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BRIDGING THE
RIVER OF DEATH

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(JULIA'S BUREAU)

A sequel to "How I Know the Dead Return"

BY

W. T. STEAD,

EDITOR OF THE "REVIEW OF REVIEWS."

Reprinted from the "Harbinger of Light."

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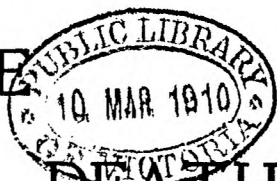
1. Bridging the River of Death.
2. The Unseen World a Reality.
3. From the Dead or the Living.
(A reply to criticism).

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA,
E. W. COLE, BOOK ARCADE, MELBOURNE,
316 GEORGE ST., SYDNEY, 67 RUNDLE ST., ADELAIDE,
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Editor of the "Review of Reviews."

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INTRODUCTION.

One of the great privileges attaching to the uphill task of breaking down the materialism of the present age is the joy that comes from getting into touch with eminent workers in the cause of enlightenment all over the world. It is impossible to overrate the importance of the accession to the ranks of avowed believers of a level-headed and accomplished writer like the editor of the "Review of Reviews." Mr. Stead's position in the world of letters is unique. Many are the unpopular causes that he has championed to his own personal detriment and loss, solely because he has, with the clear vision of a seer, gone counter to public opinion in some great matter of public policy, and has dared to express his convictions. Spiritualism could have no wiser or braver champion than Mr. Stead, as all privileged to read his address, "The Unseen World, a Reality," in October "Harbinger," will acknowledge. The following article has been sent expressly for publication in the "Harbinger of Light" by Mr. Stead, and will appear almost simultaneously in the "International Magazine," published in English, French, and German. It is the first published account of the working of "Julia's Bureau," and illustrates more forcibly than ever Mr. Stead's unflinching devotion and unbounded generosity to any cause he has proved worthy of his support.

BRIDGING THE RIVER OF DEATH.

By W. T. Stead.

For the last three months I have been conducting at Mowbray House, Norfolk-street, Strand, London, an office which is called "Julia's Bureau." This office represents a tentative effort, made systematically, to build a bridge across the grave by which it is possible to communicate with those who have passed over to the other side after the change which is called death. It is named Julia's Bureau, because the suggestion was first made to me by a friend of mine of the name of Julia A. Ames, whose communications received after death by the means of automatic handwriting have been published under the title of "Letters from Julia," which have been translated into many languages, and have met with an extraordinary amount of support among men of all religions and of none. It is called the Bureau because it is in effect an office with a clerical staff, archives and the ordinary machinery of a Bureau. The business of the Bureau is strictly limited to one thing, namely, to endeavour to put into communication those who are sorrowing for their beloved dead with the spirits of those whose bodies have been laid to rest in the earth.

The result of three months' experience has been to confirm my conviction that it is perfectly possible to establish communications with those who sincerely love, even although they are divided by the grave, excepting under certain circumstances, in which it was inadvisable that such communication should be effected.

The modus operandi of the Bureau is very simple, as will appear from the following explanation of the way in which it is managed. In the first place, everything in the Bureau is under the direct personal control of Julia herself. She attends every morning at the short service with which the proceedings of the day are

opened. Her figure is seen by those who possess clairvoyant vision occupying the chair which is reserved for her at the head of the table, and to her all questions of importance that arise during the day are referred for decision. Her decisions are given in two ways, both direct and simple. When a clairvoyant and clairaudient on the staff is present, they are received clairaudiently, but in the absence of the clairvoyant and clairaudient, her decisions are given by automatic handwriting, communicated sometimes simultaneously and sometimes not, through the two automatic writers who act as her secretaries. Julia does not interfere with the discretion of her staff, but on the vital question of who should be permitted to take advantage of the machinery of her Bureau her opinion is always taken. For instance, let us suppose that Mr. A., who has lost his wife, passionately desires to ascertain whether or not intelligence can be obtained as to her existence on the other side; whether any message can be received from her, whether in short he can have the joyous realisation of the fact of the continual existence of her personality, and of the continuing consciousness of her affection. He addresses his letter to the Secretary at the Bureau, Mowbray House, Norfolk-street. In reply he receives a communication asking him whether he has taken any steps to inform himself concerning the investigations which have already been made into the existence of an invisible world beyond the grave. If not he is told that he should make himself familiar with the literature on the subject, and facilities are suggested whereby he can obtain the books needed. If he has taken pains to ascertain what is already known on the subject, he is furnished with a copy of a pamphlet explaining the working of the Bureau, which he must read. He must also read "Letters from Julia," a copy of which can be obtained for 1s. under the title of "After Death." Not until he has read the pamphlet and "Letters from Julia" can he make an application for the use of the Bureau. After having done so he must fill in and sign and forward to the Secretary the following applications:—

APPLICATION FORM.

I....., being a member of the Borderland Library, or having otherwise informed myself as to what has been written concerning communications with the other world, hereby make application for the use of the Bureau in order to attempt to enter into communication with....., late of....., who passed into the spirit world on..... This application is solely prompted by motives of affection, in the belief that, if it be permitted, the deceased would desire such an opening up of communication as earnestly as does the applicant. I have read the pamphlet entitled "Julia's Bureau and Borderland Library," and also the first series of "Letters from Julia." With a full understanding of conditions, limitations, and dangers therein defined, I make this application, and I am willing to submit in all things to the decision of the Director of the Bureau conveyed to me by one or other of her amanuenses.

Signed.....

.....190....

The application being correctly made out, it is then submitted to a psychometrist, who, holding the form in his hands, senses the aura of the applicant, and endeavours to sense the state of mind, and present condition, of the person with whom communication is desired to be opened up. Having done this the psychometrist fills in and signs form B. At the same time the application form is passed on to each of Julia's secretaries, who writing independently, often at a distance of many miles from each other, take Julia's instructions as to whether or not the prayer of the applicant should be acceded to, and an attempt made to put him into communication with his beloved dead.

Nearly one hundred cases have been thus dealt with, and in no case has Julia's opinion, dictated to the secretaries, differed as to whether or not the case should be taken. In some cases her decision is conveyed in identical language, in others the language differs, but the purport is always the same. The decision yes or no is often accompanied by advice as to whether the personal attendance of the applicant is required, or

whether it be sufficient that some article belonging to the deceased were sent to the Bureau to enable the sensitives to get into touch with the person with whom it is hoped to get into communication.

If Julia's decision is favourable the applicant is notified of the fact. At this point I would ask the sceptical reader, who utterly disbelieves the continuous existence of the soul after death, to admit as a possible hypothesis that the faith entertained by many of the greatest men who have ever lived in this world, from Plato and St. Paul downwards, may possibly have some foundation. It is at least a conceivable possibility that our personality survives death. If so it becomes a practical question as to what proofs would be adequate to satisfy the minds of the survivor as to the reality of his friend continuing existence. In other words, what tests are there which would satisfy a rational man as to the identity of any intelligence claiming to be a disembodied spirit of his friend. The majority of men have never thought this question out seriously. They often say: "If I could have only one clear proof, if I could hear his voice, if I could see his form, if he would give me any message that I could recognise as coming from him, it would suffice." But experience shows that in nine cases out of ten when all those tests have been supplied the enquirer is as incredulous as ever. It was, therefore, thought necessary by Julia that before the application was sent to the sensitives the applicant should think out seriously what he would regard as evidence sufficient to convince him that he had been placed into communication with his dead friend. Therefore:—

Communicating to the applicant the information that the Director has approved of his application, the applicant is asked to fill in and sign the following Form H, which he will then enclose in a sealed envelope, and retain in his possession until the experiment is complete:—

FORM H.

which is to be enclosed in a sealed envelope and retained by the applicant until he returns it with the annotated reports to the Bureau, is as follows:—

WHAT WOULD BE SATISFACTORY TESTS.

From.....

Address..... Register No.....

In submitting to the Bureau the case of.....
I would regard it as satisfactory evidence that I had been put in communication with my beloved one if the sensitives could give me any of the following particulars :—

- (1) Personal particulars.
 - (a) Name in full, (b) date of birth, (c) date of death, and (d) place of death.
- (2) Personal appearance of deceased. Specifying
 - (a) Approximate height, (b) apparent age, (c) general aspect, (d) colour of hair and eyes, (e) expression of features, (f) any peculiarity.
- (3) Description of death, specifying
 - (a) Apparent cause of, (b) any scene at death, (c) any incidents or messages.
- (4) Reference to any of the following incidents in past life known to deceased and myself.
- (5) Giving (a) any pet name of deceased's or of my own, as for instance
 - (b) or the names of any relatives or friends, *e.g.* ; or,
 - (c) the names of any place, house, &c., known to us both, *e.g.*
- (6) Giving any message to me about affairs not known to the sensitive.
- (7) The use of any characteristic words, phrases, slang, nick-names, as for instance.....

If all or any of the above are obtained from the sensitives, I will be satisfied that, if telepathy be excluded, I have been put in communication with my dead.

If the sensitives were to give me a message containing information known to the deceased, but which was not in my possession, and which I subsequently verified as true, I should regard it as suggesting that in the other cases telepathy was not the explanation.

To further ascertain whether the telepathic hypothesis is to be relied upon I undertake, as each sensitive is drawing to the close of the sitting, to try to impress as strongly as I can upon their mind the name of.....who has no connection whatever with my beloved dead.

I sign this and will seal it before going to the sensitives, and undertake to forward the envelope with seal unbroken to the

Bureau after annotating the reports of the sittings.

On receipt of the following form D, signed by the applicant, the experiment begins.

FORM D.

I hereby inform you that I have filled in Form H, and have enclosed it in a sealed envelope, affixing the seal on 190 . When I have received and annotated the reports of the three sensitives I will forward this envelope with seal unbroken to the Bureau, together with the annotated reports.

Signed.....

They are then either personally or indirectly through some letter, portrait or other article, which has been in contact with the deceased, passed in succession to three sensitives or mediums. These mediums have been selected by the Bureau after long and careful examination as to their honesty and their ability. They are not informed in any case of the name of the applicant, nor is any information given them as to the person with whom it is sought to enter into communication.

The method of procedure is simple. A stenographer from the Bureau accompanies the applicant to the medium with strict instructions to give no information whatever as to his identity or as to the person with whom he wishes to communicate. He is simply introduced as a case from Julia's Bureau. The sensitive or medium then describes clairvoyantly the person or persons whom he sees in company with his visitor, and communicates to him any message that he may receive clairaudiently. In cases where the sensitive is a trance medium he will sometimes be controlled by the spirit with whom the sitter wishes to enter into communication. The applicant is straightly charged to give no clues, to ask no leading questions, but to remain as passive as possible, merely assenting or dissenting to any statement that may be made by the medium, to which he is requested to reply. Every word spoken by the medium or by the siter is taken down in shorthand, and the reports of the three sittings (Forms, E.F. and G.) are carefully typed out and submitted to the applicant for annotation and correction.

After the stenographer has typed out the report of the sitting the applicant undertakes to—(1) go through it carefully, line by line, stating exactly what is correct and what is not, (2) append to the report in each case his own impression as to how far the communications made by the medium could be explained by telepathy from the conscious mind or from the unconscious mind, or whether he suspects that the accurate information could have been conveyed to the mind of the medium by any other means, and (3) give his final impression as to whether or not he thinks they have been brought into communication with their loved ones.

These Reports, together with sealed envelope containing Form H, are then sent to the Bureau, where the envelope is opened and its contents compared with the results obtained from the mediums.

These three annotated reports are carefully filed in the archives, and the Bureau reserves to itself the right to publish these reports either in full or in extract, so long as the names and addresses of the persons concerned are omitted, unless special permission is given by the applicant for the publication of all particulars.

What has been the result up to date? Briefly this, that the majority of applications have been proved as genuine by Julia, although a few have been rejected, and some have been sent back until the applicant has fully complied with the conditions of the Bureau. Of those that have been passed through the three-fold test, I should think at least seventy-five per cent. have received evidence which has been the source of infinite satisfaction to them, and at least in half the number of cases the applicants have expressed themselves absolutely convinced that through one or other of the mediums they have received tests satisfying them beyond all gain-saying as to the fact that they have been brought into communication with those whom they have loved and lost.

My only difficulty arises at present from the prospect of coping with the inevitable expansion of the business of the Bureau. At the moment I am meeting all the expenses of the Bureau out of my own private pocket,

which will considerably exceed £1000 a year. This is all very well so long as the number of applications is small, but it would be utterly inadequate if we had even five cases a day to deal with. The reason for this is obvious. Besides the cost of the stenographer and typist every case is submitted to three mediums. Now mediums are rare, and they must be paid for the time which they devote to the cases of total strangers. As a rule in London a good medium who gives a careful sitting is paid one guinea by the sitter. It is possible that by the Bureau terms could be arranged so that the medium's fee might be reduced to half-a-guinea, which means 31s. 6d. out of pocket expenses for payment of mediums, to which must be added the cost of stenographer and typist. It is not too much to say that what with postages, etc., every case costs me £2 out-of-pocket expenses, besides the rent of offices, salaries, etc. Five cases a day, therefore, entail an out-of-pocket expenditure of £60 a week, or £3000 a year, over and above my initial £1000 a year.

Where is that money to come from That is a question upon which Julia's opinion has been definitely declared. She refuses to allow me to make any charge to applicants to the Bureau. No difference must be made between applicants who are rich and those who are poor. The benefit of her Bureau must be extended impartially to all persons who are mourning their dead. If anyone offers to pay the £2 out-of-pocket expenses entailed in dealing with his case the money must be refused. No applicant, therefore, can say that he has paid a penny for any service rendered him by the Bureau. If, however, after the case is complete any applicant should feel disposed to make a freewill offering of gratitude to the funds of the Bureau he is allowed to do so, but on no other consideration is money to be taken. This is very heroic, and I sincerely hope that Julia's confidence may be justified by the results. It is somewhat absurd to think that the human race, which spends scores of millions in burying the corpses of its dead, should grudge the funds which will enable the bereaved to secure a

conclusive demonstration as to the continuous existence of those whom they love.

This brings me to a much more serious question than the lack of funds, and that is the lack of mediums. Mediums are among the most valuable members of the community. They are like a seeing man in the world of blind. They need to be sought for as hidden treasure, and preserved and cared for as the only instruments by which it is possible successfully to undertake the exploration of the other world. Instead of that, they are as a rule sneered at, derided and treated as if they were knaves and liars. Sometimes they are thrown into gaol, and everything, in short, that collective society can do to discourage the development of mediumship is being done and has been done for many years. Under those circumstance, it is not surprising that good mediums are few and far between. Any considerable increase in the demand for their services would inevitably drive up prices, for exceptional genius always demands exceptional reward when once the value of its gift is appreciated by mankind. I hope, however, that with increasing intelligence, the growth of the scientific spirit and the decay of superstition in spiritualism, those individuals who are so much more highly evolved than the rest of their fellows as to be able to see what is invisible and inaudible to the majority of men may be discovered in increasing numbers. In any case Julia professes to have a buoyant confidence that both funds and mediums will be forthcoming. Anyhow, I am going ahead.

II.

Those to whom the subject is entirely new may rub their eyes in amazement, and ask whether it is possible that a responsible journalist who, like myself, is actively engaged in the affairs of this world, conducting his own business, and maintaining his journalistic position, could speak gravely of bridging the grave, and holding communication with the other world as if it were as practical a proposition as tunnelling the Channel or cutting the Isthmus of Panama. The best answer to those persons is to describe the following case which occurred

within the last twelve months. It is one of many such, but it is so complete in itself that I prefer to select this as an illustration of the kind of evidence that is convincing an ever-increasing number of inquirers as to the reality of the bridge across the grave.

A lady friend of mine in a good position, well known in the world of letters and society, had the misfortune last winter to lose by sudden bereavement an intimate and much-beloved friend. She was as one distracted, the light of her life seemed to have gone out, and for days she could neither eat nor sleep. In her distress she communicated with me, not really venturing to believe that it was possible that out of the darkness and blackness of the great shadow she might be able to receive some cheering word that would tell her of the continuance of the life and the love of her friend. But even before she met me she had received the evidence for which she sought. As I knew all the parties concerned I can speak at first hand as to what happened. My friend knew an Eastern lady, who, seeing the extremity of her distress, thought that it would be well to hold a meeting with a well-known medium in London of the name of Williams, whom I have frequently met at the seances at General Turner's. She went listlessly into a darkened room in which the medium was sitting with her friend and two other ladies. The medium shortly afterwards went into a trance, and in the eerie silence and darkness of the room my friend vainly wondered, half despairing, whether there could be any truth in the theory of the return of the dead. Thus musing, she was suddenly startled by hearing herself addressed in clear terms, audible to all those in the room, by her pet name. The voice was the voice of her dead friend. She answered, he replied. She felt the touch of his hand upon her shoulder. Then the invisible hand touched the watch of the deceased which she was wearing in her bosom, causing a thrill as of a powerful electric shock to pass through her body. The voice continued to speak to her, assuring her of his unflinching devotion, of his desire to watch over her welfare, to advise her concerning a mutual acquaintance, and finally taking leave of her in the same terms with which they had always been wont to part. The deceased was a total stranger to everyone in the room

excepting my friend. They heard what was said, but they did not understand what was meant or to what it alluded. But to my friend there could be no doubt she had talked with him whose body she had seen laid in the grave but a few days before.

Fired with a new-born faith, she desired to have more permanent evidence than the memory of the vanished voice. She went to Mr. Bournsell, a septuagenarian photographer in Shepherd's Bush. Her identity was strictly concealed. I saw Bournsell afterwards and closely questioned him, and found he had no idea as to who had been his sitter. He had a vague idea that she was a duchess, which she was not. Hardly had she seated herself in the studio when Mr. Bournsell, who is clairvoyant and clairaudient, told her that she was accompanied by a gentleman who had only recently passed over into the spirit world. He said that she was wearing something that belonged to him. With this gentleman was another who resembled him in appearance. He had passed away some years before, and the elder gentleman said, "Tell her that I have met Reggie" (I have altered the name). Now Reggie was the name of her friend's brother who had died abroad some years before. My friend then asked Mr. Bournsell whether he thought he could get his photograph. As always Mr. Bournsell expressed his inability to say whether or nor the spirit form could impress itself upon the plate, but he said he would try. When he was doing so he said he received another message from the invisible sitter which he at once recognised as referring to the circumstances in which he met his death. Nothing whatever was said to Mr. Bournsell to give him a clue as to the identity of the person for whom his sitter was sorrowing; but to her immense delight when the plate was developed his portrait appeared plainly visible standing beside her. There was no doubt as to the resemblance. It was he, and no one else than he, yet he had not been in the spirit world a week when he returned and was photographed in the way I have just described. After that many communications were received from time to time, but to only one of these I will refer for two reasons. First, because it proves the reality of the guardian care which is some-

times exercised by those who watch over us on the other side; and second, because it was one of the cases directly connected with Julia's Bureau.

Julia's Bureau has one office in London at Mowbray House, and also a quiet residential retreat in the suburbs, a house standing in its own ground amid trees, near water, in surroundings which are conducive to free and undisturbed communication with the other side. Sitting at a table in the Library one Monday night one of Julia's staff was surprised to hear a name rapped out. She was not a physical medium, and not accustomed to receive messages otherwise than by automatic hand-writing. That evening her hand refused to write automatically, and the movements of the table attracting her attention she asked who was present, and received in answer the name of the deceased friend of the lady whose story I have just told. The recipient when the name was rapped out had nothing to lead her to associate it with anyone. It was a christian name, but she had no information as to the identity of its owner. On asking why this person had come she received by the process of question and answer, the table rapping out the words letter by letter, a warning addressed to the lady in question, begging her not to use her motor car for a week, and saying that if she did use it in that week she would have an accident and would be run down. Whereas if she postponed her journey till the following week no casualty would happen.

My colleague in the Bureau carefully noted the contents of this strange message, and reported it to me the next day, saying that she had no idea from whom the message came, nor did she like to send it on being an anonymous warning of an improbable accident. There might be nothing in it, and if the lady acted upon the warning and postponed her drive until the following week no one could say whether there was a justification for the warning. On reading the message, however, I recognised at once the name of the friend of the lady, and, therefore, sent the warning on to her advising her to check it by direct communication through automatic hand-writing. The lady lived some fifty miles out of town. The letter was posted between one and two o'clock on Tuesday morning. I heard nothing more

about it until 6 o'clock on Wednesday night, when I received a telegram from the lady in question, stating that she had just received my letter, and was much surprised at its contents, for she had left home on Tuesday morning before my letter arrived, and had only found it on her return. On driving through London on her way home on Wednesday afternoon a motor omnibus had turned the corner of the street on the wrong side of the road, and the street being slippery and wet with rain it was impossible to avoid a collision. The motor 'bus struck the rear of her motor car, completely wrecking it, and the occupants of the car had a narrow escape from sudden death. The remains of the car were left in London, and its occupants in a more or less bruised and wounded condition were forwarded home by train to find waiting the warning which had arrived too late to avert what might easily have been a fatal catastrophe. All the documents concerning this case of prevision are in order, and will be submitted to proper authorities. The evidence is complete in every particular, nor is there a weak link in the whole chain.

What do these facts suggest? Unless the whole narrative is a tissue of romantic fiction; here is a case in which a friend was able to return from beyond the grave within a week to comfort the survivor, to manifest his presence by touch, by a direct voice, by conversation couched in the old familiar terms which could not have been known to the medium. Further, that he was able to show himself to a clairvoyant, to bring with him his brother who had pre-deceased him, and to impress his picture upon a photographic plate in the studio of a photographer who never heard of his name or knew of his existence. Further, that he promised to watch over the safety of his friend, and in fulfilment of that promise sent a warning nearly two days in advance of the event as to a motor car accident which actually happened, which he had foreseen, and from which he had in vain endeavoured to save her. If such things, oh! sceptical reader, had happened in your experience, so that you knew the truth of them beyond any manner of doubt, would you continue to deride the idea of bridging the grave? Would you not, on the contrary, feel that we were within measureable sight of establishing com-

munication with the other side on a firm and scientific basis?

One more incident and I have done. It illustrates the possibility of holding intelligent conversation with disembodied spirits of friends under circumstances which preclude all possibility of fraud or hallucination. In the year 1884 it was my good fortune to meet General Gordon at his sister's house at Southampton. The interview which took place led directly to his throwing up his appointment on the Congo and accepting the commission to go to Khartoum to extricate the garrisons from the Soudan. It was an historic interview which made an abiding impression upon my mind. There was with me a brother officer, a great personal friend of General Gordon's. Nineteen years after Gordon had met his death, when Khartoum was captured, in company with the same officer, I had a sitting with a medium well known on the Continent, of the name of Mr. Alfred Peters. Towards the close of the Seance, greatly to my astonishment, without the slightest expectation either on the part of my friend, or myself, Mr. Peters was controlled by an intelligence, whose identity neither of us could for a moment doubt. It was exactly as if General Gordon himself had taken his seat in the chair. His mannerism, which was very marked, his quick, brusque, humorous mode of speech was exactly reproduced. He took up our old conversation at Southampton 20 years ago, asked me if I remembered about matters, some of which I did remember, and some of which I had forgotten, and none of which the medium could possibly have known. He talked away with the same keen intelligence, political acumen and dogmatic assurance which distinguished him during his physical life. He recognised us both, spoke to us both in the same friendly fashion, and poured out a stream of conversation that was a mixture of theology, mysticism, and high politics, and his personal reminiscences bore in every sentence the true Gordon stamp. I have had many remarkable sittings in my life, but I do not remember any seance in which the control was more absolutely perfect. The character of General Gordon was strongly marked. He was intensely original, full of personality, and at the same time he had been dead so long that the medium, Mr. Peters,

who was a mere boy when Gordon died, could not possibly have acquired his habits of speech, his mode of thought, or his recollection of the topics which he discussed with me twenty years before, nor does he (Mr. Peters) to this hour know who it was that controlled him, for General Gordon in his usual peremptory fashion said, "Don't tell this boy who it is that has been talking through him. I want to use him again, and I can use him more easily if he does not have any idea as to who I am."

I saw Mr. Peters the other day and asked him closely about that seance with a view to holding another, but I found him in utter ignorance as to the spirit who had made such vigorous and effective use of his organs of speech.

Those and other things give me every assurance, based upon absolute knowledge, that the veil between this world and the next is wearing very thin, and that I think we may be on the verge of a development of human faculties which will render it possible for that which is now the privilege of a very few to become the common inheritance of the whole race.

I shall be very glad to communicate with any of your readers whom these pages have set athinking, and especially those who are conscious of being among the elect few who possess the sixth sense.

THE UNSEEN WORLD A REALITY.

So important a statement concerning our relation to the spiritual world is seldom made as in the following address delivered by the distinguished journalist, Mr. W. T. Stead, in the Grand Theatre, Halifax, at the Spiritualists' National Union Conference, held July 4th, 1909. It was specially reported for "The Two Worlds" by Miss Felicia R. Scatcherd, of London, and the full text is given below.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I speak to-night with a sense of peculiar responsibility. I have given up public speaking, as the strain was more than I could stand in addition to my journalistic and other work. To-morrow is my sixtieth birthday, and I do not think I can end my fifty-ninth year better than by bearing my testimony to you, most of whom I have never seen before, and shall probably never see again, as to the words of truth that have proved my greatest help and inspiration.

I was talking the other day to a distinguished statesman, a High Churchman, who said "Religion depends chiefly in reliance upon the unseen." If he be right, religion in this country is in a very bad way. Cecil Rhodes told me that whenever he met a Jew he always asked him if he ever heard in the Synagogue any reference to a future life. He never met a Jew who gave an affirmative answer. I have applied the same test to many churches. It is

seldom you hear an expression of real faith in another world from any Christian pulpit, and very seldom any reference to ministering angels and spirits. The fact is the Church has become practically materialistic. I hope that we possess in Spiritualism the means of a real revival of religion. But many Spiritualists are tinged with materialism; you do not like people to talk about religion, and I hope you will bear with me when I tell you I detect a materialistic note in many of your publications. Most of you are Atheistic the greater part of your time. You never can do wrong unless you cease to believe in God as a living force. We never can mourn or lament without having first lost faith in God. The great mission of Spiritualism is to make men spiritual. It is not the extension of materialism into the other world. That is a damnable error. The peculiar notion that Spiritualism teaches that there is no such thing as retribution for a life lived in selfish neglect of the duties to God and humanity has no foundation; in fact, no Spiritualist teaches an everlasting hell. I do not think any religious man believes it.

But behind the doctrine is an eternal truth. As a man leaves this world, so will he wake in the other world. You may find yourself in a state of utter, outer darkness if you have lived a loveless, selfish life on earth.

I remember David McCree, who was turned out of his church, saying to me: "I do not object to hell, I want to rehabilitate it." Men have got rid of the idea that life here entails consequences hereafter.

A friend of mine, a distinguished foreign lady,

living in London, some time ago began to work the spirit-indicator. She was only a beginner. Imagine her astonishment when the name of a great personage was spelt out. Slowly, letter by letter, he gave his name, and then in pathetic terms begged her to pray for him. "Where are you?" asked my friend. "In utter darkness, pray for me, pray for me." He was not an exceptionally bad man, he had only lived a life of thoughtless indifference and self-indulgence. Soon after, he came again: "Why have you not prayed for me; why have you not kept your word?" "But I have prayed for you, in church, and all your countrymen, too, have prayed for you." "That matters nothing. I want, and must have, the fervent prayer of a loving soul." "But what is your condition?" "I do not know, I am like a ship-wrecked sailor, in darkness and loneliness on an unknown shore. Oh, if you could only tell my relations of my experience it might help them to avoid my fate." The same thing may await for you and me. We think we are just men and women; in reality, we are spirits spending a few years of education in this world (which is but as a preparatory school for a larger life) who in a few years will pass on to another state in which our position will be governed by the use we have made of our life here.

I do not want anyone present to be able to say that he stood within the range of the voice of W. T. Stead and that he did not warn him to flee from the wrath to come. But while it is necessary to say this, Spiritualism is at the same time one of the most beneficent agencies for interpreting the love of God. Eighteen months ago my eldest son passed

into the other world. I heard his first cry as a new-born infant, I caught his last sigh as he passed into the unseen. I had always said I would never make my final pronouncement on the truths of Spiritualism until someone near and dear in my own family passed into the great beyond. Then I should know whether Spiritualism stood the test of a great bereavement, bringing life and immortality to light. And I am here to tell you that the reality of my son's continued existence, and of his tender care for me, have annulled the bitterness of death.

You remember what Lowell said: "Console me if you will, but all the consoling can never make death other than death." I can say Spiritualism has made death other than death for me. That boy had been for thirty-three years my joy and my pride. I had trained him in hope that he would succeed me and carry on my work. The very day he died I came up at 11.30 a.m. to appoint him as my assistant editor. That night at 11.30 p.m. I saw him die. The blow was so sudden. I did not know he was seriously ill. When I saw him breathe his last I knew our Father had other plans, and that the boy I had trained to work for me here was going to work for me on the other side. And that hope has been gloriously fulfilled. The telephone helps us to realise this kind of communication. When my boy was here our offices were connected by telephone, and it is much the same now. He writes to me through several mediums, he shows himself to my friends. I myself have seen his materialised face. One friend has seen him at least three times fully materialised, as was our Lord after his resurrection. He is here to-night beside me. I am as sure of that as I am of the fact that

I am speaking to you. When I realise the difference it makes to have this knowledge, and to be without it, I feel I must testify to you as to the reality of the unseen world around us. The reality of the unseen world is the doctrine out of which all the religions of the world have been fashioned, the bed-rock whence they have all been hewn.

Yet people recoil from you when you ask them to investigate. How wretched all such people will feel if when they come back no one sees them, no one hears them, no one senses their presence. The first bitter experience of many is that those on this side have suddenly become stone-blind, stone-deaf, utterly oblivious of the presence of their departed friend. A meeting like this will prepare those who are left behind to be kinder to those who come back. What miserable wretches are we if we do not try to spread this glorious truth. We are, many of us, tainted with more than a touch of Pharisaism. One thing certain is that the Pharisee goes to hell far sooner than the publican.

I know my son would not care to come back to earth, that he is enjoying vistas of usefulness and ever-widening knowledge that fill existence with increasing interest. Am I not bound to communicate to my fellows what has been such a joy to myself? Ought we to sit in our corner contentedly munching our cake all to ourselves? Is that right? What answer can we make to our elder brother, Christ, when he meets us and asks: "What have you done for my other brethren?" You may say: "Lord, I took in 'The Two Worlds,' and read 'Light'; I went to the meetings when there was a specially interesting medium."

Oh, you miserable wretch! All religions recognise the responsibility of man to his Maker. All agree that we shall have to render an account as to what we have done with our life. How many times have you, have I, for that matter, ventured to point out to those about us that the course they are pursuing, if it is loveless and selfish, can end in nothing but a fearful looking forward to come.

I have been a *journalist* for forty years. I do not know a single leader-writer who warns his readers that they will have to answer for their actions in a world to come.

Do not say I am reproaching you. I feel my own failings as much as any one. Some of you may believe that Jesus Christ never existed. If he never did exist, then it is high time that someone set about realising the ideal. Others of you share my belief that he exists as our leader to a better world. I will tell you about the beginning of my mediumistic career so far as I am a medium. When I was in Holloway jail one Christmas—you are all so busy catching trains and ringing up telephones, that you never have time to listen to the voice of your souls—I had been trying to write a letter to a poor girl who had been rescued. She was finding the new life very dull and was in danger of falling back, and it was suggested that if I were to write to her it might have some influence over her for good.

I left the letter unfinished to attend morning service, and was looking down from the organ loft on my six hundred fellow prisoners when I heard a voice: "Why are you telling that girl to be a Christian? Never tell anyone any more to be a Christian. Always tell them to be a Christ." My mind

revolted, and I said: "What blasphemy." But the voice went on: "The word Christian has become a mere label covering much of self, little of Christ."

I pondered the matter deeply. I wrote to all those on whose judgment and spiritual insight I felt I could rely—to Cardinal Manning, to Hugh Price-Hughes, to Josephine Butler, to Benjamin Waugh, and others. What would these spiritually-minded men and women think of it? With one exception all said: "These words contain the essence of the Christian religion."

Ever since then I have always passed on this message to my fellows. What does it mean? First, that you have to love all beings, not only the nice ones, the attractive ones, but those who seem less attractive, even repulsive. Secondly, you must sacrifice yourself for the well-being of others. Thirdly, you have to interpret the love of God to those around you. Each of you is the centre of a group of souls to whom, if you are not a Christ, perhaps no other interpreter of the love of God and the character of Christ can be sent.

When you return to your home to-night you may be able to say a kindly word or do a sympathetic action. And you do not speak that word, you do not perform the kindly deed. You are not a Christ. You speak the word, you show your sympathy by your actions, and you are a Christ to those persons. Even though you may call yourself an Atheist you are God's Christ to those people.

On Christmas Eve I was writing a letter to my wife, to tell her what my message was, and I was just about writing this sentence: "And a voice came

to me and said, 'Be a Christ,' and I have not been able to get this voice out of my mind." In the middle of the sentence I heard the Christmas bells ring and laid down my pen to listen to their chiming. When I took up my pen what do you think I found I had written? "Be a Christ,' and I have not been." Friends, I had written the truth, and I left the sentence as I found it.

There are all round us here those whom we have loved and lost, and they know what is going on. How do you think they feel when they see you leading loveless, selfish lives, and know the future that awaits you? They are anxiously waiting to see whether your hearts will be touched. This place holds perhaps 2000, and there may be 5000 spiritual intelligences around us. Some loving friend or relative may be asking of some here:—"Will he turn? Will she yield?"

But my last word is not of warning but of triumph. Christ came to bring not only peace—peace is a negative thing—but joy, joy supreme in the absolute assurance that God is in His heaven, and that, therefore, all is right with the world.

FROM THE DEAD OR THE LIVING.

A Reply to Criticism.

W. T. STEAD IN "REVIEW OF REVIEWS."

MR. FRANK PODMORE is getting on. In his "Mesmerism and Christian Science" (Methuen. 12s. 6d.) he shows that he is capable, for a season, of admitting the reality of facts, such as the cures wrought by Christian Scientists; but if we may predict the future from the experience of the past, it will probably not be long before Mr. Podmore goes back on Mrs. Eddy as he went back upon Spiritualism. He is built that way. It is also satisfactory to see that he is beginning to feel that the Psychological Research Society needs some defence. That the best way of making the Psychological Research Society worthy of its title would be the resignation of Mr. Podmore, Mr. Piddington, and one or two others whom I need not name, has not yet dawned upon Mr. Podmore. Nevertheless his article, "From the Dead or the Living?" in the new *Fortnightly*, may be accepted as a sign of grace. It is true it is but a feeble sign, but we must not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. The article takes my article, "How I Know the Dead Return," as its text; but its chief object is to magnify the importance of the cross-correspondences obtained from Mr. Myers by the aid of three automatic writers. The cackling of the S.P.R. over these correspondences reminds us of the hysterical elation of an old maid of a hen when she has laid her first egg. It is perhaps natural, and, as a humane person, I

sincerely hope that no super-Podmore may arise to prove that it is but a wind egg after all.

When we turn to what Mr. Podmore has to say about my article, I suppose I ought to be crushed by being told that I have not taken pains to lift my records above the level of the fairy tale. But when I find that I have already done almost everything that Mr. Podmore admonishes me I ought to have done, I manage to survive; for it is Mr. Podmore's ignorance, not my neglect, that is at fault. In the *Fortnightly* I was writing not for a committee of experts, but for the public at large; but if Mr. Podmore had taken the ordinary precaution of looking up the records of his beloved S.P.R., he would have found that dates, notes, and all the other particulars which his righteous soul desiderates were supplied by me at the time to no less notable a Psychical Researcher than Mr. F. W. H. Myers. "We want to know this," says Mr. Podmore; "we want to know that." Well, if he wants to know it very much why does he not take the trouble of getting to know? The materials have been in the possession of his Society for more than fifteen years. "We don't know the spirit photographer." There is no one so ignorant as those who won't know. Does Mr. Podmore think that he ought to receive a postcard every morning telling him that the name and address of the photographer was Mr. Bournsell, Upper Richmond Road? Really in future when writing for Mr. Podmore it will be necessary to send him a copy of the multiplication-table whenever I venture upon the statement that twice two make four. "We don't know the medium who received a message from E. M." But her name has been published, and if Mr. Podmore had not seen it, it could have been

supplied to him for the asking. "The friends who saw E. M.'s apparition after death"—they also are not shrouded in mystery, but being private persons I did not print their names in a narrative to which the addition of unknown names would have carried no weight. "We don't know the lady of the broken umbrella—unless, indeed, she was identical with E. M." There is, in short, no limit to what Mr. Podmore does not know. But if he did not know "the lady of the broken umbrella," Mr. Myers did. He had all the particulars of the incident at the time. He investigated it personally. He had the lady of the broken umbrella down to Cambridge as his guest. He published in the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.* his conviction that she was a good witness. And she was not "E.M." Was there ever a more charming illustration of the Podmorean method as to how not to find out facts which are as plain as a pikestaff, and as obvious as the nose upon your face? "We want to know" in Mr. Podmore's assertion, interpreted by Mr. Podmore's practice, means—"We don't want to know. We neglect to read our own records, and we refrain from asking the one person who could tell us what it is we pretend we want to know." This being so, it is small wonder that Mr. Podmore should pitifully bleat a dozen times over "We don't know," "We don't know." Of course he does not know, and he never will know so long as he persists in the present idiotic method that is called "research" by the S.P.R., the first principle of which appears to be that of never seeking for information where they know it can be found.

As to the rest of the article, it is useful as an

illustration of the perverse ingenuity with which every conceivable test as to the authenticity of alleged communications is explained away and rejected as worthless. For Mr. Podmore, whose reason recoils from accepting the simple and obvious explanation given by all returning intelligences as to the origin of their communications, has taken to his soul, as the *diabolus ex machina*, an entity which he names alternately the secondary self, the personified subconsciousness, the trance personality, the dream-self. And this uncanny monster he credits with a lack of morals, an absence of scruple and an abnormal cunning. It is a supreme example of Art for Art's sake. And as we have to deal with an author whose mimicry is as subtle as it is unscrupulous, and one who can withal read the secret thoughts of the sitters, no evidence either of phrasing memory, idiosyncrasy, or even of sealed letters is worth anything. "In short, the only evidence that can satisfy must consist in evidence of the present activity of an active and individual intelligence."

It is well to know that there is some evidence that can satisfy Mr. Podmore. The evidence as to the continuous activity of the actual and individual intelligence of Julia A. Ames is infinitely more abundant, continuous, and convincing than the evidence of the more or less chaotic cross-correspondence upon which the S.P.R. lays such touching stress. The Bureau at Mowbray House is conducted under the constant personal direction of Julia A. Ames. She is present every morning in her chair at the circle, is consulted about every important detail of business, and she gives her decisions

with characteristic serenity and emphasis. Sometimes they are taken by clairaudients, sometimes by automatic writing by different automatists, who are proud to act as her secretaries. And whether by clairaudience or by one of three or four different secretaries, there is no inconsistency in her messages. We are in the constant presence of the clear, practical, earnest intelligence which twenty years ago inhabited the body of Julia A. Ames, and can have as little doubt of her identity and her activity as the clerks in an office could have of the identity and activity of a managing director who directed the office through a long-distance telephone.

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