

PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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- 037 – The Great War: Second Thoughts about Raymond – Oliver Lodge
- 043 – Lodge family photograph circa 1913
- 044 – The Pioneer Again – Leslie Price
- 045 – How I became interested in the Paranormal - Mercy Phillimore - *LIGHT*
- 049 – Harry Price Explained – Comments and Reflections – Miss Mercy Phillimore
- 055 – College Fights for Survival – Leslie Price
- 056 – Ectoplasm as Associated with Survival – *Survival*
- 065 – Some books we have reviewed
- 066 – How to obtain this Journal by email

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THE GREAT WAR

Introductory Note by Pyspioneer: We are now approaching the centenary of the 1914-18 war, and we expect to carry a variety of archival material dealing with that trauma. Of course older readers will already have encountered much in our pages that is relevant, such as the 1919 SNU presidential address of Ernest Oaten which looked back at the war.¹

SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT RAYMOND - OLIVER LODGE

Perhaps the most influential psychic book of the war was *Raymond* by Sir Oliver Lodge (1916) containing messages from his son killed in the war. Less well known is a revised version of the book which appeared in 1922. We take the material below from a reprint.²

PREFACE



RAYMOND REVISED is a much altered form of *Raymond*; it contains a totally new Chapter about more recent conversations (Chapter XIX) and an explanatory Chapter (XX) about points which have seemed specially open to hostile criticism; also each of the Three Parts has been shortened and simplified, and to some extent rearranged. A few copies of the fuller and original edition, now the twelfth, are still available, and will I hope remain so for a time, for students, though as it stands now the book is easier than the old one for the general reader.

I wish to call attention to Part III, and ask critics to read it, because that is the fruit of Part II; and it is easier to judge of these deductions than of the raw material of Part II, where rapid readers may stray among stumbling-blocks only tractable by serious students of the subject who are familiar with the Proceedings of the S.P.R. and other forms of psychical literature.

Raymond is rather keen about *Raymond Revised* and hopes that it may be of extended use.

¹—See Pyspioneer Volume 7. No 6. June 2011:—Presidential Address on July 5th, 1919 – Ernest W. Oaten – *The Two Worlds*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.6June2011.pdf>

²—*Raymond Revised*: A New Abbreviated Edition of *Raymond or Life and Death* with an additional chapter by Sir Oliver J. Lodge: Special Edition for the Psychic Book Club Ltd, London. No date.

CHAPTER XX

EXPLANATIONS AND REPLIES

I PROPOSE to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by a new edition to make a short explanation or commentary, which may incidentally meet some of the objections raised by the more reasonable type of critic – namely the critic who is willing to devote some time and attention to a book in order to arrive at its real meaning.

The main object of a book like this is to help to bring comfort to bereaved persons, especially to those who have been bereaved by war. I do not indeed recommend all sorts of people to visit mediums or try to investigate the subject for themselves. If they do, it must be on their own responsibility. When sane people, actuated by sound and good motives and in a reasonable spirit, desire to gain first-hand experience, in the hope of thereby mitigating their sorrow, it is natural to do our best to help them; but it is unwise to take the responsibility of urging such a course upon an unknown stranger. And some should be dissuaded. Nevertheless, a considerable number of bereaved people have been helped; among them many who knew nothing of the subject beforehand. People in genuine distress have gone with careful recommendation and instructions to a reputable medium, quite anonymously, and have got into touch unmistakably with their departed. This has happened in numerous and some noteworthy cases. The result has been a considerable addition to the bulk of cumulative evidence in favour of the genuineness of the phenomenon, and incidentally, of the power of mediums who normally knew nothing whatever about their visitors, but who in trance gave many intimate family details. It is absurd to suppose that people who had never been to a medium of any kind were recognized; still more absurd to suppose that every anonymous stranger is personally known and has been looked up beforehand.

The best mediums are simple, straightforward people, anxious to do the best they can with their strange gift for the help of people in sorrow. Occasionally individuals may be encountered who pretend to powers which they do not possess, or who eke out their waning power by fraud; but in so far as these imitators are fraudulent they are not genuine mediums. If inexperienced novices go to charlatans who advertise by sandwich-men and other devices, they deserve what they get.

On the other hand, I have not usually found bereaved people too ready to be convinced. Some are; some are foolish enough to give things away in a careless manner; but as a rule it is a mistake to suppose that people who are really seeking for evidence are ready to be misled. They are often quite critical, and reasonably cautious. Their anxiety sometimes makes them even excessively anxious not to be deceived in so vitally important a matter. And even after they have had quite good evidence, they sometimes go back on it—very naturally—and become sceptical again. Many years of experience were needed in my own case before I was ready to admit the cumulative outcome of the whole body of evidence as finally conclusive.

Concerning the particular case of my son Raymond, I have had many further talks with him, but the stress and anxiety to communicate has subsided. The wish to give scientific evidence remains, but, now that the fact of survival and happy employment is established, the communications are placid—like an occasional letter home. He has,

however, been successful in bringing to their parents a number of youths whom he knew before death, and the weight of evidence has accordingly heavily increased.

I hope that in time, when the possibility is recognized and taken under the wing of religion, that people will not need individual and specific messages to assure them of the well-being of their loved ones. They will, I hope, be able to feel assured that what has been proved true of a few must be true of all, under the same general circumstances. Moreover, it is to be hoped that they will be able to receive help and comfort and a sense of communion through their own powers, in peaceful times, without strain or special effort and without vicarious mediation.

The power or, sensitiveness, or whatever it ought to be called, seems to be a good deal commoner than people think. I anticipate that in most families there will be found one member who may be able to help others to some knowledge in this direction. Elaborate proof is necessary at first, as it has been in connexion with many now recognized and familiar things,—such as the position of the earth in the solar system,—but when once a fact or doctrine is generally accepted, people settle down in acceptance and enjoyment of the general belief, without each striving after exceptional experience for himself. The inertia of the human mind and of the body-politic is considerable: right beliefs take time to enter, and wrong beliefs take time to disappear; but periods of anxiety and doubt and controversy do not last as a permanent condition. They represent a phase through which we have to go.

CLERICAL OBJECTIONS

One difficulty which good people feel, about allowing themselves to take comfort from the evidence, is the attitude of the Church to it, and the fear that we are encroaching on dangerous and forbidden ground. I have no wish to shirk the ecclesiastical point of view: it is indeed important, for the Church has great influence. But I must claim that Science can pay no attention to ecclesiastical notice-boards; we must examine wherever we can, and I do not agree that any region of inquiry can legitimately be barred out by authority.

Occasionally the accusation is made that the phenomena we encounter are the work of devils; and we are challenged to say how we know that they are not of evil character. To that the only answer is the ancient one—“by their fruits”. I will not elaborate it: St. Paul gave a long list of the fruit of the Spirit in *Galatians* v. 22-23. Yet I do not mean to say that no precautions need be taken, and that everything connected with the subject is wholly good: I do not regard as wholly good any activity of man. Even the pursuit of Science can be prostituted to evil; as we see now only too clearly in the war. Everything human can be used and can be abused. I have to speak in platitudes to answer these objections; they are often quite unworthy of the sacred name of religion; they savour of professionalism. Chief Priests were always ready to attribute anything done without their sanction to the power of Beelzebub. The Bishop of Beauvais denounced Joan of Arc’s voices as diabolic. It is a very ancient accusation. In the light of historical instances, it is an over-flattering one: I wish to give no other answer.

OBJECTIONS RAISED ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS

Concerning the substance of the communications received from the other side, perhaps the most difficult portion is the account given of the similarity of the conditions as described 'over there' to the conditions existing on the earth; and it is asked, How can that be possible? I reply, in all probability *because of the identity of the observer*. I do not dogmatize on the point, but I conceive that in so far as people remain themselves, their power of interpretation will be similar to what it used to be here. Hence, in whatever way we interpret a material world here and now, so, in like manner, are we likely to, interpret an ethereal world—through senses not altogether dissimilar in effect, however they differ in detail.

Surely the external world, as we perceive it, is largely dependent on our powers of perception and interpretation. So is a picture, or any work of art. The thing in itself—whatever that may mean—can hardly be known to us. I admit it is a difficult proposition,—but the evidence is fairly consistent on this point ever since Swedenborg,—the next world is always represented as surprisingly like this; and though that obviously lends itself to scepticism, I expect it corresponds to some sort of reality. It looks almost as if that world were an ethereal counterpart of this: or else as if we were all really in one world all the time, only they see the ethereal aspect of it and we see the material. The clue to all this seems to depend on the similarity, or rather the identity, of the observer. A nerve centre interprets or presents to the mind each stimulus in the specific way to which it has become accustomed, whatever the real nature of the stimulus; a blow on the eye, or a pressure on the retina, is interpreted as light; irritation in the auditory nerve is interpreted as sound. So, it may be, we shall be unable to interpret things save in a more or less customary manner.

To come to smaller details. If the accusation has been brought that such things as smoking and drinking are represented as in vogue among the denizens of the other side, that accusation is utterly unjustified and untrue. A statement detached from its context is often misleading. What is revealed in my book, if it has any trustworthy significance, implies clearly and decisively that they do *not* thus occupy their time; nor are any such things natural to their surroundings. Nothing but common sense is needed to understand the position. If there is a community over there, it cannot be a fixed and stationary one, new-comers must be continually arriving. My son is represented as saying that when people first come over, and are in a puzzled state of mind, hardly knowing where they are, they ask for all sorts of unreasonable things; and that the lower kind are still afflicted with the desires of earth. After all, this is really orthodox moral teaching; or I am much mistaken; it is one of the warnings held out to sensual persons that their desires may persist and become part of their punishment.

As bearing out this statement, a friend has recently sent me a sentence extracted from Swedenborg's *Spiritual Diary*, vol. i, paragraph 333.

'The souls of the dead take with them from the body all its nature, insomuch that they still think themselves in the body. They have also desires and appetites of eating and the like; so that those things which belong to the body are inscribed upon the soul. Thus they retain the nature which they take with them from the world; but this, in process of time, is delivered to oblivion.'

The same idea is independently expressed by me in the chapter on the Resurrection of the Body, towards the end of this book. But indeed the slander referred to in the preceding paragraph is so perverse and pernicious as to be essentially wicked. The truth of the position can be quite easily realized, and there is no excuse save stupidity for what must otherwise be purposed misrepresentation, akin to the accusations of devil-worship and necromancy.

Imagine an assembly of clergymen in some Retreat, where they give themselves to meditation and good works; and then imagine a traveller arriving, mistaking their hostel for an hotel, and asking for a whisky and soda. Would that mean that alcoholic drinks were natural to the surroundings and part of the atmosphere of the place? Would not the feeling aroused by the request mean just the contrary? The book says that in order to wean these new-comers from sordid and unsuitable though comparatively innocuous tastes, the policy adopted is not to forbid and withhold—a policy which might over-inflame and prolong the desire—but to take steps to satisfy it in moderation until the new-comers of their own free will and sense perceive the unsuitability, and overcome the relics of earthly craving; which they do very soon.

Whether the statement be accepted as true or not, or as containing some parabolic element of truth, I see nothing derogatory in it; and the process of weaning may be wise.

It must be admitted, however, that games and songs are spoken of, and I have heard it claimed that 'spirits of just men made perfect' ought not to be occupied in any such commonplace ways, even during their times of relaxation. To this I reply that when perfection or saintliness is attained that may be true: it is not a subject on which I am a judge. Games and exercises are harmless and beneficial here, even for good people; and surely if young fellows remain themselves, games and exercise and songs will not seem alien to them—at any rate not for some time. People seem hardly to realize all that survival with persistent character and personal identity must really involve. It is surely clear that the majority of people, whether in this or in another life, are just average men and women, and neither saints nor devils; and ecclesiastical teaching has grievously erred in leading people to suppose that the act of death converts them into one or the other. Progress and development are conspicuously the law of the Universe. Evolution is always gradual. Youths shot out of the trenches—fine fellows as they are—are not likely to become saints all at once. They cannot be reasonably spoken of as 'just men made perfect'. Let a little common sense into the subject, and remember the continuity of existence and of personal identity. Do not suppose that death converts a person into something quite different. Happier and holier, pleasanter and better, the surroundings may be, than on earth; there is admittedly room for improvement; but sudden perfection is not for the likes of us.

It is, moreover, highly unlikely that the experience of everybody on that side is the same: the few saints of the race may have quite a different experience: the few diabolical ruffians must have a different one again. I have not been in touch with either of these classes. There are many grades, many states of being; and each goes to his own place.

If it is urged by orthodox critics that the penitent thief went to heaven, I reply, Not at all: according to the record he went to Paradise, which is different. A sort of Garden

of Eden, apparently, is meant by the word, something not too far removed from earth. As far as I can make out, the ancient writers thought of it as a place or state not very different from what in this book is called 'Summerland'.

Against this it may be urged that Christ Himself could not have stayed, even for a time, at an intermediate or comparatively low stage. But I see no reason to suppose that He exempted himself from any condition appropriate to a full-bodied humanity. Surely He would carry it through completely. Judging from the Creed, which I suppose clerical critics accept, they appear to hold that Christ even descended at first—descended into Hades or the underworld, doubtless on some high missionary effort. Anyhow and quite clearly the record says that for forty days He remained in touch with earth, presumably in the state called Paradise, occasionally appearing or communicating with survivors,—again after the manner of transitional humanity. And only after that sojourn, for our benefit, did He ascend to some lofty State, far above anything attainable by thieves however penitent, or by our young soldiers however magnificent and self-sacrificing. After æons of progress have elapsed, they may gradually progress thither.

Meanwhile they are happier and more at home in Paradise. There they find themselves still in touch with earth, not really separated from those left behind, still able actively to help and serve. There is nothing supine about the rest and joy into which they have entered. Under the impact of their young energy, strengthened by the love which rises towards them like a blessing, the traditional barrier between the two states is suffering violence, is being taken by force. A band of eager workers is constructing a bridge, opening a way for us across the chasm; communication is already easier and more frequent than ever before; and in the long run we may feel assured that all this present suffering and bereavement will have a beneficent outcome for humanity.

So may it be!

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SIR OLIVER LODGE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH CIRCA 1913



Back Row

Honor – Lionel – Barbara – Lorna – Oliver – Lady Lodge

Seated

Noel – Mrs Brody Lodge³ – Alec – Norah – Violet – Sir Oliver Lodge

Foreground

Brodie – Rosalynde – Raymond

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³.-Formerly Winifred Gunn

THE PIONEER AGAIN



Volume.1 No.2 January 2014

Contents list:

- 036 – The J. Arthur Findlay College, for the Advancement of Psychic Science – The early years
- 050 – Ernest Walter Oaten (1875-1952) – His contribution to Spiritualism was long and notable, giving almost 60 years' service
- 052 – The History of The Two Worlds
- 053 – Twenty-one Years – Oaten tells us how through Spirit Guidance his position as Editor was orchestrated by the spirit of Emma Hardinge Britten
- 056 – Who were the first Ministers of the Union?
- 062 – New Presidents Page

This new history journal will be presented using original researched material wherever possible. Articles and quotes are taken from original sources as they were published at the time and reproduced by "Optical Character Recognition" (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

Special thanks are acknowledged to Minister David Hopkins and Leslie Price for their work in sub-editing and corrections in this issue

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35

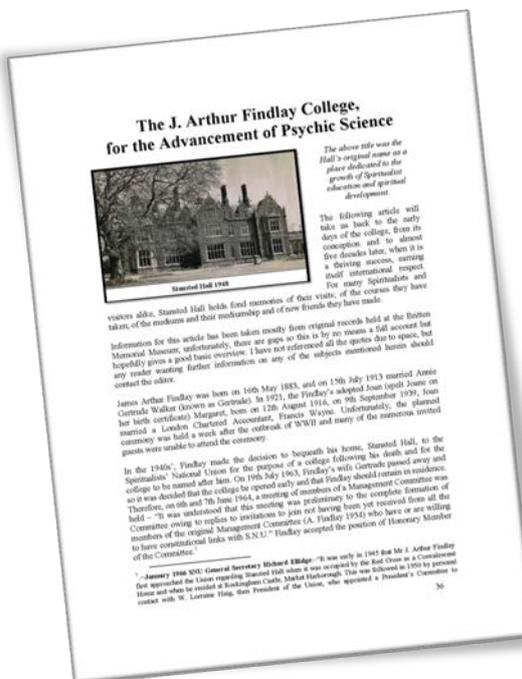
In Pypioneer November, we called attention to the first issue of the revamped SNU magazine *Pioneer* which is now a quarterly entirely devoted to the history of National Spiritualism. A second issue (January 2014) has now been made freely available on line.⁴

This contains revelations about the early years of the Arthur Findlay College at Stansted, and about the lifelong discarnate guidance given to Ernest Oaten, editor of *Two Worlds* by Emma Hardinge Britten.

There is an investigation into how SNU ministers developed (they are older than you might think), and a list of SNU presidents (do you know who was the first to pass in office? And who was the first Jewish president?).

An engrossing read.

LP.



⁴—The Pioneer Journal:—<http://www.snu.org.uk/spiritualism/pioneer>

MERCY PHILLIMORE

Note by LP: In Spring 1962, LIGHT began a new era as a quarterly magazine edited anonymously by Dr Vernon P. Underwood. One of his excellent innovations was a series “How I became interested in the paranormal” and Miss Phillimore, the LSA secretary who had retired from that position in 1952, joined Dr Raynor Johnson in the first issue. She later served on the council.⁵

Below is taken from LIGHT, Spring, 1962 - No. 3448:

AT the beginning of this century I had the friendship of some people who were interested in the strange happenings that occurred, so they assured me, in the presence of certain men and women called mediums. My reaction to these accounts was of lighthearted amusement. When the friends claimed that such happenings indicated the active association of people who had died, well, my amusement was mixed with incredulity and the suspicion that these otherwise intelligent friends were suffering a grievous delusion.

At that time the rooms of the London Spiritualist Alliance were in St, Martin's Lane. They included the Library, the office of LIGHT, a room for small meetings, and a general office. The more important meetings were held regularly in Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, in the Salon of the Royal Society of British Artists.

It was there I was invited in 1904 to my first meeting of the LSA. The venerable American pioneer, Dr. J. M. Peebles, in his nineties, was to speak, with Edmund Dawson Rogers presiding. That occasion proved to be the last public appearance of these two fine pioneers. Dr. Peebles died soon after, and Edmund Dawson Rogers began a long illness which ended in death.

With the Rev. Wm. Stainton Moses, Edmund Dawson Rogers had founded LIGHT in 1881, and taken the lead in re-organizing a Society that was first renamed the London Spiritualist Alliance, and then, in 1955, the College of Psychic Science.

The friends to whom I referred were the surviving family of Edmund Dawson Rogers: Melissa, his eldest daughter, a wise and most level-headed personality who warmly supported the Women's Liberal Association of those days; Alice, a younger sister, wife of Henry Withall,⁶ then the Hon. Secretary of the LSA, and Dawson Rogers, a younger son, assisting the Editor of LIGHT.

Between the years 1904 and 1913 these friends invited me to the meetings in Suffolk Street when occasionally, in addition to the speakers of the evening, various mediums gave demonstrations of their subjective psychic gifts. I must confess that these meetings in no way led me to have even the slightest realization of the profound underlying truth they were supposed to reveal. I listened unmoved to the arguments of the speakers, and silently relished with much amusement what I then

⁵.-LSA: London Spiritualist Alliance today known as The College of Psychic Studies:—
<http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/>

⁶.-See *Psypioneer* Volume 7. No 8. August 2011:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.8August2011.pdf>

regarded as the “performance” of the medium. Amongst those I listened to were Miss McCreadie, Vango, Susannah Harris, J. W. Colville, Alfred Vout Peters.⁷ The last three had spectacular personalities, and a spectacular style of dressing.

In those days, as far as Spiritualism was concerned, I was just a frivolous disbeliever. It was not that I lacked feelings concerning the departed, with whom I associated the old idea of “sacredness”; it was that I was then incapable of taking mediumistic gifts and the claims made for them at all seriously. I could only see the “funny side” of much that is associated with mediumship.

Since then, I’ve learnt a great deal. My journey from disbelief to full acceptance of the reality of conscious communication with the departed was long and difficult; it covered years, in fact. In November, 1913, I called at St. Martin’s Lane to see my friends, Dawson Rogers and Mr. Withall. I saw also E. W. Wallis, then the Editor of LIGHT, husband of the famous trance medium Mrs. M. H. Wallis,⁸ and the genial old Bernard Deane Godfrey, the Librarian.

In the course of conversation, Mr. Wallis said, “As you are free, come up here and help us. We need help.” I thought: “Goodness me, to help among the spooks.” This suggestion was backed by Mr. Withall. I was persuaded, and started with them on the first Monday in December, 1913, stipulating “for six months only”, intending to fly London for sea and country at the end of that time. The six months, however, lengthened into precisely thirty-nine years, as I resigned on November 30th, 1952.

The initial six months proved in reality a time of mounting mental confusion and, it is true to say, of acute mental distress. I was faced with this seemingly insoluble paradox: I disbelieved in the psychic happenings and the claim made for them. I knew my friends to be clever, honourable people, but thought of them as bemused by this unaccountable odd belief. At the LSA, day by day, I met and talked with people whose quality of mind and character shone forth as reality to my perception, and yet—they all had this odd belief. This was tantalizing, a torment to my mind. I could not accept their beliefs, yet could not believe that such people could be wholly deluded.

My six months were up. Not only was I terribly puzzled, I was profoundly interested. I accepted an invitation to remain.

But in August, 1914, with the declaration of war, I told Mr. Withall that I should seek war work. He replied, “If you want war work, stay here, for we shall have plenty. People are talking of this being over in six months. It is more likely to last six years.” Again I was persuaded to stay. And so it was that after the terrible offensive got into full swing we, at St. Martin's Lane, were inundated with the bereaved.

⁷—Alfred Vout Peters see *Psypioneer* Volume 4. No 2. February 2008:—*Alfred Vout Peters – Paul J. Gaunt*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.2February08.pdf> & Volume 4. No 3. March 2008:—*An English Medium in the Celtic twilight – Wendy E. Cousins*:— <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.3March08.pdf> & Volume 4. No 4. April 2008:—Alfred Vout Peters 1867 – 1934 – final part:— <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.4April08.pdf>

⁸—See *Psypioneer* Volume 2. No 6. June 2006:—*Woman who was a medium for fifty-two years*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.6June06.pdf>

I began to attend sittings. My first experience was with Mrs. Etta Wreidt, the famous voice medium. I was taken by Vice-Admiral Osborne Moore (Vice-President of the LSA at that time) as a guest to his private circle held at the home of W. T. Stead at Wimbledon. Mrs. Champion de Crespigny was, also a guest, and this, too, was her first experience with Mrs. Wreidt.

I was told nothing of what to expect, only that the circle would be held in darkness. A few minutes after it began, a terrific noise, a voice of thunder roared forth, fit to shiver the room to pieces. I was terrified. This voice turned out to be that of Greyfeather, the Admiral's special devoted "guide", and one of the unseen group always first to greet him. Many voices were heard, and an etherialization seen, but I was too disturbed to have a proper judgment of the proceedings.

A Quaker I had met was interested in what I was doing in London and gave me a letter of introduction to Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, with whom he worked in the Adult School movement. Her husband, James Hewat McKenzie, was devoting his life to the study of psychic science.⁹ I wrote to Mrs. McKenzie enclosing my letter of introduction, and in reply she sent her husband to see me and to invite me to dine with them. The invitation led to a long-standing friendship, and to sittings with, several of the physical mediums they brought to work at the British College of Psychic Science in Holland Park.

Before these experiments, Mr. McKenzie had generously offered to book me a series of six sittings with Mrs. Osborne Leonard,¹⁰ whose remarkable gifts were becoming known to a wider public. In later years I was to have the pleasure of knowing her, to admire and respect her for her faithful exercise of her great gifts. She is blessed with a nature so free of egotism that criticism of her work, whether constructive or unhelpful, arouses her interest without rancour.

Here is a confession about our first meeting in 1915.

On the appointed day Mr. McKenzie introduced me to Mrs. Leonard and departed, promising to return at the end of the sitting. Mrs. Leonard settled down and, after a short time of quiet, entered trance. A manner of speech, of a personality known as "Feda" was revealed through the lips of Mrs. Leonard. This, her unusual change of personality, had not been explained to me, so it caused me much surprise. "Feda" chattered away merrily in childish broken English.

Then to my amazement some striking facts were mentioned which concerned my mother, who had died some years before. I was shocked by the mixture of levity and broken English in which reference was made to what, in my mind, was "sacred" ground. It was of course due to my prejudice that I was incapable of unbiased consideration of the significance of Feda's knowledge.

⁹.-See *Psypioneer* Volume 3. No 8. August 2007:—A Knight Errant of Psychic Science James Hewat McKenzie:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.8August07.pdf>

¹⁰.-See *Psypioneer* Volume 6. No 5. May 2010:—Mrs. Osborne Leonard – Her life and Mediumship – By D. A. Nickelson & The Mediumship of Mrs Osborne Leonard – Later Years: New Facts and Factors, by D. A. Nickelson:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.5.May2010.pdf>

The sitting ended. I found Mr. McKenzie waiting for me. As we walked away, he questioned me about the sitting. I burst forth in all my seething dislike and feeling of outrage. Mr. McKenzie was utterly surprised and indeed very angry, and indignantly said he would cancel the series he had booked for me. However, before we parted, each had calmed down, and it was agreed that I should have another trial. Alas, the second sitting proved but a repetition of the first. Mr. McKenzie gave me up, but only for a time. He was by nature a determined propagandist, dedicated to the conversion of all the world to a belief in demonstrated survival.

In later years, this sitting with Mrs. Leonard proved to be one of my valuable experiences, for after I came to believe in the reality of mediumship, I was able to understand difficulties similar to my own, and to give reasonable explanations that led to a better, less prejudiced judgment of results.

My long road to belief in demonstrated survival included a knowledge of the vagaries of the psychic faculties, of the mediums themselves and also of sitters of various types of mind. It suggested clues to many difficulties that cause trouble and disappointment during the search for evidence. It also threw light on the puzzling experiences lying in wait for those who at first rush emotionally with an all-embracing belief in mediumship, but lacking discrimination.

Thus I was launched on my way.

In the end I gained an unshakable belief in the possibility of conscious communication through true mediumship. From this point the idea of the "Unseen Cloud of Witnesses" becomes clearer, and it is in a way a mundane contribution to the vision of the enlightened who have faith in the great processes of all degrees of substance and spirit.

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HARRY PRICE EXPLAINED – COMMENTS AND REFLECTIONS



Note by LP: The psychical researcher Harry Price divides opinion today as he did in life. (For a discussion of a new hostile biography, see *Psypioneer* March 2007,¹¹ and the author's response, April 2007).¹² Miss Mercy Phillimore worked in the same building as Harry from 1926-1930, when his laboratory shared premises with the LSA.

Her assessment of him is therefore of great interest:¹³

THE PROBLEM OF HARRY PRICE.—In view of the controversy aroused by the recent book published by the S.P.R. on the haunting of Borley Rectory (see review in our last number, pp. 25-7), the following notes from a talk by Miss Mercy Phillimore, who was for a long period the Secretary of the L.S.A., should be of particular interest:—

One wonders if any field of study yields quite so puzzling a harvest of distressing contradictions as does Psychical Research. No wonder many people flee from it in terror as something eerie, misleading, even dangerous. It is all these things, like life itself, as I never cease to say to myself. We remember, however, that it is, like our lives, based on a reality that leads to knowledge and enlightenment.

One of the chief difficulties in psychical research is man himself, his very character, his mixed motives, good and bad; for that which we study in psychical research is of the very essence of the human being, the very substance of his make-up, a blend of physical and mental life-force in an exceptional degree of activity. Hence the importance of the nature and character of each and all who participate in this work. The medium is not exclusively responsible for results. His exceptional powers, without which nothing—nothing of any value—can happen, are of course of first importance, but every other person also unconsciously makes his contribution from the subtle mental and physical forces of his own personality.

¹¹.—Volume 3. No 4. April 2007:—Book Review by Leslie Price - Harry Price Reassessed:—
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.4April07.pdf>

¹².—Volume 3, No 5; May 2007 Harry Price – Richard Morris responds:—
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.5May07.pdf>

¹³.—Taken from *Light* June 1956: Vol LXXVI No 3427.

These thoughts derive from looking into *The Haunting of Borley Rectory: A Critical Survey of the Evidence*, by Eric J. Dingwall, Kathleen M. Goldney and Trevor H. Hall. This book presents us with the problem of the fraudulent researcher. He can be regarded as the counterpart to the fraudulent medium. A fraudulent medium is a person endowed with supernormal psychic faculties who, on occasions, supplements them with intentional deception. So also can the fraudulent researcher at times make a valuable contribution to our work. Each of these types, i.e. the fraudulent medium and the fraudulent researcher, is a mixture of straight and crooked dealing. Whether it is a good thing to have anything to do with either in connection with serious work is an open question. I will straight away make it clear that I hold no opinion as to whether Borley Rectory, or the site on which it existed, is or is not, the scene of past or present hauntings. I am here concerned only with the late Harry Price. I propose without apology to give you my opinion of the man. It is an opinion I formed early in my association with him as a member of the L.S.A., and an opinion of which time never seemed to justify any change. I venture to suggest that it offers an explanation for the apparent contradiction of his nature.

Harry Price as a magician and member of the Magic Circle was well versed in all the ways to imitate the physical phenomena of Spiritualism and more particularly to detect the many ways of producing fraudulent effects which dishonest mediums resort to. He described himself, somewhat ambitiously, as a scientist. He was in fact a skilful and resourceful mechanic, having an aptitude to invent mechanical devices for checking the physical manifestations of Spiritualism. In many ways he had great ability, he was extremely observant, swift in thought and action, very painstaking. He spent lavishly on his hobby while demanding always his full pound of flesh.

Merely a hobby: that is what psychical research must have been for him. One couldn't ever feel that he gave any really serious thought to its significance. His pursuit in it was a means to an end—the end of placing himself in the limelight. He was an egotist bemused with personal publicity. This need of his temperament dominated all his activity, a trait of character apt to endanger strict honesty.

If he is to be judged as a psychical researcher it cannot be said that he was always honest, in spite of the fact that some excellent research stands to his credit.

I would ask a question which I consider to be appropriate. My question is: What in fact was Harry Price? I answer by saying: Harry Price was a first-class public entertainer. He had the attitude of mind, and many of the habits, of a variety stage illusionist. But the conventional stage was too narrow for the range of his own special cast of genius. His temperament prevented him from playing second fiddle to anyone. So untrammelled he took the outer world for his stage, seeking the assistance of those who could be useful to him. He was a magician, a conjurer, an illusionist. He induced illusions in others, but he himself had no illusions. It is my opinion that within the limits of his type of mentality he had full comprehension and exactitude in thought and action. He was in his own way quite an artist—his way, that is the way of the public entertainer. It was the mistake of the public to take him seriously as a psychic researcher. That mistake was a tribute to his cleverness. Strictly he should not be blamed for that. It was above all the most grievous mistake for a spiritualist or psychical researcher to take him seriously. Those who didn't know him personally may be excused. But I doubt if there were many who did know him personally at all

well, who did either wholly trust him, or take him very seriously as a psychical researcher.

As a public entertainer I can judge him not only indulgently, but even with admiration, while of course regretting his behaviour which has caused psychical research to suffer a temporary check. Yet as checks to psychical research are so many, is one more or less so very important? Besides, we can always comfort ourselves by the thought that in the long run truth prevails.

Mr. Price had many years ago won public confidence by advertising his ability to detect fraud in mediumship, and so he was looked upon by those who were either timorous or antagonistic as a safe guide, philosopher and friend in a mystifying subject.

So successful was he in winning the confidence of some press men, that eventually even Fleet Street accepted him, quite mistakenly, as the leading psychical researcher on whose opinion they could rely and to whom they did frequently refer. This sorry mistake also invaded the British Broadcasting Corporation, for, unless I was misinformed, the B.B.C. at one time appointed him chief reviewer to the *Listener* of all books relating to psychical research.

From the late twenties he added to his growing popularity with his three major spectacular so called 'investigations', The Brocken, Joanna Southcott's Box, and Borley.

As is well known, the Brocken is the highest mountain in the Hartz range in North Germany. It holds an important place in ancient folk lore, and many legends have clung to it. On Walpurgis night, the eve of the first of May, curious rites used to be enacted, and it was believed that witches met and held revels with the devil. Harry Price had the happy inspiration, in the interests of course of psychical research, to revive and test one of the legends which claimed that if a pure and beautiful maiden and a goat met at midnight at the summit of the Brocken on the eve of the first of May, the goat, under the influence of the rites enacted with the devil, would be transformed into a handsome youth who would instantly fall in love with the pure and beautiful maiden.

Much advance publicity was given in the Press to the forthcoming revels on the Brocken, and on that particular eve of the first of May, accompanied by a large party of reporters and Press photographers, maiden and goat, Harry Price, in top hat and frock coat, ascended the Brocken to hold communion with the devil.

Alas, the experiment failed; another defeat for psychical research! Was it that he hadn't the right witch handy, or was he himself not a too wicked wizard? The goat remained a goat, and doubtless the maiden was all forlorn. But at least we can hope, even at this late day, that that psychical researcher-in-chief, having a charming weakness for that cross section of feminine creation, the young and glamorous, offered some consolation to the disappointed maiden. Mr. Hannen Swaffer at that time maintained, week after week in his paper, delightfully amusing comment in a rich vein of sardonic humour, on the Brocken 'investigation.' It was all great fun.

Next came the episode of Joanna Southcotts' Box. Joanna Southcott, as of course you all know (but let me remind you) was an English religious fanatic of the late eighteenth century. She sprang from Methodism, and founded a sect of her own. It is said she 'sealed the 144,000 elect at a charge varying from twelve shillings to a guinea. When over sixty she prophesied that she would be delivered of the Prince of Peace on the 19th October, 1814; but he failed to appear and it was given out that she was in trance. She died of brain disease on the 29th of the same month'. Her many publications included prophecies. In addition, so the rumour went, many important prophecies concerning the future of the nations and the world were sealed in a box, for the future opening of which she left specific instructions. Her followers, who lasted until the end of the nineteenth century, are said to have numbered over 100,000. When questioned as to the whereabouts of the box the remaining disciples maintained silence, and it was thought by others that all trace of it was lost. Silence reigned for twenty-five years. Then, all of a sudden, that box, hidden for years no-one knew where, arrived one day here at Queensberry Place; deposited by whom nobody knew, like a poor little foundling, on the cane stool in the hall. It was addressed to Harry Price, who, by the grace of the Council of the London Spiritualist Alliance, occupied our top floor as the National Laboratory for Psychical Research. According to the instructions for the opening of the Box which accompanied it, the day for the opening should not be fixed until a panel of bishops, eight if I remember rightly, agreed to be present at the opening ceremony. Following the dramatic arrival of this precious box Mr. Price did his utmost to persuade the stated number of bishops to grace a public meeting for the opening. But only one bishop gave his consent. So, as a concession to hard fact, namely one bishop instead of many, poor Joanna's specific instructions were partially disregarded and a much-advertised public meeting for the opening was held at Church House, Westminster, which was crowded to its fullest capacity. A few days after that meeting, in the precincts of the National Laboratory upstairs, I was invited by Mr. Price to inspect the contents of the box. There were a few feminine treasures, some cheap trinkets, and a very old-fashioned little book. It was a kind of diary with various entries, among which Mr. Price explained, with great solemnity of expression and an air of shocked surprise, were some *risqué* stories. Those, however, I was not invited to read. I still vividly remember feeling much amusement, but my propriety enabled me to express a corresponding horror that a lady so famed for her religious fervour should have been so like some of her less worthy sisters! That box aroused suspicion in my mind which time has not dispelled. Is my suspicion unworthy, I wonder? By the way, can anyone guess what is my suspicion?

Next Borley, dropped into his eager embrace by the *Daily Mirror*. What a fortuitous opportunity for more publicity, and a long-term chance for pursuing the congenial hobby! From Harry Price's point of view, what luck!

The S.P.R. publication giving evidence of unfair play in connection with the reported haunting at Borley caused me little surprise, for it is in character with what I had noted during several years of fairly close association with Mr. Price.

This disclosure is likely to have caused a number of spiritualists as well as the general public to have disturbing thoughts, for while many disliked Mr. Price for his seeming over anxiety to expose mediums, they thought him a useful safeguard against the impostor. Above all, they were, of recent years, greatly interested in what they believed to be a trustworthy record of a remarkable haunting. Now their confidence in

him must to some extent be shaken. In consequence they may wonder if any part of his research work was wholly trustworthy.

Having referred to the unpleasant, dominant aspect of his character, I am happy to turn to the other side; for he certainly possessed some fine qualities. Had he been less of an egotist, less a lover of the limelight, without leanings on occasion to 'terminological inexactitudes', to quote our greatest hero, he would have been of immense and lasting benefit to psychical research. He had some of the qualities and much of the ability that are necessary in our work. We have to thank him for two excellent contributions, the first concerning the mediumship of 'Stella C' and the second concerning Rudi Schneider.

Harry Price became a member of the L.S.A. shortly before March 1923 when the sittings with 'Stella C' began. Without delay after he took up membership he told us that he wanted to experiment with a physical medium, and that if the Council were willing to put a room at his disposal and give him facilities for research he would introduce to us a very promising physical medium, and that he would welcome our co-operation in the experiment. (He did in fact offer to do this in support of research work as part of the L.S.A. But once the work was well established he acted independently.) The Council accepted his offer and I was instructed to form a circle of helpful members. We were most fortunate in enlisting the co-operation of a group of people who proved to be exceptionally suitable. All the sitters were strangers to Mr. Price with one exception, a stranger to us introduced by Mr. Price. It is interesting to recall that one of the sitters was Mrs. Eileen Garrett, then a private member in the days before it was known to what heights of mediumship and work she would subsequently attain.

'Stella C' proved to be a very gifted physical medium, and as the conditions of the circle were exceptionally good we almost immediately witnessed remarkable results.

All the details of this series of sittings are to be found in a book entitled, *Stella C*, written by Mr. Price. Happily for me I was in a position to know every detail concerning those sittings, in preparation for each one and throughout the entire first series. Those sittings were held in our house in Queen Square, Bloomsbury. I came to know 'Stella' very well. She was young, charming, quiet, and I am convinced sincere and honest.

One particularly striking physical phenomenon in the 'Stella' series was the splitting up into numerous fragments of the 'Crawford' table. It is noteworthy that this extraordinary happening occurred in the absence of Mr. Price and his friend. Major Cecil Peters, then a member of the Council, had had the table made exactly to the dimensions of the one used by Dr. W. J. Crawford of Belfast in his investigations with the medium, Kathleen Goligher. Major Peters presented it to the Alliance for use in experiments among our members.

A little time after the sitting when that destruction took place, which was an exhibition of an unusually powerful force, the treasured fragments mysteriously disappeared, and were never again seen at the Alliance. The nature of that deportation, whether normal or supernormal, was never known; but most obligingly those fragments posed before a camera for publication later on in Mr. Price's book!

The second item of good research work conducted by Mr. Price was the first series of sittings with Rudi Schneider which took place in this house, and before Rudi became somewhat exhausted by the arduous condition of testing to which he submitted. That work is fully recorded and published. I might add that in several ways I had opportunity of recognizing the psychic powers possessed by Rudi.

I have been brutally candid in expressing my opinion of Harry Price. So I must add that, in spite of all I have said, I found him in many ways a very likeable person; he was companionable and a generous friend. The thoroughness and vigour with which he tackled most things that interested him—and he had many interests—were very stimulating.

Lastly, I will quote one of the sayings of a wise, kind and very tolerant old friend, long since departed, 'Philosophically judged, no-one is deserving of blame'.

—~§~—

COLLEGE FIGHTS FOR SURVIVAL

The College of Psychic Studies in London faces difficult conditions, members were warned at the 2013 annual general meeting. The College placed a report of the meeting on its web site.¹⁴

This revealed that Treasurer Geoffrey Dart, who has subsequently become a trustee and holds the post in succession to David Defty, had reported that:

“The negative net movement in funds, or excess of expenditure over income, was £148k in 2012 compared to a deficit of £423k in 2011. However this ‘good news’ was mainly the result of an improving stock market with unrealised losses on our investments of £260k in 2011 becoming a gain of over £100k in 2012:

“Excluding investment gains and losses our deficit increased from £113k in 2011 to £270k in 2012 with voluntary income (donations and legacies) declining by over £150k. Taking into account only those items directly under the control of the College, the deficit in both 2011 and 2012 was approximately £290k.

“Deficits are mainly funded by drawing on our investment portfolio which was valued at around £2.5m in our 2012 Accounts. It is clear that the levels of deficit in recent years cannot be funded in the longer term. The Trustees priority is therefore to reduce the deficit over the next three years.”

The president Stephen Chapman, a solicitor, reported “It became clear to us during the year 2012 that drastic action had to be taken seriously and significantly to transform many elements of the College’s business. We realised that if the College continued in the direction in which it had been heading, its future could at some point be in doubt. To this end, we spent a good part of the year going in detail into the nuts and bolts of the College business.” A first attempt to develop a new computer system and website had to be given up. It is now hoped that a new system will go live in early 2014, and that this will play a major part in the expansion of the College.

The College now has a new top management team. Gill Matini is principal. Brian Adams, the vice-president is editing LIGHT, with renewed emphasis on both scientific and archival discoveries. Some of the College artistic treasures have been displayed in 2013 at the Orleans Gallery Twickenham (for the Madge Gill exhibition) and in February 2014 at the Horse Hospital London (the Ethel Le Rossignol paintings).¹⁵

¹⁴.-Challenge of change heralds high expectations for College:—
<http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/AGMReport.htm>.

¹⁵.-The Horse Hospital:—<http://www.thehorsehospital.com/now/a-goodly-company-ethel-le-rossignol/>

Introductory Note by LP: In *Psypioneer* April 1912, we reprinted the obituary of Felicia Scatcherd, a zealous worker for Spiritualism.¹⁶ The experiences reported below suggest that she had some facility for physical mediumship herself. She was also the anonymous medium for the communications in the book *Letters from the Other Side* (1919) and herself the main communicator in the book *Jordan Past* (1939). In considering the theoretical discussion of ectoplasm with which the essay opens,¹⁷ the reader will recall the investigation by Marc Demarest *Spirits of the Trade* published in *Psypioneer* March 2013:¹⁸

Ectoplasm as Associated with Survival

BY F. R. SCATCHERD
Editor of the *Asiatic Review*.

“If the red slayer think he slays,
And if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep and pass and turn again.

“Far or forgot to me are near,
Shadow and substance are the same.
The vanished gods to me appear,
And one to me are shame and fame.”
Emerson.

THE term ectoplasm is made up of two Greek words, ÉKTÓS (outside) and πλάσμα (a thing formed).

Prof. Chas. Richet was the first to use the word as applied to the substance out of which materialisations are produced.

An objection urged against the term is that it is already in use in connection with zoology.

Madame Bisson prefers the word “substance,” and invariably refers to “*la substance*” when describing the phenomena concerned with the manifestation of ectoplasm. She was the first investigator to place these phenomena on record in such a manner as to compel the attention of the scientific world. In a sense the term substance seems preferable to that of ectoplasm, as being more inclusive of the ascertained facts concerning this living mode of matter in its various degrees of manifestation. American investigators have tried to popularise the terms *Plasma*

¹⁶—*Psypioneer* Volume 8. No 4. April 2012:—*The Passing of Miss F. R. Scatcherd – The Two Worlds*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.4April2012.pdf>

¹⁷—This essay is reprinted from *Survival* by various authors, published by G. P. Putnam’s Sons – first printed separately, October 1926.

¹⁸—*Psypioneer* Volume 9. No 03. March 2013:—*Spirits of the Trade: Teleplasm, Ectoplasm, Psychoplasm, Ideoplasm* – Marc Demarest:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP9.3March2013.pdf>

and *Plasmology*, with regard to objective psychic phenomena, but the term ectoplasm has caught the popular fancy, and those who denied all reality to psychical phenomena talk glibly about ectoplasm and think they know all about it. In truth, up to the present very little is known about this “basis” of objective psychical phenomena. One of the oldest and most illustrious of living investigators tells us:

“We must not hide from ourselves the fact that these phenomena cause us to penetrate another world, a world unknown and as yet entirely unexplored.”¹⁹

If real progress is to be made in the exploration of this unknown world, ectoplasm, and its kindred psychic problems, must be studied with dispassionate ardour and due observance of the conditions essential to secure results.

Dr. Franz Hartmann was of the opinion that all psychical phenomena were to be attributed to a nervous force producing mechanical and physical effects outside of the human body.

Even a limited experience of the phenomena in question would prevent the acceptance of this hypothesis rejected by Flammarion, Mme. Bisson and other investigators, including Dr. Geley.

All theories of the subconscious are seen to be equally inadequate to explain the facts as observed with Eva C. and other mediums.

“A portion of force, intelligence and matter can be exteriorised from the organism, act, perceive, organise and think outside of the muscles, organs, senses and brain. It is none other than the lofty subconscious portion of the Being. It constitutes truly a subconscious exteriorisable being, coexisting in the ego with the normal conscious being.”²⁰

The word *being* or *être*, is evidently used as our word self, and should be thus translated.

Dr. Geley, however, has himself modified this view so as to cover the whole field of phenomena. In a later work²¹ he expresses himself thus:—

“During the whole time that the materialisation lasts it is in obvious physiological and psychological relation with the medium . . . every impression received by the ectoplasm reacts on the medium and *vice versa*; the extreme reflex sensitiveness of the forms is closely connected with that of the medium. Everything goes to prove that the ectoplasm is in a word the medium herself, partially exteriorised. I am speaking of course only from the physiological point of view and not at present from the purely psychological side of the matter” (page 63).

¹⁹.—Camille Flammarion. *Les Forces Inconnues* (Scatcherd reference)

²⁰.—Dr. Geley. *L'Être Subconscient* (Scatcherd reference)

²¹.—*From the Unconscious to the Conscious* (Scatcherd reference)

All experiences in materialisation phenomena tend to demonstrate the existence of one primordial substance, of which living forms are but representations. Dr. Geley, a consistent and clear thinker, goes on to complete his views of the problem thus:—

- (a) The essential unity of organic substance.
- (b) The evidence of a superior dynamism implied by the necessity of admitting a superior, organising, centralising and directing dynamism.
- (c) The conditioning of the dynamism by the idea.

The third factor is the most important of the three, maintains Dr. Geley. It implies the complete reversal of materialistic philosophy, for it means “the modelling of living matter by an idea”—ideoplasticity, and when to this is added the fact of teleplasticity, denoting the same phenomenon of ideoplasticity taking place at a distance from the dematerialised organism, the ground of ascertained facts with regard to materialisation he holds is fully covered.

Baron von Schrenck-Notzing, whom I have known longer than almost any of the other eminent psychical researchers, was one of the few who did not accuse me of inventing excuses for fraudulent mediums, when I brought forward this fact of ideoplasticity as an explanation of what seemed fraud on the part of a medium. I had discovered independently this fact of ideoplasticity (calling it the image-forming faculty) as possessed by myself and other sensitives when dealing with certain phases of ectoplasmic phenomena, especially that of psychic photography.

In his foreword to Mme. Bisson’s work on materialisations published in the same year as his own volume, Baron von Schrenck-Notzing singles out this ideoplasticity as the most mysterious of all the enigmas associated with the marvellous living substance known as ectoplasm.

II

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH REGARD TO ECTOPLASM

Emotion—sympathy—releases, if it does not actually generate, ectoplasm. The first time I ever saw ectoplasmic vapour was when I was sitting by the fireside, in intimate conversation with an elderly governess who was deeply attached to me. A white mist slowly stole up between us heavy and thick against her dark clothing. I at first thought she had set herself on fire, but it was not so, and the “smoke” continued to curl up between us until she broke “conditions” by leaving her chair. In other words, the ectoplasm, out of which a form might have appeared, was dispersed.

Years later, at a materialising séance, the phenomena had died away when two ill-formed female materialisations shot up in front of me in violent dispute.

“I knew her mother before she was born. I am Tempy. You go away.”

“I was Miss Scatcherd’s maid. I am Louisa of Ebenezer Chapel. I want some of the chocolate she has in her pocket.”

Our laughter greatly shocked a French visitor. Then the cultured deep voice of a spirit who called himself Charles Darwin, and frequently stood behind my chair,

with his hand on my shoulder during the whole time of the séance, was heard by all present:

“Tell her that we allowed those humble spirits to manifest because you were all too solemn and tense. Tell her that laughter releases the etheric force at the nerve centres and gives us the material wherewith we can manifest.”

Countess P.W., the visitor in question, understood English imperfectly. “Temy” was the name of a confidential maid with whom my mother had parted before her marriage. I remembered a nurse, Louisa, and used to think her name rhymed with that of her chapel, which I preferred to our church. Also I had chocolate in my pocket, for the only time I believe during that series of séances.

I saw ectoplasm in solid form for the first time when looking for rooms in the neighbourhood of Russell Square. My friend, many years older than myself, was tired. She wore a black velvet cloak and was sitting on a high chair so that her mantle hung in long folds to the ground, while the light from the large windows fell full on her face. Suddenly I observed, on her left side, just above the waist, a patch of cloudy white substance, becoming bigger and denser as I watched its uncanny growth. Meanwhile I was discussing terms with the landlady, a frail little woman, when a look of terror came into her eyes. She, too, was staring transfixed at the globular mass of white substance on my companion’s black mantle. For out of it looked a living face, normal in size—a man’s face with rolling eyes and a leering grin that made one’s blood run cold. When I mentally ordered him away he grinned defiance. Fearing to startle my friend, I took the landlady aside and asked what was the matter. She burst into tears.

“Oh, miss! did you not see him? He was my first. He’s come like this several times, and has never forgiven me for marrying again.”

“What do you mean?” I asked again, very severely.

“Oh!” she wailed. “You must have seen his wicked face glaring at us from your friend’s cloak, and now you will not take the rooms!”

I saw ectoplasm in the form so much discussed today for the third time on the occasion of a hurried summons to Paris in December, 1906, when, through the kindness of Mme. X, I spent some time as her fellow-guest with the celebrated medium, Eva C., then known as Mlle. Marthe B. At the circle experimenting with Marthe the phenomena were fitful. The medium’s control reiterated one sentence, “Il nous faut la dame qui rit.” (“We must have the laughing lady.”) No one could guess what was meant. One day the control lost patience. (“Bêtes que vous-êtes!”) “Foolish ones that you are! You call her Felizia; we call her the laughing lady.”

“There is a member of the Society for Psychical Research in London, a Miss Scatcherd, whose name is Felicia,” said one of the circle.

“That is the person we need,” replied the control, so I was telegraphed for, and was given the above statement as to the reason why.

One afternoon we had sat three hours without results. The sitters had left. After supper, Marthe insisted on giving me a séance for myself. I objected, but the hostess said she must not be opposed. Marthe was soon in a state of deep cataleptic trance, her head thrown backwards so that, even if normal she could have seen nothing in front of her. The curtains of the cabinet—merely a corner of the room—were not closed, and the light was only slightly lowered. Madame X, her daughter and myself, sat in front of the cabinet, talking in low tones. Suddenly I saw a large mass of luminous substance, about 18 inches away from the medium's chair, on the floor to her left. *I thought:*

“How was that managed? Is it attached to her in any way?”

“There is no attachment” (“Il n’y a pas de lien”) said the control. “You may pass between us.” Which I did, completely encircling the medium.

I imagined my sight must be deceiving me as to the whiteness, but a new lace handkerchief looked grey when held beside the ectoplasm.

I was in a position to be able to touch the ectoplasm unperceived by the others or the medium. When I approached my hand within a few inches of the substance, the medium's body was contorted with spasms and the control cried out:

“Do not touch me. That is my very life” (“Ne me touchez-pas. C’est mon vie moi.”)

Conscience-stricken, I apologised. Later on I was permitted to touch the ectoplasm, to test it in other ways and even to weigh it.

My observations, then recorded, are confirmed in very particular by the experiments of later investigators of the same medium. The air in the neighbourhood of the ectoplasm was slightly colder than that of the rest of the room, and its resistance varied. On that occasion it felt like passing one's hand through the beaten white of an egg, and its weight was very slight in proportion to its volume.

“How I should like to weigh it,” I said to the hostess one evening. “But that is impossible as we cannot touch it without hurting the medium.”

With an amused smile Mme. X sent her daughter to fetch the scales from the kitchen. Meanwhile the uncanny substance was squirming and changing form in a reptilian sort of fashion. I felt it understood what was going on. But I had the shock of my life when it wriggled itself off the ground, and like a huge slug, stood on end and mounted into the tray of the scales, which rested on a stand about ten inches from the floor. There it remained until we had recorded its weight. It then wriggled and squirmed backwards from the scales on to the ground, reassumed its former shapelessness, and while we were watching *it was gone*. It did not melt. It disappeared.

It is difficult to credit such things, but others have recorded similar phenomena. We must remember, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle²² tells us, that ectoplasm

“is a new order of matter, and it is clearly derived from the subject herself, absorbing into her system once more at the end of the experiment . . . it is soft and glutinous to the touch, but varies in form and even in colour. Its production causes pains and groans from the subject, and any violence towards it would appear also to affect her. . . . The most marked property of this ectoplasm . . . is that it sets or curdles into the shapes of human members—of fingers, of hands, of faces . . . which develop until they are indistinguishable from those of living beings.”

III

ECTOPLASM AS USED TO DEMONSTRATE SURVIVAL.

It was in the late Sir William Crookes's little dark room, at 7, Kensington Park Gardens, that I finally verified certain surmises as to the use made of ectoplasm as a means of demonstrating survival.

No reference has been made to these latest experiments by Mr. Fournier d'Albe, in his “Life of Sir William Crookes,” except on one page and that reference is couched in vague and misleading terms.²³

There were present Mrs. Z, the medium, Sir William and myself. Sir William having injured his leg by a fall, was in need of skilled attention. Otherwise his health was perfect. The nurse objected to his psychic activities, and together with others like-minded, made things difficult.

Once Sir William had arranged himself in his long chair, in the dark room, there was just space for two other persons to be seated, and no room for moving about without detection. One afternoon, after the lights were out and the phenomena had started, some one opened the door. A shaft of light fell full on the medium, who gave a gasp of agony, while I called out: “Shut the door. You are spoiling our experiment.”

But the door was not properly re-closed. By means of the crack of light I saw a bulky mass pass between Sir William and myself, partially obscuring the light, in places shutting it out completely. For a moment I thought the medium had left her chair, and stretching out my left hand, struck the knee of the entranced sensitive rigid in her place. At the same time a voice said:

“You have hurt my medium. You have been told you should never touch her when we are working. She was already suffering on account of the light. No, do not close the séance. We will shield her from the light, and will do our best to carry on.”

²²—Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. *The Vital Message*. (Scatcherd reference)

²³—*Life of Sir William Crookes*. p. 405. (Scatcherd reference)

Sir William was literally enveloped in the ectoplasmic mist which was apparently weightless, as he felt nothing, though it seemed to be resting on his injured leg. But the substance was so arranged as to cut off the light where it struck the medium, while leaving enough for me to see, to some extent, what was occurring.

Meanwhile a lively conversation was in progress between Sir William and the spirit of his late wife, who seemed to be most dexterous in managing the ectoplasmic column and manipulating it according to the slightest expressed wish of the sitters.

I did not see the formation of the hand that caressed her husband's forehead and greeted myself with a touch, but I heard Lady Crookes say, in answer to Sir William's regret that he could not see her (he had his back to the door), "I am here beside you, Willie dear. Listen while I carry the musical box round the room."

But I did perceive the upper end of the ectoplasmic column form itself into a rough gripping apparatus and heard it groping for the musical box at our feet.

By means of the bar of light I saw the musical box as it was whirled past the door and round and round Sir William's head.

The box had been purchased for the purpose, a day or two earlier, at Gamage's, and was wound up and stopped at our request, or at that of the unseen intelligences in a way impossible to ourselves, on account of the nature of its mechanism. It was passed gently up and down his injured leg and most of the time two or more voices were speaking with Sir William and myself. But I concentrated on observing as far as possible the behaviour of the ectoplasm, and did not make my usual record of the conversations.

I had known Lady Crookes during her lifetime, and was now witness of her attempts to make use of ectoplasm as a means of demonstrating her survival, by actions and effects that needed only the register of the normal five senses for their perception.

The medium was ill for some time as a result of the shock caused by the sudden letting in of the light. Also where I had placed my hand on her knee in order to ascertain whether she had left her chair, was a huge dark bruise which only gradually disappeared during the next few days, and was at first painful to the touch.

Nine months of concentrated study has taught Mr. Dennis Bradley what many investigators of fifty years' standing still ignore:—

"It is a scientifically established fact that ectoplasm comes from a medium's body, and that the effect of light, on some mediums, is to cram this ectoplasm back into the body with a terrific shock."²⁴

²⁴.-H. Dennis Bradley. *Towards the Stars*, page 168. (Scatcherd reference)



Ectoplasm was at first understood to indicate the substance exuding from a medium in visible form, perceptible to all the sitters and capable of being photographed. It is now applied to any mode of mediumistic emanation which renders possible the various forms of physical phenomena (including psychic photography)²⁵ from simple raps to partial or complete materialisations, the latter in every way resembling a normal human being.

Prof. Chas. Richet, when describing the Bien Boa materialisation,²⁶ stated that it possessed all the attributes of life, walking, speaking and breathing, just like a human creature—having a body that manifested both resistance and muscular strength.

During the series of materialising séances before referred to, it was interesting to follow the progress of the intelligences in the art of materialisation. In one of his first attempts my special friend, claiming to be Charles Darwin, fell to pieces in front of me. I was covered with an unpleasant cobweb like substance, and was upset for several days as a result of the shock. One of his latest feats was a demonstration of the muscular strength referred to by Prof. Richet. I had refused to obey his orders to leave the circle, when he lifted me from my chair and deposited me on the couch at the other side of the room.

So perfect often were these full-form materialisations such as Crookes's Katie King and Richet's Bien Boa, that, as Prof. Richet himself has pointed out, the choice lies between two hypotheses, and two only: that of a phantom possessing all the attributes of life, or of a living person simulating a phantom.²⁷

The average outsider usually adopts the second hypothesis.

Commenting further on the subject, Prof. Richet said that as a physiologist he could not make up his mind to admit the fact of materialisation. He would only assert that it was a profound mystery that must change our ideas of nature and of life from top to bottom. This was written in 1906. I met him in the early part of December of that year when we discussed the question of survival. I wonder whether he remembers saying:

²⁵—Photograph left to right: Barbara McKenzie – Stanley De Brath – Felicia Scatcherd. Taken at the British College of Psychic Science (see footnote 9) experimenting in psychic photography in July 1924.

²⁶—*Annals of Psychic Science*, April 1906. (Scatcherd reference)

²⁷—*Annals of Psychic Science*, 1906. (Scatcherd reference)

“Oh, mademoiselle! I sometimes almost wish I could do violence to my conscience as a physiologist and accept the hypothesis of human survival. You ask me why I feel like that? Because I might then entertain the hope, even if it were only for once, of shaking hands with Socrates.”

Prof. Richet has now admitted the facts of materialisation, though he still rejects the only adequate, explanatory hypothesis, that of survival.

Madame Bisson met Eva C. in 1910 and her observations were published in 1914, as were those of her fellow-observer, von Schrenck-Notzing. Their careful records confirm and illustrate, in every essential detail my own sporadic experiences of 1906, and onwards. Until these studies were published, my statements were received with amused contempt or crude denunciations, and I utterly failed to interest any member of the S.P.R. except Sir W. Crookes, who had his time fully taken up with other matters.

Dr. Geley's conference at the College de France, on “So-called Supernormal Physiology”²⁸ further elucidated and confirmed the observations of Bisson and von Schrenck, whose names, together with those of Richet and Geley, will for ever be associated with those discoveries which are making possible a new biology and a new physiology.

Ectoplasm as such does not demonstrate survival. But when, with more than the rapidity of thought, it builds up and breaks down, or dematerialises *at the word of command*, producing by means of materialised hands and feet, seamless wax gloves, from which no living hand or foot could be withdrawn without damaging the glove, it demonstrates intelligence other than that of the experimenters.

When it reproduces by the agency of a temporary materialisation, or of a supernormal photograph, a death-wound, unknown to any of those present, but afterwards verified, survival as associated with ectoplasm is as clearly proved as any fact can be in this wonderful but relatively imperfect world, for here we have an instance of memory. Memory pre-supposes mind: both imply thought and all three demand conscious life, or rather self-conscious existence, as an essential pre-requisite for any similar manifestations whatsoever.

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²⁸—Gustav Geley. *La Physiologie dite Supernormale*. *Bulletin de l'Institut Psychologique*, 1918 (January, June). (Scatcherd reference)

BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

If you have any problems locating a copy we can contact the author

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Helen Duncan the Mystery Show Trial, by Robert Hartley published by H Pr (Publishing), London 2007. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9553420-8-0. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 244-247:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

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Mrs Miller's Gift' – a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library, by Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1-4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

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Immortal Longings – FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death, by Trevor Hamilton published by Imprint Academic in Exeter, U.K (also VA, U.S.A) 2009. ISBN: 9-781845- 401238 H.B, 9-781845-402488 PB, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 157-148:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

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