

PSYPIONEER

Founded by Leslie Price

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**THIS ISSUE OF PSYPIONEER
is dedicated to
DON GALLOWAY**



23 October 1929 - 1 September 2009

Don Galloway served as assistant secretary and later secretary of the *College of Psychic Studies*, (formerly the *London Spiritualist Alliance*). He took a sympathetic interest in the *Psypioneer* project from its inception and frequently passed on material from his private library of considerable historical interest. Like many of our readers he had a great respect for the old workers.

and to

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE



22nd May 1859 – 7th July 1930

This is our second special issue devoted to ACD material in celebration of 150 years since his birth (the first special issue being May 2009).

**Initial Public Offering (IPO – in today’s terminology!)
For ACD’s Psychic Bookshop**

PP Introductory Note: - In our separately published Psypioneer Archive¹ concerned with ACD's Psychic Bookshop and Library, we have already presented much information on the evolution of this venture. Below we reprint the Prospectus for the proposed floating of the bookshop - with which in the end Sir Arthur did not proceed. It is not clear if that was because of his ill-health or general economic conditions.

THE PSYCHIC & GENERAL BOOKSHOP CO., LTD.

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DENIS CONAN DOYLE, Esq., Windlesham, Crowborough.

¹ PsyPioneer Archive: - www.woodlandway.org

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PROSPECTUS.

The Company has been formed for the purposes specified in its Memorandum of Association and in particular to purchase the Assets, including the benefit of the Lease, Stock, Goodwill and Fixtures of the Psychic and General Bookshop, Victoria Street, S.W.1 which was opened in 1925 by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who has up to the present time been carrying on the business, but now finds that owing to failing health and many pre-occupations he can no longer carry on by himself. It is felt that this offers a good opportunity of taking the business over from him as it stands and placing same on a company footing with a Board of Directors who would be prepared to carry on.

Although the business has only been established five years, it shows all the prospects of being a successful one, especially since the selling and distribution of general literature has been added to its original activities. The gross earnings which were little over £1,000 in 1925 have risen to approximately £4,000 in 1928 and 1929. The present year shows an increase up to date. A gross turnover of £6,000 would bring the concern to the dividend-paying stage.

Sir Arthur has expended £4,500 from his own purse in establishing and working up the business. He is prepared to take half this sum in shares, the rest in cash. There would remain, after the expense of the Company formation had been met, approximately £2,250 which the Directors consider sufficient as Working Capital and enable the business to extend itself by fuller advertising. The Company would start with the advantage of several hundreds of customers whose names are upon the books and with a staff who are thoroughly accustomed to managing the business. The Stock of about £1,000, the expensive fixtures, the existing business and goodwill would all be handed over to the Company, and all liabilities paid off.

Apart from the business possibilities which are here set forth, there are very many psychic students whether they be psychical researchers, theosophists, or spiritualists who desire to have an open display of occult literature in some centre point in London, instead of being, if it exists at all, on the back shelves of a bookseller's shop. These, no doubt, from a propaganda point of view would extend a welcome and help to the enterprise.

The Bookshop during the time of its existence has been a most busy psychic centre and has published many notable works, including such books as Von Reuter's "Psychic experiences of a Musician" and Purchas' "Spiritual Adventures of a Business Man," besides smaller books

such as “Pheneas Speaks,” Campbell Holmes’ “Fundamental Facts of Psychic Science,” Cox’s “Talks with the Immortals” and “Experiences in the Unseen World” etc. In the press they have a considerable book, Von Reuter’s “Consoling Angel” and Mrs. Hinchcliffe’s “Return of Captain Hinchcliffe.”

It is understood that the pictures in the shop and objects in the Museum are the private property of Sir Arthur and are not included in this sale.

Miss Mary Conan Doyle who has been honorary superintendent of the Bookshop, is prepared, for a time at least, to place her services gratis at the disposal of the new Company, in such capacity as the Directors may desire.

To W. T. LIVINGSTON,
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THE PSYCHIC & GENERAL BOOKSHOP Co., Ltd.

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for Shares in the above Company.

Yours faithfully,

A WORD OF WARNING

By

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE,
M.D., LL.D.

SIXPENCE

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THE PSYCHIC PRESS,
2, VICTORIA STREET, S.W.

A WORD OF WARNING

By

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, M.D., LL.D.

I WRITE this little pamphlet, which I have entitled "A Word of Warning," under a strong sense of responsibility. There are certain things which it is my duty to say, and this seems to be the time to do it. They are not easy things, nor things which make for popularity, but for many years I have had to plead an unpopular cause for the sake of truth, and one gets used to opposition and misrepresentation. As one grows near the limit of the psalmist, the outer world gives us little fresh to hope for and little fresh to fear. One's only possible motive or desire is to state the truth as clearly as one can see it, and to justify any gifts which God may have given one.

For five or six years I have received in my own family circle certain messages which profess to be, and have every internal sign of being, from a high spiritual source. Some of them I have actually published under the title "Pheneas Speaks." The part published is not more than one-third of the whole, and the residue contains much which, if it be true, is of extreme importance for the human race. I was instructed that the time has not yet come for such publication, and indeed it was clear upon the face of it that a detailed and verbatim account would tend to cause panic, and lend itself to different forms of vulgarisation and sensationalism. I, therefore, refrained, but I went the length of indicating the general tenor of these warnings.

This was that the world had failed to learn the lesson of the great war, that only by such tragic visitations could it be chastened and humbled into a more spiritual state of mind, and that accordingly, *unless there was some sweeping change of heart*, a second trial was coming which would surely accomplish what the first had failed to do. The date of this crisis would be soon, it

would take the form of political and natural convulsions, and its effect would be absolutely shattering. Such, in a nutshell, is the message as we have received it. It is not a pleasant one either to hear, or to deliver, at a time when we are still reeling from the last blow, but if the message is a true one then the situation should be faced.

But is it a true one? There lies the whole crux. There are several considerations which bear directly upon the question. First of all, these messages have come absolutely unsought, are entirely outside the medium's range of thought or interests, and in many ways run counter to our own opinions. Secondly, since they began to reach us the whole trend of events, both in international affairs and in seismic activity has moved in the direction indicated, and shown itself in each case most active in the very quarters of which we were warned. Finally, during this time we have received a series of corroborations which now exceed a hundred in number, coming from every part of the world, and all dealing with one or other of the events which are already foretold in our record. If, to use a homely comparison, I may compare that record to a completed jig-saw picture, then we have had each separate piece handed in independently, so that all united, when fitted into their places, would form a duplicate. These records, some of them short, but many of them long and detailed, I have, of course, carefully preserved. They constitute a formidable dossier. If any critic says, "These alarms are continually occurring. They are delusions of the sub-conscious mind," I am entitled to point to this mass of evidence, and to say, "But why should all these subconscious minds be moving in the same direction?"

A further consideration which influences me is that many of the lesser prophecies of Pheneas have been already fulfilled. Again and again he has given us notice of earthquakes and other events before they occurred. Anyone who cared to examine my manuscripts could satisfy himself upon that point. If, then, Pheneas is often right about the smaller matters, is it logical to suppose that he is mistaken in his main contention?

Weighing every alternative explanation, there is only one to which I could attach any weight. It is that people who have responded to the reactions of the war may unconsciously fall back upon the terrors and wonders of Revelations, and the Apocalypse which build up visions of the same order. It is a conceivable explanation, and yet it will not cover the facts. It will not explain the exact detail obtained in so many of these sinister messages, nor will it account for the fact that the signs of the times are already ominously pointing in the direction indicated.

I have used the adjective "sinister," and so they would seem on their face value and immediate application. But I would stress the fact that if and when they materialise into realities, they are but a violent remedial prelude to a very great moral and spiritual advance of the race. Therefore, even at the worst, it should be hope and expectation rather than despair which should fill our hearts, if we place the welfare of the whole future race against that of one generation of human beings.

But now we come to the centre of the whole problem. What are the changes which should have been brought about by the war, which have not been brought about, and which must be brought about, if we are to escape the wrath to come? They are, as I understand them, of two different orders, religious and economic. I will take the former first.

Mankind must learn once for all that Religion has nothing whatever to do with theological beliefs, or forms, or ceremonies, or priest hoods, or vestments, or sacraments, or any of the other trappings and adornments which have so covered it that we can no longer see it. It depends upon two things only, and those are Conduct and Character. If you are unselfish and kind, then you are of the elect, call yourself what you will. If you are dry and hard and bitter and narrow, no church and no faith can save you from the judgment to come.

But what is the harm of the form or the sacrament? May it not help you to be unselfish and kind? It is true that it may not prevent you from being so if such is your natural bent. Every creed and system of thought has its saints – which does not mean that it produces its saints. The mere fact that they appear in all, shows that they are independent of all. Even Atheism has had its saints. But the general objection to all forms is that they inevitably tend to take the place of facts, and to give a man the impression that not by his own effort, but by some trick or charm of someone else, the sacrifice of a Christ, or the blessing of a priest, he will reap his reward. It is a fatal delusion, as each will find for himself when it is too late. It is easy to go through life in the majestic procession of a church, with that sense of security which the sheep may feel in the heart of a flock. But we do not die in a procession. We die alone. And then comes the hour when the soul realises its position, and understands that nothing in the world is of any help to it save only the character which it has itself built up. If it is sweet and loving, all is well. If it is hard and worldly, then it has now to face the consequence.

These irrational observances do harm because their obvious impossibility and falsehood alienate the earnest man, and prejudice him against all that is true and good in religion. In his repulsion from the self-styled ministers of the Christ he loses sight of the Christ Himself. He fails to understand that that august figure, the most notable in the annals of the world, is in no way responsible for all the complexities and distortions which have been inflicted upon His own perfectly simple maxims by an order of men who often represent not Him, but those Pharisees with whom he contended in His lifetime. Christ's mission was to fight the pedantic religion of His day. The same mission assails Him now should He come back to us. It is true that there are ministers of every denomination who are the salt of the earth. So it may have been also among the Pharisees. It is not they, but the system into which they are forced which needs an utter reform, which can hardly stop short of total abolition.

Vague statements are of no avail. One must get down to details, even if some tender souls are hurt in the process. There is no need to be hurt. They should learn that the best service that can be done to the real Christ is to make Him reasonable, and that every effort, however humble, in that direction, is done for His sake and His true religion.

Let us admit in the outset that every one of the fantastic beliefs which have been foisted upon mankind has originally had some true and legitimate meaning, which has been exaggerated and deformed, until it has become a monstrosity. Let us consider first the case of that august lady who was the mother of the greatest of mankind. Surely she deserves honour. We know, it is true, hardly anything about her, but “like mother, like son,” and she was carefully chosen. If we wish to have an ideal of womanhood why not Mary the wife of Joseph, the hard-working partner of a carpenter, the mother of a large family and the sufferer in that tragedy which has stirred the world? All this is reasonable. But why in the name of sanity

should we call her “The Virgin.” Are not the names of her children known? In an absurd desire to exalt her and make her other than human, one-half of the people have been driven into superstition, and the other half into contemptuous and almost hostile neglect. In claiming too much her supporters have lost that universal assent which would be right and reasonable.

Now take that sacrament, the nature of which is disguised under such grand names as “Eucharist” and “transubstantiation,” because it is so obviously repellant that any plainer word would condemn it. In its origin it was reasonable and charming. It meant that those who were of the same communion should meet from time to time in good fellowship, and that when they did so they should bear in mind Him who was the very centre of that Communion, the gentle teacher and living example of all that was good. What could be more reasonable than that? And what has human absurdity and perverseness made of it? No less than that we eat and drink (and presumably digest) the actual flesh and blood of God. Some, possibly half the Christian body, go to that preposterous length. The other half halt at some point just short of this blasphemous absurdity. All this in the teeth of all common sense and on the faith of a single text out of a volume which is never critically examined that it is not shown to be full of mistranslations and interpolations. It is folly of this sort, folly to which I know no parallel in any barbarous religion, which calls for a judgment upon us. That we should claim that the words of a man could turn a wafer of flour into the flesh of God will fill our posterity with mingled horror and amused contempt.

Or take the so-called sacrament of Confession. What could be more sensible or laudable than to take some elder of one's own sex into one's confidence and obtain his advice. The young man with an inclination to drink or debauchery is guided and gently reproved by his elder. But that out of this perfectly natural transaction there should be so perverse and dangerous a practice that a young woman should tell her secret thoughts to a celibate of the opposite sex is surely stark lunacy. It is difficult to say whether it is the man or the woman whose delicacy suffers most. If she must needs confess, then in the name of chastity and common sense let it be to some discreet matron.

And what of baptism? It is intelligible enough that some ceremony should be performed in order to remind the adult that he really does belong to a certain Community, with the beliefs and duties attached. There is no special need for such a thing, but it is intelligible. Look, however, at the monstrous perversion which has supervened. It has been taught that of two unconscious babes, one of which has received a splash of water with a formula while the other has not, one will surely, if both die at the time, be blessed and the other be cursed for ever. Should the babe die unsplashed, then the mother who dies in bearing it shall lie in consecrated ground, but the babe shall be buried outside and alone. Again, I ask, has any heathen tribe anything more fantastic than this in its ritual, and can we ever expect the affairs of this world to be normal while we profess to hold views in religion which no sane mind could justify? If such things have come from the priesthood, then it is time that *all* priesthood should be swept away, and that the Community should take their religious affairs into their own hands. However badly they conducted them it could not be worse than the organised materialism and systematised insanity which are the framework of present-day religious belief.

What too of the Trinity, with its involved and mystical three in one? How simple it is in its reality, and how monstrous the growth which Byzantine speculations have nourished. We have our God, the unthinkable, marvellous, ever-present force which makes all and pervades all. Call it "The Father," since we must needs reduce it to our human level of thought and expression. So far we are on sure ground. Then we have the Son, or rather, the Sons, since to certain human beings, whereof Jesus of Nazareth was an outstanding example, there is given special attributes of character and knowledge, by which they may serve as guides and teachers to the race. These rare souls are God-created, so we may use the word Son. So far again we are within the bounds of intelligible reason. But why make any third persona person who can only be defined as being an inspiration, an emanation, an influx, or other names which are quite contrary to our idea of personality. There are, we will say, vibrations between Father and son. These same vibrations pass on to us. But how does this make a third person, or why should we bemuse our plain Western European minds by such obvious fallacies of ancient Oriental speculation? Let us be honest with ourselves, and cut away all this dead matter until we expose that which is living.

And the fall? And the Atonement? Is it not certain that there never was a fall, and that if there had been a fall there would be no justice or sense in such a vicarious sacrifice? How long are we to continue to propagate such ideas, which offend honest minds and make them turn away from that which is indeed reasonable and essential. Is it not enough that God has sent a great teacher into the world who can set us an example in the modesty of his own life, and in the bravery with which, to his own danger and destruction, he protested against the formal, bigoted creeds of his day, even as lesser men are protesting now. Make Him reasonable, make Him understandable; do not make His life alien and inapplicable by depicting Him as of different flesh and blood to ourselves. If He were indeed so, then where is the merit of His career?

These are a few of those dogmas and formal teachings which have to be utterly swept away, if the Race is indeed to make an advance towards truth. The whole Old Testament must also go, save as a venerable and sometimes edifying piece of literature. It touches heights of poetry, and preserves records of early history, but bears no relationship to religion, and carries no message from God to modern man. It has long poisoned the New Testament, as a corpse would poison a living body to which it was chained.

Concerning the New Testament also – must we not use our God-given reason in its interpretation? The time which elapsed between the death of Jesus and the assembly of the gospels was roughly the same as that between the death of Shakespeare and the present day. There were very many floating narratives and Jerome, the compiler, said that each was a different version. From among them all he built up the present gospels. Is it not perfectly clear that nothing at all was known of the birth and infancy of this humble teacher. It was not a public incident like His teaching and His death. Therefore in the foolish idea of glorifying one, who was so manifestly great that He needed no spurious adornment, the whole story of His beginnings is taken from Oriental legends told many hundreds of years before. If this did not sufficiently vitiate the text it is said that in the third and fourth centuries special inquisitors were appointed called "Correctores" and that their duty was to bring the text of the gospels into harmony with the actual practice of the church. It would be interesting to know how many of

our present sacraments and how much theological confusion we owe to the ingenious interpolations of these gentlemen. They would certainly sustain ritual since ritual entails a priesthood, to which they belonged. As to the exact value of ritual it is well to remember that the most ritualistic of all churches is the Russian, and that their national history has been a nightmare of murder and crime.

All vain forms must be discarded. But there is something to be added – something of infinite importance. We have to recognise that God, the Central source of all inspiration, has not ceased two thousand years ago to send his messages and his consolation to the world. Through the movement which is called Spiritualism, we have learned that it is possible to get into touch with sources of knowledge which are far higher than ourselves, and thus to obtain a clear explanation of the reasons of our existence, and of the fate which awaits us after death. This is the most weighty message which has been sent out for two thousand years, and it has been received in the main with ignorant derision and contempt. This also has to be answered for in the time to come. But it is towards this source of knowledge that we have to turn in the future. The Ethics of the Christ, with the guidance and teaching of the other world, will constitute the whole religion of the future, fluid in form and dogma, but solid in the essentials, and consistent always with our reason. All else must change. These wrangles which we now see in the Churches, are like men who dispute whether they shall sit on this branch or on that branch, when the whole trunk is rotting beneath them. If they could change themselves, then all might be well. If they will not change themselves, then surely something will come to change them. What that something may be lies in the future, but there are signs that this Future is not far away. If those signs are true, then the message is that England, though heavily stricken, will escape more lightly than those countries where form and dogma have an even stronger grip than with us.

Let me, in a word, restate the position as I see it. Our religion has been like clay and gold, the clay of man-made dogma and observance, the gold of the inner Spiritual meaning. The clay has long covered the gold, so that many of the most earnest of mankind have turned away heavy hearted, and never seen that the gold was there. Our task is to remove that clinging clay, and to expose and use the gold so that no man ever more can doubt its existence.

I write in a conservative and not in a destructive spirit. I have my eyes fixed not upon the minority of this nation who belong to Christian churches, but to the majority who have been driven out of all communions by the fantastic out-of-date doctrines which are advanced, and who in their repulsion have now lost the essentials of religion. If those dogmas could be made moderate and intelligible as I have tried to make them here, then all those multitudes may once again be brought back to that God-consciousness and sense of the beauty of Jesus which is at present lost. The Churches, immersed in their own petty squabbles and formulas, have no time or energy for the consideration of the state of things outside their own borders. If what I have said hurts any tender soul I do hereby express my regret. I have written not in levity or in thoughtlessness but under the strongest conviction that I am helping, in however humble a fashion, to break the ground for the harvest of the future.

One word in conclusion as to the economic side, which is also involved. This brings us into an atmosphere of politics, and yet there are some large considerations which are guiding posts

upon which any present political party may march. This is no place for details, nor have I perhaps the practical knowledge which would furnish them, but it is clear that wealth must be regarded less a personal possession and more as a trust to be used for the common good. No one who surveys society can doubt that some are too rich and some too poor, and that a method should be found by which the former shall help the latter. It offends our sense of justice that some should squander wealth in luxury abroad, and that so many who work hard and live plainly should be so hard pressed at home. Man needs little to have all the materials for happiness. An assurance of nutritious food, nature, love, music, literature, games, cleanly orderly houses – if a man has these things, which should come within the compass of all, then he should, with an occasional change, have all that life can give in the way of contentment. When every man and woman have such a prospect then the social position is sound. Such a solution is not to be gained by bloodshed, or by the violent destruction of existing Government, but it is to be gradually worked for as the methods to attain it unfold themselves. The present inequalities and consequent miseries of life are among the causes which make for disaster.

In conclusion I should say that the views experienced are my own and are quite independent of the Spiritualistic Organisation.

**THE
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The Circulating Library send books by post at 2/6 a month or one guinea a year.

The Museum (entrance one shilling) contains many objects of psychic interest.

Hours 9 to 6.

THE HAUNTING OF CONAN DOYLE

By Leslie Price

For Arthur Conan Doyle it was a day which changed his life deeply and permanently, as he explained in a letter to his friend Sir Oliver Lodge:

*“Pheneas first came through on Dec 10th 1922. He at once plunged into this subject and has spoken about it continually ever since. He seems to have been sent to us for that express purpose. It was this which made me take it seriously but as my synopsis shows there have been shadows before...”*²

Pheneas was a spirit guide in the ACD home circle who prophesied imminent worldwide cataclysm. The belief, or half-belief, that this was about to happen, made their ordinary life overshadowed, to put it no stronger. And Pheneas did not just predict this once – he kept on about it, month after month, year after year. Moreover, Conan Doyle had available a collection of other prophecies, received through many sources, which also prophesied disaster. It was this collection which he sent in summary form to Lodge.

The Pheneas case has been generally neglected by both admirers and critics of Doyle. One reason undoubtedly is that there was no such cataclysm. Earthquakes continued to happen regularly, but whole countries did not vanish. There was a world war eventually and lots of smaller wars, but nothing that ended the old order.

A second reason is that the full material was not available. Even the book “Pheneas Speaks” was a much edited account. The original records ended up at the University of Texas. Few have consulted them. If we have not considered the full records, we cannot add much. Many other Doyle family papers were long withdrawn from public view.

The Pheneas teachings added to Doyle’s religious radicalism, giving an extra sense of urgency. His tract “A word of warning” reprinted in this issue of *Psypioneer* expressed this, although like the Pheneas book, it was circumspect about the details of the possible horror to come.

In 1974 Jeffrey Meikle, a young scholar at the University of Texas library had the opportunity of examining the original Pheneas material. With his permission we quote from his groundbreaking paper.

[“‘Over There’: Arthur Conan Doyle and Spiritualism” *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas*, n.s.# 8 (1974), 22-37; reprinted in *Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, ed. Harold Orel (New York: G. K. Hall, 1992), 271-81.]

“Doyle himself became actively involved when an Arabian spirit called Pheneas, who had announced himself as a personal guide in December 1922, began revealing details of the

² March 11 1927 SPR archives- Doyle/Lodge 540

modern world's Atlantean future.³ Communicating by means of Jean Doyle's automatic writing and trance speaking, Pheneas informed them in 1923 that humanity was "sinking into a slough of evil and materialism" caused by the presence on the earth's surface of thousands of evil spirits who had never progressed beyond the first of the spiritual planes. "God's own light must descend and burn up the evil fumes," he said, and a band of spiritual scientists was already at work "connecting vibratory lines of seismic power" to bring about preliminary earthquakes and tidal waves. The late war would be "as nothing, nothing, nothing, compared with what lies ahead." Doyle's own task, Pheneas said, was "to prepare men's minds so that when the awakening comes they shall be more ready to receive it". Doyle would act as "a battery to others," and the "whole world... in its great extremity" would "cling" to his record of the revelations.

In 1924 Pheneas began to provide specific details. The "coming world-surrender to God" would begin at harvest time in 1925 with a great storm moving from west to east, followed by "a tremendous upheaval in Central Europe," "the submerging of a Continent," and then "a great light from on high." Hardly a nation would escape. America would face civil war; Russia, that "black mark upon the map of humanity," would be destroyed; Africa would be flooded; Brazil would suffer "an eruption of an extraordinary kind"; and the Vatican, that "sink of iniquity" from which "countless veins of poison flow to humanity," would be "wiped off the face of the globe." England, however, would be "the beacon light in this dark world." Already Christ had approached the "power-station" being erected around Doyle's home and would soon make his presence known. Then he would withdraw to make final preparations before returning to proclaim himself, after which Doyle would "rally round Him" for the final battle. In a small leather notebook entitled "Prophesied Course of Events," Doyle recorded that "the whole process will take some years, but I shall survive to the end, then pass over with my whole family," a conclusion supported by a Winnipeg medium's prediction that he would "not die in the ordinary sense."

He apparently accepted completely these revelations from Pheneas. Among friends he circulated "A Short Synopsis of Some Corroborations" containing more than eighty prophecies of a similar nature reported by other mediums. When the autumn of 1925 passed without remarkable incident, Pheneas explained that preparations would take longer than expected, since they had underestimated the strength of the enemy. As a measure of concern it might be noted that in 1927 members of the British spiritualist community were seriously considering the problem of how they would distribute their literature in the coming crisis, in the event of "interruption of railway communication."⁴ Pheneas had warned Doyle not to publicize his prophecies until after the first definite signs of their fulfillment, but early in 1927 his Psychic Press and Bookshop, located in London, offered an expurgated version called Pheneas Speaks, containing excerpts of a generally sentimental, uplifting nature.

³ The following quotations come from several series of typed transcripts, each with its own pagination, and all catalogued as "Pheneas speaks."

⁴ J. Engledow to George Vale Owen, 17 March 1927.

A comparison of the book with the original typescript indicates that Doyle was not above helping out Pheneas on occasion. Where the typed transcript had Pheneas stating that “the light will be the greater for the darkness you have passed through,” Doyle wrote in ink a concluding phrase for the sentence -“in fighting for truth”- and the book contained the addition (p. 36). But his handwritten interlineations encompassed more than exactness of expression. To previously typed messages received in 1925 he added supposedly prophetic remarks concerning earthquakes and storms in Russia, Jamaica, and Australia, complete with footnotes describing their actual occurrence in 1926 and 1927. These also appeared in the published book (pp. 116, 123, 127). One might suspect Doyle of fabricating all the messages, but it is likely that he hoped to ensure the book’s acceptance with a few dramatically fulfilled predictions.

These few pathetic lapses from his customarily strict ethical code do not detract significantly from his record as a selfless campaigner for the world's moral reformation through spiritualism. Shortly before his death Doyle wrote to a friend that he had “broken my heart in the attempt to give our spiritual knowledge to the world and to give them something living, instead of the dead and dusty stuff which is served out to them in the name of religion.” By that time Doyle had begun to wonder if he and his wife were “victims of some extraordinary prank played upon the human race from the other side,” since none of the Pheneas predictions had materialized, but his faith in survival itself never wavered.⁵ He looked forward to his own passage “over there” as a glorious new beginning, and when the event occurred on 7 July 1930, it was a cause for quiet celebration among his family and friends.”

Dr Meikle is now Professor of American Studies and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin. Recently he kindly reread his paper, and commented to Psypioneer.

“Of course it is now 35 years in the past, my first publication as a young scholar only 25 years old, and in a field I subsequently left. However, I'm surprised at how professional it seems, except for a tone of sarcasm that occasionally creeps in on the subject of what seemed to me Doyle's credulity. The essay was reprinted in 1992 by Harold Orel in his anthology “Critical Essays on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.” Other than that I don't recall any reactions to the essay one way or the other. I've not written anything further on spiritualism, though given unlimited time I would someday write about Percy Harrison Fawcett, a fascinating figure whose explorations in the Amazon region were driven by catastrophist predictions transmitted through mediums.

⁵ Doyle to Walter Gibbons, 17 March 1930 (typed copy).

I think it is too strong to say that I accused Doyle of fraud. You're referring to the last three paragraphs of the essay, which are based on my comparison of the typed Pheneas transcripts with the published book "Pheneas Speaks." I suggest that Doyle did not always transcribe selections from the transcripts verbatim but edited them to make the language more convincing. This was common in that era. In addition, however, I did find some specific prophecies in the book that are not in the typed transcripts held by the Ransom Center. These coincided with events that had indeed already occurred in the real world. It seemed to me these were added to make it seem as if subsequent events confirmed the prophecies. Is this fraud of the sort practiced by a man like Crandon? I don't think so. Doyle was an old man who believed implicitly in the revelations he had received and wished to impress them upon a doubting world. I refer to this episode as "these few pathetic lapses from his customarily strict ethical code." It's not a wholesale attempt at fraud but more of an embroidery on revelations he wholeheartedly believed in.

I wish my documentation was more complete, but the style of the journal encouraged minimalism, as I recall. If you wish to compare the typed transcripts with the published book, please keep in mind my footnote on p. 35, stating that the quotations I used "come from several series of typed transcripts, each with its own pagination, and all catalogued [by the Ransom Center] as 'Pheneas speaks'." Were there other transcripts in Doyle's possession that are not part of the Ransom holdings? Personally I doubt it. The Doyle spiritualism collection is so vast and apparently complete that I can't imagine anything having been omitted. I'm sorry I can't provide any further information and wish you well in following up on this issue."

A positive view of Conan Doyle's attitude was provided by the biographer Julian B. Arnold in his book "Giants in Dressing Gowns" (1942).p.193-6. This has been reprinted in another Doylean anthology edited by Harold Orel: *Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Interviews and Recollections* (1991),

Arnold wrote:

"Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, shortly after the close of the Great War, began to gather examples of automatic-writings received by 'sensitives' during the period between 1920 and 1923. My own collection of those materials, fascinating though inexplicable, was of such a nature that Doyle asked me to supply him with copies, and my compliance led to a long and interesting correspondence. He made an exhaustive study of the combined series, arriving at the conclusion that they all agreed in another universal war late in 1939 or early in 1940. After the manner of automatic-writings, the precise time and even the nature of the disasters foretold were not defined, but each separate writing concurred in the general prophecy of the perturbed experiences through which the civilized world has recently passed and now protestingly endures.

Sir Arthur's interpretations of the evil omens, so uniformly described in the writings examined, were made to me twelve years ago when the political skies were moderately serene, but as one regards the darkness of those skies today it is strange to recall the famous

novelist's prescience and the correctness of his readings of the scroll of fate. The last of his letters to me on those matters gloomily confirmed his forebodings. It reads:

Windlesham,
Crowborough,
Sussex.
Oct. 6th, 1927

DEAR MR ARNOLD,

Many thanks for your valuable letter.

You can have no idea of what a concentration of evidence there is, in the automatic-writings, upon this world disaster, nor how remarkably consistent the various accounts are.

I have, I should think, 50,000 words (in automatic-writings) on this subject, all carefully copied out and extending over three years.

Then I have about sixty independent testimonies of the coming of a world disaster.

Time is their difficulty but the general impression is that it is at the end of the next decade.

America will, I fear, suffer greatly. Also Central Europe. Also the Mediterranean basin. Ireland also, but the British isles less. But all are to catch it. Such is the general sinister scheme.

That is how I get it. But they always emphasize that it is the good spiritual outcome and not the sad material means which should be borne in mind. There are to be great psychic accompaniments and something corresponding to the Second Coming, though hardly as pictured.

I have told you more details than to anyone else, and I don't want to seem an alarmist.

Yours sincerely,

A. CONAN DOYLE

It was to prepare against the prognosticated Armageddon that Doyle bent most of his later energies, and few men have better used their abilities to that end or striven more diligently to promote good understanding between Americans and Britishers."

Some members of the Doyle family were not impressed by the Pheneas material. Georgina Doyle's book "Out of the Shadows - the untold story of Arthur Conan Doyle's First Family" (2004) champions ACD's daughter Mary who with Kingsley was the offspring of that first marriage...

"At that time [i.e. 1929] Mary was deeply interested in her father's guide, or guardian, in the spirit world. This was Pheneas, described as a Chaldean of great antiquity who had told Arthur that he had been chosen to make spiritualism universally understood and accepted. Mary also referred in the article to her stepmother's remarkable mediumistic powers – but we hear nothing of this later, which indicates that Mary may have changed her mind on this point. Jean may have been genuine, but it is likely that imagination and wishful thinking augmented any real power she may have had.

It is difficult to be objective here - Arthur seems to have believed implicitly that his wife had acquired the great gift of inspired writing, which later changed to semi-trance inspirational talking. There is no doubt that the book *Pheneas Speaks* is a true account of conversations in séances purporting, through the mediumship of Jean, to be between Arthur himself and various family members, friends, and others in the spirit world. However it is impossible to know how much is genuine and how much is Jean's imagination. John was quite sure his aunt had no mediumistic powers, and when I asked Claire Oldham if she believed that Jean was genuine medium the answer was a forthright "Good God, no." In fact knowing that Jean craved attention, it is easy to imagine that after an initial show of reluctance she realized that she could enjoy considerable notoriety by pursuing the acquisition of mediumistic gifts. She had imagination and a theatrical nature, and obviously wanted to impress her husband."⁶

Georgina Doyle goes on to critically analyse the flattering references to Jean and her children in "*Pheneas Speaks*".

It is time to draw together these differing testimonies. Unfortunately if Conan Doyle did "improve" before publication the prophecies that came through Pheneas, by adding details after the event, psychical researchers would take a serious view. One of their core activities is scrutinising written or transcribed communications for evidence of paranormality. Hitherto Conan Doyle has been regarded as inaccurate at times, but not as wilfully altering records.

We may reasonably conclude that Pheneas was an entity who led Conan Doyle astray with prophecies of imminent doom that were not fulfilled. ACD's belief in him fluctuated, but the full text of the 1930 Gibbon letter shows that it basically remained to the end, despite doubts. It is interesting that Pheneas does not feature in the post-mortem communications received by Grace Cooke. Pheneas had vanished, leaving not a rack behind. LESLIE PRICE

⁶ Pages 248-9.

Conan Doyle's resignation from the SPR

PP Introductory note: Firstly, we reprint below, contemporary Spiritualist reaction. This is followed by the SPR's official response.

THE INTERNATIONAL
PSYCHIC GAZETTE

No. 200. VOL. 18. MAY, 1930. PRICE SIXPENCE NET

Our Outlook Tower.

THE CRISIS IN THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

HEARTY SUPPORT FOR SIR A. CONAN DOYLE.

MR. W. H. SALTER, the Honorary Secretary of the S.P.R., in a letter to ourselves published last month, said: -

“The Society has received several letters from prominent Spiritualists strongly disapproving of Sir Arthur's action and expressing complete confidence in the Society's methods.”

We mentioned that Sir Arthur, on the other hand, had received many letters from members of the Society who sympathised with his action, and we publish below short excerpts from these, which may be left to speak for themselves as to the kind of “complete confidence in the Society's methods” at present entertained.

A WAVE OF RESIGNATIONS

“I have resigned membership of the S.P.R. I received no help from it.”

“I became a member of the S.P.R. some years ago, but it seemed to me they were doing nothing constructive, so I dropped my membership.”

“After being a member since 1911, I resigned last year for practically the same reasons, after Mrs. Bulley and several other members had tried to instil some life into the Society without success.”

“As far as I and many others are concerned, I can only say that the S.P.R. seems to go out of its way to deny comfort to the bereaved... I have subscribed to the S.P.R. for this year... If there is no improvement I shall cease to belong to it.”

“Your letter has been a real guide in the matter, and I shall hope to take advantage of your advice.”

“I am considering your suggestion that I should join your campaign of resignation, but at present am inclined to wait for Sir Oliver Lodge's pronouncement.”

“I wish to sympathise with your action and to tell you that I, too, resigned my membership some time ago. . . . I am very glad I have nothing more to do with them.”

“That you can still wield efficient weapons is evident by your letter of resignation from the S.P.R. I thank you for it. I have many times resented the attitude of that organisation, and shall not renew my membership.”

“DISGUSTED”

“I have been so disgusted with the hostile attitude of the Society towards everything which could not be brought within the bounds of Telepathy that I have already resigned my membership, which discontinued last December.”

“I may say that I read Mr. Besterman's article in the January number of the *journal* just after I had finished reading Mrs. Hack's book, and I have immediately sent in my resignation to the Society, feeling that it was of no help to me in my psychic studies.”

“Only the hope that there was some chance of altering the methods of the Society has induced me to continue my membership, and I have this year come to the same conclusion as yourself that this is hopeless. It seems a pity that the oldest body of all should be left to people who are ruining it, and with whom hardly any medium will sit.”

“I wrote them in the same indignant fashion some months ago in regard to some criticisms that appeared in the *Journal*, and the only reply I received was, the Society was not responsible for the opinions expressed by its contributors !”

“It is not only Spiritualists who are seriously upset by the present methods of the S.P.R. It seemed to me months ago that the handing over to a Jesuit priest the decision as to the genuineness of the Scripts of Cleophas was an impertinence, and I wrote to the Secretary about it, of course without avail. I have since left the Society, after having belonged to it since its inception. It seems to me that the S.P.R. officials are running pretty close to the wind, for they

are taking money in the form of subscriptions from members for the purpose of Psychical Research, when by their actions they prevent it.”

“HORRID SCENES”

“I agree entirely with all you say regarding the discourtesy and tone of articles written by Mr. Besterman, and the general state of the Society. In fact I sent in my resignation last autumn, following the special meetings which were called. These were of such a nature as to fill me with disgust. It is very sad to see a Society which has held the position of the S.P.R. in a condition of inactivity and dry dullness, such as is its state to-day. The attempt of a few members, including myself, to introduce by open voting some new members on the Council was met by a storm of protest and accusations of desiring to harass the Council, and so on ! No doubt you heard of the horrid scenes which took place.”

“I have received your letter, every word of which I agree with, and my resignation will follow. I have been a member of the S.P.R. ever since it started, but it almost seems condoning dishonesty to continue to subscribe.”

“I have written to the Society to resign. I have paid my subscription for 1930, so suppose my name will have to remain until the end of the year.”

“Unfortunately I paid up as a life member some 20 years ago, never thinking they would funk their own cause as they have. However, I have written to the Secretary and asked him to remove my name from their list of members, as I wish to resign.”

“THEY ONLY HINDER”

“The day on which I received your public protest against the S.P.R.'s unscientific work was really a happy day for me, because I had learned by my own sad experience how right you were in saying that they only hinder the real and serious workers. I will, of course, follow your example, and retire at the end of this year.”

“Oddly enough about three weeks ago, I came to exactly similar conclusions, and sent in my own resignation, after over twenty years as an associate member, though not knowing that others had sensed and were ready to protest against the offensive character change which has come over the honourable Society. . . . The serpent has wormed its way into the nest, and those like Sir Oliver Lodge of the elder generation are not to be blamed for not seeking a brawl where only foul blows are struck, and where muck only is to be gained in the encounter.”

“Thanks for your bill of indictment against the S.P.R. It shows plainly that you are as alive and kicking as ever, and still stand in the foremost rank to repulse every attack. Of course, I read Besterman's sayings in the *journal* for January and before. He seems to belong to that kind of people who see everywhere fraud, folly, and stupidity, who know much better what happens at a seance than the sitters, who use every opportunity to arouse suspicion, and who never shrink from calling a rogue or a blockhead any man who expresses his honest conviction of Spiritualism. I believe ecclesiastical influences work nowadays in the Society, especially

Jesuitical. I think it better to resign my associateship in the course of this year, mentioning the Society's unscientific way of criticising men of the stamp of Bozzano and Bradley. Since the days of Myers, Hodgson and Hyslop the Society has sunk deeply. But verity will gain the victory over lies, and yours will be a great part in the victory."

"Many in Italy will join in thanking you for your stand, Count Bon here among others. If you personally know Prof. Bozzano and his wonderful nature and indomitable courage for the Cause, you will understand – as he is a frail man now – how troubled his friends were at such abuse from such an unexpected direction as the S.P.R."

PROTESTS AND CRITICISMS

"I have written to the President of the S.P.R. in reply to his circular letter... I laid stress on the fact that the reviewing recently in the S.P.R. *Journal* has been bad reviewing, quite apart from its animus and ignorance."

"I thoroughly sympathise with your feelings about what would appear to be very serious misrepresentations. I fear they have been unfair in the cases you mention, which is distinctly bad."

"My wife and I are humble students of psychic matters and must confess that during the last three or four years we have derived no real assistance at all from the S.P.R. work. That the S.P.R. is at present not 'pulling its weight' in any way except as a brake on real effort I fear nobody can deny."

A Life Member wrote to the Society: - "How such a review could have been accepted by a Society noted the world over for absence of prejudice either way is difficult to understand. . . I trust an explanation will appear in an early issue of the *journal*, with a full withdrawal of the review. A loss of confidence in the Society by its members would rapidly result in the closing of the Society."

“DESTRUCTIVE IN A TRIUMPHANT WAY”

"I feel I must reply to assure you how much I sympathise in your attempt to bring the Society back to its real objects. It was certainly not formed to negate everything of a psychic nature. I have been an Associate of the S.P.R. for nearly 20 years, and do not want to leave it unless I am forced to by their policy... Many prominent members of the Society, including Sir Lawrence Jones, are, I understand, convinced Spiritualists, but lately all criticisms in the *Journal* of any psychic happenings or of books with specialist evidence have been destructive, and *destructive in a triumphant way*. For Mr. Besterman to go off on a tour of Continental mediums for four months and to return reporting joyously that all was negative, doubtful, or fraudulent, proclaims him unfitted for his work of research. Some people never succeed in getting evidence, and he is obviously one such unfortunate."

"Reading your circular I must inform you that you have indeed guessed the inmost thoughts, not only of myself, but also of most of the scientific explorers of psychical research here in

Munich, of whom many have hitherto been members of the S.P.R. In autumn, 1928, Mr. Besterman was here in Munich, and Baron Schrenck-Notzing and other renowned men agreed that the S.P.R. made a great mistake in sending such a young and inexperienced gentleman abroad, who, instead of increasing the high repute of the Society, only injured it. I myself was struck by the article in the *journal* regarding the seances at Millesimo Castle, by the insulting manner of its criticism. Certainly criticism must be allowed, but in my judgment it was an impudence to attack Prof. Bozzano in such an offensive way.”

“I join entirely with you in your indignation. I experienced the same sensation when I read Besterman's libellous article. It is impossible to excuse his offence, no matter how obliquitous his mentality. By that article he has disgraced the S.P.R.”

“In my opinion the Society has not advanced a single step since the publication of Myer's ‘Human Personality.’”

“It is with great pleasure that I have learned of your action, and I trust it will be the means of enabling psychic research; as such, to proceed untrammelled by the outworn fallacies of physicists.”

“I have had myself such illuminating direct experiences that the kind of discussions printed in the S.P.R.'s. *Proceedings* merely bores me. And it bores others, for I am certain that it is rarely that the best cases of psychical experience are now submitted to the censors in office.”

“I am glad you have taken this matter up because many of the members are looking for a lead. We have clung to the Society while your name and Sir Oliver Lodge's were on the list, but with increasing impatience.”

“I have written to Mr. Besterman, with whom I am on some slight terms of correspondence, to express my deep regret at the method and tone of some more recent communications in the journal. They do not conduce to friendly feeling, nor to the progress of the researches for which the S.P.R. was founded.”

A LIVELY MEETING

“I attended the General Meeting of the S.P.R. last Thursday evening. There were between 20 and 30 members present, with Sir Lawrence Jones in the chair. . . .

“I put the question to Mr. Besterman that since, in an endeavour to explain the phenomena at the Millesimo sittings, he alleged that they were perpetrated by fraud, would he please explain to the meeting what motive the Marquis Centurione could have had in perpetrating fraud ? The Chairman immediately got up and said, ‘I rule the question out of order.’ This is the usual method of thwarting an awkward discussion.

“However, a little later on, I had the opportunity of speaking again, and I then gave Besterman the most terrible verbal thrashing he has ever received in his life.

“I also severely criticised and reprimanded Mr. W. H. Salter, and told him that he was abusing his position as Hon. Secretary of the S.P.R. by his browbeating, domineering, and prejudiced attitude.

“At the end of my denouncement I said that whilst I had no race prejudices I considered that while any number of graduates from the English Universities possessed the necessary qualifications to occupy the position of Librarian and Editor of the ‘journal’ of the S.P.R., it was most questionable policy on the part of the Council that this position should have been given to a Pole.

“You could have heard a pin drop, and several of them seemed to shrink in their chairs. Directly I had finished the Chairman got up and said, ‘After this scene I must close the meeting.’

“As I drove away two or three members came up and shook hands with me, saying they agreed with everything I had said.”

PP Introductory Note: The official response to Sir Arthur’s resignation as a member appeared in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, March 1930 p. 45 – 52. We thank the Society for making a photocopy available to us.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S RESIGNATION

FOR the purpose of record we reprint below certain documents which have already been circulated to our Members and Associates, namely: I. A circular from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle dated January 1930; II. A reply to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s circular by the President and the Hon. Secretaries; III. A reply by Mr Besterman to Sir Arthur's circular so far as it concerned Mr Besterman’s review of *Modern Psychic Mysteries*.

Although the Council regard this particular controversy as a very trivial matter, it is conceivable that at some future date our members may wish to know exactly what occurred, and for that purpose we feel justified in reprinting these three documents.

We are glad to report that very few of our members have adopted Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s advice to resign from the Society. The total of resignations in which his circular or Mr Besterman's review is mentioned is two to date (27 February); and the total of all resignations since his circular is six.

On the other hand, the Council have received several letters disapproving of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s circular or expressing confidence in the way in which the

Society's affairs are conducted. Among the members who have written in this way may be mentioned Mr F. C. Constable, Miss Dallas, Mr Stanley De Brath, General Sir Reginald Hart, V.C., and Dr Osty, to whom the Council wish to express their thanks.

I. SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE'S CIRCULAR.

DEAR SIR (OR MADAM),

I had occasion recently [on the 22nd of January 1930. Ed.] to send the following letter to the Chairman of the Council of the S.P.R. : -

“Dear Sir,

“I have just read an article in the January number of the Journal by Mr Besterman upon the Millesimo sittings. It is, in my judgment, such a series of misrepresentations and insulting innuendoes that it tends to lower the good name of the Society. The insolence by which the considered opinion of a man like Professor Bozzano, who was present, is set aside and treated with contempt by one who was not present, and who has had very little experience of psychical research, makes one ashamed that such stuff should be issued by an official of a Society which has any scientific standing.

To appreciate the full absurdity, as well as the gratuitous offensiveness of Mr Besterman's alternative theory of fraud, one has to visualise what it exactly implies. It means that an Italian nobleman of old family, a member of the legislative body, has invited a circle of friends to his home in order to practice a succession of complicated frauds upon them. That he is himself implicated is shown by the fact that levitation of his own body and other personal phenomena are among those most clearly recorded. Having assembled his guests he causes the voices of his own dead relatives and others to be sounded in the room. A lady confederate conceals under the short modern skirt a long medieval rapier, a matador's sword, a big doll and other objects quite unseen by a critical company. She or some other confederate produces a large balloon-like object which hovers above the company, and in some unspecified way produces blasts of ice-cold air. All these and many other wonders are brought off so successfully that in a succession of sittings the company, including Professor Bozzano, are completely deceived, and the latter stakes his scientific reputation upon the truth of the phenomena. This is the picture which Mr Besterman's theory of fraud would compel us to accept, the whole being done with no conceivable object. Can we dignify such nonsense as this by the name of Psychical Research, or is it not the limit of puerile perversity?

“A further example of prejudice is to be found in the allusions on page 15 of the same Journal to the real psychic researcher, Mr Dennis Bradley, and to George Valiantine in Berlin. The assertions of the opponents of Spiritualism are at once accepted on their face value without the slightest attempt at discriminate examination.

“I have long waited hoping that the Podmore, Dingwall, Besterman tradition of obtuse negation at any cost would die away. But as there is no sign of it, and the obsession seems rather to become more pronounced, my only resource is, after thirty-six years of patience, to resign my own membership and to make some sort of public protest against the essentially unscientific and biased

work of a Society which has for a whole generation produced no constructive work of any kind, but has confined its energies to the misrepresentation and hindrance of those who have really worked at the most important problem ever presented to mankind.

Yours faithfully,

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.”

Those of us who are conscious of the extreme importance of the movement called “Spiritualism,” or even those who are desirous to see fair play in the matter, must be aware of the way in which the Society, originally intended to be a sympathetic and fair centre for inquiry, seems to have become simply an anti-spiritualist organisation. Everything which tends to prove the truth of that cult, no matter how honourable or sane the source may be, is assailed by suppression, misrepresentation and every sort of unreasonable and vicious opposition.

For a generation, since the death of Myers and the end of the Piper sittings, the Society has done no constructive work of any importance, and has employed its energies in hindering and belittling those who are engaged in real active psychical research. This latest article of Mr Besterman may be insignificant in itself, but it is a link in that long chain of prejudice which comes down from Mr Podmore, Mrs Sedgwick [*sic*], and Mr Dingwall, to the present day. It is necessary, as it seems to me, to call a halt, and to make inquiry as to how far the Society is to be for ever in the hands of this small central body of reactionaries; or whether they really represent the opinion of the members. It is not desirable that the Society should lose its independence or become a Spiritualistic body, but it is most essential that it shall not treat what so many regard as a matter of supreme importance with the irresponsibility and levity which have been shown hitherto, where it has been the custom again and again for a commentator to jeer at phenomena which he has not witnessed, in the face of the most cogent evidence of their having actually occurred.

I would ask those who would wish to appreciate what I say to read Mr Besterman’s article in the January *Journal*, and then Professor Bozzano’s measured and dignified preface to Mrs Hack’s “Modern Psychic Mysteries” (Rider), which treats of these sittings.

This matter is of more importance than would at first sight appear, for I say deliberately that these Millesimo sittings are on the very highest possible level of psychical research, both from the point of view of accurate reporting, variety of phenomena, and purity of mediumship. Therefore, if they can be laughed out of court anything we can produce will be treated with similar contempt. I can hardly believe, as I read Mr Besterman’s criticism, that he has actually read the book. It bristles with errors of fact. He complains that we are not told where the sword was apported from. On page 93 may be read: “The weapon had been lying on a large table on the second floor of the palace. In a direct ... thirty yards.” He talks of the apports as if their extreme length was two feet (in order to insinuate that they could be concealed by the lady). On page 176 is a picture of a lance 6 feet long, and on page 208 of a plant 4½ feet high-both apports. He complains that he does not know what a flexatone is, and yet it is described on page 97. Yet this slovenly critic takes advantage of his official position in order to warn the reading public of the S.P.R. away from this most important book. I have waited long in the hope of some reform but I have now concluded that it is not to be expected, and that the influence of the Society is entirely for evil. I have, therefore, resigned my membership, and the protest would be more effective if those who agree with me would see their

way to follow my example. It need not hamper their psychic studies. In the British College of Psychic Science, 15, Queen's Gate, W., they will find an Institution where they can participate themselves in real positive psychical research, with mediums at hand to be tested, a good library, an excellent quarterly magazine, and an atmosphere which is progressive and not stagnant.

I write this under a strong sense of duty, for I am now one of the oldest members of the S.P.R. I am convinced, however, that they have long been not a help but a hindrance to the psychical knowledge of the world, and that a strong protest is called for.

I may add that, having uttered such a protest, I cannot undertake to enter upon prolonged argument or correspondence, nor can I attend meetings, as my health hardly permits me to leave the house.

Yours faithfully,
ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE,
M.D. (Edin.), LL.D.

January 1930.

I would remind members of the words of that great pioneer, Sir William Barrett: "A scepticism which is too lofty to see the existence of a mass of evidence under its very eyes is anything but healthy. It calls for medical attention."

II. REPLY BY THE PRESIDENT AND HON. SECRETARIES.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has been a member of our Society for very many years; he is an author many of whose writings have given great pleasure to all of us; and he is now, most regrettably, ill. On all three grounds the Officers of the Society would have wished to avoid entering into controversy with him, but the circular he has recently addressed to our members, inviting them to follow his example in resigning from the Society, calls for an early reply.

To Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Spiritualism is, to use his own phrase, a "cult," and it is a natural consequence of this point of view that, however sincerely he may protest his desire that the Society should retain its "independence," he should regard as "obtuse negation" and "unreasonable and vicious opposition" any criticism of the phenomena on which those who take the "cult" view of Spiritualism are content to base their faith.

It has been one of the great achievements of the Society that it has always comprised among its active and loyal members persons whose views on Spiritualism ranged from complete acceptance to total denial: this has only been possible because an atmosphere of toleration combined with frank mutual criticism has been congenial to most of its members. But it would be too much to expect that it should be to the liking of all, and from time to time some of our more dogmatic members, both Spiritualists and Anti-Spiritualists, have revolted against it. There have been various secessions in the past, but the Society has never allowed itself to be deflected by them from the purpose for which it was founded, namely critical investigation.

It has always been the rule of the Society that the responsibility for both the facts and the reasonings in papers and articles printed in *Proceedings* or the *Journal* should rest entirely with their authors. It is therefore easy, in a Society as inclusive as ours, for anyone seeking to make a case for “obtuse negation” to select a list of papers having a tendency to deny the supernormality of particular phenomena. It would be equally easy to make out as impressive a list of papers published in recent years which were strongly affirmative of the genuineness of them or of other phenomena.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says “For a generation, since the death of Myers and the end of the Piper sittings, the Society has done no constructive work of any importance.” The Piper sittings continued, of course, for several years after Myers's death, and the principal report on them was published in 1915, which can hardly be called a “generation” back. Shortly after that (in 1919) was published the first of the many papers on Mrs Leonard, all of which can claim to be as “constructive” as the reports on Mrs Piper, and many of which are written from a definitely Spiritualistic point of view. Does Sir Arthur suggest that these are of no importance?

It would presumably be useless to remind Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of the fact that in connection with cross-correspondences the Society has during the alleged dark period developed and patiently pursued an entirely new line of research; he has expressed his personal opinion that the cross-correspondences are not of much value, but this opinion is not shared by a large number of our members, including several who are as convinced Spiritualists as Sir Arthur himself.

Nor is he probably much interested in the work the Society has done in elucidating the problems of telepathy, though here again he would find himself in disagreement with many Spiritualists, who hold that only on a proper understanding of telepathy can a reasonable case for survival be founded.

It is apparently by the attitude to physical phenomena of contributors to *Proceedings* that the Society is, in Sir Arthur's opinion, to be judged. Has Sir Arthur forgotten the report (1909) of the Naples sittings with Eusapia Palladino, reckoned by many investigators the strongest evidence on record for the genuineness of physical phenomena? And the Willi Schneider sittings at Tavistock Square in 1924?

If the Society's investigations into physical phenomena have throughout its history been infrequent, this is due to the high standard of control conditions on which the Society has always, and properly, insisted, and to the preference shown by physical mediums for the much lower standard maintained elsewhere.

On Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's strictures on Mr Besterman's review of the Millesimo sittings we do not propose to dwell at length, as Mr Besterman is replying to them separately. It is, however, to be noted that sittings held in complete darkness, for the most part without control and without any searching of those present, sittings at which phenomena were produced which cannot be paralleled in the records of any sittings held under good control conditions, are described by Sir Arthur as “on the very highest possible level of psychical research.” Further comment is superfluous.

The theory that since Myers's death the Society, or the Officers or Council, have developed an Anti-Spiritualistic bias is as lacking in foundation as the contrary theory (which we have also heard expressed) that in recent years it and they have become uncritically Spiritualistic.

(Signed) LAWRENCE J. JONES, *President.*
ELEANOR MILDRED SIDGWICK
W.H. SALTER

Hon. Secretaries.

14 February 1930.

III. REPLY BY MR BESTERMAN.

As Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has made a contribution of mine to the *Journal* the ostensible cause of his attack on the Society, I have been given this opportunity of replying on my own behalf to his circular so far as it concerns my review of the Millesimo sittings.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is "ashamed" that I set aside the "considered opinion" of Signor Bozzano, and he considers the alternative theory of fraud to be absurd and gratuitously offensive. But even during my acquaintance with the work of the Society (to the brevity of which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle refers) I have learned that the S.P.R. is concerned not with opinions but with facts, and that it is not accustomed to flinch from offering alternative hypotheses where those first suggested do not appear to be in accordance with the facts. What I wrote was written on the basis of such facts as are put before us by Signor Bozzano, and was not concerned with his opinions. If Signor Bozzano or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle consider my conclusions inaccurate, let them put forward *facts*, not *opinions*, to refute them.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's objections to my statements of fact are contained in the following two sentences from his letter: "A lady confederate conceals under the short modern skirt a long medieval rapier, a matador's sword, a big doll and other objects quite unseen by a critical company. She or some other confederate produces a large balloon-like object which hovers above the company, and in some unspecified way produces blasts of ice-cold air." This is not the case: I say nothing about a lady confederate; I say nothing about a "short" skirt, since Signor Bozzano gives no information on this point, and Signora Rossi may equally well have been wearing a "modern" evening gown, which would have been long; I do not speak in this connection of "a long medieval rapier, a matador's sword, a big doll and other objects," but merely of a doll which I suggest measured at most fifteen inches, and of a short sword in its scabbard, which I suggest to have been about two feet long (all these "suggestions" are inevitable, since Signor Bozzano does not himself give the necessary information). Even so I merely say that these two objects *could* have been hidden in a woman's dress; I do not say they *were*, and I also specifically refer to the window of the room about which we are given no information. I do not refer to a "large balloon-like object which hovers" but to a small balloon that does not hover. It is hardly correct to say that the method suggested by me of producing cold currents is "unspecified," since I devote an entire paragraph to a careful account of this well-known method. Finally, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle refers to the "critical company;" all the evidence, in fact, points to the company having been utterly uncritical.

I need say nothing about the third paragraph of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's letter, since he has corrected his mistake in a subsequent communication. The remarks objected to are not by me but by P.-P.-S., and are in any case merely a quite accurate summary of an article which was under review. [The third paragraph of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's letter to the Council originally started, "A further example of this gentleman's prejudice . . ."]

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's observations as to the Society's policy it is not in my province to answer. But I may observe that the "Podmore, Dingwall, Besterman tradition of obtuse negation," is a tradition of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's own invention, though I am proud to be associated in this way with Podmore, for whose critical methods I have the greatest admiration.

The above lines were written for printing in the *Journal* as a reply to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's letter to the Council. In his circular Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has added further criticisms of my review, to which I now reply as briefly as possible. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says that I complain "that we are not told where the sword was apported from," and goes on to quote a passage tending to show that we *are* told. This is not the case: two different swords are in question. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says of me, "He talks of the apports as if their extreme length was two feet . . ." This is not the case: I do not make any such statement. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle writes of me., "He complains that he does not know what a flexatone is, and yet it is described on page 97." This is not the case: what I wrote is that the "flexatone" is not illustrated or *adequately* described, and that I have been unable to find any reference to it in the standard musical and other works of reference.

(Signed) THEODORE BESTERMAN.

14 February 1930.

ACD's AUSTRALIAN HELPER

The name of Leslie Curnow is known to every reader of ACD's "History of Spiritualism" since the author early explains: -

"It was clear that such a work needed a great deal of research - far more than I in my crowded life could devote to it. It is true that my time was in any case dedicated to it, but the literature is vast, and there were many aspects of the movement which claimed my attention. Under these circumstances I claimed and obtained the loyal assistance of Mr. W. Leslie Curnow, whose knowledge of the subject and whose industry have proved to be invaluable. He has dug assiduously into that vast quarry; he has separated out the ore from the rubbish, and in every way he has been of the greatest assistance. I had originally expected no more than raw material, but he has occasionally given me the finished article, of which I have gladly availed myself, altering it only to the extent of getting my own personal point of view. I cannot admit too fully the loyal assistance which he has given me, and if I have not conjoined his name with my own upon the title-page it is for reasons which he understands and in which he acquiesces."

This raises the question of course of whether Curnow was responsible for any of the errors in HOS. At any rate, he took a natural interest in the impact of the book, and called attention in LIGHT October 16 1926, p 484 to some reviews.

REVIEWERS REVIEWED SIR A. CONAN DOYLE'S "HISTORY OF SPIRITUALISM"

BY LESLIE CURNOW

By the issue of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's important "History of Spiritualism" (Cassells, 2 vols, 42s.) a unique opportunity has been afforded of getting some idea of the attitude of the Press of this country towards Spiritualism. For some years it has been evident that a more enlightened tone of opinion prevailed, and now that view is thoroughly substantiated. It may be said without fear of contradiction that the "History" has been well received. I have read some thirty to forty reviews in London and provincial newspapers, and for the most part they are couched in complimentary terms. More than one congratulates Sir Arthur on his fairness, and open-mindedness in stating his views, in seeing the weak spots, and not being afraid to speak of them. One writer who was impressed by this aspect of the "History" says, "The zeal of the devotee is held in check by the inhibitions of a cool, shrewd, impartial and judging mind."

The following extracts may be quoted as instances of a welcome breadth of view: -

"The day has gone by when Spiritualism can be dismissed with a contemptuous shrug of the shoulders as a palpable system of fraud. . . . Even the churches, as well as the average man, have come to admit that there is something in it."

“It requires more credulity to believe that scientific investigators were throughout duped in their investigations, than to believe that the phenomena they avow were produced.”

“If there have been fraudulent mediums, it is also not an uncommon thing to find a clergyman in the dock.”

“When men like Sir Arthur and Sir Oliver Lodge are such convinced upholders of the doctrine, we can no longer find complacent comfort in the reflection that its appeal is only to the ignorant and the gullible.”

While there are these more tolerant views, there is yet to be found in some quarters a curious want of knowledge of the subject, as when one newspaper spoke of Sir Arthur as the author of “Raymond”!

It is not surprising, perhaps to find in these Press notices an almost total lack of what may be called informed criticism. Certainly there was Sir Oliver Lodge's lengthy notice running through two issues of “T. P.'s and Cassell's Weekly,” but this only served as a bright contrast to the rest.

In the notices of the religious Press there is a respectful tone, though no sign of any enthusiasm for the subject. This can be understood if the following passage is a correct presentation of the views of the churches.

“A profound gulf is fixed between the doctrines of the Christian Church in all its branches, and the teachings of Spiritualism. Undivided Christendom believed that redeemed souls awaited in a penitential state the coming of the Judge and Saviour. . . Protestant teaching is summed up in the words of the Shorter Catechism, ‘The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory.’”

The teachings of Spiritualism are certainly in conflict with this latter statement.

Another Church paper considers that, “If what Sir Arthur Conan Doyle anticipates with such fervour should come to pass, and converse with the dead of the kind which we find here described become a commonplace, there would be an end to faith and also to hope.”

If so, faith and hope would have been replaced by something far more sustaining, that is, by knowledge, Clergymen of all denominations have been ready to confess that when they became convinced of the truths of Spiritualism a new world of comfort and enlightenment was theirs. For instance, the Rev. F. C. Spurr in his little book, “The Heart of a Father,” speaking of the death of his son, said:

“The only thing of importance to me was the knowledge that my boy really lived in the Spirit World. I wanted to know. More hope and vague belief were singularly unsatisfying. “And then when knowledge came to him, and he was satisfied beyond doubt that he was in touch with his boy, his heart cry is, “This new experience has transformed our lives. The spirit world in which my wife and I have always ‘believed’ has now become a very real place to us.”

This manly confession of the value of substituting knowledge for mere vague belief should serve as sufficient answer to the fears expressed by the ecclesiastical organ.

One of the strangest criticisms comes from Miss Evelyn Underhill in the "Observer." As this lady has delivered an address to the members of the London Spiritualist Alliance she can hardly be without some sympathy with its aims, and therefore her remarks must be attributed to want of understanding. In speaking of the woman of Endor (whom she goes out of her way to malign by calling the Witch of Endor), she says it was she who "purported to summon the great spirit of the prophet from the place of rest, and never the prophet himself who sought such communications from the unknown."

Psychic students do not need to be reminded how utterly wrong this statement is, first in the idea of being able to "summon" anyone, and, second, the old, moss-grown idea of a "place of rest."

After admitting that the lives of the saints show a real connection between sanctity and "certain kinds of psychic abnormality," and that their lives provide numerous and striking examples of post-mortem appearances, she goes on, "Yet, in spite of this, it is surely not too severe to say that truly spiritual minds have seldom been Spiritualistic, and that the 'high teachings' obtained through mediumistic channels at once betray their shoddiness, when compared with the utterances of the saints."

It is difficult to understand what is meant by the remark that spiritual minds have seldom been Spiritualistic, but in so far as these minds have been in touch with spiritual verities then they have been at one with the highest and best in Spiritualism. In the second criticism we seem to detect a regrettable note of prejudice. From both sources the teaching is lofty, and whichever it is that one finds the more helpful is a matter of spiritual temperament.

What are we to say to Miss Underhill's further objection that the Spiritualistic heaven is "essentially comfortable"? Does she expect to find it uncomfortable? At the same time her view is surely a lamentably inexact inference from, say, the Vale Owen script and others of the same kind. Heaven, of course, or any other abode of happiness must have characteristics that may be described, if inaptly, as "comfortable," but in no sense the smug, or mere arm-chair comfort which Miss Underhill intends to convey. Indeed, all the accounts that come to us from the spirit world agree that life there, while one of congenial occupation, is made up of high endeavour in ministering to the wants of others.

Not for many years has there been such a flood of publicity as that given to Sir Arthur's notable "History," and the discussion thus aroused cannot fail to excite fresh interest in the cause of Spiritualism.

But who was Leslie Curnow? Sometimes this kind of question is answered only in the obituaries, and sadly this came swiftly, in *Light* December 18, 1926 p. 602.

THE PASSING OF MR LESLIE CURNOW

It is with great regret that we learn of the passing from us on Saturday, the 11th instant, after a short illness, of Leslie Curnow, who was for many years an enthusiastic worker in the Spiritualist movement. The son of the editor of a leading Australian newspaper, the "Sydney Morning Herald," Mr. Curnow, who obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts at Sydney University, took up the career of journalism, and coming to England in 1913, was engaged by the London "Times" and other important newspapers, including the "Sunday Times." He was for some time a member of the staff of *LIGHT* and subsequently embarked upon authorship and lecturing, in connection with Spiritualism and Psychic Research, in which he met with marked success. He assisted Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the production of "The History of Spiritualism," and also wrote a book, "The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism," which was well received.

He was a "plain blunt man," of great sincerity and honesty of purpose, and the affection in which he was held was testified to in no uncertain manner on Sunday last, when the congregations at the Æolian and Grotrian Halls rose in silent tribute to his memory.

We extend to Leslie Curnow, in his new stage of life, our sincere good wishes at this present season of Goodwill to all men.

More tributes were paid at the funeral, reported in *Light* December 25, 1926 p. 609: -

THE PASSING OF LESLIE CURNOW

The interment of the mortal remains of Leslie Curnow took place at St. Pancras Cemetery, East Finchley, on Thursday, 16th inst., in the presence of a large group of his friends. A short service in the cemetery chapel was conducted by the Rev. Geo. Vale Owen, assisted by the Rev. H. M. S. Bankart, the regular chaplain, and Mrs. Philip Champion de Crespigny read the 23rd Psalm. At the graveside Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said a few impressive words in tribute to the departed worker. He said he was reminded of a similar occasion when, in California, it was said of a dead friend; "The cage is outgrown, but the bird soars and sings above it." So they might say of their dear brother, Leslie Curnow, that his cage was broken and the bird had escaped to a happier region. They were simply there to lay the cage on the scrap heap of old cages. His spirit had passed to a state of peace and rest, after the struggle of earth. He was a good comrade; a man to whom they could turn in need without fear of his failing them. They would miss him sorely, although knowing he would still be with them in their work in that new life upon which he had entered. They had not to say farewell to him, but only *au revoir*.

The Rev. Geo. Vale Owen, addressing the arisen spirit as “our brother and fellow soldier,” said: “May God and His angels keep you, and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

Amongst the friends present, in addition to those already mentioned were the Duchess of Hamilton, Miss Lind-af-Hageby, Mr. Horace Leaf, Mr. Dawson Rogers, and Mr. David Gow. A number of Mr. Curnow's friends from the Hampden Club and others, whose names could not be obtained, were also in attendance.

A letter we have received from the Secretary of the Hampden Club states: “Mr. Curnow was held in high esteem by all who knew him here, and we are all very shocked at his sudden end.” Mr. Curnow was, we believe, a resident of the Hampden Club for some ten years or more. He was 58 years of age.

Two other friends sent tributes.

The first of several written tributes appeared in LIGHT January 29, 1927 p. 52.

SOME MEMORIES OF LESLIE CURNOW

Mr. James Coates writes: -

It was my privilege to know Mr. Curnow very well, and I soon recognised his ability, personal character and deep interest in Spiritualism. I had tea with him twice in his room in the Hampden Club, and was astonished at his library. He spent hours searching second-hand shops and bookstalls – hours that another man would take for rest and recreation after his strenuous day’s work. He had the Colonial manner – a little free but never ungentlemanly – and he was given to strong likes and dislikes.

I had much pleasure in introducing Mr. Curnow – a stranger – to several interesting people, and to one séance - with Mrs. Susanna Harris. In this case one experience was enough. He felt the séance was evidential, but it lacked in spirituality. He never went back again. It was too coarse for him.

In absence on holiday of the Editor of LIGHT he was in the chair. I was in Aberdeen about 1922 to 1923. The city was in a great state of excitement about a haunted house. The police officials believed in the haunting. On the receipt of a wire from Mr. Curnow desiring me to inquire, I got permission from the Chief Constable to investigate. In company with a well-known Spiritualist I visited the house, interviewed the people, and drew certain conclusions. The head of the house was a person of doubtful standing, making a good bit out of the visitors. As to the “haunting,” it was clearly due to natural causes- rickety flooring, and crumbling of the walls below. I sent a wire to Mr. Curnow to this effect: “There is nothing in the hauntings. All due to natural causes.” The local Press got the full particulars, and the hauntings ceased.

A short time before Sir Arthur Conan Doyle sailed to Australia, Mr. Curnow, rendered him some service. From that time till before Mr. Curnow's demise, I have reason to think that Sir Arthur appreciated his ability and service, and paid his grateful tribute to the memory of Curnow at the graveside.

Let me place a stone of memory on his cairn.

A second tribute appeared in *LIGHT* February 12, 1927 page 78.

MORE MEMORIES OF LESLIE CURNOW

MRS. F. E. LEANING writes: -

As an intimate friend of the late Leslie Curnow, it has given me great pleasure to see the kindly notices of him that have appeared in *LIGHT* and elsewhere. It was really he who started me on such career as a writer as I have had, for my, prepossessions concerning the power and the glory of editors were too strong altogether for me to have dared to submit any work direct to such august beings. Mr. Curnow, however, was not an editor, but an assistant editor, a kind man who would sit down beside one like an ordinary human being, and to whom I was not afraid to display my perplexities. Perhaps the present Editor of *LIGHT* will not mind my adding here that my terrors yielded by degrees to the discovery that even the chief can be the kindest and most modest of friends, and can combine gaiety and comradeship with the wielding of power and authority. But in the beginning of our acquaintance I was too timid and too dazed with excitement to do him justice. Thus it happened one day, when Mr. Curnow had tantalised me with the sight of a new book which he had in hand to review, that he suddenly put it into my hands and said, "Take it home with you and see what you can make of it."

I rose at once into a "superior condition," and took it home, walking on air. It seemed to me great fun to play at reviewing a book: of course, I had never done such a thing in my life, and did not for a moment think it anything but a jest. Forty-eight hours later I sent my sheets to Mr. Curnow: with a saucy note: "How's your reviewing? I've done mine! And I've left in all the little bites, for there isn't time to copy it out." I had the most stupefying surprise of my life when I got a note from the Editor accepting it, and did not believe it would really be printed even then. But it was, with only one word altered.

After this, as we grew in mutual respect for each other's acquirements, my literary comrade did me many and many a good turn, for we were eager book-worms both, and though his collection far out-numbered mine, he helped me constantly to the kind of books I wanted, and his advice and knowledge were invaluable. Another fellow-enthusiast, still left I am thankful to say, for our comforting, writes to me thus: "I was indeed sorry about Leslie Curnow. I hardly knew him, but I liked what I did know. I loved him for his frankness and sincerity. He did great work. He was full of energy and enthusiasm: that also attracted me to him. I love enthusiasm, I detest inertia. Frankly, life is work; I can't conceive of any other."

Yes, for him too, life was work: it is the great ensign that flies over the Universe. Heaven sends no better boom than that of finding our work and the fellowship of good co-workers.

There was however further news of Curnow, and it came suitably enough from Sir Arthur himself, in LIGHT January 22, 1927 p. 39.

THE RETURN OF LESLIE CURNOW

BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

On his death bed I made a compact with Leslie Curnow that he should come back to me through Mrs. Barkel. On Wednesday, the 5th inst., I was able to get a sitting with that medium at the Psychic College. Two-thirds of the sitting was taken up with other communications. Then the following came through. I omit long portions which are private.

“He wants to say [the control was talking] that it was the happiest time of his life his passing over, because it showed him how many true friends he had. When he was told before that he had much work to do he thought it was with you, but it was really over here.

“He says that he hopes, if possible his library will not be scattered. It was his life’s work; keep it in the movement. The books, if separated would fetch very little, so it is of no use to anyone save Spiritualists.

“He says what a beautiful thing; death is. The last thing that he can remember is seeing Mrs. Stobart and then dropping off to sleep, and waking to find his dear father, mother and brother waiting for him.

“Since he has been over here he had made himself known to several on your side.

“ ‘I wouldn’t come back, Sir Arthur, much as I love the movement. I can see further now and do more.’

(These words were uttered in a very close approximation to his ordinary voice. It was most convincing.)

“I [the control] met him because I promised I would,

“Will you look into the notes which he made for a little book on mental phenomena and put them in order?

(A. C. D.: “I will do my best, but you know I am hard pressed”)

He is laughing now. He is thinking of your shop. He says that he did you over a book. He says he bought one book at your shop for two shillings and he would not part with it for fifty pounds.”

“What was it about?”

“It was an old book, out of print. It was about mediumship. Very old and discoloured. He says, ‘Make sure of your old books before you sell them so cheap.’ He is still laughing.

“Now he talks of Australia. He wishes to send his love to his sister.

“He says that no words he has heard or read can describe or come near the wonders of the spirit world. If he had his life once again he says that he would fight tooth and nail for it. It is the greatest and most glorious truth ever known and men, through their own ignorance, have forfeited their birthright, which was conscious union with the spirit world and angelic guidance.

“He says that he has met many of the old timers here. It seems that there is a great stir to work in. unity in order to bring about a greater knowledge of the laws of communication.

“It will become the universal religion despite what any may say to the contrary.

“When the times of trouble are over Curnow says that the spirit voices will be audible in the land and man will again walk hand in hand with his angelic guides.

“He came to his own funeral and heard something of a little bird which pleased and amused him.”

Those were the chief points in his communication. One has to admit that the medium was familiar with Curnow’s affairs and may have retained, even in trance, a subconscious memory of them. It is also to be noted that I asked for him before he came through, so that it did not appear to be spontaneous. On the other hand it is quite possible that he was waiting his turn and would have come even if I had not asked. The evidential points are the reference to Mrs. Stobart which I know to be true, though the medium, so far as I know, did not. His views about his library are characteristic but not strictly evidential. The use of his own voice for a single sentence was extremely impressive. He had a peculiar nasal rising intonation when he used to say the words “Sir Arthur” which was exactly reproduced. The point about the unfinished book is true, but may have been within the knowledge of the medium, and the same applies to the allusion to a bird at the funeral. The reference to the valuable book bought for two shillings, and his amusement at the transaction is very characteristic. He bought several books at the shop, and I shall have some difficulty in tracing this particular one, but if I can do so in would certainly be an excellent test. The total result of the interview, making every allowance for the particles from the medium’s mind which are always swept forward in the psychic current, was extremely convincing. The passage about what man has lost by his ignorance was beautiful and impassioned as delivered, and it took a Curnow brain to frame it.

This attracted the attention of another editor (LIGHT February 5, 1927 p. 65.)

THE RETURN OF LESLIE CURNOW

SIR,-I am intensely interested in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's report on "The Return of Leslie Curnow," and would like to add one matter which seems, to me, important.

Sir Arthur quotes the Control as saying, "Will you look into the notes which he, Curnow, made for a little book on Mental Phenomena, and put them in order." It may interest your readers to know that some ten months ago I made arrangements with Mr. Curnow for the preparation and publication of a series of articles on "The Mental Phenomena of Spiritualism," with the intention of making a companion book to one I recently published on "The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism," by Mr: Curnow.

In the last letter I received from Mr. Curnow, written some ten days before his death, he told me that he was busy with the preparation of this, and he had completed the notes for the first five chapters. To the best of my knowledge and belief, no one was informed that Mr. Curnow was engaged upon the work, and the point may be of interest in confirming the identity of the communicator.

Yours, etc.,
ERNEST W. OATEN.

Manchester.

Another reader added a report to LIGHT February 26, 1927.

THE RETURN OF LESLIE CURNOW

Sir,-Circumstances have intervened to prevent my reading LIGHT for several weeks, and I was much interested to read Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's article (p 39), as it confirms a prior experience of mine here at Weston in the early morning of December 30th.

Mr. Curnow manifested to me then, and seemed to be very anxious about his books, drawing my attention to several sets and series of volumes which he indicated as containing valuable records. He seemed to wish them to be preserved and not to be dispersed.

I immediately sent you an account of this, which you have apparently overlooked. I should like to put it on record as confirming Mr. Curnow's return and also the anxiety he evidently feels for the library which meant so much to him.

Yours, etc.,
CHARLES L. TWEEDALE

Fortunately a solution was found to the problem of the library. There was only a brief report but it was enough to set minds at rest, in LIGHT June 18, 1927 p. 293.

THE LATE MR. LESLIE CURNOW'S LIBRARY.-We are asked to state that in disposing of Mr. Curnow's library, it was found necessary to divide it. One portion was purchased by the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, and the other by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who is handing over the books acquired by him to the Library of the Britten Memorial Institute in Manchester.

Duncan Gascoyne, curator of the Britten Museum kindly checked "Two Worlds".

"The only reference I could find was in the Secretary's Report of the Britten Memorial Fund Annual General Meeting held at the Britton Memorial Library, 65 Bridge Street, Manchester on Saturday June 9th 1928, which states:-

"The Secretary's report covered all the activities of the year, special mention being made of the valuable gift from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of half of the "Leslie Curnow" collection of psychic books. He hoped that sanction from the Charity Commissioners would be received at an early date to permit the Library being used until such time as we could establish a permanent Library and Institute."

The Britten Memorial Library collection now belongs to the SNU (although some duplicates have been sold off over the years) and is housed at Stansted Hall. They bear the bookplate which appears below.

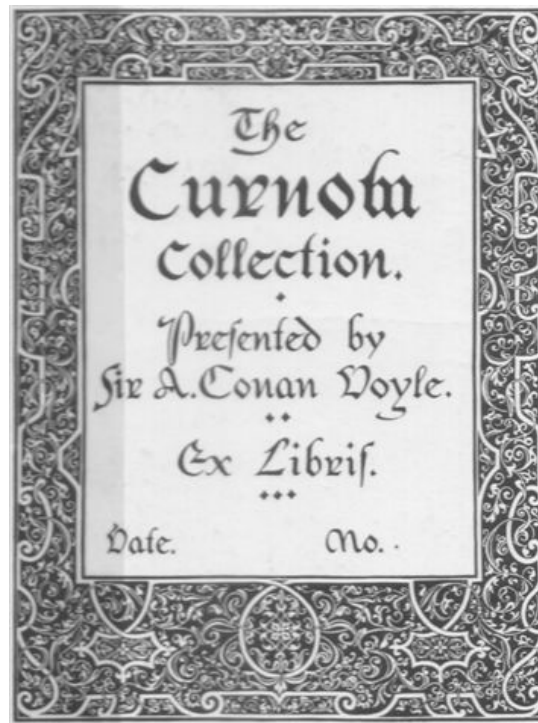


Photo courtesy of Garth Willey

LP & PJG

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