

PSYPIONEER

Founded by Leslie Price

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NEW LIGHT ON THE FINAL DAYS OF SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

The last psychic engagement of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was to press for a change in the law on mediumship. An item on the defunct Psypioneer web site recalled this:

SIR ARTHUR'S LAST BOW.

On 1 July 1930, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was part of a deputation who met the British Home Secretary to call for a change in the law on mediumship, and on 7 July he died.

In his new biography "Teller of Tales" (Allen Lane, Penguin Press in UK) Daniel Stashower notes

"For some months he had been lobbying against an ancient piece of legislation called the Witchcraft Act, dating to the reign of James I, which had been revived as a means of prosecuting mediums." (p.438)

Readers may like to compare this account with those in the many other biographies of Doyle. It is by no means easy to avoid errors in discussing the law on mediumship, and we do not expect to be immune.

*If we turn to one of the contemporary accounts in Spiritualist newspapers, such as "LIGHT" August 2 1930, we find from a letter of Fielding-Ould (vice-president, LSA) that the Spiritualists were seeking a change in both the **Vagrancy Act 1824 and the Witchcraft Act 1736**. Clauses in both made the legal status of mediumship, astrology and fortunetelling doubtful.*

The Witchcraft Act was progressive legislation in the reign of George II (not James I) - it put a formal end to the witch persecutions in England, but retained provisions against people who pretended to be able to conjure spirits. Both Acts predated Modern Spiritualism (1848) and had not been intended to be used against it.

Was any medium, as distinct from astrologer or fortuneteller, prosecuted under the Witchcraft Act in Sir Arthur's lifetime? We are seeking names. Mediums were prosecuted under other legislation, such as the Vagrancy Act as rogues and vagabonds.

We suggest that Helen Duncan was the first medium to be prosecuted under the Witchcraft Act, in 1944, and that this was followed by a spate of similar police action when they realised that they could use the Act to get convictions. The matter is discussed in Maurice Barbanell "The Case of Helen Duncan" and G.K. Nelson "Spiritualism and Society".

Finally, a point about Sir Arthur and the LSA, of which he was president. Sir Arthur spoke at the Deputation, but the LSA was not officially represented. As Fielding-Ould explained, while they wanted the law changed, they were not happy about the particular legal arguments used by another Spiritualist body, the SNU.

We hope to reprint the full evidence presented by the deputation, but at present would call attention to the past paragraph. Unusually, it referred to a difference of opinion between the LSA and its own president. How serious was this?

Here is the full text of the Fielding-Ould letter.

THE DEPUTATION TO THE HOME SECRETARY

Editor of "LIGHT."

Sir,

Recently the Home Secretary received a Deputation anxious to put before him the legal disabilities which at present hamper the whole spiritualist movement, especially in the matter of police prosecution of Mediums.

On this Deputation the London Spiritualist Alliance was not officially represented, although the President of the Alliance attended and made an important speech. Some surprise has been expressed that the L.S.A. did not send an official Representative. Will you kindly allow me to explain how this happened? The attitude of the Alliance was definite and must not be misinterpreted.

When the project of a Deputation was first mooted by the S.N.U. the General Secretary circularised Spiritualist Societies in regard to possible amendment of the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts, and further drew attention to the disabilities suffered by those Societies in the matter of legacies. So far the L.S.A. was in full agreement with the objects proposed but was not prepared to quote the Cantlon Case in support, nor did the Council consider it correct to quote the Hummeltenburg Case as an argument. In both cases the L.S.A. was primarily interested and may be presumed to be fully seized of the facts. The Council therefore decided not to be officially represented on the Deputation so long as the matter to be placed before the Home Secretary was mainly based on these two Cases.

The L.S.A. was not, however, content with a merely negative attitude but at once proceeded, with the able assistance of Sir Ernest Bennett and Sir Oliver Lodge, to try and draft an amendment to the Witchcraft Act which could be brought forward in the House of Commons as a short Bill with reasonable hope of success. After much weary work the Council succeeded in hammering out a formula which was acceptable to the S.N.U.

All now seemed plain sailing. Nothing, however, was heard of the proposed Deputation for nearly nine months when the General Secretary of the S.N.U. wrote saying that they still intended to use the two Cases mentioned supra as a basis of argument but made no reference to the agreed amendment. Under these circumstances the L.S.A. considered itself justified in concluding that the S.N.U. had reverted to its original position and, therefore, as was perfectly well known would be the case in view of correspondence which had passed, the L.S.A. found itself unable to co-operate and was consequently not officially represented.

Since the Deputation was received by the Home Secretary it has become known that there had been apparently some misunderstanding, and this fact is patent that it was solely owing to want of adequate information as to the intentions of the S.N.U. who organised the Deputation, that the L.S.A. Delegate did not accompany the President to the Home Office.

So far from being wanting in enthusiasm in the matter of our legal disabilities, as has been suggested, the L.S.A. has for many years advocated, in season and out of season, the very policy which others have now tried to urge upon the Home Secretary.

R. FIELDING-OULD,

*Vice-President, London Spiritualist Alliance.
July 25th, 1930.*

Recently in consulting an old Psychic News reference to the Seven Principles, one of us (LP) was surprised to read on the same page by Maurice Barbanell the editor.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1932. Psychic News, page 6.

ALL WORLDS ARE ONE

A Bit Of Secret History

Spiritualists have long wondered about the exact position taken up in regard to our case by the London Spiritualist Alliance. Unknown to all but a few people, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle resigned his presidency of the L.S.A. a few days before his death, because they would not join his deputation to the Home Office.

He and the movement were appealing on religious grounds. The L.S.A. wanted the scientific side stressed. They withdrew without informing their president. He resigned. But this did not stop the L.S.A. from sending to his funeral a wreath with a large inscription, "To Our Beloved President."

Now Paul Gaunt in studying Psychic News for 1934 has found more information about this. When Arthur Findlay, financial backer of PN, resigned as LSA president in a 1934 religious row, PN took the opportunity on December 15 1934 to recall some recent episodes, including the 1930 deputation, and to print extracts from a hard hitting letter by Lady Doyle.

FINDLAY RESIGNS FROM THE L.S.A.

STORY OF INTRIGUE BEHIND THE SCENES

By ***THE EDITOR***

ARTHUR FINDLAY has resigned his presidency of the council of the London Spiritualist Alliance, and his chairmanship of the company that owns "Light."

In an interview I had with him, he gave the reason.

"My resignation has been caused by the action of a minority of the council inducing the secretary to call an irregular council meeting," he said, "for the purpose of publicly announcing, in 'Light' this week, that the Alliance disassociated itself from certain opinions on theology expressed in a lecture I delivered to members of the L.S.A. on November 29."

In this lecture, he attacked the myths and creeds that have grown up around Christianity - and said that Spiritualism would become the world religion.

"As the members of the council, who met in the irregular way they did, knew at their meeting that I had telephoned to say I had posted my resignation," added Findlay, "this announcement, if published, will doubtless have been toned down, if it appears at all."

Findlay told me that this council meeting was called at less than eight hours notice. He actually received his notice on the morning of the meeting itself.

This was contrary both to the articles of association of the Alliance and the Companies Act.

These articles of association, he said, do not specify that its president must be an orthodox Christian. Neither do they say that if he is asked by the council to give an address on Spiritualism as a religion, he must not criticise the creeds of the Christian Church.

"As the Alliance is a limited company, and can have no religious opinions of its own," said Findlay, "it is absurd to call a council meeting to draw up a resolution disassociating the Alliance from the opinions expressed by its president.

"The Alliance is a body of people with all shades of religious opinion. They sign no creed on joining. For a small clique to convene a council meeting to be held within

eight hours of the members receiving notice, without having consulted the president of their intentions, is not only grossly irregular, but savours of the worst possible form of intrigue."

The address which Findlay gave is similar to one he has given at the Queen's Hall and up and down the country! It is called, "Why Spiritualism Must Become the only World Religion." It was published in "Light" last week, starting on the front page - and commented on favourably in a leading article in the same issue! The action of the council is an attack on the right of free speech by its own president.

The editor of "Light" was present at the meeting. No word of criticism was heard until this council met.

I am told that Findlay's speech incited the wrath of the more "respectable" members of the council, who wish the Alliance to be run as an orthodox Christian body, and do not desire to see "Light" expressing views contrary to the creeds and dogmas of Christianity.

"This intolerance must react most unfavourably on the Alliance, the Quest Club and 'Light,' said Findlay, "as it is quite contrary to everything that Spiritualism stands for."

L.S.A. now means, apparently, "Leave Spiritualism Alone."

Findlay's resignation will be especially unfortunate for the L.S.A. just now. Under his guidance, both the Alliance and "Light" were regaining their old position in the Spiritualist movement, which they lost owing to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's resignation.

After Doyle resigned, their membership fell from about a thousand to approximately five hundred!

Since Findlay became president, last spring, the steady decrease has been stopped. Members have been joining the Alliance and the Quest Club, an activity which Findlay conceived and brought into being, at the rate of forty to fifty a month. At this rate, the old membership would have been re-established some time next year.

When he became chairman of "Light," which had been appealing for money for years, Findlay said it was losing £1,000 a year. He stopped the wastage that was going on, and the over-staffing, and obtained new quotations from printers, with the result that, for the first time in fifty years, "Light" made a profit - last week!

Only a few days ago, Findlay said to the secretary of the L.S.A., "Now we have managed to put 'Light' on its feet, I hope, within a year, to have the Alliance showing a surplus, instead of its present loss of £700 a year."

What was it in Findlay's speech to which these very "respectable" members took exception? Here is a summary of some of the things he said in his address:

"It is just because of the evidence Spiritualism gives that we are at the beginning of our career, that the knowledge of survival is of vital importance to religion.

"This being so, we begin to realise that, what today stands for religion in the minds of most people, is not religion at all - that creeds, dogmas and ceremonials are only crutches to help the mentally undeveloped along the road of life, and that as the mind develops these are discarded.

"I consider it is our duty as Spiritualists to teach humanity that it is not creeds and dogmas that matter, but the life we lead. Humanity is still wedded to the drapings, and thus ignores the central truth which these have hidden.

"The vast majority think that the truth is contained in creeds and dogmas, whereas these symbols hide the truth.

"The light, however, is now breaking through, and Protestant countries are leading the world into the New Knowledge. In time how long, no one can say - religion will not consist of drapings, myths and legends which are behind the creeds and dogmas; but instead, it will stand for something real and true - for something that really matters, and not for something that does not matter.

"So I foresee that, some day, mankind will worship in one cathedral, whose dome is the firmament, and whose true and only priests are the interpreters of Nature."

"MANIFEST ADVANTAGE"

When, in May, "Light" announced Findlay's acceptance of the presidency of the L.S.A., it said, "Readers are so well acquainted with Mr. Findlay's work and position in the Movement, that nothing further need be said as to the manifest advantage of his generous acceptance of their responsibilities."

Yet, already Findlay had delivered his lecture over a score of times!

It is strange, considering the origin of the L.S.A., that its council should take exception to a speech which prophesied that Spiritualism would become the only world religion. The Alliance was started by the Rev. Stainton Moses, who, in his book, "Spirit Teachings," put on record how, through his own automatic writing, he was forced, step by step, to abandon his orthodox Christianity and accept the religious implications of Spiritualism.

This book is the copyright of the L.S.A.! They still sell it! If they had published it at a cheaper price, instead of 6s., they could have sold thousands of copies, for the book is really Spiritualism's Bible.

Stainton Moses was forced to accept Spiritualism as a religion. The organisation which he founded is now too timid to follow his lead!

The London Spiritualist Alliance has always done strange things. In 1930, it was prosecuted under the Vagrancy Act, because three disguised policewomen had a sitting with Mrs. Claire Cantlon on its premises.

In the middle of the case, they foolishly accepted the advice of their counsel, who told them to drop the medium and to defend themselves without her. The result was that the unfortunate Mrs. Cantlon was given only three days in order to arrange for her defence! As she is a trance medium, and did not know what transpired when these policewomen sat with her, she had a difficult task.

After the proceedings were instituted, the Alliance appealed for a fund to conduct the defence. When they announced that they were dropping the medium, resentment was felt in the Movement. Hannen Swaffer, who had promised to contribute £25, withheld his donation. The Spiritualists' National Union, which was arranging to collect money from its members for the same purpose, also decided to withdraw its help. Spiritualism had been let down!

But the L.S.A., "respectable," was safe.

In protest, several prominent members of the Alliance discontinued their membership.

Then, when a deputation was being arranged to the Home Secretary, J. R. Clynes, in 1930, to seek relief from the disabilities under which Spiritualists suffer, the Alliance, at the last moment, refused to join the deputation.

THE CHANGED CASE

In order to accommodate their point of view, the deputation's case, which was framed on religious grounds, had been altered to stress the scientific side of our subject. Although the last meeting of the deputation was held at the L.S.A.'s headquarters at Queensberry Place on the day before the visit to the Home Secretary, the Alliance withdrew, without even notifying their president, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle! As a result, he resigned.

A few days later, Sir Arthur passed on. He had risen from a sick-bed in order to lead the deputation. Although he had resigned, this did not stop the L.S.A. from sending to his funeral a wreath with a large inscription, "To our beloved president."

The L.S.A.'s withdrawal from the deputation caused a great stir.

Dr. Fielding Ould, who succeeded Doyle as president, tried to justify its attitude. There was a long correspondence in "Light." Lady Doyle sent a letter, but it was not printed.

This is what she said of the L.S.A.'s attitude:

"It does not seem to me in any way to excuse their action in not doing their part in the matter. The S.N.U., I believe, actually held a meeting at 16, Queensberry Place the day before going to see Mr. Clynes, so that the L.S.A. could and should have known fully the line of action proposed and should have co-operated with them.

"Surely, when so much was at stake, any little petty feelings regarding the formula to be followed should have been put aside. The very fact that the L.S.A. had suffered

so badly from a financial point of view alone over the Cantlon case was all the more reason for them to do all in their power to get the laws altered.

"It is a mystery why they should have objected to the case being quoted. Surely it was a trump card to play, and not to hide. Where would the L.S.A. be without mediums! Their whole existence depends on them.

"Personally I feel very strongly, as do many others, about the weak attitude of the L.S.A. in their omission to do their share in trying to get the laws altered as regards mediums. Also in their not doing the obvious thing - informing their president, my husband, of the reasons for their failure.

"It was the last hurt that his noble soul suffered in this world through the action of fellow humans - humans, too, belonging to a society which he had always done his best to help.

"In his stricken state, he insisted upon heading the deputation, for which he had worked so long, and which he was indeed instrumental in bringing off, and the strain and effort undoubtedly shortened his days.

"The want of action displayed on that occasion is on a par with the whole unprogressive policy of the L.S.A. It is a very great pity that an organisation which could be such a living force in the Movement should be so inert and ineffectual. Unless they realise their deficiencies, they will soon be in as moribund a condition as the S.P.R."

Now, in Spiritualism's latest controversy, the Alliance is bound to emerge with its prestige harmed and its membership weakened.

Arthur Findlay is a man who is respected by the whole Spiritualist movement for the honesty of his views. While you may not agree with all his opinions, no one can question his honesty or his abilities and character.

His views have been known to Spiritualists for years. They were known to the London Spiritualist Alliance when they asked him to become their president!

Why, then, all this fear now?

This criticism by Maurice Barbanell is, so far as I am aware, the most severe article ever published about the LSA in its history. Even after 75 years, it carries a sting. There is no doubt another side to the story, to which we hope to return. We hope also to recall the cases cited, relevant in the history of the law on mediumship, on another occasion. The resignation of Arthur Findlay is also significant. Our concern here is the resignation of Sir Arthur as LSA president, which has not previously been appreciated. Moreover, for the LSA to be criticised by his widow was an astonishing event.

The Fielding-Ould letter reprinted above still refers to ACD as the LSA president, and LIGHT gives no indication that he ceased to be president before his death. That death

was briefly noted in the July 12 1930 issue, as was the visit of the Deputation to the Home Office, and ACD was deleted as president in the regular LSA advertisement of events. It was reported in September that Robert Fielding-Ould had succeeded ACD as president.

So far as the 1934 resignation of Findlay is concerned, this was but briefly mentioned in LIGHT .There was no response to the PN reopening of the circumstances of the ACD resignation. The election of a new LSA president, Miss Lind-af-Hageby was reported on February 7 1935.

It would appear that LIGHT was economical with the truth in its account of the last days of ACD as their president. His resignation as LSA president also changes our perspective on ACD's resignation as a member of the SPR in January 1930, which was reported in JSPR March 1930. There were two significant resignations at the end of his life

LP & PJG...

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Notes by the way

DR LLOYD-JONES AND CFPS

When the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical Study was formed in 1953-4, it received a cautious welcome from liberal Christians interested in psychical research, such as Leslie Weatherhead, then the leading Wesleyan Methodist preacher in London, though occupying a Congregationalist pulpit at City Temple. But Evangelicals were opposed, including Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones, originally a Calvinistic Methodist preacher who was at another Congregationalist centre, Westminster Chapel.

Although there are occasional tilts at the psychological approach of Weatherhead in the sermons of Lloyd-Jones, who had been called to the ministry away from a promising medical career, perhaps his most important criticism of CFPS was in four sermons of late 1960. These were published in collected form in "Not against flesh and blood - the battle against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Bryntirion Press, 2001). The New Testament reference is to Ephesians 6.

Under the heading "Voluntary submission to evil powers", Dr Lloyd-Jones says "*Now this refers to a subject that is normally called spiritualism, but should be called spiritism.*" (p34.) Why this name is preferable is not explained, but such a distinction is common in evangelical sources, and may reflect the belief that "spiritual" as a prefix implies godliness or moral elevation, or a wish to emphasise that contacting spirits is involved, as distinct from merely philosophical speculations which contrast with materialism.

However the biblical expression "spiritual wickedness" shows that the adjective just means "having to do with spirits." (Note; The distinction commonly drawn by scholars is between Spiritism, the mediumship-based system founded by Kardec and

popular in Latin countries, and Spiritualism, the mediumship-based movement found chiefly in Anglo-Saxon countries.)

In speaking of the appeal of spiritism, Lloyd-Jones affirms.

” It is my duty to put these things before you, because within the Christian Church there is a society that supports spiritism. The secretary, an ordained clergyman in the Anglican Church, has written a book in which he does not hesitate to say that a belief in psychic phenomena is essential if one really wants to understand and believe in the Bible. He writes that as a theological student he was trained to dismiss most of the Bible, especially everything to do with the supernatural. He was a typical liberal modernist in his theology. But since becoming a spiritist, or, as he would say, a spiritualist, he has come to understand the Bible in a way that he never could before.”(p36-7)

There is more about this book which is evidently “The Bible as Psychic History” (1959) by Maurice Elliott. Moreover:

“Some spiritists even claim to heal diseases. One spiritist says that he is controlled, if I remember rightly, by the departed spirit of the great Louis Pasteur...” This is clearly a reference to Harry Edwards (1893-1976) whose challenges to the Church and to the medical profession were a feature of the 1950s. Lloyd-Jones refers by name (p.36) to three noted persons as firm adherents to Spiritualism - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir William Crookes (sic.). But of these, ACD tried to get National Spiritualists to accept the leadership of Jesus Christ had Christian tendencies, Lodge was a liberal Anglican who avoided religious Spiritualism, and Crookes was an Anglican churchwarden who left Spiritualism after an intense enquiry in 1875.

Lloyd-Jones accepts the reality of some psychic phenomena, and speaks respectfully of the Society for Psychical Research. *“In spite of the most careful scientific investigations undertaken by people who are not spiritists, the Society has had to admit that it has been left with certain phenomena that cannot be explained.”*

Some SPR investigators have thought that mediumship did involve people who had died, but Lloyd-Jones does not accept this possibility.

“People think they are talking to their own departed dead, but they are not. According to the Bible, they are communicating with evil spirits that are impersonating their loved ones.” (p.51)

Actually there is no general and explicit statement of this impersonation in the Bible.

“You will often find that the people who dabble in it, especially mediums, are immoral and loose in their living. Moreover they often collapse and have mental breakdowns and various other problems. I repeat that they are not in touch with the spirits of the departed dead, but with evil spirits impersonating the dead.”

This sweeping comment on mediums (how often is often?) is not made entirely without knowledge because, he says of mediums, *“I have known some of them, one in particular, who became a Christian.”* (p.54)

These mediums are, he suggests, in a grave situation:

“as we have seen, there is a new interest in spiritism in this country, and spiritism is even entering the Church. This adds urgency to our study of demon possession, because it is quite clear to me that many of the so-called mediums become devil-possessed” (p.65)

This is a very serious charge – even today there are parts of the world where those thought to be connected with devils are murdered. The charge may be partly a matter of logic.

- a) trance mediums have controls and communicators
- b) all spirit communications are with evil spirits
- c) therefore mediums are possessed by evil spirits or devils when they are in trance.

Non-survivalist SPR researchers tend to prefer a psychological explanation, involving dissociation and hysteria, though some will also acknowledge the possibility of a demonic element. Barrett combined belief in survival with acceptance of the participation of non-human spirits in seance room phenomena.

Lloyd-Jones may also be drawing from his personal experience counselling mediums - there was a major Spiritualist centre within a mile of his London chapel. (However other references indicate that the medium he knew well, who became a Christian, was in South Wales earlier in his ministry) But in the absence of detail, his charges appear wild. The low earnings of most mediums in the 1950s would not have supported much loose living, while the moral outlook in organised Spiritualism was generally similar to that of the community in general.

In asserting that mediums are not in touch with the dead, Lloyd-Jones is obliged to acknowledge the medium of En Dor, through whom, as we read in Scripture, the prophet Samuel returned. He takes the view, not that Samuel was not there, but that he returned through the power of God, and not that of the medium.

“God gave this appearance of Samuel in order to condemn a practice he had already condemned through Saul himself.” (p.53 - King Saul had previously put mediums out of the land). And the post-mortem Samuel indeed has harsh words: *“And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?”* (1 Samuel 28.15). But the natural way in which the incident is related, and the noticeably sympathetic treatment of the medium in the text mean we must be careful not to read into the biblical account what is not there. (For a recent discussion of attitudes to the medium of En Dor, see

<http://www.survivalafterdeath.org/articles/leslieprice/saul.htm>)

Lloyd-Jones also rejects the survivalist view of after-death states.

“ Spiritists will tell you that the future realm is very much like this one; men and women still go on doing very much the same things, drinking their whiskies, smoking, playing cards. “(p.51)

There are no prizes for recognising here an allusion to “Raymond” (1916) by Sir Oliver Lodge, which appears in numerous critiques of Spiritualism. Through the medium Mrs Leonard in particular, came a series of messages ostensibly from the recently killed soldier son of Lodge. One is not always sure the book has been read by the critic. It is not usually appreciated that the communication was not endorsing the desirability of whisky and cigars, but was just reporting that some dead people still acted as if they were desirable. To quote “Raymond” (3rd edition, Nov. 1916 “, p197-8.)

“A chap came over the other day; who would have a cigar.” That's finished them,” he thought. He means he thought they would never be able to provide that. But there are laboratories over here, and they manufacture all sorts of things in them. Not like you do, out of solid matter, but out of essences, and ethers, and gases. It's not the same as on the earth plane, but they were able to manufacture what looked like a cigar. He didn't try one himself, because he didn't care to; you know he wouldn't want to. But the other chap jumped at it. But when he began to smoke it, he didn't think so much of it; he had four altogether, and now he doesn't look at one. (1) They don't seem to get the same satisfaction out of it, so gradually it seems to drop from them. But when they first come they do want things.

Some want meat, and some strong drink; they call for whisky sodas. Don't think I'm stretching it, when I tell you that they can manufacture even that. But when they have had one or two, they don't seem to want it so much - not those that are near here. He has heard of drunkards who want it for months and years over here, but he hasn't seen any. Those I have seen, he says, don't want it any more like himself with his suit, he could dispense with it under the new conditions. “

This material is passed on via Feda, the control of the medium and Sir Oliver comments in the footnote. (1) “Some of this Feda talk is at least humorous.”

In these sermons, Dr Lloyd-Jones clearly shows the incompatibility of Spiritualism with the Christian faith, and in my view makes many good points. But he does not show, say, the familiarity with psychical research that Canon J. Stafford Wright demonstrated. In contrast to detailed biblical references, he is often content with less precise allusions to psychic matters. Given the gravity of his charges, this is unfortunate. If the sermons had been revised like sermons collected and published in his lifetime, this deficiency might have been corrected. LP.

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THE YUCATAN BROTHERHOOD

It was widely believed a century ago among Theosophists that Spiritualism began as a human scheme by occultists. Some evidence on this has been discussed by Joscelyn Godwin in "The Hidden Hand." Part I: "The Provocation of the Hydesville Phenomena." Theosophical History III/2 (1990): 35-43. Part II: "The Brotherhood of Light." TH III/3 (1990): 66-76. Part III: "The Parting of East and West." TH III/4 (1990): 107-117. Part IV: "The Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor." TH III/5 (1991): 137-148.

Perhaps the most eloquent statement came from Annie Besant, president since 1907 of the Theosophical Society based in Adyar India, which appeared in their monthly magazine The Theosophist. May 1917, p.187-195. We reproduce that statement below, and expect to return to the subject. For the moment we would observe that notwithstanding the authority of Mrs Besant, the Yucatan Brotherhood appears not to be spoken of nowadays by Theosophists. LP.

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THE YUCATAN BROTHERHOOD

A TALK WITH A CLASS, III, By ANNIE BESANT

MANY of you may perhaps know that the impulse which originated the Spiritualistic movement came from the White Lodge itself, and was passed through certain Initiates and Disciples of the Fourth Race; and it is that which gave it its peculiar character. Most of you have doubtless heard of the Brotherhood of Yucatan, in Mexico, an exceedingly remarkable group of Occultists, who came down by definite succession in Fourth Race bodies, maintaining the Fourth Race methods of occult progress.

They play quite a definite part in connection with the Fourth Race which, as you know, includes the great majority of people now in the world. That is sometimes forgotten. We are apt to think of the Fifth Race, with which we are all immediately connected, as the main Race in the world; whereas, as a matter of fact, the Fourth Race is enormously greater in numbers. The Fifth Race, which is leading evolution, is a minority. In fact, that is the normal rule of progress, that a minority leads, and then gradually the others come up to its level, while it itself passes onwards. So, out of the Fifth Race the most advanced will pass on to the Sixth Root Race; and then the Fifth Race will gradually become a majority, and the Fourth Race, like the Third now, will become the laggard minority behind the bulk.

Hence this Brotherhood of Yucatan plays an important part in the evolution of the world in connection with the Fourth Race. Its methods are more suitable to that Race. They are not the later methods of Those whom we speak of as the great White Lodge, chosen for the Fifth Race evolution. This does not mean that in that Lodge itself there are not those who have come up from the Fourth Race. They all have come from it. But it means that They are utilising bodies whose finer, is more nervous constitution

is very much highly organised, especially those who in the decadence of the Fourth Race went on under the special guidance of the White Lodge of the time, and took up methods which were specially intended to save the Fifth Race from the catastrophe in which a majority of the Fourth Race were overwhelmed in the great cataclysm of Atlantis. None the less, as I say, the Fourth Race remains the majority, and this Occult Brotherhood of Yucatan are specially charged with looking after them. Their methods have always been - as were Fourth Race methods of the past - those which dealt with the advance of mankind through what is called now "the lower psychism"; that is, through a number of occult phenomena connected with the physical plane and tangible, so that, on the physical plane, proofs might be afforded of the reality of the hidden worlds. That was the object of it, as it has always been.

It was found that the results of that method tended, after a time, rather to materialise religion. People sought for phenomena rather than for spirituality, and sought to prove the spiritual by the material. The methods were therefore left only to those who preferred them and to whom they were most suitable, while the Fifth Race was trained along a more difficult, but surer path, in which knowledge had to be gained side by side with the evolution, not of the emotional and passionate, but of the mental, nature. They had to pass through the intellect to the higher intuition, or as it is sometimes called, "the higher psychism".

Hence, when it was seen that the Fifth Race was drifting into materialism in its most advanced members, the scientific world, and that knowledge was progressing very much faster than the social conscience and moral evolution, it was thought necessary to start a movement which would appeal to those who were materialistically-minded, and would afford them a certain amount of proof, tangible on the physical plane, of the reality of the superphysical, of the unseen, though not of the spiritual, worlds.

Hence the Spiritualist Movement. That proceeded in the western world by demonstrations available to physical investigation, by knocking, by tilting of material objects, such as tables, chairs, or anything else that was conveniently movable. Later on, there were voices that were made audible, and still later what is called "materialisation"; that is that persons clothed in the astral body, who had laid aside their physical bodies, either temporarily or permanently, took from people who were constituted in a particular way, parts of the etheric double and even parts of the dense physical body, so that their astral bodies, thickened, densified, by this material addition, might become visible to ordinary sight. With all its disadvantages, it was the only method available, and therefore of course was taken to prevent the catastrophe of the universal spread of materialistic science over the Nations which were at that time influencing the intellectual life of the world.

The Yucatan Brotherhood, accustomed to the use of that method, handed down from ancient days, took up the guidance of this rescue movement. Sometimes, in the early days of the Theosophical Society, its Masters Themselves manifested in this fashion; at other times, They spoke and taught through H. P. Blavatsky, who had a very strongly mediumistic body, due to the intermixture of Fourth-Race blood (the Tartar blood in the Russian body. that she took for that purpose); during the training she underwent at the hands of a Master of the White Lodge, by which she reached a very high degree of knowledge and power, she learned how to utilise her body and to

keep it under her own control, permitting it to be used by others only with her own consent.

It was this peculiar mixture of mediumistic body and occult development which made H. P. B. so very puzzling a person to those among whom she lived. There was the Fourth-Race strain, highly developed, which made her, as the Master said, the most wonderfully developed psychic that had been born for two hundred years; and there was the careful training of all the higher powers, which jointly made it possible for them to utilise her as a physical medium for Themselves.

Now the need for careful training of the sensitive lies in the fact that if such a person is left to himself or herself, they, being without knowledge, are not able to protect themselves, and to select those whom they will permit to use their physical bodies. In the earlier days, they were protected by priests in the Temples, and were the sibyls and vestal virgins of the older religions. They were scrupulously guarded from contact with the outer world, and only chosen persons were allowed to come near them. But when such people in a time of ignorance of Occultism came into the world, and were exposed to all its difficulties without any kind of outer protection, they became the ordinary mediums of the last century, who could not protect themselves at all. They were open to every influence which came from the astral world and from the higher regions of the physical world. Hence they were mostly in touch with the less developed human beings who had passed on, the crowds of average people who throng the lower reaches of the astral world. While some of the Yucatan Brothers guarded very carefully their own special disciples, that they might give higher teachings through them, there were many mediums who were left practically uncared for, save when some kindly discarnate entity, attracted by some good quality in them, guarded them to some extent, warding off influences from the evil-minded of the astral world.

Materialisation is not so marked now as it was in the earlier days, when we find that very many of the "controls" were North American Indians. It was very characteristic of the early phases. It began in America, of course, where the available people were, so to speak, most handy, and you will find a number of American Indians acting as controls of those first mediums. They were given all sorts of names, such as "Sunshine," and the like. When they materialised, they materialised in their own forms, which very often were those of children.

Then came a phase where others, not Indians, but people of somewhat the same type materialised, showing through their communications that they were ignorant and undeveloped. But these crude messages were sometimes interspersed with communications of great value, coming from some member of this Occult Brotherhood, or even, on a few occasions, directly from the White Lodge. In the case of Stainton Moses you are face to face with such an illustration; a man of high intellectual value, full of doubts, full of questionings, and therefore not very suitable for an average medium, who needs to be quite passive. Because of his intellectuality a very high use was made of him, and some of the teachings which came through him were of great value. Through some of the American mediums also some very fine teachings came, and you have this mingled mass of messages of very varying usefulness.

The real value of Spiritualism was that it gave tangible proofs of post-mortem existence, so that a man like Sir William Crookes was able in his laboratory, by applying the most careful scientific methods of investigation, to obtain quite definite proofs of existences other than the physical. You can read his own records, and see the remarkable scientific acumen that he brought to bear on his investigations; see how he invented a particular kind of light, so that the materialised bodies should not be broken up, as they were by ordinary light; how he invented a method of weighing the materialised form, and so on. Those methods are still followed by the Italian and French investigators, who were all of the same type of materialistic scientists, and who one after another emerged from materialism into Spiritualism. They do not always call themselves Spiritualists, shrinking from the name, but they have published their investigations most fully; they are men like Rochas and Richet in France, both largely tinged with Theosophy, and Lombroso, in Italy, who obtained a most remarkable series of proofs.

The scientists were sufficient to give to the scientific world, if it chose to look into their records, the proofs which it demanded; as a rule, scientists would not look into them. The Royal Society still refuses to recognise Crookes's fine investigations. He very nearly lost his position as a Fellow of the Royal Society, because he was regarded as superstitious and as going into illegitimate speculations. However, he recorded his proofs, and he endorses down to the present day the validity of his own investigations. Sir Oliver Lodge has, to some extent, followed in his steps.

So far as Spiritualism went along the line on which it was intended to go, it was exceedingly useful at that time, and remains useful now. It is the one line of physical proof of superphysical facts, apart from all questions either of moral worth or of spiritual unfolding. Anybody can, as in ordinary physical science, obtain these proofs, who chooses to follow the methods, and a good many scientists have followed them. Sir Oliver Lodge, as said, is one of them; he has published a remarkable book, called *Raymond*, in which the evidence of post-mortem existence is taken from his son, who was killed on one of the battle-fields of the present War.

Now of course the present time offers innumerable facilities in that way. Hosts of young men are flung out of mortal life in the very full vigour of their manhood, and cannot quickly pass on into the Devachanic existence. They are suddenly killed, and that brings about, as you know, peculiar karma. Moreover the conditions in the astral world just now are much changed. People are no longer under the ordinary rules, which were far better for them - unless they have reached a very considerable height of unfolding practically to fall asleep, to gather up all the experiences of the life that are useful, to carry them on to Devachan, and work them out into faculty. Instead of that the whole thing is now changed. People who die normally, not by accident, are continually being retained there for special work, and very large numbers, nearly all of you perhaps, will not pass out of this life into the devachanic existence; most of you will probably choose to come back (if you pass away within a few years), in order to be with the Lord Maitreya when He comes, or to work at the enormous volume of work which has to be done, when He has left the world again, at the stage which He himself has brought about, but which will need reinforcing and further evolution.

Annie Besant

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Printed below is the full obituary notice of Andrew Jackson Davis, taken from Light February 5 1910 pages 60-61.

DR. A. J. DAVIS

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In 'LIGHT' of last week we briefly announced the transition of Dr. Andrew Jackson Davis, and we have now received from Mrs. Davis a cutting from the 'Boston Globe,' Mass., U.S.A., of January 13th, containing an 'appreciation' of Dr. Davis, in which fuller details are given regarding the life and work of our old friend in such an admirable manner that we reproduce it almost entirely. The 'Boston Globe' says:

Dr. Andrew Jackson Davis, who fifty or sixty years ago was unquestionably the most distinguished Spiritualist author and lecturer in the world, and who for the past twenty years had been practising medicine as a regular physician at 63, Warren-street, Boston, died this morning at his home, 50, Summer-street, Watertown.

On account of failing health Dr. Davis retired last August, on his eighty-third birthday, from the practice of medicine, and until two months ago was at his summer home in New Hampshire. He has been a sufferer from asthma, and this, together with the infirmities due to old age, was the cause of his death. He was twice married, but leaves no children.

A generation or two ago the name of Andrew Jackson Davis was not only familiar to everyone throughout the United States, but was also known to philosophers and scientists in Europe. Some of his books were translated into many foreign languages.

He anticipated by many years some of the most important scientific discoveries and of the generally accepted scientific theories, yet he had received little or no education from books. He was one of the three or four great leaders of the Spiritualist movement in this country. His career as author and as lecturer is unique in literary annals. He published more than thirty volumes, and lectured innumerable times to big audiences. His books contain many rare and beautiful thoughts, much useful and practical information and curious theories of life here and hereafter of deep interest to the psychologist, sociologist, theologian and reformer. A marked trait of Dr. Davis's voluminous writings is the numerous repetitions in philosophy and theology, which occur therein, but his style is so charming and so full of virility and force that the reader loses sight of this defect.

His especial gift was the diagnosis of disease by clairvoyant means, and he was known all over the world as 'the Poughkeepsie Seer.' Comparatively late in life, when he was nearly sixty years old, he began the study of medicine, and obtained his degree of M.D. from the U.S. medical college in New York, and afterwards practised in Boston.

Dr. Davis's methods of diagnosis were peculiar to himself. He did not feel the pulse, or look at the tongue, or take the temperature, or use the stethoscope on his patients, or ask them any questions. He merely put the tips of his fingers on the palm

of his patient's hand and thus 'sensed' his physical condition. Then he prescribed such remedies as his knowledge of therapeutics directed.

He was immensely popular with his patients. Everyone loved him. He was always ready with wise counsel or pleasant jest. He had a keen sense of humour. With his medical and hygienic advice he mingled sound common-sense and a great deal of genial, kindly philosophy, so that his patients always went away in a hopeful frame of mind. He was extremely benevolent, and devoted much of his time to patients who could afford to pay little or nothing. He passed his old age in efforts to do good, and the warm regard in which he was held by those who knew him best was evidence that he succeeded. Thousands of men and women in and around Boston will feel that the world is poorer now that Dr. Davis has gone.

Born at Blooming Grove, Poughkeepsie, Orange County, N.Y., August 11th, 1826, of poor parents, in his youth he suffered great poverty. So far as is known, he never had anything more than the most rudimentary school education. While a young man he suddenly developed wonderful clairvoyant power, fell into deep trances, and, as he declared, conversed with spirits, receiving from them information as to a future life.

Early in 1843, while working as a shoemakers apprentice in Poughkeepsie, his remarkable clairvoyant powers were developed by William Levingston, a travelling mesmerist and lecturer. Although without any instruction or education, he, in the mesmeric state, began to discourse fluently on medical, psychological and general scientific subjects.

Soon after he became associated with Professor Levingston he began treating the sick, with great success, giving correct diagnoses and writing out medical prescriptions while in the magnetic sleep.

On March 7th, 1844, he fell into a trance which lasted, it is said, for sixteen hours, during which time he declared that he talked with invisible beings or spirits, and received from them precise instructions concerning the position he was subsequently to occupy as a teacher from the interior state.

In November, 1845, his first book, 'The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations,' was dictated by him, while in a deep trance, to the Rev. William Fishbough. Its ideas startled the world, especially as they came from the lips of a young uneducated man, under such peculiar conditions. From that time he became identified with the direct promulgation of Spiritualism.

This work embraces a wide range of subjects, advance many startling theories and repudiates any special authority for the teachings of the Bible. It soon became the standard authority as to the philosophy of Spiritualism and had a wide circle of readers.

After the completion of this book, Mr. Davis ceased to submit himself to magneto-mesmeric manipulations, and from this time he claimed that he was the subject entirely of spirit influence, or illumination by the direct action of the invisibles. Of the numerous works which he afterwards wrote, the following may be mentioned: 'The Great Harmonia,' in four volumes; 'The Approaching Crisis,' 'The Penetralia,' 'The

Present Age and Inner Life,' 'The Magic Staff,' 'The History and Philosophy of Evil,' 'Death and the After Life,' 'Arabula, or the Divine Guest,' 'The Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse,' 'The Stellar Key to the Summer Land,' and a manual for 'The Children's Progressive Lyceum.'

We have a page from 'The People's Journal,' in which, under date of July, 1847, in a 'Letter from America,' the writer, Parke Godwin, states that he has the proof-sheets of a curious work, entitled 'Natures Divine Revelations,' before him, and, speaking of A. J. Davis, then about twenty-five years of age, he says :-

It is evident that he never received any but the most elementary education, and that the greater part of his time in youth was passed on the shoemaker's bench. His employer testifies that he was always a lad of the most exemplary character, faithful in word and deed, perfectly trustworthy in all respects, but quite ignorant, and utterly incapable of any intricate and comprehensive fraud. During the delivery of his lectures, Davis's manner was pervaded by a tone of great seriousness and reverence: he had the air of one convinced of the truth of his communication . . . his constant attendants aver that he conversed with no person and read no books during the intervals of his lectures.

After giving a lucid résumé of the contents of the book Mr. Godwin says:-

It carries out the doctrine of progressive development into all spheres with the most rigid and unflinching logic; and as a mere work of speculation, to consider it in no other light, it is full of the highest interest. It could, at any rate, only have been written by a man of extensive scientific acquirements and the most vivid and vigorous imagination. But if we suppose it to be what it purports to be - the spontaneous utterances of a clairvoyant - it becomes one of the most extraordinary works that was ever published. . . . That it is the unaided production of Davis, there are hundreds of the most respectable and sound-minded men in this city (New York) most profoundly convinced, after a deliberate inquiry into all the circumstances of the case.*

If we are to judge the tree by its fruits, what can those who oppose Spiritualism say when they find that its influence upon one who has been rightly called 'The Father of Modern Spiritualism' has resulted in a personality whose main characteristics are presented by Dr. Densmore in the following words: 'The dear, sweet spirit. What a noble, manly nature possessed of the most beautiful optimism, delightful humour and philanthropy absolutely free from selfishness' - and this after upwards of half-a-century of devoted service to humanity under guidance and illumination from the unseen!

** He means 'unaided' by any person in the body.*

A. J. DAVIS'S WORK FOR CHILDREN

Perhaps one of the greatest of the many good things accomplished by Dr. Andrew Jackson Davis under spirit instruction was the inauguration of the Children's Progressive Lyceum, an improved form of Sunday School. The plan of this Lyceum work, which is set forth in full and complete detail in his 'Manual,' was not original with him. He says:-

It is an attempt to unfold and actualise on earth, partially at least, a progressive juvenile assemblage like those in the Summer-Land; whither children are constantly going from earth, and where they are received into groups for improvement, growth, and graduation. In those heavenly societies and spheres the young grow and bloom in love as well as in wisdom – In affection as well as in true knowledge.

We doubt whether Spiritualists generally know, or realise the significance of the fact, that there are in this country at the present time upwards of two hundred of these Lyceums in full working order, in which every Sunday over ten thousand children are being instructed in ethical and spiritual principles in a way that arouses their interest, and which cannot fail to prove of great benefit to them in later years. In America also the Lyceum work is growing rapidly, and is the hope of the movement for the future.

The spiritual training of children is an important subject, and one which should seriously occupy the studious attention of parents, and all who have the care of the children. While ordinary Sunday Schools are by no means perfect agencies for the work they are intended to perform, they are infinitely better than nothing, and the Lyceum methods, when carried out on the lines and in the spirit of Dr. Davis, are certainly more attractive to the young; but too many parents are careless and indifferent about this matter of the training of their children in ethical and spiritual or 'religious' principles, in the self-discipline requisite for the strengthening of their characters, and in the observance of the obligations which are essential to right living. In many homes the old religious practices have disappeared. Attendance at Sunday School, or places of spiritual instruction, is not regarded as of any great importance, and children are too often permitted to do very much as they please. Unfortunately they thus lose the influences which would make for strong, habitual, high-mindedness and clear moral consciousness, based upon knowledge and conviction, and enforced by noble example.

It is for this reason that earnest Spiritualists in all parts of the world are actively engaged in the altruistic work of providing Lyceums, as centres of spiritual and educational influence, in which young people of both sexes may be trained to understand themselves and to appreciate at their true value those religious and ethical principles which underlie all true spiritual progress – individual, national and universal. Andrew Jackson Davis wrote that each child is 'a bundle of infinite possibilities,' and it is equally true that it requires wise discipline and training to secure the best results in the development of its innate powers. Writing recently in the 'Christian Commonwealth,' Dr. K.C. Anderson wisely says: -

It is significant that the Greek word for teaching is the same as that for child, so that that wise people could speak of the childing of the soul. In the very idea of childhood teaching and training are involved. The true child is not there at first,

perfect and right; there is only the embryo or possibility of the child; the true child is a late product, depending on what home and church, the toil and discipline of life and the being's own docility can accomplish.

The real truth is that it is the babe that is old, very old, because all the past of the race is contained in its little frame. Old dispositions and feelings and tastes and prejudices are wrapped up in it, and these will by-and-by manifest themselves. It is to attain to true spiritual childhood and youth it must cast these off one by one. We are all born old, for all the life we have then is the life of the race, and the problem left before each individual is to escape from his race domination and to arise to filial consciousness. We are at the least nothing but masses of impulses and inclinations which are the bequest and heirloom of all the human and re-human races that have gone before us.

We cannot go back to the theology of our fathers and happily that is not necessary; but it is at our peril if we become less earnest and serious than they were.

Whatever changes have taken place in our ideas of the universe, of God, and the nature and destiny of man, the most important thing parents can do for their children is to rouse, develop, and rightly train their religious nature, to awaken them to the fact that they are children of God in possibility, and that a life of religious trust and love is more important to them than anything else, more important than anything they can learn, anything they can achieve, anything they can possess. . . The fact is the child cannot be fully developed, until his religious nature is roused, until it is evolved and trained. This is that which is highest and best in him; and parents render him the highest and best service when they lead him to understand this, and to live upon this place where he is a man; for man is not essentially man until he has developed that which characterises and constitutes him a man – the higher ranges of emotion and life. Until a man comes up into that which links him with God, he is not peculiarly and distinctively a man.

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Andrew Jackson Davis's *'The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind'* was firstly published on 4 August 1847 in New York and it is reputedly stated that the two volume set containing almost 800 pages that within its first week of sales 900 copies were sold and a second edition ordered. In December of this year the two volumed book was published in England by John Chapman in London. PJG

Chapman remarks in his preface:

The book was brought to me from New York by a Mr. Cunningham, (an Englishman, who has been recently residing in America,) who was deputed by Dr. Lyon (Mr. Davis's Magnetizer) and Mr. Fishbough (his " Scribe") to visit England, and make arrangements for its publication here. He was provided with a duplicate set of stereotype plates, from which the present edition was printed, and I was fixed upon in New York as the person who should be requested to become the English publisher.

After making myself acquainted with the work, I acceded to the request; and the whole expense of publication is borne by Dr. Lyon and Mr. Fishbough, who will also receive any profits which may accrue after the cost is defrayed.

The amount of scepticism or credibility with which the book will be received, must ultimately depend upon the extent and quality of the testimony produced to sustain the statement of the extraordinary facts in reference to its origin, and also upon the intrinsic character, or internal evidence, which the book itself displays.

In relation to ordinary subjects, the external testimony adduced in the "Scribe's Introduction" would be deemed conclusive; but the statements it is intended to sustain being of a character which almost every scientific mind will, a priori, be disposed to doubt, it is to be regretted that the external evidence cannot at present appeal to English readers with a force capable of producing a decided conviction, as all the witnesses mentioned in the Introduction are Americans, whose names are almost entirely unknown in this country, though they appear to be respectable men, and one of them, Mr. Brisbane, will be recognised by many Englishmen as notable for his philanthropy and benevolent labours.

I have written to America for the testimony of persons known to Mr. Bancroft, the historian, and now American Ambassador at the English court, which, with his endorsement, will constitute the strongest proof that can be produced, and which I hope to be enabled to add to a future edition of the work. In the meantime, I may mention that Mr. Cunningham (named above) speaks in the highest terms of the integrity and honour of Dr. Lyon, Mr. Fishbough, and many of the recorded witnesses whom he personally knows. And I think the statement of Mr. Cunningham may be received with confidence, as, if I may form an opinion of his character -from a few days' intercourse with him, I should say that I believe him to be a truly honest, sagacious, and trustworthy person, who would not only scorn to lend himself to the design of promulgating a deception, but whom it would be difficult to impose upon. In addition to my own impressions, I have been enabled to obtain very satisfactory evidences of his integrity from persons who have known him many years in the town in which he lived before he left England.....

[We continue with the letters of J. J. Morse's Australia / New Zealand trip between the periods of September 1902 to June 1903. This 3rd letter is sent from Melbourne as published in 'Light' January 10th 1903]

LETTER FROM MR. J. J. MORSE

The identity of the phenomena of spirit communion in all countries is one of the solid elements upon which we rest our facts. When the communications disclose undeniable evidences of personal identity in the case of the communicating spirits,

our claims are strengthened, and when such evidences are received from the departed who passed away over twelve thousand miles, from the place where a communication is received, and are given through a person who never knew or had the opportunity of knowing the communicant when in the flesh, then the evidence appeals with startling force to its recipient.

The foregoing propositions were brought home to me with singular force on the occasion of a visit to a well-known medium in this city, a reference to which formed the closing item of my previous letter, and my promise to deal with it shall now be fulfilled. The lady is Mrs. H. A. Rising, who resides in a beautifully situated villa on the fashionable St. Kilda road. Her house, named 'Jessaville,' stands in its own grounds, and is a large and elegantly furnished dwelling. For a number of years past, this lady has held private meetings every Friday evening, her spacious drawing-room being filled with eager seekers after the facts of spirit return. She also gives private sittings to a large *clientele* of the *elite* of the city, and bears the reputation of being a remarkably reliable medical clairvoyante. Born in Scotland, she settled in this country some sixteen years ago. She knew nothing about Spiritualists until some years after her arrival in Australia, though she has been a 'seer' from her earliest recollections, her 'gift' causing her much trouble, and many chidings, in her youth. So far as I am able to ascertain, Mrs. Rising is about the most notable medium for her class of manifestations in Australia, certainly in the State of Victoria, and, without doubt, in this city. So much, then, by way of preface.

In company with Mr. W. H. Terry, Mrs. Morse and myself, at Mrs. Rising's invitation, attended her usual meeting on Friday evening, October 31st, the final one, it turned out, of her season's work, for she closes during the summer months, which here are from November to April! Between forty and fifty people had assembled for the sitting, which lasted very nearly two hours, during the whole of which period Mrs. Rising was under control. The method of the controls is to take their medium to every person in the company and give communications to all present. The communications were of the most varied character, including tests of identity, advice regarding health, travel, business, lost articles, missing friends, and numerous other matters of interest to those concerned. Surnames and other names abounded, and in no single case was there error or hesitation. Everyone present appeared to be fully satisfied, and in not a few instances profoundly astonished also. Towards the end of the proceedings the medium turned toward Mrs. Morse, and gave her a message from her mother, with her name, and referred to certain family matters. This was followed by a communication from an aunt, who had been in spirit life for many years. Then came a message to me from my father and mother, with their names. Then she said: 'James Burns is here; he is glad to greet you, and he is still hard at work helping the cause, 'adding,' It is all right now,' which remark had a special significance to me. She remarked: 'Amy is here,' evidently referring to Mrs. Burns. The next remark to me was, 'Bowman is here.' 'Yes,' I said, 'James Bowman?' He says, "I am Bowman," which was a mode of expression I had often heard my dear old friend use. Then, with characteristic humour, the control added, 'I'll take your picture,' for, as your Scotch readers will well know, he was a photographer, and whenever I was his guest the phrase mentioned was one he was constantly using. Then he startled me by sending his love 'to Jessy, the wife,' who is still living at Gourock. Other points of interest were presented, but enough is recorded to show the value of the communications made to us.

The foregoing is but the barest outline of what transpired, and by no means does full justice to the medium or the communications made through her. For my own satisfaction, and to be sure that the persons who communicated with us were unknown to Mrs. Rising, I somewhat closely questioned her when having a little social chat with her after the meeting. I found her knowledge of British Spiritualism and its *personnel* practically *nil*. The '*telepathic*' theory, beloved of certain classes of inquirers, was equally out of the case, for we had gone as guests, and did not expect to be favoured, nor was either Mrs. Morse or myself thinking of, or wishing for, communications from anyone, especially. We went with open minds, willing to receive whatever should come for us, if anything should come. I must confess that these messages were indeed comforting, assuring us of the continued friendship and affection of our departed friends. They are added to the innumerable evidences proving that 'death' does not divide us, but rather the more closely binds the ties of sympathy and love which friendship weaves about us.

A few days ago we had the most unspiritual experience we have ever encountered! It was in the shape of a 'dust' storm, the worst, according to the Melbourne 'Argus,' for thirty years, and we hope never to see the like of it again! It commenced at noon and lasted over six hours. The entire city was enveloped in a dense cloud of fine dust, which insinuated itself into every place, covering us with a fine grey powder. It was accompanied by a scorching north wind, which almost burned us. The wind was what is known as a 'brickfielder,' and truly the gusts of wind were as if they came from a brick kiln. Such storms occur occasionally, but are usually over in twenty minutes; they inflict enormous damage, and have to be taken, it appears, as amongst the vagaries of the, somewhat singular climate of Melbourne, which is one of the most trying and enervating I have ever met.

On Sunday next, the 30th inst., I complete my first three months' work, and then, as arranged, I am to visit New Zealand, where most likely my stay will extend over three months. I am then to return to this city for some further lectures preparatory to my departure for the United States. Some pressure is being brought to bear upon me with the view of inducing me to remain in Australia beyond the period of my contract, but nothing definite has yet been advanced, or decided upon.

Permit me to take this opportunity of sending the New Year greetings of myself, Mrs. Morse, and Miss Morse to our good friends at home. Probably you will spend the holidays amid rain, fog, or frost. Out here they will pass with baking heat, accompanied by flowers and trees in their midsummer dress! The customs which appear a trifle conventional at home assume a new value when one is far away from all associated with Christmas and the New Year. How large a part sentiment plays in our lives we do not always realise! Without it the world would be dreary and sad indeed. Therefore, not in the simply conventional manner, not as a mere sentiment without meaning, but as the expression of the heartiest goodwill to our friends at home, let me close by wishing you, Mr. Editor, and your staff, and all who may read these lines, A Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Melbourne, Australia.

November 25th, 1902.

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How to obtain this Newsletter

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Paul J. Gaunt