

APOLLONIUS

OR

The Present and Future of Psychical Research

BY

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Κέρδος ἂν εἴη μήτε πιστεύειν μήτε ἀπιστεῖν πᾶσιν

Phil. Vit. Apoll. II, 45

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & Co., LTD.

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & Co.

Made and Printed in Great Britain by
M. F. Robinson & Co., Ltd., at The Library Press, Lowestof

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Psychical research has in the last twenty-five years lived down the obloquy and suspicion which surrounded its earlier days, and secured an assured position as a recognized branch of scientific study. In nearly every European country and in the United States of America men of acknowledged eminence in their professions—philosophers, scientists, doctors, literary men—have devoted themselves to the earnest study of those obscure and baffling phenomena which form the subject matter of psychical research, though this field of scientific endeavour holds at present few allurements in the

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shape of personal advantage or reward ; no appreciable endowments exist to facilitate such research, no professorial chairs are reserved for its devotees. The patient and unselfish toil of those men, who have given to psychical research years which otherwise might have brought them rich material gains, is based on their deep and abiding interest in the subject, and their frank endorsement of Schopenhauer's words :

“ The phenomena under discussion are, at least from a philosophical standpoint, of all the facts presented to us by the whole of experience without comparison the most important : it is therefore the duty of every educated man to make himself thoroughly acquainted with them.”

Nevertheless, in spite of the recent emergence of psychical research into the clearer light of scientific tolerance and even encouragement, it must be admitted that its literary output has

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within recent years, as far as the English-speaking races are concerned, fallen far behind the brilliant and yet substantial work of its earlier pioneers. Few, if any, of our modern researchers in Great Britain have reached the high level attained by the works of, say, Myers, Gurney, Podmore, Professor and Mrs Sidgwick, and Professor James of Harvard. Nor again has any adequate progress been maintained in the experimental work which characterized the earlier history of the Society for Psychical Research. Our main evidence for telepathy is still the careful work of the Sidgwick group at Brighton, and little has been accomplished in the investigation of "physical phenomena" since the perplexities and disappointments of the Palladino experiments. In America the glory has indeed departed from a movement which was formerly illumined by the splendid work of William James, Hyslop, Hodgson, and Prince.

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On the other hand, if in Great Britain the earlier branches of experiment have to some extent been neglected, a vast amount of useful work has been accomplished since the death of Myers in the new field of "cross correspondences",¹ which, in the opinion of some, may well prove to be the most productive of all our areas of research. On the Continent too experimental work of a high order has been developed during recent years, more especially in France and in Germany, the results of which have been given to the world in the writings of such men as Richet, Osty, Schrenck-Notzing, Tischner, Dessoir, Driesch, and others. The happy selection this year of Dr Driesch as President of the

¹ i.e. two mediums sitting widely apart, sometimes even in different countries, receive different messages alleged to come from the same discarnate personality. When taken separately such messages may be obscure and meaningless; when read in conjunction they present a clear and intelligible meaning.

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S.P.R. is a tribute to the fine work of himself and his countrymen. No better future could indeed be desired for psychical research than that it should occupy the serious attention of German scholars and be treated in accordance with the painstaking and efficient methods of German science.

But while the advance of psychical research on strictly scientific lines has to some extent fallen short of the hopes of our pioneers, an unprecedented development has taken place in the cruder and less critical forms of what is popularly known as "Spiritualism". This increased interest in spiritualistic phenomena has been followed by a vast output of books devoted to the acceptance of the spiritist theory and generally characterized by the absence of scientific spirit or critical investigation. Thousands of persons who fully admit their acceptance of the "facts of spiritualism" and allege that they find in the teachings of the spiritualist

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creed guidance in life and consolation in death appear to be satisfied with a minimum of reason for the faith which is in them. Popular enthusiasm for occult experiences has produced no corresponding increase in the number of serious students. The valuable material accumulated with immense care in the *Proceedings* of the Psychical Research Society is to a large extent unknown to and unexplored by the modern spiritualist, who professes to base his claims, if called upon to do so, on uncritical data derived from professional clairvoyants or his own automatic script. The result has been a veritable flood of alleged messages from another world which, in some cases, have been supplied to the Sunday newspapers by discarnate and obliging intelligences with the regularity of an editorial leader. The recognized spiritualist churches, "Lyceums" and similar organizations in Great Britain, 610 in number apart from

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independent societies and groups, possess a membership of at least 54,000 ; and, despite the honourable efforts of many educated and enlightened spiritualists who are determined enemies of mediumistic fraud, a steady increase has taken place in the ranks of those pseudo-mediums who trade on the credulity of the public.

At first sight this strange development might appear to be wholly out of keeping with the spirit of an age which may reasonably be described as materialistic. The appalling failure of organized Christianity to avert or shorten the War, the diseased growths which have fastened upon our music, art, and drama, the waste and extravagance in our social life, the cruel self-seeking of our international conduct—these and other influences of the War-period and its aftermath have provided a fitting inspiration for large sections of our population which appear to have little taste for much beyond the life-purpose

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of Mr. Wells' hero "to put one's hands on the dibs, and have a good time." But history has demonstrated in the case of individuals and nations alike that material and even intellectual progress does not necessarily eliminate superstition. The sceptical Julius Caesar crawled up the steps of the Capitol to avert the jealous wrath of the gods; the Renaissance was responsible for two centuries of witch-burning. And so we find that side by side with the weakening of moral and religious sanctions a widespread spirit of credulous and uncritical belief pervades the community. The vast developments in the circulation of cheap newspapers while adding enormously to the information of the public on current events, has also led our less educated citizens in general to accept what they see in print. During the War-fever even men of recognized position whose training might, one would think, have instilled into them some measure of intellectual

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caution, have exhibited amazing credulity. The late Bishop of Carlisle, and the Editor of *Punch* are typical of thousands of our fellow-citizens, clerical and lay alike, who accepted without question such grotesque fabrications as the German "Corpse Factory" or the "Crucified Canadian". Stories embodied in the *Bryce Report* and similar publications were received without any misgiving or discrimination by ninety-nine per cent. of our population. The nebulous story of the singularly inefficient "Angels of Mons" formed the text of lay and ecclesiastical addresses. The national mind, carefully tutored by the fraud or stupidity of controlled journalism, was ready when the War ceased to exchange the material horrors of this world for the spiritual excitements of the next.

The most powerful impulse, however, behind the new spiritualism has come from the staggering loss of human life in the Great War. Never before in the

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world's history has the cry of human bereavement been so loud and bitter, for the vast majority of the millions who perished in the conflict were young men leaving behind them a heritage of sorrow incomparably greater than that which follows from the loss of the old, who in far greater numbers die every year in the ordinary course of nature. Nor has the poignancy of their grief for the loss of sons and brothers been lessened for those among the survivors who have reached the conviction that these vast armies of the world were led to the slaughter on false pretences, and that the soldiers died not, as most of them honestly believed, to promote justice, peace, and freedom, but to subserve the same vile motives of imperialist and commercial greed which have promoted every other modern war.

In earlier ages the Christian religion did indubitably inspire in the minds of its adherents a genuine conviction of a life beyond the grave and a future

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recognition of those lost awhile. But Protestantism in its violent rejection of earlier tenets has so far attenuated the doctrine of a future existence that its harsh interdicts on prayers for the dead and its vague and inconsistent beliefs as to the state of the departed have to a large extent ceased either to attract or convince. At Omdurman the writer saw thousands of men advancing against the most terrific fire of the century's warfare with the name of God upon their lips and real conviction of a future life in their hearts—but these men were not Christians. The carelessness, timidity, or corruption of the Churches have served to devitalize not only the ethical precepts of their Master but also that immortality which He brought to light. But, although the old springs of comfort have to a large extent ceased to flow, the needs of the human heart remain, and are turned to those fresh sources of assurance and consolation which

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are so lavishly offered by modern Spiritualism.

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Those who undertake the scientific consideration of psychic phenomena must realize the existence of certain initial difficulties specially attached to this branch of research. No form of scientific work is more exposed than this to the dangerous influence of the "personal equation" in the researcher. An astronomer might conceivably be prejudiced in his work on Mars by some *a priori* tendency to regard that planet as the home of sentient beings, but the influence of such personal factors in scientific research may generally be regarded as almost negligible. When, however, we find ourselves in contact with psychic phenomena which indicate intelligence, it is often difficult to dissociate our conclusions as to the source of such intelligence from our other beliefs or disbeliefs. On an occasion famous in the annals of the

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Society for Psychical Research a sealed envelope containing a written statement by the late F. W. Myers was opened in order to test the accuracy of Mrs Verrall's automatic 'Myers' script, which had previously claimed to reveal the words of the sealed message. I shall never forget the look of cruel disappointment which appeared on the faces of some of those present when the two messages were found to be dissimilar. On the other hand one of the party, a persistent opponent of the spiritist hypothesis, received the result with obvious satisfaction.

That such preconceived hopes or opinions colour the general attitude of the devotees of popular and uncritical spiritualism is obvious. Given a dark room, a professional medium inadequately controlled or uncontrolled, and a cardboard trumpet, the voice which comes through the trumpet is, to a large extent, accepted as that of a discarnate friend because the sitters

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are already convinced of a survival or earnestly desire to be so convinced. Even in the later work of psychical researchers of a higher order, men of intellectual eminence and scientific training, a certain relaxation of critical rigidity is sometimes noticeable. In these cases the lapse from earlier standards of evidence is no doubt due to the absolute conviction secured by long and critical investigations at some previous period. When already convinced intellectually by earlier experiences of the reality of the phenomena under investigation, even men of the mental calibre of a Sir William Crookes may almost insensibly deviate in subsequent discussions from the evidential standard of the investigations from which they derived their earlier conclusions.

There exists another weakness of the human mind against which the psychical researcher must always be on his guard. Those perverse tendencies which are

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covered by the term 'megalomania' form a sinister factor which serves continually to warp the judgment and even, in some cases, the moral sense of those who lay claim to the possession of supernormal powers. It is doubtful whether this form of mental perversity, appearing often as a kind of kink in otherwise normal and regular minds, has ever been adequately recognized by those whose task it has been to collate the facts and estimate the validity of alleged psychic phenomena. Megalomaniac impulses, indeed, would appear to provide at any rate a partial explanation of many declarations about strange and startling occurrences outside the actual area of the *séance* room. The writer, from personal experiences in several modern wars, including the last, and a careful study of war psychology and war-literature, has come to the conclusion that of the large number of atrocities which are alleged to disfigure the record of all civilized

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armies only a very small percentage ever occur at all. Some of these stories are certainly invented by Propaganda Departments, civil and military, whose members, in some instances, do not scruple to disseminate falsehoods in order to blacken the good name of an enemy people and so increase the ferocity and fighting efficiency of their own troops. But the bulk of these atrocity tales are due to the megalomaniac desire on the part of soldiers or civilians to recount thrilling and terrible events or pose as the actual participants in some gruesome episode. A civilian refugee or a wounded soldier in hospital (a normally truthful person) will sometimes invent in detail an atrocity story in order to impress an interrogator or a nurse and so secure for himself an amount of megalomaniac satisfaction. It is presumably the same curious impulse which brings to famous criminals in the dock offers of marriage from

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ordinarily decent and respectable women, or leads an obscure tourist to carve his initials on the Parthenon, or stimulates people to frenzied social effort in order to shake the hand of a royal personage, however commonplace his character or feeble his achievement.

But if this form of mental perversion finds so many outlets in the course of everyday life, we may well expect it to flourish even more abundantly in the environment of psychic happenings. After all, what ordinary experience, however desirable, could vie in value and interest with the power to receive or convey actual messages from the dead? What ordinary scientific achievement could equal the exercise of a power which could secure the passage of matter through matter, bring about the levitation of a table without personal contact in defiance of the laws of gravitation, or cause the appearance of a materialized hand or even a full-length figure?

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The professional mediums who every Sunday, sometimes more frequently, conduct the spiritualist services in our towns are obviously regarded as persons of great importance and authority by their large audiences, and the consciousness of this, apart altogether from the fact of their fees, may stimulate them to supplement, if need be, the output of possibly genuine phenomena by an ever-ready supply of pseudo-messages and haphazard "delineations". The humbler mediums, usually unpaid, who form the centre of thousands of "circles" in our working-class homes are invested with an importance and feel a mental exaltation quite foreign to the drabness of their ordinary surroundings and occupations. And here again if genuine powers of clairvoyance are inadequate or non-existent, this special form of spiritual pride will still provide a satisfactory flow of messages from the deceased

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buccaneer or Indian chief who acts as the "control".

It is difficult indeed to assign any limits to the intrusion of this singular influence in the domain of psychical research. In one remarkable instance a London barrister of recognized standing and enjoying a large income from his profession posed for some time in private circles as a physical medium. He claimed *inter alia* the power of causing the partial levitation of a table by placing his hands on the top. Yet at a sitting conducted by members of the S.P.R. this gentleman was easily detected in the childish trick of having inserted inside his cuffs two small pieces of wood, which were thus introduced under the table's edge! On another occasion I found during the investigation of a case in Hampshire that a maidservant, possibly in collusion with her mistress, was producing luminous crosses by rubbing moistened

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matches on the furniture and walls—there being no conceivable motive for this transparent deception beyond the desire to be regarded as a successful “medium”. Much, if not all of the story of the Rev. Stainton Moses’ career can probably best be explained as an amazing example of spiritual megalomania. Such a theory of course involves the disagreeable conclusion that a clergyman and a public-school master, endowed with a kindly and generous disposition, must have spent years of his life in the systematic deception of his most intimate friends and, later on, of the public at large. Nevertheless, all said and done, the moral miracle in this astonishing case is, as Mr Podmore suggested, more easy than the physical one.

The extraordinary poltergeist cases—cases by no means infrequent and widely distributed—in which furniture is violently moved, windows and crockery smashed, and pictures thrown

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down, can usually be traced to the furtive trickery of little boys, or more commonly little girls, who do not scruple to destroy their parents' property and peace of mind in order to secure for themselves the secret satisfaction of some megalomaniac impulse.

Apart from the deliberate imposture, due more often than we suspect to the megalomaniac impulses referred to above, there is some ground for believing in the existence of a still more subtle form of apparent fraud. It is frequently asserted by mediums of repute that they are unable to do justice to themselves or exercise their gifts to good purpose because of the unsatisfactory influence of one or more sitters of an aggressively sceptical type, a curious parallel—be it said in all reverence—to the strange remark of the Evangelist that the miracles of Our Lord were sometimes actually prevented by the disbelief of His hearers.

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But may the disbelieving sitters, in some instances, go further than a mere hindrance of genuine phenomena and actually cause the production of trickery and fraud on the part of the medium? Given a medium susceptible to telepathic suggestion, and one or more sitters suspecting or convinced in advance that all they will witness at the *séance* will be an exhibition of trickery, it is easy to see that telepathic suggestion of fraud, conscious or unconscious, from the minds of these sceptics may result in trickery which is primarily due not to the medium but to themselves. This risk is obviously accentuated when the medium falls (as, for example, in Mrs Piper's case) into a cataleptic condition or some form of ordinary hypnosis.

In any case it is confidently asserted by psychical researchers of capacity and experience that the same medium may be fraudulent at one moment and genuine at another. Such a thesis is

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doubtless hard of acceptance to ordinary men or women, however disposed they may be to an unprejudiced consideration of psychic phenomena ; and it was, in fact, rejected by the original founders of the Psychical Research Society, who definitely refused to include within the area of their investigations the alleged phenomena of any medium once detected in the perpetration of fraud. Further experience, however, has apparently modified this once inflexible attitude, and at any rate a majority of the Council of the S.P.R. are now willing to hold experimental *séances* with mediums against whom fraud has been openly alleged or actually proved. The writer shares the view of this majority, for, as far as he can judge from personal experience or the definite testimony of others, a medium like Eusapia Palladino was, sometimes, indubitably guilty of patent and childish trickery (which she would subsequently admit quite shamelessly), and at other

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times produced valid phenomena of amazing interest under the strictest test-conditions.

We need not devote much time to the deliberate fraud and trickery which have always been admittedly associated with certain manifestations of mediumship and have frequently inspired such disgust and contempt in the minds of would-be investigators that they have abandoned the quest altogether. Those who have persevered in spite of discouragement know what it is to find oneself in uncomfortable and ill-ventilated rooms, holding the hands of unknown persons in the dark, tortured by the metallic music of a cheap gramophone, or compelled to join in discordant renderings of revivalist hymns or dreadful ditties like "Where is now the prophet Daniel?" And one realizes all the time that the music is meant to drown the noise caused by a fraudulent medium in wrapping himself in muslin or adjusting a false beard, and

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further that one will have to pay a guinea for this wretched exhibition ! What researcher, again, has not experienced the boredom of public or private sittings for "delineations", when a medium, after a few spasmodic twitchings, "passes under control" and proceeds to describe the appearance of the deceased relatives and friends of the members of a credulous audience, which will subsequently contribute to the "silver collection" ? Who, too, has not reflected with amazement upon the staggering credulity of men and women who accept the delineated "old gentleman with white hair" or the "old lady with grey hair parted in the middle" as unquestionably their late father or mother ; or, in a materializing *séance*, believe that the same piece of butter muslin waved in one direction is a lost grandparent and waved in another direction is a little child ? Such wearisome and sordid experiences form the

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via dolorosa of researchers, who are prepared to seek for gold even in the muddiest streams, and sometimes find it ; for, even if ninety-five per cent. of the alleged phenomena are explicable by trickery or deception, the remaining five may defy all such explanations.

The student of psychical research is confronted at the outset by a considerable volume of reasoned and unreasoned opposition. Persons who in other directions are entirely opposed to each other's points of view combine for a common assault : uncompromising materialists and devout evangelical Christians form a strange alliance against what they vaguely describe as "spiritualism". An even more curious dislike comes from large masses of our population who, without any deep convictions or reasoned arguments for their hostility, are irritated by a movement which appears to upset the even tenour of their mental conservatism. Even cultured people are not

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proof against this prejudice : at many dinner tables any sustained reference to the alleged phenomena of mediumship would be regarded as " bad form " and thoroughly objectionable. When the writer entered the House of Commons he was informed by the chairman of his Liberal Association that his membership of the Psychical Research Society would "do him harm in the constituency". This unintelligent aversion to spiritual novelties, which almost wrecked the Salvation Army in its infancy, secured the triumph of the Dayton " fundamentalists ", and now, though happily with diminishing force, assails the study of clairvoyance or telepathy, seems analogous to that primitive instinct which impels wild birds to combine for the destruction of an exotic parrot which has escaped from its cage.

Even as regards the more serious of his opponents, the apologist of psychical research is entitled to object

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at the start that comparatively few of these are adequately equipped for their task. It is lamentable that our hostile critics have for the most part scarcely taken the trouble to understand our position or furnish themselves with more than a quite superficial knowledge of the facts. What a sorry figure would be cut by most of our lay and ecclesiastical opponents were they set an examination paper on the evidences accumulated by the Psychical Research Society, to go no further ! One of the best known opponents of the phenomena of mediumship has admitted that he has never made any personal investigation of the claims of any prominent medium, British or foreign, and a *brochure* distributed to his audience exhibits an amazing ignorance of the subject matter against which his platform diatribes are directed. There is another reason for popular hostility. Much of the fraud which admittedly exists is of a peculiarly heartless character, for its

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exponents derive their resources largely from bereaved men and women who fly to spiritualism for tidings of their lost ones and for solace in their grief. The natural indignation felt against such traffickers in human sorrow undoubtedly predisposes many superficial critics to assume in their haste that all public mediumship is fraudulent.

Apart from the more or less unintelligent prejudices of the public generally, the scientific investigation of the phenomena of mediumship is hampered by the professional antagonisms of the Church and the Law. The menace of legal proceedings, while a terror to the fraudulent, is also a deterrent to the supply of genuine phenomena. Mediums are usually persons of a very sensitive and nervous temperament, and the fact that at any moment a Mrs Leonard is liable to the same legal procedure and the same conviction as the most insignificant fortune-teller is not conducive to the

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regular supply of those supernormal facts which form the subject-matter of scientific psychical research. From time to time, and apparently by concerted action, legal proceedings are set on foot by the authorities against public mediums. The requisite evidence is furnished by detectives or journalists who have secured sittings with the defendants, and the prosecution takes place under an Act of George IV, directed against "vagabonds" and "fortune-tellers". Our magistrates usually maintain on these occasions that the essential part of the legal offence is the medium's claim to "foretell the future", and this is apparently accentuated and aggravated by the "intention to deceive" or the acceptance of money or reward. During an epidemic of legal medium-baiting in 1917, men and women were sentenced to heavy fines, up to £50, or imprisonment, because of their claims to foretell the future. Yet a little reflection might

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have caused our magistrates to remember that all the official representatives of organized religion are regularly engaged in foretelling the future and are paid—and quite rightly—for their services in this respect. The so-called “ sport ” of the race-course is—as many of us know to our cost—built upon an elaborate and extensive system of prophecy for payment—whether the forecasts are made in the columns of the most respectable newspapers or in the circulars of professional tipsters. Nor, indeed, can one wholly dissociate those manifold pledges which disfigure our political elections from the same suspicion ; for these prophetic anticipations are made in order to win votes and so secure the social and pecuniary rewards which result from electoral success.

Some of the magistrates who tried and condemned these mediums displayed a pitiable ignorance of the whole subject of psychic phenomena. Almost

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anybody indeed appears to be considered competent to dogmatize about theological or psychic matters without any credentials in the shape of adequate study or experience. The following extract from the well known "Brockway" case serves to illustrate the mental equipment of a magistrate for a trial of this character :

"The Rev. G. H. St. John Mildmay stated that he had had two sittings with the defendant and was amazed that she could tell him names that he had written in a paper which was then folded up and held in her hand . . . he was convinced that she was perfectly genuine.

Magistrate : You have, I suppose, seen conjurors taking cards out of people's hair and such things ? (*Laughter*).

Witness : There was nothing resembling that."

A subsequent reference by one of the witnesses to the possible influence of "lying spirits" was followed by this edifying dialogue :

Mr Barker (prosecuting Counsel) : I object to such ridiculous questions.

Mr Wild (for the defence) asked the magistrate to rule whether such a question was ridiculous.

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The Magistrate (with emphasis): I certainly think it is ridiculous.

Mr Wild then said—with justice—that it was evidently waste of time to go on, and left the Court."

The antagonism of the Christian Churches, a *damnosa hereditas* from the unspeakable records of past centuries, is now a waning force, chiefly confined to the ranks of what the late Dean Rashdall rather roughly called "the inferior clergy". There are some exceptions. The distinguished Dean of St Paul's, a devoted student of the obsolete fantasies of Neoplatonic philosophy, seems quite unable to dissociate the serious study of psychic phenomena from the fraudulent banging of tambourines or the wearing of false wigs. He is ready to consider the unsupported assertions of Plotinus, that that third-century mystic on one occasion enjoyed some form of beatific vision in the "contemplation of the One"; but on the other hand the more recent and

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infinitely better supported testimony of a Lombroso, Crookes, or William James as to the occurrence of a physical or clairvoyant phenomenon is contemptuously ignored. Now and again sincere representatives of medieval Christianity like Lord Hugh Cecil are to be found who ban the *séance*-room because they are convinced that clairvoyance is a form of necromancy and 'controls' like Mrs Piper's "Phinuit" or Mrs Leonard's "Feda" demoniacal agencies totally unfit for Christian intercourse. The more general and more enlightened attitude of at any rate the Anglican Church is embodied in the *Report* of the bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 1920 :

" We say without hesitation that we welcome scientific investigation : we recognise the patience and the skill with which members of the Psychical Research Society examine the mass of evidence of all kinds submitted to them, and above all the unmistakable desire to safe-

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guard the inquiry against illusion or fraud, to arrive at truths, and to interpret scientific facts correctly."

Yet side by side with this moderate and reasonable resolution we find that the Conference registered a very strong warning against "the habit of recourse to *séances* and mediums". Here again is revealed once more the ignorance of many well-meaning and able critics who possess a merely superficial acquaintance with the subject. How, for example, can we study scientifically the phenomena of clairvoyance without recourse to clairvoyant mediums? Such an embargo would—to go no further—have robbed us of the profoundly interesting records of Mrs Piper's trance-mediumship, or the striking results contained in Dr Osty's volumes. One might almost as well approve of the scientific study of anatomy and forbid recourse to the dissecting-room.

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At this point, and in view of the admitted imperfections which mark the course of our inquiry into supernormal phenomena—the fraud and credulity and malobservation which so easily beset our work—the question may fairly be asked: “Has psychical research really any future?”

To such a query I have no hesitation in giving an emphatic “Yes”. One may go further and say that at no period since the subject was seriously studied have we had better reasons for such an answer. Within the last few years a veritable revolution has occurred in the general attitude of science towards the phenomena of the universe. In the light of Einstein’s discoveries the dogmatism of the materialist has become obsolete. The old scientific outlook has been undermined and superseded by scientists themselves. Atoms and electrons are no longer regarded as ultimate realities. According to Professor Eddington, “there is

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nothing to prevent the assemblage of atoms forming the brain from being itself a thinking machine in virtue of that nature which physics leaves undetermined and undeterminable." Not only the 'laws of Nature' but space and time and the great globe itself may conceivably be mental phenomena, themselves the creations of mind. And so it has come to pass that such an utterance as Professor Clifford's: "The Universe is made of ether and atoms and there is no room for ghosts" remains only as a fragment of an outworn scientific creed. The division of the external world into a material world and a spiritual world is now held by scientists to be superficial. No inherent impossibility rules out of court the possible manifestations of other minds than ours, functioning apart from our own brains and bodies. "We may doubt", says Professor Eddington, "whether there is any branch of knowledge from which exact

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science is excluded ” : there is “ room for ghosts ”, and room for other super-normal phenomena hitherto ignored or denied by scientists in general. The fact of telepathy indicates the existence of other methods of mental communion outside the recognized channels of sense, and for that reason is rejected *a priori* by some of the more conservative representatives of science. “ Such a direct transmission of ideas from one mind to another ”, writes Dr Jodl, “ without any perceptible physical method of communication would indicate the presence of a crack in the very foundations of all our views on nature, and, if proved, would lead us to a complete revision of fundamental principles.” Dr Henning declares that “ psycho-physics, yes, even psychology, as a science, must be utterly wrecked before we have recourse to telepathy.” How different in tone is the statement of one of the most acute among our younger thinkers, Professor Broad of

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Cambridge¹, who not only tolerates the existence of a spiritual world but postulates the actual necessity of a 'psychic factor' in order to provide a coherent explanation of the universe and ourselves.

Since the advent, then, of a new scientific revelation the field lies open for further work and further advances in psychical research. No longer denied access to the precincts of orthodox science or received with a dubious welcome, the professed student of supernormal phenomena can claim and receive a definite status as the representative of an acknowledged branch of scientific study. But in realizing this, he must realize too the responsibilities of a position so assured. Two objects must be permanently kept in view—the accumulation of fresh facts, and the exercise of rigid control and accuracy in our experiments.

¹ *The Mind and its Place in Nature*, 1925.

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In the discovery of new material we are, of course, faced by the irritating and disappointing character of the phenomena with which we deal. They are often spasmodic, sporadic, irregular. They do not occur in any fixed sequence nor can they be predicted. Even when our experiments yield obvious success, we are ignorant of what the conditions of such success may be : no satisfactory experimental control of these wayward phenomena seems at present feasible. If they are reached through the channels of mediumship, we are again exposed to the varying and uncertain influences exercised by the physical or mental condition of the medium at the moment. It is quite clear that these ' sensitives ' are in almost all cases persons of a definitely neurotic or hysterical temperament ; indeed, if we can ever establish the actual connection between these pathological conditions and the production of supernormal phenomena we shall have gone a long way in

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unravelling the tangled skeins of psychical research. The discovery and classification of fresh psychic facts may mean the expenditure of long and tedious hours, but without the renewed exercise of “ *recherche lente, persévérante, obstinée* ” we cannot hope to convince ourselves or to speak with our enemies in the gate. In this department of research more than all others our facts soon become more or less obsolete, or at any rate lose their compelling force. No one now alludes to the careful mechanical safeguards against fraud devised by Sir William Crooks in the eighties. Our generation has almost forgotten the convincing experiments in telepathy carried out by the Sidgwick and Professor Barrett, and no longer quotes the Stainton Moses phenomena which Myers accepted. The call is for the production of fresh data collected by our own contemporaries. Without therefore troubling ourselves unduly for the time being with explana-

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tions and theories about the facts, without intruding into the work the will to believe or disbelieve, let us devote ourselves to experiment and empirical facts. Surely among the thousand members of the Society for Psychical Research, to go no further, enough recruits could be found to supplement adequately by their own unselfish efforts the splendid work of our own pioneers in Great Britain and America.

Further, in the process of accumulating and systematizing our facts we must accept as an axiom of unquestioned validity that natural and normal causes must be eliminated before we have recourse to the supernatural or supernormal. In other words, we must regard it as *prima facie* more probable that the medium is consciously or unconsciously fraudulent or that the sitters are the victims of credulity or malobservation than that men and women possess a capacity for

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acquiring knowledge or influencing matter which transcends the recognized facts of ordinary experience. Our course then as psychical researchers is clear. We must exercise such drastic and complete control over the whole course of our experiments as to render deception an unthinkable hypothesis. That such methods of control exist and can be applied is indubitable: that they are occasionally absent from *séances* conducted by scientific and educated persons must equally be admitted.

Podmore revealed several defects in the alleged safeguards against fraud accepted in certain experiments with Florence Cook and even D. D. Home; and quotes a serious instance of careless description in the record of the famous experience of the London Dialectical Society with the latter medium: where the statement that "the room was illumined by moonlight" is shewn from the calendar (as in the parallel

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of Sir John Moore's burial) to have been incorrect. In more recent times the conditions observed in Warsaw and in Paris with the mediums Kluski and Gujik have been sometimes unsatisfactory. Nor can any impartial critic, in view of the surprisingly lax conditions which prevailed, necessarily accept the widely recorded successes of Professor Gilbert Murray in thought-transference as manifestations of anything abnormal or unusual. In the case of any less distinguished performer it would have been difficult to regard such experiments, in the absence of any repetition of them under test conditions, as worth the serious consideration of a scientific body.

The collection of fresh facts is, to a large extent, conditioned by the supply of sensitives and by the provision of adequate funds for such research. Apart from the existing opportunities provided by University chairs of Mental Science, Mental Philosophy and the

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like, which have already contributed largely to this study when held by men like McDougall, James, Schiller, and Broad in Great Britain and America, private generosity will always apparently be ready to assist in some measure the experimental work of psychical research. The most serious obstacle arises not from the absence of monetary assistance but from the fact that the feelings entertained towards one another by the warring sects of religion are reflected in the rivalries and disputes of the societies engaged in the study of psychic phenomena. That regular supply of sensitives which is required for an adequate collection of empirical facts is seriously hindered by the violent animosities of leaders who fight over the bodies of well-known mediums and sometimes tempt them, like football professionals, by the dangerous offer of a higher fee.

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If we accept the view that psychical

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research holds ample promise of a useful future, we may next consider the various lines of our advance.

Any serious study of psychical research demands as its first essential a knowledge of the results secured from a careful consideration of telepathic phenomena. Many researchers would, indeed, maintain that their investigations need not extend beyond these limits. They regard telepathy, once scientifically established, as a working hypothesis which will cover the whole field of those abnormal phenomena which form our subject-matter. From this point of view, apparitions, clairvoyance, crystal-visions, even the physical phenomena of the *séance*-room—these and other abnormal happenings can be explained by the exercise in one shape or another of the transference of human thought and volition outside the ordinary channels of sense.

Those who hold that thought-transference is the solvent of all our

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perplexities in psychical research may point to the fact that down the centuries one marvel after another appears to have been directly attributable to this cause. A useful monograph might be written on this fascinating theme. To go no farther, it is easy to see how the miracles recorded in Biblical and ecclesiastical literature, and the amazing records of witchcraft and sorcery, may to a large extent be brought within the compass of the telepathic solution. ~~xxx~~

No serious attempts to investigate the conditions or results of thought-transference appear to have been undertaken before the middle of last century. It was not indeed until 1876 that Sir William Barrett really initiated the careful and scientific study of telepathic phenomena which has been continued by the Society for Psychical Research in England and on the Continent by Boirac, Osty, Tischner, and many other distinguished savants. The results obtained have been, it is true,

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questioned and criticized at every turn by certain scientists who deny that telepathy is either proven or indeed possible. Professor Jodl (quoted by Tischner) goes so far as to say : " Such a direct transmission of ideas from one mind to another, without any perceptible physical method of communication, would indicate the presence of a crack in the very foundations of all our views on Nature." " Psycho-physics ", writes Dr Henning, " yes, even psychology as a science must be utterly wrecked before we have recourse to telepathy." It is, however, useless to indulge in mere *a priori* refutations or, in the case of telepathic experiments, to concentrate on the failures and ignore the successes. It is of course impossible within the very narrow space-limits of this little book to furnish any detailed reference to such experiments. Suffice it to say that evidence varied, cumulative and irresistible now exists which has established telepathy as a scientific fact.

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The study of telepathic phenomena suggests the interesting question whether telepathy is a psychic factor of permanent and regular character or whether it represents merely the dying embers of a once more active force. Can the transference of human thought apart from physical media be developed and systematized on such a scale as to suggest immense possibilities in the human relationships of the future? Or will such development be inevitably retarded by the fact that telepathy is a dying sense to be classed with various obscure eccentricities of the human body which serve merely as vestigial landmarks in the long history of the race? Despite the alluring possibilities of the first suggestion, indications certainly exist which lend colour to the pathetic belief that research has only discovered this force in the evening of its existence.

This view of telepathy as a "rudimentary survival" seems to be

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strengthened by the admitted fact that manifestations of telepathy are far more certain and more striking when the percipient is under hypnotic suggestion ; for, if it be the subliminal self which rises above the threshold in hypnotic slumber and obeys the suggestion of the agent's mind, this is itself in all probability a manifestation of race-experience rather than that of the individual. The everyday self, the product of normal experience, is influenced to a much slighter degree by hypnotic suggestion than that mysterious entity, the secondary self, trailing its clouds of precarnate existence.

In the dim recesses of our race-history our pithecoïd ancestors in default of language may well have possessed telepathic powers for the communication of their simple ideas, which powers have gradually been rendered less necessary as language developed, and may ultimately, unless stimulated and exercised, finally perish

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from atrophy. Such a theory would be illustrated by those stories which are furnished by reliable travellers and missionaries with reference to the amazing transmission of news which at times appears to take place amongst native races of a low level of civilization under circumstances which preclude any opportunity for normal methods of communication.

Nor, again, is it easy to avoid the conclusion that some form of telepathy exists among various forms of animal life. The "homing instinct" of the cat and the pigeon, and bewildering facts connected with the flight of birds of passage, inexplicable from any ordinary laws of experience, may conceivably be examples of a form of telepathy infinitely more regular and efficient than the fitful manifestations on the part of *homo sapiens* which engage the attention of psychical researchers. It is not easy to find any ordinary explanation for the immediate

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rush of a scattered herd of cattle to any available shelter, when one of their number has been struck by the noiseless warble-fly. Or when I watch the curving flight of the beautiful ruffs and reeves round a Norwegian lake—the absolutely simultaneous rise, the instantaneous wheel of the whole flock in the fraction of a second—or, again, when I see hundreds of starlings rise together and afterwards return to their trees in complete unison, I find it difficult to regard these charming incidents as due to normal or even abnormal sight or hearing, and wonder whether here again some rudimentary but efficient form of telepathy may not be at work.

Can we go further, and suggest that some of the baffling phenomena of heredity and instinct may ultimately find their origin in the telepathic transference of thought? We accept the word 'instinct' as an adequate explanation of the habits of sentient

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creatures, but it explains nothing. Every manifestation of instinct is obviously due to volition, however rudimentary—is, in other words, a mental as distinct (so far as such distinction goes) from a physical phenomenon. It is difficult to trace an “instinctive” movement to material spermatozoa or germ-cells. “The burnt child dreads the fire” as the result of its own experience, but no experience taught the baby how to use its lips at its first meal, any more than it taught the chicken how to escape from the eggshell. The “collective experience of the race”, the alleged source of these phenomena, may sooner or later be recognized as the telepathic transference from the mind of the parents of concepts derived from the previous telepathy of successive generations. It may appear at first sight fantastic to suggest that the mechanically exact habits of a mother-wasp may be the result of mental telepathy, but after

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all this seems a better *vera causa* than the wasp's-egg, a minute fraction of matter which can explain nothing in the realms of thought or of volition.

Charcot's telepathic suggestion of a hot iron by the application of a wooden ruler elicited a cry of agony, and produced a blister filled with lymph on the percipient's arm ; other experiments at the Salpêtrière and elsewhere raised weals and other stigmata on human bodies. Can it be that this same mysterious and powerful force may come to be accepted as at any rate a partial solution of the vexed question of heredity? A baby is born with marked physical characteristics of its father or mother. During its prenatal existence you have two main factors : the minds of the parents on the one side, on the other the mind of the unborn child. The future of the little being lying under her heart forms the constant thought of the expectant mother. She thinks of it as reproducing

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certain characteristics of herself or of the husband she loves ; the husband applies his thoughts in the same direction : and such concentrated suggestion, consciously or unconsciously conveyed, may serve to shape the child's body as well as its mind, in accordance with the maternal or paternal hopes and desires.

Well established as it is in the simpler forms of direct communication between agent and percipient, telepathy is sometimes called upon to explain the whole series of phenomena which are grouped under such heads as clairvoyance, psychometry, crystal-gazing, automatic writing, etc. The more or less public exhibitions of alleged clairvoyance which form the central feature of innumerable spiritualist services in this and other countries do not, as a rule, furnish convincing indications of supernormal activity. I have never myself seen any public "trance-speaker" who, despite the

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conventional twitchings and contortions which herald the ingress of the Red Indian or other spirit-control, did not appear to be in complete possession of his or her normal consciousness. But the prolonged and careful investigations of Mrs Piper's mediumship and those more recently undertaken with continental clairvoyants by Drs Tischner, Osty, and others, stand on a very different footing. In the face of the accumulated evidence furnished by such research, those who rely on telepathy as the universal solvent of psychic difficulties must often falter where they firmly stood. Leaving for the moment all the concrete evidence derived from experiments with the British Mrs Leonard or continental mediums like "Mrs van B.", or Mademoiselle de Berly, the records of the Piper *séances* form a rich store of evidential facts. Amid all the various deceptions and failures of the quaint "Dr Phinuit" or the more precise

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“George Pelham”, detailed and accurate messages are found, some of which appear inexplicable by any conceivable exercise of telepathy between living persons.

Nor again can the agency of living minds always furnish a satisfactory explanation in the rare but indubitable cases of prevision or precognition exhibited by clairvoyants. From what source come those precise statements made from time to time by trustworthy mediums, under strict test-conditions, with respect to certain articles placed in their hands? Clairvoyance of this type, often called psychometry, might almost suggest the validity of Fechner's theory of “odylic” influences, which may appear less fantastic in an age when the dividing line between matter and mind is becoming theoretically obsolete. Moreover, to psychometry, once accepted as a scientific fact, an interesting corollary would attach; for, if mere contact with a

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man's cravat can produce from the medium a detailed and accurate account of the suicide of an unhappy prisoner who had worn the cravat, masonry and woodwork might in the same inscrutable fashion be responsible for suggesting the auditory and visual phenomena of a "haunted house". Some well-attested cases exist in which alteration of structure in a house has been followed by the cessation of the "hauntings".

If telepathy from the living breaks down when called upon to explain all the facts of clairvoyance, there exists another explanation which has received the enthusiastic support of those investigators who, while they reject transference between normal minds, point enthusiastically to the alleged efficiency of the "secondary" or "subliminal" self. Fascinating descriptions are given of this "mysterious Mr Hyde which lurks in each of us", this subconscious mind working in the

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inner sanctum, as director and controller, while the normal work-a-day self transacts the conventional business of life in the open shop. The amazing performances of a "calculating boy", the sudden conversion of a Bunyan or a Paul, the supreme genius of a Shakespeare or a Handel, are alike referred to that comprehensive source of all things supernormal, the secondary self! This subliminal self can, we are assured, furnish a sensitive with information which otherwise could not possibly be possessed by any other living person. It can not only explore the dim recesses of past experience but foretell with accuracy the events of the future. Driven from the outer trenches of telepathic defence, some modern protagonists of psychical research find, as they think, an impregnable stronghold in the limitless efficiency of the subliminal self. The *soi-disant* George Pelham may convince his friends that he is what he claims to be, but he is only

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a manifestation of Mrs Piper's sub-conscious self—in other words, George Pelham is Mrs Piper. If a medium announces in England the death in battle of an officer hours before the bad news has even reached his battalion's base, this (if not a 'happy shot') is merely a striking instance of those abnormal powers of cognition possessed by the medium's subliminal consciousness.

Can this hypothesis bear the heavy strain put upon it? After all the phrase "subliminal self", "unconscious mind"—call it what you will—embodies nothing at all beyond a hypothesis. Nobody has yet demonstrated the existence of such a division of the mind attached to each living personality, or defined its qualities or capacities. There are indubitably certain depths in the human mind which may be reached by the processes of psycho-analysis, but in these cases there appears to be no compelling

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reason for any bewildering thesis of two or more distinct minds attached to the same human organism. There may be diversities of mental operation, but the same mind: the *θεός* and *θηρ* can form a composite mentality capable of moral excellence on the one hand, and on the other exposing to the Freudian probe the lower levels of a non-moral animal existence;

Not only have we failed to prove conclusively the existence or determine the activities of an entity so improbable *a priori* as a second self, but this popular hypothesis cannot always justify itself by fitting the facts, unless indeed we are prepared to assign to such an additional human mind a considerable measure of omniscience. How much further do we get by declaring that such intelligences as Phinuit, George Pelham, or Feda are mere manifestations of a medium's "secondary self"?

The messages which we receive from clairvoyant experiments with entranced

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or controlled mediums, table tiltings, planchette, ouija boards, etc., present a bewildering congeries of good sense and stupidity, relevancy and irrelevancy, truth and falsehood, sobriety and flippancy. Such communications possess two marked characteristics. They display intelligence, however low the level of that intelligence may sink ; and they invariably claim to proceed from the surviving minds of dead men and women, or at any rate from discarnate beings or " spirits ".

These messages fall into two classes ; in the first place, the most important of them, those which offer evidential matter either spontaneously or in compliance with a sitter's request. In such dark and unaccustomed paths the thoughtful researcher must walk warily and form his judgments dispassionately. Suffice it to say that persons of real ability and calm judgment are to be found who are intellectually convinced

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that in certain instances the agencies which have communicated with them through mediums are actually what they claim to be, the surviving personalities of dead friends or relatives. I found it difficult during some sittings under an assumed name with Mrs Piper to resist the belief that I was being addressed by two lost friends, so amazing was the relevancy of a single message in the one case, and the force of accumulated details in the other. Of a communication through the same medium given to his sister-in-law for transmission to himself Professor William James of Harvard writes as follows :

“ The point is that the message is an allusion to a matter known (so personal is it to myself) to no other individual in the world but me—not possibly either to the medium or to my sister-in-law ; and an allusion so pertinent and intimate, and tender and helpful, and yet so unhelped by any actual

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earthly knowledge on anyone's part, that it quite astounds as well as deeply touches me. If the subject of the message had been conceivably in my sister-in-law's mind, it would have been an interesting but not infrequent case of telepathy; but as I say it could not possibly have been, and she only transmits it to me after the fact not even understanding it."

The second group of messages possess little or no evidential value with regard to the personal survival of individuals, though they too always claim to proceed from "spirits" of some kind. Trivial, vulgar, and unworthy as they often are, these communications cannot be ignored by the student of psychical research. When we have eliminated trickery, collusion and self-deception from these experiments, there remains a residuum of communications more or less intelligent which obviously do not proceed from the normal consciousness of either

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sitter or medium ; in most cases, indeed, there is no medium employed, for the messages are spelt out through movements of a table or an instrument of the planchette type.

Many of these messages are of a perplexing character. Some show indications of a rather colourless goodwill, others are freakish and deceptive with a flavour of feeble practical joking. Occasionally they are blasphemous or indecent. A very common feature is the giving of addresses connected with the sitter or with the former life of the alleged spirit-communicator. Full names of individuals, the names of streets and the numbers of houses are freely given. Nevertheless, in nearly every instance it is found that the facts as given are partially or entirely inaccurate. The whole procedure is baffling and obscure. If on the one hand the false information is due to the conscious action of any of the

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sitters, why does not the person in question take the trouble to provide a more complete deception? How easy it would be for such devotees of trickery to equip themselves with a stock-in-trade of really accurate names and addresses from any list of obituary notices contemporary or of older date. If these tiresome and misleading statements proceed from the subliminal consciousness of the sitter or medium, it is obvious that this entity is unable to secure various simple items of current information; and in that case, again, what is the motive of such transparent deception?

Nor, indeed, if the subliminal consciousness be accepted as the source of such perplexing messages, can we feel altogether happy in the possession of a secondary self or subconscious mind which is admittedly guilty in many instances of trickery, evasion, flippancy, deliberate and often cruel

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deception. Any clouds of glory that such a self may have trailed behind it are at times sadly tarnished, nor is the conviction either agreeable or inspiring that we harbour within us a force capable of præternatural knowledge and amazing achievement and yet characterized at times by conduct which the ordinary mind of any decent person would utterly condemn ; for such a secondary self is frequently exhibited as “repressed, conative, infantile, unreasoning, predominantly sexual ” and, one may add, sometimes fraudulent and usually non-moral. So many difficulties, indeed, appear to be involved in connecting these messages with any conscious activity that some investigators take refuge in the view that they consist only of the “stuff that dreams are made of”, proceeding from the lumber-room of the mind, and no more fraudulent or immoral than the elusive vagaries

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and incongruities of some fantastic dream.

One other source of the perplexing messages under discussion remains for our consideration. There is, as we have said, a feature common to them all: they invariably claim to proceed from disembodied personalities.

If the devotees of the 'subliminal self' hypothesis persist in bringing these agencies also within the broad compass of the human mind, conscious or unconscious, it may, I suppose, be urged that the claim to discarnate existence put forward by these *animulae vagulae, blandulae*, is a delusion which is built upon the accumulated mental experience of the human race, always believing, or striving to believe in a life beyond the grave. From the dim recesses of our racial history this pathetic protest against annihilation has, as it were, become a stereotyped portion of the

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human mind, and so it comes to pass that while the normal self may reject a personal survival, faint and fleeting echoes of the primaeval faith still rise from the depths of the unconscious self.

If it really be the case, however, as suggested above, that no activity of the human mind, whether normal or subliminal, can furnish an adequate explanation of the communications in question, we are left to face the facts and ask ourselves whether, after all, the claim put forward by the agencies involved may not be a valid one, viz., that they are what they invariably allege themselves to be, the product of discarnate intelligences. It is easy for those unacquainted with the accumulated phenomena of automatic writing, the planchette and ouija boards, and so on, to sneer at such an interpretation of the facts. But sneers have often dogged the earlier footsteps of scientific enterprise, and in any case

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—sneers or no sneers—the scientific researcher must, if he can, provide a solution of the phenomena which in this department of his work are so abundant and so easily repeated, that nothing else is needed beyond a careful sifting of the material, and above all, a mind as free as possible from any conscious bias towards either a normal or supernormal explanation. Once it is accepted that modern science does not necessarily preclude the existence of intelligences independent of those associated with the functions of the human brain, we may frankly admit that the theory of spirit-agencies in the case of these erratic messages does at least fit the facts. The existence would seem to be suggested of those alleged unseen entities, sometimes described as ‘elementals’, an order of low-grade spirits, able and apparently eager to communicate with us. The presence of such beings around us has, in earlier

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centuries, been widely accepted by a veritable *consensus gentium*; and the general characteristics of the communications in many a table-tilting or planchette experiment would seem to correspond closely to those of the fairies, efrits, demons, gnomes, "little folk", *et hoc genus omne*—an intermixture of good humour and mischief coupled with a limited intelligence and the almost complete absence of any moral standard.

Before leaving the subject of telepathy, one more reference to this force as the origin of psychic phenomena must be briefly considered. The well-known "Census of hallucinations" conducted by the Society for Psychical Research revealed the fact that (a) 9.9 per cent. of the 17,000 persons questioned declared that they had at one time or another seen an apparition, (b) that very few recognizable phantasms were seen after the lapse of

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one year from the day of death, (c) that of the veridical cases the vast majority coincided more or less accurately with the moment of death. Modern research has also revealed a fact never before established, that phantasms of the living are far more frequent and generally far better attested than those of the dead. In summary, it may be claimed that men and women with sound minds in sound bodies do occasionally see phantasms of both living and dead persons under circumstances which entirely preclude malobservation or deception. No fact could, indeed, be better established than that ghosts are seen now as they have been seen all down the ages. What, however, is new in respect to this interesting phenomenon is the modern explanation that a ghost is a subjective impression conveyed to the mind of A by a conscious or unconscious suggestion from the mind of B. Deeply interesting as are

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the well-established and comparatively numerous telepathic images conveyed from the living to the living, these do not lead us outside the range of ordinary telepathic activity :

“ There needs no ghost, my lord, come
from the grave
To shew us this.”

But what are we to say to similar phantasms when the person they represent has passed through the gates of Death ? With the special significance of these cases we shall deal later.

It seems clear, then, that the student of psychic phenomena will find many promising lines of research in the ample field covered by telepathy, clairvoyance, and the varied activities of motor automatism. Fresh facts must be accumulated and sifted, fresh efforts made to co-ordinate such facts and discover the laws through which

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they work. Nevertheless, there remains another area of supernormal activities which cannot be neglected—the physical phenomena alleged to occur from time to time, almost invariably in the presence and apparently through the mediumship of certain individuals. In this obscure region, however, the opportunities for fraud have been so great, the detection of trickery so frequent, and the general character of the mediums often so indifferent, that, even with the experiences of a quarter of a century behind them, many careful and able researchers find it difficult to give any definite opinion either for or against the existence of such startling phenomena as “materialization”, “ectoplasmic” extrusions from the body, or the movement of material objects without physical contact (telekinesis). The only excuse for offering my own personal views is the

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fact that I have over a long period of years had sittings with some of the world's best known ' physical ' mediums including Mrs Corner (née Florence Cook), Eusapia Palladino, Eva C. (Marthe Béraud) and Willi Schneider, and a considerable number of less known sensitives, and I am unable to endorse the opinion recently suggested by a body of able and experienced German investigators, Drs Gulat-Wellenburg and Rosenbusch and Graf v. Klinckowstroen, that no scientific evidence exists for the occurrence of physical phenomena. On one occasion I have witnessed the production of a complete, visible and tangible figure which certainly was not the medium herself: that it was a confederate—the only other normal possibility—was ruled out by elaborate and convincing precautions. Despite the open readiness of Eusapia Palladino to cheat when left without control, many of the positive results secured

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through the mediumship of this Neapolitan peasant-woman under test-conditions appear to defy any normal explanation. The sceptic has still to explain how after a searching examination, medical and otherwise, Eva C. under stringent conditions of control and observation was able to exude from her body solid and fluid masses of so-called ectoplasm, the existence of which was duly recorded by photography. No reliable evidence exists to disprove the claim made on behalf of D. D. Home, that he was never detected in any kind of mediumistic fraud, and much of the evidence resulting from the personal experiences of cultured and educated persons with this medium is staggering in its completeness. "On that very hearthrug where you are standing", said the late Sir William Crooks, F.R.S., to me, "I saw Home raised eighteen inches from the ground in broad daylight and verified the

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phenomenon *visu et tactu*". "I do not say", remarked this same great scientist on another occasion, "that these things are possible—I only say they happened."

Telekinesis (the movement of material objects without personal contact) in full light has been attested by men of unimpeachable honesty and acknowledged ability—like Professors William James, Lombroso, Schiaparelli, and Richet. Mr Dingwall quotes two axioms of the professional conjurer—*Never tell your audience beforehand what you are going to do*, and *Never perform the same trick twice on the same evening*. But Mdlle Tomczyk of Warsaw repeated the same form of telekinesis more or less continuously for six years. Is it conceivable that throughout that period various groups of educated and experienced investigators should have utterly failed to detect the use, say, of threads or

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filaments however fine? It is childish and unscientific to ignore sound testimony and regard every account which comes to hand of supernormal physical phenomena as little else than the tale of an idiot signifying nothing.

There is indeed ample work in this dark and dubious region for those who have time, patience, and opportunity for the investigation of the rare cases of well attested physical mediumship. In view, however, of the more immediate results of real value which may be secured from a study of the subjective phenomena of psychical research it is obvious that, unless a physical medium is willing sooner or later to submit himself frankly and honestly to every reasonable test proposed by the best scientific minds, it is comparatively useless for a researcher to spend his limited time in inconclusive

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sittings for the alleged marvels of telekinesis or materialization.

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We have sketched the main lines upon which the psychic student of to-day is working, and the question which remains is simply *Cui bono*? What is the practical, or even the theoretical value of our research? Several adequate replies may, I think, be given.

The results secured by psychic research in Great Britain and various other countries possess, first of all, a real historical value. The attested phenomena of telepathy, clairvoyance, and physical mediumship throw a clear light upon many dark corners of the past.

The Sibylline and other oracles uttered by the entranced priestesses of old, and many of the features of

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medieval magic, have their unmistakable counterparts in the experiences of modern mediumship. The appalling records of the most devilish machinery ever devised for the torture of mankind, the witchcraft persecutions (not of the Dark Ages but of the Renaissance), possess an added horror when one realizes that the offences alleged against the nine million persons burnt to death in two centuries were to a large extent the outcome of psychic forces and conditions whose character was totally unknown to either the victims or their tormentors.

The sacred books of Christianity and other religions speak of visible and audible phenomena of supernormal character which have their obvious analogues in the psychic experiences of our own days. The messages revealed in the shining Urim and Thummim, the quaint telepathy of Jacob's sheep-farming, the phantasm and the voice

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at Endor—these things appear no longer as the isolated happenings of a remote and dissimilar past or of a special dispensation. In the pages of the New Testament, too, the healing touch for the sick, the rescue of the possessed, the experiences of the first Eastertide on the way to Emmaus or on the Galilean beach, the testimony of the “five hundred brethren at once”, the sudden conversion on the Damascus road—such records are indeed “worthier of all men to be believed” because they are no longer relegated to a far-off “age of miracles” but are repeated and exemplified in the phenomena of modern research.

Apart, however, from the question of historical interest, is it too much to hope that we may sooner or later succeed in controlling and utilizing to a vastly greater degree than at present those new forces which our researches

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have brought to light ? Mr H. G. Wells, in a prophetic page of *When the Sleeper Awakes* pictures a Harley Street of the future occupied by the consulting-rooms of telepathic specialists, and there can be little doubt that the valuable work even now accomplished in cases of nervous derangements and mental pathology by suggestion, hypnotic or otherwise, is capable of still further expansion as fuller information accumulates and earlier prejudices subside.

The employment of suggestion in the education of the young is a field at present almost unexplored, although suggestion is so obvious a factor in the "endless imitation" of childhood. The increased application of psycho-analytic methods may in the future not only relieve to an infinitely greater extent the maladies and distresses of the ordinary individual, but revolutionize our attitude towards the

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criminal. Just as the treatment of hysteria has already advanced far beyond the beatings and cold douches of our grandparents' days, so do our methods of handling the criminal become ever more curative than penal; nor is it probable that fifty years hence civilized nations will still regard the rope or the electric chair as the only possible fate even for the murderer.

In another direction psychical research may stretch out a helping hand to reinvigorate the failing forces of religion. The structure of organized Christianity to-day exhibits all the signs of gradual but inevitable decay. Even of those who may be willing to render lip-service to the formulae of orthodoxy few ever enter a church or chapel. The forces of Christianity appear to exercise little control over domestic politics, and none at all over the international conduct of the nations,

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which so often displays a complete contempt for the precepts of either religion or morality. While the organized religion of Christ has still a message for the individual and can still guide His faithful followers in life and cheer them in the hour of death, the despairing cry of the Saxon chronicler might well be uttered over the masses of "Christian" mankind to-day: "Christ and His saints sleep." Faced with such hard facts, thoughtful men are beginning to realize that some reconsideration and restatement of the Christian position is inevitable. In such enterprise valuable data would be provided by the results of scientific psychical research. One of our best known psychologists has indeed gone so far as to declare that no other power than psychic research can hope to arrest the advancing forces of materialism. The acceptance of the fact that

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communications and influences can reach us which are manifestly not the product of human minds nor conveyed through the ordinary channels of sense would stultify any *a priori* denial of the possibility of that "spiritual communion" which is an essential feature of religion.

In the second place, psychical research is, in the view of many, already able to endow with a measure of precision and certainty those vague and tremulous promises of a future life which are offered by the Churches. Owing to the rapid decay of religious forces in the western world this vital doctrine of a personal survival has for the vast majority even of so-called Christians lost any real significance. In answer to the query "Do you desire a future life whatever the conditions may be?" which appeared in a questionnaire circulated by the American Branch of

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the S.P.R. in 1900, the 'noes' numbered no less than 78 per cent. of the total replies received (3321)—many taking the form of "not at all", "not in the least", "never think about it". And although the results of an investigation within such narrow limits cannot be regarded as decisive, it is probable that the note of scepticism or indifference which runs through the majority of the replies reflects to a large extent the attitude towards a personal survival adopted by the average man or woman of the present day.

Against the advancing tide of unbelief or indifference the modern presentation of religion seems wellnigh helpless. Nevertheless, if this spirit of blank negation or complete indifference continues to make headway, it is difficult to see how either moral or religious sanctions can retain their authority. If annihilation be our fate, any moral guidance of the Universe

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must appear to many minds almost inconceivable. And if the moral guidance of the whole collapses, schemes of morality for the parts become a *reductio ad absurdum*: the Divine sanctions of the Sermon on the Mount are replaced by systems of glorified Police Regulations imposed by the shifting decrees of a human majority.

Within the narrow limits at our disposal we can only indicate very briefly the main lines along which psychic research may serve to establish the fact of a survival. The cumulative effect of the evidence offered is very great and may avail—in Glanville's words of old—"to secure some of the out-works of religion and regain a parcel of ground which bold infidelity hath invaded."

(1) Various forms of automatism and certain well attested physical

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phenomena indicate the existence of discarnate intelligences.

(2) Telepathy proves that thought can be conveyed apart from the ordinary channels of sense, and, if telepathy be accepted as the cause of apparitions of the living, it would seem that the dead whose phantasmal forms appear to us are also capable of volition. The apparition (seen simultaneously by two witnesses) of a dead mother bending over the cot of her dying child "with a look of infinite love and tenderness" is deeply significant. Of even greater evidential value are the well-attested accounts of apparitions seen by dying children or their young brothers and sisters who were present at the deathbed.

(3) Many of the communications which reach us from tried and tested mediums, like Mrs Piper, appear to

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be what they claim to be, actual messages from deceased persons.

(4) It is virtually impossible to attribute some of the 'cross-correspondences' recorded by the S.P.R. to any other agency but the conscious and detailed activity of a discarnate personality.

* * * * *

And so our patient work continues. The men and women who forty years ago served faithfully as the pioneers of modern psychical research have nearly all passed away. There can be little doubt that they had pitched their hopes too high. So deep was the devotion inspired by these new labours, so large the mass of facts offered by a veritable cloud of contemporary witnesses, that leaders like Myers and Sidgwick and Gurney hoped with confidence that in their own days the

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compelling force of the facts they had gathered would bring intellectual conviction and change the whole outlook of mankind. Such clear certainty came to few men in the ranks of these pioneers themselves and most of them died "seeing the promises from afar but not having attained unto them". But fresh recruits have filled the gaps in our line, fresh channels of research have been opened up, and fresh facts recorded: modern science tends rather to clear our path than to close it, and the light of that earlier hope still shines brightly. Amid the limitless possibilities of the next fifty years—great developments in surgery, bio-chemistry, television, lighting, and transport—it may be that not the least of the discoveries which glorify the new age will come from the scientific results of psychical research. "Hardly as yet", said William James a year before he died, "has the surface of the facts

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called ' psychic ' begun to be scratched for scientific purposes. It is through following these facts, I am persuaded that the greatest scientific conquests of the coming generation will be achieved. *Kühn ist das Mühen, herrlich der Lohn !* ”

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