

SPIRIT COMMUNICATION

AND

VIGURS

The MIND

of...

the MEDIUM,

the SITTER,

the COMMUNICATOR.

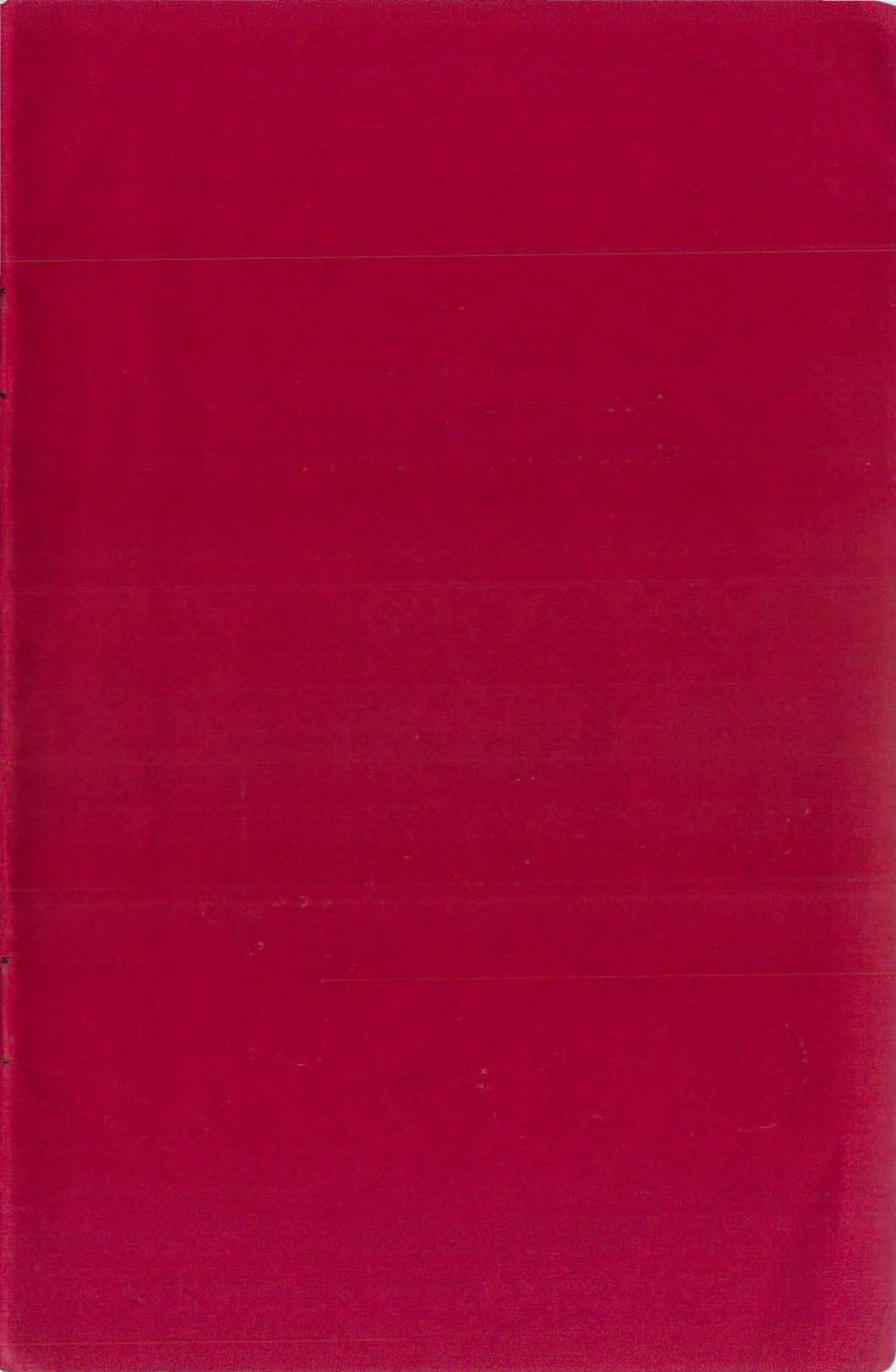
A Spiritualist Symposium

BY
Brigadier R. C. FIREBRACE, C.B.E.

HAROLD L. VIGURS
HORACE LEAF

and other members of the Group

THE FOURTEEN GROUP



FOURTEEN GROUP

THE MIND OF THE MEDIUM
IN COMMUNICATION

By
BRIGADIER R. C. FIREBRACE, C.B.E.

COMMUNICATION AND THE
MIND OF THE SITTER

By
HAROLD L. VIGURS

THE MIND
OF THE COMMUNICATOR

By
HORACE LEAF

MEMBERSHIP OF THE GROUP

Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding	Mrs. Meurig Morris
Lady Dowding	Mr. Charles R. Probert
Brigadier R. C. Firebrace	Mr. T. Ralph Rossiter
Mr. Maurice Barbanell	Mr. J. P. Shaw
Mr. Ronald P. Beesley	Mr. John M. Stewart
Mr. H. F. Bendall	Mr. Eric W. Stuart
Mr. A. W. Challis	Mr. John W. Symonds
Mrs. Muriel Hankey	Mr. Harold L. Vigurs
Mr. Percy J. Hitchcock	Mr. G. A. Williams
Mr. Horace Leaf	Mr. Percy Wilson

The FOURTEEN GROUP came into being in June 1947 when the Presidents of the three largest Spiritualist organisations in Britain met to confer on matters of common interest. They felt that a few other outstanding Spiritualists of repute should be invited to join them for the purpose of lending to the deliberations the benefit of their experience and knowledge, and from this beginning emerged the periodical meetings of fourteen men prominent in their respective spheres.

It was made clear from the start that members of the Group expressed their personal views only and in no sense represented or spoke on behalf of any organisations to which they belonged or of which they happened to be officers.

More recently membership of the Group has been extended by inviting several additional members (including three ladies) to join, and the functions of the Group have also been somewhat modified in the light of other developments in the Spiritualist movement, in order to avoid overlapping.

The present aim is to examine evidence and offer guidance to Spiritualists at large on fundamental matters of immediate concern to all who are interested in the scientific, religious and philosophical aspects of Spiritualism.

It is emphasized that the individual views expressed in the papers and discussions reported herein are those of the speakers and should not be regarded as in any way representative of the opinions of any organisations to which the speakers may happen to belong.

Mr. Percy J. Hitchcock acted as Chairman until his passing in April, 1953. Subsequently Brigadier R. C. Firebrace, C.B.E., was elected Chairman.

THE MIND OF THE MEDIUM IN COMMUNICATION

by

BRIGADIER R. C. FIREBRACE, C.B.E.

I THINK this is one of the most important questions that we have to deal with in Spiritualism. Sometimes we meet opposing camps; one camp will say that everything comes from the mind of the medium and the other that everything is from spirit.

To make my own views clear, I am in the middle of the two camps. Why do some of us think that the mind of the medium does enter into statements made by them?

There are many ways of dealing with this question, but I am going to start the ball rolling by discussing errors in communication. If communication were perfect there would be no errors, but I think it is evident to everyone who has studied mediumship—and not in the least surprising—that there are errors, incorrect statements that come through even the very best sensitives.

Of course, I accept fully the idea that there is communication which we obtain through our sensitives. As regards these errors, the question arises why they occur. There are several possibilities. One is that they arise from the inherent difficulties of communication, i.e. that there are difficulties inherent in communication between two different states; you get errors because the communicator is finding it difficult to convey to the medium exactly what he wants to say. I accept that fully as one source of error; a medium has misheard, as you can mishear on a long-distance telephone call.

Another cause can be telepathic impressions reaching the medium from incarnate minds.

A third possibility is that some errors are due to thoughts or impressions originating in the medium's mind, conscious or subconscious. Perhaps someone will challenge the statement that thoughts arise and mingle with other thoughts in the medium's mind, but I consider that they do. I think that on the whole this is the main source of error. It is most understandable if you consider that with normal mediums the mind is still to some extent active.

It may be disputed whether the subconscious mind of the medium is to any degree active in trance communication. In my opinion that subconscious mind is normally active to a greater or lesser extent even in deep-trance mediumship. I do, however,

allow for the possibility that in rare cases the medium's subconscious mind can be completely stilled. However, I think that is the exception rather than the rule.

You can probably recall statements that have been made in the course of your own sittings, but to attempt to prove my point, I will quote the case of a very celebrated medium, Mrs. Piper, through whom evidence of survival was given that convinced quite a few scientists and sceptical researchers. I am not going to belittle the brilliant evidence given by her, but there were occasions when she uttered statements which it would be extremely difficult to accept as originating in a discarnate mind—they were often too absurd to be attributed to such a source.

Many will remember that one of her controls, Julius Cæsar, came in shining white armour and said that he was still engaged in galloping over the plains of Arizona. I would not attribute that type of statement to a spirit communicator.

On another occasion, another control, George Eliot, referred to the talks she had had in the other world with Adam Bede. Adam Bede was a character out of one of George Eliot's novels. I feel that these two statements would never have been made by Mrs. Piper in her normal state; but they arose from her subconscious mind, which at times had a dreamy tendency. I think they were similar to dream-fantasies.

Does the mind of the medium enter into the direct voice and other forms of physical phenomena? There are different opinions about this, but my own view is that it can, that the thoughts behind these manifestations can be from spirit, or can be also the result of a mental process of the medium.

I will give you one example. In a fairly recent sitting with a direct-voice medium, which was being recorded by a tape machine, a voice gave a quite unusual name, which I heard myself on the record. We will say that the voice said, "Warriston." This was at once recognised by a sitter. The medium (who, I believe, is slightly deaf) said, "Oh, I think it was Woolason." The voice, after having given its rather difficult name correctly, then said, "Yes, Woolason," and proceeded to give, under what I can only think was the influence of the medium's mind, a completely wrong name.

I accept in all forms of phenomena a degree of colouration of what is being given from spirit sources. The source of communication can be spirit or it can in some way be the mind of the medium, but more often it is an admixture of the two. I am not entirely alone in that opinion.

By chance—if there is such a thing—I was reading a book last night, "Anchors to Windward," by Stewart Edward White, who

has had very considerable experience of sitting with fine mediums. I would like to finish by quoting what he says:—

“ One of these difficulties is the tendency to mix, with even genuine communications, contributions from the states of the medium's own subconscious. Sometimes entire passages have that origin. In any case it is very difficult, sometimes impossible, to pick out which is which, to determine what originates from outside and what is supplied quite unknowingly by the sitter's own mind. In psychic research this latter is technically known as ‘colouring’. Its character is determined by what sort of person is the medium, what are his customary habits of thought, and what are the terms of belief in his environment, which means not only his physical person but his thought and spiritual surroundings.”

That quotation covers almost exactly what I believe.

DISCUSSION

Mr. H. F. Bendall: I can throw a little light on that point. I remember a friend saying that on one occasion his mother went under deep-trance control, and there was a long talk on reincarnation. After that, there was a statement that reincarnation was a fact. The spirit communicator said: “ Thank goodness I got that out of her mind!” The communicator had to clear away the thought in the mind of the medium before she was able to get on with the work she had to do. There have been many other cases.

In the mediumship of other mediums I have often heard teaching which was contrary to their own personal opinion. In my early days I experimented with a table and I found that mischievous spirits can influence results. In a sitting I had with a direct-voice medium words were put into the mouth of my wife which I find did not come from her but from a friend of hers who had committed suicide. I have also found that telepathy between the sitter and the medium frequently affects the message.

There was another interesting case when I was attending a séance where the medium was in deep trance, and the message given to me was, “ You have been communicating with someone whose name begins with an S.” Before leaving home that evening I had written to a Mr. Saunders. The medium said, “ It was Saunders.” I replied, “ Quite right.” Then she said: “ It was with reference to Abdul Latif.” Saunders was not a Spiritualist and had certainly not heard of Abdul Latif. It was a clear case of the mind of the medium affecting the message, because she thought it referred to the Saunders who had so many communications from Abdul Latif.

Mr. M. Barbanell: I think I would only take exception to the phrase, “ normal medium,” because I would contend that mediums

are never normal. As for the suggestion that where an opinion contrary to the medium's is expressed, either in trance or in some other form of phenomena, I do not think that is evidence that the medium's mind is necessarily absent during that communication. It could be that, through the subconscious mind, there was a desire to express a contrary opinion in order to suggest that the communication was in no way discoloured.

In my view it is axiomatic that all communication, whether in mental or physical phenomena, reaches us through the subconscious mind of the medium and therefore I assert that there is no such thing as one hundred per cent. spirit communication and no per cent. of the medium. With every communication there must be some form of colouration—for example, the receiving of communications by symbols and the medium's misinterpretation of them, which might be unconscious. The medium's wishful thinking must colour any communication and the medium's likes and prejudices must affect whatever comes through.

This raises the very difficult question, which has not been touched upon—whether mediums are better or worse as instruments when they are cultured or when they are not cultured; whether culture is a help or a hindrance; whether it is like the violinist, who can play better on a Stradivarius than on an ordinary violin, or whether the medium's education and beliefs are always an impediment.

Mrs. Meurig Morris: We have been talking about the subconscious minds of the medium and of the sitter. How are you going to differentiate where the subconscious mind of the medium ends and that of the communicator begins? In deep trance the medium undergoes a physiological and psychological change. While in this state the medium's conscious mind is not functioning. I think that during this state there must be a merging of the medium's subconscious mind with that of the controlling entity, for it is only in the conscious mind that a demarcation is experienced.

There is also development from the deep trance state to one I call the dualistic state in which the medium and the control function at the same time through the body and mind of the medium. The larynx of the medium and a portion of the brain are used by the control while the medium, as a silent listener, is able to think and reason about what is being spoken and to accept or reject such ideas. In this state the mind and will of the medium are operative, yet do not retard the entity who is speaking.

This is a development from the deep trance state and is not semi-trance as commonly understood. It suggests the need for a deeper study of the mind of the medium in communication and the methods used by communicators. The dualistic state is an evolution of the trance condition and greatly surpasses it.

Mr. J. M. Stewart: There is no doubt that there are mediums who think that everything comes from the Spirit World and who do not appear to realise the part played by their own minds, either conscious or subconscious. Apparently, more often than otherwise, spirit people work through the subconscious mind of the medium. If the medium has a well-stored mind for the control to draw upon, the work of the control is simplified and the output is improved. If that is so, it is obvious that, the wider the medium's knowledge and the better trained his mind, the more effective will his work be.

On the other hand, I have heard of a trance medium of high standing who was more or less forbidden by her controls to read books on religion or philosophy because these books might put certain ideas into her mind and give a turn to her thoughts which might impede, distort or colour their ideas flowing through her. These are two points of view we have to reconcile. We have to discover the laws which govern the production of phenomena.

Mr. R. P. Beesley: There are many different methods of deception and we have not enough research. I can quote at least twelve known methods by which messages can be passed, which means that on three planes of consciousness—the physical, mental and spiritual—we do not need any communicator. There can be impressions emanating from the desire-body, a physical complaint reflecting itself on the body of the person, or a strong mental thought which the other person has fixed in the mind of the individual he wants to hear about.

We can have a perfectly good communication coming through backwards—an example of the mirror-mind. As one woman's message was recorded it was nonsense, but when reversed everything was found to be perfect. Did the medium's mind enter into that message? Obviously not.

On another occasion a suicide came back and described the gruesome method by which he took his life. The following night we had great difficulty in preventing that medium from repeating the action. We can get a two-way series of impressions, each dependent upon the sympathy between the communicator and the transmitter. The error in all these different methods is so vast that we cannot be dogmatic at this stage. We need more research and training.

Mrs. M. Hankey: I believe that the medium's subconscious or conscious mind can colour certain things. It is only by training that the mind can be subdued. I think that communication is not entirely from the subconscious level.

An interesting point for investigation would be the results of proxy sittings, such as transatlantic sittings. The proofs I have received rest more upon proxy sittings than on personal ones.

Mr. P. J. Hitchcock: You may remember the Rosemary case.

Rosemary, a normal woman of normal education, was a brilliant medium. In trance she gave forth what appeared to be gibberish until an Egyptologist was taken along, listened very closely for the vowels and gradually mastered them. He then fitted them into ancient Egyptian, which is made up of consonants only. She was speaking ancient Egyptian, which became a dead language about 100 B.C. This seems to me to be communication without anything to do with the mind of the medium, unless she was in communication with someone else who had been reincarnated.

Mr. Barbanell: There is some misunderstanding. When I said that all communication is effected through the subconscious mind of the medium, I did not wish to imply that that means necessarily a subconscious interference by the medium. They are two entirely different statements. We can all quote evidence, statements which are 100 per cent. evidential and which the medium could not normally have known.

In the case of Rosemary, the claim is made that Rosemary is the reincarnation of Vola, a contemporary of the Lady Nona who transmitted messages in ancient Egyptian. Whether you accept it or not is an entirely different matter. The point I was trying to make was that everyone agrees that the subconscious mind is the means by which communication is effected. To what extent does the subconscious mind colour the communication? In some cases it might be none; in others quite a lot.

Brigadier Firebrace: I claim that communication is very often influenced by the mind of the medium. I accept the possibility of 100 per cent. or 99 per cent. accuracy, but in the majority of cases there is evidence of some interference from the mind.

Mr. Beesley: We have to decide where telepathy starts. The mind and telepathic communication are the crux of the matter. Is it really possible by training to get the medium by a conscious effort of will to fight inhibiting intrusion to any serious extent of her own ideas?

Brigadier Firebrace: There might be a question of degrees of elimination. I have had evidence through the direct-voice mediumship of Estelle Roberts which was absolutely factual and conclusive and not in her mind, and therefore could not originate from her mind. On the other hand, in my own voice circle I have had good evidential communication which has been followed on a number of occasions by the same voice making statements which came from the mind of the medium. I think the origin of what was said varied on different occasions. There is no line of demarcation; they intermingle.

Lord Dowding: There does not seem to be difference of opinion between any of those who have spoken. I think everybody agrees that occasions arise when the material comes from the medium which was not in the mind of the medium. I think many

of our troubles arise from trying to get cut-and-dried rules about what happens. It seems that a part of this very important question is the origin of the messages and the means by which they are transmitted to the medium from the Other Side. I feel there is a great variety of method, particularly when advanced spirits are communicating. A person living on earth a year ago might find it easy to make contact with a medium and give an intelligible message, which might be right or wrong; it might be perfectly communicated without any colouration, but wrong because the communicator did not know what he was talking about.

It may be that an exalted spirit, in order to talk to us, has to go through a much more complicated business. His vibration may be so far separated from that of the medium that, unless the medium is exceptionally receptive, direct communication is not possible.

There are various methods. One is described in Vale Owen's "Life Beyond the Veil." Forty-nine or fifty discarnate persons received the message from the high spirit—you can think of it as an inverted pyramid. It came down through all those people to the person on earth, the seamstress who had looked after Vale Owen's little girl when she was alive. This is a complicated process and you can imagine errors arising from it. Another method is the re-adoption by the elevated spirit of one of the astral bodies which he has occupied in the past.

I think that it is possible for material to come through the medium with no distortion at all; it is equally possible for a true message to be distorted, or for a false message to be received from a playful spirit.

Lady Dowding: I have had many messages in which I have been able to trace the medium's mind working through them. I had one that was in nobody's mind.

Mr. Hitchcock: I think we can come to the conclusion that mediums differ. There is the case of a medium telling a sitter that her husband was there, yet she had no husband. Then we can continue to the top of the tree where there are cases of communication so pure as to be almost unaffected by the medium. In the vast majority of cases they are so affected.

Lord Dowding: I think at some of the very low levels there are more cases where the story coming through is coloured by the medium in some measure.

Mr. Beesley: In all these types of communication we are dealing with telepathic communication between mind and mind. Therefore, because a certain amount of the medium's influence is there, it is only because mind is relative to mind in that degree. The error is there, but it is not a deliberate fault. We can say it is telepathy, but where does that telepathic line run from? The mind and telepathic communication are the crux of the matter.

COMMUNICATION AND THE MIND OF THE SITTER

by

A. H. L. VIGURS

WE are primarily concerned not to expound text-book points of view but our own thinking, so as to give people something fresh to break the habit of mind.

To do this and think creatively is probably the most strenuous of mental exercises. Faithfully to communicate that thought to another afterwards demands special skill which comes only from long application and practice. Every branch of study demands its own terminology and system of presentation and, even when this is relatively mastered, we are painfully conscious of our own incapacity to convey adequately the full richness of our concepts, and more especially those relating to subjective matters. Words are limited symbols and thought is rarely purely intellectual. Generally there is an emotional element linked with thought and for this reason the spoken word, aided by gesture, intonation and probably the impact of certain psychic influences, is more effective for communication than the written word.

Moreover, in communication words are limited by the scale of values that our hearers attribute to them. These values are derived partly from the personal impact of our own experiences and partly from the traditional background of the social world to which we belong, and usually these differ from the corresponding values in the minds of our hearers. In general, all communication is to conditioned minds.

If this is our difficulty under normal conditions, how much more imposing is the task when we try to explore those less familiar realms where the psychic levels of consciousness have no well-defined terminology or definitions, where in the main we have to resort to analogies related to our sense-experiences and where the basic necessity of mutual experience for true understanding is so very limited? In short, in all communication there are three limiting factors, viz. (1) the mind of the communicator, (2) the means adopted for communication and (3) the mind of the recipient; and each of these factors is capable of being broken down into many sub-divisions. The limiting effects of these factors are even more pronounced in psychic communication; they are all indissolubly connected, and our constant problem is to exercise

keen vigilance to discard colouration due to human frailty, so that we can get a larger conception of the message that the communicator intends to impart.

In my psychic experiences with sensitives (and I prefer the word "sensitive" to "medium") I stumbled upon this limitation very early. About 30 years ago I had a sitting with a trance medium and during the communication was told, among other things, that fairly soon I should be going to Canada. I was told that I should make my home there for many years and was also correctly given the names of the two companions who would accompany me, my wife and a very close friend. At the time, I did not pay serious attention to the message and merely noted it for reference should confirmation in any way be received.

About a month later, during a private sitting with a sensitive who operated out of trance, I received a further "spirit message" which confirmed the previous one and I began to wonder whether, after all, this was not a genuine communication. I told my wife and my friend, Jimmy, about the two messages. They were interested and we decided to explore the matter further. They had a series of sittings with other sensitives, were told substantially the same message of going to Canada, and in two cases the names of the other companions were correctly given. At this stage we all began to think that the message was really genuine and came from spirit. Though we made no active preparations, to some extent it entered into our calculations for our future.

Confirmations continued. Through automatic writing a sensitive gave me the name of the ship we should sail in and this was subsequently confirmed at a direct-voice sitting. Tentative dates were advanced for the time of sailing. I was even advised to sell my house in preparation, and so on. Time eventually proved that all this was incorrect and it was only my early scientific training, which had taught me that as much can be learned from failure as from success, that determined me to follow this question of communication further.

Clearly the conventional Spiritualist explanations were inadequate. To suggest that a person on the other side of life was trying to pull my leg was a bit thin. All the sensitives consulted were well known London ones, working for our larger Associations and obviously had proved their capacity to act as channels for communication with spirit. It is true that some of the messages had been given by the sensitives when in a normal state of consciousness, but quite a number of the messages purported to come from their guides, whose names are household names in the Spiritualist movement. Surely these guides could not be hoodwinked by a hoaxer on their side of life? It was a challenging problem, for we had had at least twelve confirmations.

Now as to my present views regarding communication I

think it is common ground between us that man has an etheric body and that consciousness, memory and character are linked with that body and not with the physical body; that all our experiences, and what we have assimilated from those experiences, in some way are registered or integrated with that etheric body and its emanation, the aura; that to a truly developed sensitive there can be no dissimulation, for by contact—somewhat akin to a psychometric contact—with that aura and etheric body he is able to discern what we really are, feel and think. To a developed sensitive all is revealed and man is known for what he really is.

I want to take this a step further. We also claim that man is spirit; that the etheric body is but a vehicle for the manifestation of spirit, just as the physical body is but a vehicle for the etheric body. We all have some concept of God and generally we postulate that spirit is the God-like, divine part of us, the real ego. For simplicity's sake I have ignored sub-divisions of this etheric body into emotional, mental, astral bodies, etc. As the Bible talks of body, soul and spirit, for convenience I am referring to the physical body, the etheric body and spirit.

There is contact between the physical sense system and the etheric body; there is also contact between our spirit consciousness (often not known to normal consciousness) and the etheric body. The etheric body, therefore, is the matrix of our consciousness where the past, through physical experience, is recorded and where that larger knowledge which comes from spirit is also recorded and awaits our growing efforts through prayer, aspiration, silence, worship or any other form of spiritual exercise, to be assimilated into conscious knowledge.

Now what happens when the sensitive and the sitter are together for communication? There must be sympathy in the common experiment for communication, and this sympathy enables the aura of the sensitive to harmonise with and to some extent to blend with that of the sitter. In this condition it is relatively easy for the sensitive to record impressions psychometrically obtained from the aura of the sitter—impressions which, when communicated to the sitter, correspond with facts and happenings having relation to that sitter.

If the sitter is able to confirm the facts so given, this augments the sympathetic link between the sensitive and the sitter and, if this is continued and the sensitive is able to raise himself into the higher levels of consciousness, he (the sensitive) may be able to record and translate some of those psychometric impressions he is receiving from the sitter's auric influences that originate in the spiritual ego of that sitter.

Spiritual knowledge is not limited by time. It may relate to the past but is more likely to relate to the future and to forthcoming conditions, and so the sensitive may make prophecies which do not

originate from any discarnate entity but are gleaned from the larger consciousness of the sitter himself, though naturally not known to the sitter's normal consciousness.

I am convinced from close observation of many experiments that this is the source of many prophecies. When we talk of our spirit friends' inability to gauge earth time accurately it would probably be nearer the mark to look for this chronological limitation to the faulty interpretation by the sensitive of the psychometric contact that he is making with the sitter's spiritual nature. Not all prophecies originate from spirit, unless we also include the spirit of the sensitive and the spirit of the sitter.

In this contact with the aura other factors also have to be allowed for. The aura records not only our worthy side, our successes in life, but also those frustrations when opportunities have slipped from our grasp or perhaps not even come our way. Normally, by the deliberate action of the will, these aspects are not allowed to find expression in our consciousness. Nevertheless, though suppressed, they are not eliminated and can be picked up by the sensitive. If the sensitive is not aware of the source of these impressions he may be confused into thinking that they come from spirit and in his ignorance they may be passed to the sitter as part of genuine communications.

Where a sitter thinks, or even feels, that in this world he has not had the opportunities his abilities merit, such thoughts or feelings, though suppressed from normal consciousness, can be the trigger action for psychometric contact by the sensitive which, if not clearly understood by the sensitive both as to nature and origin, may easily be confused into a spirit message. As the sensitive usually feels very kind towards mankind, this contact may become so coated with comfort—and perhaps kindly encouragement—that it appears to be a direct calling from the spirit world to greater office and function. How many people have been supposedly “told by spirit” that they should go on to the platform and speak, that they are to be the champions of the spirit world to put the Church to which they belong or the special society to which they are attached in proper order, that they are to lecture, as they are the chosen vessels of spirit for the real revelation?

The aura is an open book to the well-developed sensitive, but unfortunately all our sensitives are not well developed and often, in the elation of getting a contact with something not from themselves, they utter what they get as a message from spirit. I am afraid that too often it has little to do with communication from spirit, other than from the deeper levels of the sitter's mind.

Now let us examine the auric field between the sensitive and the sitter a little more closely and try to relate it to spirit communication. A worthy sensitive, actuated by the desire to serve humanity and not to display his own gifts, must, because of the

spiritual law that like attracts like, attract to himself those in the higher life who are also actuated by a similar altruism. Where there is true community of interest there is no separation, and those from the higher life will be concerned not only to develop the sensitivity of such an individual but to consolidate its working to give more effective service to those who are seeking enlightenment and truth. Consequently the aura of such a sensitive will link with those similarly minded in spirit and will gradually become impregnated with the influences which they radiate to him for the unfoldment of his gift. These may lead to further earthly experience to ripen the understanding or may pave the way for an initiation from within to a larger measure of spiritual awareness.

The limitations of three-dimensional space are not in point, for we are dealing with consciousness on levels where these limitations do not apply. This new influence in the life of the sensitive can very well be termed that of a "guide" and at this stage the aura of the sensitive will be a composite of the sensitive and the guides or helpers. In addition, there will be those who are drawn by similar ties to the sitter, i.e. those who wish to communicate and those interested in the sitter on more altruistic grounds and by their efforts to assist the communication process.

Now, though a sensitive and/or his guide can make a direct contact with the communicator, my experience points (and I would not put it higher than that) to the fact that more effective communication takes place when the communicator has a sympathetic love interest with the sitter, so that the contact for communication is strengthened by the further correspondences that can be made by the sensitive directly through attunement with the sitter's aura, in which the aura of the communicator also blends. The auric field in which the sensitive is working is coloured, therefore, not only by the qualities (i.e., thoughts, feelings, memories, scales of value and, in fact, the whole character) of the sensitive and sitter but also by those qualities of the many friends in spirit who are co-operating with both. It is like a restless pond where the water is constantly coming to the surface bringing all sorts of matter with it. So this auric field consists of very many elements derived from the life-force of all those co-operating with the experiment of communication.

We know that mental processes, even on the normal level, are not logical, and that is why we all have mental complexes. It requires constant effort of the will to direct our normal process of thought-images, to suppress those which are not sequential, in order to think logically. How much more difficult, therefore, is the task when, as far as the sensitive is concerned, the will-power is deliberately laid aside and out of the welter of impressions which impinge upon his consciousness, he has to try to sort out those which are germane to any communication and then to arrange

them in a logical order? No doubt this is a very complicated process and the probability is that the major part of the work is undertaken by those spirits who are co-operating in the capacity of "guide" to the sensitive.

In this medley of impressions to be gleaned in this auric field, a fact (such as a name, Christian or surname, village, street, number, etc.) can be fairly clearly isolated and is less likely to be adulterated by associative or accruing impressions in the mind of the sensitive. So it is logical to expect that facts and evidences can be communicated with relatively little confusion; but when it comes to the transmission of a stream of ideas such as a teaching, the limitations of all our normal processes of thought become heightened. It is my experience that so-called communication of this class is rare and, in the main, consists of a series of impressions buried deep in the subconsciousness of both the sitter and the sensitive, not forgetting those impressions attributable to those operating from spirit.

This fundamental difficulty was early recognised by Stewart Edward White and no doubt you will recall the great lengths to which he and the spirit helpers went to try to eliminate this very serious limitation in Betty's communications. It is relatively easy to prove survival by transmission of evidential facts but it is extremely difficult to transmit thought which is new and does not fit in with the general pattern of impressions in the minds of both sensitive and sitter.

Just recall the "no war" prophecies of 1939, and the fact that most sensitives in this country and in the U.S.A. do not pronounce in favour of reincarnation, whereas most sensitives in other parts of the world almost take it for granted. I suggest that for the explanation we must look to the loaded mental content of all taking part in the communication. It is, perhaps, not without wisdom that the old schools of religious training required the sensitive to undergo long periods of strong mental training and discipline, long periods in the quietness of the secluded cell, to call forth that sensitivity within that would enable the sensitive to make contact with minds apart from his own.

The preacher's exhortation for man to offer himself as an empty vessel for service to God (i.e. humanity) probably was rooted in a profound psychic truth and, in order that Spiritualism shall make that impression on world thought that we all so desire, it may well make us ponder on the necessity to organise centres of retreat where the sensitive, under wise direction, may not only make himself more sensitive to outside influences from spirit but will develop that discipline of his faculties that the work of selection by the guides will be eased and will enable truer communication to be experienced.

If this is the background of our difficulties with a private

sitting, how much more difficult must be the task of sensitives of the calibre of, say, Mrs. Estelle Roberts when, at a big meeting such as in the Albert Hall, she has to find that poise of consciousness within her, not only to respond to the auric field generated by that vast audience but to be able to remain detached from it to such an extent that she is able to pick out those impressions that relate to an evidential communication from a communicator in spirit?

As far as my Canadian episode is concerned, when I thought deeply and honestly about the state of my own mind, I felt that it could be associated with a deep desire by my friend and myself to escape from the tyranny of a desk and the routine of being a cog in the large Governmental machine. Though our work had interest because of its complexity — no two cases were alike — it had little creative value compared with the making of things, whether in the arts or in the world of industry. Moreover, there was the natural longing to be out and about and for an open-air existence.

It can easily be seen, therefore, how this frustration could be picked up by a sensitive and then probably dramatised into some venture in Canada by an experience already recorded in the mind of the sensitive. Once our minds were loaded with this suggestion it would be readily available for confirmation and enhancing by other sensitives. They picked up this impression; it was something impinged upon them and, in their confusion, attributed to spirit and passed over as a spirit message. Here is our Achilles' heel.

The tragedy is that the majority of our sensitives are not aware of these difficulties and do not want to know of them. With the minority who are aware there is often a reluctance to break with the easier but traditional "hit-or-miss" method of giving off which is so prevalent to-day, for such a break would involve long and arduous training to develop that fine discrimination so essential for spirit communication.

The minds of both the sitter and the sensitive are very limiting factors in communication and only as we train our sensitives, first to recognise these limitations and then to rise above them, shall we pave the way for real spirit communication. In fact all communication hinges on the capacity of the sensitive to lose his normal consciousness—his stream of individual sense-impressions. In this condition, as he identifies himself with the communicator and to the degree that he is able to do this, eliminating extraneous influences from the mind of the sitter and from the environment in which both are placed, is spirit communication possible. It will mean a complete remodelling of the activities of our movement so that we open up something akin to the old idea of the temple and its training. We shall still be propagandists to meet the challenge of current materialistic thought, but on the other hand we shall

recognise the bigger responsibility arising from our claims for spirit communication.

In my own research work along these lines, direct contact with the sitter has been eliminated so far as physical presence is concerned. Eventually we shall take similar measures so far as the presentation of our public demonstrations is concerned. The sensitive will not be present on the platform when the address is being given and, when the time for the demonstration arrives, he will be led on to the platform, but will remain behind a screen until after his demonstration. He will give his evidences somewhat on these lines: "I have here a gentleman who tells me that his name is (say) John Spencer Lawton, that he lived at 45, Brunswick Terrace, Abingdon, and that he wishes to communicate with a lady in the audience named Alice Kingshott." The Chairman will then ask if such a lady is in the audience and, if so, whether she can identify such a gentleman. On getting a reply in the affirmative, the sensitive will ask no further questions but will proceed with the evidence and the communication. He will make no visual contact with the recipient until after the evidence and the communication have been given.

Provided a link has once been established between sensitive and sitter, that link can function at any later time and is quite independent of any separating distance. Moreover, the reading then given can embrace those who are then with the sitter, even though completely unknown to the sensitive. The contact springs from the original contact with the mind of the sitter.

Furthermore, in this type of experiment even time is not material. I have experimented with people unknown to either the sensitive or myself, who were due to meet the sitter in, say, two hours' time. The result has been that information has been given—often of a very striking nature—which related to that individual. I am sure that there is significance in these experiments.

Spiritualistic experiences are continually breaking new ground to the open and receptive mind. The call to our leaders and to us as a Group is to question traditional views which may have become inadequate to give constructive yet progressive thought along research lines, that we may explore the implications that arise from these ever-growing frontiers of mental activities and then pioneer new concepts to give expression to our larger understanding.

DISCUSSION

Mrs. Hankey: I welcome the reference to disciplining the sensitive, for so many lack it. I agree that sensitives should be secluded and protected while developing and training, as was done in Biblical days.

Mr. Hitchcock: To do this the whole Spiritualist movement

will have to be re-organised, since no organisation exists which can do this kind of work.

Mr. Vigurs: The sensitive should submit voluntarily to it. No organisation can direct him to such training.

Mr. Hitchcock: What is the place of the auric field in relation to communication?

Mr. Vigurs: Just as physical organs register sensation for the physical mind, sensations can be received in other parts of the being, the etheric side, bringing greater awareness. Time and space have not the same values as to the physical senses. I often experiment with a sensitive who gives diagnosis by making telephonic contact through another person. I have checked this by ringing a healer and asking for an immediate diagnosis of a patient who would not arrive for treatment for another two hours. The diagnosis was subsequently proved correct.

Mr. Challis: Do you not distinguish between the limit of the auric field and the extent of consciousness which is limited?

Mr. Vigurs: I meant the capacity of the auric field to sensitise itself to response.

Brigadier Firebrace: There is the famous case of Pascal Forthuny, who, one-and-a-half hours before a large meeting, described in detail the life and circumstances of the person who later would occupy a particular chair in that hall. Interference from the mind of the sitter is possible—probably less from the conscious than from the unconscious or subconscious mind. Occasionally a sensitive will repeat to a sitter something he gave that person earlier, perhaps years ago. That probably comes from the deep subconsciousness of the sitter. Ideas may be easier to transmit than facts, provided they agree with the sensitive's opinion. It is very difficult for a spirit to communicate anything opposed to the sensitive's beliefs. I think the sensitive has to blend with the sitter and the communicator.

Mr. Challis: I sat, at a fortnight's interval, with two mediums, each of whom gave me the outcome of a perplexing situation I was in and how it might be resolved. Later it was resolved in a quite different way, but subsequently I found that someone interested in me and aware of my problem had hoped consistently that it would be resolved in the way described by the two mediums. How far had these thoughts impinged on my aura and been picked up by the mediums?

Mr. Vigurs: That is going a step further. Thought-forms can be anchored in an individual's auric field and a sensitive can pick them up and, through the sensitive's ignorance, give them as coming from spirit.

Mr. Barbanell: The most satisfactory communications are

achieved when there is love between the sitter and the communicator. Screening the medium will prevent all the natural emotions associated with love when it returns, and destroy the basis on which communication rests.

Mr. Vigurs: Definitely, screening is going to be tried and will be a success. It can be done now and will be the standard for future demonstrations. The sensitive will first tune in to the conditions of the hall, then to the sitters and positively open up clairaudience—and thereby two-way communication—and obtain evidence for transmission. It will come within relatively a few years.

Mr. Challis: This will involve the old idea of the medium being segregated from all contact with the everyday world.

Mrs. Morris: What will come through mediums in the future will be impersonal communications relating to humanity, evolution, etc.

Lord Dowding: I have had several personal experiences germane to this subject. Two people, "A" and "B", wanted to do two opposite things. "A" went to a deep-trance medium who, as far as I know, had never seen her before. In deep trance he gave her a message from his guide which indicated that what she wanted to do was correct. So she went to "B" and said: "Go and have a sitting with this medium, whose guide wants to talk to you." "B" therefore went to the medium and, while in deep trance, the guide gave "B" the opposite advice.

Mrs. Ena Twigg told me that when on the platform she saw things like rays reaching out from individuals towards her and she had to repel these, because, if one of them connected with her, she would be reading the person's mind and not giving true clairvoyance.

During the war I received many letters by people who did not know what had happened to their relations in the Forces who had been reported missing. I counted about seventy of these stating: "Your husband (or son) is not with us. He has lost his memory. He had a head wound and is being looked after by monks (or the underground or fishermen) and will return to you when the roses bloom."

As soon as I began to read one of these messages I could almost finish it myself. Some of them may have been right, but in not a single case was I told that it was correct; in a number of cases they were proved wrong. A peculiar feature of these messages was that they generally involved a request that I would intervene with the authorities to make a search which would cause maximum expense and involve the risk of the greatest ridicule of Spiritualism when the search proved abortive. One message concerned an uncharted

istland in the mid-Atlantic. Most of these cases came through reliable mediums.

I do not offer any explanation, but I think that underlying these cases was the sitter's tremendous desire for the person to be safe.

Mr. Leaf: There is also the desire of the medium, who is very anxious to comfort people. There is some kind of mechanical factor connected with all phases of mediumship. When developing mediums I have studied their physical and psychological reactions. I do not think there is any law governing them. There is often a reaction on the heart. There are other psychological factors, particularly a feeling of pressure around the head, like a band round the forehead, which may become quite painful. I know of no explanation for this; the difficulty is to ascertain how it is done.

In the next world there are extra dimensions and a different time-factor, and probably for that reason they cannot tell us how they do it. I think we shall never know how mediumship is developed and functions. I think that the attitude of mind of the sitter is less important than we suppose. Antagonistic people, who have concealed their feelings, have had good results; others, however anxious, never get results. The auric field may not mean an extension of space, since the mind is qualitative, not quantitative. When sitting for development one occasionally has transcendental experiences. I have had one. I found myself returning to my body and had the amazing experience that this world did not exist at all. Plato said that this world is a reflection of a reflection of a reflection. The spirit people may sometimes think this world of so little importance that they play ducks and drakes with it.

Mr. Stewart: I believe that the mind of the sitter, in moulding conditions, is not properly realised. The sitter does not prepare himself properly but brings all his worries to the circle. The medium does not get a fair chance and, being sensitive, picks up all the depression and hostility. If half the sitters in the circle expect fraud they will get it.

When I see the facility with which some people get communication, I wonder what they have that others lack. There may be something in their personality. Perhaps it is a cold approach to the subject. We know that the results obtained by psychic researchers have been meagre compared with those obtained by Spiritualists.

In one circle I know of the sitters were arranged in the order of the colours of the rainbow according to their auras, the idea being that the violet rays sent a charge of power round the circle until the red vibrations were raised to the level of the violet. They got excellent results. If the sitters are arranged in proper order—positive and negative, etc.—results may be better.

THE MIND OF THE COMMUNICATOR

by

HORACE LEAF

IT is difficult to determine how much custom enters into some attempts to classify the spirits who communicate through mediums. The subject is, in common with others arising from mediumship, so abstruse and complicated that no-one is justified in claiming to be a perfectly reliable authority on it. This is shown by the fact that many investigators of great experience and sympathetic to mediumship are not prepared to accept the spirit hypothesis and lean heavily towards the subconscious theory.

Experienced mediums will doubtless excuse this scepticism for, unless one has irrefutable evidence of the existence of spirits, communications through mediums may well be attributed to the creative power of the human mind. Even qualified mediums are not exempt from doubt. Quite recently a popular London medium assured me that he does not believe in spirits, although his demonstrations in private and public assume that he is communicating with them.

Such scepticism is justified in the case of the average medium, whose messages and descriptions are of what is called the "impressional" order, and this is by far the most frequent form of mental mediumship.

Occasionally there turn up a series of impressions, retailed as from the spirit world, which leave little room for doubt that that is their real source. For the past few months I have been questioning experienced mental mediums on this matter and have been surprised at the relatively few messages they have conveyed which fall into this important category. Very rarely is one able to rule out all possibility of the information having been obtained from some "natural" source. Mediums, of course, deplore this and wish it were different.

On closer consideration, however, the evidence for spirit intervention is much stronger than at first appears. If those who base their scepticism of spirit communications on scientific grounds compare the communications received through mediumship with those received in scientific telepathy, the difference will be found to be so great that the spirit hypothesis seems pretty secure.

Scientific experiments in telepathy between the living have always been reduced to the simplest kinds of objects, such as the

five patterns comprising the Zener cards. The average so-called "spirit message" received through mediums often comprises long and complicated references to numerous affairs. There is in the whole of scientific telepathy nothing comparable to the results of the average private sitting that strangers have with qualified mediums. This fact has never been sufficiently valued by critics of the spirit hypothesis.

This preamble is mainly to assure you that, in accepting the spirit hypothesis, I consider there are sufficiently strong grounds to support it. They justify me in speaking positively, as I shall now do, in my attempt to describe what may be called the orders of spirits connected with mediumship. I will, however, mention one instance as a useful example for our purpose.

While delivering a Sunday evening discourse from the platform of a Kingston Spiritualist Society, I was astonished to see two apparitions descend from the ceiling to the platform. Both were elderly and both were dressed in what may be termed orthodox spirit robes. They were very unlike in stature, one being short and the other tall. It was obvious that they were in earnest about something, and what it was was soon made plain. The shorter spirit pointed to the organist, a young man quite unknown to me, and said: "There he is; will you undertake to control him?" It was clear that he was anxious for the taller spirit to agree, but without success. The taller man gazed for some seconds steadily at the organist, arrived at no decision, and both took their departure without further comment in the same way as they had come. After the service I spoke to the young man, saying nothing of what had happened but asking him how long he had been interested in Spiritualism. This elicited a very illuminating statement. "I am," he said, "sitting for mediumistic development and in a peculiar position. My guides assure me that I am quite ready to be used as a medium, but they are unable to find a spirit to undertake the job!"

It is unnecessary for me to elaborate the subject with many illustrations. Suffice it to say that on equally convincing grounds I have arrived at all my conclusions on this aspect of the subject. There may be nothing original in these conclusions, but they are definitely my own. Should they be confirmed by other students I shall rejoice because it will make them more reliable.

I believe mediumship, when properly developed, is based upon well-organised techniques applied by spirits interested in the medium. All techniques are not the same and in consequence variable results may be obtained. This conclusion fits in very well with the famous instance when Professor William James and Dr. Richard Hodgson agreed to permit the displacement of Mrs. Leonora Piper's control Phinuit by the Emperor group which had formerly superintended the mediumship of the Rev. Stainton Moses. The

grounds on which Emperor advised this was that Phinuit's method was a bad one and ruining Mrs. Piper's mediumship, which he likened to a battered and worn machine. The Emperor group claimed to have a better method and after they took charge improved results were obtained.

My classification of the spirits who communicate through mediumship is: guides, controls, communicators. Their functions may differ widely, although they fit in together well enough. Care should always be taken to distinguish them by their scientific tasks, although this is not always easy between guides and controls. Psychical researchers do not, as a rule, recognise the existence of guides, classifying all controlling personalities as controls.

There is certainly a marked difference between guides and controls when the guide is not also a control. A guide may be compared with a machine-minder, a control with a printer. The one keeps the machine in a state of efficiency, the other merely works it. The difference lies deeper than we at present understand.

Guides often claim to be connected with the medium by a "spiritual bond" which relates them to some sort of "affinity."

The ancients appear to have known this, especially the ancient Greeks. They maintained that every man had a Genius and every woman a Juno. The duty and aim of the spirits was to ensure, to the best of their ability, the well-being of their earthly charges. When the Romans adopted the Greek faith they modified the meaning of the Genius, dropping altogether the idea of a Juno. With them a Genius became a man's alter-ego although it was obvious that it had not entirely dissolved into his spiritual make-up. Later a further change in the meaning of the word took place, and to-day we usually regard genius as a superior manifestation of an individual's own mind. It is conceived as being superlative, inspirational, original and unteachable. It thus retains something of its old Greek meaning. We also see something of the guide idea in the Christian teaching of guardian angels. I happen to know that the belief in spirit guides exists among the Maoris of New Zealand. The guide of the Tohunga of Hinemutu, whose *whare* (house) I visited, was the spirit of his grandfather.

Summarising briefly the principal duty or task of a spirit guide, I would say that it is to develop the supernormal powers of the medium and if possible to use them. Where he cannot use them, he obtains the assistance of a spirit who can. That spirit becomes the Control. The terminology is, of course, my own and is open to criticism. My aim is merely to distinguish the orders of spirit communicators with a medium by the work they do.

A control apparently does nothing without the consent and help of the guide or guides—for it is well known that some mediums have several. Guides have definite moral obligations and responsibilities

towards the medium, which the controls have not, and the bond between them is much stronger, for a control may regard the medium in a very impersonal way, much as an engineer regards a machine. He will use it only so long as it can be of use, and then discard it. Naturally, a bond of affection may develop, and the control become as firm in his regard for the medium as a guide. Indeed I have seen this happen. There may, of course, be a multitude of reasons why a guide cannot control and use the powers of a medium after they have been developed; some of these we may never be privileged to understand. One is, I think, the fact that the guide lacks the kind of mental development that the medium's powers may call for. Another is that the environment in which the guide lived when on earth may have been so different from that of the medium that he finds no real point of contact. You may think of others.

What about the other spirits involved in mediumistic communications? There is nothing really technical about them and of themselves they can do nothing. It is people's ignorance of this that makes the exercise of mediumship so difficult. Sitters often expect too much. They have a belief that if spirits can return they can do anything, and the question of difficulties does not exist for them.

There can be little doubt that it is the communicators who cause most of the failures in mediumistic communications. They are, as a rule, grossly ignorant of the rationale of mediumship and its use. There is good reason, I think, for believing that many of them do not even believe that communication with this world is possible. During a séance with Mrs. Etta Wreidt I heard a communicator exclaim in amazement: "Can you really hear me? Well, this is remarkable!" On his friend asking him why he had come to the séance, he replied: "I heard it could happen and I've come to see how it works."

Communicators therefore communicate only with the consent of the guides and controls, principally the former. Professor James Hyslop was of the opinion that it was probably the duty of one of the spirit "band" to select from among the would-be communicators who should do the job—a kind of master of ceremonies. Hyslop further maintained that communications did not necessarily come direct from the communicator, but through a chain of spirit operators. He called it the chain method, and there is plenty of evidence to support it. It is not, however, the sole method.

The chain method is based on the principle of various spirits connected with the medium's powers entering into different densities of matter as they approach the medium, and any message coming through passes down the chain. A brief consideration of this process will show how numerous are the possibilities of error. The

theory certainly accounts for many of the defects of mental mediumship.

You will observe that the chain theory implies or even necessitates the making of a number of physical organisms in which the members of the chain must work, and these must be constructed of matter denser than that which constitutes the spirit world. This is interesting, for the common opinion is that mental mediums receive their communications in a purely psychological way. A closer inspection of mediumship indicates that this notion is wrong, because the development of mental mediumship is (perhaps invariably) accompanied by physiological changes.

This fact can be supported by examining the state of the medium's pulse. My method has been to take the pulse beat of members of a developing circle five minutes after the members were comfortably seated and before proceedings began. The pulse beat should then be about 72 with normal, healthy people. Twenty minutes after the proceedings have commenced and when the sitters have relaxed mentally and physically, the pulse is again examined and marked changes may be discerned. The following figures taken with a developing class will illustrate what I mean. In this instance a third examination was made at the close of the meeting, which lasted one hour and a half:—

Sitter No. Pulse Beats

1.	72	78	78	..	Increase after 20 minutes, 6 beats.
2.	66	66	66	..	No increase throughout.
3.	66	66	72	..	Increase at conclusion, 6 beats.
4.	72	60	75	..	A decrease after 20 minutes of 12 beats, raised to 15 beats at conclusion.
5.	84	84	84	..	No change.
6.	102	102	72	..	Variation of 30 beats.
7.	78	78	90	..	Variation of 12 beats.
8.	90	60	96	..	Variation of 36 beats.
9.	90	60	84	..	Variation of 30 beats.
10.	72	60	66	..	Variation of 12 beats.
11.	78	132	—	..	Variation of 54 beats.

It will be noticed that there is a considerable eccentricity in some cases.

My opinion is that when the pulse markedly decreases the medium inclines to trance mediumship, although even this is not constant. They nearly all indicate that a decided metabolic change has taken place, and in instances where the pulse has increased there must have been a considerable amount of combustion, which shows that work was being done. This is probably due to the making of some refined form of ectoplasm for the construction of the subtle bodies required by the controlling entities. I merely suggest this; you may have other ideas on the subject. But, on the face of it,

it seems as if mental mediumship is allied in some way to physical mediumship and reactions are not entirely psychological.

My reason for referring to these interesting reactions is to show that there is a considerable amount of mechanism involved and, although we do not know exactly what form this takes, it must be regarded as an important factor modifying the communications. Apparently mental mediumship involves more than the use of what F. W. H. Myers calls the telepathic law. Undoubtedly telepathy is the chief means by which spirits communicate through mental mediums, but it is not so simple and easy as that. Whatever these physiological changes are, they improve telepathy compared with its use between living persons, as in extra-sensory perception. Unless we consider such possibilities we shall not be able properly to appreciate the difficulties spirits face when working through mediums.

We are not entirely in the dark regarding the condition in which spirits find themselves when communicating. Long ago notable members of the English Society for Psychical Research, after they had passed on, tried to explain the situations in which they found themselves when communicating with this world of ours. They declared that they seemed to be immersed in a denser kind of matter which greatly inhibited their intelligence. They likened their condition to being encased in armour, or in a dense fog, or in a kind of glutinous substance which made them uncertain of what was transpiring.

Confirmation of this has been shown at physical séances. Once, when assisting Dr. W. J. Crawford in his telekinetic séances with Miss Kathleen Goligher, I witnessed an example. One of the group was a well-known mental medium who was quite unexpectedly used by an entity claiming to be the chief director of the experiments in the spirit world. Wishing to give advice to Dr. Crawford, this entity spoke through this medium, and every now and then anxiously enquired whether he was "making this instrument work." The medium was shouting at the top of his voice, yet the spirit was unaware of the fact but hoping for the best. He explained that he was acting on the medium from a position far removed from the earth and was uncertain of what was happening. The impression conveyed was that the control was working downward through a complicated system of communication.

Those of you who had the good fortune to sit with that superlative voice medium, Mrs. Etta Wreidt, may have heard "Dr. Sharp" (who supervised her séances from the Beyond) advise sitters not to interrupt the voices too soon by asking questions. He explained that the communicators acted by rote at the beginning of their talks, after the manner of a person reciting a poem, and that to interrupt them broke the continuity of their thoughts.

Later one could question these entities freely and would get spontaneous, intelligent answers.

All this, I think, helps us to form a clearer idea of the difficulties in which spirit communicators are embroiled when working through mediums.

It is unnecessary for me to say anything about the conscious and subconscious difficulties relating directly to the medium's own mind. The last two papers dealt very effectively with these. I would, however, like to say something about an aspect of the subject not yet dealt with. I refer to the medium's brain. There is a tendency to regard the brain as a passive instrument on which the mind of the medium plays as a musician plays a musical instrument. I am confident that this is a serious mistake; that the brain is a very lively and reactionary agent.

The human body is a living entity independent of the soul, and has powers and tendencies of its own. The instinct of self-preservation shows this. This dominant instinct is essentially physical in its application and does not originate in the mind or soul. Its primary object is to ensure the survival of the body, if necessary in opposition to the soul. Of course, it reacts on the mind, but entirely in its own interest. Many a person would willingly die, but the instinct of self-preservation will not allow him to if it can help it. There is, I think, plenty of evidence of this independent action of the brain, memory affording excellent examples. The frequent difficulty of recall is a case in point. Memory is a very mechanical affair, and invariably depends upon the brain. That is why we know so much about it.

Aristotle recognised this and mentioned three of the laws governing it. Since then three others have been discovered and are laid down in all reliable works on psychology. They are:—

- the Law of Association by Continuity;
- the Law of Association by Succession;
- the Law of Association by Similarity;
- the Law of Association by Contrast;
- the Law of Continuity in Space;
- the Law of Continuity in Time.

One is born with tendencies favouring some of these laws, which explains why some people have good memories and others bad, and why some people have the capacity of remembering well certain things and not others. These laws are so definite that they are often hereditary, as doubtless you know. Because of this, memory is a very strong determining factor in spirit communications.

May I mention myself as a case in point? I have always had a poor memory for proper names but a good one for abstract ideas. The reaction on my mediumship has been profound and persistent. I have always found it difficult to obtain names when functioning

mediumistically, notwithstanding my long endeavour to improve along this line. Obviously it is not my mind, as such, that is at fault, but an inherent incapacity. Deploring this weakness and striving to overcome it has merely improved me but not cured me.

Apply this principle widely and it will not be hard to appreciate the difficulty it must impose on spirits communicating with us. One cannot expect a stranger to use so personal a faculty better than the medium can.

Of course, there are always exceptions, and a medium defective in certain ways may be astonished and delighted to find every now and then that his weakness has been over-ridden. How this is done no one can say, but it shows that some spirits are more expert than others.

There is this left to say: When all the difficulties that hedge mediumship around have been seriously considered, we find more reason for rejoicing at success than complaining of failures. Whoever has been fortunate enough to have out-of-the-body experiences and remember them will know more about this than those who have not.

Of one thing I am convinced, that those who pass into the Beyond find it difficult to recall some of their earthly experiences, partly because they belong to the body and remain in their primeval freshness in the brain and not in the mind. They can be recalled but not more easily than we are able to recall even impressive dreams, that vanish soon after awakening and refuse to respond to memory. This may be because we have passed from fancy to fact.

If it be true that at death we pass from Illusion to Reality, we must not be surprised if we find we cannot recall earthly events very well, and when we do they may be fragments only. The absorption of consciousness into total mind, which presumably occurs after death, may be compared with pouring a cup of coloured water into a bucket of water. The colouring will be dispersed throughout the bulk, and when recalled may be in patches only. This would account for the well-known characteristic of mental mediumship, that when facts are recounted by spirits they are very partial and often have no proper relation to sequence in time.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Vigurs: Regarding the pulse records taken with sitters, I kept records of my own pulse reactions and those of a lady while music was being played and was surprised to find that there were startling differences of an order such as this. Then I stopped the music and let a mental reaction take its place and again found variations in pulse-rate comparable with those recorded in the paper. I think we might all usefully do this.

Mr. Leaf: I think the answer in the second column of figures is that there is no difference at all.

Mr. Vigurs: But there was no sensory disturbance in my experiment. You could have an equal disturbance of another kind producing similar reactions. I still support the view that in all communication the operation is from the subconscious of the sensitive, and that development consists in training the normal consciousness to allow the minimum of colouration to occur to the message that is being picked up in the subconscious. The most forthright clairvoyance I have ever had has always been dissociated from the body and it has required a strain to remain dissociated while keeping control of the normal faculties of consciousness so as to pass on what I wanted to pass. In such circumstances the clairvoyance has been minutely detailed. The element of strain might be comparable to some of those things which happen in development. But you cannot take your own pulse in such conditions.

Mr. Barbanell: I have never read of any explanation of phenomena that really explained what takes place and it seems to me that this information is deliberately withheld from us. You do not need to die to produce an apport. I feel that the information is deliberately concealed because, if we knew how to create the direct voice and to materialise, we should be going round to séances producing the phenomena ourselves and interfering with the processes of communication. I sat with Mrs. Estelle Roberts in her direct-voice séances, which were admirable for obtaining evidence, and began to notice some of the technique employed by Red Cloud. It was obvious that every communicator was rehearsed beforehand. They had been drilled, questioned as to what they were going to say, and only when their prepared statements had passed the scrutiny of Red Cloud were they allowed through. He always said: "Just let them say their piece. Do not ask questions. You will find they are giving you evidence because they have already prepared it." The new communicators were obviously excited and did not realise that they were being heard. You could catch the surprise in their voices—"Can you really hear what I am saying?"

Another interesting factor which has not been mentioned is that there are people on the Other Side who have no desire to communicate. I once took a friend to Mrs. Estelle Roberts. After ten minutes he came out and Red Cloud said to me: "He wants his father but his father does not want to come back."

We must disabuse our minds of the idea that all guides are good at everything. Some are good at evidence, some at philosophy, some at foreseeing the future. The possession of one quality does not mean the possession of other qualities.

Mr. Leaf: If the next world is an extra-dimensional world it would be impossible for the way in which things are caused there to be explained to us here.

Mr. Barbanell: How do you explain the fact that so many yogis and fakirs perform what is equivalent to psychic phenomena?

Mr. Leaf: They don't. In their case it is control of the physical body and telepathy. I once employed a yogi to demonstrate before a group of doctors. We saw exactly what he did in thirty experiments and he told us how to do them. There was nothing that went outside the physical make-up.

Mr. Barbanell: Blanche Cooper, the voice medium, had at one of her séances a living man communicating in the direct voice for Dr. Soal.

Mr. Leaf: I have had a living man materialise. In most cases it was done with a materialising medium who had produced other forms of communication.

Mrs. Morris: I do think we shall be able to find out the method by which these communications take place. It is a matter of time and scientific approach. Proving the continuity of life is a primary step, not the only one—there are many more important steps in the great design. The things we are discussing now have been proved and recorded in books by scientific men. As we believe in survival of the personality and communication, what next have we to offer to humanity after this proof is given?

Mr. Leaf: No scientist has ever been able to throw any light on the subject, however much he has agreed. The spirit people do not attempt to explain it to us.

Mr. Stewart: You say that "impressionable mediumship is the most prolific type of phenomena." That suggests that spirit phenomena take place in the everyday affairs of life far more than in the séance room and that spirit intelligence can reach us through our thoughts, inspiration, etc. I think that is a valuable idea. You also say, "Spirits sometimes have difficulty in remembering details of their earth lives." I have always understood that our memories are perfect and that our punishment lies in them. If we can conveniently forget details of our earth life there seems to be a weakness.

Mr. Leaf: The answer to the question about memories is to be found in an ordinary sitting, when you will notice how fragmentary are the communicator's memories. It also applies in physical mediumship. I have also mentioned that there is no sequence in time in their memories, which are picked up haphazard. I am particularly interested in this aspect.

In 1917, during my military service, I had to undergo an operation in University College Hospital. When recovering from the anæsthetic I found myself beside my body, aware of the fact and about to enter it. I was exquisitely happy. I knew that I was returning to finish a sentence which had been imposed upon me for things done wrong. At that time I had no recollection of this

world, and then I began to recover it. "I shall think that is the real world and this is a dream"—it took me two hours to recover. And then I found that the things of this world existed in my brain. My first thought was, "My God! I'm married!" And then other things followed. They came to me like tentacles binding me to this world.

Mr. Symonds: Is Mr. Leaf sympathetic to the view that often we have communication on a wave system similar to earth radio, so that all who are in tune will receive it irrespective of their location? People outside this building are linked with us.

Mr. Leaf: We have no evidence of communication by waves. There is such a thing as mental energy, which is some kind of nervous energy capable of being registered. E.S.P. indicates that we do not use any kind of wave system. That was pointed out years ago by Lord Balfour when, as a member of the S.P.R., he was dealing with telepathy. He asked whether, when we send a thought, it goes directly to the person at whom we direct it or radiates in all directions like the light from a candle. If we communicate directly with a person, how are we to discover where he is so as to direct the ray? Telepathy is almost always restricted to a single person. Dr. Rhine's experiments show that the energy does not vary in relation to the distance travelled; indeed there is evidence that the impact is greater when the distance is greater. There is another theory, the direct-contact theory, based on the assumption that there is no such thing as space. Mind does not need space to exist in. We reveal this when in dream we people space with things of our own making. This theory has much more to support it than the vibration theory, which is based on the fallacy that if you make vibrations in the atmosphere by speaking the recipient of the sound-waves is reading your mind. You do not really communicate directly with his mind at all. If the sounds you make do not mean anything to the recipient he will receive merely a sensation of noise. In other words, each individual does his own thinking. You merely disturb the atmosphere and the recipient does the rest.

Mr. Symonds: Would you say it is likely that spirit communicators can work in bands and be so sensitive to one another's perceptions that when one of them is nominated as spokesman they can convey their joint message?

Mr. Leaf: I cannot answer that because I do not know what spirits can do.

Mrs. Hankey: I do not think pulse differences teach us anything. They would be important only if we had the same readings over a period of six or twelve months. On what do you base your opinion that when the pulse decreases markedly the medium tends to be a trance medium?

Mr. Leaf: It is based upon the knowledge that occasionally when a person is completely entranced there is no pulse and no temperature.

Mr. Barbanell: I was interested to hear that "guides often claim to be connected with the medium through a spiritual bond", because in my own home circle the guide has said repeatedly: "You are a part of me," but he does not explain what that means. I thought this was peculiar to our circle.

Mrs. Morris: I can understand such a bond. During a certain type of trance experience I am vitally aware of conditions upon the interior planes, which are most difficult to express in words yet are the cause of my belief that many guides are in reality a part of the medium's microcosmic nature.

Mr. Barbanell: It raises the profound question of all that is involved in individuality—that mediums and guides may be parts of the larger self.

Mrs. Morris: I believe that to be so.

The text of the three papers is printed herein as delivered: the records of the discussions upon them have been edited and somewhat abbreviated with the approval of the members.

