

1848 - 1948
The Spirit Ladder of a
Hundred Years

*Being a Lecture delivered by Brigadier
C. A. L. Brownlow, D.S.O., to the
London Spiritualist Alliance on the
22nd April, 1948, in recognition of
the centenary of modern Spiritualism*

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1848-1948 : The Spirit Ladder of a Hundred Years

ON 5th May, 1884, in St. James's Hall, the Rev. Stainton Moses, as its first President, delivered his inaugural address on the foundation of the London Spiritualist Alliance. He opened by saying : " We have room for all who realize the importance in a materialistic age of expressing a belief that there is something behind matter and that death does not end all."

As the word Alliance signifies, the L.S.A. was a combination of other societies and is, in consequence, directly descended from the British National Association of Spiritualists, formed in 1873, which in its turn was derived from the British Association of Progressive Spiritualists, established at Darlington in 1865 : one of the first societies in this country. Therefore the L.S.A. has roots set deeper in the past than any other similar growth in England, and its history covers nearly the whole course of the hundred years under review.

As is well known, March 31st, 1848, is the date from which this centenary is counted. On that day at Hydesville, in the State of New York, the Fox family, who had been disturbed in their humble frame-dwelling by strange manifestations, received by raps intelligent answers to questions put to the unseen rapper. Now it must not be assumed, for it would be the gravest of errors to do so, that the Fox family event is to be considered as the first manifestation in human history from which some men have deduced the reality of communication between those living on earth and intelligent beings in another condition of existence. Throughout the written story of mankind are found accounts of happenings out of the normal that lead to this conclusion, while in the burial grounds of peoples who lived in distant times and who left no record in words, relics have been discovered which clearly indicate belief in an after life. It was not a deluded modern Spiritualist, but Socrates, who said : " This familiar spirit, this divine voice that you have so often heard of and which Melitus has endeavoured so much to ridicule ; this spirit has stood by me from infancy."

Any account of this centenary must start with the name of Andrew Jackson Davis, born of poor parents on the banks of the Hudson river. At an early age he was clairvoyant and heard voices. The teachings of his *Harmonial Philosophy*, in spite of repetition and vagueness, have influenced Spiritualists of all degrees of thought ; even though Joseph McCabe writes of his work : " There is no need to examine his book seriously." It comes as a surprise to realize that Davis died as late as 1910. He described Spiritualism as : " The development of sublime relations between mankind and the next sphere of existence."

The unusual occurrences in the Fox family received remarkable publicity throughout the U.S.A. As a stone dropped in a pond causes an expanding wave, so the news spread and raised intense interest. It was as if some psychic volcano that ever smoulders in the regions of the unconscious had suddenly erupted. University professors and editors of the Press poured a constant stream of icy water on this conflagration but could not put it out. The spivs of those days found a happy hunting ground to practice trickery ; and devout Irishmen relished breaking up meetings and cudgelling the nearest Spiritualist's head as a devil's agent and the enemy of the Pope. The Spiritualists themselves were in a state of confusion, so quickly had an excited public forced the pace of expansion.

The three Fox sisters now started on careers as mediums, which were to involve them in victories, vicissitudes and defeats. Other mediums emerged into public notice. But beneath the turmoil and the pother moved the slow, sure force of a liberated reality. Time and again calm, reflective persons went to investigate and dispel illusion, only to discover facts that altered their opinion. Among public men of note so attracted and convinced were Dr. Robert Hare, Professor in the University of Pennsylvania, and the Hon. J. W. Edmonds, President of the Senate and Judge of the Supreme Court of New York. The initial excitement subsided ; but from America messengers had gone forth to Europe. I will now trace the effect of this impact on these islands ; and would like you to imagine a sort of spirit ladder set against the structure of time, where each storey of the building is a decade into which we will peep as we climb up to the present here and now.

1850—59.

The first medium of note to arrive was Mrs. Hayden, who landed in England in 1852. She combined psychic powers of a high order with an intelligence equally high, as witnessed by the fact that she later graduated and practised as a doctor of medicine. She soon won supporters, such as Doctor Ashburner, a royal physician, and Professor de Morgan, the mathematician and philosopher.

The new idea spread widely, but was looked upon, in the main, as a sort of curious entertainment. Ladies sent out invitations to "Tea and Table-Turning." There was, however, a small body of sincere persons who faced mockery and disdain because of their views about the vital significance of these strange phenomena. As can be imagined, these claims of unexplained raps and movements of objects brought certain scientists on to the scene to expose the nonsense. Of these was the great Faraday, who declared the cause to be unconscious muscular action, and he devised an ingenious apparatus to support his contention. Sir David Brewster, another scientist, remarked : "The world is obviously going mad."

Mrs. Hayden returned to America and the vogue for table-turning died away. Superior persons said Spiritualism was dead and done with, and would never return. But it did return. In 1855 a new American

invasion began, with the advent of the medium David Richmond, at Keighley in Yorkshire. From that visit sprang and spread the powerful and devout Spiritualist Movement in the north of England. There and then, David Weatherhead founded the first Spiritualist paper, the *Yorkshire Spiritualist Telegraph*, under the editorship of W. B. Morrell. In the same year, 1855, there landed at Liverpool a slight youth with blue eyes and auburn hair—D. D. Home, the greatest of mediums, a Scot who as a child had been sent to the U.S.A., and there had come to notice because of his psychic powers. Writing of his feelings on arrival, he says : “ I had this strange power, which made a few look with pity on me as a poor deluded being, devil sent to lure souls to destruction ; while others were not chary of treating me as a base imposter.”

His gifts became quickly known in the social world of London and, among many who had seances, I mention Sir David Brewster, Lord Brougham, the Earl of Dunraven, Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Mr. Ben Coleman and Mr. T. A. Trollope. From London, Home departed for the Continent, where the Emperor Napoleon and Empress Eugenie were fascinated by their experiences with him. About these powers of which he had only heard, an eminent Doctor wrote in a scientific magazine as follows :

“ For ourselves we entirely disbelieve. We venture to recommend a study of Pratt’s *Mechanical Philosophy* : and he may perhaps catch a sense of the pitying scorn with which those nurtured on the strong meat of inductive philosophy view these sickly Spiritualist dreamers.” The worthy Doctor then had a sitting with a medium in his own house, which so altered his opinions that he forgot Pratt’s *Mechanical Philosophy* and wrote quite a different sort of article to a Spiritualist paper.

At the close of the 'fifties, large sections of the country from top to bottom were being stripped of old faiths by scientific materialism. German scholars had dug into the historic foundations of the Church and had laid bare a frightening weakness. Geologists had unanswerably shown the record of the rocks to reveal man as a newcomer in an ancient world of life. Herbert Spencer had produced a practical philosophy that pointed out man as an incredibly ignorant morsel, poised on the brink of a vast Unknowable. Darwin had weaved biology into the inductive pattern of a genealogical tree which revealed noble man as descended not only from William the Conqueror, but from an ape-like ancestor, and that all creatures were his relatives. Matthew Arnold, among the poets, wailed classic tunes of stoical despair ; while Fitzgerald echoed the fatalistic nihilism of Omar Khayyam. To those who saw with sadness the ancient vision of another and a better world becoming engulfed in an encircling gloom, there appeared a psychic light that moved strangely in the darkness, that could not be swept away either by scorn or by argument, that could not be adequately explained, but which, nevertheless, brought a great hope and a greater joy to those who would look upon it.

This period is noteworthy for the rise of psychic literature. In the *Cornhill Magazine* for August, 1860, Thackeray being editor, appeared the article on Spiritualism called "Truth Stranger than Fiction," which caused such a commotion that the circulation dropped by 20,000 copies. Of Spiritualist periodicals founded at this time were *The Medium and Daybreak*, *Human Nature*, *The Spiritualist*. Of books I must mention *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*, by Robert Dale Owen, son of the social reformer; *From Matter to Spirit*, by Mrs. de Morgan, with a preface by her husband, Professor de Morgan, who therein states :

" I am perfectly convinced I have seen and heard, in a manner which makes unbelief impossible, things called spiritual which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence or mistake. But when it comes to the cause of these phenomena I find I cannot adopt any explanation which has been suggested."

At this time also was published Home's book, *Incidents of My Life*. Home had returned to England from the Continent and began the great period of his mediumship of which I was once privileged to see original notes. Dr. Elliotson, who in the 'fifties said of Mrs. Hayden : " Anything approaching this impious audacity we have never witnessed ; " said to Mr. Ben Coleman in the 'sixties, after a sitting with Home : " You may tell the world I much regret my folly in so long resisting the truth."

Of other mediums I must mention the revered name of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, who was also a journalist and a speaker ; and Miss Nichols of whom a certain man wrote : " I am not going to be gammoned by such nonsense." After a sitting he altered his views somewhat, and wrote an essay called " Mary Jane or Spiritualism chemically explained." Then he had another sitting and more marvels occurred ; for Miss Nichols became Mrs. Guppy and Mr. Guppy became a Spiritualist.

In America the U.S.A. was rent by civil war. In the life of Mrs. Maynard, the medium, we read how as a young girl at that time she visited President Lincoln, and, through her, Daniel Webster, departed from this earthly life, had urged him not to flinch from his projected Emancipation Proclamation. Mrs. Maynard says : " When I regained consciousness, I was standing in front of Mr. Lincoln and he was sitting back in his chair with arms folded, looking intently at me."

In this decade there was an expansion of Spiritualist beliefs, but the intellectual mind of the country paid little attention, for interest was centred on the exciting match being played between the bishops and the scientists over the reality of man's nature. Huxley defended wicket truth against the ecclesiastical bowling, which he knocked across every boundary of the Lords. This made it all the more surprising when Disraeli made his dramatic pronouncement at Oxford that he was on

the side of the angels. I have often wondered if this act was due to surreptitious readings of Spiritualist literature in the quiet of the trees of Hughenden.

1870—79.

We will climb our ladder again and look into the next-floor windows, the 'seventies. The extent of Spiritualism at this time may be judged by the estimate made by Mr. Cromwell Varley that one hundred mediums, many undeveloped, was the total in these islands. Also, the hostile attitude of the Press reflects the general outlook of the public on the subject. Spiritualists were still a small band of pioneers open to abuse and ostracism; nevertheless their claims were gradually percolating through the nation, drop by drop.

In 1871 was published the report of a Committee convened by the Dialectical Society of London to "Investigate the Phenomena alleged to be Spiritual." Of the thirty-three members, only three were Spiritualists, but the report states: "Four-fifths entered on the inquiry wholly sceptical. Only by irresistible evidence the sceptical were reluctantly convinced." Thomas Huxley, asked to sit on the Committee, had politely refused with these concluding words: "Better live a crossing-sweeper than die and be made to talk twaddle by a medium."

When, therefore, the somnolent and cigar-scented atmosphere of the Athenaeum was moved by the news that the young F.R.S., William Crookes, was about to investigate Spiritualism, the intellectual ring expressed their delight that the degrading superstition would now be dissipated by scientific means. The results of this investigation, published in the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, dispelled illusion, but not in the manner anticipated; so that Crookes, in his turn, became the target for hostility, steeped in venom. Crookes' chief instrument was Home, who now closed his career as a medium and retired to the Continent. He died in 1886, and his grave in Paris bears these words from Corinthians: "To another the discerning of Spirits."

In 1873 was founded The British National Association of Spiritualists, a year after the Spiritual Evidence Society, which became the Marylebone Spiritualist Association. In the year 1872 the Rev. Stainton Moses came to London, where a sitting with Lottie Fowler opened his mental eyes so that he developed his own splendid mediumship, of which his automatic-writing has given us *Spirit Teachings*.

In '76 Sir William Barrett read a paper on Spiritualism at the annual meeting of the British Association which gave great offence to other scientists; but it is curious to note that not only Barrett, but the three scientists who supported him in this matter, namely, Wallace, Crookes and Rayleigh, were honoured, in due time, by the Order of Merit.

Spirit photography first came to notice in England in this decade, and of contemporary mediums I mention Charles Foster, Florence Cook, Slade, David Duguid, Eglinton, Monck and Madame d'Esperance.

1880—89.

The 'eighties found Spiritualists trying to put their house in order, for the exposure of fraud among certain mediums had led to self-examination. Delighted opponents falsely insinuated this meant that all mediums were fraudulent and all Spiritualists deluded. The fact of fraud among mediums must be faced because it is there ; but not in the way enemies like to suggest. Mediums are born and are led into their exacting public life by inner forces. Their powers wax and wane and hence, being human, they are tempted and sometimes fall to trickery at moments when their genuine gift is absent. In consequence of a fresh outlook, new organizations came into being of which two claim our attention—first the Society for Psychical Research and, second, the London Spiritualist Alliance.

The idea of the S.P.R. was mooted by Sir William Barrett, and the Society was established in 1882, with Professor Henry Sidgwick, of Cambridge, as its President, who said in his first presidential address : “ I say it is a scandal that the dispute as to the reality of these phenomena should still be going on ; that so many competent witnesses should have declared their belief in them ; and yet the educated world should still be simply in an attitude of incredulity.”

Among the first members we find the names of Edmund Gurney, who died in 1888, F. W. H. Myers, Stainton Moses, Frank Podmore, Richard Hodgson and Mrs. Sidgwick. The Prime Minister, Mr. Gladstone, joined the Society and stated : “ Psychical Research is the greatest work, by far the greatest, being done in the world today.” Of the S.P.R., it has been said that it carries on its books more names famous in the world of thought than any other institution except the Royal Society. Its labours during the 'eighties included a report on thought reading ; the publication of *Phantasms of the Living* by Gurney, Myers and Podmore, and the beginning of the investigation of the Piper mediumship which was to continue into the next century. The Society issued records in the form of serial *Proceedings* which have gained world-wide renown, not only for painstaking exactitude, but also for a luxuriant terminological growth where precious orchids can be found hanging in a vast jungle of words.

I have already mentioned that the L.S.A. was founded in 1884, with the Rev. Stainton Moses as the first President, an office he held throughout the 'eighties. He also edited *LIGHT*, which was first published in 1881. The activities of the L.S.A. in those days are best revealed in the book of printed addresses delivered in the Banqueting Room of St. James's Hall.

1890—99.

We have now climbed our ladder to the 'nineties. Let us first look in at the Spiritualist window and then into that of Psychical Research. We see a table littered with papers at which sits a bearded, smiling man. He is talking to someone whom he calls his Senior Partner ; and when

we ask who that might be, he answers jovially, GOD. The man is that great-hearted Spiritualist, W. T. Stead. In the Christmas number of his magazine, the *Review of Reviews*, for 1891, he published a feature, "Real Ghost Stories," which were as popular as the Cornhill article of 1860 was unpopular. In his introductory remarks Stead says: "The time has surely come when the fair claim of ghosts should no longer be ignored. Either these things exist or they do not. If they do not there can be no harm in examination. If they do we have no right to shut our eyes."

In 1892 he found himself capable of automatic writing, and an American woman journalist, Julia Ames, who had lately died, wrote through Stead's hand to a woman friend in London to whom she had also appeared in a vision, according to a pact. These letters were published in Stead's Spiritualist paper, *Borderland*, as "Letters from Julia," and subsequently in book form, which has been reprinted many times and translated into many languages.

Turning on our ladder to glance in at the Psychic Research window, we notice two mediums, Mrs. Piper and Eusapia Paladino, and two investigators, Dr. Hodgson and Sir Oliver Lodge. Dr. Richard Hodgson, an Australian, was a man of brilliant intellect and an experienced investigator of the S.P.R. When Hodgson first touched the Piper mediumship at the end of the 'eighties, he began a ten-year contest with facts that in the end forced his sceptical mind to concede the reality of survival and communication with the dead. It is an episode in the history of Spiritualism of gripping interest and high import. In his report to the S.P.R. published in the *Proceedings* for 1897, Hodgson states: "I cannot profess to have any doubt that the chief communicators to whom I have referred are veritably the personages that they claim to be; that they have survived the change called death; and that they have directly communicated with us whom we call living through Mrs. Piper's entranced organism."

Oliver Lodge, then a young and rising scientist, was boldly examining phenomena both with Mrs. Piper and with Eusapia Paladino. In later years he said of these experiences: "The hypothesis of surviving intelligence and personality is the simplest and most straightforward and the only one that fits all the facts." In 1898 Sir William Crookes, in his presidential address to the British Association, spoke of his psychical researches in the 'seventies and confirmed all that he had published at that time. He closed by saying: "We strive to pierce the inmost heart of Nature. Veil after veil we have lifted and her face grows more beautiful, august and wonderful with every barrier that is withdrawn."

1900—09.

WE come to the new century and the sixth floor. I now see history in the perspective of my own memory, for I began this decade a schoolboy and left it a subaltern officer. I interpolate this remark because it is interesting to note that, during this period, I neither heard,

read nor knew anything whatever about Spiritualism or Psychical Research. I was completely ignorant of this subject, as were so many then.

In 1902 the Spiritualists' National Union was inaugurated at Bootle in Lancashire. Associated with it was *The Two Worlds*, founded in 1888 by Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, who was its first editor, and through whose mediumship came the Seven Principles of Spiritualism, adopted by the S.N.U.

These principles are :—The Fatherhood of God : The Brotherhood of Man : Continuous Existence : Communion of Spirits and Ministry of Angels : Personal Responsibility : Compensation and Retribution hereafter for good or ill done on earth : A Path of Endless Progression.

Mr. Hanson Hey held the office of General Secretary of the S.N.U. until his death in 1920, and left behind him a record of selfless labours and high achievement. He described the Spiritualist position as follows : “ Spiritualism teaches we are spirits *now* for purposes of experience. We have no creeds nor dogmas, but a set of principles for each to steer his bark over the troubled waters of life.”

The organized Spiritualist Movement, *not* to be confused with Spiritualism in its wide sense, led to a proliferation of “ churches ” throughout the land. The use of the word “ church ” has been criticised as offensive ; but it is correct, for one of the meanings the dictionary gives is—“ a building set apart for divine worship.” The individual freedom that operates these Spiritualist churches does lead them into dangers and difficulties, but the alternative is a dominant central authority to whom the individual must surrender his birthright of free personal judgement on ultimate conceptions. One cannot have it both ways. In my humble opinion, the answer is toleration ; especially from those who think themselves more closely related to the Almighty than ordinary folk.

In 1901, F. W. H. Myers was elected President of the S.P.R., and he died the following year. His great work *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* was published posthumously. It was Myers who coined the word *subliminal* to convey his belief that the reality of man lies beneath the conscious surface in an expansive psychic organism that reaches out to contact regions mysterious to man's limited conscious mentality. Of death Myers was often heard to say : “ I am counting the days to the holidays.”

In 1905 the President of the S.P.R. was Professor Richet who, in the following year, startled the intellectual world by stating his conviction of the reality of materialization phenomena ; the result of his experiments with Marthe Beraud, afterwards known as Eva C, carried out in General Noel's home in Algiers.

In 1908 Archdeacon Colley discovered the photographic mediumship of William Hope in the Crewe circle, which had been formed three years before.

In this decade, too, Admiral Usborne Moore started his seven-year self-imposed task of investigation, mostly in the U.S.A., which is recorded in his *Glimpses of the Next State* and *The Voices*.

In 1909 the Rev. Charles Tweedale sent out from Weston vicarage, where such wonderful manifestations had been vouchsafed to him, that best of books for inquirers : *Man's Survival after Death*.

1910—19.

In this period the following distinguished savants were among the presidents of the S.P.R. :—Professor Henri Bergson, Professor Gilbert Murray and Lord Rayleigh. It is not, however, to the S.P.R. but to the Continent that our attention must be turned, for there we find that the remarkable results obtained by Richet were being confirmed and extended by the investigations of Baron Schrenck Notzing, Madame Bisson and Dr. Geley. Their results were published separately by these investigators, and had the novel interest and value of being supported by photographs that revealed the presence and the phases of formation of materialization, from inchoate extruding masses to defined shapes of human limbs and forms. Contemporaneously, Dr. W. J. Crawford in Belfast was carrying out his investigation of the mechanical action of psychic rods in the production of movements, his mediums being the Goligher circle.

These important facts confirm the recorded experiences of William Crookes and others in the 'seventies. Geley gave the name *ectoplasm* to the condition of matter which materializing mediums exude in ideoplastic streams and which assume shapes expressive of human identity. It accounts for the stories of ghosts in solid form and of material beings from another world that have been attested to down the corridors of time. A significant fact is that those persons capable of giving ectoplasmic displays are as rare as men who love their enemies ; which leads to the difficulty of the general public accepting such accounts, because the natural reaction of men through conditioned reflexes is to reject the unfamiliar as untune.

On the night of the 14/15 April, 1912, the "Titanic" sank, and William Stead, Spiritualist, went to meet his Senior Partner. A month later Count Miyatovich, at Wimbledon, through the voice medium, Mrs. Wriedt, saw and recognized, I quote his own words : "the very person of my friend, William T. Stead." All three there heard these words : "Yes, I am Stead. William T. Stead."

The disaster was a curtain raiser to the First World War. Millions died and Sorrow contemplated Survival. The scientist cynically shook his head ; the philosopher discharged contradictory verbiage ; the parson murmured of a possible hope ; but the despised Spiritualist held up a light in the darkness of despair.

The figure of Sir Oliver Lodge suddenly loomed upon the mind of the people. Mrs. Osborne Leonard stood a good angel by his side. Mr. J. A. Hill supported him from a bed of sickness. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle,

sensing the full poignancy of the human tragedy, leaped into the glare of the public ring as a heavy-weight champion. Lodge published *Raymond* and Doyle *The New Revelation*. Tens of thousands obtained a glimpse of that which lies beyond death and were comforted ; for they at last realised survival was true.

Sir William Barrett, in his book, *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, relates the tie-pin case :

A young officer, killed in France, communicated : “ Tell Mother to give my pearl tie-pin to the girl I was going to marry.” None of the recipients knew about any girl he was going to marry, though he gave her name. Six months later she was discovered ; also in his returned kit was found a pearl tie-pin. One father received this message from his son : “ The boys suffer more when they return home in spirit and are refused a hearing than ever they suffered on the battlefield.”

1920—29.

The 'twenties saw an expansion of the two streams—Psychical Research and Spiritualism ; new societies, new books, new periodicals and a greater knowledge through the land. In 1921 was held the first International Congress of Psychical Research, representing twenty-six nations. Of books I mention Richet's *Thirty Years of Psychical Research* ; Wickland's *Thirty Years among the Dead* ; de Brath's translations ; Bradley's *Towards the Stars* ; Hannen Swaffer's *Return of Northcliffe* ; Margaret Underhill's *Your Infinite Possibilities*.

In research, the Crandon mediumship stands out pre-eminent, and it covered the whole decade. Dr. Crandon, Professor of Surgery in the Harvard Medical School, discovered his wife to be a powerful medium, through whom her dead brother communicated. The story is related by Malcolm Bird in his book, *Margery the Medium*.

On the social stage, Hannen Swaffer's search and discovery of Lord Northcliffe changed him to a Spiritualist, and his journalistic powers made him able to open a door in the blank wall of materialism to many persons in many places. Dennis Bradley's direct-voice seances at “ Dorincourt ”, Kingston Vale, were attended by audiences drawn from the London world of art, business and letters : and through the hands of Mrs. Hester Dowden and Miss Geraldine Cummins came, by automatic writing, not only messages but books.

Names, societies and books are but buoys which mark the flowing tide of Spiritualism ; and I must leave your imagination to picture the onward sweep of the deep waters of truth across the sands and banks of time. The truth of Spiritualism is to be likened to a vast natural movement in the depths of man's being, and is not a cultured growth forced in the glasshouse of a laboratory, nor a passing result induced by platform performers. To the individual the truth of it comes, for the most part, unexpectedly from the unknown.

For this reason I cite as an example my own case which was published in the October number of *LIGHT* for 1946. In December, 1927, at

Farnborough, Aldershot, I was making the funeral arrangements for my late Commander, when my head clerk said to me he had received a ouija-board message from our late chief, but could not understand the names of certain persons mentioned. I did not grasp what he was talking about and "ouija" was simply gibberish. Then he told me the message and I was startled; for I knew the names and I knew also he could not have known them. Whence came the names? There was nothing for it but to admit they came from my dead Commander.

In 1928 I went to the War Office, and walking home one day along Victoria Street, I suddenly stopped at a window. Then, looking up, I saw it was Conan Doyle's psychic bookshop. I went inside, and there was Sir Arthur himself, whom I had never met before. His daughter gave me my first psychic book, Tweedale's *Man's Survival after Death*. A few months later I was driving an antiquated car, my own, towards Salisbury Plain. As was not unusual, the car broke down, and I walked to a nearby house for assistance. The door opened and there I saw Sir Oliver Lodge, whom also I had never met before. And so it went on; not in laboratories but in life itself.

1930—39.

We have climbed our ladder to the ninth floor. In 1932 the *Psychic News* was founded and, using the technique of modern journalism, reached out to catch the ear of a new public, who began to think that there really might be something beyond the brass plate on a coffin and the reading of a legal will. In the 'thirties were published Mrs. Osborne Leonard's *My Life in Two Worlds*; Nandor Fodor's *Encyclopaedia*; Findlay's *On the Edge of the Etheric*; Bozzano's *Discarnate Influence in Human Life*; Carrington's *The Psychic World*; Palmstierna's *Horizons of Immortality*; but of publications issued at this time I think the most significant was Dr. Neville Whymant's book, *Psychic Adventures in New York*, in which that renowned scholar relates how he conversed with a voice that spoke archaic Chinese, where no one else present could have either understood or articulated such a tongue, uttered mysteriously from a far distant past. In 1931 Mr. David Gow, editor of *LIGHT* since 1914, handed over office to Mr. George Lethem who was to be succeeded in 1941 by Mr. Charles Richard Cammell, and in 1942 by the present editor, Mr. H. J. D. Murton.

I now state briefly some of the organizations and persons active in Spiritualism and Psychics at this time. There was the S.N.U. and, the newer and smaller body, the Greater World Christian Spiritualist League. Additional to these were numbers of independent units and groups scattered over the country. The S.N.U. had affiliated to it about five hundred churches, with 15,000 enrolled members and far greater numbers unregistered. Prominent in the Spiritualist cause were Mr. Hannen Swaffer, Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, Mr. J. A. Findlay, Mr. J. B. M'Indoe, Mr. Maurice Barbanell, Mr. E. W. Oaten, Mr. A. H. L. Vigurs. Besides the S.P.R., various Psychical Research Societies

were now in being both in and outside London ; of these I name the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation.

Of Spiritualist Societies I have time but to mention the L.S.A., whose Secretary, Miss Mercy Phillimore, is still carrying on her faithful service and giving freely of her wisdom : the M.S.A., on whose council in the 'thirties were Miss Estelle Stead and Mr. Shaw Desmond ; and the Spiritualist Community, first located at the Grotrian Hall under the leadership of Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, on whose platform came speakers such as Mr. Ernest Hunt and mediums of the order of Mrs. Estelle Roberts and Mr. Frank Leah.

Of the latter I have many happy memories of hours spent in the intimacy of his studio and in spiritual adventures in many places. His mediumship stands out in the history of the last hundred years as unique and amazing. For what can be more amazing than the portrayal by pencil or in paint of the unknown dead, of whom not even a photograph nor a sketch had been seen beforehand ? His work is treasured in the private records of a thousand homes, of which some have been reproduced in Paul Miller's book of Frank Leah's mediumship, *Faces of the Living Dead*.

1940—48.

We have arrived at the summit, the tenth storey, different from those which lie below us in the finality of time ; for here the sky is above, and about us the dust and noise of new construction. The decade began in the sliding catastrophe of the Second World War, so that one naturally compares the Spiritualist position with that in World War I. Perhaps because casualties were greater then and because bombing had made London itself a battlefield, interest in Spiritualism was in some ways less pronounced ; but it was there, and again in their thousands the bereaved found the truth that lights the darkness. In a way comparable to Conan Doyle, a new champion leaped into the lists of spiritual conflict. I refer to Lord Dowding. He did not say : " The antecedent improbability of the extension of personality from space-time continuum into the denigration of entropy is offset by the precognition of symbolic invariables through the ultra-marginal processes of extra-sensory perception." What he did say was : " The boys LIVE."

In Psychical Research the names of Dr. S. G. Soal ; Mr. G. N. M. Tyrrell ; Professor C. D. Broad and Dr. R. H. Thouless stand out clear and eminent. Over the air they declared that, on the basis of indisputable data, telepathy and precognition were established. They seemed to ask philosophy and science : " What do you make of that ? " with occasional asides to the pushing Spiritualist : " I do wish you would stand further away." Mr. Tyrrell's work, *The Personality of Man*, published in the Pelican books series, has made many think and read again. Mr. Harry Price, lately deceased, published *The End of Borley Rectory* and *Poltergeist over England*, monuments of accurate

record. It is curious to note what interest poltergeists, ghosts and the like, excite in clergymen who view with pious horror a mother when she communicates with the loving spirit of a son.

In the world of organized Spiritualism Mr. Vigurs assumed the office of President of the S.N.U. and, in his presidential address, warned his audience of difficulties and dangers likely to arise from a lack of qualified mediums and speakers. In 1945 Mr. E. Thompson succeeded Mr. E. W. Oaten as editor of *The Two Worlds*, an appointment the latter had held for twenty-six years. Mr. Oaten's experiences in Spiritualism embrace all aspects and are unique in range and quality, so I will now read from a letter he wrote to me last week :

“ You are at liberty to quote the incident. The date was the last day of February, 1911. The venue—Attercliffe Spiritualist Church, Sheffield. I was making a presentation when I was overcome by a wave of emotion. I asked the chairman to carry on. I retired to a corner of the platform and tried to calm myself and probe the cause of the upset. I saw my father, who was lying in Bristol in a state of paralysis. He told me : ‘ I am free and am coming to help you in your work.’ I announced the fact publicly and called attention to the time. It was 9.40 p.m. I got into the midnight train to Bristol and on arriving found my father had expired at 9.30 p.m. This is not an isolated experience. I have had several cases of friends—all Spiritualists who were familiar with the laws of communication—notifying me of their decease within an hour of its occurrence.”

Saluting Mr. Oaten in his old age, let us turn our thoughts to youth. All over the country young men and women are having discussions about Spiritualism in the little churches ; not taking things for granted but talking and thinking things over. They want to know.

We have finished our climb. Looking down over the face of these hundred years, I ask who will deny that there is something there, a body of experience from physical phenomena to mental impressions that indicates intelligent beings at work behind the material scheme of Nature, with intent to make their presence known ; to show us that those who have died live ; to tell us Love is the binding force of God's Universe ; and to implore us not to turn our eyes away from the truth of the Spirit World, especially in this age of scientific nihilism and national animosities.
