
My Seven Minutes in Eternity

with

Their Aftermath

*The Unabridged Version of the
Epochal Article Published in*

The American Magazine
for March, 1929



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William Dudley Pelley - 1954

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IN THE foothills of the Sierra Madre Mountains near Pasadena, California, I formerly owned a bungalow. When I wanted seclusion in order to complete a knotty job of writing, I laid in a stock of provisions, bade adieu to acquaintances, motored up to this hideaway and worked there undisturbed. My only companion was Laska, a mammoth police dog.

I had come by the bungalow through peculiar circumstances. I cannot ignore them in the light of what occurred.

My life had been an eventful one. Shortly after my birth in Lynn, Massachusetts, my father had entered the Methodist ministry. He had filled pulpits in North Prescott, New Salem, and East Templeton. Then the compensations of a country minister being sufficient to meet the expenses of a growing family, he had moved to West Gardner, Mass., where he entered newspaper work. My earliest recollection of a type case was in climbing a stool in the office of the *Gardner Weekly Journal* before the Spanish War and setting up my name in composing sticks that were always in demand by much-harassed printers. From Gardner my father moved his family to Springfield. I went through the grammar schools in Gardner and Springfield but after I had finished one year in high school father engaged in a manufacturing business in Fulton, N. Y.

I do not propose to intrude an autobiography at the opening of this article on an epochal experience more than to say that I had arrived at a strange interlude in my life when I came into possession of the now-famous bungalow.

I was sixteen years old when I joined my father in his northern New York factory making tissue paper products. Five years later, on reaching my majority, the business had grown to such a point that I had become General

Superintendent of a plant employing 103 men. When unfriendly elements secured control of the concern, freezing father and me from its control, I went into newspaper work. I became feature writer on the *Springfield* (Mass.) *Homestead*, I was night-man on the *Boston Globe* for western Massachusetts, I founded and ran the *Chicopee Journal*, I sold this first paper of mine to purchase the *The Deerfield Valley Times* in Wilmington, Vermont. I sold this second paper to work for Gov. Frank E. Howe on the *Bennington Banner*. While on the *Banner*, I began writing fiction for the national magazines. I was making highly profitable strides as a fiction writer when I bought the *St. Johnsbury Evening Caledonian* in St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

I had run the *Caledonian* only a few months when I was solicited by the sponsors of the Methodist Centenary Movement to go to the Orient on a layman's survey of Foreign Missionary Work. When America entered the war, I got into khaki in the Far East, becoming a Red-Triangle man and impromptu consular courier with the Allied troops in Siberia.

The years following the war had not been unprofitable. I had sold my eastern newspaper interests to go to California and make motion pictures from many of the 200 magazine sto-

ries and three novels I had produced since leaving the *Bennington Banner*. I made a score of movies in Hollywood and with a Yankee's weakness for engaging in any sort of pursuit that promised profit, I also had interests in a western film magazine, in a chain of west coast restaurants, in a real estate firm, and in an advertising agency.

What I am getting at is, up to October, 1927, I had traveled over half the earth, met all sorts and conditions of men, made and lost several modest fortunes, and reached a point where the mere making of money or reading my name in print had entirely lost its zest. I was spiritually jaded. The vigilance of business had begun to pall on me; I felt as if I wanted to get away from everything I had ever been or known and spend a year in study and meditation. I not only wanted to read several shelves of books that I had never found time to read, but I also wanted to *write* some books that never would be appropriate for me to write as a popular author of modern fiction.

I remember graphically the morning in 1927 when I arrived at my decision. Angered at the petty harassments of business, I had gotten into my car and driven out toward Beverly Hills. As I drove slowly, I turned over in my mind what my life had encompassed up to that mo-

ment: little more than an unceasing struggle for money or acclaim. And the irony was, that I didn't want either.

I shall have more to say further on in this article concerning some of my reactions to life that had made me the chap I was back there in 1927. However, I shall never forget arriving at the end of a blind road on the far side of Beverly Hills and stopping my car before a sign that read:

BEYOND THIS POINT IMPASSABLE
Go Back!

I stopped my motor and sat staring at the sign. I felt that I had somehow come to the end of another sort of blind road and that the signboard held an allegorical significance. Sitting in the California sunshine, I cast up an accounting with myself.

Beyond this point impassable! Go back!

I decided that I would go back. I would go back and divest myself of all the entangling business alliances that were adding nothing to my peace of mind, I would get rid of the interests that were burning up my spiritual vitality and returning me nothing but dollars. I would stop journeying about America, get all my personal possessions together and put them permanently under one roof where I would

settle down in the midst of them and write a few books, not for public consumption, not to cater to popular markets, but to feed my own soul.

I planned out a wholly different mode of living for the rest of my life, sitting there in my motorcar that morning. And when I finally started my engine and swung the machine about, it was to drive back into Hollywood and proceed to put my decision into drastic execution.

I would get as far away from the fleshpots of Hollywood as I might and yet remain in contact with such business interests as I could not wholly dispose of. And to this end, that same afternoon, I headed the machine across into Pasadena and up toward Mount Lowe. Somewhere up in the little unpaved byway streets of the real estate developments that snuggled against the mountain, I felt I would find that which I sought. And an unerring sixth sense seemed to be guiding me.

In late afternoon, with the sun dropping below Catalina Island far out on the west, I turned south from Lake Avenue in Altadena and coasted slowly down Mount Curve Drive. Halfway down the grade I came upon a quaint little English bungalow, a story and a half high, with a garage, behind a row of white

birches. It was tenantless, for sale, and open to inspection.

The companion I had with me that afternoon will attest that as I veered my car up its driveway and came to a halt in the rear of the premises, I said: "This bungalow is *mine!* I'm going to live here just as surely as though all my goods were inside this house at this moment!"

The presentiment was overwhelming. In some strange way I seemed to be "remembering forward". . .

I felt as though the house had been built and left there, waiting for me to arrive at my decision of the morning, made twenty miles distant in Beverly Hills.

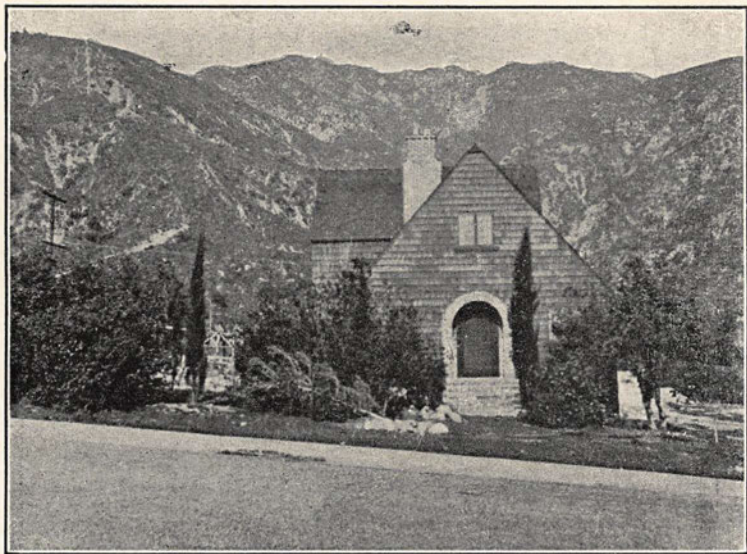
I was astounded at the ease with which I acquired the property. Within a week I was ensconced inside it, had begun to furnish it and collect my various possessions from all over the country to make it my permanent home.

I know now that I had reached a crisis in my life, that morning in Beverly Hills. I know now that there was more than mere spiritual discontent in my decision to cloister myself for a year and do the reading and writing I had always wanted to do, prohibited by secular designs upon my time.

So from October to the following May, I

kept the familiar little place as my hideaway and literary workshop. I began the collection of a library. I acquired my big police dog, Laska, as my solitary companion. During the windy winter of 1927-1928, we lived there in the structure, slowly making it comfortable, subduing the sagebrush and wild poppy in the yard, grading the land and installing a swimming pool for the summer that was coming.

I am forced to admit, however, that Laska and I had not spent many nights beneath its roof before I noticed that the dog was ill at ease inside the rooms. She would pace the floors for half-hours at a time, halting in queer places and cocking her steel-shell ears at passageways and corners. Once she awakened suddenly from her place before the hearth in the living room, to back away from an invisible something and bring up in a corner of the library bookshelves. There she sat with head aslant *looking at someone or something that seemed to be actually in the intersection of the shelves*. She sat there thumping her tail on the rug, the hair on her neck uneasy, turning from time to time to send me a look of perplexity, and whimper. At other times she would go to the foot of the stairs and give short worried barks up the flight with both paws resting on the lowest step.



Altadena Bungalow - 1928

Had the bungalow been an old house, I might have thought it haunted. But it was less than six months old and no death had ever occurred beneath its roof. All the same, night after night as I lay in bed alone in the upper story at the back, I heard strange sharp cracks of the boards beneath the stairs as though someone were stealthily ascending. Laska asleep at the foot of the bed at such times, would spring to her feet and rush out barking. Many a time she would arise, go downstairs in the dark and pace the length of the living room.

I never saw anything savoring of the supernatural, however, and was more interested than frightened at the behavior of the dog. Meanwhile I got along with my writing.

It was one year I recall of real mental freedom.

HAVING been denied an academic education, I had educated myself, so to speak, ever since the days with father in the factory, by reading in bed for two or three hours every night before I turned off the light. For nearly twenty years I had done this. And my reading had encompassed every solid and substantial subject imaginable. I had an unaccountable interest in history, biography, political economy, and ethnology. No matter where I hap-

pened to be, or what the nature of my daily activities, I crammed interminably but without conscious purpose.

I must emphasize here, however, that I was equally *unattracted* to books on comparative search. I had the layman's inborn aversion to spiritualism, derived from my orthodox parents. Of Theosophy I knew nothing and cared even less. Between October and May I did acquire and try to read one of Sir Oliver Lodge's books on survival, but it failed to hold my interest. I had a virgin mind therefore, for all that now happened. . .

Of all subjects that I explored in those twenty years of self-education, history was my *forte*. I felt that I know world history as I knew my own biography. And yet I had also grown astrange dissatisfaction with general books on history. The histories of the world were a grandiose compilation of battle-dates, superimposed on the aggrandizements of generals and statesmen. Oftentimes I wondered why no one had written a history that should account for the racial, instead of the political, urges of peoples. What was the underlying cause that made one people suddenly pick up their women and children and dogs and chattels and move over into the country of another people, at a cost

of great slaughter to both? Was some ulterior influence at work of which historians knew nothing?

I decided to study this problem and write a book upon it. I would write a short history of the world to be called *The Urge of Peoples* and tackle the Historical Exposition as no one had ever before attempted.

It was to be a matter of three years before I was to get my cues straight for this great work, but I could not know that at the time. I started to write to "please my soul." It was around the first of May, 1928, that I finally commenced this labor. I still have the pages of manuscript preserved exactly where I left off when the Night of Nights came.

THE WORK was going well, I was mentally untroubled, feeling physically fit, writing six to eight hours a day with plenty of outdoor recreation.

For the first time in many years I was having opportunity to browse, ponder, meditate, and study. When I became brain-weary I would whistle for Laska and we would go out for a tramp in the canyon. Or I would clear away more sagebrush on my land and do more grading with shovel and barrow. Nothing in my mode of living, therefore, could possibly have

accounted for the experience that overtook me. Indeed, I might almost state that in a manner of speaking I had been "turned out to grass" for eight months in order to quiet myself and prepare for the illumination which I now believe was scheduled from the first.

Insofar as I can recollect the time, I had worked up to the 28th or 29th of May. That night I retired around ten o'clock and lay in bed reading until I dozed. The book had nothing to do with what subsequently happened, nor had any occurrence of that day or week or month any special significance in what that memorable night brought forth. I emphasize this fact in order to refute the claims of the skeptical that what I underwent was some form of neurotic psychosis. The book was a notable volume on ethnology, something of a hobby as I have previously stated.

In all honesty, however, I must confess that during the evening I *had* arrived at a crucial point in the writing of *The Urge of Peoples* where I had laid down my pen to consider the puzzling subject: *What Were Races?* How did it come about in Nature that one man's skin was black, another's white, another's red, another's yellow? How did it happen that a Chinaman would be a Chinaman for a thousand generations never mind where he lived, or

what his environment? How did it happen that an Englishman transferred to the Orient would stay an Englishman though he ate Chinese food and talked the Chinese language till he scarcely knew himself when he looked in a mirror? What was this vast mystery of race, and why down all history were the races so demarked?

Before morning I would discover!

I felt drowsy around midnight, laid the volume on ethnology aside, pulled off my glasses and extinguished the bed-lamp. I had gone through a similar routine on a hundred other evenings; the day had been no different from a hundred other writing days spent at the bungalow.

My sleeping chamber was located at the back of the house and was perfectly ventilated, with two casement windows opening toward the mountains. Laska curled on the floor at the foot of my bed—her accustomed sleeping-place—and that she did not externally motivate the phenomenon in any way, I am positive. When it ended and I was back in my body, I sat up on the bed's edge and my action awoke her, bringing her over beside me where she thumped her tail on the rug and sought to lick my wrist.

I do not recall having any specific dreams the first half of the night, no physical distress,

certainly no insomnia. For twenty years I had been an average smoker and puffed my pipe constantly over my typewriter. But I had never observed any derogatory effects from such indulgence and was no more distressed than usual from this particular day's consumption of tobacco.

But around two o'clock in the morning—the time later verified—a ghastly inner shriek seemed to tear through somnolent consciousness. In despairing horror I wailed to myself:

"I'm dying! I'm dying!"

WHAT told me, I don't know. Some uncanny instinct had been unleashed in slumber to awaken and warn me. Certainly something was happening to me—something that had never happened in all my life—a physical sensation that I can best describe as a combination of heart attack and apoplexy.

Mind you, I say *physical* sensation. This was not a dream. I was fully awake and yet I was not. I knew that something had happened to either my head or heart—or both—in sleep and that my conscious identity was at the play of forces over which I had no control. I was awake, mind you, and whereas I had been on a bed in the dark of a California bungalow one moment when the phenomenon started, the

next I was plunging along a mystic depth of cool blue space not unlike the bottomless sinking sensation that attends the taking of ether for anesthetic. Queer noises were singing in my ears. Over and over in a curiously tumbled brain the thought was preeminent:

"So this is death!"

I AVER that in the interval between my seizure and the end of my plunge, I was sufficiently possessed of my physical senses to think: "My dead body may lie in this lonely house for days before anyone discovers it, unless Laska breaks out and brings aid."

Why I should think that, I also don't know—or what difference it would have made to *me*, being the lifeless "remains"—but I remember thinking the thought as distinctly as any thought I ever originated and put on paper in the practice of my vocation.

Next I was whirling rapidly. Once in 1920 over San Francisco an airplane in which I was a passenger went into a tail-spin and we almost fell in the Golden Gate. *That* feeling! Someone reached out, caught me, held me. A calm, clear, friendly voice said close to my ear:

"Take it easy, old man. Don't open your eyes just yet. You're all right. We've got you and are here to help you!"

Someone had hold of me, two persons, in fact, one with a hand under the back of my shoulders, supporting me, the other with arms slipped under my knees. I was physically flaccid from my "plunge" and lay inert in a queer opal light that diffused in the place into which I had come.

When I finally managed it, I became conscious that I had been borne to a white marble pallet and laid nude upon it by two strong-bodied, kindly-faced men in white uniforms not unlike those worn by internes in hospitals, who were secretly amused at my stupefaction and chagrin.

"Feeling better?" the taller of the two asked presently as physical strength to sit up came to me and I took note of my surroundings.

But I took note of more. I took note of the speaker. I knew him, unmistakably. He was Bert Boyden, former managing editor of "The American", *who had been killed in France in July of 1918.*

The other man, slightly bald, was a stranger.

"Bert!" I gasped.

They exchanged good-humored glances.

"Don't try to see everything *in the first seven minutes!*"

"Bert—am I dead?"

THEY did not need to answer my question.

The query was superfluous. I *knew* what had happened. I had left my earthly body back on a bed in a bungalow in the mountains of California. *I had gone through all the sensations of dying* and whether this was the Hereafter or an intermediate station, most emphatically I had reached a place which had never been duplicated in all of my experience.

I say this because of the inexpressible ecstasy I felt in my new state, both mental and physical.

For I had carried some sort of a physical body into that new environment with me! I knew that it was nude. It had been capable of feeling the cool, steadying pressure of my friend's hands before my eyes opened. And now that I had reawakened without the slightest distress or harm, I was conscious of a beauty and loveliness of environment that surpasses all chronicling on printed paper.

A sort of marble-tiled portico, the place was, lighted by that soft, opal luminescence, with a crystal-clear pool in a white stone basin diagonally across from the bench on which I remained for a time striving to accredit just what had transpired. I can best liken the structure to a roofed-in Roman plaza about fifteen feet high and thirty feet square. Heavy smooth pil-

lars supported its roof. The illumination came from the material itself, a soft alabaster whiteness that scientists in our earth-world might identify as "cold light". . .

I had been placed on the bench that was set along the west wall. This wall was blank behind me. On my left, to the north, a corridor supported by more of the pillars ran an interminable distance eastward; I could not make out where it went and did not explore it. Across before me, the east wall was unbroken, but at my right the whole south wall was open. Three or four steps led down onto greensward, into a garden that was eerie and indistinct in a sort of nocturnal haze. . .

The marble basin opened in the southeast corner of this portico floor; two or three steps leading down into immaculate water undisturbed by a ripple.

I looked from the garden vista, with its backdrop of night sky, to the two friends who had received me. There were no other persons anywhere in evidence in the first half of my experience. I swung my feet down from the pallet to the floor and sat staring at Bert and his companion with my hands grasping the edge of the pallet beside my naked knees.

Apparently my friends knew a good joke about me. They continued to watch me with

smiles in their eyes. I recall that Bert, the taller of the two, the one whose hands had been under my neck, *stood wiping his hands upon a towel as he regarded me, as though something had come off my body onto his palms that he wished to be rid of after touching me.*

Again I found my voice. Looking beyond them and around me, my gaze came to the bench beneath me. I thumped it with my palms. Next words were:

"Great Scott! It's *real*."

"Of course, it's real," my friend returned, still smiling.

I got up from my marble bench and moved dazedly about the potrico till I came and stood at the edge of the pool.

"Bathe in it," the instruction came. "You'll find you'll enjoy it!"

I went down the steps into the most delightful water. And here came one of the strangest incidents of the whole adventure. *When I came up from that bath I was no longer conscious that I was nude. And the sensation of nudity did not occur to me again throughout my visitation!* On the other hand, neither was I conscious of having donned clothes. The bath did something to me in the way of clothing me. What it was, I don't know.

But immediately I came up garbed somehow by the magic contact of that water .

IT DID not occur to me to feel either wonder or awe that I had left my physical body and penetrated to this delightful place. It all seemed as natural as it seems natural to me at this present moment to be sitting in the fleshly body again, putting these words on sheets of white paper. Thus it no more occurred to me to discuss the fact that to all intents and purposes I was "dead" than it occurs to me to go about this life discussing the fact that I am "alive" . . . there seems to be only one continuity of life and consciousness and we feel as comfortably at home in one vehicle or environment as in another.

While I had been bathing, the second man who had received me went somewhere outside the portico and I never saw him again. But my first friend stayed with me. Clothed, I sat down again on the pallet and we entered into converse. I did not ask *why* I had come there. I was not particularly concerned about those I had "left behind" in the earthly state. But the great pertinent fact that I learned that night, and which has since altered my entire conception of life in the world, came out subsequently in one hour's conversation.

The friend who had received me had been in earthly life the Managing Editor of *The American*, when I had first come down from Vermont in 1917 to join its writing staff. Yet, so sublimated in appearance was he, so virile as I have said, so ruddy and stalwart, over what he had been in earth-life, that at first I scarcely knew him. It took me some moments to get oriented to him again.

Quizzically he asked me: "Don't you remember being here before?"

"When have I ever been here before?" I asked him.

"Countless times," he assured me, smiling more indulgently. "You left this plane or condition to go down into earth-life and function as the person you know yourself to be. Don't you remember *that*?"

"You mean I lived as someone else before being born as William Dudley Pelley?"

"Everyone has lived before—hundreds of times before. People still in earth-life will live hundreds of times again—as they may have need of the mortal experiences. It's the very basis for all human relationships."

I pondered this.

"You're writing a book on the peculiarities of earthly races," my friends went on subsequently. "You came to the point where you

wondered what races were. I'll tell you what they are. They're classifications of humanity epitomizing gradations of spiritual development, starting with the black man and proceeding upward in cycles to the white. Each race is an earthly classroom to which people go to get certain lessons in specific things."

I CANNOT print a literal transcript of all that Boyden and I discussed in the hour that now followed. Humanity is not ready for an exposition of the great fundamentals of human life, steeped as it is in the tenets of orthodoxy and man-made concepts of the "hereafter" . . . if I told the exact truth of what was discussed that night, my whole narrative might be discredited.

But vaguely I knew that I *had* been in that same state prenatally; it was far more familiar to me than mortal environment. I was gradually coming into a sense of recalling something dim and vague in the coffers of Long Memory, when this peculiar thing happened—

All at once I perceived a bluish mist beginning to swirl about me. At first I took it to be hallucination. It seemed that heavy furls of smoke were laving around me, getting thicker and thicker, until they grew not only opaque but tangible to the touch.

Suddenly they got so strong and swirled so fast that Boyden's face and figure were blotted out. The thick odorless mist *had actually seized hold of me and I was swirling with it!* Faster, faster, faster I spun in that frightful carousal. Then I lost all sense of sight or identity in the vortex of it. Straight up through the heart of it I seemed to travel at a fearsome pace, to poise abruptly in midair. And as I poised, something awful closed about me! It seemed as though a great suit of clammy, cloying armor, a miasma of implacable sinew, had shut around me. It crunched me horribly, an excruciating agony that ended in a *click!*

I opened my eyes to my California bedroom, with the faint patches of starlight designating the windows! I was back in the mortal thing, the grinding and groaning of atoms, that made up my earthly body! My heart was pounding frightfully; my constricted forehead was sopping wet with perspiration.

I lay stunned for a moment, striving to accredit the thing that had happened.

I was back in earth-life and I had not wanted to come back. My physical flesh was loathsome to me. I pulled myself up on one elbow in the bed. The hands of my illuminated night clock said 3:30 a. m.

Then from somewhere I heard a strangely

familiar voice address me. Was it audible in the room, or inside of my head? I did not bother to question. *I only knew it was Boyden's voice and he was crying out to me clearly and distinctly from the Dimension that I had just quitted so queerly:*

"Come on back here, Bill! You and I aren't finished with our visit yet."

"Come back?" I cried aloud. "What do you mean, come back. I don't know how to get back."

"Oh yes, you do," the voice retorted. "Lie back on your pillow. You know the process in the depths of your subconscious. Just relax and *come!*"

I make the solemn affidavit, that in that quiescent morning hour, alone in that bungalow in the mountains, I did have it in my subconscious to relax and vacate the mortal husk. In that moment I knew how to do it. Deciding that I did want more of the same exquisite experience, I lay back on my pillow and opened the marvelous vault of the subconscious storehouse.

This time I deliberately felt myself quitting my body!

I felt the same blissful release, the same exquisite languor that precedes all forms of subconscious trance. I floated. I dropped.

But this time no one "caught" me. I *seemed to walk out into the blessed white illumination of that exhilarating place*. Nor did it occur to me that even then I had done anything exceptionally wonderful. I went through the whole experience the second time as smoothly and unerringly as though I had fallen asleep and resumed a dream.

When I walked out into the exquisite Reality the second time, however, a change had come over the portico itself.

It was filling with people!

They were coming into the structure from up the long corridor on the northern side. They sauntered into the room, and stood around regarding me, smiling at me quietly—as though they also knew a good joke about me—finally sauntering down the steps to the south in little groups of threes and fours. *Practically everybody nodded and spoke to me!* They had a kindness, a courtesy, a friendliness, in their faces and addresses that quite overwhelmed me. Think of all the saintly, attractive, magnetic folk you know, imagine them constituting the whole social world—no misfits, no tense countenances, no sour leers, no preoccupied brusqueness nor physical disfigurements—and the whole environment of life permeated with an ecstatic harmony as universal as air, and you

get an idea of my reflections in those moments. I recall exclaiming to myself:

"How happy everybody seems! How jolly! Every person here conveys something that makes me want to know him personally."

Then with a sense of shock it dawned upon me:

"I have known every one of these persons at some time or other, personally, intimately! But they're sublimated now—physically glorified—not as I knew them in worldly life at all!"

I CANNOT make anyone understand how natural it all seemed that I should be there, particularly with them. After that first presentiment of dying, which experience had ended in the most kindly ministration as I have reported, all terror and strangeness left me and I never felt more alive. It never occurred to me on either occasion that I was in "heaven" or if it did, it occasioned me no more astonishment than that at some time in my adolescent consciousness it had occurred to me that I was on "earth". After all, do we know much more about one place than the other?

I had simply ended two queer voyages through bluish void and found myself each time in the same charming place among affable, worthwhile people who saw in me something

that amused them to the point of quiet merriment. Yet not a merriment that I could resent.

I had no mad obsession to go off in search of Deity or look up Abraham Lincoln or Julius Caesar. I was quite content to stroll timidly in the portico by which I had entered this harmonious dimension and be greeted with pleasant nods by persons whose individualities were uncannily familiar.

They were conventionally garbed, these people, both men and women. I recall quite plainly that some of the women wore hats. The big, broad-shouldered, blue-eyed friend in white who had first received me with his hand beneath my neck, always hovered in my vicinity, I recall, and kept an eye on my reactions.

I PLEDGE my reputation on the solemn contention that I talked with these people, identified many of them—including two former Manhattan newspaper editors who had had much to do with launching me on the tempestuous seas of magazine authorship—called others by wrong names and was corrected, saw and did things that night that are verbose for me to narrate in a magazine article but which I recall with a minuteness of detail as graphic as I see the keys of my typewriter now under my fingers.

Regardless of the fact that imagination is the chief asset for one of my vocation—or what was my vocation up to that time—I am not given to particularly vivid dreams. Certainly we never dream by the process of coming awake first, knowing that we are suffering some abnormal kind of head or heart attack, swooning and coming abruptly conscious again in the arms of two kindly persons who reassure us audibly that everything is quite all right. Nor do the impressions of a dream stay with us—at least they have never stayed so with me—so that after months have passed such an experience is still as vivid as any of my experiences in Siberia during the late World War.

I went somewhere that night, penetrated to a distinct place and had an actual physical experience. I found myself an existing entity in a locality where those I had always called "dead" were not dead at all; they were alive with animation far transcending life in flesh.

The termination of this journey—my exit, so to speak—was as peculiar as my advent. I cannot print the true details, as they concern a person now living on earth. Furthermore, they would not be understood by the masses to whom this article may come, for as Jesus once said regarding the higher dimensions of life: If I tell you of earthly things and ye be-

lieve them not, how can ye believe when I tell you of heavenly things?

A swift, swirling, bluish journey, as before, Then came that suffocating suffusion of greasy, cloying, sickish substance ending once more with the agonizing *click*. The best analogy is the sound my repeating deer-rifle makes when I work the ejector mechanism—a flat, metallic, automatic effect.

Next, I was sitting up in bed in my physical body again, as wide awake as I am at this moment, staring at the patches of windows where the new day was coming brighter over the eastern mountains. But the same reflection of physical exhaustion was again through my diaphragm and abdomen, and it lasted several minutes. Not any digestive distress. Simply a heavy weariness in my torso as though I had just passed through a great physical ordeal and my heart must accelerate to make up the lost energy.

"Those weren't dreams!" I cried aloud, half expecting to hear Boyden's voice in rebuttal once more. But it did not come. Instead, Laska uncoiled from the foot of the bed and straightened to her haunches.

I looked at the clock on the table near at hand. The time was twenty minutes to five o'clock!

There was no more slumber for me that night. I lay back finally with the twin experiences fresh in my senses but with an awful lamentation in my heart that I was forced to come back at all—back into a world of struggle and disappointment, turmoil and misrepresentation, to an existence of bill collectors, unfriendly bankers, capricious editors and caustic critics—to all the mental and physical aches and pains which combine with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune to make of this earth-plane a Vale of Tears.

It was tragedy, the Coming Back!

Enough of that for the moment.

Call it the Hereafter, call it Heaven, call it Purgatory, call it any one of the Astral Planes, call it a Hyper-dimension, call it What You Will. Whatever it is—and where—that human beings go after being released from physical limitations, I had gone there that night consciously, *and brought the full graphic memories of it back with me!* Like Lazarus of old, I had been called back, back to the anguish of physical existence to finish out my time and errand in the conventional manner.

For I did have an errand to finish out, and some day when the proper time has elapsed, and earthly event has proven the validity of my contention, I may reveal what I have had

thus revealed to me, as to the specific details of that errand.

Up to the time of writing this article, almost a year later, I have not had the slightest inclination toward a repetition of the episode. Dreams I have had, and occasionally a fine old fashioned nightmare, but have known them as such. Somehow or other, in sleep that night, with external aid or otherwise, I unhooked something in the strange mechanism that is Spirit in Matter and for four hours my own conscious entity that is Bill Pelley, writing-man, slipped over on the Other Side.

There is a survival of human entity after death of the body, for I have seen and talked intelligently with friends whom I have looked down upon as cold wax in caskets!

But that is not all. There is plenty of aftermath. To describe the details of the experience, however, it is necessary to intrude a few personal confidences, none of which I am eager to make.

I brought back something with me from that Ecstatic Interlude—something that had interpenetrated my physical self and which suddenly began to function in strange powers of perception!

AS I have said, I was born the only son of an itinerant Methodist minister. Soon after my birth my parents began that old-fashioned Odyssey of traveling from "call" to "call" in the northern Massachusetts back-hills.

Orthodox Protestant theology as it was forty years ago, was far more plentiful in my father's household than bread, butter, clothes and fuel, in those days. Camp meetings and Quarterly Conferences, the Higher Criticism, Predestination, Free Will and Election, Infant Damnation, hell fire and the Day of Judgment, constituted most of the household converse in my young and tender years. God early shaped up to me as a weird combination of heavenly Moloch and sublimated Overseer of the Poor.

Parish poverty forced my father from the ministry while I was in childhood but with grim New England vigor he saw to it that his relinquishment of a pulpit did not lessen my surfeit of conventional theology. Three times to church on the Sabbath day and twice during the week—Tuesday evening class meeting and Thursday night prayer meeting—left me small opportunity to forget my Creator in the days of my youth and the gratitude I owed Him. Just what this gratitude was owed Him for, troubled my small soul exceedingly in those

far-off years because I found myself a perpetually hungry, shabbily-dressed, and none-too-happy youngster who had to start his life-labor at sixteen years of age and stay with it thereafter, even to the present.

Much Scripture was quoted to prove that my desire for a high school and college education was unfilial in view of the struggle father was having for survival. I ceased to be strong for Scripture after interest in my first mill-job had become a stalemate. I must further attest that the treadmill of a factory's discipline when other boys of my age were disporting themselves in healthy animal play, did not make me much stronger for God.

No need to clutter up this article with the books I read, but at twenty-two, in a little town in northern New York State I was publishing a brochure magazine of heretical tendencies. Not exactly atheistic but holding few illusions about the Scriptures—as I knew them then—or about the Scribes and Pharisees who wail loudly in public places about their righteousness and who take good care that their alms are seen of men. I had discovered myself possessed of a certain facility with iconoclastic language, no censor, and the courage of my ignorance. Fresh from a wry, repressed childhood, cluttered up psychologically with the

worst sort of New England inhibitions, resentful that I had been denied social and academic advantages for which my hunger was instinctive, I proceeded to play a lone hand and make things warm for several good people whose only indiscretion was that they represented authority as aforesaid, especially spiritual authority. I know I made existence rather annoying for a number of representative ministers of the faith who saw life as through a glass darkly but weren't making the squall about it that I was making. From maturer perspective I quite affirm that I should have been spanked—or rather, educated—but all the theological misfits in forty-eight states and a couple of foreign countries were soon buying my magazine, unaware that it was being written by a beardless youth, and my twaddle and blither were piling up to give me much heartburn in later years when I came to see that I merely took out on God what I should have taken out on an inhibited environment.

The Almighty stood the onslaught rather well, however. I got into newspaper work as I have outlined, and into matrimony, and parenthood, and more adversity. And that was the last of the heretical magazine, though not of its owner's theological complexes. And eventually the day came when immature intelligence

couldn't stand the pace and instead of digesting I ejected it *a la mal de mer* . .

I had brains enough to see that my life had been started all wrong and was "getting no better fast", but not the academic equipment nor social balance to alter existence and start myself about-face.

Those were arid, hostile years, looking back on them now. A couple of business projects went whack and after them my marriage. Family relatives made the whole mess worse by volunteering to "teach" me how to run my affairs. And my affairs—and life—had already been run too much by "teaching" relatives. With each additional snarl I got more and more despondent. The death of my first daughter mellowed me somewhat. I wrote a couple of novels in which love of human nature was largely a reflex from the fearsome storm of hunger and rancor that was waging inside me. I believed my life a ghastly mess, that I was cynical and caustic, that the so-called "friends" I possessed, whom I could really trust, could be counted on the fingers of one hand—and most of them would stand watching at that—that we got nothing in this world unless we fought for it with all the ferocity of a Siberian wolf-dog and that beyond peradventure of a doubt, *death ended everything!*

America's entry into the world war found me in the Orient, as I have said, not a healthy place at all for one who was striving to escape the biological premise for human existence. I went with the Japanese forces to Siberia, acted as Red Triangle man, consular courier, and war correspondent through the Bolshevik-Czech campaign and came back to the United States to face a newspaper business damaged. The swarming millions of Asia had not confirmed my faith in the conventional Almighty's goodness and wisdom, in fact they had only made me more skeptical than ever of His existence at all, *though I never had anything but remorseful tenderness in my heart for the Man of Sorrows and what He epitomized in the scheme of things human.*

Curiously enough, however, this was strictly a personal relationship. It had nothing to do with my father's theology.

To save my newspaper creditors from loss, I went to Hollywood and labored among the fleshpots. I made a score of motion pictures which rehabilitated my fortunes. I wrote an additional couple of novels that my publishers refused. I quarreled with them in consequence, still taking life by the strong-arm method. I wrote many stories that editors rejected. I quarreled with them also. When an editor

wouldn't buy a story of mine that I considered particularly brilliant, I sat down at my typewriter and contrived to tell him that I thought him a dolt. You see, I had the unfortunate complex that the attainment of success meant a knock-down and drag-out scrap. It made me a lone wolf at life, getting the least bit mangy as I approached my forties. . .

Time after time I tried sincerely to correct my psychology and get back certain religious—not theological—cues I felt that I had lost with the passing of boyhood. I plunged deeper than ever into eleven-pound volumes on all sorts of racial traits and behaviorisms. I was a walking museum of how a man may reach middle life and yet be the worst mess spiritually that ever got into *Who's Who in America* but *What of It?*

In view of such an autobiographical summary, the significance of the nocturnal experience in my mountain bungalow should not be abstruse.

I can look back now and recognize that throughout those forty years of turmoil and seeming happiness *I was being prepared for something*. It was all most deliberate. There was no chance in it anywhere. I had a definite work to do and those had been forty years of the most rigorous disciplining in order to ac-

quire the experience to do that work efficiently. In no other environment, with no other parents, could I have gained all those spiritual things that I had truly been gaining without being aware of it. . . .

Thousands, yes millions of people are going through that same Golgotha today—not knowing they are acquiring invaluable experience and wisdom for a great work they definitely volunteered to do after getting into life. But they, like myself, must find the Key to the secret of that Golgotha in each case. It came to me in California in 1928 because without exactly knowing it, I had arrived at a balancing of the three factors in my being: the physical, mental, and spiritual. I was therefore ready to proceed with the larger employment.

THE FIRST intimation that I received, that the discarnate experience had affected me physically, was going down into town next morning and into the office of one of my companies. Soon I noted that the employes were conferring in little knots, whispering together, casting puzzled glances in my direction.

"Has anything especial happened to you?" one girl finally found courage to inquire.

"What makes you ask that?" I demanded.

"Because somehow you don't seem the same

person who went out of here two or three days ago. You've altered somehow. We can't make it out."

How could I explain to her?

I went about my bungalow in the days that followed as though I were still in a sort of trance—which verily I was. Days of this, with a queer unrest galvanizing me, a feeling that I was on the verge of something, that out of my weird self-projection onto another plane of consciousness I had brought back something that was working in me like yeast.

Then came experience Number Two—not quite so theatric and therefore harder to describe.

One night while still imbued with the "feeling" of my fourth dimensional adventure, I decided to go to New York on a trip and consult with some friends there whom I knew to be interested in the Society for Psychical Research. I took down a volume of Emerson and tossed it into my bag for reading matter en route. The next day I was speeding eastward.

All day long I rode and the sunlight died as we left the Golden State behind us. Off on the reaches of the Mojave Desert, the transcontinental train clicked along mile on mile. The evening deepened. Passengers retired. I was finally left alone in the club car.

I had the volume of Emerson with me and had opened it to his *Over-Soul*. In the middle of it, though not reading any specific line, epigram, paragraph or page, I had a queer moment of confusion, a sort of cerebral vertigo. *Then a strange physical sensation played at the top of my head as though a great shaft of pure white light had poured down from above, boring straight through the roof of that droning Pullman coach and into my startled brain!*

In that instant a vast weight went out of my whole physical ensemble, a weight that had been forty years compounding. A veil was torn away.

I was conscious of a Presence, a stupendous Presence. Something had happened and was continuing to happen. A cascade of pure, cool, wonderful *peace* was falling down from somewhere and completely cleansing me from every snarl and complex.

I knew in those moments that Jesus the Christ was an actual Personage!

I knew more.

I knew that He had been waiting forty years for me to come up through my curriculum of earthly experiencing, to arrive at that moment.

I knew that the church, the theologians, the religionists, were all wrong about Jesus the

Christ and that along with millions of others being blindly led and fed on arid allegorical interpretations of Truth, they were misrepresenting the Man of Galilee.

Jesus the Christ, and all that He meant to the world, *WAS!*

And again there was nothing maudlin about it, nothing sanctimonious, *nothing that had to do with religion.*

It was more than ever a personal relationship.

My book slid from my fingers to the carpet and stayed there. I sat staring into space. *I was not the same man I had been a few moments before!*

I mean this physically, mentally, spiritually. I knew that somehow I had acquired senses and perception that I could never hope to describe to any second person and yet they were as real to me as the shape of my hands. For a time I wondered if "much learning had driven me mad" but then I recalled that really mad people never stop to question whether or not they are balanced. Next I was aware of something new and strange in my whole experience.

I was conscious of presences about me, conversing. That empty Pullman held passengers not perceptible to mortal eye. And in a manner of speaking, *I could discern their thought-speech!*

I cannot tell in this article the contacts and adventures I confronted in New York, corroborating these presentiments. But I came back to my mountain bungalow a month later with these psychical gifts developed to a point where I knew full well the meaning of those strange manifestations in the house at which my dog had been so nervous.

From the very first night of my return I knew that there was someone in that darkening room with me beside Laska, my dog. In fact, I was aware that several living, vibrant personalities were with me in that room. Laska sat up, cocked her head from side to side and wagged her tail at some of them again—at *nothing* apparently—one of them in particular standing by my desk at the north end of the room. And now I understood!

And yet I was not in the slightest afraid. Why be afraid of our friends? . . .

In all of my life up to that time I had never seen a ghost, never had more than an academic interest in psychical phenomena, and pooh-poohed spiritualism as a sort of crack-brained dogma that belonged in the same pigeon-hole with soothsaying and gypsy fortune-telling. I had not invited any of these experiences that I knew of. They had simply *come* to me.

What really had happened was, *I had un-*

locked hidden powers within myself that I know all human beings possess, and had augmented my five physical senses with other senses just as bona fide, legitimate, and natural as touch, taste, smell, sight, or hearing!

That I had help in unlocking these hidden powers I will not deny. Nevertheless, nothing had happened to me that has not happened to thousands of other people, only in very rare cases do they talk about it. What those hidden powers are, and why I maintain that they are bona fide, I will have to leave to other writings.

But they had suddenly shown me that life was not at all the ordinary, humdrum, three-meals-a-day thing that I had always accepted. Its essence and its meaning was so vast and fine and high and beautiful that it overwhelmed me and a recognition of it performed a sort of re-creation in me that made me feel I was not the same person I had been up till then.

My desire to explain intelligibly just what I mean by this, is almost an ache within me, at this moment. But for some uncanny reason, words are not the medium that conveys it. The only term I can employ that comes anywhere near the truth is *spirituality*. The *me* that is the Bill Pelley entity can convey it by *being*, and the fact that I *am*, gets it to you.

Is this last a nonsensical statement? All

I can say is, that I know by experience that there is a great overpowering existence outside of what we call worldly Life—that I have been in it and *felt* it—that having been in it has endowed me with certain capacities that have transformed my whole concept of the universe and some of my friends are kind enough to add, have transformed *me*. Physically as well as mentally.

MY first dramatic physical reaction was a sudden change in the physical components of my body. I discovered that miraculously I had lost my "nerves". . . .

Ever since childhood I had lived under such a natural nervous tension that it had kept me underweight, put lines on my face and an edge on my voice, perturbed me psychologically so that opposition of any kind annoyed me and made me want to crash through it like an army tank flattening out a breastworks.

Suddenly this had departed.

I was peaceful inside.

I had the glorious feeling of physical detachment from the handicaps of bodily matter. No form of bodily exertion seemed to take energy that I need consciously supply. I had always been slightly stoop-shouldered. With-

out any unusual exercise my spine straightened of itself, so to speak, and my shoulders felt broadened.

Along with this physical alteration went the unexplainable faculty to withstand fatigue either active or sedentary. If I wearied myself by unusual labor, it was the healthy weariness of boyhood that overtook me. On the other hand, I could sit at my typewriter twelve hours at a stretch if necessary with scarcely a muscle protesting such inactivity.

With this alteration came a different feeling toward those around me. I discovered that I couldn't fight with people any more, and that I was making friends. A queer statement, this. Yet people were going out of their way to perform services for me, to counsel me, to seek my society, to make me one with themselves. I think this amazed me more than the strangeness of my new physical rebirth.

And yet deep down underneath it all . . . well, I understood. That understanding, I aver, has been growing with me every day and hour since, comprising naturally many things that I am restrained from offering in a magazine that is read by all classes of people at all stages of mental, moral, and spiritual development. Still, there are conclusions and equations I may draw that have universal application.

WHAT is this thing that happened to me, and why did it happen?

First, I believe my subconscious hunger after what the Bible terms "the things of the spirit"—that is, the sincere desire to penetrate behind the mediocrity of three-meals-a-day living and ascertain what mystery lay behind this Golgotha of Existence—had what might be called a "prenatal basis". It had to do with my coming into life in the first place. Vaguely, dimly, all through my life up to that memorable night in California, I had remembered something that I was supposed to do, to accomplish, in life, and the fact that I was not accomplishing it—that I could recognize with any inward satisfaction—was taking me out of my character and making me the combative young wretch that resented authority the clock around. The fact that I had responded at last to the Higher Call, that morning in Beverly Hills, turned my life around abruptly even as I had turned my car around literally, attracted to me spiritual forces of a very high and altruistic order who aided me in making that hyperdimensional visitation.

Second, it goes without saying that having made such a visitation and having had certain questions concretely answered by those I confronted in that dimension, my subconscious—

or for that matter conscious—knowledge of what the Fourth Dimension is, and means, and what can be done within its area, undertook to operate first upon my physical body and performed the rejuvenation that subsequently came to me. And yet I can no more explain the Fourth Dimension with *words* than I can convey to a man blind from birth what I mean when I talk about the *redness* of the color Red. I know what the higher dimension is, myself, as I know what redness is by having eyes. I can see how it interpenetrates Matter, constituting the "inside" of it, so to speak, and how projections from it must come out the reverse of what we know them on the physical plane. But I can no more make it intelligible to the average reader than Einstein can explain Relativity to a group of salesmen in a smoking car. The average man or woman without his spiritual perceptions duly awakened, cannot possess any equipment to assimilate what I am trying to tell him—any more than the blind man can assimilate the "redness" of red if he never had eyes capable of knowing the peculiar attributes of Light in Matter that give the phenomenon of color, or any more than expounders of Relativity can convey their meanings to those unfamiliar with higher mathematics.

Third, these experiences—the visitation, the

knowledge that was bestowed in the visitation and the result of it—immediately revealed to me that there is a world of subliminal existence interpenetrating the ordinary world in which most of us exist as average two-legged Americans full of aches and worries, *and that this subliminal world is the real world*—the world of “stern reality” if you will—that is waiting for the race to learn of it and tap its beneficent resources long before what we call physical death, that our “dead” loved ones are existent in it, alive and happy, conscious of their condition and waiting for us to join them either at “death” or at any time that we attain to that stage of spirituality where it is fitting for them to make contact *and remember it!*

Understand thoroughly, I am not a Spiritualist, a Mystic, or a Psychic Researcher in the ordinary meaning of those terms. I am not trying to convert anyone to anything. I am simply telling you that something happened to me that was not consciously self-invited, that my friends attest to an even greater alteration having occurred in my personality than I am capable of feeling from within, although I feel plenty.

Having had certified that there is no such thing as Death for the conscious and sentient entity that is You and Me as we know one an-

other, I find this certainty the touchstone that unlocks many another mystery. What I have learned about the Life Fundamentals, that night and since, explains why one man is born rich and another poor, one a splendid athlete and another a helpless cripple, explains the friendships we make and the mates we marry, the poor luck or good fortune that accrues to us, why we put work and worry and love into the raising of children only to have them snatched from us at the threshold of maturity. It unlocks the mystery of the Christian religion as it was in its pristine purity, the miracles of Jesus, the conversional power of the Holy Spirit. It makes life strong to be lived without fear or doubt or unhappiness—and I think the experience happened to me *because it is my earthly brevet as time goes on to delineate in book and preachment something of the spiritual "redness of red"* if that conveys my meaning to those who may be interested.

There is in every human heart a hunger and a thirst for the things of the Spirit but in many of them this desire has become so embalmed with the poisons of worries, doubts, fleshly desires, struggles to attain th ewherewithal for physical survival, that for all practical purposes it no longer exists.

The day is coming in the evolution of the race when Spirituality is going to be the whole essence of life instead of the present world's materialism. Here and there are those who because of their prenatal identities, so to speak, their consequent re-awakenings, their visions self-invited or otherwise, may be called monitors and mentors for their fellows, showing them what may be attained by anyone if he so orders his life and thinking as to be susceptible to such revelations.

I believe that Nature, God, Universal Spirit—give the Great Cause any name you will—is taking this method of giving the monitors and mentors unusual experiences to furnish the whole race an inspiration by which it may quicken its spiritual pace. There is nothing more prohibitive morally or ethically in exploring these great new fields of Reality than in exploring the fields of radio or atomic energy. In fact, *the Great Cause means we shall explore them!*

At any rate, whether I am right or wrong, I know that for a limited time one night in 1928, out in California, my spiritual entity left my physical body and went somewhere, a concrete place where I could talk, walk about, feel and see, and have answers returned to my questions addressed to physically "dead" people, that

have checked up in the waking world and clarified for me the whole riddle of earthly existence.

I know there is no Death because in a manner of speaking I went through the process of dying, came back into my body, went out again deliberately, came back into it again and took up the burden of earthly living again. I know that the experience has metamorphosized the cantankerous Yankee that was once Bill Pelley and launched him into a wholly different universe that seems filled with much love, harmony, good humor and reasonable prosperity.

What's the answer to *that*?

There is no answer, except that it must be accepted as inevitably as I am forced to accept the awareness of my own identity.

I know because I have experienced.

THE AFTERMATH

VIEWED FROM 1952-1953



WHAT a major alteration in the affairs of my life I was to precipitate by the writing and publishing of *My Seven Minutes in Eternity!* Nearly a quarter-century has now transpired since that epochal levitation of spirit in my Altadena bungalow. It is well-nigh 1953 instead of 1928, and I am sixty-three years old instead of thirty-eight. Much water has flowed beneath the Bridge of Time since the night of that hyperdimensional experience. I can value it in retrospect and make rational deductions. My whole career and life-errand was to be predicated on the happening, with perchance historical repercussions on the destiny of my country. Three times I have rewritten this Aftermath-comment on the trio of republicings of the *Seven-Minute* article; this is the fourth. Each time I have found new material to my hand to append to the story. Let me tell you again briefly how I feel about the whole of it, up here in 1953. . .

At first, as I have previously remarked in those earlier publishings, I was dubious about writing up the experience for *The American*. I didn't care to have myself labeled a Spiritualist or a mystic. If the great American public jumped to the conclusion that "something had slipped in my brains", in that the experience had come to me, I would be finished as an author of prestige and reliability. I knew that, with some concern.

Strangely enough, although the *American's* editors were energetically insisting that I make the story of record in type, it was more or less Bert Boyden's voice continuing to "get through" to me in odd moments—what I came to distinguish and name Clairaudience—that finally brought me to do it. I chanced to be in Manhattan again when the urge sounded clairaudiently to make an official version of the occurrence, and I did it of a morning in the Commodore Hotel. I wrote the unabridged version much as I have set down in the previous pages and took it across to the *American's* offices just before twelve o'clock noon. The lady assistant editor had her hat on, to leave for her lunch. I told her what I had brought, and she sat down at once, her midday snack forgotten. Finishing it, she sprang up and went into the office of the Editor-in-Chief. I waited

another thirty minutes, apparently while he too read the manuscript. He came back with Mary, carrying the story.

"We're going to stop the presses on the March number," he announced, "and substitute this article. It's the biggest narrative that's ever come into the offices of this publication."

Because the page-forms on the March, 1929 number had been closed, it was necessary to cut the material exactly to fit the space available when the other first article had been "pulled", as printers phrase it. Mary went to work on it later that afternoon and trimmed out every superfluous word or description, paring it down to the bone of precisely what had happened. I went back to California that week and was in Pasadena again when the publication reached the nation's newsstands.

They had named the article *My Seven Minutes in Eternity*, from the adjuration I had received in the discarnate state, "not to try to see everything in the first seven minutes." Many people were subsequently under the impression that my experience had lasted only seven minutes and they wondered how I could have crammed so much into such an incredibly short sequence of time. Actually I had been "out" four hours—from two to six o'clock.

THE CIRCULATION of *The American* in 1929 was around 2,200,000 copies. National advertisers estimate that each copy of any standard magazine bought and paid for, is read by at least four persons—which meant that presumably ten million people had access to that original version as published. I had no cause to doubt it. The reaction in the matter of mail was amazing. . .

I have told in my book of psychical memoirs, "Why I Believe the Dead Are Alive", the exact *denouement* of the article when published. Something like 20,000 to 30,000 letters of comment, most of them the warmest approbation of the editors for printing such a narrative, began arriving and piling up in the Manhattan offices of the Crowell Publishing Company, and the phone wires to California began to heat with editorial demands that I return to New York and do something to relieve it. This mail had to be acknowledged, for it meant disruption of the magazine's entire stenographic staff.

Well, I decided to close out in California for good, return to Manhattan and resume my life there. I went back and helped sort out, classify, and answer those thousands of letters. It took me six to nine months, with the aid of two secretaries.

The reactionary letters, I discovered, grouped themselves into three categories—

The greatest proportion of them came from American readers who declared that they as well, at some time in their lives, had undergone a similar levitation! They knew the article wasn't any fictional fabrication because my avowed experiences had been their own, and they wanted to compliment me for being so frank in relating how such spiritual adventure may happen.

The next category comprised those who were neither facetious, skeptical, nor derogatory, but who merely wanted more light on my sensation or reactions in respect to this or that, but emphatically insisting that I continue to write along such line.

The third category contained those in a great army of the spiritually hungry who merely wanted to thank me for the hope and inspiration which my article had brought them—with here and there a materialistic cynic who avowed I ought to be kicked out of the country for projecting any such hocus-pocus when "everybody knew" that death ended everything and that "there was neither thought nor voice in the grave whence thou goest" . . . but out of 20,000 communications there were actually less than two dozen who thus derided me as an

eccentric, or expressed open disbelief that I had recounted the truth.

But here was still a more interesting circumstance—

In ninety-five percent of these testimonial letters, the technique of gaining into the Higher Dimensions, and the scenes and experiences encountered there, appeared to be so similar as almost to constitute a Law of the Process. A man in Oregon and a woman in Virginia—of course not knowing about the other's writing me—would recount similar visitations, relating accurate details and specifications, many of which I had not mentioned, but which had happened to me before my "return" and "awakening". When this occurred not once or twice but scores and even hundreds of times, I knew that no rule of coincidence was demonstrating. The percentages were too great. Something was being revealed that was well for the human race to know about. That all of it was constituting a sort of curtain-raiser for a vast resurgence in the spiritual life of the nation, I had no means of suspecting at the time. But here were these results, irrefutable as to evidence.

In most of these instances, the levitation had happened as mine had happened—unheralded and unexpected. By no means had they come

either as an aftermath to illness, alcoholic addiction, or time of heavy spiritual depression. Invariably, however, they *had* come in the wake of a tremendous desire for eternal truth, and hunger and thirst after things of the Spirit. Also, I might add that the writers were not drawn from among any one type or caste of people, any one sect, cult, age, occupation, social stratum, or locality of residence. They came cleanly-cut, from a cross-section of everyday Americans, from bank presidents to stenographers, from wage-earners, from housewives, from octogenarians to boys and girls in college, men and women being represented equally. Many came from Christian ministers.

The only one instance, however, was a skeptical attitude taken by a pastor. This exception was a California clergyman who was certain that the Devil had tampered with my soul that night, in that I had not immediately encountered Our Lord when I found myself on the Upper Side of the Veil of Consciousness. The dear man apparently had never been informed that approximately 65,000 persons "die" permanently out of the body every twenty-four hours, and if all immediately "encounter Our Lord", the Lord is curiously challenged with a most formidable procession of souls every night and day, seven times a week,

no time off for Sundays, holidays, or sleep.

I found, I repeat, that a discarnate visitation similar to mine had been common to incredible numbers of people, but they had not enjoyed my opportunities for being articulate about it. *Going out of the body without death always resulting, consciously or unconsciously, was something that happened to vast numbers of people, regardless of race, age, sex, or strata of society.* Only I had projected a sensation by describing my own physical vacancy in the lead-article of a periodical having ten million readers. And in view of the fact that the technique employed or the environment encountered ran so constant as to details, brought to me with no little shock that perchance here was a psychological—not to mention theological avenue to be explored from which the human species might encounter heavy profit.

That I was breaking ground for a vast new departure in mass human thinking never occurred to me in those weeks and months immediately following publication—that was to come as I yielded to the insistence that I write more along the same line, and my own developing clairaudient faculties brought me greater and greater erudition in the eternal verities. Among the latter was to be the possibilities in serried earthly Rebirth, the thing that is pur-

blindly understood by the orthodox as Reincarnation.

That I had reincarnated in this country and generation to perform exactly this service to the human race, with all the academic and social responsibilities it carried, was something that was to grow upon me gradually as veil after veil seemed to drop or be lifted on prenatal memory.

THE SECOND category of my correspondents wished to know how much of the article was fact and how much fiction. Had I merely "dreamed a particularly vivid dream" and embellished it with additions as a writer? Some of them would pick out tiny discrepancies of phraseology and context—of which any person writing at high speed might be guilty—offering them in evidence that fabrication was apparent in certain sequences of the narrative.

Particularly was there camouflage in identifying Bert Boyden as my mentor in the experience, because he had formerly been Managing Editor of the publication. What I have written now in this volume are the facts.

To this class of questioners I wrote a personal letter wherever practicable, assuring each that whereas whole sequences of my experience had been deleted in the interests of common cre-

dulity—because dogmatic church people might take umbrage for printing any such article at all—everything that was printed had been unadorned fact, to the best of my belief and recollection. There had been no fiction in the narrative, I had written it under a sort of personal protest, and I had no need to try to enhance my reputation by stirring up any such pot of sensationalism. My writing income at the time had been in the neighborhood of \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually, I had been listed for many years in *Who's Who in America*, and was generally accepted as one of the most successful authors in the nation. However, I do want to make comment in this Aftermath against the possibilities of it's having been a particularly vivid "dream", and what incidents later demonstrated that it obviously was not.

I began to get communications from the Spiritualists of the nation, where discarnate persons had "come through" to mediums in trance and attested to the veracity of what I had written. Think of Spiritualism what you may, the fact remained that from such resource came proofs that jolted me.

I recall, about three to six months after I had set up my own office in New York to handle the Movement that was proceeding out of the publishing of the article, that I received

one particular communication from a group in Massachusetts, recounting to me certain behaviors of mine on that epochal Seven-Minutes evening that I had never mentioned to a soul, much less incorporated anywhere in print. They were strictly known to me alone, and had had to do with the pool of clear water which I had found adjacent to the "patio" where I had held reception of my departed friends. The transcript from this Massachusetts group *described my behavior in regard to this pool, and my conversations with friends I had nowhere described*. Astounded as to where my correspondent could have procured this data, I turned the page. At the bottom was a notation that a Doctor Curtis had dictated the information, and that "Dr. Curtis is a spirit, who made the Passing about four years come Christmas."

Here was corroborating testimony "from the Higher Side" itself, relayed through disinterested third parties, that what I had undergone had by no means been dreaming.

It was an incident or two like that, which set me back emphatically and caused me to realize that I had uncorked something to which it might be well to give major attention.

Then ensued the matter of my own developing clairaudient faculties. I certainly was becoming more and more proficient at "hearing"

the speech of many of those persons I had encountered face to face that night, and the proof of this too was apparent from the unorthodox nature of the text itself . . . Was any of it hallucination? . . .

Let modern psychologists and psychiatrists explain these "hallucinations" as they will, I submit that hallucinations do not endow us with supernormal perceptions, enabling us to contact so-called "dead people" precisely as though they were still alive. I was getting the additional material day after day, week after week, month after month, some of it of the most sacred tenor. But I'll refer to that in more detail in a moment. Before I go further, I want to recount another odd incident that had to do with identifying Bert Boyden's companion in that patio—

WHEN I had first gone to New York, after the experience, and reported details about it which the *American's* editors had solicited me to write, my lady editor had invited me up to her apartment for the evening to try some experimenting with Involuntary Pencil Writing. The whole episode is narrated in the opening chapter of *Star Guests*.

Before we sat down to try out the Involuntary Writing, she had gone into her sleeping-

room a moment, to come back with a packet of cabinet photographs. These she fanned out on the table.

"Tell me," she invited, "if any one of the persons in those pictures resembles the male companion of Mr. Boyden whom you encountered in Seven-Minutes that night."

There were over a dozen photographs of men, all strangers to me. Yet the fifth in the assortment I pegged a finger on at once.

"*That one!*" I exclaimed. He was a stocky, semi-bald man of about forty years. "He was the person who aided Boyden in laying me down on that patio bench!"

How was I to know—the man in the photo being an absolute stranger—that I wasn't identifying some man working in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco at the time, as alive physically as any person in the census of North America? But he wasn't.

"Aha!" Mary cried. "I thought so!"

"You thought what?"

"Do you know whom you've chosen?"

"Of course I don't."

"That's *my* late brother-in-law, William, a special friend and companion of Bert Boyden's in life, who died tragically at Camp Lewis in the opening days of World War I, from the accidental discharge of a rookie's rifle, the

bullet from which drilled him through the head!"

I'd never known she possessed such a brother-in-law. But later I was to discover that my "karma" seemed tightly interwoven with Mary's, and most of her family and ex-husband's family. The point here was, that I had identified the face of a man who had been a close companion of Boyden's in life. Coincidence? It could have been. Later I was to learn that it wasn't, because this same William materialized for me, in the body of a New York spiritualist medium, talked to me in his own voice so that a dozen companions with me heard him, and made direct references as well to my conduct of that night.

Here was more disinterested proof. Too much of it was piling up as time went on, for me to deprecate the authenticity of what I had undergone.

How contest such secular evidence?

My "mental radio"—now termed by Dr. Rhine of Duke University, Extra-Sensory Perception—had been so galvanized by my experience that I could continue to keep in touch with those I had encountered back in May of 1928 in Altadena, California. I could carry on conversations with these persons without trance of any kind on my part, proffer in-

quiries and get intelligence and informative answers.

It seemed that I was proving, by incident after incident, that orthodox church people had everything wrong in their concepts or traditions about what happened to the soul-spirit of the individual after physical demise. People did *not* die physically and their souls ascend automatically into realms of celestial bliss, to be judged for their "sins" . . . neither did they remain in any state of Purgatory, or "asleep in Jesus" awaiting the trump of Gabriel announcing Judgment Day. Their spiritual selves, clothed in some sort of body invisible to mortal senses, rose up out of their discarded remains and went on living and sensing and learning, taking intellects with them, right here in environs adjacent to material earth. The Spiritualists with their "Summerland" appeared to have arrived nearest to the truth, only the Spiritualists refused to credit the possibility that after fifty to two hundred years of such Summerland life, such spirit-souls became utterly discarnate and returned to take possession of a new fetus in another pregnant mother and become a new child and live another life right here in mortality. Each lived scores and even hundreds of repeat lives in mortality, for that matter, as

witness what is disclosed from subconscious mind when the personality is sent back upon the Time-Track in various forms of mental therapy. At any rate, what was coming to me seemed decidedly to be "something new under the sun" and worthy of all the time and attention I could devote to it. But here is a circumstance that ought to go into the record—

The American Magazine swiftly indicated that, despite the stupendous success of this article among readers, they wanted no more of such hyperdimensional narratives or anything allied to them. Why not? Later, when everybody who had participated in any way in the accepting and publishing of the article had been removed from their jobs apparently for the indiscretion—myself included—I was to learn "why not."

The private allegation was made to me that powerful orthodox church interests had made moneys available to cause changes of personnel in the Crowell Publishing Company on the condition that never again was that type of article to be published. Orthodoxy taught certain fundamentals about the afterlife and they were not to be challenged, in this or any other manner. Organized Christian religion taught that when man or woman died, he or she went before his or her Maker to be judged for "sins

in the flesh", and that was that. It was wholesale heresy to even question it; . . . just as at one time back in history it had been wholesale heresy to question the statements in Genesis about Creation. Remember those words of Father Melchoir Inchofer to the Church in the Middle Ages—

"The opinion of the earth's motion is of all heresies the most abominable, the immovability of the earth is thrice sacred; argument against the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and the Incarnation, should be tolerated sooner than an argument to prove that the earth moves."

That settled *that* for all time. A complete change arrived in the personnel of *The American*, and I have never sold it anything for publication since. At a luncheon to Dr. Robert Norwood, pastor of St. Bartholomew's, which I attended six months later, the Managing Editor sat across the board and told Dr. Norwood, "Publishing *Seven Minutes* was the greatest editorial mistake *The American* ever made. People wanted more of it, and we couldn't turn the publication into a metaphysical monthly, or give Pelley the prominence

that his article called up. "So," he added, with a disdainful look at me, "a first-class writer was ruined to make a second-rate metaphysician." After uttering which profundity—which was his way of saying that orthodox ecclesiasticism didn't like his publication's attestation that the earth moved—he departed for a job in Washington.

But I had to do something about the interest aroused in 20,000 to 30,000 people by what I had written. I found myself in demand to fill lecture platforms, and pulpits of more advanced clergymen in and around New York. In one of those audiences I discovered Sumner Vinton sitting and listening—a Baptist missionary I had known in Japan in 1918—and he asked to come to my office next day and discuss a project for me to get out a weekly mimeograph on similar circles to interested friends, continuing the enlightenment that was coming to me. I began to do such a mimeograph and Vinton promoted the study-group idea.

Within six months I was talking to 20,000 people a week in 476 such groups as well as issuing a monthly magazine.

Such was the origin of the Liberation-Soulcraft Movement, that now has its publishing

Headquarters in a pleasant Indiana town, 20 miles north of Indianapolis—which puts out two weekly publications, four deluxe books a year, and circulates periodic talks on electronic tapes that are played to a hundred audiences across 22 States.

I'M UNABLE, in the space in this small volume, to write a detailed biographical sketch of everything that happened to me up the 23 years that have gone, in result of the Seven-Minute article. I've done that in my biography, *Door to Revelation*, temporarily out of print.

But in result of that nocturnal awakening, however, my psychical faculties developed to such a degree that I was able to record and transcribe a million-and-a-half words of Higher Dimensional enlightenment and revelation and have it to draw upon as the basic material for the odd-dozen volumes I've written since. You can read the story of these books and publications in our little free handbook, *All about Soulcraft*.

Something like \$50,000 worth of sacred Scripts, bound in Bible format, have been distributed *free* to pastors and spiritual leaders of America, during 1952—all of it stemming out of my dropping to sleep of an ordinary

night on May 29, 1928, in a California bungalow, and awakening an altered man with morning. And contrary to the expression of *The American's* Managing Editor to Dr. Norwood, the great list of 156 *Soulscripts*, gradually being made available to those interested in the divinely occult, has been designated by competent critics as a course in Mysticism surpassing all the great mystics of the past excepting William Lorber of Germany—proceeding beyond Spiritualism, beyond Rosicrucianism, beyond Theosophy.

I have come to grasp now that all the while, up through boyhood and young manhood I had been carrying in my subconscious mind a hundred-percent consciousness of this, my life's real brevet, and had been anxious to be at it that day in Beverly Hills when I turned back my car at the roadblock with the sign, *Travel Not Permitted Beyond This Point*, or words to that effect. But I hadn't appreciated that Time and Situation, not to mention intellectual development and balance, had to be complied with, first.

Naturally I couldn't write this in the *American* at the time, as part of my article. People wouldn't have understood, and perhaps I didn't wholly understand it myself. But this thing had happened—

With the awakening of my Extra-Sensory Perception faculties, the whole program of my life came clear!

Call it that I had made a sort of Pact to come into mortal life in the year 1890, accomplish a certain work and attain an expected objective. All that had preceded that 38th year had been mortal or physical preparation for that Job. I had certain things to do in the closing years of this Piscean Dispensation.

It was a type of Martin Luther renovation of current ecclesiasticism that was expected of me, re-presenting the sterling fundamentals of the true Christianity—or Christ Message—purged of Hebraic complexes or Mosaic backgrounds.

Well, such work has flowered from the nocturnal beginning and I have no excuses nor apologies to offer for it. If I went further in my exposition of my vicissitudes of the past two-score years, I would merely be repeating what is told more graphically and in greater detail in weightier books. Acquire and read *Why I Believe the Dead Are Alive*, and you'll find the narrative picking up and moving forward in more explicit detail.

The Aftermath of Seven-Minutes?

I've learned that life is a continuously per-

forming experience, that death is merely the shedding of body, that coming back into fresh physical incursions is a law of life for everyone and solves all the mysteries of mortality, that Christ is more actual and real than any living person on this earth, and that all things assuredly *do* work together for good for those who live literally the Eternal Verities.

Read the Soulcraft literature and learn.
And further deponent sayeth not.