

AS ONE GHOST TO
ANOTHER

By
JOHN SCOTT

*“A stranger here
Strange things doth meet, strange glories see,
Strange treasures lodged in this fair world appear,
Strange all and new to me;
But that they mine should be who nothing was,
That strangest is of all, yet brought to pass.”*

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PREFACE

The writing of this preface presents some difficulty to one unaccustomed to self-expression in literary form, but I must recognise the claim that my personal history constitutes a necessary datum in the examination of this abnormal phenomenon and I will make the circumstantial account as brief as possible.

When my formerly obedient hand surprised me I knew very little of psychical research and less of Spiritualism, which I regarded as a pathetic delusion provoking humour in the daily Press and anger in the churches, yet, later, when I turned to the way of scientific reports on mediumship by the Society for Psychical Research, I found much familiar to me through my hand's writing.

Those well acquainted with me find it difficult to detect in my mental make-up a motive for automatism or self-suggestion. In our economic age I was occupied in earning a living with the hope of reaching independence and, having attained my object, I had no feeling of "frustration." Attention to theology or philosophy would have interfered with my effort and I ignored them. My attempts at literature had for years been confined to statistics and reports mainly culled from newspapers. In my youth I received what is termed a good education, but at the end of the ropes a wise schoolmaster, doubtful of my capability to absorb more learning, advised a period of residence in France and Germany as an easier way of acquiring useful knowledge.

In such circumstances my friends and relatives may be excused their laughter on reading the unexpected products of my hand. After their direct observation of my method of procedure the incongruity of the script with my known character remains their riddle. As for myself, I sometimes disagree with the opinions of my hasting hand, often I do not understand and doubt its statements, but it has given me interest and new views. There is a resemblance in letter formation by the barely legible scrawl to my normal handwriting, sometimes more sometimes less, just as the opinions written sometimes agree with mine and sometimes not. Often, while I wrote at first, I became conscious of words or a short phrase and, concluding I had written nonsense, I would impatiently throw the paper into a drawer, but when I deciphered the contents next day I was astonished at their well composed and lucid style, quite beyond my powers.

The arguments used to explain the source of the writing are, on the one side, traditional and definite and on the other complicated and requiring explanations. Either, as the Bible states, the "spirit" of a deceased person, called "messenger" in the original manuscripts, but "angel" by ecclesiastics, survives and is able to communicate through certain men on earth from another world, or, on the other hand, there exists something equally invisible termed a "subconscious," private to each of us, which acts with purpose and intelligence. The details of the latter theory are much disputed among modern psychologists. In my case the most usual notion expressed is that I have broken into the shadowy abode of the suggested

subconscious, seeking “compensation for frustration” and “escape,” thus letting loose an actor to simulate two dead persons, one not known to me at all and the other through hearsay. Another notion avers that, despite a mentally clean bill of health from medical experts, I suffer from the morbid state of “schizophrenia” and dual personality. It has even been maintained that the whole proceeding is physical, my brain and muscles being subject to “conditional reflex.”

Meanwhile I remain the ordinary human animal of social routine, distinguished from the herd merely by the label: John Scott.

PART I

Initiation

“Columbus, when he set out did not know where he was going. When he arrived he did not know where he was. When he returned he did not know where he had been. But he discovered America.”

When a City friend (see Appendix) who trusted nothing beyond his senses, experienced a series of events resistant to a sensory interpretation, my conventional opinions were threatened with uncertainty and confusion, until, having retired from a life of modern bustle to the calm of the country, I gained the opportunity of seeking a clue to what seemed incredible. Then, when with the aid of psychologists I was engaged in this search, my senses were affected by contacts apparently external and inconsistent with my normal exercise of perception.

Not being one of those who go to meet new ideas with a gun in their hand, and filled with great curiosity, I encouraged the novelty. Soon experiment in the region called “psychic” culminated in a vague urge to my right hand and I was interested to find that, with the voluntary collaboration of my muscles, it scrawled across the paper under it line after line in the semblance of writing. After this had happened twice, I was inclined to attribute its regularly repeated course to some nervous stimulus alone, until, when I was giving it rein on a third occasion, an onlooker suggested that I should encourage my hand by intentionally writing “the first word that comes into your head.” I wrote the word “when,” whereupon my hand continued with the perfectly legible words “you go upstairs I will go with you,” and so on, in intelligible phrases for eight lines. I had no intention of going upstairs and did not do so until many hours later when I went to bed. In the few lines written my hand thus called me “you” and wrote that its words were those of a person in a state to which I, like all others, must evolve. An examination of the previous scrawl seemed to detect that at two places there had been a vain attempt to write the word “when,” and there was a fanciful guess that perhaps the word did not come on my initiative but was suggested otherwise.

Fascinated by their assumptions and logical speculations I continued a fervent devotee of the psychologists and liked to think I had tapped my “subconscious.” To account for the curious personality of my hand's “you” and “I,” I accepted the conclusions of reports on “dual personality,” overlooking the divergences in those cases from the present phenomenon. I have learnt that the main difference lies in the two facts that dual personality is a morbid state which in the majority of cases reported yields to medical treatment, as Dr. Prince has proved, and, secondly, that no doctor can detect in me a tendency to fantasy or notable instability. Psychology, no less puzzled than the ordinary man, contents itself with affixing the label “sub-conscious dramatisation” to the consistency and continuity of my pencil's product, and it leaves to speculative curiosity the method of intelligent selection from

miscellaneous experiences and inherited tendencies, deemed for the most part somewhere dormant, the dramatis persona and a text suitable to his character.

On subsequent occasions my hand wrote that he (I use the word “he” as part of the datum and without prejudice) had manifested his presence to teach me one form of recording impressions on a mind in order that my hand might later cooperate with another better informed person. He began his pedagogic role with the following programme for his proposed course of lessons.

He would make contact three times a week at a fixed hour and the regularity of my presence at that hour was essential. My writing must be at the highest possible speed, even at the cost of legibility, and thus aid the exclusion to the greatest degree of my private stream of thought. He would like me to practice asking questions, but solely about the process, as he was not competent to give information on his present state of being. I asked him at once who he was, but he bid me wait for the answer until the dose of his tuition. When I objected to the inconvenience of the hour for writing he suggested, he allowed me to change it in the hope of all-important regularity of attendance. There were also detailed instructions about the softness of my pencil and my way of holding it, which never completely satisfied him. He was glad when I decided to banish observers likely to distract my attention. All was pleasantly reminiscent of schooldays. One lesson will suffice as specimen of all:

“Do you make my pencil move?” I asked.

“Well, I use your pencil with you; both of us choose words and write them.”

“I mean, could you write directly with my pencil?”

“No, I need your help. You see we are in partnership; everything you do I do, too. This would not be a success if one did something without the other.”

“Shall we not find difficulty with proper names?”

“It is not likely. You may find a little difficulty at first, but you will overcome that.”

“Can you see what we write as it is being written?” “Yes, to a certain extent when I want to.”

“Can a thought remain in my mind without my writing it?”

“Yes, that is what we are doing. Raise your pencil now, very quickly, and you will find our combined thought in your mind ready for writing.”

“Why do you never correct me when I write a wrong word?”

“There is no wrong word; it is your thought and my thought combined and what we then create should be reproduced by your brain in words which exactly represent our thought. When we think no words there is no correct word for you to reproduce.”

“I have been told that it would be well to begin after holding the pencil for a time to ‘magnetise’ it.”

“Yes, but the matter is not of first importance.”

“Should I not smoke before the hour of writing?”

“You may act naturally till you begin; thereafter it would be unwise to smoke, or do anything likely to distract your attention from the work in hand.”

“Do you prepare beforehand what you are going to teach me?”

“In a general way, but sometimes your mental state or ideas take me outside my programme and then it is all impromptu. It is a good thing you are asking questions, it should give you confidence. . . . You have another question?”

“Did you mean that when your thought combines with mine my brain forthwith produces a word?”

“Approximately, yes; but do not be so literal. I send out my thought to your mind and it fuses with yours, and then you and I produce words together, which you, or rather we, write with your hand. There is no way of describing to you with your present knowledge the intricate process of communication. Now, what next?”

“The above process cannot apply to proper names!”

“Not exactly in the same way. We have difficulty in thinking a proper name so that you can understand, but with us it is easy. You see from this answer that there are certain details you cannot understand at the present stage of knowledge in your world.”

“Is it better to write in a subdued light?”

“There is no difference in this work, but that does not apply to all psychic processes.”

“Remember everything - to be attentive, to be passive, to be in the right frame of mind, without all those wandering thoughts, and above all, keep moving on. . . . Yes, like that, only faster if possible. This is now much better, I hope you will be able to read it, but I don't care if you can't, it is always pace, and you cannot imagine how important that is from many points of view, because it excludes your own thoughts and because of other adjustments. . . . Now then, is that inquisitive mind at rest, or have you another searching question to put to your servant?... You hesitated at that word and felt we formed 'slave.' We did. You could not have thus hesitated a short time ago; that shows improvement. So no more fears.”

Before proceeding to the subsequent development of the writing, I think this further remark of his, about time, has interest:

“I have told you already our interpretative time is not like yours. You might not call it time at all, and that makes it so difficult to explain things to you. Think what time means to you in all you do and then try to imagine a day without time. How could you explain that day to a stranger who knew no time? Then put yourself in our position when you ask us to satisfy your curiosity about our life. Time is only one instance of its strangeness for you. Many other aspects we despair of describing to

you, because you haven't the ideas, much less the words. Yet you are impatient with me and call the words I suggest 'woolly and indefinite, not straight.' How can we speak straight? Our words would tell you as much as raps on the wall which were not a code. Don't count time by days and weeks, but think of it in terms of quality. Time well filled is shorter than idleness, is it not, even with you? Time is an affair of feeling: rapidity with us is unceasing work, activity. We have no other way of experiencing our sort of time, and therefore space, as you will discover. So don't grumble again about the passing of time; it may be very quick with us when it is slow with you. We think you have been quick with your writing in both estimates of time, yours and ours."

PART II

Contact

*"I was not bidden teach,
But simply listen, take a book and write,
Nor set down other than the given word,
With nothing left to my arbitrament
To choose or change."*

Teaching through my hand of the new method of writing had become a matter of routine, three times a week at the same hour during about twelve months, when the following event took place without previous warning that something less usual was going to happen. My writing became extremely rapid and in the latter part I had barely time to finish my questions before the written answer came.

"Good evening. Are you in good form tonight? There is another beside us who will talk to you, if you are able to take what he has to give. Will you try now? Here he is. See if you can take it down as easily and surely as you take me. There should be no difficulty after all my lessons, so you will see what you can do. . . . Here he is, are you ready?"

"How do you do? This is the first time I have spoken to you, but I hope it will not be the last. If we can get ourselves together and work easily, I hope to be able so to impress you that you can take my words with ease. It seems from these sentences that it will indeed be possible, but at first we must have some regular practice to ensure accuracy. There is much to say, but it must be done with order and regularity, and we must assure ourselves that the communications are accurate, that what I say is not changed in its nature when passing from our state to yours. I believe, from what I have been told, that you will be perfectly efficient in this respect, and you still seem to take the present communication in a satisfactory way. Perhaps I need not go further tonight, but merely say that I am content with this first experiment and sign myself . . . Good night."

Then I said aloud to my familiar influence, "Are you still here?" and my hand wrote the rapid answer, "Yes, I am still here and will now tell you my name, as I promised, if you can take it down correctly. It is HUBERT ATTLEY. Have you spelt it right?" I read it aloud letter by letter. "Yes, that is right. Do you want to ask me something else?"

"What were you in our world?"

"I was a schoolmaster."

"Where?"

"Not very far from you in Gloucestershire. Now, is that enough?"

"I am glad I could get the words of the new man."

"I am glad, too, and I am sure he is pleased with his experiment. Don't be discouraged. I think the novelty of this evening has prevented you doing yourself full justice. It will go better next time. Shall I go on and finish the paper, or have you had enough?"

"Let us stop for tonight," I said, and my hand wrote, "Good night. God bless you."

My new correspondent subsequently stated that he had been a politician, administrator and diplomat known to me by repute who had died in the last reign. He did not wish his identity made public until he asked me to do so. Newspapers had given me an idea of his appearance and I must have read some reports of his speeches. He was a distinguished scholar and wrote several books.

My hand wrote that this correspondent served as a channel of communication from spirits much further developed, as I was a channel from him to my present state.

As to the schoolmaster . . . At a public meeting in London, far from my home, a clairvoyant and clairaudient, who of course did not know my name, singled me out from a numerous audience and said: "I get the name Hubert called for you, but I am not shown anyone. I hear he is glad to greet you again. Do you remember him?" I said that perhaps I did.

"Now he is showing me what looks like a school playing yard - little boys playing. They look funny - big collars and their trousers seem too short and tight. I see their white socks and thick shoes. . . . Now he says, 'Tell him I lived in the Byronic age.

Some months later, in Coventry, I interviewed another seer's control and asked in precisely these words, "Can you find out where a man named Hubert, who was said to have had contact with me, lived?" He replied that he was inquiring and in the course of further conversation on other subjects, he suddenly said, "Here is a reply on your vibration - 'Lydney.'" That is a town in Gloucestershire, but I have never been there.

PART III

Conflict

*“Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself,
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproves: wherefore thou be wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt.”*

First of all I asked my new partner why he came to me of all people, and my hand wrote that when, after an unsuccessful experiment elsewhere, he was looking for a more sensitive mind, my mother suggested to him that he should try me. He took the necessary steps and was successful beyond expectation.

He begged me to have no fear. Difference in the quality of thought forbade evilly-disposed spirits access to a man's mind unless similar thought to theirs prevailed there. On the other hand a well-intentioned spirit found his approach facilitated by like thought to his own. Never could any spirit, good or bad, compel a normal mind; it can make suggestions only, which a man may accept or refuse.

He had no intention of painting word-pictures of landscapes and buildings, nor of describing in detail the divers occupations of the population visible to him. The best of such descriptions, he said, led to great error, simply because, in addition to a different space and time, there were basic factors in his form of life which could not be conveyed to human understanding in its present era of development. We were often disappointed, he knew, by the tantalisingly incomplete nature of communications; but the only channels open are minds, collections of associated ideas, powerless to accept an idea unrelated to their past acquirements as they extend very gradually from known to unknown. Alien ideas in an attempted invasion find no access. So, in order that there should be no abuse of our remarkable affinity of mind, he would confine his descriptions for the most part to the constitution of his spiritual life and social relations resembling subjects which were his interest in his former state.

My attitude to intercommunication was most important, and he gave the following advice:

“Accustom yourself to the idea that we are not supernatural, but still natural people like you. It is not anything magical that enables us to communicate, but the use of certain properties in our respective environments and the natural laws governing them, to be employed precisely as a chemist or electrician conducts his experiments. If people would treat us as chemical elements it would be better than to regard us as eerie ghosts. That kind of sentiment creates the most adverse atmosphere for us who are attempting to reach you and give you testimony or comfort. When that attitude is found in you there is actually a change in the quality of the thought used; a

shrinking or blurring takes place in the presence of fear: the psychic environment of the frank sceptic is easier to overcome than that of the coward or the superstitious person brought up to tremble at ghosts, devils and witches. It is a saddening experience for those of us attracted to you by love when the object of our affection shrinks in terror from our kindly influence. Personally I have not experienced this, but I am told that the grief of some spirits is most poignant, and I well believe it is so. Let me urge you to be as natural as possible with us, familiar and confident whenever there is contact or preparation for contact. You thus help to create the most fruitful situation and give the greatest pleasure.”

In answer to a question about our respective shares in this new partnership my hand wrote with its usual headlong speed:

“The initiative is mine and almost at once I open the introductory communication with you; thereafter we are one and mingle our thought at every word. The purport is entirely mine; the words and phraseology are large influenced by your degree of education and reading; your thought will unconsciously push away some words that I suggest. This does not happen too often, as you are very receptive and make it easy for me to impress the actual wording into which I have translated my thought for its passage from our silent selves to you who must have words.”

The following pages contain a selection from hundreds of explanations by which my hand sought to overcome my rationalistic point of view. The shorter examples generally represent what I might call outbursts, that is to say they were provoked directly, not by a question, though they sometimes disregarded one.

Many discussions in this part relate to the two theories which equally puzzled me - the ancient and familiar spiritual and the modern highly complicated psychological. Spiritual as opposed to physical furnished a clear enough notion, but what mental picture was possible of ‘a spirit’? On the other hand I hesitated before the theory that after an active life with no sense of failure, a “frustrated” subconscious unexpectedly became theatrical and “dramatised” to offer me “compensatory fantasy.”

It must be kept in mind that what follows does not represent a conscious intention to express my own ideas in comprehensible English, but a concentrated effort to place words on paper at a thoughtless speed regardless of meaning and legibility.

I

It still seems to me improbable that you are a personality outside my mind, and I would say about your claim that it admits of no confutation and produces no conviction.

“You allot too great powers to the ‘subconscious’ of your professors and make it another intelligence, which it must be. Think for a moment: supposing, as they assert, a vast collection of all you have experienced, heard and read during your life remains in some private store, which they name your own subconscious, or subliminal, what power, unknown to you, chooses those facts relevant to our

subject, and at the same time is able to simulate an intelligent person? The mere existence somewhere in you of a mass of happenings does not seem to me adequate to produce this writing. How, in the absence of a consciousness of this conglomeration, can the right words and sentiments be chosen and brought to writing without guidance from a thoughtful and attentive mind?

“You are well aware by now that it is not the familiar You who compose these productions; you have not a fraction of the time for that at this great pace; you do not even grasp the sense of the whole until time is available to consider and type it out; you are also aware that normally you compose with considerable difficulty, very different from the effortless rapidity with which you are writing our meaning now. Such considerations may well give you pause when you attribute all too forgotten scraps in your subconscious, or whatever else you choose to call it.

“You hear the professors say it is your other personality, and indeed it must be two other personalities, for the writing of my predecessor was not like mine. Does it seem to you probable that you can multiply personalities within you, with or without your will, you who are sane and in your daily life behave in no way different from your fellows, nor attract their notice by an eccentric habit of changing to another person? Why do these personalities refuse to come out at any other time, and yet are immediately at your service for our regular half-hour in the evening, executing their respective tasks with such ease and skill?

“What, moreover, is known in your state of personality? How can you define it, or where will you find authorities on psychology who do not differ widely on the idea? Surely it must seem more reasonable to you that an intelligent man in a further state of life is able to impart to you what he finds suitable to your mind and ideas through these little essays, never incorrect nor irrational, but all well composed and well expressed.

“I beg you to meditate more and more on what must appear to you surprising, and try if you cannot break down your obstinate convictions of the past. I can sympathise with you in calling this psychic work hide-and-seek; it undoubtedly is. But our hiding is not our desire. We writers wish intensely to be able to show ourselves and speak to you face to face, but we are obedient to laws which we know to be wise. If you find that the discovery of them is a matter of tiresome and often vain seeking, you need not despair on that account. Each of your generations is finding out more. If only you would remember that in psychic practices we are not hidden through caprice, but we are subject to laws similar to those familiar to you on earth. It is no new regime which hides us, but partial difference in laws as yet little known to those for whose later nature some portions await use.

“You will find out much directly you join us, and I think that you and others who have studied psychic matters will wonder that you did not discover more. You are all too willful in your study of us. There is much emotion in your methods, whether prejudice and antipathy, or too strong desire for dreams of your own to come true,

to console you and remove your fears. You are indeed a difficult population to manage, and I may be allowed to say so from experience in two forms of one life.”

II

Limitations

“You and I are a point of junction between two largely incommensurable systems, which in many ways clash and cannot be combined. You ask me a question which in the light of your circumstances seems straightforward and capable of a similar answer in the way natural to you. But I, when I come to reply, find my freedom of speech hampered in many respects. My answer is as straightforward as the restrictions imposed on me by my acceptance of law permit. Often I cannot give the straight answer whose lack disappoints you, because it would rationally force me to use words which would mean as little to you as a sentence in Icelandic. On the other hand I am restricted by my voluntary mission, whose scope must not extend beyond practising you in thought-reception and the executing of this writing, at the same time giving you a limited amount of moral and religious instruction aimed at the improvement of your ideas and character.

“I do not think you can accuse me of not satisfying all your needs in these two directions. Are you not a thoroughly proficient writer, with a vastly greater sensibility in reception than when I took over from my colleague? And have I not to some extent transformed your opinions and, may I not hope, amended your character and conduct? What does it matter in comparison that I have not filled your mind with pictures, only approximately true, of our scene, our modes of living, acting and amusing ourselves? You would have received nothing more than vague conceptions, painfully translated into the nearest equivalents of what you can understand in your present condition. You can profit little from that; even as satisfaction of your curiosity it must appear poor and insufficient. You know well now that much of that nature is inaccurate, not in the intention of the communicator, but through faulty transmission and faulty translation of unfamiliar ideas and symbols into inadequate wording. You should pay far more attention to the new views you have learnt from me of our general state and of what is required of you in your present environment. It does not matter one whit whether or not other people think that what you write comes from ‘your own subconscious.’ Profit by what we write and leave others alone. It is certain that their standard of judgment is defective, uncertain and too material.”

III

How can I, or any of us, be easy and familiar with you, as you ask us to be? You come to me in so questionable a shape and in life would have embarrassed me had I met you.

“I understand that feeling, which is the result of education in your very earliest years. It is at the bottom of the universal fear of ghosts. There is an idea that they are wonderful people who have power to do anything, that nothing mortal, either

mental or physical, can be a match for them, and that in fact they are beings quite different from you in every way and quite unaccountable in their actions. How false this idea is you of all people should have learnt after the considerable period you have known me and listened to my information.

“Since you should know now that I am a man like yourself and no strange creation, how can I cause you nervousness on any occasion that we meet? I have said all I can say on the subject, and yet these old fancies remain fixed in your mind. Make another effort to understand at least this part of my explanations. Think of the many times I have tried to impress upon you that I am absolutely the same sort of person as those you have met in the street today, in hundreds perhaps. There is only one difference, that of our bodies, and since you are well aware that does not constitute the person, but merely encases him, why should you continue to fix so much of your attention on that part which is a kind of puppet? You could pass by a puppet without much attention and leave it to the ignorant wonder of a child, and yet you find that part of your fellow man so important and continue to allow it a large, sometimes the largest, place in your judgments.

“This attitude was mine in my unenlightened days and then I never recognised the opportunity of knowing better which you have embraced. Therefore your continued adherence to this mistake is more worthy of blame. Let me assure you that I am a man with all the weaknesses and defects that word contains. Why should you still look upon my contact with awe?

“Your second reason for want of familiarity is really more justifiable. It is comprehensible that what you occasionally read and heard of me in my numerous high positions and my reputation for aloofness should, for a time at least, cause you feelings which separate, but by now you should have overcome that; I am sure you have tried, so why not make another effort to dethrone me from the seat of angels? I am no messenger, but I may hope to serve in that capacity when my engrossing work elsewhere than with you comes to an end. Till then treat me as an equal and a human equal. Do you think that at this moment I am looking at you as something different from myself; some specimen of another race, as I might stare through the bars of a zoo? You may think this idea ludicrous, but it is no more so than your attitude towards me, which I long to see you change.

“It is so difficult for you people to grasp the fact that there is nothing abnormal in these psychic processes, but that they are a part of nature in the same sense that all you do is so; that you are not going outside the natural when you experience communication with us; and that, on the other hand, if the method appears to be commonplace, the experience should not on that account be undervalued. Why should you ask that expression of a truth should be given in a clap of thunder, or other striking phenomenon? Is it the greater truth for that? Must surprise be an element in the promulgation of new truth? It is not so that your world is wont to accept truth; a person who publishes a new idea which has come to him is opposed

and criticised in every possible way, until you settle down to accept his inspiration and to recognise that a new truth has been revealed to you in the natural way in which a spirit, embodied or not, communicates truth. There is no attempt to force it upon you in an unheard of or surprising manner. All follows law worked out in human faculties, and the fact that the method of revelation is normal and comprehensible should in fact be an argument for accepting what is promulgated. Were an attempt made to present it as something miraculous, the greatest suspicion should rightly attach to it.

“I should like you to emphasise this when speaking of your own psychic experiences - the simplicity and ordinary nature of our intercourse, that it is something suited to human capacities, not a breaking in from some strange quarter. Recall to mind the unity of all spirits apart from the varying kind of matter clothing them. We all, in your state and mine, use the same way of thinking and can, as you see, speak the same language. When you die from your present phase of life you continue the same person and act in the same way, and so, when you wish to impart knowledge to spirits in your previous state, you will do it in the same way, not in a different and startling manner, which it has become your nature to do because, forsooth, you have stepped from one room to another and wear a costume of different texture.”

IV

His powerlessness

“Truly mine is a strange position. Here am I, using all my powers of mind, lessened in nothing from what they were in my former state, and so vividly aware of my present existence and activities, and yet I am powerless to make you share my knowledge. It is a remarkable state of affairs which I do not presume to criticise, but I can sympathise with you, even in the rejection of what I have given you in the way of proof.

“Can you wonder that when you asked me what my chief feeling was when I first returned to your state, I told you unhesitatingly that it was my sensation of powerlessness, my restricted ability to help in the good and in the resistance to evil? Now, so long after, this sensation can be almost a torture to me, perhaps because in some measure I return among the old influences which fired my ambition in my earlier environment. I was always proud of the power I had obtained over men, of the knowledge that so many waited upon my words and wishes, and of my eloquence, which on many occasions roused vast assemblies to applause and inspired in my contemporaries admiration and envy. There is still an echo, however faint, of my past, which causes me mental pain in this new achievement of my mind. Again there are those who envy my success in communication; again I have the sense of leadership in this group which meets to reinforce my influence upon you.

“But do not think I am complaining, or resenting what is willed elsewhere, acting in a manner for which I have rebuked you on your evenings of disappointment and disgust. For all that happens I have but submission and wonder. Much that once

puzzled me and led to moments of doubt has now become clear; but not all. At least I can praise the orderly guidance of our lives and yours. I accept all where once I would murmur, and I can assure you that were you to believe in me wholeheartedly, my cup would be full, and I should look to the future with increased confidence and hope.

“But tonight I must be patient no less than you. God bless you.”

V

If as you tell me, you now communicate with sufficient accuracy, why does no great writer passed from us give us another of his works?

“It is quite true that great men who arrive with us remain great men from your point of view, if not from ours, and they have all the powers which made them famous on earth. But, as I have told you already, they quickly become absorbed in their new life, where they can use their powers far more easily and with greater effect on others. I think I may say that most of them become thus absorbed, to the exclusion of all thought of earth.

“There are a few who at first return and communicate through your mediums, but their experience does not encourage them; in fact they soon despair of effecting any notable good. First and foremost comes the difficulty of finding a mind capable of taking what is generally called work of genius. This is not difficult to understand, for you are aware that a mind which produces such work is unique. Even when an attempt is made by them to pass through work of the highest quality, if not with the notable inspiration which made their name, there is no medium to be found even passably fit for such a communication.

“Until now no communication, absolutely none, has come through to you without a portion of error. So you can picture to yourself the feelings of a great artist in words who sees his dearest creations being mutilated or destroyed. From your knowledge of the feeling of such men for their works you can hardly believe that they will persist in using your faulty channels; the blame is far more yours than theirs. With us they can use their distinctive powers to the utmost, and satisfy to the full every desire for complete expression. They have interested audiences, useful criticism and evidence of great impression made and appreciation shown. When they communicate with earth they cannot do more than help, perhaps, some struggling brother artist, or they must confine themselves to answering commonplace questions, in a commonplace way which they know will lead to little error.

“So it is not possible to imagine a writer, musician, or painter with us producing great work for the benefit of earth. It would result in a caricature, and be far more likely to induce unbelief than to act as another argument for the truth of survival. Nevertheless, I think there have been great men who have attempted this, and they have produced something not at all on the level of their high qualities and capabilities for creative work. You may have met with some of these productions -

and wondered.

“In thus speaking I am referring solely to artists attempting creation for earth; I do not mean that some of them cannot give you, and have not given you, most brilliant and useful inspiration, but that is not the same thing as producing a great work of art, stamped with their peculiarities and genius. That you will never obtain, and when I say never, I should perhaps do better to limit my statement to many generations to come. (You see how I jibe at prophecy.) Whether a time is coming when such skilful and educated mediums will be born and trained to do what would now only be possible by a kind of miracle, I cannot know. But surely the world has to make much more history before that consummation.

“If you meditate and look about you, you cannot fail to see that even the most brilliant of your mediums - and they are very few in all - lack education and capability for intellectual work. They are good for messages and ordinary inspiration for ordinary people, and in so far are doing work of the greatest importance, but they themselves would be the first to admit that, were Shakespeare to attempt to write a play, or even one sonnet, through their mind, they would lamentably fail.

“In this composite work of communication the limitations of the ingredients, if I may be permitted the expression, are very evident, and it is foolish to expect more than the conditions allow. Otherwise you are acting like the old alchemists as compared with the modern research worker. The former set out in his experiments to satisfy his desires and private theories, but the modern experimenter starts with the known composition of certain elements and the limits of certain laws, not asking more, but hoping by varying combinations while using them in their own way, he may discover some new law, leading to further knowledge of what is there to his hand, not always a fulfilment of what he desires or judges should result.”

VI

Revelation's method

“You should have recognised by this time that in the universal plan revelation does not come about without human co-operation. Throughout all life runs the same principle and wise purpose whereby Man must labour for advance in knowledge. There is given no revelation unrelated to a human mind, whether it be by writing thus, or by mystical rapture, or by vision, or by correlated voice, and the greater and more devoted the human mind the more notable the revelation. It is never doled out to you in charity. You must prepare all spiritual growth in the sweat of your brow and the travail of your brain, and, as he works, Man begins to conform to the perfect pattern of which he is in restless and largely unconscious pursuit. You are not yet Man, but manlike and tending to the final being which shall crown the Great Power's creation. Your ape-like ancestor is still nearer to you than the man that shall be.

“Perhaps you will think that I have wandered far from your recent comment on the

obscure and indefinite nature of what we impart to your state and the many questions remaining unanswered. Understand that you are all aiming, generation after generation, at answers foreshadowed, and only by your effort in co-operation with us can your yearning ever be satisfied. The human mind is the grand revealer, not some written word, nor outward vision, nor unrelated voice, thrust on a world supine. Man must rise and struggle to join his thought with ours, and from age to age he will find our light befriending him - but how few care to pierce the clouds of sense and catch the gleam. Yet we are an integral part of every man's life; he who watches within knows great reward now and hereafter."

VII

There seems some ground for people's merriment over Sir Oliver Lodge's account of his dead son's whisky and tobacco in heaven.

"You must not think that directly he awakes to his next state of being a man recognises that old springs of action are no longer effective. He still imagines that he must satisfy his hunger and seek wealth, love, or ease in one accustomed way or another. He does not at once perceive that, though so many of his surroundings are unexpectedly familiar, actually conditions have enormously changed. Then come instructors, and his friends, if he has any, to intervene and try to explain things to him. But it is extraordinary how deaf a large number of persons remain to this information, In many cases they believe that they are being deceived, or are dreaming in a new way. This latter view is that most commonly held; nothing will persuade them they are dead. It is not their idea of death, neither the heaven nor the hell that a common religious teaching leads them to expect, and they hold out stubbornly in their belief.

"After a time, which you would call longer or shorter, experience begins to teach them that they can do what they like, and for those who have had a hard time on earth something like their idea of heaven seems to be dawning. They try to satisfy their former, usually coarse, desires and are surprised, believing they are enjoying the real thing they remember. Such men have no compunction or repentance for their past, which has been reproduced before their memory with great vividness, perhaps even, in some cases, what is meant to lead them to repentance and be the first step in an advance has an almost opposite effect for a time. Their familiar past may attract them and make them attempt with new powers to repeat past experiences. But they soon find that it is not now the same thing, and then they may have a kind of homesickness and some of them learn how to return to their old haunts.

"You may object that what I have said can only apply to somewhat debased characters and not to the general sum of the persons appearing to us. Well, I do not think I can wholly agree with that. Your judgment of the moral value of humanity as a whole is not so true as that we are able to form, who have opportunities denied even to those living among uncontrolled human types and mingling with them daily.

I do not mean to say that you in your experience have not seen almost the lowest depths to which in some cases humanity can descend, but that you have not perhaps realised that such characters are far more common than you comprehend.

“It is certainly true that only a minority of those appearing among us are prepared at once to start service to others and themselves learn to advance to higher states. Even those who on earth have had the privilege of culture, and the outward forms at any rate of religion, quite easily succumb to temptations from their increased powers and faculties. If a person is to advance forthwith he must have begun his advancement in your world. You must not think that he must have been noted for his religious life of rites and ceremonies. Many a well-developed character who neglected all forms of religion will find himself on the right way when he joins us and will perhaps be enormously surprised at the position awaiting him. Many unbelievers in your country have retained ideas from their youth which lead them to expect that, if there be after all another life, their mistake must involve them in painful experiences. It is one of the crooked and perverse notions prevalent among you that what you believe will mark your place in any future life. Of course that is quite erroneous, and I could name persons who rejected all forms of religion on earth and are honoured among us for their former valiant fight on behalf of the oppressed and their self-denying services rendered around them. Never believe that those who have a fixed creed and worship in prescribed forms are necessarily the highest of your wordly crowds. Our judgment is not on those lines. A man is a man and is judged as such in his character and deeds for others, not condemned because he is not of a species ‘religious man.’ There is something to think about.”

VIII

Man's animality

“I may flatter you to think that there has been vast progress in Man’s thought and knowledge since some hairy ancestor dwelt in trees very long ago, but long and short are matters of relation and comparison. A million years are little enough to pass through in escape from the bestial, and you cannot count on mere durational process to perfect body and mind. Has your body changed its form so far from that of your simian cousins? Then how can you claim so immense a change in your minds that you have become beings of matchless wisdom and virtue, or at least reached so high a level that your animal habits and instincts are all suppressed, or modified to be wholly admirable where they were disgusting? Believe me when I repeat that you have very far to go before reaching that Man who already exists in the thought of the Most High. Perhaps, if you meditate deeply and compare the lives of the men you know, or of the most lauded characters in history, with your ideal picture of the Great Power (in reality quite beyond your imagination or that of the greatest poets) you will come to my way of thinking.

“How much more evidently must I recognise the distance you have to travel, I who have seen mighty spirits face to face, felt their splendour blind me and their

goodness strike me with profoundest awe, that wholesome fear your imaginative writers suggest to you in their pictures of angelic beings clothed with divine virtue and beauty. But never can they convey the impression that would be made upon you by the high messengers of your future state, our instructors, counsellors and friends. I think you would forthwith drop your protest about the apes and assure me that what I said may be an understatement.

“Surely to you in your present turbulent and cruel world the thought must come at times that raging apes could not be more totally bestial and inhuman than the pitiless torturers and assassins stalking in hundreds through the fair lands of the most materially efficient nations your world has ever known.”

IX

It puzzles people to find that those mediums, or seers you have once or twice mentioned are not always estimable characters.

“A man with the psychic gift is born in that condition, and so far it is evident that his power has nothing to do with his conduct. But, later on, supposing he becomes conscious of his privilege and understands its implications, he will certainly impair his usefulness if he is a careless liver, ungrateful to the Power which has endowed him with a rare opportunity.

“Of course in a very large number of cases a man lives and dies without understanding his peculiarity, or perhaps even discovering it. But once he recognises his advantage and makes use of it, he must also realise his responsibility and therefore treat his gift with reverence, conforming his life and character to the position granted him in the great scheme, otherwise he finds his power unreliable. Even if you take the physical side of the question only a man of loose habits will as naturally prove himself incapable of doing himself full justice as an athlete who excels in physical advantages, but abuses them. If therefore in physical matters such is the result of a mistaken course of life, you may be sure that on the spiritual side the consequences will be many times more grave; spiritual lapses bring consequences which are not to be compared in their gravity with physical errors.

“There is another aspect of the question. A man of high thought and intention cannot but attract high and powerful spirits and receive help from them, increasing his ability to employ his powers efficiently and at the right moment. That is perhaps the most important effect of a good life upon natural psychic powers; with such aid they increase with compound interest, so to speak, and their possessor goes from strength to strength.

“There are some mediums wonderfully endowed at birth whose ministrations never seem to reach the height expected, and the source of their weakness, when not physical handicap, is nearly always mistakes in their way of life or low aspiration, constituting a burden to be carried throughout their career. The highest seership can never be accompanied by low spirituality.

“I would add that education plays its part. Many psychically endowed persons do not reach their highest power because they have never learnt the way to great ideals by studying the lives of inspired men in other countries and other ages. If high spirits make contact with them the greatness is unrecognised and its influence uncommunicated. Mediums born powerful have acted as wonderful channels for us in what I may call the mechanism of intercommunication, but they have disappointed our world in the end, not always through striking errors in their lives but because they were too easily satisfied with the low standards of enlightenment by which they were surrounded.

“The ideal medium has not yet been born in Europe. Perhaps now, when Spiritualism has become fully self-conscious and from year to year is gaining enlightenment through more methodical study of psychic events, a medium will be born with the exceptional powers possessed by isolated persons in the past, to which he will add the instruction of modern inquiry, the study of tradition and a high spirituality. Such a man seems bound to arise and, when he does, the result will be an extraordinary change in the world's way of living. Spiritualism lacks a greatly inspired leader who, joining the fervour of faith to eloquence, could fill vast halls with crowds of admirers, irrespective of clairvoyance or other manifestation of our presence. Let us hope that he will be the man ultimately to save your world from the catastrophes which, as I told you years ago (1936) are seen by many of us to be imminent.”

X

Spirit language

“When you speak you overlook the fact that a thought or feeling preceded and occasioned your words; clearly all people find it difficult to reproduce their experience in speech, in fact they are never able adequately to do so. Does this fact not suggest to you how it comes about that the guides or controls of mediums, who are well accustomed to dispense with words in their region, understand the thoughts and feelings conveyed in messages quite naturally, but are forced to express their meaning by what seems to them the clumsy expedient of words? This does not affect the general truth of the message, but were the recipient able to understand the language of feeling and thought, which with us is the same, whether spoken by a Greek, a Hebrew or a Frenchman, it would be truer and conveyed more easily. Your language is a wonderful and necessary instrument for civilised people and admiration for accurate or poetic English is entirely justifiable, but it is not the thought itself, merely the nearest expression of its meaning available. We have a universal language: you have not, nor does it seem likely that humanity will ever succeed in inventing one. It may be that in the course of your years men may so increase in psychic power that your language and ours will become one, but that must be left to speculation.

“There is another aspect of the subject less important. Men can now express their

feeling through facial expression and gesture, and in so doing express more than mere words can attain. It is worth your while to meditate on silent expression and by so doing mentally realise another feature of your advance when you develop to your next stage of being. Perhaps that is more easy to make real than many of the other features of our state which you find so incomprehensible.

“I may also call your attention to your dreams, in which you live a life largely silent, yet understand events and persons, even in forms often impossible and ridiculous, though at the same time comprehensible by you and producing pleasure or dismay as effectually as your waking language of words.”

XI

A science teacher suggests to me that human life is a curse and he became human by force.

“I should certainly have much to say to this gentleman. I do not see that he can escape the blame of unscientific presumption. He does not know the circumstances which ushered his spirit into your environment, or how far he may not have contributed to despite the fact that he has lost memory of the commencement of a great opportunity. He speaks foolishly, as if he had certain knowledge of such matters and could judge what is right and wrong in the creation of worlds and the devising of the lot of mankind including himself: He has allowed his desires, disappointed hopes and, perhaps, too high an estimate of his personal worth to obscure his measure of intelligence.”

“He is a man who has received the gift of human life, which most others use to their advantage and pleasure, but leaves the endowment unenjoyed because he has imagined something more suited to his whim, and as he sees and learns of others employing the gift with zest, as it was intended to be employed, he grumbles that his misunderstanding leaves him miserable.

“You must not, however, be ready to judge such a man too hardly, as if his attitude were an intellectual distortion to justify a yielding to base instincts; it may be that his physical organisation is affected by unfortunate habits and a failure to resist successive environments. Cases where this gives the exciting cause are less blameworthy than the other, and a change in ways of life puts an end to the folly.

“Actually the love of life is too strong in normal minds and bodies to make genuine cases of hopeless disgust with it numerous. Often, it appeared to me, the danger lies among those educated beyond their natural power of absorption, through intellectual posing. From time to time in intellectual circles it becomes a source of conceit to rail in paradox at life and destiny. It is deemed the sign of a clever man and people poison their minds through imitative parade of such opinions, although in their silent heart of hearts they are aware that their complaints and criticisms are due to disappointed hopes and bitterness that the world does not appreciate them at what they estimate to be their worth.

“As a passing attitude this is quite common after a disappointment, and it is

understandable. Instead of realising their own mistake men prefer to malign conditions of life and the whole world itself, insinuating that it is badly constituted and that had they omnipotence, all mankind would have a splendid and successful existence. There is nothing so obviously contrary to the will of the Great Power than that a man should thus resign himself to unhappiness and in unreal speeches declare a hatred of life. Life is God in you and all worlds and in living wisely and with zest, man serves God. That is something the grumbler ignores. Life gives an opportunity of co-operating with God in his power. It is something that he rejects, losing a marvellous privilege and a fruitful possibility. When such people reach our state they will find their attitude which, with our greater knowledge it is impossible to keep up, a source of torturing regret. It requires unceasing attention from ministering spirits to enable them to avoid desperate depression, almost amounting to what you call madness - of course with us there is no madness."

XII

Pessimism

"You paint too black a position for your world. It appears a world in which no man can be happy or even contented, but is this really so? Look around you; think of your own life. Have you not experienced much happiness? Can you say, 'I have had a miserable life'? Take other men in a different and less fortunate position than you; have you ever found one who declared that his life had been totally miserable? He may at times have suffered injustice, pain and hunger, but would he refuse to repeat his life if the opportunity were offered? Life is not in the eyes of any man a state of continuous and hopeless misery, although when at the height of suffering he may be inclined to any exaggeration and even fancy he would like to die.

"Now the Great Power in pursuance of his plan might well have disregarded mankind as merely a means to his ends, and leave them as you might leave lower animals to the consequences of your plans, say of cultivating crops, or building. You do not first think of giving them pleasure to offset the necessary laws governing your actions. Yet in your world men have given them much to alleviate the laws of nature necessary to a great scheme.

"As you have read in a previous talk of mine, the Great Power as artist must love his handiwork, living or dead, but you now demur at the expression 'love' as exaggerated sentiment. I do not agree with you in that. All love is one, whether in high or low form. The word is loosely and injudiciously used, it is true, when a man may say he loves a dish at a banquet or a favourite form of amusement, but even here the feeling is properly love. Love is something which draws out feeling without reason, or if reason be employed love is weakened. You do not reason yourself into love, love comes first and it is open to you to control or fortify the feeling by reason. Meditate on this."

XIII

A Spiritualist lady suggests that you are a mischievous impersonating spirit.

“From her point of view I suppose she may feel justified, as she has not had your intimate connection with me over this long period of your time, which ought to render any suspicion on your part quite out of the question. There is no other way in which I could convince her of my identity at present, but I think that there are various considerations which you might present to her mind.

“For instance, what kind of mischievous spirit would pass considerably more than a year in playing a trick with the utmost regularity, at the nine hour and on the same days, without on any occasion missing his rendezvous? It seems to me a strange idea of mischief and a spirit who should behave in this strictly orderly way must have missed his vocation of mischief-maker.

“In the next place, do you, or perhaps I should say does she, imagine that a spirit of so malevolent a nature as to wish to deceive your good intentions could possibly write the profitable matter of which my talks are composed? Anyone being told by her of his nefarious activities and then reading their results would, I think, suspect your Spiritualist of herself trying a mischievous trick on him, or at any rate of being a person of weak moral and literary judgment.

“And, once more, what can she guess to be the object of this persevering mischief-maker in taking all this trouble? Does he obtain any satisfaction from your very ordinary manner of life? It is not such an existence as might attract any in our further state by its wild gaiety and indulgence in pleasant vices. I do not think a frivolous spirit would feel rewarded by a day spent with you, at least not an ordinary day, especially if it ended in this very serious business which we are now pursuing. So I think that if her suspicion is genuine, of which I may be allowed to have my doubts, she may set her mind at rest.

“Then in your case there have been certain episodes which should have settled the question for her, namely, the contact with her mediums who, without even knowing your name, very clearly announced my presence; though she may certainly say that the mischievous one pursued you to these interviews, and, with even harder pains, entirely succeeded in again deceiving not only you but also the medium's spirit control.

“Speaking generally, but without special instruction, I should say that in all probability impersonations which last more than a few contacts must be very rare. There must be some special attraction to make a plot of this kind last for any length of time. You must consider that to afford so permanent an attraction a man must be very strongly addicted to some vices agreeable to the spirit in question. Such a character will not persevere merely for the pleasure of laughing at a man and nothing further. I would need to appear to him that he got something by it.

“You must also recognise that it is not pleasant for any kind of spirit to hang about

for a long period in your atmosphere. Those who do so are mostly spirits seeking a rapid method of advance; for well-intentioned spirits existence there is a sacrifice. It is a considerable undertaking for one of us to go through the necessary processes which ultimately make us more than temporary companions for you. There is in the first place much laborious training, and then tentative visits to our previous state are often of a tedious and disagreeable nature. Not seldom we find that we have attached ourselves to a person unsuitable for our mission. That was my own first experience, which certainly was not very disagreeable, but the impossibility of success disturbed me and perhaps threw me back. As I have told you, I considered myself happily inspired to find you, and I am still happy to notice how we both increase in mutual understanding and pleasant relations.

“I think you may almost entirely eliminate the suspicion of impersonations. I can assure you that, although they really take place, they are by no means frequent and I cannot imagine such a state of things lasting long.

“One last thought I would leave with you. In your surroundings it might be profitable to pose as a lord and to receive the attention paid as his due, but in this state a lord is no more than Tom Smith. There can be no question of honour wrongfully enjoyed by a usurper of his personality now. So it is with all men.

“God bless you, and let me sign as the real article

your friend

(here follow full names).”

XIV

Form

“You need never fear that when one of us is seen and described by a medium the form may be some other spirit playing a trick. We cannot change our form to that of another, but only to that of ourselves at some period of our previous life. Sometimes we may appear in a form unfamiliar to you, which to one of us would represent the spiritual advance we have achieved. That does not often happen and is arranged for some particular purpose through the influence of greater powers. We never appear in our significant forms save to persons whose condition makes understanding possible. Of course when you first arrive among us you see people in the form to which you are accustomed. Even the higher spirits would not appear to you as they really are and as we are accustomed to see them. Your surroundings, too, appear absolutely natural to you, perhaps not in some place or landscape with which you are familiar, though in many cases that happens, and the new arrival believes that he has not quitted his old familiar environment.

“Such a feeling may persist for a considerable period of your time and he may act as if he were in his own home and feel himself so placed. A quiet death has little shock about it and there is nothing to give an appearance of change. He is left preferably to realise his new state through his own powers. There are some who take a long

period, as you would say, to realise what has happened, and they are unhappy, or rather have discomfort. There is always a good reason for this, that is to say, one man may experience in a way which is quite unsuitable for another. As I once told you, the fighting men in your wars may continue to think they are still fighting and they have to be very carefully treated, not as one who dies in his own chair at home, quietly.

But it is their own minds which render them thus. Their thought is fixed on old plans and ideas to which they are devoted, especially the young.”

XV

Our troublous times seem almost to leave you cold. You so rarely refer to them, or to your own troubles in a similar time.

“How can you suspect me of indifference when England is thus suffering? Surely I feel your grief. Many of us are distressed, but we have ideas now which lighten our trouble, and I could wish that you shared them.

“Keep in your mind that you are in good hands, whatever may be the result of this crisis in your affairs. You do not, I hope, reproach and complain of the Author of all for directing or allowing your catastrophes. That is too often the way of your world; you look about you to blame anyone but yourselves. It is your first thought. When some disaster happens which, it seems to you, no man could have prevented, you turn upon your Creator. You do not and cannot understand what plans he is working out for the course of your world, nor how it is your free choice which seems illusively to hinder them and are now making confusion for you where all might work smoothly.

“Do you imagine that if modern man had followed the moral principles which civilised man has tried and acknowledged to be the will of God, all this of which you complain could have happened? In the campaign of horror which your enemies are conducting against you, do you see no faults of your own in the past which have provoked or encouraged their ruthless attack?

“Never think that I act as defender or devil's advocate, but I should like you to perceive and to confess that a whole series of faults by many nations lies at the root of the wide-spreading misery you all suffer now. Where the greatest guilt lies who shall decide?

“I would say to my nation, - with tears if you will - let it set its house in order, amend its way and lead the world in its devotion to duty, the will of God, even if it appear to suffer injustice and have to abandon the sweets of revenge in the guise of just retribution.

“After these heavy losses (1940) a great struggle will come for our nation, a sterner struggle than with guns and cold steel. England must lower her pride and turn to her old ways of living in noble days, seek pleasures less and virtue more. She will have an opportunity to serve humanity in her old way, scorning the scorners who will

upbraid her for cowardice. There will be hard mental suffering for you who have physically suffered much. It is beyond the blood and tears I am looking, to that opportunity of greater things for our ravaged isle than she has ever known.”

XVI

Of his past

“I do not like to dwell on my earth life; there was too much to depress and weary me when I was alone. It is true that for all others, I suppose, I was a very successful talented man whom anyone might envy, and, indeed, there were times when I myself believed that I was something greater than the ordinary human being. But such moments were more than balanced by times of terrible depression, pain of body and pain of mind, for I was as sensitive physically as mentally. My poor body was an everlasting sufferer, as my friends knew, but they knew little of the suffering of my mind, especially at the last. I did not look back upon my successes with comfort for my soul. Perhaps my ambition was too great for such successes; I always wanted more, expected more and was the more disappointed.

“There was little comfort from others. We laughed much, travelled much in far countries, and I loved to travel, but from the first I had gnawing pain of body and soul. My mind feared for the collapse of my body, feared that with it would collapse my ambitions and my sense of superiority. I dwelt too much on the future, while actually enjoying the present with my many friends - and I had some very good ones. I enjoyed life too when I was occupied with my work, or with the pleasures of society, but every man has his silent moments when dread may come to him. Fortune he knows to be fickle; he sees men's deceptions all about him and feels himself as widely exposed as any other to the blows of fate. You cannot, he says, insure against fate; you are crippled and suffer, but that is no reason why you should not expect to suffer more.

“How gloomy I am with you tonight, when I have so often blamed your depression. You will tell me, ‘physician heal thyself.’ Do not think I am a dull dog because I am with you. Dismiss such thought of discourtesy. You know the truth; I would not speak thus to everyone.

“Well, forgive me my elegy on a past state which I am again about to quit and seek the work which compensates for all. God bless you.”

XVII

Can you explain the prevalence of pain and evil in the world under a government that you tell me is benevolent?

“Well, that is the agnostic objection to Christianity and, indeed, to all ideas of the government of the world by a just and omnipotent God. It is very difficult to give a reply that shall satisfy sentiment, and this, perhaps, presents one of the few problems where it is not justifiable to build speculation on a natural feeling. There cannot fail to be a deflection from just appreciation by reason of a subject containing

so much to arouse feelings of pity and indignation. I do not think it possible for me or anyone else to give an explanation of this aspect of life, if it be isolated from others, which will entirely allay those feelings. I can, however, testify that there are many thousands of us who had exactly the same sentiment, most strongly in youth, but, even arriving among us with it, have since seen reasons, if not to justify suffering in a philosophic scheme, at least to accept, through knowledge of fresh aspects of the government of worlds, the view that there is no injustice in your government taken as a whole and regarded as an unfinished process of which parts only are detected in the few years of earthly existence.

“If consideration be given to the fact that so many of the wisest characters in the history of your world shared these objections to the full and yet retained their faith in the goodness and justice of their God, there will be less rebellion in your criticism. I will allow that this question of suffering and evil is not solvable in your state, or where I am now, but I will never flinch from my most firm belief that the good observable in your world will ultimately prevail and save it from corruption.

“Meanwhile all well-intentioned men must pity and help those who appear to have the hardest lot in life, encouraged in their work by the remembrance that Jesus Christ knew the worst of necessity and remained an optimist. Neither he nor any of the great personages of Christianity ever doubted for an instant that the hardships of earth are not in the main stream of universal order but are the necessary eddies. The fact that we cannot explain part of a plan which allows a place in it for pain and evil does not warrant the conclusion that the world is a mistake and that we may await its final destruction with gladness.

“The wise of your world accept without demur the perplexing fact of human misery concurrent with universal government by goodness, understanding that had you not, through the influence of inherent goodness, high ideals, you would lack this tendency to stress and deplore evils for which you cannot yet conceive a sufficient reason or present remedy.

“That the remedy is growing to fulfilment in the process of the ages you can hardly doubt, when you study the history of the world. You are living in England at a time of dark appearance (1941) and many foresee a future confusion little less gloomy, but you should comfort yourselves that there have been blacker periods in the past and that, as before, the universal course proceeds steadily to the light. It is not Man who is governing that course and, however he may behave with cruelty, madness and desperate wickedness, there is a power around and in him greater than human which in unhurried advance will solve all Man's enigmas, and which - you may believe me when I say it with my increase in knowledge - is wholly beneficent.”

XVIII

Growing Pains

“It appears to you and others, who are keen to find the truth about our existence and your survival, that it should be such a simple matter for us to give you proof sufficient for a universal feeling of certainty and thus set all your minds at rest. But, I ask you, would such an action accord with the other dealings of the Great Power with your state? Are not men advanced by slow degrees and their own efforts? Should it not seem to all of you that this is the intention of whoever it may be that keeps your world on its course? What would human nature be like if there were nothing to seek and to conquer, if every secret of the universe were displayed to men waiting for the fruit to drop into their mouths, lotus-eaters of the laziest and most slothful type, living spineless and flabby till they died out, perhaps superseded by some other animal struggling on an upward, evolutionary course? Does that sound like a programme or process that a wise and purposeful power would devise?”

“There is hardly anything more evident to us who have reached this further state, if we are of the well-intentioned, than the plain duty of gratitude to the Great Power for our difficulties and pains. Every pain is a growing pain. It is by a steep and difficult stair that you mount and you quickly recognise that the steepness and difficulty of the climb has given you power to enjoy the life unfolding before you at the summit.

“Why should you expect a change in history's deliberate course, and, instead of a slow and most efficient development, a divine miracle to force upon an unprepared world the truth which their efforts are reaching by mental conflict, to their great gain?”

“You cannot fail to perceive in your own life and that of others that what profited you was not your easy and effortless hours, but your days and years of hard endeavour, successful or not. You are in your present state for training, and the harder you are trained the greater enjoyment you will experience at your next remove.”

XIX

Present conditions in our world and my psychic activities mutually interfere more and more, and I would ask you, should one of us divert his mind to another world when even the attention he concentrates on this one seems insufficient?

“This time your question is definite and I will try to reply.

You are active not only in your own sphere, but also in a vast region which includes us, and when you talk of confining your attention to your world alone and your mind's activities in it you are essaying the impossible. All that happens is that you neglect an essential portion of your area of life. Without us you could not live as you do live, and you are bound to include us in a true estimate of your world's condition; otherwise you cut a vast complex in two, like those who, for their own purpose,

separate body from mind, the two being inseparable, as I think you now realise.

“The error of some philosophers, who form and develop their theses on the principle of ignoring either the mental or physical, you are repeating when you say you are put on earth solely to act the part of an inhabitant of earth and that consideration of any other world is alien to your mission. That mistake has become so clear to me now, though even in my other section of life I never left this one out entirely, little as was the attention I gave it. It has been a source of pleasure to me in my cooperation with you to think I was leading at least one resident in the portion of the whole, which once for me meant almost all, to the true and reasonable view of the totality which I never attained. There you have my answer to your question; whether it satisfies you or not I do not know.

“I fear that you have once more decided to take a step which I deplore and was convinced you would never take again. It may be impossible to reweave the threads connecting our little company with you who have proved so sensitive. I do not think I need tell you how grieved we shall be to lose an occupation which has been so pleasant to us, even if you occasionally found it irksome and used the word ‘drudgery.’ Yet what effort do you now make beyond a slight physical exercise for less than a quarter of an hour twice a week? You know better than I that on your part there is no effort at composition and neither physical nor mental fatigue.

“I do not understand why this writing has now so little interest for you. It is such a remarkable performance and it makes no difference that it has become a fixed routine. When you think, it must appear to you marvellous that you should have suddenly blossomed out in this quite unexpected fashion. Why you have a lingering inclination to repudiate us I cannot imagine. It seems so natural that you should accept the fact that people who are dead, as you say from habit, should really, as Christianity teaches, be still resident and active in a further state, with a body differently composed, but otherwise exactly the same as when you knew them. I see nothing difficult to believe in that, except to a man with a too ready faith in his respected professors and spinners of theories.

“You observe these modern wizards in words and webs of thought matched against the unswerving believers of humanity's thousands of years and, as referee, you give the former your verdict. It is to me almost incredible, as I reflect on the mighty minds of the past who firmly believed in another life to come and the Great Power which governs all things well. Not only did they believe, but they tested their belief in the practical affairs of life and they were not deceived. Yet you seem to prefer the lucubration of less capable men whose triumphs in the recent generation were largely due to mechanical instruments which, in other hands, might have been made to prove other theories. Tomorrow they will be superseded by newer instruments in the hands of newer men who will throw many of the current ideas into the dustbin. When that happens, as in succeeding generations it so regularly does, the old belief shines again from behind the fog until it is again obscured.

“But there are always men who catch a glimpse of it and henceforth are impervious to the charm of theories which dazzle by their novelty and fashion. Evidently there is progress and development of human powers, but that there is equal increase in human wisdom few dare assert, as they consider the world around them filling with ever more ingenious inventions in the hands of madmen, or so it must seem to you. You must restore the foundations and sit at the feet of the wisest of the human race who have still much to teach you and help you on a rugged path. Think on these things and try to find a firm faith in man's intuition and reason, which no mechanised science can shatter.”

XX

The invisible

“It is not in my power to give you firm belief in the invisible, though we see so clearly what is invisible to you all about us and about you.

“Do you realise that in all affecting life in your universe more is invisible than visible to you? You live in the invisible, absorbed in its effects though you see it not; it is in you, above you, beneath you and around you, and because one of your senses is not acute enough to observe it you cannot believe that it is there. Is it not enough for belief that you see, cannot help seeing, and enjoy its effects? Your food comes from the invisible, from the invisible atmosphere through invisible forces of vegetation. You breathe the invisible, and that with lungs you never see; do you not believe in innumerable parts of your own frame that you cannot see and never will? Were I to go further in expatiation upon the unseen, so universal is it that the visible might almost come to appear to you a negligible aspect

“And about that difficulty of prayer to the invisible. You accept as a necessity of thought the existence of an intelligent order in all affecting you, whether visible or not. That seems one of your few beliefs. Can you also believe that an orderer has placed you in his order and left you to your own devices and struggles in a purgatory of devil-take-the-hindmost? Does a creative artist throw his half-finished work away? Does he not add the touches which may make it perfect? What then would he not do for a living witness of his creative power? How he would cherish it, add here a little, erase there a little that conditions had made faulty. I cannot believe that he would leave it forgotten by him and his collaborators.

“You should try to view the Great Power as the supreme and unresting artist, who, like all artists, loves his achievements. You will not then count him a taskmaster who punishes, but the unmatched artist who loves and lives in you and all his work.”

XXI

What is thought?

“I once surprised you when I said that you can use thought without its thinker. That, I expect, still puzzles you, in so far as you have some notion of the philosophic theory of your age. It is a truth, I assure you of that once more.

“The view of thought that I recommend to you is that it is the substance from which spirit creates all that exists. In your minds it is a perpetual flow, but you do not use it until you have, as it were, detached a passing morsel and checked its mobility for your conscious examination. Then you construct a picture of it. The professional philosopher will produce tomes about thought which he has thus collected and caged.

“Meanwhile the flood of living thought goes on ebbing and flowing, sometimes monopolised in ‘minds,’ but always discoverable in its outflow through the whole universe, ceaselessly at creative work. In the mind of Man it cannot be cribbed and confined; back and forth it flows in a kind of systole and diastole, and people catch it here and there for their scientific classifications, works of art and dreams by day and night. Thought is never still, but always renewed by the spirit of the Great Power, even when your minds fail to interpret it into any order your systems can classify.

“Thus men's minds mingle thought and grow; always there is the urge to seek and know, always you are free to gain a further fragment from the omniscience passing around and through you, and then you fight and wrangle over it, and through your fighting gain in mental power. There is progress, never doubt it, though one generation contradict another. The same laws apply in the realms of thought and spirit as in the material and physical; there is struggle and through struggle advance. So far as I can see in my lowly state, it continues eternally, and I praise the Great Power for this opportunity given me to advance.

“I was thought a clever, perhaps a brilliant man on earth; I assure you I thought so myself and would have declared that I knew much of how to organise and rule men. But how feeble and mean it all appears now. Nothing seems to remain of all I did but minute fragments of the truth that I honestly sought. All the paraphernalia of a striking career are nothing to me, give me no pride on reflection and much regret. But there were times when I followed my better self, and I was a good liver; this I look back on with a slight satisfaction. Yet as I do this I think, too, of the vast opportunities which were mine to help my fellow-creatures and how little I did for them. There was too much ambition in my life and too complete a reliance on my own effort.

“People have praised me for my great activity and painstaking, and they were right; I was always a hard worker. But how much less I might have worked, and done much more, had I let my thoughts and aspirations rise towards the invisible realm, and sought to conform my mind more to the great scheme of all things than to my own puny plans, and almost solely to them. That I was helped from another world in my successes I know well now, but I never gave a thought to this when I swelled with satisfaction, or perhaps I should say I seldom did so, for I was not one of those who neglected all prayer.

“You want to ask me a question. . . . No, you were not doing anything else in those phrases than to reproduce correctly in writing ideas from my mind. Do not be so

doubting. Good night. God bless you.”

XXII

Creative thought

“You have heard from me in the past how we build with thought and that you yourself are doing so with us from day to day, as you would say, although you are quite unconscious of what you are building, or even that you engage in such an activity at all.

“Now put two and two together. You regard matter¹ as the medium of all you make with your hands and your machines, and you rightly regard both hands and machines as matter; in the same way we use thought for building and manufacture. We take the thought by right of our spiritual nature and we use it in a spiritual way according to our level of advancement, exactly on the same lines as you with your matter. We are not the creators of the thought we use any more than you are the creators of the matter you use. In fact we use thought of which none of us is the original thinker. There is only one original thinker and all others borrow their thought from him. Remember that favourite quotation of mine, ‘In whom we live and move and have our being,’ an inspired phrase which Paul wholeheartedly adapted from the inspiration of philosophers before him.

¹ The word matter is used in its popular meaning for what the senses cognise, especially those of touch and resistance.

“You should often meditate on the idea of the creative thought used by you and by us. Your machines required creative thought before you reconstructed them in the form of matter. All you make, from pictures to aeroplanes, is constructed in the first instance by thought, and that would now be enough for us, but in your present condition your thought must be clothed in matter, even as it is housed in that kind of brain which you will one day feel glad to have discarded.

“Surely this is plain and straightforward, as you demand of me, even if it is not orthodox psychology. What do I care for orthodox psychology? Psychologists are still feeling their way to an ordered science and so far their theories are infantile.

“Never be slavish to the opinions of any man or body of men; remember that all is change, in the mental no less than in the material of your world. Were there no change there would be no life; change is its evidence, life in *excelsis* of the spirit and permeating all matter.”

XXIII

What you have said about creative thought seems to imply some solidity in you and your surroundings.

“We are in no way solid, but when we first change we regard all we see as having the sensible qualities we attached to similar objects on earth. This superficial and entirely false view is nowhere more so than in the illusion of solidity.

“If you will reflect you must admit that the term has now little real meaning even

with you. It smacks of the doctrines of earlier scientists, who believed in the indivisible atom, a thing which would have been found to show weight and resistance had they been able to measure and manipulate it. But nowadays solidity has a greatly changed and limited meaning. Your theoretical atom has not vanished, but with respect to solidity it seems in sorry plight, and as all your round world is now resolved to energy in ceaseless motion, your firm and solid earth must to the nervous seem to quake. Why should you expect from us what you have had to abandon yourselves?

“Most certainly we possess no solidity other than that appearance of three dimensions which deceives the newcomer. Nothing can resist us but that spirit which to most of you seems the least resistant, less than a puff of air, invisible and intangible, of all things most unlikely to oppose.

“So now perhaps you begin to think that your remark to me has little meaning. We can pass anywhere and through anything, using your language, but ‘through’ has not the same significance to us. Our powers of locomotion are unhindered by solidity or distance; where we wish to go we go, even as we are wishing it, in a flash, whether it be far or near, as you would say. There is no effort in this; we never find ourselves in collision with person or thing, and we are never fatigued by any journey we take.

“I wonder if you will grasp what I am saying in all its implications; I should think you will not. Well, I suggest that you meditate on this subject of our travel and in what you mean in your year of grace by solidity. You will there find scope for many meditations, and I will give you one piece of advice. Do not seek theories of fourth, fifth, or sixth dimensions. You are no better at mathematics than I was, and were you a mathematical genius those theories would lead you nowhere.

“I was not sent to teach you science, though I could teach you much about the inadequacy of the scientific method. In the main parts of my mission I feel I have succeeded, since I have taught you to co-operate with me in writing my thoughts with such accuracy and speed, and I believe that the rest of my mission is on the way to accomplishment, namely a change in your moral and religious ideas and a new self-confidence and disregard for the opinions of others. You now let them criticise without perturbation. This is the calm that will bring you success in all undertakings we may suggest. I can give you no other advice than I have done these many months. You must draw on your newly discovered stock of patience and hope for the best.”

XXIV

Distance

“Like so many other ideas, such as time and space, the idea of distance must appear to you mysterious, but we quickly recognise on reaching my state that distance, like time and space, goes by the board. When we first transfer to new conditions it is one of the causes of our confusion, for all are greatly confined at first, partly because among much that seems familiar we notice strange things happening to which we

were naturally unaccustomed in our previous phase. No one, I think, however much he may have studied psychic matters and the communications of the controlled and clairvoyant ever reaches a clear comprehension of our state of life until he has personal experience of it.

“We may notice that there is still a kind of space and time and therefore distance, but what we cannot understand at first is that these are ideas of our own and yet take effect beyond us, are indeed necessary. Although our private ideas, they effect something practical and contribute to the environment of all. I hardly think you understand what I am trying to impress upon you, but if you will meditate upon it you can gain an inkling of the truth even in your present state. When I wish to join my thought with that of another in like affinity I do not change my place, as you put it, or rather, I would say, need not necessarily do so, for we can present ourselves to each other when we so desire.

“As I have told you, I am not in your room at these moments of writing, yet we are conversing in as intimate a manner as you might with a friend still clothed in his body. I could, were I so disposed, be locally with you and I have occasionally done this, but not often. You might then have seen me clairvoyantly, not otherwise. When we meet in our state, we of course practise clairvoyance and, besides communicating through feeling, can also speak as you do. When we are first changed I think we all desire to see each other and use words, and many continue long in this state of mind. It is, however, a sign of advance when we lose this desire “

XXV

Have your ideas about marriage changed?

“I do not now regard marriage as a sacred ceremony; it is a procedure necessary in a civilised community for the sake of order and rational living. The state has the right, and in some respects the sole right, to lay down or alter the rules and conditions governing the marriage of its members. The Church's duty is to ensure, as far as it can, that the two persons entering upon this union of their lives shall do so with a regard for the presence and action of the Great Power in all their relations.

“In a more solemn fashion the ecclesiastical ceremony constitutes a saying of grace. When people say grace before and after meals they are recognising with gratitude the beneficence of the Great Power and invoking his assistance. This is well done not only with respect to eating and drinking, the building up and strengthening of the body, but on the occasion of any action undertaken in your world. For me there is nothing more than this in ceremonial marriage.

“It is not possible for young people with little knowledge of the world to bind themselves irrevocably to a condition beyond their experience. They may have the full intention, and in most cases they have, to live together for the whole of their lives; with very many this is an overwhelming desire which no church ceremony can increase or lessen. That some unions are failures in a month or two does not prove

the declaration of the married couple hypocrisy or fraud, since at that time more than any other the mind is less able to make a reasonable and meditated judgment.

“Thus it seems obvious that a church requiring that two young people should rivet themselves together for a life of changes and trials, which they have barely begun to experience, cannot be justified from any point of view whatever.

“Can any sanely-minded man believe that it is for the good of society forcibly to maintain in this closest of contacts two persons who, having discovered their initial error, pass through inevitable disagreements and disputes to an ultimate situation of loathing? There is the greatest probability that not only will the children of such a marriage suffer grievously in mind and character, but the door is opened to vicious life of various kinds. These two make ruin of their own lives and, in seeking consolations for their unhappy state, may promote an ever-widening circle of evil in their associates.

“Yet, on the other hand, there must be no hiding the fact that although under present conditions the perfect marriage is far rarer than the unsatisfactory, unions can be observed in your world which approach the ideal and fully justify the institution of monogamy. These unions, it now appears to me, are in all probability eternal. The people thus joined and gradually growing to one life will find that, on leaving the world they know, their union becomes something more enchanting than their best moments on earth. They will not, as others do, feel the want of perfect companionship, and search without rest for what I will call completion. Unions are made with us which ultimately prove as happy as the best on earth, but such unions must ripen, one mind growing into the other and emotions on either side striving for the right note in a chord. This effort the happy unions of earth are spared, one helping the other to spiritual advancement and growth from the start. You know what we think of love and must, guess how we value such exhibitions of its power and tendency to raise a being to further heights.”

XXVI

Religious dogma

“You have no, doubt discarded many ideas upon formal religion since you commenced to write with me, and that is all to the good. Although I have more than once remarked that you showed proof of little religious feeling I do not think that your fundamental ideas are irreligious, but you have difficulty in formulating them even within your own thought. It is not possible for me to judge how far you have abandoned the religious dogmas carefully taught you by your parents and masters. Of course much was erroneous and merely represented the opinions held generally at the period of your youth, which was approximately that of my own. I never rejected my early teaching, though I modified much in conformity with an epoch of advance, which as one time seemed set on rejecting the reality of all religious feeling and substituting a bare and rigidly scientific theory of life. That tendency yielded to a more spiritual attitude, unexpectedly brought about by the scientists themselves

as they continued to make deeper advance by methodical discovery.

“Therefore I do not think you need fear abandoning too much, as you seem to suggest. Curiously enough, you appear to us to be finding a new foundation for belief in matters of the spirit through the work of those whose ancestors in your youth attacked with devastating effect the traditional beliefs of your country. There is no better advice I can give you than to put what appears to you the truth before all else. You will lose and you will gain, and, will you allow me to say that in what you have sometimes called the futility of this writing, you can find signposts on the right road. If you can find in our work cause for strengthening your religious feeling, we shall ourselves feel great satisfaction and reward. We are delighted that you should experience the fear you suggest, for it seems to us a safeguard against rash conclusions.

“You have indeed pleased us tonight and we rejoice that all complaints are absent.”

XXVII

A vicar condemns attempts at communication with the dead.

“I would ask him if at any time in the history of the Jewish people, as recorded in the Old and New Testaments, a lively intercourse between the two states ceased. Naturally, at some periods it was more evident than at others, but at no time, from Genesis to Revelation, was communication between the visible and invisible systems by voice, writing, or angel, broken off absolutely.

“Having called his attention to this, I would then ask him why he believes that, although in his view Christianity remains the same as it has always been (whether that is so or not is a question outside our subject) this long continued communication was dropped and, if so, at what moment?

“Anyone reading the Bible must regard intercommunication between the two states as an integral part of the religion of which it is the history. Certainly this intercourse is nowhere condemned, nor do we find it stated in the New Testament that the customary communication would be brought to an end at some foreseen date. Does it not, then, seem more likely that the neglect of religious duty accounts for the cessation of publicly recorded communications rather than some instruction from our other life?

“If this is so, and he feels that there is something strange in the fact, should he not welcome an attempt to restore, in a public and formal manner, the historic interchange through the senses between the two states of human life, visible and invisible, material and spiritual? And would not this revival give strength and energy to the spiritual in man, increasing his faith and renewing his hopes?

It is difficult to understand why this attempt - and I need not say that those who undertake the matter seriously find it a successful attempt - should be condemned by people holding the Christian view of life, and this not after careful examination, but without any painstaking and practical inquiry at all. There is so little ground for

this attitude in a really earnest follower of the teachings of Jesus, who seemed to live continuously in actual and verbal communication with higher powers, and made no secret of the fact; indeed he urged his followers not to neglect this source of energy and happiness offered them by the will of God. If they did not believe his words alone, he begged them to do so for his work's sake; he showed them signs and wonders, and thus consecrated similar acts by all who claim to follow him.

“Then, perhaps, I would ask him if he is not attaching a weight to the words and deeds of churches and individual men which he should reserve for the teaching of his Master alone. Do not his conscience and inward feelings prompt him to strive at increasing the efficacy of his mental communication with the unseen, which he now seeks to maintain by prayer and meditation, with more or less success? There must be many occasions in his life when he feels what our fathers called a ‘dryness,’ a feeling that fervour is reduced to mere words, and that no answering influence comes from those to whom he addresses himself. Surely at such times vividly perceived action by invisible powers would be indeed a godsend, in the most literal sense, and would once more cheer him on his way. In the world of your day there must be so few reinforcements available to the Christian in his combat with evil, so that a source of renewed strength should rather be welcomed with a shout of joy than with suspicion, neglect and scorn.”

XXVIII

Christianity

“I see no difficulty. It is true that the sayings of Jesus are still the foundation of my belief and, I hope, guide my conduct. I do not know any better teaching than is contained in his traditional words. But in saying that I still call myself a Christian I intended more than that. I believe in the structure and order of Christianity as it developed subsequently to the life on earth of him whom I still call my Lord. It is not possible merely to repeat and believe much of what has been handed down as his doctrine; there must be some organisation to collect and unite the large number who wish to continue the work of that great prophet, and Christianity constitutes the communal life in which certain practices are observed arising from his words. But this organisation is the work of human beings, although directed by his high spirit, and no human institution is without fault

“In my present state I have learnt more clearly to perceive these faults and amend my former practice, but I in no way reject Christianity en bloc; far from that. I believe that reunions of Christians are necessary and reinforce the prayers of individuals, rendering them more effective. Majestic services in great cathedrals add to the efficacy of attempts to commune with the Great Power, and afford perhaps the best means of raising the ordinary man's thought to a height seldom reached in his private devotions. My Christianity is of a kind which makes no difference between the usages of Protestant and Roman Catholic and claims the right to reject or modify doctrines which my new state has given me light to treat in this way. There are very

many in like state with myself; Christian practices have become woven into our personality by habit and continue to aid us in our advance to higher states.

“That is what I meant when I told you I was still a Christian, but I am well aware that a Christianity which confines itself to the attempt to follow in practice the actual sayings of Jesus and reject all that goes with the idea of a Church can be equally efficacious and more suitable to other types of mind. In any case I would not have you think that in following the instructions of this writing you are justified in neglecting the gospels.”

XXIX

You regret the absence of a religious tendency in me and your communications have a religious tone, but you have never told me much about your religious worship.

“There is a considerable difference from you others in our approach to the Supreme Power. You have already heard from me that human tradition and mental constitution tend to make this power too humanly personal. There, I think, is where the greatest difference is to be found. We do not look for someone acting as a man acts, granting requests here and withholding them there according to a dominant wish on specific occasions. Our attitude is rather that of intense reverence for details in a wonderful scheme, or general order, evident to us in small things no less than great, giving us continual proofs of ordered and beneficent action. We do not picture to ourselves powers manlike but on a vastly greater scale, omnipotence, indeed, used as a man would use it. Perhaps the manner in which some people of the educated classes on earth regard Nature comes nearest the way we reverence and adore. But do not press this comparison. There is an important element absent, difficult to describe, something between the idea of those who regard Nature as animated in an almost human way and call it God and those who frankly call God a person with a character composed of perfected virtues, which they recognise in the worthiest men.

“Our prayer, for instance, is not one man speaking to another who, through high office and notable powers, is clearly his superior; it rather resembles a man's thinking expression of the highest ideals of his own mind. We do not ask that events may be made to take place for our advantage or that of our friends, nor that what we foresee as likely to injure us or our aims may be counter-ordered. All that we leave to the Power which we found to be arranger of our lives in the wisest way for the good of ourselves, of our fellows and of the whole. Our prayers may take the form of aspirations towards a higher and happier state of existence, and often we pray that our friends may find the way to better development and the avoidance of spiritual dangers from others or themselves. You might often describe our most earnest devotions as hard thinking, and by hard I mean intense and concentrated to such a pitch as affects our very innermost being.

“So much for what you may call private devotions. There are times, too, when we address ourselves to the Great Power and extol the qualities we perceive in action

around us, the beauty of our environment, the extraordinary skill with which one part of our life fits in with another, the evident conquest of evil influence; and many another aspect of our existence pointing to the glorious nature of the vast mysterious influence which can thus order our lives and show us love in all its forms and irresistible efficiency.

“This kind of worship readily lends itself to co-operation with various groups about us and those with which our lot is more nearly cast. Naturally the worship of those with whom we are in affinity corresponds with ours and with them we join in common forms. We have not set times, nor set words, but a general feeling will reach a climax, as it were, and the whole community will engage in public thanksgiving and expression of love and admiration; it happens as simply and irresistibly as on earth you eat and drink when hunger and thirst create the desire in your bodies and minds. We have no priests, and no churches as social buildings reserved solely for worship, but there are occasions, and Easter is one of them, when large numbers assemble in halls used for amusement and public intercourse.

“But it seems to me that I am becoming inclined to descend to details from which I should do better to abstain. It is not my commission, and perhaps little my desire, to paint one of those detailed descriptions of our life, which sometimes doubtless have their uses, but they are inevitably inaccurate and liable to lead your imagination astray. The little I know of these accounts does not encourage me to emulate them, and it is my doubt whether your doubts would not be aggravated by such an attempt.”

XXX

Work as prayer

“You need not think that, in your reluctance to express in formal words your acquired conviction that some Great Power exists and directs the course of your world, you descend among inferior souls, those who intentionally suppress the recurrent impression, common to all people in their heart of hearts, that they are curiously influenced and directed by powers invisible and unavoidable in human life.

“Much true prayer is as natural as breathing and is performed in countless ways outside the traditional habits of petition and giving thanks. Often, when a man's feelings are deeply moved by beauty, patriotism, or admiration, truly for a passing moment he prays. Often, too, a man may work at some plan, perhaps merely mechanical, felt useful to his fellows, and if his whole heart is in his project, he will feel an inexplicable elevation of thought. It may be that the painting of a picture, or the composition of a symphony induces periods of ecstasy to which no words can give expression. Well, these men are praying, worthily praying, and the influence of the Great Power is met and followed by them as by those who find satisfaction and often great joy by assisting their fellow men in public worship, or in traditional form alone on their knees.

“You have too narrow an idea of the Great Power; somewhere in all of you there remains a notion of a taskmaster or unwearying inquisitor of all your words and ways, sternly distributing his approval and disapproval. In sensitive people such early teaching is in many cases exaggerated by tenderness of conscience to anxious morbidity, and it is rare that such natures succeed in correcting the notion.

“I cannot too earnestly exhort you to believe that the Great Power seeks (if I may use that term) to do you good and make you happy, and in so far as you aim at a good and useful life (which is the happy) and at happiness to others you are meeting your God and co-operating with him.”

XXXI

You have used the phrase “the teaching of Jesus.” What exactly do you mean by that?

“That is not so difficult as you seem to imagine. But do not take it that I am laying down the law and demanding that my version must be accepted undoubtedly by everyone who calls himself a Christian; that is no longer our way of doing things. With us all opinions on all subjects are given a hearing, whether religious or secular, and by discussion with each other we still correct and develop our views, or find fresh strength for our work from inspirations which encourage our convictions.

“In the first place I would warn you against taking the words of Jesus *literatim*, as they appear reported in the New Testament. What I mean is that firm belief does not include a deep regard for the traditional words, as if they were sacrosanct and for acceptance without the proper use of your gift of reason. Jesus spoke in Aramaic of the period, a language of which your world is now almost entirely ignorant, and his traditional sayings are reported by translation into an Asiatic Greek dialect of doubtful interpretation through the better knowledge of classic Greek; subtle alterations were introduced into these records by warring sects which had their custody; and, finally, infatuation with the approximate retranslation of your Authorised Version into picturesque and largely obsolete English still leads many of your pastors and masters into error. What counts eternally is the spirit which emanates from the teaching, the general sense, if you like, although that expression may seem a return to the verbal interpretation which I abhor.

“What, then, do I now find to have been the teaching of Jesus Christ which justifies allegiance and the assumption of the name ‘Christian’? In the first place firm and unshakeable faith in a Power which in its character and actions may be regarded metaphorically as a father; treating us all with unceasing love and care, and at the same time establishing laws sufficient for your pleasurable development and the maintenance of the growing world you live in. This firm faith has for a main result the provision of an antidote to that unnecessary fear and anxiety inherited by human kind from the invaluable fear-instinct of the animal tribes. I do not think there is anything that I can more recommend your present age to study in the teaching of Jesus than its insistence upon the relief from anxiety in those who follow

it.

“Then emphasis must be placed on another injunction, implicit obedience to the Power; even if it leads to the dearest sacrifice, that of life. The orders you should obey are not emitted from any outside source, no thundering Sinai, but spoken within yourselves, and at this voice’s bidding you enjoy, even in sacrifice, a happiness which, I now believe, cannot be won in its entirety in any other way but that of the Christ. It must often be followed through pain, but not self-inflicted pain; there is ample opportunity to suffer in well-doing without the practices of asceticism.

“The third principle is that you must devote yourself to promoting the welfare of your fellows. You must not devise schemes to prosper materially, or attempt to improve your character without regard to the needs of your neighbour, and where your interests and those of your neighbour conflict, then, provided there be no infringement of moral law, yours must yield to his. Thus you will not only develop and advance your character in your state and ours, but you will, beyond your aim, find an unexpected peace.

“That is my programme for a Christian as I now understand the name. What do you think of it?”

XXXII

Evil

“You touch on a deep matter which we are as little able to explain as you are. We cannot give you a reason for the existence of evil in your world and, let me say, we do not try. We have the faith, renewed and strengthened since we made our change, that all is right and well, planned. The origin of evil takes a small place in our thoughts and desires. We cannot solve all mysteries merely from the fact that we have left the region of ‘matter’ and as a consequence our bodies. We have not changed to a different kind of nature from you; we are a little wiser, but only a little, and we discuss much, but not with any of that sense of resentment which so often disfigures your discussions.

“Much becomes revealed which enlightens us and would enlighten you, if we could explain intelligibly to you the changed atmosphere in which we live, what our changed surroundings suggest to us and what our friends whose passing is of longer date give us by way of instruction, simplifying for us many of our problems. We are less critical; our criticism is in a sense overwhelmed by wonder and gratitude, reverence is increased, and hope. Mental criticism is less powerful; our feelings play a much greater part and are wholly satisfying. When you are happy, does not criticism fade from your mind? Often the suffering, the rebellious and the sophisticated criticise their discomforts or the absence of what they deem they could have devised for a life more suitable to their desires. So you see here is another hint that, as I have often said, you will find greater happiness in our state than in yours.

Meanwhile you will do well not to torture your brains with a problem insoluble in your condition and for ages and ages in ours. We do not grieve for that but enjoy and learn a little more of the inexhaustible greatness of the Great Power.”

XXXIII

Has your idea of God changed greatly?

“When you were taught to attribute personality to the Great Power you regarded him as a human person extended, as it were, on the same lines. You were in danger of enthroning a kind of fabulous monster, active as suggested by such earliest teaching, spying on you all from some point of vantage to punish and reward as might please him on each occasion. I know well that you now regard that ideas as grotesque, but perhaps, in recoiling from it, you have lost something it would be well to retain. Are you not figuring to yourself something vaguely like a natural law, exercising influence similar to that of a magnetised lump of iron, affecting you blindly, without feeling, but very powerful? That view is as grotesque as the other.

“Follow this line - that you yourself exercise an almost incredibly small fraction of a power which, after initiating, inspires and directs all your experience and possesses the potentiality of all qualities you admire most in man or woman. It is personal as it appears in man, but has proved as far beyond any human person as man is far distant from the power to create and organise living things. Yet limited creative powers in mankind denote its presence, and in studying them you can relate omnipotence with personality and, if it helps you, construct a character. In all that you can detect of human wisdom and goodness, often in unexpected places, you will find present a share of him.

“These are no precise and accurate words into which we are materialising my thought; much is inadequate. For instance, they may seem to imply that the power is deprived of what is given to human kind. That is not so; nothing leaves him; the highest qualities of Man cannot be called a part, for they are undividedly his, together with all the universe you know. In striving for an image you call him ‘father,’ but when a father has begotten a son, that son does not remain a sharer in the possible strength and wisdom of his begetter, whereas you, for the whole of your present and future life, draw your force from him.

“How personify so vast and all-comprehending a power? It is perhaps from regarding this as beyond serious imagination that you are led to lose altogether the personal element which, however, must be retained. Probably the thought arose in your mind that to talk of a person, or anything like a human person, creating constellations and the world your senses perceive, was absurd. You were led astray by your inclination to value sense experiences above the invisible forces and qualities represented by spirit and mind, which in importance far outweigh them. You will draw nearer to aright conception if you ponder on the great achievements of man's limited mind and then try to realise an unlimited thinker for whom to think is to create.

“You certainly made an advance when you banished from your mind the idea of a being who deals out rewards and punishments like a schoolmaster, so now go further. Freed from that element in your ideas about the Great Power you should surely notice reasons for belief that not only does he not act in that capricious way, but exhibits a beneficent tendency towards you as an emanation sharing his own life. You can hardly believe that if you are spirit of his spirit, as you are, he has not an essential quality greater than the affection of a father for his less closely related offspring.

“There are many occasions when a son does not understand why his father acts in a quite unaccountable way, and at other times appears indifferent to troubles seeming to the child at his stage of life most highly important. Not only does he not understand, but accuses his father, at least mentally, if not in words, of unkindness no less than injustice. Comparing small things with great you may fashion from this some idea of the attitude of the Great Power to all that issues from himself; but especially towards mankind who, through mental development, are related in a much closer and special manner, with power to perceive and criticise his action. When you realise this the further idea should come to you that something resembling human affection must exist in him. You do not see hardship and tyranny dealt out universally to your state and certainly we see none of them in ours.

“It seems to me a want of serious reflection on the subject which causes you to ignore the evidence for this affection. You know well that, apart from human mismanagement, you may experience a generally pleasing life amid attractive surroundings, and there can be no other reason for this than the thought of the originating power as it produces pleasure through moral and material beauty. It must also occur to you that there is something in you that makes truth desirable and an objective to be sought. When you see that beauty and truth are plainly desirable and sought by you from a kind of natural instinct which you cannot explain, you may feel inclined to believe that justice and integrity are also sentiments within you to be exercised with pleasure, objects that you feel satisfaction in attaining in some degree yourself and witnessing in others.

“Where do you think that beauty, truth and justice come from, such intimate objects to your mind and sought for its satisfaction? Can you not reach the idea that they are there because behind them an influence of similar quality urges you to have within you the highest pleasures? What thereafter is your conclusion?”

XXXIV

Spirit

“There is no doubt that you can trust implicitly in the deep meaning of the phrase ‘in whom we live and move and have our being.’ That, let me assure you, is truth. You are enveloped in spirit, which is the active element in your world and all worlds. What your scientists term ‘matter’ is not an active principle and the philosopher who said it can produce nothing is right. It is not the cause of your sensations. You could

safely study the work of Berkeley and probably gain ideas which will help you in the work for which we have made contact with you. I have so often impressed upon you that spirit is the real and essential in life that I will not enlarge upon that theme, but leave it to your meditations.

“Spirit is the support and texture of all you experience, the rest is appearance, not unreal, but the plan for your education and character-formation. Never believe that the world of sense is illusion, as some Eastern religions would have you believe. It is a reality created by spirit, and you may call it thought-form, if you realise that the thought is that of the Great Power directed to your benefit. You should find the source of love in this. You have told me that for you there is much difficulty in detecting the love of the Great Power in your world's events, for you lay too much stress on the misery and failures in your view of the phenomena of history past and present.

“You trouble your mind about the existence and origin of evil, while neglecting the problem of the origin and prevalence of good. Yet the explanation of the one is as difficult for human minds as that of the other; it is best for them not to seek for origins, a hopeless task. You must have heard the saying ‘end and beginning are dreams,’ and so they are, for me no less than you. But you will find on your future change of life that new aspects and influences of your advanced state will offer problems that make your old riddles vain and, like us, you will abandon such causes of mere vexation, they will be crowded out. Good night.”

XXXV

Destiny

“It is quite true that there is a course of life determined for you who form part of a process involving multitudes of persons, but you must also remember that this process includes changes in a multitude of ways. It is within a general direction laid down for your life to follow that your acting in one way or another forms your character and develops your spirit. You act with your own plans in your head, and you may carry them out or fail, incurring further consequences, but you can never affect the main lines of your life from the cradle to the grave by your activities within it.

“You are perfectly free to go up or down, to lead an active or an idle life, and consequences will follow, forming and developing you, but you cannot make a change in your course, or, in your dealings with your fellow men, break the ordained course of another's life. Your action upon another, either from love or hate and their consequences, will in one point of view, say that of your possible biographer, constitute a most important feature of your history and be minutely described by him, but there is a series of relations which he fails to record, without, however, violating the historical truthfulness of his narrative. Yet, if you could look at the matter from that other point of view, you would perceive that those relations are far the most important for your present and future.

“What you have to do is to work out your life through your environment and experiences, acting in a specific way according to your choice as each event arises. That should be your care and the occupation of all your faculties; the other course of your life is none of your arranging. But if you adopt the fatalist attitude, sitting down as if powerless before inevitable opposition or disaster, you fail in your duty as man, and you will suffer through orderly and natural consequence, both in your and my state. Yet it is equally true that what is ordained will come to pass, whatever be your action. That part of your history does not deal with the character you form under pressure of events, but it does deal with what you inherit, and with it are linked your birth and death. None of that, as you should well see, is governable by you. You may object that your freedom includes the choice to put an end to your present life; that, too, is true and is a reason why suicide may be so grave an impediment to your advance when you continue. From what I have said you may understand this; you would misuse your great gift of freedom of choice and overstep your rights in a vain attempt to alter the timeless destiny where all events are one.”

XXXV

Routine

The following are not selected for their special interest but are taken at random from hundreds of others as examples in successive years of any evening's routine writing. Including the preliminary greeting, not reproduced, none of them occupied more than a quarter of an hour to twenty minutes, with no effort of mind and little of muscle. I found the process monotonous, but never fatiguing.

26.2.40.

“There is only one way to detect an intuition. You should sit quietly and run over in your mind all the arguments which occur to you for taking some course or refusing to take it. Then remain quiet, and you will find, I think, that one suggestion will arise in your mind with greatly increased force and vividness, and you will hardly be able to resist it. But let me urge you to sit quietly, as I said, while you are arguing the point in your own mind, and then again when you have exhausted your own ideas and believe you have taken the best decision. Wait silently, and if there is something negative or positive to be said from this side you will perceive it. That is the sort of intuition you should attend to.

“There is something else which is often called intuition with you, but it is not deliberate and you cannot bring it about. Often it occurs in an emergency, like a flash, and it is often contrary to logic. Much has been executed and much discovered in this way by those who have trusted to their intuitions. Almost always they come from someone here, but in some cases the part played by the man himself is the greater. It seems that the man of genius owes his quality to this faculty of abandoning logic and reasoning and depending on vivid ideas. . . . (You have brought a fatigued mind tonight, I do not know why.) Where were we? The man of genius in many ways resembles the medium; he establishes a communication with

us more open to inspiration than other men, but I fancy he rarely attributes it to any person but himself, just as you attributed our writing to yourself; it was naturally hard for you to change ideas long ago acquired by custom and observation. You had for so long acted like others and never observed any other method of writing and composition. The idea of another mind influencing you from a further state of life appeared to you fantastic. Then it became obvious that your mind and ideas were not kept apart but summoned to cooperate, and therefore you were not wholly wrong in attributing all to yourself. But if at first you could not be blamed for this, you ought by now to have banished the idea. You have read so much of our work and realised how far beyond your power is what you find in your files. You must also recollect that this is not our work entirely; I do not mean when we write on paper, but I co-operate with others in a higher state of development, so that the whole universe is one.”

1.8.41.

“You are always too timid about correcting our work, though I have given you the reasons why you should not be. You should remember that this is a joint authorship in which I supply the thought and you a part of the wording. And then, when you are transcribing what we have written, there is a watch upon you, and if you are observed to incline to a correction or addition which might alter the sense, your mind is at once influenced to renounce the intention.

“I am glad you changed the wording of a sentence in our last effort and deleted the repetition. I feel entirely at ease when I hear your confession. You know well that I dislike slipshod English as much now as I used to in your state, and I can only express satisfaction when I learn that you have corrected an instance of loose writing or inappropriate phrasing.

“There is much nonsense written about inspiration. It is often regarded as something magical, out of relation to normal process in your world, whereas it is a natural occurrence, as natural as the writing of an ordinary letter. You use such brains as you possess, and if someone in this further state makes a suggestion, you do not notice an unreal voice or words, as many of you seem to expect from inspiration, but your perfectly natural process of thought, which goes on unceasingly as long as you are alive in any world, proceeds to carry out or reject that suggestion in the normal manner employed by any person engaged in conscious composition. The fact that in your case you experience no effort in your composition with me alters nothing.

“The prevailing idea of inspiration is of a piece with the belief that we have suddenly become wonderful beings, full of wisdom and power over you, simply because we have passed through the process of death, and that what we were, say, at 8 p.m. we have lost at 8.10, becoming totally different beings. Hence the fear of ghosts, so ludicrous because it is a ghost which feels that fear. I hope that you, at least, take a more rational view of us from the study of what we have written.”

4.2.43.

“What you call evolution I would call development, and then say that it is merely the principle of all creation; everywhere in the universe development proceeds without cease. It is not necessarily a movement which leads forward to more useful existence or more permanent form, but it has never ceased since that first imagined cell holding in itself the unending impetus to all earth's life. In using the word you leave the choice and decision open to all opinions, whether those which maintain that a mind set in motion and continues to permeate all, or those which conceive that creation can be fully accounted for by chemistry and mechanics.

“By your automatism you bring aid to one of those beliefs; you can feel that your mind is freely concerned in the creative impetus of your hand. No mechanical means could be invented to perform automatically what you are doing at this moment, although by chemical means it might indeed make more beautiful patterns on your paper. Then, of course, you yourself know what the preachers of blind automatism cannot know, not having the inner experience, that the matter you write does not always contain your opinion, nor one that has ever occurred to you in the past, and that a phrase written in a dead language may mean little to you and send you to classical scholars. In fact the process, which at its sudden onset so much amazed you, can be usefully employed in meditation on the much greater subject I have mentioned.

“In this writing spiritual and mechanical methods combine in a natural way which should be illuminating to many, the components being as hard to separate as mind and body always proves to the philosophers. Spirit permeates your brain, your hand, your pencil and your receptive paper, creating not something new but sufficiently unforeseen to strike as a miracle the people who observe your speeding and what you write without the shadow of effort. Did it not seem to you also, in the first moments when your hand apparently rebelled and contradicted, rebuked and consoled you, that here was something miraculous, eerie and incredible? Did you not fear for your senses?”

14.6.43.

“The word savages is an exaggeration. It has happened that what were originally virtues in primitive man, before he developed self-consciousness, have in some cases become your defects. When you take savages as the height of human evil and bestiality you misjudge them. Take one of the natural attributes of man, say fear. What more effective instinct could be devised for preserving the life of those who were founding a new world? Now you hide and despise it, more justly than some other qualities, yet you still need fear, and the struggle to control it racks your nerves. Or again there is ambition; that, too, in the form of a lust for superiority, while it tended to preserve you and yours in the early days, has become almost a vice, which uncontrolled led and still leads the world to confusion and bloodshed.

“It is not these instincts themselves which are to be condemned, but the danger lies in the struggle of the rightly civilised man to suppress or hide them. And there is the sex relation, the love of woman for man and man for woman, the cornerstone of your preservation and continuance and a wholly commendable virtue; but through man's folly it has become in all countries a vice or a shame, ineffectively controlled by unwise legal institutions. It will be many generations yet before the relations of the sexes become natural and in accord with the will of the Great Power. Can you say in this year that murder has not reverted to the instinct of self-protection without pity, far more excusable in savages fighting for their own and their family's food and preservation? Need I go through all your fancied virtues; by a little meditation you can unveil many a virtue turned vice and recognise that hundreds of years will be necessary to cleanse a man from the power of instincts set in him for other objects than those for which he employs them.

“Can you then believe that your advance from savagedom has reached the pitch that your moralists assert? Can you think that we too have gone far on our upward course which seems almost endless? From your experience of life do you believe that the wisest and greatest of men is immune from vice? They might tell you of unimaginable conflicts within their souls, and how they have thoughts at solemn moments of meditation which cast them on their knees and play havoc with their best intentions.”

17.7.44.

“That is perhaps not so serious a matter as you imagine. To establish a sure belief one must begin from doubt and examination. That is common to all thinking men, but some have more sceptical minds than others and you are one of them. You must never regard sincere doubt as an evil; it is a necessity for all who think deeply on the cloud of mystery which surrounds your world, hardly lessened in mine. I think consideration of this fact should give some comfort to you, and I think it would, if you had not so firmly adopted the opinions current in your younger days when the increasingly rigid classifications of sensory impression seemed to have won a victory over philosophy and religion. I can recollect that contemporary struggle when Positivism actually flourished and attracted for a brief period some of the finest minds among my acquaintances. I myself was never tempted to join that confraternity, although I often listened to their theories. I saw that something was lacking, evident in their attempt to set up a kind of new ceremonial religion, which appeared to me an almost laughable caricature of the religion in which I was brought up and which I still believe, if with considerable modification.

“You must not however infer that I had no doubts about it; I should reproach myself if that were true - it would mean that at that time my thinking was superficial. You yourself, I have learnt, were convinced by the doubters and the theorists of popular science, as were a large number of persons like you with a fair education, but so much occupied with business or other affairs of the moment that they rarely paid

close attention to philosophical or religious subjects. You continued for very many years, most of your life in fact, to believe in materialism and the sensory aspect of your existence and do not seem to have been mentally disturbed even when you suffered material misfortunes. That persistent materialism is the bar in your present doubt of me and all that I represent. It is still my hope that, if you have the patience to continue this writing we may be able to dissolve your accumulation of old ideas, which are much less of an obstacle in a new age of less confident minds.”

17.9.45.

“There is no fixed and definite method of drawing nearer to us. It is in your general habit of mind that you must seek approach. You should dwell in your mind on spiritual subjects. I once told you to study the poets and imaginative writers, as nothing can be of more use to you than the development of your imagination. Do not believe that it is a defect of character to be imaginative. Imagination is the seed of all that man has achieved. Great ideas are wisely developed by the imagination. Even if it is used by the many in an abusive manner that does not mean that it is the source of their errors. The good man, by which I mean the well-intentioned, must make use of the imagination to reach his highest aims, and I have already told you that imagination is of inestimable value in our state; it becomes creative and rules the prospect we make around us.

“It is sad that among my countrymen the imaginative man is distrusted in the ordinary affairs of life. Poets, dramatists and novelists are, indeed, esteemed, but with a kind of pity for their uselessness in the material life of everyday. They do not receive the homage reserved for the millionaire or financial wizard. But even the millionaire, if he has made his wealth by his own brains and not those of others, profits from his imagination.

“Perhaps you may think I am straying from your question, and therefore I will say to you that to increase your spirituality, and with it your psychic power, you should exercise your mind on imaginative writing rather than on the works of the professors of whom you appear so fond. These men have great uses with you and show the heights to which man's mind can reach in material surroundings, but their theories will not help you when you join us. It is then that imagination comes into its own, and those who have cultivated it with you find great reward.

“Do you not think, perhaps, that your persistent doubt of us comes largely from want of imagination? You cannot habituate yourself to ideas so different from what your firmly-rooted views and experiences of the past led you to expect. It is difficult for you to grasp the fact that your world, so wonderful in its practical progress, can find a rival in a world elsewhere, and that your senses which serve you so well are not the best and only instruments for discovery and satisfaction. Outside your material world all life appears to you fantastic and impossible, whereas there lies round you a different world infinitely more beautiful, more comfortable and more suited to the temperament of any human being who enters it.

“This is what I recommend - read and study the poets, cultivate the highest in your thoughts, imagine the best your mind can reach in meditation, and of course pray.”

1.10.45.

“Well, you must think over what I have so often put before you in the way of argument. You know well what I have to say and should borrow from that when you speak to thoughtless people. I do not ask you to preach sermons to them, or adopt a solemn mode of speech quite alien to your character. There is nothing I would impress upon you more than the entire naturalness of the whole relationship. People must banish old, firmly-rooted prejudices, a feeling of contemptuous hostility to a doctrine which runs counter to their experience and much of the tradition still clinging to them from their youth and consonant with public opinion. There is no reason why you should blame yourself for talking lightly of a great and serious subject. There is much solemnity and use of stereotyped phrase customary with most people, not that their words are prompted by sincere feeling, but rather by desire to be at one with the herd, to do the proper thing and to avoid the appearance of abnormality. That is the kind of talk least acceptable to the Great Power; above all sincerity is required, not lip-reverence.

“Why should you be grave and almost fearful with spirits, men like yourselves and as you will all shortly be? We should not awe you any more than those you see and hear about you. Because we are unseen to most of you it does not mean that we are other than you as men. We have made a change in our surroundings, but we are still the same. All that has happened to us is normal; there has been no magic or miracle in our step forward, nor is there any miracle in our approach to you in a manner not requiring the medium of bodily senses. Your thought is natural, and when at times we mingle our thought with yours that is a natural process governed by law, as all process in your life is governed by law, from the rising and setting of the sun to your breathing and digestion. That is what I should point out to the persons to whom you refer. I would also suggest to them that they should take you at your word and make trial of the activities they avoid, adding to their ignorance an apprehensive or presumptuous scorn. Their scorn is without foundation; it is a matter of fashion, and fashions change. Your world is awaiting a change of fashion and when that comes it will be a happier place.”

6.6.46.

“Yes, I can tell you something about this. When I said spirits were all about you though you did not perceive them, I did not mean that you are perpetually spied upon by any spirit who chooses or chances to act thus, and that there was always a crowd of them round you, but it is true that often a spirit, for reasons connected with his advancement, is permitted to visit you and observe your activities. That, however, need not disturb you, as care is exercised to ensure that such visits occur at moments when something in your actions will be useful to the visitor. This, I think, disposes of something hinted at by you in your question and should at the same time

relieve you of any uneasy feeling that you are being watched from a point of vantage denied you.

“As to your further question, it is not the case that, when two of you discuss a person who has evolved to his next state, what you are saying is known to him. Of course it might happen that he was one of those I have just mentioned as having access to you for some good reason, but that is not an ordinary occurrence. On the other hand, if the two persons desired to send a particular message to their dead friend, it would be assured of safe delivery. You can always send a message to one of us with whom you are in close affinity of character, or for whom you have a strong affection, which simplifies communication. If you will consider the matter, this is what you do each time you sit down to write with me. You address strong thought to me by a usual channel and I receive it at once, as arrangements are made for a temporary break in my exacting work at that hour of your world's time, of which, as I have already explained to you, I am notified.

“Does not this answer or throw some light on prayer, which has always been a difficult subject for you to understand? You can as easily direct a prayer to the Great Power, or one of the high spirits, as you can communicate with me, and it will as certainly reach its destination. Prayer would simplify your work with me no less than assist your activities in your normal life. It should not be regarded as a due task, but as a means of invigoration, not forced as a habit, but prompted as a grateful sentiment.”

11 .7.46.

“I suppose you would naturally, with your ideas of space and time, have a somewhat curious notion of what takes place with us when we put ourselves into communication with you. Of course we do not need to assemble, nor do I need to go to your room. All passes quite satisfactorily in my absence from your local habitation. Our combined influence is as strong while we are what you would call apart as if we were, as we certainly could be, in earthly locality with you, but that must not make you think that our way of doing things is in some way imperfect and insufficient for all your purposes. Our influence is not restricted to your earthly place and we do not require, we do not wish, to observe your actions when you prepare to meet us in our sense of that word. I hope this does not disappoint you. You can always feel our influence in your room as if we were spatially there.

“As to what I said about strange spirits observing how we are occupied and showing curiosity about the process, that is more difficult to explain. They may be observing unobserved by us, or they are connected with us individually and ask questions with a view to learning our methods. But as I go further into your question I begin to fear lest I give you details which might lead you to erroneous conclusions. For that reason I shall never give you precise details of our ways of life. It so often happens that a chance statement by one of us through a medium is misunderstood and your imaginations start working, leading you to grave mistakes. I will not incur that

responsibility, though I know well that this has often caused you disappointment with me.

“What you remark about flowers on your table is true, and though we do not take on your space to see them, we duly get their influence. You are too much bound by ideas of distance. Looking at the matter from our point of view I would say that we are always near you and you can speak to us even if you are insensible to our message in return.”

5.9.46.

“You are so far right that when you write with me you make contact with a region of which you and other men are usually unconscious, or, if you like the term, subconscious, but it is also the region where two worlds meet and we obtain intercommunication. To enter into such communication you must to the greatest degree suppress your normal thought and prevent its interference. The more you succeed in this the truer the communication. It must seem strange to you that through a kind of trick or by a drug, aids which are quite unspiritual, entrance can be obtained to a region the notion of which fills men's minds with awe or fear. You others have a way of classifying states of mind as right or wrong according to the methods employed to reach them. We have no prejudice and recognise that opium or hypnotism can open a door to us no less widely than clairvoyance or trance. We regard nothing as disgraceful in a process which is material and governed by law; but from our previous experience we understand the attitude of the moralists who condemn all means of attempting communication with us and doubt its possibility.

“I think these prejudices will pass away in course of your time as so many others have done, but in the meantime you need feel no compunction in exercising any means of influence upon brains which may open more widely their window to the soul. Are you now imagining that I would advise your taking opium or some other drug in order to reach us? That is far from my thought; but I would not have you condemn too severely the unfortunate who uses drugs to produce feelings and spectacles which are denied him amid the difficulties and obstacles of an unfavourable existence. It is not the religious alone to whom heaven opens, although in our opinion the religious way is far the best. Men must realise that, however religious their feelings, they still have bodies which they cannot shake off when they seek communication with our state. Do you regard my words as immoral? I hope not and trust to your knowledge of my character in the past.”

XXXVII

Protest

“You do not know, you cannot judge, for you have not the means of judging, what you are doing in this writing, which you once called futility. You are well aware that I have said all I can to show you your mistake and I can now add nothing. You have fixed your mind on one sort of proof and we are directed to give you a more worthy

one. Do you believe it more reasonable to ask for miracles than to rely on your gift of reason and intuition? I did not come to show you conjuring tricks, but to try to make you such a character as we admire and seek to encourage. That, rather than this writing, great achievement though it be, is what we aim at with you, and you will not trust our intention, nor firmly believe that all our efforts are not your own, suspecting that even our best communications are nothing but lucubration of some unconscious you. Verily I prefer unconscious to you as your friends know you.

“Am I wrong in saying this when I think of my years of labour at giving you reasons to trust us? Always your sense-bound consciousness rejects us, refuses free reason on our utterances and continues in the prejudices and superstitions of the past. Were you satisfied with your character and brains in your past life, so contented that new knowledge coming to you in recent years appeared nonsense and drivel to so clever a mind? There is some bather in your character still insurmountable by reason. You speak of disappointment with us and deception in our promise, but do you not think we have cause to be disappointed also in you who remain impervious to the affection and reason of all of us, who have paid so much attention to you only to find our efforts doubted or repulsed?

“Read our past work and ponder over it. Let us speak to you through those writings when we are absent. We all hope that in leisured reading they may have the effect they fail to make after passing to you with such rapidity.”

PART IV

Grand Inquest

*“The ghost in man, the ghost that once was man,
But cannot wholly free itself from man,
Are calling to each other thro' a dawn
Stranger than earth has ever seen; the veil
Is rending, and the voices of the day
Are heard across the voices of the dark.”*

NOTE

In point of time the following matter represents the earliest intercourse between my assumed correspondent Number Two and my mystified self. It was preserved for examination by learned men who, I hoped, would explain to me the method by which and the source from which my hand had acquired the gift of imaginative authorship. For it must be taken into account that my attitude to the operation after my first shock was half humorous and my acquaintance with psychic matters very slender. I had read two books on the subject dealing with apparitions, one by Camille Flammarion, who held in France the position of our Astronomer Royal, and the other by the eminent Italian physicist Bozzano. Both these scientists had become

Spiritualists through observation and experiment. I was also acquainted with a book in more popular style, "On the Edge of the Etheric."

The first questions I asked in my curiosity seem such as anyone would ask in similar circumstances and have therefore a general interest. My aim was to make my writing as mechanical as a dictaphone, reserving criticism to subsequent examination and reflection.

For the benefit of those who believe that there is communication between our present and a future stage of evolution I append extracts from shorthand notes of experiments with three forms of the psychic faculties with which some persons are born.

In the case of No. 1, I telephoned the lady anonymously and found I could interview her forthwith. For No. 2, I was merely one of a crowd at a public meeting, and to No. 3 I telephoned at 11 a.m. and met her at 3 p.m. At no time did they know my name or where I lived.

I. *Clairvoyance*. Mrs. Helen Spiers.

I handed her a page of my script folded so as totally to conceal the writing. Crushing it in her hand without unfolding it, she said, "This is writing from the spirit world. I see a fine-looking man of dominating personality. He says he has written it through your hand and is very happy about it."

2. *Psychometry*. Mrs. Annie Johnson.

A numbered envelope containing my pencil was handed to her by another person and she said, "This is strange. I am being made to write quicker and quicker, very quick indeed, like this, until I have a pain in my arm. Whose is No. 64?" (I acknowledged it.) "Now I see, someone from the Other Side makes you write like this. You are powerfully protected and are wanted to write a book."

3. *Trance*. Mrs. Lilian Bailey, O.B.E.

Did I know I had an Egyptian interested in me? He was bringing a kind of "cushion of light" above my head and upon it were "signs or letters, some sort of writing, focusing itself on your brain. It passes through your brain and you reproduce it." It came through several channels and I was the last link.

Grand inquest

What may an ordinary man expect at his death?

"There are many things to be taken into account. In the first place, a spirit frequently reposes for a considerable time, especially if when embodied, he had a long or exceptionally trying malady. And then it depends largely on his personal desire whether, on waking, he seeks to return to his earthly surroundings. Sometimes devoted love draws him, or it may be his anxiety for schemes and

arrangements on earth, undertakings on which his heart was set. Such things have at first great power, until he perceives that they are not taking so important a part in his thought as they once did, and at the same time the new life is opening up and proving the stronger attraction. The young are more drawn to earth than the old; they had great hopes of life, which their elders had learnt to regard with less greedy eyes, estimating more justly the chances of failure in ideals and the hazards and disappointments which fall to a man's lot.

“Sometimes it may be rather long before the spiritual body is able to separate from material form, and it is advisable to leave the corpse undisposed of for a short period. But more often the spirit is quickly loosed, and then, I think, there is always a tendency for it to remain somewhere in spatial proximity, regarding friends and relatives who mourn, partly in wonder at the strangeness of the situation and partly because he would like to comfort them, to give them a sign that all is well so far, and that certainly we live again.

“A time of great despondency may occur at this stage. The heart and desires are on earth; earth is still all-important, and yet there is no way in which the spirit can exercise his influence in that seemingly all-important sphere. There is a sense of powerlessness which is very irksome, especially to the ambitious with strong characters. These suffer, too, from seeing affairs proceeding as they would not have them proceed and perhaps witnessing other persons' actions to which they would greatly object were they allowed to express an opinion. All this period is most agitating to some, until influences from their new state prevail and the centre of interest changes.

“But, speaking generally; most people soon turn from the earth, recognising that the new life is going to be something better. They are naturally filled with curiosity and the fears arising from religious teaching on earth, but the reaction is powerful and most pleasant. Those who believed in a lurid hell are greatly relieved to see no preparations for it, nor hints that their way leads to a fiery pit. It is true that they experience a very black moment, but it in no way resembles their idea of a judgment where all is wrath, proceeding from some hardhearted person who sternly pronounces a crushing doom. Indeed people are affected in a thousand different ways according as their consciences are enlightened or barely active. No two spirits being alike, it is impossible to predict how any one of them will be affected.

“A great deal depends upon the friends, known and unknown, who come to greet the newcomer; the influence of good and wise protectors can do much to smooth the ways of the new life. There is no doubt, too, that acquaintance with reports of psychic experiments and, better still, personal experiences, aid and lighten the change of state. You may realise how true this is if you imagine what would have been your bewilderment two or three years ago, had you then left the earth, and compare it with the assurance of all you now know and have experienced. Already the difference in outlook which acquaintance with us opens to your vision must be

enormous.

“In your new surroundings there will be no sort of haziness. You will think yourself in the same natural, solid and real environment as on earth; nothing will seem artificial. It is true that when you perceive the inhabitants of your new world you may notice that there has been a change, but even that depends on circumstances. Supposing you do not immediately recognise friends who you know to be ‘dead,’ you may not realise for some time that what you were perhaps expecting has happened. Probably the first indication of change to many people is not what they see but what they feel. Few have the happiness of a painless death, and so, gradually, the truth dawns that all the pain of body and distress of mind are gone in a sudden and mysterious way and, finding that the body which you lately moved with painful effort now moves easily, you move it and walk. It is thus, I believe, that the realisation comes to most people, and with it a mixture of joy, wonder and a little fear. Then is the moment when, in the majority of cases, friends whom you have known, or have known about you, or have the mission to assist your first entry among us, approach you and greet you kindly, explaining matters and satisfying your earliest curiosities.

“What I have said refers to the average man, not characterised by great virtues or vices, but you must not imagine that matters invariably proceed in this way. In certain cases, for instance, there is a crowd of persons already waiting on the threshold, delighted to be brought in contact with one whom they have learnt to admire and love, or proud of their mission to welcome the newcomer and give him his first information. There will be present also a host of relatives and acquaintances equally pleased to receive him among them. It may be a very happy affair, to be desired by everyone on his leaving your earth.

“Those who, like yourself and some of your friends, have had revealed knowledge of what is to be expected on arrival with us, should never fail to tell what they know. A very little, the mere turning of the thought of one who rejects the truth of communication with us, may at the moment of change prove a support and comfort. Therefore relate all your experiences, although they may not seem to you sufficiently striking to be convincing. You lay a foundation on which we can work, and you are conferring a benefit on your friends, although you may seem to arouse their opposition and dislike.

“Finally, you must not expect characters to change forthwith. If, for instance, we were hesitating on earth and undecided, we remain so; otherwise we plan and try to carry out our plan in the course of our service. There we have an advantage over you, in that we have a clearer idea of what is possible, and our thought has far more power within the limits of our new state. We have certain basic ideas fixed in our minds, leaving no room for doubt. We know that there exists a great and benevolent power, whom we must obey, or all our plans go wrong. When I say ‘obey’ I do not mean that we receive orders from that power, or anyone else, but we take it as a

matter of course that, if we attempt anything not in accordance with the law of the Great Power, there will be no result beyond a deterioration of our being.

“Our desires, backed by the creative force of our thought, do not come into conflict with those of others. Desires not in accordance with the law of the Great Power are ineffectual outside our own personality, and there they act in one way or another to our detriment. All desires conforming to the laws of life are fulfilled, and the mere fact of a commencement of opposition between the aims of two spirits denotes at once that one or other is aiming at something contrary to law, and he loses ground.

“Here I approach the source of my eternal wonder, this kind of ‘automatic’ ordering of our life. There is much in our life which resembles in a way ‘automatic’ writing. It seems to you who write in your earth state that you are doing something perfectly natural, so natural that you were at first convinced that you were only writing ‘what came into your head.’ But on reflection afterwards (for I give you no time to reflect now at this break-neck pace) you perceived that the process had other elements in it of a strange and compelling character. You were not writing something of your own intention and composition, and yet it had seemed an action of your free choice. That is precisely what we feel now in our plans and acts.

“There is undoubtedly an exercise of our free will, and yet this will, for all its freedom, is somehow directed to ends other than those foreseen by us when we planned and worked. Each person has his own apparently original thoughts and proceeds to carry them out, and you would expect many a clash. But, as our schemes proceed, there is this other indescribable element apparent, that which makes your seemingly free writing prove itself the next day to be something not at all designed by you and expressing sentiments which in all your past life you never entertained.

“I may say without offence to you, I think, or undue conceit on my part, that these writings are far wiser than you and can teach you much, as much as any teacher with a separate personality can teach a pupil. No one can accuse me of self-conceit in this statement, for these pages are not the work of myself alone; in this new creation I freely admit your share, drawn by me from your mind, so my self must not be branded with the charge of egoism and self-deception.

“Perhaps the secret of spirit life is this universal co-operation hidden from superficial observation. On earth you do great things with our co-operation, generally unobserved, and we for our part live and advance only by co-operation with the Great Power. It is true that you, too, move and work within that power, but the conditions are other than with us. We cannot go too far astray as you are allowed to do without check. Our eyes are far more open to reality, which is God for you and the great anonymous power for us. The wide freedom to err on earth makes the *raison d'être* of your existence, renders effectual your fiery trials, permits no sin to be sinned in vain, no resistance to evil to be without reward.”

What were your own personal impressions after death?

“Naturally it was all very strange, but on the whole not disagreeable. I had been suffering intense pain and, when I again became conscious, there was a feeling of relief, lightness and pleasure. But as I looked about me, all seemed like a vision which would pass. Only gradually did I recognise the situation, seeing those whom I knew to be dead; it would be affectation to exclude that word, all understand it.”

Descriptions of “heaven” make it seem rather dull.

“That is want of imagination on your part. Picture to yourself another world like your own, people with the same tastes, landscapes of wonderful beauty, streets and gardens, graceful architecture and crowds of busy persons, all with work to do, and most of them doing it. What is dull in all that? Their conversation is lively, and when you have joined those with whom you have affinity, it is certain that what goes on in your circle of friends will be the sort of thing that suits your tastes. Of course there are ups and downs in feelings, as on earth. There are serious moments and quieter periods. We can be alone when we will. But we are often very gay, and you can look forward to happy times, I can assure you.

“I admit that there is at first a state when we are not so happy. Unfamiliar surroundings, realisation of a host of opportunities lost, faults serious and grave in our past life, remorse and, perhaps worst of all, the absolute perception of our miserable personal appearance in comparison with others who have already progressed to something higher - all this prevents us from gaiety, and there is approximate gloom. But that passes when understanding comes, and work and openings for service, which is a sure restorative. And then there are meetings with those we have loved and lost, as we thought. Truly compensations for first sad thoughts are many. It dawns upon us that we are loved, that the mysterious power is wholly well-disposed and governs all.”

You are not always working, I suppose, you have holidays.

“Surely we have, but not, perhaps, in the sense you mean. Probably your idea is something like school holidays, so many weeks in winter and so many in summer. Our holidays are entirely in our own power to take, and we only do so when we retire to a state connected with the source of power, so that we can recommence our service with greater vigour. We have the equivalent of sleep, which occurs fairly frequently, but it is not to that I refer, rather to certain longer periods, when we place ourselves in the required state to receive power, or sometimes we are taken to a higher region, where the environment has the same effect. This is much more to be desired, as the experiences we undergo cause a renewal of thoughts and ideas. It is all most cleverly arranged, and it requires restraint on my part to withhold my dithyrambs on a familiar topic. Suffice it to say that the question of rest and recreation is one of the most striking evidences of the perfect system of government under which we live. The anonymous power exercises its quite gentle influence upon us in a way which seems like natural growth. Yet beneath this agreeable experience we can recognise irresistible strength, recognise without resenting it.

“There are no rebels; I mean that those belonging to the state where I am would never dream of resistance to anything obviously ordained, but there are those allowed to pass among us who, I think, will long remain rebels. The purpose for which they come I take to be our instruction; they could not penetrate to us of their own wills. Perhaps they have expressed a desire to see higher sphere of abode and, as the system is, their desire has been granted, with the possible result that there is awakened in them a thought of progress which will be fostered by one of us and developed. That would be a most acceptable service to many who are themselves bent on progress. Such services constitute our work, about which you are sometimes curious; it lies on this side rather than on yours. The return to your state is accompanied by much pain, but the attempt rewards itself more greatly and success brings greater pleasure, as you may imagine.”

Can you describe in detail your ordinary routine?

“Too difficult a subject to treat. We are so differently circumstanced that I should seem to be talking to you in a foreign language which you imperfectly understand. At any rate, I think I can assure you that you will find our ordinary course of life infinitely preferable to your daily life on earth. There is that freedom from pain for one thing and a normal feeling of buoyancy and ease of movement. You are not now, I take it, afraid of the prospect of leaving your world. You know more of what to expect than the many who never give a thought to means of communication between the two states. It is true that, when I lived in your state, I never doubted that I should live elsewhere again; but when I say ‘never’ I am perhaps exaggerating, for occasionally I did doubt, in moments of depression - and there were many at the last.”

In such unfamiliar circumstances was it not possible to get some guidance?

“Oh, yes, and of a most interesting nature. In common with thousands of others I attended ‘courses’ of enlightenment at a time when I was glad to be able simply to rest and enjoy to the full the new and happy sensation of freedom from anxiety and pain. But my thoughts certainly wandered more often than at present to your world. For, however one may arrange and try to foresee the future of those one leaves behind, there is always something which escapes the most loving solicitude. However, little by little I became engrossed in my new knowledge, which was indeed imparted in a very novel manner and yet succeeded in enthraling my attention. In this, as in all other ways, the skillful organisation and natural progression of life with us still excites my admiration and will always do so. For in my earth life, as you know, I had much organising and arrangement on a grand scale to carry through, and I am therefore in a position to estimate the wonder of what I see around me in this order of ideas. Yet it hardly seems like organisation as we used to regard that; it is more like something which naturally develops by some process of growth.

“Invisible personality, that is what we laid immense emphasis upon on earth, but here it is less personality than power - unseen, anonymous, mysterious power,

which is doing the right thing, filling gaps and exercising watchfulness in the greatest as in the most trifling relations between the myriad inhabitants of this region, all active persons with their various purposes, yet not following an independent programme, but aiming at wholehearted execution of the service suggested to them by higher influence.

“There are never any mistakes; even if we do not recognise this when we first arrive, it is very soon impressed upon us, and we recognise this order as part of our happiness. It does not seem like the commands of anyone; it is there and works, without a chief or governor that one can observe. There are ranges of persons who go about their business and, as it were, draw us along, without conscious intention on our part. It seems like a natural force acting on the waves; but, if we are the waves, each of us has nevertheless a choice of following the tide or not. Our desires, too, are accomplished in a strange way. It does not seem to us that we are working to accomplish our desire, and yet it is accomplished.”

Do bad temper, jealousy and so on continue among you?

“These defects are part of our characters as they were on earth, but where I am I think nearly everybody tries with his new knowledge more earnestly to eradicate such weaknesses.

“You must try to get a better picture of us and our way of living, although, it is true, you cannot grasp many aspects of this state. But you must not imagine that we are colourless beings, always in a dreamy mood, and so cleansed by death from all our spots and stains that we have no character worthy the name. If I may say what must seem to you with your present views almost a contradiction, we are very ‘human,’ and we quarrel and love and talk sometimes in a senseless way, all very like you in your present state. The uncomfortable feeling on arrival is not always because conditions of life are so different, but is often largely surprise that there are so many resemblances and that such a world exists at all. It is so seldom that a newly arrived spirit sees what he expected to see. The number of those enlightened is incredibly small. Although I may be speaking of my own experience only, it seems that we get far more persons with some knowledge of our ways from the English-speaking countries than from any others. You may think ‘What about India?’ Well, if you think their idea of heaven is more like the part I know than London, you are mistaken.

“With the knowledge you are now gaining you will be able to realise your new circumstances much more quickly, and you will not suffer from the painful revolt against the substitution of truth for your pet theories and beliefs, nor from general feeling of strangeness, which sometimes amounts to total disbelief in one's surroundings, and the idea that all is a bad dream from which something terrible may come at any moment. There is an element of fear in everyone's first experience, and a great deal of soothing must be done by people allotted to this task and the friends and relations attracted by love, or merely by interest.

“The truly painful part is the review of the past. No one escapes that, and there is no one who does not suffer. The best suffer most, which must seem to you unjust, but it is not. The depth of their suffering serves to raise them when their first efforts at progress take place, and their rank will be higher by so much as their repentance was deep and keenly felt. Never believe that there is real injustice, either with us or on your earth. That is the meaning of faith, and lucky are those with you who suffer. Have you ever looked at things from the point of view that there are souls *worthy* suffering? Perhaps some people find the way smooth because their souls do not merit the rough. Pain on earth will most certainly have its balance redressed; think of this as law.”

What did you personally find most remarkable?

“Perhaps what most struck me was the reality, almost ‘solidity,’ of all about me. You talk of spirit freely and think you know exactly what you are talking about. It seems to you something diaphanous and air-like, something that might itself be dissolved by a breath of air. All that is inherited memories or early times, prehistoric times, the age in which the later word ‘spiritus’ has its root. This false idea has been steadily propagated by ecclesiastics and theologians, but it is quite a false idea. Spirit is the strong and vigorous motive force which guarantees your existence and that of all around you, animate and inanimate. What you see and handle is veneer upon a sturdy foundation, and that foundation is spirit, the most powerful and indeed the only source of energy and lasting strength.

“How many people, may I ask, have ever reached this picture of spirit in their mind? In all these ages in which man has developed thought upon the unseen, the vulgar idea has never been corrected. The penalty of this laxity is the prevailing materialism, for the holding of materialistic ideas has its justification in the weak and almost puerile presentation of the idea of spirit by both pious and learned men, to whom the crowd looked up as marvels of science and philosophy. Yet while science gladly rid itself of the idea of spirit as an encumbrance, philosophy was bound to maintain an idea which seemed its *raison d’être*. How could it commit hari-kari? It is lucky that, however feebly, in whatever futile forms, philosophy has persisted, sometimes, in the over-sophisticated ages, such as yours and mine, as a still small voice, drowned in the triumphant paeans sounded by science, which thanks to us, is obviously lowering its tone and, however unwillingly, making admissions sufficient to restore the balance between the two conflicting theories of your world.”

Have you seen spirits arriving from earth?

“Many times, both strangers and relatives. But your question is merely one of curiosity. I have told you my sensations on coming over and have assured you that you will like this life better than your earth life; what else do you want for comfort or for knowledge? They do not suffer, these people, in their passing. I think sometimes their friends suffer more, when they see the bodies writhing in apparent agony,

while in reality the spirit is already tasting its first freedom from pain, or lies in a blessed insensibility.”

Are you able to meet great men of the past?

“Some of them are occasional visitors where I am, but they do not stay long with us; we are all busy. You must not think that we lie about and amuse ourselves, as the ancient gods were reputed to do. It strikes me that many of your ideas of heaven are more nearly related to paganism than to our present existence. But I hope you will not again ask me to describe in detail our familiar way of life, now that I have assured you that it is quite impossible to give you a picture which would convey even a remote resemblance of certain details to your mind. I should be trying to translate into your language ideas for which you have no equivalents, and the result would hardly be better than some of the attempts by missionaries to translate the English Bible into the primitive language of African natives. Such an attempt would serve us for practice, but might convey the most erroneous ideas.”

And your ancestors?

“Invariably persons quite unknown to a newcomer approach and take an interest in him, not because they have any curiosity about what is happening on earth, but because there is an unbroken connection in spirit. This connection goes very far back in a man's ancestry, and for all I know is eternal. But you must remember that after a few generations you have many thousands of persons connected with you, so the strain becomes very weak; perhaps it vanishes altogether; I do not know.”

Can you know the names of people you meet?

“I cannot, nor can I see all their thoughts, as you once asked. A man must tell me his name, but I can judge fairly well from his appearance what his mental history has been and is. There are signs upon us which tell much to those who direct their attention to us. There are what might be considered badges of rank; by this I mean that our place in the line of progress through our good or bad qualities is evident. But you must not think we are spiritual snobs on that account. If our progress has been more rapid, our idea, when we see a less developed spirit, is to help him to progress, and if our relations become such as to enable us to put our desire into practice, it gains us advancement. We may even sacrifice some of our progressive work to help him. As I have said, service is the main occupation of the region where I am. It is our life-blood and marks our destiny.”

As you are still in contact with evil influences, there must be discomfort and pain with you.

“We are pained mentally, but of course never physically in our present bodies. There is despondency, especially at first, as I have said, arising from feelings of acute remorse; this is our worst pain. Then there is the knowledge of unpleasant occurrences on earth in connection with those we love. This also is very bitter: but such feelings lose their sting as we become more engaged in new interests and as we come to understand the value of pain to you on earth. We gradually comfort

ourselves with the consciousness that the afflictions of those we love will ultimately serve, not hinder, the sufferers.

“Our eyes soon become opened to certain aspects of the question of evil and pain, but do not ask me at this stage of my progress the reason for the existence of evil in your world. Believe, as I do, that there is a good reason. Persuade yourself of that now, in your earthly state, although you feel bewildered by the mass of evil, and when you reach a higher state you will be so instructed that the question will cease to be one of the great stumbling-blocks in the way of a philosophical scheme of existence. Certainly I myself can see that there is an explanation of what was often a source of doubt.

“Memory is an occasional source of pain, but also of great satisfaction, because from our position we can review the events of our lives with more calm, and much which troubled us on earth is perceived to have aided us greatly when regarded *sub specie aeternitatis*.”

Do people in your state retain their sense of humour?

“Of course they do; there is hardly any difference in their behaviour from their conduct on earth. We continue, and when I say that I mean that our fixed personalities continue. If we were humorous on earth we are humorous still. What makes our conversations with you often less frivolous than those we carried on on earth is that there is undoubtedly a sense of solemnity connected with this communication between two worlds. It is a matter of great concern and importance that we both find it possible to communicate from one world to another. Surely many people must have desired this consummation of many longings. Poets have sung of it as if it were real and, as in many other directions the singer who allowed his imagination free scope merely predicted, although unconsciously, that which future ages realised.

“You on earth are now reaching a new stage in human development, and it rests with this and the following generations to organise their psychic work in such a way that the transformation in thought and ideals planned by higher powers may be effectively brought about. There is therefore much to make those aware of this situation give a rather serious turn to the words by which they make contact with you. Some of you take it lightheartedly, like a man who makes a rather interesting experiment to gain a rather interesting experience. But there is a moral and religious background to all these practices which cannot be ignored, and which, indeed, is never ignored by us, if we are earnest and progressive persons. And then again we recognise the immense effort required to bring about these contacts. You take it light-heartedly because you see the phenomenon only, but do not see the numerous preparatory steps which we must take to produce it.”

To what kind of religious background were you referring?

“I was not thinking of any special faith, but of the attitude of mind which denotes

reverence and a solemn admission of the high importance of this work. It should not be undertaken merely as a pastime, or as a scientific enquiry. It is something infinitely greater; the attitude towards it must be religious; there is no avoiding that conclusion. You have the feeling of certainty in the revelation of another world, and of how a man should live in yours so as to be prepared for his future existence, not immediately after quitting his world, only, but for ages on ages to come. That vista now makes your world look rather small and explains perhaps why I take less interest in your doings, when, but a short time ago, the conduct of affairs was all in all to me.

“I cannot say that I neglected *in toto* my relations to another world, but I fear that my ideas on that subject were as shadowy as those of the mass of men with you. I did not abandon my religious duties nor undervalue prayer so much as some men; but when I try to put myself in the positions which I latterly held on earth, I cannot but marvel at my absorption in what are really trifling matters, although they occupied conspicuous headlines in the newspapers. I was never satisfied with honours; there was something lacking, but I could not tell what it was. Mine was a life of disappointment, not, as you may think, because I had notable deceptions, known to all men, but because, when I had attained an object which I had aimed at with the expectation that at last I should reach a goal giving the height of satisfaction, I found that the result of my effort failed to satisfy me, or that I saw a further desirable object beyond, which I must attain before I could murmur, ‘At last I am content,’ - and I never was.”

Did you never give attention to psychic research?

“Never, though of course I heard much talk and discussion on the subject, particularly in conversation with A. . . B. . . but I never took the matter seriously; the idea of illusion being always present to my mind. There were so many more important things (as it appeared to me) to think of that enquiry into psychic matters seemed to me an almost frivolous occupation. Yet several persons in my circle of acquaintances might have interested and enlightened me.

“That was one of my lost opportunities on earth and I should be glad if any effort on my, or should I say our, part rouse more people to regard these matters in all seriousness. The time is certainly coming when such studies will lead to a vast revolution and notable advance in human affairs and man's outlook on life. When that will be I cannot say, but I do know that preparations for a great campaign are being made, of that you need have no doubt. If you can help in the least to bring this plan into action in your field of work, you may believe that you are co-operating in great things.”

Will you tell me something about your buildings?

“I can only tell you what I have seen where I am. There are buildings in all styles of architecture, as you may imagine, since people of all nations and many ages have

individual preferences. But as in all else, harmony prevails and nothing is allowed to clash. There are specialists who devote themselves to architecture and building. The latter does not mean what you call by the same name, but is done entirely by thought, some persons being found more fitted than others for this work. It is not as a rule the architect who builds, each confines himself to what he does best. The general lay-out of a district is probably planned elsewhere; I do not know about this yet.

“One thing would strike you as curious: a person looking at the landscape of which buildings form part may influence what he sees to make it more agreeable to him. You must not pretend that you can understand this, and by speculating on an explanation you will only arrive at erroneous conclusions. One more ununderstandable for you! The accumulation of ununderstandables should teach you that, instead of speculating on something you call heaven and what takes place there, you would be much better employed in seeking instruction on the development of the human spirit before and when it reaches the nearest state beyond the limits of your world. You will certainly not find anything unpleasing in this region if you have led a good and useful life in the other.

“Remember that you are building your dwelling here while you are constructing your life on earth. You all become builders unwittingly, or, dare I say, it used to be unwittingly, for now illumination is coming to a select number of you, and it will gradually, very gradually, become the faith of all. Our buildings are yours. They are beautiful if your souls are beautiful and your life on earth will show itself in your house no less than in your person to those with the sight of our world, which is in truth piercing.”

Can you not say a little more about this incomprehensible fact?

“Regard thought as our material, not an invisible effluence from a brain, or anything similar, but an independent, active and most creative something, for you an ‘x,’ which, if you could work it out and give it action, might solve many of your most baffling problems. There will never be a time, it seems to me, but I know little yet, when man will solve all his problems in earth life. There will be further revelation, perhaps, but, as it is, your philosophers and scientists seem to me far from entering on the right road, and when they find it they will yet have far to go. But so they are developing their spirits and those of persons on earth interested in speculation. The best kind of speculation is meditation, or perhaps I should say is based on meditation as its preliminary, when we are given an opportunity to help you. It is a valuable habit to set apart a fixed hour for meditation, a difficult acquirement and, as I believe, peculiarly distasteful to Englishmen. I am not telling you this in a sarcastic vein; each nation has its aptitudes. There have been notable Englishmen who have meditated profoundly, and have not been contented with material experiments and mathematical problems as guides towards truth.”

Another puzzle is the question of your clothes.

“We wear what clothes we like and we make our own, although we are no tailors. This continues the difficult question of thought. We can make anything by thought. It has no limit provided it does not violate the laws of life; it seems as if confusion or disorder of any kind were the most deadly of sins. I shall never tire of wondering at the workings of the Great Power in ordering our life, and then considering that in other regions crammed with life, the same calm, unhurried power is actively employed in a thousand different forms of order. That is another thing of which you have little conception. Things do not go wrong as they do on earth, and that seems another marvel when one first observes this state. It makes your world seem a veritable chaos, at all times, not only after great wars and cataclysms. Certainly I shall one day speak to you in serious work on that one subject; it interests me more than I can tell, perhaps because I had so much ordering to do, and did it, I fear, so unsatisfactorily. There were influences which continually upset my order, do what I would.”

What would you do if you were placed on earth again now with your present knowledge?

“That would depend principally upon what sphere of action was allotted to me by the higher powers. I certainly have learnt that there is one main object for all men to aim at, and that is service. In doing so they are not only finding their real happiness on earth, but are actually building their future abode and environment. I have already told you this, but how difficult to explain. To state that thought and intention can become ‘solid’ would make you smile, and indeed it looks comic to me, but there is truth of idea behind that statement, if not truth of expression.

“When a man seeks to serve and succeeds in finding a place in life where he can do so largely, he is actually creating something with us. His surroundings after his change will have a different appearance through his work on earth; that is to say, the work is on earth, but the most important part of its results take place in what we may call heaven - for, as you know, I count it an affectation to avoid the well-known names used on earth. When I say ‘heaven’ I mean my present state, and when I say ‘earth,’ I mean yours. Well, then, the useful man, living a life of service is most effectively constructing his heaven. This is not a wholly figurative manner of speaking, as it must appear to you, but how difficult to make your mind accept so foreign an idea! I can imagine the incredulous saying, ‘What, can a man think a brick, or a slab of marble?’ But if I said ‘Yes’ I should be saying nothing so wildly extravagant, though it would not be a precisely accurate statement in words of a true idea.

“From this trifling instance you can understand how difficult it would be to do what you lately asked me - to describe in minute detail our condition. Then I instanced the absence of time of your kind as an impossible idea for you to grasp, and, could you grasp it, I should have still more bewildering ideas to add, of which even a roundabout analogy would fail to convey anything you could understand.”

Do you spy on me sometimes?

“That is just what I did this evening at an earlier hour. A rather frivolous conversation, but there was no harm in it, I think. Sometimes you go rather far, are carried away, I mean, when you are laughing and talking with others. That is a venial fault; when you scoff at what are most serious matters it is not done with serious intention.

“Now, you must not think that I am continually, or even often, with you. It happened that I had been in your thoughts and no occupation prevented me from paying you a visit, although it was not in your own house. It is all so easy, as you will find out. Try to picture a state where you think ‘I am going north, east, west or south’ as the case may be, and even as you formulate the intention your surroundings change and you have arrived at your destination. On first realising your powers you take every opportunity of testing them, and it is at this period of our new experience that we are most prone to visit earth. Our desires and memories draw us in that direction. Very soon, however, the immense interest and novelty of our habitat crowd out all earthward longings; but of course we never forget where love is the link.”

Have you ever appeared to anyone?

“No. I know no one of those to whom I am drawn by love capable of perceiving me, and there is no member of my family still on earth who has a tendency to study or meditate upon communication with another world. They all have the average ecclesiastical belief in a future life, and that is too pale and ineffective a faith to obtain manifestations from us, except on rare occasions when, for some special object, we are given an excess of power. Naturally I have frequently been present with my relatives and delighted in observing their activities.”

What do I look like to you?

“I see through you, so to speak, that is to say, I see more than people in your world when they look at you. Would you understand if I said I saw your soul? What I mean is that within your flesh I can perceive another you of a more permanent character, and that is what interests me in this work; for I can see your intentions and, in a measure, your difficulties, when you are hampered by your corporeal element. It is most interesting, as you may imagine.

“In this order of ideas I may say that some souls are not pleasant to look upon. Among us, too, there are those who appear from time to time with almost repulsive selves. They are not with us in the ordinary course, rather visitors who are allowed to penetrate from elsewhere for a special purpose, or possibly because the petitions of someone who loved them and mourns their absence have found favour with the higher powers who organise our life.”

You talked of coming to me in a flash, but, however quick, that implies time and space.

“As you say, our movement must contain time and space, although it is so rapid, but that is not the time and space you know. It is conditioned by events and thoughts.

How can I explain such an idea to you? I could not explain it to anyone where I am, not hampered by words. Time is a quality and space is not a void, yet we see distance and can talk of far and near; we can convey the notion of past and future. Combine our space and time and you have the basic conditions or substructure of our being. With this amount of clarity, or obscurity, it seems to me we had better quit the subject.

“You do better at this stage to abandon any attempt at understanding these details. Be content with my assurance that this is a happy and pleasant life, not dull, and when you awake to it you will understand conditions quite quickly under the perfect system of instruction which prevails. Really there is no reason why you should try to understand details of our life now; your questions are merely curiosity. Your duty lies on earth, and if you have no doubts about this future life, you have good reason for acting on earth as you are meant to act. Leave us to our space and time without neglecting your duty or falling short in intelligence. Occupy your own space and spend your own time well, knowing that another space and time await you with new tasks and another life to lead well or ill.”

Morality must be easier in your region where there is no property and no money.

“You are right in saying that there are no money temptations, but you must remember that men retain their characters and desires and at first aim at the same objects they coveted on earth. Strange as it may seem, they are sometimes allowed to attain them. But in course of time they perceive that they must pursue a different policy. They perceive that there is nothing in men's desires for themselves and their own advancement; it is satiety without satisfaction and, if not actual disgust, at any rate a wish comes over them to change their objectives. Some partially developed souls on the other hand persist in their desires and will not for a long time perceive why they are not happy, or why their fellowship with their affinities arouses their dislike, although all have similar tastes. There is rivalry and unrest, until some more enlightened person succeeds in influencing them and setting them on a better course; or it may be that a spark within them kindles, past memories fanning it to a glow, and starts them on a brighter path.”

Do families remain together?

“In certain cases, but often those living together were not related by blood on earth. Affinity is a stronger bond than blood relationship and groups are formed of those who by character and tastes are more closely akin. You can judge from your present observation that such a connection must be more agreeable than family life, where the bond is not made by your sympathies but by your parents. More often than you perhaps think, however, members of the same family remain in touch. There is often a fundamental bond of love between them which does not appear on the surface, being hidden by habit and differences of character; it is not recognised by those concerned until the superficialities of earthly life fall off and we know and are known.”

Do our friends know when we think of them?

“Yes, but that does not mean that they can quit their duties for you. Such a proceeding would upset the wonderful order and arrangement, of which I continually speak to you with admiration, and result in confusion.

“But wherever you may be on this Christmas night, you will certainly eat your dinner in company with many who hold you in affection. Whether you perceive them or not is a matter of your sensitivity, but I can assure you that they will influence your thoughts and perhaps your acts. There is no limit to the interest they take in those they love, and they rejoin them far more often than you imagine. It is a cause of sadness that you so rarely pay attention to them; but they gladly suffer, and some, the more ardent and intense, always cling to the hope that they will make contact. This writing of ours may seem to you something unemotional and merely interesting, but there are those with us who would suffer agonies to obtain one word, spoken or written, which puts them in touch with loved and apparently lost ones.”

Does age affect people with you?

“If you mean to ask me whether those about me are afflicted with the infirmities of age, I can tell you they are not. They are our age, that is the age of all our region; no one is noticeable for age, yet there is no dead level. How can I explain? We can change our appearance almost as easily as we can change our dress. It is certain that if I were to appear to you, it would not be in the shape of a schoolboy, at a time when you never knew my form, but as you were acquainted with my appearance in later years. To others in your world I might present myself under a different aspect, but always one in which they would identify my personality. At first we remain for a considerable time in the guise of our earthly bodies; this period varies with the dawning of our awareness of our strange new powers of thought, and then the change comes very suddenly. We must have the idea of such a change before it can be effected; the idea may come from our own minds, but I think it is more often suggested by those who love us.”

Does a great improvement in form take place normally?

“Of course cripples and those having blemishes of one kind or another find their bodies restored. But you must not think that this interferes with family distinctions; everyone remains as he was on earth and, though improved in his outward shape, always recognisable for what he was. In the power of changing our appearance, too, there is a law; we cannot change to a totally different personality, we can only follow the line of our changes on earth. The appearance we had at various stages of our life is open to us to assume and we adjust it to circumstance.”

Are forms never other than human?

“There is a norm for the human form (but not uniformity by any means) a pattern labelled, as it were, man, a *ne varietur* of the great designing power, which, if you

are poetic as well as religious, you may relate to the words of the Jewish scriptures, 'in his image,' but do not be literal about this; it is an earthly tendency to personify. It is a useful tendency for you in your present state of development, perhaps a necessity, if you are to understand certain ideas and follow certain injunctions with sufficient emotion to make them springs of action. After arrival with us, however, you will find springs of action in another manner; feeling and imagination are so intensified that the imagery of earth is feeble in comparison. For instance, the feeling of awe is doubled, not only inspiring our worship, but spurring us on to higher aims, in a way which is the counterpart of your personification and directed to the same awe-inspiring object."

Does the idea of God become clearer to you?

"If a man on earth studies religious literature and thinks for himself, with an earnest desire for knowledge of the divine, he should be able to learn all that is necessary to know on the subject. The difficulty to most thinkers on earth (perhaps I was one of them) lies in the notion of personality. Too much stress is laid on this. It is exaggeration of anthropomorphism, which in moderation is justifiable; for all ideas of the Deity must be anthropomorphic, man being the highest form of spirit we know, and therefore he is right to attribute his best qualities, idealised as far as possible, to the divine power within and without the universe.

"It is doubtless best for humanity thus to make vivid their religion by personification. You may well believe that a ploughman would not be able to comprehend, much less be moved, if taught an impersonal idea of power and goodness, an abstraction among the concrete ideas which make up his life and limit his understanding. For many generations yet you will have personal gods in all countries leading a life of active physical work and seldom given to meditation.

"Certainly we know that there is no menacing autocrat spying on our faults, correcting them in wrath with a schoolmaster's punishments. The power which is absolute in all worlds seeks our weal, not our woe, and our happiness through well-doing is the sign of progress to better things. Is it not so on earth?"

People often doubt whether goodness brings happiness.

"Sound, progressive natures are those who have happy views of life, developing through success in such views. It is not, though people assert it, a question of bodily health and secretions when a soul is happy, but of closer contact with the power that is all in all. The happy soul may not realise why it is happy, but it knows very well that something is wrong within it when it is depressed. How can this happiness be acquired, you ask me? With difficulty. That is where meditation is effective, meditation which I would recommend above all to my countrymen. Think till light comes, as it surely will if you resign yourself - not at first perhaps when you try the system, but in course of time it will become indispensable, and without a shadow of doubt it leads to happiness; we will always see to that when we find a quiet soul.

“Your motto is ‘be up and doing,’ it is the way to virtue and success; but to us it is a mockery and a jest, a materialist's creed, the theory of every man who does not recognise the supremacy of thought. Man of action, what a noble sound, but what a poor reality unless thought inspire it.

“The really great on earth have always combined the two in right proportion, but their biographers rarely grasp this truth. Too often they present us with whatever flatters our national characteristic, instead of pointing out how many hours and days a great man passes in wrestling and questioning within, not always planning more action, rather seeking to know if his past actions can be justified, or, if he has done that which shames him, seeking his own justification. But whether merely specious or true, this pleading before his conscience is a necessity; the disapproving voice is every ready, never silent altogether, though at times he may think it is. You talk glibly about ‘automatic’ writing, but seldom consider that you have an automatic conscience, no product of evolution and civilisation, as some would have you believe, and it is yours for eternity.”

What is the best life for a man here and now?

“It still seems to me that those born in a Christian country have immense advantages, and especially western Europeans, who are in no danger of being so overcome by spiritual teaching that active life is paralysed. There is certainly little danger that the old error ‘faith without works’ will catch hold on Englishmen. You may safely encourage the new light that modern knowledge is giving you without fear that you are being led from materialism and mechanism to another extreme.

“There is not much difficulty for a man to do his duty, however, if he faithfully follow any of the great traditional religions.”

It seems strange that people live so long without knowledge of their psychic potentialities.

“The fault lies in the condition in which humanity now finds itself, especially in the West. You are fallen from a high estate, by which I am not referring to the theological ‘fall,’ but you were once granted privileges and shown a path which you have failed to use. Humanity in Europe has failed to follow the light from the East during the age subsequent to the sack of Jerusalem. The intense materialism of these later times was preceded by an equally lamentable period of ignorance and sloth, rightly termed the Dark Ages. But mankind will never sink into, absolute chaos and disorder; help will come. In the meantime a brighter fate ordained for you all is dimmed, and an immense number of spirits with your endowments, who might have led the world on the right path, have nearly all died undeveloped. When they reach our shores they have the pain of knowing what was offered and comparing it with their stunted lives on earth.”

What is the truth about reincarnation?

“I have often discussed the question and have found that opinions vary. Experiences of some people point to the conclusion that this in certain, perhaps many, cases

really takes place, and the reason is not difficult to conjecture. A person who voluntarily returns to his former state in a reincarnation takes a short cut, as I may say, to progress, while we others proceed more laboriously by deeds of service and will be out-distanced in the upward course by those who have again passed through the hard school of earth. But you must take nothing that I say for absolute truth, as I must confess that I have received no instruction on this point and I hear the most different ideas expressed on the subject. What is certain is that it has never been suggested to me that I may return to earth otherwise than by voluntary visits on my present mission, when, as you of course know, I have no need to take on flesh.”

Do you approve still of capital punishment?

“You have no right to take life for any cause, unless partly by accident, as in the course of defending yourself from an evilly inspired person, or in defending those who are too weak to defend themselves, or are dear to you, or of whom you are the natural protector. I think I am right in saying that there is no exception to this principle - that life, i.e., human life, must not be taken on any pretext whatever, whether it be done with the elaborate ceremonial of a court of justice, or by the dagger or poison of the assassin.

“It is for the Great Power to decide whether a human being has reached the end of his lesson on earth and the time has arrived to remove him from that discipline. No man is so utterly bad that, given a chance, he may not be reformed and put to shame the most virtuous. I told you lately what our views are on the close intermingling of virtue and vice and the impossibility for any person on your earth to allot blame with perfect justice, or to pronounce a just sentence. As it is, however, so it must go on, until the hour of enlightenment shall strike. But remember that that hour is brought nearer by each man's efforts; so it is permitted, your choice is free.”

You said men would do well to attend to the development of their spirits. How?

“Full treatment of that matter would be long, because each spirit varies in its requirements. Speaking generally, the practices followed to produce cultured minds come very near spiritual culture, especially with those of a religious turn of mind. This is perhaps the secret of spiritual development - to cultivate the mind and feelings by general education in the arts and sciences, coupled with social service, much meditation and religious practices. But you must not suppose that there are not men and women who arrive at a very advanced state of development without being highly educated or notably religious. You would be much surprised if certain minds around you were laid bare. You would find spiritual development in the most unexpected places.

“All forms of culture may be culture of the spirit; not only formal studies at school or university, but all kinds of mental discipline, such as that of researchers or inventors, even the pursuit of hobbies, which have so often been transformed from congenial occupations to great benefits to mankind under our direction. And you

must not forget a large class of humble persons that, more in times past than now, has devoted itself to studying the Bible. There is much culture of mind and spirit to be obtained by that study, which leads naturally to developed power of prayer, and that, when once learnt, is the most active contribution to spiritual life.”

Do coloured persons retain their colour?

“Not eternally, because at a later stage of progress form changes and we do not then see each other in earth form, as we may do in this and all other lower states. Certainly in our region difference in colour remains, but, as you may well imagine, colour prejudice is a thing of the past. Some coloured persons are the most honoured and admired, having great spiritual gifts acquired already in some measure upon earth. They were much more inclined to employ meditation than the whites and by that means reached spiritual enlightenment. We others were, I fear, too much occupied in active life; we seemed to regard silence and rest as a sort of vice. If we had not materially useful work to keep us going, we played games and made a fetish of them. Do you not think that proficiency in games is regarded in England as virtue? The crowds who witness sports of all kinds are hardly better than worshippers of very little gods. Have I said enough about this? Perhaps my opinion is quite contrary to yours.”

Do you agree with a Spiritualist who says we have a thought-body as well as what you have called a spiritual body?

“I had no experience of it in my own body, nor have I noticed anything of the kind where I am. What exists elsewhere, of course, I do not know, and I have not yet finished my time of instruction in this present abode. My conviction is that you in your state have the visible fleshy body and, mingling with it, a double, as it were, of finer texture, which remains your body when you pass to us. That ‘subconscious’ body changes perpetually, evolving or developing, but very slowly. It belongs to the spirit on earth; but it is not wrong to talk of the fleshy body as the spirit's abode, it is in one as in the other.

“There is, I may add, divergence of opinion even with us on the exact constitution of the bodies and the action of their powers. On such questions, as on theology, differences persist and, I suppose, will continue to do so for a considerable period of our progress. At no stage is there a sudden revelation of such constraining force that spirits are used as puppets. In all states of being man must gain his knowledge by his own exertions. That you may take to be a law of iron. I need not stay to explain to you why this is so, as every educated man in modern times can understand. Development or evolution by regular exercise of his powers has brought man where he is and will take him farther than he can now imagine. His day of belief in special interventions and creations is over, and the recent fashion of seeking to prove that there never was a time when any power outside man was necessary to his progress is also passing.

“A new phase of truth is dawning, with a struggle, of course; man must fight, if not with his fists, then with his bitter controversies about ideas. If you ever secure universal peace there are many of man’s qualities which will suffer eclipse. No one can deny the beauty of conflict which shines through its miseries. Doubtless the qualities it produces would be evolved in equally effective ways, but as peace descended upon earth it might at first bring with it loss as well as gain. The wholesale murders of the past will be well banished, but unless, as I believe will ere long be the case, a moral and religious revival takes place, man may be the poorer in several directions from the abolition of strife.”

Then you have a poor opinion of the present state of our world (1934)?

“My personal opinion has little value, although this further experience has changed it since my passing. I doubt your hope of the perfectibility of mankind as it is heading now. There seems a want of established principle among those who try to guide the modern world's destinies. Certain tried principles used to be generally accepted in all civilised countries, but now they are in a state of flux. There is no agreement among statesmen of different nations upon any basic ideas; all is contested. New theories spring up and die away to give place to others, and neither the one set nor the next is held so strongly that a sufficiently serious attempt is made to reduce it to practice. A new theory is mainly used as a weapon of the intellect to defeat an earlier, both prompted by material interests, and so it goes on. No building is done, but much demolition, and the housebreakers can only break, not bind.

“This must sound pessimistic, but it is not so, because I have learnt that great things are planning, which, when the confusion is at its height, will produce those changes in the world required by that vast plan. The world will never be left to chaos. Creative order, that is what is wanted in the world and that is what will come again. We can do our share towards a better state of things. Perhaps religious and philosophic ideas rather than political will effect the change which saves. There seems with your world a ripening of revelation, and such work as we are now doing may contribute to the basis of the renaissance forshadowed. Let that encourage you. ‘The world’s great age begins anew, the golden years return.’ Good night and God bless you.”

THE END

APPENDIX

Foreknowledge

The subject of the following account became known to me through the intimate contact of war service together. He was by no means a credulous person, being partner in a city firm whose business necessitated much wariness in dealing with international traders of doubtful honesty. Even after this and later psychic experiences, he remains of the opinion that a theory other than the Spiritualist may be found for their explanation. As to marriage, he had reached middle age, enjoyed the life of a bachelor of means in a West-end flat and had no idea of matrimony. I am the "friend" to whom the two letters quoted were addressed, and they are now in my possession, bearing the relevant postmarks. I can guarantee the truthfulness of the whole narrative. I may add that the marriage has proved most happy and there is one child.

"In August, 1932, I attended a Spiritualist meeting at the headquarters of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, in Russell Square, London, at which Mrs. Estelle Roberts gave an exhibition of clairvoyance. Beyond having read a book called 'On the Edge of the Etheric,' I had had nothing to do with Spiritualism, and my religious opinions may be described as agnostic. At this meeting, my feelings were those of a rather bored spectator. I was fulfilling a promise to meet my mother there and take her home afterwards. It was the first and only time that my mother consented to attend a Spiritualist gathering, and she was so frightened that she would have nothing more to do with Spiritualism.

"After speaking to two other people, Mrs. Roberts addressed my mother, who became agitated and would not answer any questions. I therefore answered for her, whereupon the clairvoyante said: 'I hear the words, "My boy, my boy," It is your father, Max, who is here.' This not very common name was correct, and she added, also quite correctly, that my father had died three months previously, that although he had been a rich man he lost all and died penniless, and that it was this that killed him. 'He is very, very sorry, and hopes that you will one day understand. He also says: "I have let you three down, but one of you is provided for." He tells me he is happy, and that his other boy, killed in the war, who bore his name, is standing here with him. He adds that he approves of your marriage and you are to go ahead.' At that time there was no question of my marriage: I had reached middle age without doubting that a single life was preferable.

"It was only natural that an experience, such as this should make me take some interest in a subject that hitherto I had entirely ignored. Accordingly, a month later, in September, 1932, I attended a group meeting held by Mr. Vout Peters. There were eight persons present; and, addressing me first, the medium said 'Your father, Max, is, here. He is looking after Jane, your daughter.' I said 'I am not married,' and I was informed that Max was quite aware of that

“Among other things, the medium told me, as from my father, that, four or five generations ago, one of my ancestors had left Scotland with a quantity of bullion belonging to the family, of which he had robbed them, the ship he sailed in was lost, and he and the gold lie at the bottom of the ocean. None of this was known to me, and the story seemed so foolish that, in writing out my notes of the sitting, I omitted it. Investigation, however, proved that all was correct.

“Mr. Peters then took my ring and holding it in his clenched fist, without looking at it, told me by psychometry that it had belonged to Max, and that the crest on it was that of a French family. If I went to the Heraldry Department of the British Museum, they would confirm this. Subsequently an expert at the British Museum stated this was so, and I have since discovered that the ring came from my father's mother, who was of French descent.

“In October of the same year, I sat in another group, with Mrs. Grace Cooke. Being in a trance, she said, among other things: 'This marriage of yours will be great and important' I asked if it would be a happy marriage, and she (or her male control) replied that that was quite immaterial, but there would be extraordinary obstacles in the way of it.

“A few days later, I sat with Mr. Glover Botham. There were eight people present, including H.B., a business acquaintance. The medium, in trance, said to me, ‘You will meet her when the snowdrops come.’ I asked who it was that I should meet then, and he (or his child control) replied, ‘Your wife.’

“My next sitting was with Mrs. Helen Spiers. After she had spoken of some other things, I said: ‘You spirit people are always talking about some marriage of mine, but I have no intention of Marrying. What does it mean?’ After a pause, Mrs. Spiers said that my father Max, had arranged this marriage, and that the name of the person I should marry was Mary Johnson. I exclaimed: ‘Who on earth is that?’ Mrs. Spiers went on to say that I should meet her ‘after my cruise.’ ‘All this is so vague,’ I said. ‘Where is the lady now?’ ‘She is on the other side of the Atlantic. She will come over in the “Europa,” but you will not meet her in England.’ She then gave me a detailed description of the lady's appearance.

“On returning to my office, I had this name written down by a clerk, dated, placed in a sealed envelope and lodged in my safe, where it still lies unopened. At a later date, I sent a clerk to procure the ‘Europa’s’ passenger list, and I found that ‘Mrs. Johnson and daughter’ were on their way to Hamburg. I wrote to a friend: ‘My bride is in England. I have not met her. She arrived in S.S. “Europa” (as foretold). I know this, as I secured a passenger list.’ The postmark on this letter is ‘Dec. 22, 1932.’

“At the beginning of 1933, W.S., who was seriously ill, asked me to accompany him to Italy. The morning after my arrival, I was leaving my hotel alone, the invalid remaining in bed, when I noticed a London acquaintance talking to some ladies. He greeted me and presented me to Mrs. Johnson and her daughter.

“The friend in England, to whom I wrote, has kept a letter of mine, which bears the Italian postmark ‘11.2.33’ and runs as follows: ‘I have been here a week now I came here partly for a holiday, but chiefly to accompany a friend of mine, who has a bad heart and was afraid to travel alone. His mother lives here. I am giving you these details on purpose. I only knew two weeks beforehand that I was definitely coming. The first person I am introduced to here (but independently of him and his mother) is my semi-fiancée. Name exact. Description exact. She and I spend all our time together. I cannot tell you all the story yet, for she is married, but living apart from her husband. Your astonishment can never equal mine. I will do my best to marry her, but I was warned that there would be very great difficulties to be overcome. There are.’

“The first difficulty was that, as stated in this letter, Mary was married; she had, however, instituted divorce proceedings. And then there was a further difficulty; she had given her promise that, if she were freed, she would marry another man. But in the end she succeeded in obtaining a release from her undertaking and another obstacle was removed.

“Subsequently, mother and daughter came to London and, while awaiting the result of the divorce proceedings in a foreign court, Mary visited Mrs. Helen Spiers, who volunteered the information that the divorce had been granted. Three days later, the official intimation was received, confirming the medium’s statement. Four months later we were married and the fulfilment of the prophecies was complete.

“Mary has only twice sat with a medium. The second occasion was as follows. A month before our marriage, I made an appointment anonymously by telephone with Mrs. Mason, obtaining permission to bring my secretary, who I intended should be Mary. Before setting out, I said to her that she would see that the first person to come would be my father, Max, as usual.

“When Mrs. Mason went into trance her control said: ‘This lady you have introduced as your secretary is the lady Max hoped you would marry.’ Mary whispered: ‘You were right, here is your father already.’ Thereupon the control said: ‘No, no; his brother, killed at Guillaumont. He has come because it is his anniversary.’

“This fact had escaped my memory, but I had vividly in mind that it was the birthday of my daughter Jane, who was born on the same date.

“‘Max,’ continued the control, ‘Max's son, who used to be called “Maxie.” This was quite correct.’”