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ABOUT THE PHYSICAL MEDIUM ARNOLD CLARE

The awakening of the mediumship of Arnold Clare, born in 1901, can be linked to John, a monk whom he met in 1917 at Mount Athos. Arnold, serving as a member of the Navy, spent many hours listening to the wise old man; he remembered that on leaving, John simply said that the two of them would meet again. Arnold hardly realized at the time what the circumstances would be when this happened.

Later, during his naval service, he became acquainted with a Russian captain who invited him to his own home where circles were held with his wife as the medium. After attending a number of these, the medium began to speak 'with an intonation unmistakably John's and reproducing his natural inflexions'. During this occasion, the communicator reminded Arnold of what he had predicted: 'I told you, my son, we should meet again'. He continued to speak as he had done at Mount Athos, and advised Arnold that he was being trained for work.⁽¹⁾ The development of Arnold Clare's mediumship then occurred in a series of different stages. In each of these, evidence became greater and communication became of higher quality. After reading an article by Conan Doyle, Arnold was prompted to attempt receiving communications, and found that he was capable of automatic writing. However, it was only after he was diagnosed as having tuberculosis, that he began to pray and become aware of John's presence. Arnold continued with this meditation and became involved with Spiritualist churches, and joined a circle associated with the Balham Church. It was at the circle held on 31 December 1938, when the expected medium was not able to be present, that Arnold decided the séance should continue, and his own mediumship was witnessed by those present; this included the production of apports and communications from his guides. From thereon, he provided a convincing display of both phenomena and evidence.

To ensure that a reasonable amount of light was available during his séances, the plaque used was somewhat large, i.e. over two square feet; before each sitting, luminous paint was applied. The light that it supplied made it possible to see objects four feet away; through this, sitters were able to observe the

trumpets, and see the materializations. William E. Harrison provided a detailed account of his experience of Arnold's mediumship at séances beginning in 1939. In the first of these, with the medium bound securely to a chair, there was the movement of trumpets and other objects, with apports transported into the room by means of the trumpets. Similar phenomena were witnessed during séances at a later date, and these also included Peter, one of the guides, being able to speak to the sitters through the trumpet. Shortly after this time, Peter announced that it was intended to develop the medium's abilities and attempt direct and independent voice communication. As there was little progress with this at the time, there were endeavours to develop the manifestation of ectoplasm, and these were successful. During the period, the medium would be untied by the next-world visitors, and Harrison and his wife would be secured with 'all kinds of fancy knots' that were difficult to untie. Harrison reported how this was stopped 'as the ladies thought it might be dangerous'. He also relates how on one occasion, 'Little Peter' (a child guide, and so named to differentiate him from another guide also called Peter), spoke to a sitter and referred to her purchasing vegetables, but leaving them in a shop that day. After asking her whether she would like a marrow and her reply in the affirmative, a marrow was promptly produced through the trumpet.(2)

At this point, materializations were participating in the séances, being some distance from the medium and speaking to the sitters; in time this was developed even further with materializations being up to eighteen feet away from the medium, and conducting lengthy and lucid conversations. It should be noted that Arnold was not a professional medium and made no financial gain from his work; when a charge was made, the proceeds were given to a charity or cause related to Spiritualism. It is remarkable that he was able to produce such marvellous phenomena in view of his employment with the Admiralty and absences from home that were required due to this work.

In June 1940, it was possible to conduct séances in a subdued ('ice-blue') light whereupon sitters could see each other, although there was a noticeable effect on the quality of the phenomena, with the trumpets having restricted movement. In July 1940, one of the more spectacular materializations took place: sitters were joined by the medium Jack Webber who had died earlier that year. The ten sitters signed a declaration about what they had witnessed. After an appearance of one of the guides, the plaque rose and Jack Webber was seen, albeit for a few seconds. This was followed by a further appearance of longer duration; of this, Harry Edwards, one of the sitters, declared, 'Jack went from our side of the circle to the opposite side and spoke a few words, with the tonal qualities of his voice being clearly recognisable'...I have seen many materialisations, but never before have I seen one so plainly'.

Following this, there were materializations of two of Arnold's guides. The séance included other phenomena; for nearly an hour, up to three trumpets moved

about the room and 'they weaved intricate patterns at amazing speed...they turned, reversed, joined together three in a row' and at certain times were some eight feet away from the medium.(3) This was accompanied by a number of apports. Due to the war, séances were not held between August and early November 1940; in fact, due to the time, many of the séances were accompanied by the noise of air-raid sirens, guns and bombing. On recommencing, it was evident that the break had not diminished Arnold's abilities. At a séance in mid November, any doubts about whether the phenomena would return were swiftly discarded. Almost immediately after beginning, the trumpets were seen to rise close to the ceiling and move in harmony with the singing. To the sitters' delight, while singing, the voice of Little Peter was clearly heard through one of the trumpets, joining in with them. One of the guides requested that an end of the trumpet be blocked; after this was done, Little Peter spoke through the trumpet, indicating that the source of what makes this communication possible was actually inside the trumpet.

On 30 November 1940, Colin Evans, B.A., was invited to a séance; his record is significant due to his objectivity and the absence of partiality. During the séance, light was sometimes provided by a red light and the fire. His general view was that of, 'complete genuineness in respect to all the phenomena'.(4) The séance began with noises and the trumpets beginning to move. One of the guides spoke, and Evans recorded that it was wholly unlike the medium's own voice, and he believed the accent would not be possible to falsify unless a person had specialized training. Music was played through much of the séance and when the needle on the gramophone required changing, the sitter managed to drop this and was unable to locate it on the floor. Ever helpful, Little Peter announced that he had found the needle, and a box of these was promptly levitated around the room - and rattled. Evans also noted the presence of winds, that he believed may have been caused by the rapid movement of the trumpets. He also related how Arnold's mediumship not only provided different forms of phenomena, but demonstrated survival. A number of the sitters were spoken to through the trumpets and the communicators were recognized as 'voices of friends and relatives ("dead") well known to them'.(5) One of these sitters had not attended a séance before, and was unknown to the medium. This was followed by apports: Little Peter counted aloud, as these were produced one by one. Materializations subsequently joined the circle. Evans then requested that the medium be seen while a materialization was present. The electric fire was moved, and then switched on by the spirit agencies and in its red glow, a baby's form appeared; the luminous slate then moved across the room and illuminated the medium, still seated. The trumpets and the ectoplasmic rods also became visible. The plug of the electric fire was then promptly pulled out of its socket 'without human intervention'.(6) Towards the end of this séance, the materialization of Jack Webber occurred; in response to this, Evans made the decisive statement that: 'I knew Jack Webber very well by sight, and was under no possibility of doubt as to the features I saw in the materialisation being the same as those with which I became familiar

during Webber's earth life'.(7) This was followed by Little Peter materializing. Evans refers to a number of other materializations by the friends and relatives of other sitters that he understood were recognized.

It is only by the reading of such records of physical mediumship that the value of this activity becomes evident. Harry Edwards notes that the number of outstanding physical mediums in the world is negligible;(8) this form of mediumship is rare, and consequently, very precious. When this fact is considered, the importance of the NAS, its aims, and the mediums who work with it, is apparent. This is surely something worth reflecting upon.

Bibliography.

(1) Harry Edwards, *The Mediumship of Arnold Clare* (Rider and Co.: London, n.d.), p.22. (2) *Ibid.*, pp.41,48. (3) *Ibid.*, pp.52, 53. (4) *Ibid.*, p.74. (5) *Ibid.*, p.77. (6) *Ibid.*, p.81. (7) *Ibid.*, p.81. (8) *Ibid.*, p.vi.

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