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MRS. OSBORNE LEONARD

1882-1968

[**Note by LP:**—When I was a local student from 1965-68, I was privileged to belong to Brighton Psychic Centre. Among the many luminaries were Mr and Mrs Nickelson, and their memories of Mrs Leonard were inspiring. Fortunately these were preserved in two published lectures to CPS,¹ whose leaders often spoke to the Centre. The second lecture also threw important light on Blanche Cooper, whose voice mediumship is chiefly remembered through Mr Soal's oft-quoted report in PSPR 35 1925.²]

[**Note by PJG:**—The two portraits that accompany these articles are taken from *Psychic Science* (Quarterly transactions of the British College of Psychic Science): Mrs. Osborne Leonard January 1923 issue Vol. 1. No.4. & Mrs. Blanche Cooper January 1927 issue Vol. V. No.4]



Mrs. Osborne Leonard Her Life and Mediumship

*From a Lecture at the College of Psychic Science by
D. A. NICKELSON—LIGHT*³

THE only claim I have for talking in my small way about possibly the greatest trance medium of this generation is this: I have known her for well over twenty years, and I suppose I have been as close to her as most people on the earth. I have had the opportunity of watching her before and after her trance sittings, and I lived for some years in a part of her house at Tankerton. By such means, I watched her as an ordinary human being, because essentially that is the first thing I would like to add. She is just a woman, a very great woman, a very great human being as well as a great medium; but in her heart even today, when references are made in books or articles (there are so many of them) about this and that being achieved through the mediumship

¹ **Please note:**—“Copyright of all material appearing in LIGHT is reserved to the authors and original publisher. It may not be reproduced or translated, either wholly or in part, without written permission. LIGHT is still published by the College of Psychic Studies and you are urged to subscribe: <http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/index.html>”

² Proceedings Society for Psychical Research (PSPR), available to SPR members:— <http://www.spr.ac.uk/main/>

³ LIGHT Summer 1965 No. 3461 Vol. LXXXV.

of Mrs. Leonard, she often has said that she finds it difficult even now fully to comprehend the fact that it is *her* gift that has been used, and that she was the medium in question.

When she finished her trance work it was nearly 45 years' continuous service from the time she started in 1914. Obviously I cannot in the space available encompass 45 years' mediumship. I must leave out a great deal, but I may perhaps add one or two things that some may find new. What I am trying to do is to show how somebody who lived very close to a great medium listened, saw, and had the privilege of sitting with her, and from this garnered a new conception of understanding.

Let me retrace quickly. She came upon the earth this time as a Sun Geminian 83 years ago, born into an average middle class family, a very devout family with Church of England leanings, but with a strong Scots ancestry as well. Her birth was a little out of the ordinary, because the doctor thought she had passed on, and left her to attend to the needs of her mother; but her father took this wee bundle of humanity, placed it on his lap, as he was sitting in front of a fire. After nearly an hour of the father's gentle patting, the midwife returned to look at the child to find that she was living. For this reason some of us are puzzled to know if the correct birthday should be the 28th or 29th of May. She was actually born into the world on the 28th of May, but life as we know it really started in actuality on the 29th. It is possibly due to this incident in some measure that Mrs. Leonard has always had a great abiding affection for her father, perhaps even a deeper one than she had for her mother.

By the age of six years she had taught herself to read. She read omnivorously of books much more advanced than a child of her age tackled in the ordinary way, and she started to see clairvoyantly, like a great many of us have done, as a child, uninhibited. She used to see her "Happy Family", as she called these discarnate friends, on the walls of her own bedroom and other rooms in the house. Her parents were very worried when she told them clearly and simply of what she saw, and persuaded her that it was wrong, and that she must stop doing it. How many parents unfortunately do exactly the same thing even today! Some of us think it is so misguided, and regrettable.

Reaching her "teens" she became once more interested in psychic matters, by being drawn to look at it from the outside of a local Spiritualist church. She then decided to go in and see what happened. She was intrigued with the hymn singing, and the utterances of the medium, and felt drawn in some way, so decided to say nothing at home but to continue to go and see what happened. She seemed to be drawn like iron filings to a magnet. Was this the touch of Destiny awakening in her the first promptings of what was to be her life work?

I will dwell no further on the early stages, except to say that she received certain messages that interested her a great deal. At this point her parents found out, and again greatly discouraged this interest in psychic matters. To counteract it they suggested the training of her singing voice, and the young student had great hopes of an operatic career. But she had diphtheria, and lost the gift of singing; but attending her was a nurse who was a Spiritualist, and who awakened within her this feeling for this other world that we call Spirit, these so-called "dead" people.

The young girl started to take a great interest. One day she went away from home to stay with friends for a night, only thirty miles away, but during the night, that is, in the early hours of the morning, she was suddenly awakened and upon one wall of the bedroom she saw a bright light appear, and in this light she clearly saw her mother. So distinct was the vision that she could pick out details in her mother's apparel and form. She wondered what it meant, and spoke to her parent, who quietly smiled at her, looking very hard, and then the vision disappeared.

In the morning Mrs. Leonard was eager to find out just what it all meant. Returning to her home, she found that her mother had passed on that night, approximately at the time she herself saw the vision on the wall, about 2.00 a.m. This incident made a great impression on her mind, and finally decided her that she must continue to find out much more about these psychic faculties. At this time she felt that she would like to become a medium like the public ones she had heard at the local churches. It was the first promptings of wanting to serve, and to help people. She started to develop, but it became apparent that this form of mediumship was not for her. With the passing of her mother, and the consequent break-up of the home, she had to seek employment, and this brought her first venture on to the stage, in chorus and "bit" parts.

Joining a revue "on the road", she became friendly with two other junior members of the cast, and to her great surprise she found they were both interested in Spiritualism. This decided them to sit, and to see what they could obtain. The stage manager of this company helped the three girls to find a small wooden table wherever they moved from theatre to theatre. This was surely the "finger of Destiny", because in meeting this man, some years older than herself, and finding as she did that he was taking a costume part in the play, memory awakened, for a Spiritualist medium some months before had told her that she would meet a man, older and in a costume, that would have a great bearing on her life. So it proved, for thus she met her husband, who had the greatest bearing on her life, and still has, I am happy to say, for they married, and he gave her the greatest love and service, and we could easily call him, the "power behind the throne". He still makes close contact with his wife, bringing to her always, love, comfort, guidance and blessing.

Let us return to the newly-weds, very happy, and eager for psychic advancement; yet they found that the earth conditions became increasingly short. They grew accustomed to living on a meagre diet, and often were compelled to put into pawn at the weekends some of their scanty belongings. Even the experienced husband found that work did just not seem available, and I often wonder how many fears and doubts must have been in their minds. I could give you many poignant incidents, but enough to say that through it all their faith survived and the young wife continued to sit, until the time that the two other girls left for other engagements. Again pointers to the way became apparent; one of the two girls returned, and with another new one, they again started to sit, and after some while they began to get knocks, etc., at the table and messages spelled out. It was at this time that Feda made her presence known, and also the name they were to call her by.

Feda

Eager and anxious the company arrived at what is now the most famous variety theatre in the world, the London Palladium, and while sitting there, in the boiler room, the three girls suddenly saw a man in evening dress come down and walk up and down. It was obvious that he was deep in thought, and did not see them, but as he walked away upstairs, something different did happen for the three girls: for the first time Gladys Osborne Leonard was entranced by Feda, who gave the first messages to the two other sitters.

The man in question was Sir Walter Gibbons, the founder and builder of the London Palladium, who in after years became a friend and sitter of Mrs. Leonard, was himself very psychic, and had some remarkable experiences. This was at the end of 1913, and Feda explained that she had come at this time as there was a great work to do, as the earth was going to pass through tragic times. Soon after of course, came 1914 and the Great War. Mrs. Leonard started taking some circles, at which sitters paid the sum of one shilling each, and if too poor to pay, paid nothing at all; Feda and her medium were getting valuable experience. The income thus obtained was terribly small and the standard of living very low, but both these brave souls took it in their stride and knew within themselves that it was a prelude to something of value... 1914, the Great War, the terrible losses in man-power, the women dressed in black, the upsurge as always at these times to the "inner life", and many a heart-broken woman was comforted by Feda in these dark days; evidence, proof of survival, comfort, and a teaching, poured through from the world of Spirit.

At this time Mr. and Mrs. Hewat McKenzie came to London from Glasgow, started their British College of Psychic Science, and making contact with many Spiritualists, they were able to arrange sittings with this unknown medium whom they considered had great possibilities. They always sent their sitters under assumed names, finding that by so doing the results would stand up so much better to critical minds. Mr. and Mrs. Osborne Leonard at this time moved their scanty belongings on a hand cart to a new flat they had been guided to by Feda in Maida Vale, and it was while there in the early days, that Mrs. Leonard one early morning heard a wonderful baritone voice singing "Nearer my God to thee". It has remained a cherished memory all these years, for the voice was from a Guide in Spirit who later on took her through the astral realms to show her the cruelty done to animals on earth, and to open her mind clearly to many facets of her own life on earth that they wanted her to change, and which she did.

A Mr. Brown came for a sitting, and many others followed, and members of Mr. Brown's family also had sittings, and from these sittings a book was written, a book that I feel changed the whole life of Mrs. Leonard and others as well, for it was of course Sir Oliver Lodge's book *Raymond*. With its publication, that fearless gesture on the part of this great man of science to which so many of us are indebted today, there came to this small flat at Maida Vale, a flood of letters, hundreds of them, asking for sittings. It was at this time that Mrs. Leonard did not really know what the seasons were, for she was sitting a maximum period each day, and remember her deep trance sittings were never shorter than an hour, and often nearer two hours in fact; the strain on her physical body must have been very great, and would have daunted anyone less dedicated and sincere.

Her fees started at 10s. 6d. per sitting, and then at the suggestion of Sir Oliver Lodge, they were raised to 21s. What a bargain price compared with today! As many of you possibly remember, her trance state is very deep, and it has been the subject of much experiment by interested individuals and Societies, and I believe they all unstintingly praise the standard of her work, and I shall always remember her quiet mien, the back straight like a soldier's in her hard wood chair, the hands lightly clasped in her lap, her feet close together, and she would remain thus all through the time she was in trance.

To the medium herself there came from the world of Spirit, the teachings, the guidance, the knowledge, the way to think, the way to live, the way to eat and drink, and that is why she became a lifelong vegetarian, feeling, as I do, that it is a way of life to be highly commended to all people, especially to those interested in psychics and even more so to practising mediums; this enabled her to become an open vessel to be used by these discarnate friends. Feda told me once that many mediums on the earth had greater psychic power than her own instrument, but she, Feda, was able to use *all* the power that Mrs. Leonard had to give. Like most people on the stage Mrs. Leonard had been fond in moderation of eating, drinking, and smoking, but she changed to the vegetarian way of eating, and gave up both drinking and smoking entirely.

I think the following item might be of special interest. A sitter, a lady, was asked in by Mr. Leonard, and she went into the séance room to wait for Mrs. Leonard who was upstairs. Quickly the lady reappeared and in an agitated manner said to Mr. Leonard, "I wanted a sitting with your wife". He answered: "So it will be". "Then why is that young Indian girl sitting in there waiting too?" Of course it was Feda without whom there would have been no sitting...

Slowly but surely the mediumship was developed in character and depth, and Feda was able to give great amounts of evidence, and when allowed, philosophy too. Some research scholars call Feda a secondary personality of Mrs. Leonard's. If this is so, I am still puzzled to know how the following can be explained. Mrs. Leonard had a cat to which she was deeply attached, and it was run over and killed. The young maid she had was too frightened to tell her, and so the medium was very worried to know what had happened to her pet. The worry began to affect Feda's control, the open vessel was now restricted, and as it was not possible to get it through in any other way, Feda decided that she would take drastic action. One morning Mrs. Leonard was standing quietly in her séance room thinking, when she saw a mist appear on the hearth rug, and as it became more dense, a figure was clearly built up so that anyone in the room could see clearly and strongly. It was Feda, complete with prayer mat, which she solemnly put on the rug, and sitting cross legged, said to Mrs. Leonard, "Fatty (the cat's name) him dead". After that statement, she quietly withdrew. But there Feda was a separate body, a separate personality, a separate individual. I leave it with you, except to say that if Feda was a secondary personality, which I refute, I would be very happy and honoured to have such a person with me.

Independent Whisper

Many years' work had been achieved by now, and it was at this time that Mrs. Leonard wrote her first book, *My life in Two Worlds*, a title aptly thought of by her husband. During these latter years, a new addition to her mediumship was becoming more apparent, a further gift. Many people, but not all sitters, began to hear the independent direct voice speaking to them, as well as the voice of Fedra speaking through her entranced medium; it added a new concept, a new dimension to her work, and I would like to quote one particular case.

Robert Blatchford at this time wrote regularly in a Sunday journal that there was *no* life after death, and many I believe felt he was right. The time came that his own wife was called back to Spirit, and in his great loss he found no comfort from his own doctrine. He was sad and lonely and ill at ease, and during this time he was introduced by Sir Oliver Lodge as "Mr. Brown" to a sitting with Mrs. Leonard. At first he was critical and full of doubts, and hardly believed that to the medium he was unknown except as Mr. Brown, but not to Fedra. She gave him evidence of the presence of his wife, but he could not accept it; he thought it was trickery of some kind, until Fedra said: "You have a personal private name you only called your wife, and if I give it to you from her would you believe I am speaking the truth?" He agreed it would be evidence, and so Fedra said, "You called her, Your Little Dresden China Shepherdess". As Fedra said this, in the direct whisper at the same time came just this: "Bob, Bob, I am here", spoken in his wife's voice, and then the answer from the heart of this man: "My God, it's true, you really are alive!".

The sitting from then on was full of interest and truth to these two people. The sequel? The following Sunday, in the same paper, in banner headlines, Robert Blatchford wrote: "I have told you a lie, there is Life after Death". And he spoke of his sitting and his new belief. He only had one more sitting, wrote a small book, and then passed on two years later, to join once more his Dresden China Shepherdess...

I wonder how many of us here under the same circumstances would have been prepared to recant thus? I have a great respect and admiration for Robert Blatchford. In my own case I have heard the whisper many times. It has beautified my own life, given me great proof of survival of the human, the animal, and the bird personality, and I only wish I could give its beauty to each one of you. Here is the resultant of someone prepared to dedicate their life, not part of each year, but 52 weeks each year to their mediumship. No one ever went to her in vain, and many times no payment was ever received; and now in the days when she is preparing, mentally, as well as physically and psychically, to go back to Spirit, she has told me that "My work has only just started: when I go back to Spirit, that is when I shall achieve a little more for those who have had me in their keeping so long and so well". At 83 years young, she is still an inspiration to many of us. I well remember the remark of a lady meeting her for the first time, when she said on being introduced, "Good gracious, Mrs. Leonard, you are quite a normal person". I wonder what she expected to see?

The time had come for Mr. Leonard to return to Spirit, leaving the terrible gap of the absence of his physical body, but he soon was able to return to his wife and on countless occasions has proved his identity, and has many times brought back pets and friends who wished to contact the medium. Mrs. Leonard herself has had many out-of-the body experiences

and on most of these her husband has been with her. Again the added knowledge, the suffering of loss of a loved one, she has shared with countless others, and hence her other two books, *Brief Darkness* and *The Last Crossing*, describing her own experiences and conclusions.

Just before I was due to come here and speak to you, Mrs. Leonard said to me, "Tell your audience that my mediumship was essentially to prove the survival of the human, the animal, and the bird personality after this so-called Death". I believe that she has achieved that end, because not only the human, but the animal and the birds have come back. There are a considerable number of books confirming in no uncertain measure the wealth of information and evidence given through her mediumship, and yet there is so much more to be done. But it is her way of life that I want to mention once more, her dedication to the ideal of service, and the increase of knowledge and Truth, that men should live better. She gave the best she had to give. Not always was Feda successful; she had her failures, but they were quite outweighed by the successes. Memory recalls so many occasions, from that of Mrs. Kelway Bamber to Rev. Drayton Thomas, who had more than 500 sittings, and as he told one himself, would have had many more if it had been possible.

Before I close I would like to mention one other item. I have been asked many times how many words have been heard in the independent direct whisper at one sitting, and I have been allowed to give you the result of one sitting of October 12th, 1948, given by Mrs. Leonard to my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Conan Shaw, of Angmering, Sussex, who kept a careful record in shorthand of everything said; they had 1,088 words in the *direct independent whisper*, often when Feda was speaking at the same time...

I have tried to tell you quite inadequately the story of a lifetime in a few paragraphs. Spiritualism may have many great mediums, we hope that in the years to come many more will have the gift of mediumship, but this I would like to say: not only is Gladys Osborne Leonard a very great medium, but I would like to add my personal tribute, that she is one of Spiritualism's greatest ladies.

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# The Mediumship of Mrs. Osborne Leonard

## Later Years: New Facts and Factors.

*From a lecture at the College of Psychic Science*

by D. A. NICKELSON—*LIGHT*<sup>4</sup>



Photo by] [Dora Hood, 106, Holland Park Avenue, W. 11.  
MRS. BLANCHE COOPER,  
Voice Medium at the British College.

I WANT first to take you back nearly sixty years, when Mrs. Leonard was twenty-five years of age. She was not then a professional medium, but was very interested in the Spiritualist conception of life, and what it could offer to her. She was on the stage, young, golden-haired, very vivacious, and the ideal pantomime principal boy, and yet the world of Spirit was gently touching her in diverse ways. Chappell the impresario was forming a new company to travel England, doing one-night stands with a then famous melodrama, and

he wanted two young blonde women to take the parts of twin sisters. Mrs. Osborne Leonard applied for one of these parts, and got it. Another lady about the same age obtained the second part. Her name was Hounsell, but she later was much better known under her married name, Mrs. Blanche Cooper.

These two young actresses were automatically put together off the Stage as well as on, and both were happily surprised to find their common interest in Spiritualism. It was a main theme of conversation with them, and they visited the local Spiritualist churches on the Sundays in the towns they happened to be in. Cupid took a part now; Blanche Hounsell married the “heavy” man in the company, and Mrs. Leonard the manager, and on completion of the tour they drifted apart, each going their own ways. As I said previously (*LIGHT*, Summer 1965, p. 78), Mrs. Leonard really started her trance mediumship in the boiler-room of the London Palladium, where Feda first took control, and from this commenced the long years of service to so many people, great and small in the eyes of the world. Would one call it coincidence that two young women at the start of their acting career should meet in this way, share an interest in psychics, part, and then come together again, each to serve mankind with the mediumistic gifts, one for a short while, the other a life-time?

Mr. Leonard gave up the stage in order to help his wife in her new life of mediumship, and was the great power behind the throne of her life, as he is today from the dimension we call Spirit, from which he has guided and helped her for over twenty years, returning so often to prove his identity and to help others to do the same, including a pet dog and cat.

Some years went by. Sir Oliver Lodge had written *Raymond*, the war years of 1914-18 were behind us, Mrs. Leonard was well established in her work, when out of the blue, as it were, Mr.

<sup>4</sup> *LIGHT* Spring 1966, issue No. 3464 Vol. LXXXVI.

and Mrs. Cooper once more crossed the path of the Leonards. It was agreed that, as Mrs. Cooper wished to develop her psychic gifts, it might be a wise course for them to stay a little while in the home of the Leonards, so that they could speak to Fedra, and find out exactly if and what psychic gifts they had. This they did. I must leave you to judge whether this second meeting was an accident, or whether there was some motive force operating, apart from, and outside themselves. As many of you no doubt know, if Fedra was unable to get some subject matter through in trance, she would often use the Ouija board or the table to add to, or correct, any message. While sitting at the table, it was found that when the four people sat with their hands upon it, it would move off the ground, and spell out letters, etc.

Fedra at first could not seem to determine which of the Coopers had the gift of mediumship, but later tests showed that it was Mrs. Cooper, and she eventually went for training to Mr. Hewat Mackenzie, of the British College of Psychic Science. From there she gave much comfort and help through her voice mediumship, but her health was not good, and she decided to leave the College. She and her husband went to live at Wimbledon with a Mr. C. B. Collett, and in the peaceful atmosphere of his home her gifts increased, and Spirit voices were heard clearly and strongly with the medium *not* in trance, not only in the séance room, but also under normal conditions of light in the home. This continued until her early passing to Spirit.

Mrs. Leonard had lost touch with the Coopers, and had no news of them, until Mr. Collett contacted her for a Fedra sitting, and it was then that she discovered that she and Mr. Collett had definite links through relatives and close friends, such as the Coopers. It seems to me that so often, with certain people, you will find this bringing together of two or more, for some specific purpose, often to take place years after the actual earth contact has been made. No doubt some of my readers have reached similar conclusions.

Through years of mediumship it seemed that Mrs. Leonard's condition of trance was deepening, but Fedra informed certain sitters that not only this was coming about, but she felt another form of demonstration would take place. This was to be apart from the independent whisper, or voice, which has been heard as close as inches only from the medium, and as far apart as nearly three feet away, depending so much on the conditions, varying from second to second, but primarily due to the combination, I feel, of sitter, medium, and the "X" factor of discarnate helpers.

One point of study I would bring to your notice is the fact that when a sitter heard the independent whisper, it was clear, distinct and in a voice quite different from that of Fedra, and so often was at least a part of a sentence, sometimes a complete sentence in front of Fedra: the latter would be giving the same information but lagging in time as compared with the whisper. This opens up a field of investigation that could bring forth much new knowledge, if only we had the mediums with this gift of the "Voice".

Let me return to Mr. Collett. This gentleman, who for many years was the chief engineer of the Great Western Railway, was a dedicated student of all things psychic, with an alert, trained mind, and the gift of balancing facts clearly. After only two sittings with Fedra he was told that he would receive much information from someone apart from Fedra, and in his own home conditions. This proved to be true. Mrs. Leonard would on occasion pay a social visit to Mr.

Collett, usually for lunch (they had the further point in common that they were both vegetarians – in fact Mr. Collett was a Vegan).

After lunch one day, talking quietly together over psychic matters generally, they BOTH heard a whispered voice speaking. The first time it was not very distinct and did not last long, but on subsequent visits the whisper became stronger, clearer, and remained up to a limit of about thirty minutes, and gave proof of identity, information that could be checked and some precognition too. The communicator proved to be Mrs. Effa Collett, Mr. C. B. Collett's wife, who had passed to Spirit some twenty years before. On numerous occasions she was joined for a short time by Mrs. Blanche Cooper, who also proved her identity beyond question. Each gave valuable information, but again one point of interest I would place before you. Effa Collett would on many occasions toward the end of her stay near earth give a message for me, and she would *always* say "Please give this to McDonald." She insisted on the "Mac," whereas both Mrs. Leonard and Mr. Collett knew my name was Donald, without the Mac. When questioned on this point many times by both sitters, the only answer given was, "that is his name," but as I have never borne this name during this life, I do not know the answer to this problem.

I believe that a great many people think of Mrs. Leonard as having only one control, Fedra, whereas from the early days of her mediumship a discarnate being who gave his name as North Star would give healing through the entranced medium. He seldom spoke himself, but his work was most efficient. He was, we were told, a North American Indian when on earth. In the early days of 1940 Fedra informed us that the time was near when another aspect of Spirit would demonstrate through her medium. This happened quietly one day when Mrs. Leonard went into trance, and instead of the well-known Fedra greeting, a deeper-toned, quiet voice gave the greeting and told us that she was the one that Fedra had told us would contact earth, and gave many details and some explanations of the reason for her coming. When the point of a name or label came up, we said to her, "You are not Fedra, so let us call you NAFEDRA." She agreed, and to this day that is the name we call her by.

I would like to give you quickly further details for your thought and record. Fedra has been seen by many clairvoyants. Mrs. Leonard has seen her once build up in front of her, etherealised, with every detail clear. The combined opinion of her appearance is as a dark-haired, dark-eyed young Indian girl (of India), aged about 14 years; whereas Nafedra, again seen by several people very clearly, is tall, with red-gold hair, blue eyes, delicate pale complexion, deeper speaking voice than Fedra, and with quite a different laugh in tone and capacity. These details I can myself confirm from personal observation over twenty years, plus one other detail: Nafedra has always appeared to us in a beautiful shade of blue gown, whereas Fedra appears in a sari of quite different colour from the gown. On earth we are anxious always to give a name of some kind to people, as an identity-disc, as it were, and we know that the names of Fedra and Nafedra are but labels for use on earth, and not the names used in their world.

It was very apparent, too, that each of these controls used a different section as it were of the keyboard of the medium's mind, for Nafedra's phraseology was entirely different from Fedra's, whose Fedra-isms, as I call them, included such examples as when the Rev. Drayton Thomas was receiving in the independent whisper the remark from his father: "I want you to keep this in that category," The remark was given by Fedra as "I want you to keep this in that 'cat and doggerly'."

Another example was when I was given a message from a communicator who used the term in the voice to me of “telekinesis,” which Feda translated as “tin cans,” and “tin cans” this word has always been since. It is my personal belief that to many sitters the Feda-isms became an integral part of the personality of this great control, possibly one of the finest translators of thought from the world of Spirit into the speech of earth that modern times have so far produced.

In these later days it was most interesting to watch, listen and learn from the two quite different aspects of mediumship that Mrs. Leonard was now demonstrating. First the well-known deep trance mediumship of Feda, with the independent whisper or voice; then the independent whisper with Mrs. Leonard NOT in trance, on her visits to Mr. Collett at Wimbledon; then the deep trance control of Nafeda, giving yet another aspect of Truth, a facet of differing texture from Feda, and lastly the varied forms of demonstration that occurred from time to time under normal conditions of living, a galaxy in its diversity. Under this latter heading I would give the many and varied perfumes that would enrich the house and garden on occasion as we walked about, or sat quietly reading or talking, scents quite different from anything we could cull from earth memory.

Human beings are so often creatures of habit, and I would very often join Mrs. Leonard on a quiet walk along the promenade in front of her home, where few people would expect psychic demonstrations to take place, but they did. Mrs. Leonard was always alert in mind and body, and very agile, and at the end of a day spent in the séance room she would often give little jumps of happiness as we walked along for work well done, I often thought. On a pleasant sunny evening, with a number of people walking on the promenade, I watched Mrs. Leonard suddenly not just jump, as she had done, but levitated quite two feet from the ground, and carried along so smoothly a greater distance than she could have achieved herself, even if she had been an Olympic long-jump record-holder. This occurred on numerous occasions, it was objective: anyone there could have seen it, and the result was always to give Mrs. Leonard a feeling of enrichment, new life, and happiness. One evening I too was air-borne, to experience this new feeling myself, and to have proof of what can be accomplished by those in Spirit, when the conditions on earth are right for such demonstrations.

During the last war Mrs. Leonard had a Morrison shelter in her lounge and used the top as a table. On it she used to have a very heavy old-fashioned fork and spoon of silver, and before an alert was given publicly, and many times before raiders came in, as they often did, without an alert being given, one could watch fascinatedly either of these two heavy objects quietly lift themselves up from the horizontal to the upright, stay for a moment or two, and then drop back on to the top of the Morrison shelter. This was a warning from Mrs. Leonard’s husband in Spirit to take cover in the shelter against enemy action, and not once can we recall the advice being ill-founded. This protection and guarding of his wife wherever possible, the inner inspiration, the comfort, the enrichment, has been the keynote of the relationship between the medium on earth and her husband in Spirit, a beautiful team effort, that Death has only strengthened and beautified.

The experience of a life-time, the ebb and flow of Life’s vibrant current, the garnering of knowledge (and its wise use), the ever-widening scope of understanding, have slowly but surely given a greater depth to her mediumship and enabled her to offer to those who have her in their

keeping, in the world of Spirit, a broader canvas, so that they can select more delicately from the keyboard of her mind facts and more facts, and thus benefit all who are prepared to listen.

To the best of my knowledge and belief what I have told you is true and factual, and now that Mrs. Leonard is fast approaching her eighty-fourth year, she is still very much in contact with current thought and aspirations, and so often is brilliantly illuminated from within by this very developed conscious reception that is her gift from the Other World, that she might in the peace and quiet of her own home still continue to add her quota to Life and, as she believes, complete this kindergarten stage of development of the individual, as well as of mediumship, all that has gone before being but the prelude to that greater, wider scope that will be offered to us when we pass the portal of so-called Death.

But one great factor stands out in my mind: Mrs. Leonard has sought to live her life by a set of principles. Some of them were not popular when she first commenced, such as her vegetarian way of life, but this did not deter her one iota, for she has believed, as so many of us believe, that principles are excellent, but unless we put them into practice they are gone like the wind. Mrs. Leonard has not only tried to find right principles, but with the aid and promptings of those in Spirit has dedicated herself to live them.

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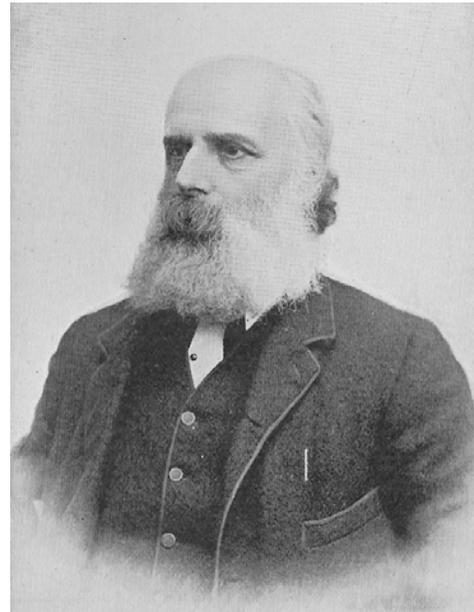
# WILLIAM JOHNSON

February 24th, 1838 — August 1st, 1914

*First president of the Spiritualists' National Union*

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[**Note by PJG:**—This photograph of William Johnson is taken from page 8 of *The Two Worlds Portrait Album*; the album contains many of the principal workers that brought together the Spiritualists' National Union, and other pioneering Spiritualists. There are upwards of 100 portraits, accompanied with short Biographical Sketches.



This album, it was claimed by *The Two Worlds* was one of the finest and cheapest volumes ever issued from the Spiritual Press, (James Burns was the forerunner in producing affordable spiritualistic material). The album was printed on plate glazed paper, and bound in strong cloth covers; gold lettered, it was intended also as a fine ornament for the Spiritualist drawing-room table.

The album was for offered for sale in mid October 1896, if ordered before Oct. 21st you would receive this handsome album for 2s. if collected, or 2s. 6d posted.]

[**Note by LP:**—Although there are a number of interesting features in this report discovered by Paul Gaunt that follows, especially its additional detail on the early days of the SNU, I should like to pose a more general question: How much overlap was there between the early UK Spiritualists and the Unitarians?

An outstanding study by John Buescher *The Other Side of Death*⁵ left no doubt that there was heavy influence on American Spiritualism from the Unitarians and Universalists. (See *Psypioneer* June 2004, p.13.⁶)

Has the Unitarian link with UK Spiritualism been not fully appreciated because it was later an embarrassment to both parties?

⁵ *The Other Side of Salvation* by John B. Buescher, published by Skinner House Books, Boston, 2004. See also: *In the Historian's Chair – Dr John Buescher*. *Psypioneer* Vol.1, No. 13 pages 145-149: http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP13.pdf . Please note unfortunately; www.spirithistory.com is no longer in existence.

⁶ http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP2.pdf

We have already reprinted some relevant evidence, such as the family background of Percy Wilson,⁷ and the role of Margaret Wilkinson,⁸ sister of Emma Hardinge Britten, in Manchester Unitarianism. Now we learn that William Johnson,⁹ who presided at the first AGM of the SNU, was laid to rest in a Unitarian graveyard. More information on early Unitarian connections will be published soon.]

Below is taken from *The Two Worlds*.¹⁰

ANOTHER PIONEER PROMOTED

WILLIAM JOHNSON,

PASSED TO SPIRIT LIFE ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 1st, 1914

His Early Life. How He Came Into the Work for Our Cause. His Work as a Speaker. His Connection with “*The Two Worlds*,” the National Union, and other Public Activities of Spiritualism. The Interment of the Mortal Remains.

TOWARDS the end of last year many friends noticed that the physical health of Mr. Johnson was palpably waning. He found it necessary to cancel his engagements to speak for our Societies, and to remain quietly at home during the trying weather of the late winter.

Early in the present year a slight paralysis occurred, the effect of which was to practically confine him to the house. Later a second shock followed, when our dear friend was compelled to keep to his bed; while at 6-30 on the morning of Saturday, the 1st inst., a third crisis came during sleep, and so, in the early dawn, he passed from night to day, from this to the world of spirits.

The end had naturally been anticipated, hence it caused little surprise to those who knew the circumstances. Seventy-six years of a well-spent life were thus completed. To the last he was vigorous of mind, cheerful in spirit, and full of concern for the welfare of the Movement he had served so faithfully for almost half a century.

On Wednesday last, the 5th August, 1914 (let the date stand as fixing the fact), the last rites were paid to the mortal casket. A plain coffin, with an unadorned shield, over the form. All it said was “William Johnson. Passed on August 1st, 1914. Aged 76 years.” It was his wish. Simplicity, no flowers, no singing. As little speechmaking as may be. It

⁷ Vol. 6, No. 1 pages 17-22: *Our new president, Percy Wilson*: <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.1January2010..pdf>

⁸ Vol. 6, No. 2 pages 46-47: *In Memoriam—Mrs. Margaret Wilkinson*: <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.2February2010..pdf>

⁹ First Spiritualists’ National Union (SNU), president 1901-1903. S.N.U. Yearbook 2010.

¹⁰ *The Two Worlds* August 14, 1914 pages 407-409.

hurt some of us, for we would have gladly put flowers over that mute form. We would have delighted to sing of life and liberty. We felt the need of some means of discharging our pent-up emotions. But it was not to be, and the Spartan simplicity was accepted because it was his wish, for the wishes of the living in such matters are a sacred trust.

The unpretentious chamber was a chapel consecrated to its one silent occupant. The grey-haired wife, her heart welling to her eyes. The loving daughter, bearing bravely. The son, feeling much, saying little. Other members of the family, and friends and fellow-workers filled the room, and overflowed into hallway and other rooms.

Then came a hush, and the voice of the speaker (his old friend, J. J. Morse), whom our friend specially desired to officiate, sounded softly and vibrant as he commenced a finely phrased and formed eulogy of the arisen one. Rarely has this speaker spoken to greater acceptance on such an occasion. The tribute, as befitted the place, was to the man, the husband, the father, and the friend. To his honour, probity, and faithfulness in all things. It was a life to remember and to inspire. A life to emulate. A life of toil and trial, but a life of triumph over many difficulties. Speaking of an unbroken friendship of over forty years, the voice became tender, and low, for deep feelings were stirred. Then, on an exulting note of the deathlessness of life, the speaker closed, and the spell upon us lessened with a long-drawn breath. Presently that plain casket, with its still occupant, was reverently borne to the hearse, and conveyed to the Unitarian Chapel at Gee Cross, a short two miles away.

The Unitarians own a handsome chapel at Gee Cross,¹¹ to which there is a burying ground attached. The building is large, handsome, and roomy inside, but just a trifle gloomy. The cortege consisted of a procession of friends, a hearse, and carriages. Reverently we entered the edifice, and some 200 seated themselves in the allotted seats. Again the speaker addressed himself to his duty. His theme took a broader sweep, for now he spoke of the public life and work of the arisen one. He made special references to his moral courage, his services to Spiritualism, his hatred of pomp and cant; his early struggles, his consistency through all the various windings of a chequered earthly life. "For forty years" said the speaker, with a touch of pathos in his voice, "William Johnson was my intimate friend. Never during that time did we have a wry word," a fine tribute to a fine friendship. The gospel he had expounded was a gospel of life, not of death. Let us rejoice that he has been promoted. That which made the clay alive still lived. He had been brave enough to cast aside man-made creeds; some may have called him Godless, but God loves honest men who live the life their souls have found.

Then the final disposition of the remnant of mortality. Out there in the afternoon sunshine, with the fair sky above. A few more words of the beauty and stay of our knowledge. It was not hope nor belief; we know that death is not the end of life. Remember him at his best, treasure the good you know of him, and let it inspire you to go and do likewise.

¹¹ Unitarians believe in the Unity or unipersonality of God, as opposed to the doctrine of the Trinity - hence the name 'Unitarian'. Unitarianism only became legal in 1813 but was particularly influential in the 19th century. See:— <http://www.unitarian.org.uk/ecu/HydeChapel/> (Ed)

A few flowers dropped down the grave. A last look at the casket, and then, with the lesson of it all in our hearts, we slowly went back again to the busy life, but not to forgetfulness of the scenes we had so newly participated in.

ATTENDANTS AT THE INTERMENT.

Apart from the large concourse of local and other Spiritualist friends who occupied seats in the chapel and stood at the graveside, the following escorted the remains from the house to the burial ground: Mr. C. Johnson, Mr. W. Richardson, Mr. J. Richardson (Denton), Mr. B. Robinson (Leigh), M. W. Potter (York), Mr. R. Peat (Dewsbury), Mr. J. Wright (Hyde), Mr. J. Sutcliffe (Slaithwaite), Mr. J. H. Meal and Mr. Meal, jun. (Hyde), Mr. Armitage (Blackpool), Mr. J. C. Macdonald (Nantwich), Mr. G. Hill (Hyde), Mr. W. France (Radclyffe), Mr. Brown (Hyde), Mr. A. Berry (Hyde), Mr. T. Hampson (Hyde), Mr. J. Hampson (Hyde), Mr. T. Cooke (Hyde), and Mr. J. Rowcroft (Hyde). Mr. S. Howarth (president) and Mr. W. Ardern (secretary) represented the H de Branch of the Typographical Association.

The Directors of THE TWO WORLDS Publishing Co. Ltd. (who sent a handsome wreath) were represented by Mr. J. T. Ward (Blackburn), Mr. M. Harwood (Darwen), and Mr. J. J. Morse (Manchester). The Spiritualists' National Union was represented by the General Secretary, Mr. Hanson G. Hey (Halifax), the Vice-President, Mr. E. W. Oaten (Sheffield), and Mrs. Mary A. Stair, hon. secretary, S.N.U. Fund of Benevolence.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

For nearly half a century the name of William Johnson has been "as familiar as household words" in the ears of thousands of Spiritualists in the North of England. He was born at York on February 24th, 1838.

From his early youth he followed the profession of a compositor in various towns, finally settling at Hyde, where he had a long and honourable connection with the staff of the *North Cheshire Herald*.

He was born and trained a Methodist, and became a Sunday school teacher, superintendent, and local preacher. As he advanced in years the tenets of Methodism failed to satisfy his increasing desire and quest for knowledge. The result of his searchings was that he lost faith in the creed of his denomination, finally abandoning its borders and entering upon the field of freethought, ultimately becoming an atheist. At this stage of his career his first wife passed away. He became restless, for some two years travelled about the country, finally settling in Hyde, as mentioned above, remaining there until he left the body. He encountered many trying experiences, for his youth and early manhood were passed during times of famine and unemployment of the early or, as they have been described, "the hungry forties."

But the matter of most interest is his connection with the Movement of Modern Spiritualism, with which he was closely associated in the North of England for 46 years. He gained his first information through listening to a lecture upon "Spiritualism" by a Mr. J. W. Morgan (secretary of the Manchester Temperance Society), assisted by Miss Halstead, a trance

medium, also of Manchester. The meeting was held under the auspices of the original Manchester Pioneer Propaganda Committee, which included, among others, Reuben Sutcliffe, John Hodgson, James Tomison, and John Lord (of Huddersfield). Mr. Johnson determined to investigate the alleged phenomena. He became developed as a table medium, and was levitated in the room. The phenomenon of the elongation of the body also occurred with him. Subsequently he became developed as a trance speaking medium, first consciously, then semi-consciously, and at a later stage as an inspirationalist.

The Pioneer Workers' Committee called a Conference in Manchester, at which Mr. Johnson and his friend, Mr. Jackson, of Newton, were present. Mr. Johnson made his first public speech for Spiritualism at this meeting and subsequently, in connection with Mr. Jackson, occupied the platform of the Temperance Hall, Grosvenor-street, Manchester, for a number of months on Sunday afternoons. In due course Mr. Johnson's sphere of action broadened, and his voice was heard upon hundreds of platforms in Cheshire, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cumberland, and in places farther North, even into Scotland.

In all movements set on foot for the furtherance of Modern Spiritualism in the North of England Mr. Johnson played a foremost part; in not a few instances was he the instigator as well as the stalwart worker. To his initiative was due the formation of the Lancashire District Committee (the pioneer District Council), and one of the best organised the Cause has known. In conjunction with others he visited Yorkshire, and explained the methods of the Lancashire Committee, with the result that the Yorkshire District Committee was formed, which subsequently became the present Yorkshire County Union of Spiritualist Societies and Spiritualists.

When the establishing of this paper was under consideration in 1887 Mr. Johnson took a principal part in its promotion. When in the same year THE TWO WORLDS Publishing Co. Ltd. was formed he joined the board of directors, remaining a member thereof down to the day of his transition, an unbroken association of 27 years' duration. His practical experience and technical knowledge made him a most valuable member of the board, for his wise counsel assisted the new venture over many difficulties. The Movement owes him a debt of gratitude for his services in connection with the birth and progress of "our Paper," of which these words are but an all too brief acknowledgment.

Mr. Johnson was always a staunch believer in an organised Cause. He was a thorough believer in the principles of co-operation and co-ordination. It is not remarkable then that he was one of the foremost spirits in forming our National Organisation, the meeting to consider the possibility of such a body being held at the home of Mrs. Britten on Tuesday, April 1st, 1890, when Mr. Johnson was present, with Mrs. Britten, Mrs. Wilkinson, Mrs. Wallis, and Messrs. Fitton, Lee, Tetlow, Hopcroft, Tomlinson, Morse, Wallis, Brown, and Simpkins. The new body was called the Spiritualists' National Federation. In 1902 Mr. Johnson was elected President of the Federation for the following year, and he presided at the first A.G.M. of the National Union, which rose Phoenix-like from the original Federation. Mr. Johnson joined the Executive Council of the Federation in 1890, and remained a member down to the time of his transition, an unbroken connection of twenty-four years—a splendid testimony to the

appreciation and confidence of and in him by our people at large. Thus, in merest outline, are recorded the salient facts in the life of the man who has lately been promoted to the higher life.

But no biographical sketch, however well written, could convey the charm of the personality of this man. Born of the people, one of the people, and always with and for the people. Large of soul, broad of mind, and tender of heart. The bright spirit shining in his eyes, indicating the indomitable courage of the man, gripped you as he gazed upon you and clasped your hand with firm magnetic grasp. He was a consistent liver, acting out what he professed. He was an abstainer and a non-smoker; he abhorred cant and humbug. He disliked show and parade; he worked, and allowed others to talk and wear the honours he often won for them. He was outspoken, frank, and fearless of opposition. For him creeds were values; of the orthodox dogmas he would have none. He became known as "the Sledgehammer" of our work. He reminded one of the line ". . . a strong man in his might smiting the godless shrines of men." He was indeed a veritable Thor's hammer of a man. He was a Socialist of the broadest outlook, and yet an individualist who deemed self-help as a common duty due to oneself. He was a born reformer, and a couple of hundred years ago he would have certainly won a martyr's crown.

The host of our arisen pioneers is the richer for his presence; we workers are the poorer for his passing.

At the end of the article, *The Two Worlds* directors honour their former colleague:

**THE DIRECTORS OF "THE TWO WORLDS" PUBLISHING COMPANY
LIMITED**

At the monthly meeting of the Directors of this Company, held on Monday afternoon, the 10th inst., the following resolution was unanimously passed, and it was ordered that it be sent for publication in the company's journal, placed upon the minutes, and a copy be sent to Mrs. Johnson: —

"The Directors of THE TWO WORLDS Publishing Company, having learned with feelings of great regret of the departure to the Higher Life of their tried friend and faithful colleague of twenty-seven years, Mr. William Johnson, of Hyde (one of the original promotors and shareholders, and member of the Board of Directors since the establishing of the Company twenty-seven years ago), do hereby put on record their high esteem for him as a man, and their sincere appreciation of the invaluable services he rendered in the formation of this Company, and the launching of the publication of its journal. They are gratified to know that he remained a member of the Board down to the time of his transition, and are confident that he, in his new sphere, still maintains his interest in the work he was so long connected with. They also desire to extend to Mrs. Johnson and her family their sincere sympathy at this time of personal loss, and to earnestly express the hope that she may find solace in the memories connected with the honourable career of her universally respected arisen companion."

(Signed FRED TOMLINSON, Chairman.
J. J. Morse, Secretary.)

GORDON HIGGINSON

[**Note by LP:**—Reference was made in our previous issue¹² to early Spiritualist reports of the Gordon Higginson mental mediumship. We reprint below the most controversial of these. The following article triggered considerable discussion in *Two Worlds*, on which we here comment briefly. Finally we reprint the sequel article in 1960 when Philip Paul revealed the result of SNU consideration.]

The Curious Case of Gordon Higginson

THIS EXTRAORDINARY STORY MUST NOW BE
TOLD

By Philip Paul—*THE TWO WORLDS*¹³

THIS is a strange story. A true story. Perhaps a sad story. Above all, a story that must be told.

On January 8, 1950, a suave, well-groomed young man swept into town on the wings of fast-growing fame. That night, under the auspices of Marylebone Spiritualist Association in Victoria Hall, Bloomsbury, he made his London debut before a packed, expectant audience.

Sitting at the Press table, I heard the gasps of wonderment and the vigorous applause that punctuated his efforts. Afterwards, when I interviewed some of the recipients of his messages, my notes bulged with their tributes to his accuracy. Gordon Higginson, Staffordshire's "wonder medium," had arrived.

But, three years later, on October 12, 1953, a meeting of the MSA council adopted the following resolution:

"The messages given by Gordon Higginson are not the type we require to be given from our platform because they are of a material nature with very little evidence of spirit communication. The secretary was instructed to cancel the engagement of Mr. Higginson . . . It was decided that no further bookings be arranged."

¹² Vol. 6, No.4:—*The Physical Mediumship of Gordon Higginson* — Dr Barrie Colvin pages 109-114:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.4.April2010..pdf>

¹³ *The Two Worlds*, May 23, 1959. Front page—concluding on page 8.



Promised to retire

Then on May 5, 1956, *Two Worlds* published Higginson's announcement that he was retiring from public mediumship. There were, he stated, "many reasons" for his decision. A demonstration at the opening of the new Croydon Spiritualist Church on June 9 would be his last public appearance.

But it wasn't. Higginson went on. On Good Friday this year, in a Ilford Spiritualist Church, he delivered more of the "name, address and telephone number" messages for which he is renowned.

I interviewed four of the nine recipients. Each, I discovered, was a church official. I said so in my report, which appeared in *Two Worlds* for April 11.

Two days later, the Editor received a letter from Dr. John Winning Glasgow's leading Spiritualist. It said:

"Your report of Gordon Higginson's meeting by Philip Paul stains my loyalty to your paper almost to breaking point. Three years ago . . . Paul had the opportunity of witnessing a Higginson demonstration . . . Since then there has been several attacks on . . . Higginson's method of presenting our truth . . ."

"Long after your name is forgotten and perhaps mine too and certainly Philip Paul's Gordon Higginson's name will be revered and honoured by those he has helped and comforted. Tell Paul to . . . stop his splenic attacks on a man who is doing excellent work."

Winning was not the only writer on the subject. Came the following, from William Porteous, secretary of the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists:

"At this meeting of our committee, I was instructed to indicate to Two Worlds our disapproval of a recent article by Philip Paul in which he wrote in a cheap and malicious manner concerning Gordon Higginson. We have this gentleman at our church as frequently as we can persuade him to come; he is due to be with us on Saturday."

[Our request to know which word, sentence or paragraph could possibly be construed as "cheap and malicious" brought no reply.—Editor (TW).]

Background story

An odd chain of events? The oddness lessens in the light of the background story.

In 1956, I was writing for this newspaper a series of "Profiles" on prominent personalities in the Movement. When I was asked to report a Higginson demonstration at the College of Psychic Science on April 22, I wrote to Higginson telling him I would be covering this meeting and asked to see him for his "profile" story afterwards. He replied, fixing the appointment.

At the meeting, I was the recipient of his second message. The information he gave contained six facts—the year of my birth; the name of an establishment at which I received part of my education; the initials of an organisation for which I have worked; that motoring is one of my recreations; my wife’s initials, and her maiden name.

Each fact and the sequence in which they were given, tallied with an entry under my name in a well known literary directory. One of the details printed in the directory is incorrect. Higginson’s message reproduced the inaccuracy.

Postponing publication of my report, I wrote to Higginson asking whether he could give an explanation. I said that if he would give me his word that *neither he nor anyone connected with him* had consulted the directory, I would accept it. In a five-page reply, he wrote: “I would rather die than stoop so low as to invent a message from spirit. I plead as an innocent man that at no time have *I* ever consulted a directory of any kind.” The italics are mine.

Error not corrected

In a second letter, two days later, Higginson said he had made “a big decision.” “Since I made my debut in London I have never been happy,” he wrote, “Vicious tongues have said unkind things about me. Now I am leaving Spiritualism for good. Let me retire happy. You would help me a lot if you would cancel the Profile report and the report of last Sunday afternoon. I can then rest peacefully.”

Because of his close knowledge of Higginson, I passed the facts to Harold Vigurs and asked for his help. Confessing that he was troubled, he postulated the theory that Higginson could have read the directors entry psychically, without seeing the book.

At my suggestion, Higginson gave me a private sitting at the college on May 5, with the object of identifying and clarifying the point of error in his April 22 message. Also present were my wife, Harold Vigurs, and Higginson’s associate, Frank Tams. The error was not identified or corrected.

In another letter, Higginson wrote: “I want to tell you now what I couldn’t before. The day before your first letter arrived I had received my doctor’s diagnosis of my health. He told me I was suffering from a serious heart complaint and unless I rested he would only give me 12 months to live.

“Since last week [the announcement of his retirement] I have had 600 letters begging me not to give up. One young man cycled all the way from Newcastle-on-Tyne to ask me to reconsider. The phone has not ceased ringing. I know now I have to give up if I am to live to help humanity. Also I am so disappointed in Spiritualism.”

Decision for silence

Later he invited Maurice Barbanell, Editor of *Two Worlds*, and myself to lunch in London. After telling us that he had been elected to the board of directors of the shoe company for which he was working, he repeated his intention, to retire from spiritualism and again appealed for the facts about my message to be suppressed.

After careful consideration, it was decided that, in view of his promised retirement and the report of the precarious state of his health, the story need not, and should not, be published.

There, for a time, the matter rested. But, within a few months, it was obvious that Higginson had not retired. More and more reports came in of his demonstrations up and down the country. As they multiplied, editorial uneasiness over withholding earlier facts mounted.

For the first time since 1956, I saw him at Ilford on Good Friday. I wrote a factual report. Then came the Glaswegians' attack. It was clear that silence could be preserved no longer. But there were blanks to be investigated and filled in.

On May 8, at a meeting with MSA officials, I learned the facts behind the Association's resolution of October 12, 1953.

The secretary, Ralph Rossiter, told how Higginson had been invited to a home circle in his flat above the MSA's old premises in Russell Square. There, he was told of Rossiter's experiences through the mediumship of Evan Powell.

Wrong Powell

When Higginson demonstrated at Victoria Hall shortly afterwards, he gave Rossiter a message mentioning well-known people in Paignton—Rossiter's home town—and especially Evan Powell, with an address purporting to be Powell's.

Rossiter could not identify the address, and wrote to Powell for his comments. Powell replied there were two Evan Powells in Paignton and Higginson had given the address of the other one.

From the same platform, friends of an MSA council member, who had also met Higginson in Rossiter's home circle, were given, by Higginson, the council member's married name and a "William A" and "Arthur" of the same surname, connected with Guernsey. The statement, "You will get a letter from York House," was also made.

"While the council member's husband came from Guernsey, there were two families bearing his surname on the island, "William A" and "Arthur" were father and son of the other family; unconnected with him. The message about a letter from York House was incomprehensible, because, although the

council member's husband owned a house of that name in Guernsey, it had been taken away from him during the German occupation and had not been lived in since.

Specially invited

There were strange happenings when Higginson demonstrated at Victoria Hall on September 13, 1953. Two women arrived at the hall saying they had received a telegram from the medium telling them to be sure to be present. They received a message.

A receptionist overheard one member of the audience ask another: "You are in the circle, aren't you? Did you get a message from Gordon to come tonight too?" The reply was, "Yes, he asked me to be sure to come as he had some news for me."

Shortly after the meeting had started, a woman arrived and, announcing herself, said she had a letter from Higginson asking her to be sure to attend as he had a message for her. No seat was available, but Rossiter said he would tell Higginson she was present.

"Oh no, don't do that, he might not like it," she replied. Later, a man left the hall and the woman was given his seat. She received a message.

The day before the meeting, an MSA member, D. W. Seaward, then of 111 Harlesden Gardens, London, N.W 10, and now of 78 Gladstone Park Gardens, London. N.W.2, met Higginson in the MSA office and asked the medium to give him a private sitting. Higginson said he did not give private sittings. Seaward tried to persuade him to make an exception in his case, and gave him a visiting card bearing his name and address.

During the meeting next day, Higginson asked if anyone knew the name "Sydney Satterthwaite." Seaward recognised this as the name of his next-door neighbour. "He lives at 113," said Higginson. "Yes." said Seaward.

During the message that followed, Seaward acknowledged "David" as his own first name—"but I'm usually called Dan or Walter"—and confirmed Higginson's statements that he lived near a vicarage occupied by a Rev. Pearson and had another neighbour named Aston, at 109.

He also confirmed that Satterthwaite had a greengrocery business in St. John's Avenue, that Mrs. Satterthwaite's name was Nellie and that "Daphne" was a niece staying with the Satterthwaites. "Mrs. Faber, another neighbour," was also mentioned in the message, but this was not understood.

When Higginson said, "Margaret will be all right," Seaward replied, "Thank you. It is my wife." It was well known in MSA circles at the time that Mrs. Seaward was ill.

Seaward was unable to place the demonstrator's statement, "You have a relative in the body named Bernard, connected with Sandringham Road or Avenue."

[At that time, all messages given from the MSA platform, were recorded verbatim.—Editor. (TW)]

When I interviewed him after the meeting, the recipient told me it was his first message from Higginson.

Secretary's check

The following day, Rossiter visited Westminster Central Library, where a reference section covering the world is available. In the "London Post Office Directory," he found details of Harlesden Gardens, off St. John's Avenue. The vicarage and the Rev. Pearson were listed at number 91. Satterthwaite, greengrocer, was listed under St. Johns Avenue.

In the Kilburn/Willesden section "Kelly's Directory," John Aston was entered at 109 Harlesden Gardens, David W. Seaward at 111, and Sydney Satterthwaite at 113. This directory contained no mention of the vicarage or the Rev. Pearson. Instead, a Mrs. Faber was listed at number 91.

In the alphabetical index, there were only two entries under Seaward—the recipient and a Bernard Seaward, of 70a, Sandringham Road.

When Rossiter told Seaward of his findings, he at first thought the directory information confirmed the accuracy of the message, but when the "Mrs. Faber" and "Bernard Seaward, connected with Sandringham Road or Avenue" aspects became clear, he was greatly shocked, for he knew nothing of the people named and did not know he had a namesake living in Sandringham Road.

I called on Seaward, whom I know personally, last week. He reiterated the facts and gave me permission to use his name in publishing them.

Seen in library

At the meeting with MSA officials, I asked what had prompted Rossiter to undertake his research in the library. I was answered by the Association's chief steward, Cyril D. Farley, who said that, while visiting the library one Saturday, he had met Higginson coming out of the building. He had a conversation with Higginson, who told him he was giving a demonstration in Deptford that day.

After passing their resolution of October 12, 1953, the MSA referred their dossier on Higginson to Brigadier R. C. Firebrace, chairman of the mediums' committee of the Spiritualist Council for Common Action. I asked Firebrace, last week, what was done in the matter. He told me that it was examined by the SCCA, but some members considered the case not proven and no unanimous decision was reached.

Firebrace, who is also president of the College of Psychic Science, added that, in 1956, Higginson undertook to give a series of six test sittings at the college. He gave one and then defaulted. The college thereupon cancelled all arrangements with him.

Finally, I spoke again to Harold Vigurs, who has been present at many of Higginson's meetings throughout the country and abroad and has made a special study of his work. "He has given me evidences clearly showing that he possesses outstanding psychic powers," Vigurs told me.

What is the key?

This, then, is the curious case of Gordon Higginson, minister of the Spiritualists' National Union and a centre of controversy. It deserves the attention of every Spiritualist in Britain. It cannot be shelved or disregarded, for its implications touch the very basis of the Movement.

Is Higginson the unwitting possessor of a psychic talent that enables him to read books without opening them? Or is there another explanation?

Some decision must be reached. The reputation of a Glaswegian prophet depends upon it.

Footnote. Higginson is advertised to give a demonstration of clairvoyance at Newcastle-on-Tyne City Hall on Saturday, May 30, with C. I. Quastel, Spiritualists' National Union, president, as chairman.

[End of first article]

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**[Note by L. P:]**—After the article by Philip Paul, whose sub-headings we have also included as is our custom, both critics and defenders of Gordon Higginson had their say. Dr Winning championed GH on May 30, and suggested that P. Paul had a grudge against GH. Many other mediums, he pointed out, had been accused of fraud. Hundreds and thousands of people had been amazed at the accuracy of the GH messages. Harold Vigurs was more judicious. He acquitted PP of any wrong motive, and suggested that some aspect of ESP might have led GH to clairvoyantly read directories. Ilford Church wrote to say only 3 not 4 of the message recipients were office holders. Mrs Calway of Eltham Church recalled a message with info about her (info printed in the SNU diary), delivered at an LDC convention from which she was absent. Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society cancelled their order for TW.

It was not until the following year that Philip Paul had further news of the case – this time from the SNU, as we reprint below.]

**“We have every confidence in Higginson”—S.N.U.**

## **“NO FURTHER ACTION” IN HIS MYSTERY MESSAGES**

**But they do not want press controversy**

BY PHILIP PAUL—*THE TWO WORLDS*<sup>14</sup>

REMEMBER “The Curious Case of Gordon Higginson”? This was the strange history of mediumistic messages that (1) repeated an inaccurate directory entry, (2) gave an address purporting to be that of a well-known Welsh Spiritualist when it was, in fact, that of an unrelated namesake listed in the telephone book for the same town, (3) reproduced contradictory information published in two street directories for North- West London, and (4) caused two major London Spiritualist organisations to cancel all future bookings with the medium concerned?

Perhaps you reached your own conclusions from an article on the case which I wrote in *Two Worlds* for May 23 last year. It has taken the Spiritualists’ National Union—from whom Higginson holds the certificate of a minister of religion—a little bit longer to make up its official mind.

I learned the result of the SNU’s eight months of deliberations on the matter from a letter I receive from their general secretary, Richard Ellidge, last Saturday.

### **“No useful purpose”**

The letter said: “In view of the fact that no formal charge has been made against Mr. Higginson and that no evidence in support ... has been received, no further action will be taken.

“The national council have every confidence in Mr. Gordon Higginson as a demonstrator. I am also to advise you that this letter is not for publication, as the council think that no useful purpose would be served by any Press controversy in which they might have to take part.”

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<sup>14</sup> *The Two Worlds*, January 30<sup>th</sup> 1960 front page.

## **No solution given**

The importance of “The Curious Case of Gordon Higginson” to the movement as a whole merits overriding the censorship imposed by the SNU. No attempt has been made by the SNU—the body responsible for the national face of Spiritualism—to answer the questions I posed last May:

“Is Higginson the unwitting possessor of a psychic talent that enables him to read books without opening them? Or is there another explanation?”

I believe that readers are entitled to the answers or to the story behind responsible official Spiritualism’s failure to provide them.

My letter on Saturday from Richard Ellidge concluded a strange, sometimes difficult to follow, correspondence.

After publication of my article last May, *Two Worlds* gave space to a challenge to Higginson issued by Charles Cardell, a consultant psychologist, in an endeavour to clear up the mystery. Cardell offered Higginson £1,000 if he could accurately name half a dozen small articles in a sealed box.

On July 6, Ellidge sent me a telegram reading, “Mr Higginson, as minister and member of SNU, has placed matter of challenge into hands of national council.”

Two days later there was another telegram from the SNU. This one read, “Higginson case referred by national council to Union solicitors—Ellidge.”

## **Oasis in desert**

There was also a letter from Higginson’s mother, written from his address at Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs. It said: Have you a son? I have three. Would you wish to have someone who would jeopardise his position and drag a good name in the mud?

“You are doing this to Gordon. He has given money, time and everything to the people. We are poor through his generosity. Have you seen Longton church? It is an oasis in a desert. The Press is not the place to do it to him. Things can be discussed in camera and if we make mistakes we can rectify them.

“My son was very distressed. You are trying to ruin his career and life and health. God forgive you. Do you believe in brotherhood of man? It is one of our principles.”

I replied to Mrs. Higginson as follows “My article merely recorded facts, exactly as they occurred, and did not accuse or condemn your son in any way. As a journalist, it was clearly my duty to publish the facts known to me, in the interests of the brotherhood of man.

## Ready to help

“There was never any intention to hurt or ‘ruin’ you, or Gordon, or anybody else. I still have a personal liking for Gordon and am always ready to help him in any way I can.”

Neither Mrs. Higginson, nor her son, replied.

Instead, at the SNU annual conference at Blackpool, last July, the president, C. I. Quastel, announced that the SNU would take no action concerning Gordon Higginson until complaints or criticisms were submitted in writing. I thereupon wrote to Ellidge. The following is an extract from my letter, dated July 27, 1959:

At a demonstration of clairvoyance at the College of Psychic Science, Kensington, on April 22, 1956, I was the recipient of a message from Mr. Gordon Higginson. Mr. Higginson knew some days earlier that I was to be present at the meeting.

## Error repeated

“The message ... contained six facts—the year of my birth; the name of an establishment at which I received part of my education; the initials of an organisation for which I have worked; that motoring is one of my recreations; my wife’s initials, and her maiden name.

“Each fact, and the sequence in which they were given, tallied with an entry under my name in a well-known literary directory. One of the details printed in the directory is incorrect. Higginson's message reproduced the inaccuracy.

“In view of the obvious responsibilities of the SNU in this direction, I request that appropriate inquiries be made in order that I may receive some explanation of this occurrence. Mr. Higginson himself has not been able to offer an explanation. Nor could he, in a subsequent sitting, identify or correct the point of error.”

On July 29, Ellidge replied “The national council have already taken certain steps in view of the article which appeared in *Two Worlds*. Your letter, however, gives us more material on which to work.”

Two months passed. Then another letter from Ellidge, dated September 24, saying: “Your letter of July 27 was considered at the last meeting of the finance and general purposes committee of the Union along with a report from our solicitors.

“I was requested to ask you to forward to me fuller details of the case, along with documentary evidence and will you also supply the names and addresses of all relevant witnesses.

I must ask you not to publish or arrange to be published any information or comments until the matter has been fully investigated.”

I responded as follows:

“I can only say that there are no details additional to those already given that can be supplied. I do not know what is meant by ‘documentary evidence’ in relation to an oral performance. As to ‘all relevant witnesses,’ I think the only person ‘relevant’ to the occasion apart from myself was my wife, but various College of Psychic Science officials were also present.”

So the matter rested—until last Saturday. And here, the SNU apparently thinks, it should remain.

No one interested in the movement can possibly agree. For the sake of all Spiritualism—now more in the public eye than ever before in its history—I repeat my original question: What is the truth behind “The Curious Case of Gordon Higginson”?

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