

The Trend of Psychical Research

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THE TREND OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH¹

N relation to great problems there is nothing at the same time so tempting and so detrimental to progress as the notion that one is in possession of an hypothesis all-inclusive and complete. A distinguished student of psychical research (Signor Ernest Bozzano) has said:

Truth may be represented by a prism with multiple faces, and error arises from observing only a few faces, and imagining that we see them all.

Anyone who seeks to combine into one system a large variety of facts must be equipped with considerable knowledge and have the judicial

¹ Reprinted by permission from *The Quest*, October 1911.

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faculty in full exercise, otherwise he is almost sure to succumb to the temptation to fit facts to theories, instead of scrupulously checking and measuring every theory solely by its capacity to explain facts.

I desire to be on my guard against falling into this error. I am not so foolish as to think I have a theory which will account for the whole range of psychic phenomena; my aim in this paper is simply to make a brief but careful review of some of the chief classes of phenomena in order to form a tentative estimate of the trend of the evidence, and to examine fairly towards what conclusions it seems to point. We have now a large mass of observed facts before us, and it is not only permissible to make deductions from them; it is, indeed, a duty to do so. Sir William Herschel recognised this duty in relation to his own branch of science; he would not

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permit students to escape it on the pretext that their only concern was the observation and recording of facts. In 1785 he wrote :

We ought to avoid two opposite extremes. If we indulge a fanciful imagination and build worlds of our own we must not wonder at our going wide from the path of truth and nature. On the other hand, if we add observation to observation without attempting to draw not only certain conclusions, but also conjectural views from them, we offend against the very end for which only observations ought to be made.

This remark is equally applicable to the research we are considering. We are warranted, nay we are in duty bound to ask ourselves in relation to it: What are the implications involved in the acceptance of the already verified facts? It is well that we should take stock, as it were, from time to time, and clearly recognise what are the truths these facts establish. Certainly they open the door to

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many suggestions, to many possibilities ; but it is not with all of these that I am about to deal. We cannot yet co-ordinate all the facts ; and if ever the day comes when it is possible to do so, the final synthesis will doubtless be full of surprises.

What we may do, however, is this. Psychical research has, in the opinion of many, advanced far enough to permit us to affirm with confidence that, whatever the ultimate, all-embracing synthesis may be, it will be one that will involve the admission of certain conclusions which are already substantiated by an overwhelming amount of evidence.

Three conclusions which, I believe, we are warranted in expecting to find established, in any future synthesis, are :

1. The reality of an unseen universe of intelligent life.
2. Man's survival of bodily death.

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3. That communication takes place between the (so-called) living and the (so-called) dead.

The evidence which is already forthcoming is of a character to place these conclusions on a scientific basis. It should challenge the attention of the most sceptical and the most materialistic. I do not say that it will necessarily convince these, for temperament and habits of thought are often the determining factors in conviction; but the facts to which I refer are such as no man of an unprejudiced mind can afford to ignore. As far, then, as space permits I will proceed to consider how far the main classes of verified phenomena justify such convictions.

I may assume that many of my readers accept the fact of telepathy; but before making any further remarks under this head, I should like to point out that many persons suppose that "telepathy" may be treated as an

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explanation of a large number of mysterious occurrences. This is a fallacy. We must rid ourselves of the notion that we have in the word any real solution of problems, before we can hope to make any progress towards discovering what that solution may be. Telepathy is a word used to *denote* a fact, not to *explain* it. The word has been defined by Mr Myers as "the communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of the recognised channels of sense."

This definition offers no explanation as to how the impressions are conveyed from one mind to another; that problem remains to be determined.

Assuming, however, that telepathy is a fact, how does it support the above-named propositions?

It supports them in this way: It removes

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some of the main obstacles to their acceptance ; it offers a reasonable experimental basis for the conclusion that communication after bodily death is possible. If thought can be conveyed without physical channels, it becomes conceivable that it can be generated without a physical brain, and it shows that mental processes are not *necessarily* dependent upon a physical organism. It is also reasonable to conclude that if mind can commune with mind without using the bodily senses, here in this life, it may be able to do so after these bodily senses have ceased to exist.

Therefore, although the fact of telepathy does not, *per se*, supply positive evidence for either of these two propositions, it offers a strong argument in favour of the acceptance of both, if, on other evidence, that acceptance is justified.

In the year 1894, a " Census " Committee

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appointed by the Society for Psychical Research made the following statements on the subject of telepathy, which, in the light of subsequent experiences, deserve special note.

There can be no doubt that the general acceptance of telepathy as a fact . . . of nature must importantly modify the current scientific view of the relation of mind to matter. But it may conceivably modify this view in either of two ways, respectively important in very different degrees.

It may lead to the ultimate discovery of some physical process . . . or it may lead ultimately to the conclusion that the causal relation between the psychical facts telepathically connected is independent of any such physical process.

It is obvious that the modification of received views in the acceptance of the second alternative would be far greater and more fundamental than that involved in the acceptance of the first.¹

The Report proceeds to say that efforts to

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. x. p. 26.

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find an explanation will probably first be made in the attempt to discover a physical process, but adds :

Unless, indeed, other strange facts should be simultaneously established, clearly cognate to telepathy, and clearly not admitting of any physical explanation.¹

No physical process has been discovered during the sixteen years which have elapsed since this was written, but many strange facts *have* been established. Whether the operation of physical laws will suffice to explain them is the point still at issue among students. These "strange facts" include apparitions, automatic writings, and physical and mental phenomena of various kinds.

Among recorded instances of apparitions there are apparitions of those still in the body. In the above-mentioned "Census of Halluci-

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. x. p. 27.

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nations" fifteen well authenticated cases of this kind will be found. A number of these cases were the result of deliberate attempts to appear to some person at a distance. Experiences of this nature are, obviously, closely related to telepathy, and at the same time they approximate to the far more numerous cases of apparitions of deceased persons. Whatever hypothesis is applied to interpret the one class, should be applied also to the other.

The object of this "Census of Hallucinations" was to attempt to ascertain what proportion of persons have experiences of this sort, tactile, or visual, or sensory, and the "Census" was signed by Professor Sidgwick, Mrs Sidgwick, Mr F. W. H. Myers, Mr Frank Podmore, and Miss Alice Johnson.

Out of 17,000 answers 9.9 per cent. were affirmative. A very exhaustive analysis was made of these cases, and in order to appreciate

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its value the ten tables included in vol. x. should be carefully studied. The number of supernormal experiences of this kind which *coincided with a death* were 440 times the number that chance alone might lead us to expect, and the "Census" shows that 95 cases were reported to have been shared by a second person or by more than two (p. 303).

Figures, however, convey little unless they are studied and compared with scrupulous attention. I will, therefore, state the result at which the "Census" Committee arrived by their analysis, and not attempt to summarise their long lists of figures. In summing up their conclusions the Committee say :

We have found that the distribution of recognised apparitions before, at, and after the death of the person seen affords some argument for the continuity of physical life and the possibility of communication from the dead (p. 392).

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Between death and apparitions of the dying a connection exists which is not due to chance (p. 394).

The bearing of this Report on the subject before us is obvious.

Two or three alternative theories have been suggested. One is that the apparent communication or vision may be due to some telepathic impulse from some other person, not the deceased.

I cannot go into this at any length, but will merely point out that there are instances in which this theory fits the facts very ill. Particularly is this the case when the death has occurred among strangers, not connected with the percipient, or when the apparition is the fulfilment of a promise to appear made before the death.

The other hypothesis is that of delayed telepathy. In this case it is necessary to suppose that the idea was projected by the

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dying person, and remained latent in the mind of the percipient for some hours before it was recognised as an apparition.

Such latency under certain limits is not impossible. But when the lapse of time between the death and the appearance is considerable, many days, weeks, or years, this theory can hardly be claimed as a reasonable explanation.

Whether the apparition is due to the activity of a dying person or one already deceased, in either case the fact adds weight to the argument for survival. If it is due to a dying person, we are confronted with the remarkable fact that just when the physical powers are at their lowest ebb, some faculty (be it psychical or mental) is extraordinarily active and potent ; so much so that it can project an image, or even, in some instances, carry information, to a person at a considerable distance. If, how-

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ever, the apparition is projected by a person already deceased, we have, of course, experimental evidence for survival of consciousness.

Let us next consider whether automatisms, such as automatic writing and table-movements, afford evidence for survival.

The observation of table-movements and automatic writing has shown, I think conclusively, that both these may frequently exhibit nothing more than the contents of the mind of the automatist.

If a person finds himself writing words which were not consciously in his mind, he is disposed to conclude that they originated elsewhere, and to imagine that he is inspired by some extraneous intelligence. Careful observation of the phenomenon, however, shows that this impression is often a mistake. There is no exercise of subliminal faculty which requires more cautious discrimination than that of

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automatic writing. That stratum of the consciousness which for lack of a better term we call "subliminal," is the region most susceptible to impressions from other minds. It is there that we may expect to find telepathic messages registered; but it is also there that the manifold impressions made by past experiences are stored, and from this deep reservoir they emerge in varied forms when the normal consciousness is passive and leaves room for their manifestation. Much that passes for communication from some extraneous source is really due to the subliminal activities of the automatist; much, but not by any means all. There is often a blended product, partly self-originated, partly telepathically received. In the case of "messages" obviously bearing evidence of their distinctly telepathic origin, the agent of these "messages" is sometimes an embodied mind, but there are instances in

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which there is strong reason to believe that they issue from a disembodied mind; each case has to be judged on its own merits.

A remarkable incident of communications by raps in a table was related to me by Mr Dawson Rogers, the late editor of *Light*. The incident is given in his own words in an issue of that journal (Nov. 19, 1910).¹ I must here slightly curtail the narrative.

Mr Dawson Rogers states that he was holding a *séance* with Mr and Mrs Everitt and a few other friends, all being well known to each other. He says: "We were sitting under the full blaze of a gas chandelier when some loud raps came upon the table." At first nothing intelligible could be obtained, but after a while a few letters were spelled out; the table rap-

¹ See also *Life and Experiences of Edmund Dawson Rogers*, pp. 49-52, published office of *Light*, 110 St Martin's Lane, London, W.C. Price 1s. net.

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ping at the letter required, when the alphabet was repeated.

When the letters M. A. N. S. were indicated Mr Rogers supposed that the name referred to a Mr Mansell, a friend who was sitting with them at the table. The "table," however, emphatically denied this. Presently, after the alphabet had again been repeated, it was understood that the S. was a mistake, and finally the name "Thomas Manton" was spelled out. No one present knew any person of this name. Mr Rogers continues :

I next asked the spirit to tell me how many years he had been in the other life. The answer came: "S-I-X——"

"Oh," I said, "six years?"—An emphatic "No."

"Perhaps you mean six years and so many months? Tell us how many?"—Answer, "T-E——"

"Oh, six years and ten months?"—"No."

"Go on."—"T-E-E——"

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"Oh, sixteen years?"—Again "No."

"Well, go on."—"H-U-N-D-R-E-D."

"Then you mean that you have been in the other life sixteen hundred years?"—"No."

"Well, try again."—"Sixteen hundred and seventy-seven."

"Do you mean that you have been in the other life sixteen hundred and seventy-seven years?"—"No."

"Do you mean that you entered the other life in the year 1677?"—"Yes."

"Tell us where you were born?"

Answer, "Laurencelydiard."

Knowing nothing of such a place as this, I asked where it was, and the reply was spelled out correctly and rapidly: "Somersetshire."

"Where were you buried?"—"Stoke Newington."

The spirit afterwards told us that he was a Non-conformist divine; was at one time chaplain to Charles II.; was afterwards ejected from the Church and imprisoned; that he could say no more then, but that if we wanted further information we could learn something of him at Wadham College, Oxford. He added, however, that he had been introduced to the

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séance by a Nonconformist friend whom he had met in the other life, Dr Jabez Burns, who while in earth-life had attended some of Mrs Everitt's *séances*.

On turning next day to a Clergy List in search of a parish of a name that might bear some resemblance to "Laurencelydiard," I found "*Lawrence Lydiard*" in *Somersetshire*. This gave me some hope that I might find all the rest of the narrative to be correct, and as the readiest method of testing the messages, I requested the Rev. W. W. Newbould, who was in the habit of frequenting the British Museum, to endeavour, if possible, to verify the facts for me, telling him, however, nothing more than that I wanted a brief sketch of the life of Thomas Manton, a Nonconformist divine.

On the following day Mr Newbould sent Mr Rogers a report of Thomas Manton which proved the accuracy of the communication in every particular.

This incident is a case of physical and mental phenomena combined. In relation to physical phenomena alone Sir Oliver Lodge

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has said¹ that, whilst he considers that there is sufficient evidence for believing that they occur, yet they do not appear to have any "immediate or necessary connection with the question of human survival." He does not, however, preclude the possibility that they may sometimes have *indirect* connection with this momentous question, and this they seem to have when they are intimately associated with intelligent communications affording good evidence of identity.

There are indeed cases in which these phenomena cannot be accounted for without assuming the intervention of some discarnate mind, and we are, therefore, compelled to face the further question: Can we identify this intelligence?

Professor Lombroso, at the outset of his investigations, inclined to the view that these abnormal occurrences were due solely to the

¹ *Nature*, Oct. 20, 1910, p. 490.

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conscious or sub-conscious activity of the medium, but after twenty years of further study he expressed a different opinion. He then stated that he considered that there is valid evidence for the intervention of intelligences external to that of the medium. It is also well known that Sir William Crookes is of the same opinion. This does not, of course, *per se*, imply that these intelligences are human. There is, however, strong evidence that this is sometimes the case. As an illustration I will quote a case recorded by Dr Joseph Venzano, a medical man in Genoa. Dr Venzano was associated with Professor Enrico Morselli (a distinguished alienist and neuropathologist) in investigations with the famous medium Eusapia Palladino, and Professor Morselli has described him as "an excellent observer."¹

His record of his experiences with this

¹ *Annals of Psychical Science*, vol. v. p. 344.

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medium are related in detail and with careful note of all the conditions and keen analysis of the occurrences and their possible explanations; the account can be read in *The Annals of Psychical Science* (August, September, 1907). Dr Venzano writes:

The control of Madame Palladino was confided to me, on the right, and to Madame Ramorino seated on the left. The room was arranged as usual, and lighted, when the phenomena occurred, by the candle in the ante-room. The narrative of this incident is taken from the special notes which I made myself on the same evening, after the *séance* (vol. vi. p. 164).

In spite of the dimness of the light I could distinctly see Madame Palladino and my fellow-sitters. Suddenly I perceived that behind me was a form, fairly tall, which was leaning its head on my left shoulder, and sobbing violently, so that those present could hear the sobs; it kissed me repeatedly. I clearly perceived the outlines of this face, which touched my own, and I felt the very fine and abundant hair in contact with my

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left cheek, so that I could be quite sure that it was a woman. The table then began to move, and by typology gave the name of a close family connection who was known to no one present except myself. She had died some time before, and on account of incompatibility of temperament there had been serious disagreements with her. I was so far from expecting this typological response that I at first thought that this was a case of coincidence of name; but whilst I was mentally forming this reflection I felt a mouth, with warm breath, touch my left ear and whisper, in a low voice in Genoese dialect, a succession of sentences, the murmur of which was audible to the sitters. These sentences were broken by bursts of weeping, and their drift was to repeatedly implore pardon for injuries done to me, with a fulness of detail connected with family affairs which could only be known to the person in question. The phenomena seemed so real that I felt compelled to reply to the excuses offered me with expressions of affection, and to ask pardon in my turn if my resentment of the wrongs referred to had been excessive. But I had scarcely uttered the first syllable when two hands, with exquisite delicacy, applied them-

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selves to my lips and prevented my continuing. The form then said to me: "Thank you," embraced me, kissed me, and disappeared.

I should state at this point that this extraordinary phenomenon did not for a moment rob me of calmness of observation, which was more than ever necessary under these circumstances, and that I did not cease to watch the medium, who was quite awake and visible to all, and remained motionless through the whole course of the phenomena.

This incident, which is recorded by a thoroughly capable witness, shows that these physical phenomena do sometimes strengthen the evidence in favour of survival; but, even when they afford no proof of identity, in so far as they show the action of intelligences other than those of the incarnate, they strengthen the argument that mind can exist apart from a physical brain, and thus they undermine materialistic objections to the possibility of survival.

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If, as an illustration of trance-phenomena, I mention only one trance-medium, this is not because there are not many others who might be mentioned, but because this medium has been so long under critical observation that she has become famous in an unusual degree. Mrs Piper has been studied for more than a quarter of a century by the S.P.R. and other investigators. Her trances are profound, and of their reality there is no doubt. The communications which are made during her trances, and which claim to come from deceased persons, frequently contain statements of information unknown to any one present. We are all familiar with the suggestion that in these cases she may have received the information telepathically from some one at a distance. As we do not know the limits of human capacity, it would perhaps be rash to say that this kind of ubiquitous mind-probing is *im-*

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possible; but there is a feature in these experiences which renders such an explanation extremely strained and improbable. It is this. The ideas communicated through Mrs Piper's trance-state are of a selective, purposeful character. Now it is just conceivable that Tom, Dick, or Harry might unconsciously communicate their thoughts to Mrs Piper in a random fashion, even whilst they were miles away and, perhaps, quite unacquainted with her, and she might reproduce this hodge-podge of ideas during her trance; but this in no way explains how it happens that the pieces of information thus given should fit into the personality of a "John" or a "William," deceased, and that, too, so appropriately that his friends are constrained to believe that it is indeed the man they knew who is conversing with them, making statements, moreover, which they are able to verify after the interview is over.

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This kind of selective thought-transference (if it is thought-transference) has the character of intelligent, purposeful direction, and has not the character which we should expect involuntary, haphazard telepathy to bear.

There is another fact also which seems inexplicable on such an hypothesis. One of the communicators, "George Pelham," has recognised correctly and appropriately some thirty persons who visited Mrs Piper when in trance. When we remember that this control never claimed to recognise the persons he did *not* know in his earthly life, we must acknowledge that, as Dr Hodgson has said, we have here a strong indication pointing to the agency of the actual "George Pelham."¹

Since the death of some of the leaders in

¹ Students of this subject should carefully read the Report on Mrs Piper written by Dr Richard Hodgson, and published in S.P.R. *Proceedings*, vol. xiii. part xxxiii.

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this research there has been a fresh departure, in the character of the evidence which has been forthcoming; greater ingenuity has marked the communications.

Two aims seem to predominate in these messages. The intelligences behind them seem to direct their efforts, in the first place, so as to indicate the action of some mind or minds independent of those in the body, and, secondly, to give satisfactory evidence for the identification of the intelligence at work. Other facts of great interest make themselves evident by the way, but these seem to be the primary objects in view. Those who are most competent to estimate the quality of the messages, and who have given several decades to the study of these kinds of phenomena, have expressed their conviction that, whatever be the source, these objects are obviously present in the communications and give them their trend.

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In reply to an argument used by a contributor to *The Church Family Newspaper*, to the effect that these messages were lacking in intelligence, Sir Oliver Lodge wrote as follows (November 5, 1909) :

What we are quite clear about is that ingenuity of a high order has been at work . . . and that to whatever agency the intelligence may ultimately have to be attributed, intelligence and scholarship and ingenuity are very clearly and unmistakably displayed. Of that we have no doubt whatever. The scholarship moreover in some cases singularly corresponds with that of F. W. H. Myers when living, and surpasses the unaided information of any of the receivers. Of that too I have myself no doubt.

I must now make a final demand on the reader's attention, for the episode with which I am about to deal is of an intricate character. Its importance, however, from the point of view of evidence for identity, can, perhaps, hardly be

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exaggerated; and this is why I have chosen to quote it rather than some more obvious incident.

In the year 1884, Mr Myers had written a letter to his friend, Dr Verrall, in which he said that a certain ode by Horace (*C. i. 28*), called the "Archytas Ode," had "entered as deeply as almost any Horatian passage into his own inner history."¹

The ode is an obscure one, and open to more than one interpretation; Myers seems to have interpreted it as expressing the dread of immortal life unless that life should prove more satisfying than the present, and the idea that survival in a monotonous eternity would offer no advantage. This seems to have been the thought which Myers had in mind when he intimated that the poem found a deep response in his heart.

¹ *Proc.*, vol. xxii. p. 406.

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His friend Mrs Verrall realised that here was a suitable subject for a test-question. She knew the *direct* answer to the question, *i.e.* she knew the ode referred to in the letter to her husband, but she did not know why Myers cared specially for it. Accordingly when Mrs Piper was in England in 1907, during one of her trances, Mrs Verrall asked Mr Piddington to put to the "Myers"-personality the question, "Which ode of Horace entered deeply into your inner life?"

This question was put on January 23, 1907. The reply received was that "Myers" would have to recall and consider before he could "bring out an intelligent answer." (An intelligent answer from the point of view of a psychical researcher should of course be an *evidential* answer.)

During the month of February one reference was made by Mrs Piper's "control" to Horace,

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and it was connected with Myers' "own poems." This association of ideas was significant, as we shall see. In March "Myers" repeated that he could not yet reply to the question. In April, when Mrs Sidgwick reminded him of the matter, she received the following unexpected reply :

I recall the question and I had Ode to Nature on my mind; but as I thought I loved another ode better I did not reply until I could say it more clearly. Do you remember immortality? . . . I thought I could answer.¹

Mrs Sidgwick saw no sense in this, for there are no odes by Horace with these titles. Some months later, however, Mr J. G. Piddington discovered that among Myers' "own poems" there are two, headed respectively "Ode to Nature," and "Immortality"; both these contain echoes of Horace, which suggest that when writing them Myers may have had in his mind

¹ *Proc.*, vol. xxii. p. 398.

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two odes, namely, Hor. *C.* iii. 4 and the Archytas Ode (Hor. *C.* i. 28). The poem on "Immortality" shows traces of the influence of Hor. *C.* i. 28 both in the language and in the thought expressed. Here is a stanza :

Yet in my hid soul must a voice reply
Which knows not which may seem the viler gain,
To sleep for ever or be born again,
The blank repose or drear eternity.
A solitary thing it were to die
So late begotten and so early slain,
With sweet life withered to a passing pain,
Till nothing anywhere should still be I.
Yet if for evermore I must convey
These weary senses thro' an endless day
And gaze on God with these exhausted eyes,
I fear that, howsoe'er the seraphs play,
My life shall not be theirs nor I as they,
But homeless in the heart of Paradise.¹

Mrs Piper had never read these poems, and

¹ *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 172.

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it was only months after this reference was made that Mr Piddington observed that there are poems by Myers bearing these titles (namely "Ode to Nature" and "Immortality"). It was in the April of the following year, 1908, that the significance of these allusions forced itself upon his mind. At that time Mrs Piper was in the States, and Mr G. B. Dorr, a gentleman well known in Boston, was holding sittings with her, with the object of trying to find out whether the "Myers"-personality showed any close familiarity with the literature, especially the classical literature, so well known to Frederic Myers. These attempts yielded most satisfactory results.

On one of these occasions (March 10, 1908), Mr Dorr read aloud a passage from Myers' autobiography.¹ When he came to the para-

¹ See *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, by F. W. H. Myers, p. 17. Longmans & Co.

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graph referring to his early love for classical authors, and among these for Horace, the hand of the entranced Mrs Piper wrote :

Ode to i motalty imortality
Ode Horace to Mortality.

This reply conveyed no meaning to Mr Dorr, who knew nothing of the question which had been put a year before. Then followed an emotional outburst, in which the communicator spoke of having at last found "my dreamed of joys."

At a later sitting in April of the same year, "Myers" associated "Orion Neptune's son" with Horace, asking in this connection, "Do you remember an ode of Horace?" Now there is only one ode of Horace in which both Orion and Neptune are mentioned and that is the "Archytas Ode." Mr Dorr replied :

I do not know my Horace well, and I recall none at the moment. Why do you ask ?

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“Myers” rejoined :

Because you ought to know that I am Myers by my giving all these proofs.¹

But Mr Dorr did *not* recognise the proofs, because he did not know what the trance-personality who claimed to be Myers obviously did know, namely, that this Archytas Ode had been the subject of a test-question put to him a year before, a test-question of considerable importance from the point of view of evidence of identity.

To a careful reader there are obvious reasons why Mrs Verrall's question should have been answered in this involved and obscure way rather than directly. A direct answer would have been explicable by thought-transference. Whereas, by referring to two poems written by Myers, both written under the influence of

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxiv. pp. 153, 154 ff., 158 ff.

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Horace, and one reminiscent of the particular ode in question, the intelligence at work showed that it possessed an independent understanding of the question, and a clear recollection of ideas which prompted the letter of 1884, but were not present in the mind of Mrs Verrall. Moreover, no one can fail to be struck by the initiative shown in working out the answer in so subtle a manner. The fact that this same poem on "Immortality" was alluded to a year later, when Horace was mentioned, seems to make the intention of the communicator quite unmistakable.

This incident has an important sequel. After Mr Piddington had reached the above interpretation of the communications respecting Horace and Immortality, he made the discovery that two earlier scripts, written automatically by Mrs Verrall and purporting to be inspired by Frederic Myers, contained

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allusions to the Archytas Ode. These were both written a few weeks after Myers' death, and one of them was the first intelligible bit of writing that Mrs Verrall had ever obtained. It was dated March 5, 1901. She says :

I was writing in the dark, and could not see what I wrote; the words came to me as single things, and I was so much occupied in recording each as it came that I had not any general notion of what the meaning was . . . though the words are consecutive and seem to make phrases, and though some of the phrases seem intelligible, there is no general sense in the passage.¹

A few weeks later, on April 27, another script contains allusions to this Ode, and these two scripts have another interesting feature. They both seem to be inspired by another reminiscence in addition to that of Horace's Ode. They are reminiscent of a poem by Myers called "On a Spring Morning at Sea."

¹ *Proc.*, vol. xx. p. 9.

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This poem Mrs Verrall had not at that time read, for it had not been published. It is a poem in marked contrast to the Horace Ode and to the poem on Immortality. "On a Spring Morning at Sea" also deals with the thought of the Hereafter, but under the imagery of a glorious Dawn, a dawn bringing infinite satisfaction.

If the mind of Frederic Myers inspired these two scripts it is easy to see why the gloomy Archytas Ode and the joyful Spring Morning Ode should be in juxtaposition in the mind influencing the writing.

In the script of April 27, in which the Spring Morning is referred to, Mrs Verrall was urged to "look well for a book under something blue."¹

The script was very insistent on this point, which was repeated on several occasions. A

¹ Cp. *Proc.*, vol. xx. p. 198; vol. xxiv. p. 160.

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description of a room where the book should be found was at last given, and the statement added: "It is a test." The description was not recognised by Mrs Verrall until it was pointed out to her that the room was evidently that of Mrs Sidgwick at Cambridge. In this room, under the *blue* drapery of a window-seat, Mrs Sidgwick kept, in a box, a sealed envelope which had been given to Professor Sidgwick some years before; the contents of this envelope she did not know, and she had even forgotten that the packet was there. It was not until three years later (1905) that Mrs Verrall learned of its being found in the spot denoted by her writing. This envelope contained, among other things, a printed copy of the then unpublished poem, "On a Spring Morning at Sea."¹

Again, it is clear to anyone who connects

¹ *Proc.*, vol. xx. pp. 195-198; vol. xxiv. p. 168.

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these facts together, that if the mind responsible for the ideas in Mrs Verrall's script was the mind of Frederic Myers, it was appropriate that allusions to the poem "On a Spring Morning at Sea" should be associated with an attempt to describe the place where this forgotten envelope, containing the poem, lay hid, and we can see why he should be urgent that it should be sought for.

Mr Piddington is surely justified in suggesting that the object of the combination of allusions is

to contrast the gloomy foreboding of Horace's "Archytas" ode and Myers' "Immortality" with the roseate hopes of "On a Spring Morning at Sea," and thereby to imply that the happy and not the gloomy prevision was the true one.¹

I will quote a few lines of the poem, "On a Spring Morning at Sea," so that the contrast

¹ *Proc.*, vol. xxiv. p. 168.

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in feeling between this poem and that on
"Immortality" may be noted.

And such a sight as this is, I suppose,
Shall meet thee on the morrow of thy death;
And pearl to sapphire, opal into rose
Melt in that morn no heart imagineth;—
Fair as when now thine eyes thou dar'st not close
Lest the whole joy go from thee at a breath,
And the sea's silence and the heaven's repose
Evanish as a dream evanisheth.¹

This incident is typical of a class of experiences which have been of frequent occurrence since Mr Myers' death.² They fully bear out Mr Piddington's statement that :

¹ Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*, p. 54.

² Those who wish to study these experiences will find them recorded in detail in volumes of the *Proceedings* of the S.P.R. I have briefly analysed some of these incidents in a small work, *Mors Janua Vitæ?* published by Messrs Rider & Son, 2s. 6d. net.

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The presence in the communications . . . of associations of ideas once familiar to Frederic Myers is not accidental, and that they are introduced—often with considerable delicacy and subtlety—for the purpose of suggesting the action of his personality.¹

They are interesting also from another point of view. They emphasise repeatedly a thought which it is characteristic of Frederic Myers to wish to convey; the fact, namely, that the life beyond is a goal worthy of our aspirations and capable of satisfying and fulfilling our highest hopes; that there indeed awaits us a “morn no heart imagineth.”

We find this strain running through the recent communications. Their ostensible object is to give proof of survival, but they do more than that, they breathe a spirit of assurance and of hope, they stimulate and cheer.

¹ *Proc.*, vol. xxiv. p. 19.

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In each class of the phenomena which we have been considering, and in others besides, there are innumerable cases which might be cited in support of the propositions which I have laid before the reader. Yet the question is still asked by many: Is the evidence convincing?

I think that we are apt to forget that the answer to this question does not depend alone on the quality of the evidence. It depends largely on the capacity which we may have for appreciating the evidence. It is only those who approach it with an open mind and sympathetic insight, and who also have learned how to estimate the worth of evidence, who can at all do justice to the facts or learn their true significance. A serious hindrance to the formation of an impartial judgment on these matters has been well pointed out by Signor Bozzano at the close of a series of valuable

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articles, which appeared recently in the *Annales Psychiques* (1910).

We know, he says in effect, that whenever the mind has for many years uninterruptedly formed erroneous associations of ideas, it may become literally incapable of dealing with any association of ideas widely different from those it has always recognised. Mental ruts are very hard to get out of. A mind working habitually in a familiar rut may become quite impervious to facts belonging to another line of experience, and, however well-attested these facts may be, such an one will receive no impression from them, neither will he be able to perceive the conclusion to which they logically lead. This indicates that serious responsibility lies upon us, and great opportunities are opening before us. Although the phenomena are not new, we are confronted with a new experience in the methods of

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dealing with them ; and they seem to occur in greater abundance in response to the attention paid to them. This opportunity is offered to students, but not without price. The price we have to pay for knowledge is always patience, perseverance, fairmindedness. Those who do not care to pay the price will not have knowledge thrust upon them.

In conclusion, if it seems strange that knowledge so important should be concealed in such intricacies and should demand so much industry for its discovery, I would commend for consideration four lines translated by Mr Myers and quoted in his *Classical Essays*. They are these :

Thus then will God to wise men riddling show
Such hidden lore as not the wise may know.
Fools in a moment deem His meaning plain,
His lesson lightly learn, and learn in vain.

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SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

At the close of this lecture¹ a remark was made by one of the audience, raising an important objection to the view I have taken that the communications above referred to, which have come in the name of Mr Myers and other pioneers in this research, are what they claim to be.

The speaker said that this view was in his opinion precluded by the character of these communications, which he described as "shifty" and lacking in straightforwardness. He complained that they showed an unwillingness to admit ignorance quite unworthy of the truthful, honourable men they claimed to proceed from. My reply, at the time, was that I failed to recognise this shiftiness in the communications

¹ The above paper was read at a general meeting of the Quest Society on Jan. 16, 1911.

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which make this claim. I felt, however, that the adequacy of my memory might be called in question. I therefore wrote to Sir Oliver Lodge, asking him to be kind enough to tell me what he thought of the objection in this connection.

He kindly wrote as follows, and he gives me permission to quote his words :

“ A certain amount of ‘ shiftiness ’ is noticeable, indeed very prominent, in answers obtained through planchette and other mechanical methods of evoking the rudimentary kind of automatism. And by such methods it is unusual to obtain an admission of ignorance : an answer of some kind is nearly always forthcoming. . . . But it would be a great mistake for anyone to suppose that the higher communications, such as we sometimes get to-day, have any real family resemblance to these rudimentary phenomena. . . . The communi-

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cations from 'Myers' and 'Gurney' are remarkably straightforward and satisfactory—no sign of 'shiftiness' in them. Several times they have said, 'But you don't seem to realise that we are ignorant of some things'—or words to that effect. . . . Moreover they often admit verbal and other mistakes, but remind us that it is necessary to discriminate between errors or confusions which creep in through the automatist, and errors which are inherent in the mind of the communicator."

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