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The mysteries of mediumship:



Mr George Spriggs:

As published in Light Magazine of October 1895

With one or two somewhat marked exceptions, the medium's I have met have been exceedingly modest and unassuming persons, and Mr George Spriggs, I think it may fairly be said, is the most modest of them all. he can well afford to be, for a writ no one who knows him but speaks of him in the highest possible terms, as a man of transparent integrity, in whose good sense, veracity, and consistency the fullest confidence may always be felt. his portrait, having appeared a few weeks since in connection with the reception given to him by the London and spiritualists, need not again be given here: but the reader, turning back to it, will find intelligent and pleasant features, according well with the characteristics described.

I found Mr Spriggs willing enough to talk, but not about himself.

'every thing worth mentioning, 'he said,' has already been printed in one or other of the Spiritualist paper's, and, though it is an excuse you have heard before, the medium is the least satisfactory of all narrators of the phenomena

connected with him, because, as a rule, he does not witness them, or, indeed, know anything about them except at second hand.'

'Never mind. the story has not yet been told in your own words, and in spite of the drawback you mention, these autobiographical reminiscences from the life of the mediums themselves, in quiet conversation, I just what the readers of 'Light' appreciate. Gibney first a sketch of the leading features of your career as a medium in as consecutive shape as you can manage, and then some account of those wonderful doings at Cardiff which have not been excelled in the history of modern materialisation.'

Resigning himself with a sigh, Mr. Spriggs began, 'Well, it shall be brief enough not to tire you overmuch. I have been a medium now for just 20 years. I had not been at it in Cardiff long before I made the acquaintance of Mr. Baker, an enthusiastic spiritualist who rushed to in with his pet subject at every opportunity. covers a letter discovering some symptoms of interest in me, to whom nothing was as novel as it was strange, he took me home to a sitting, and aroused my keenness suspicions at the outset by not only using a table specially made for the purpose, but by insisting keeping it in the part of the room that pleased him, and not worth I wanted to put it. However, the spelling out of the name of a friend of whom my host had never heard, and of the place of his burial, set my thoughts in another train, and very soon I began to feel the presence of some singular influence in the room and at that same time a desire to go to sleep. at the next sitting, which was held in the dark, I went into a trance, but nobody appeared to notice it, and I said nothing. Subsequently I sat alone at my lodging and readily got information spelt out through the table. Now came an incident that made a strong impression on my mind. I did not like the place I was stopping at; I wished to get into lodgings were there were no children, and work, among so other things, the occupants were teetotallers and members of the Christian Church. Here was the opportunity for putting a practical test to my new found but unseen friends, the spirits'.

'Who were, of course, knew all about a private mortal affairs, and occupied themselves exclusively with the concern of this terrestrial ball?'

'Just that. You see, I was like the rest of the beginners, and I am today little wiser than then, I think. Well, I asked the questions straight away, and was perhaps less surprised than I should be now at getting a prompt and explicit answer. " Go to number three, such and such a street, at 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, " said the table, adding that there I should find what I wanted, and giving details of the terms that would be asked and arrangements made for my comfort. That's what early in the week, and having a certain that there existed a street of the name given, I waited until the hour stated and called. The young lady who answered the door first replied to my inquiry in the negative, but after a moment's reflection requested

me to call again in a few days' time and see her sister, who was away from home, and for whom she was keeping house. Subsequently I called again, as desired, saw Mrs. Lister, the lady of the house, made arrangements of a very satisfactory nature, and found myself in a most comfortable and congenial home. All the details were exactly as stated through the table. Mrs. Lister was exceedingly curious to know what had induce me to seek lodging with her, as she had no intention of letting to lie appeared on the scene; but having been warned not to explain her for three months, I remained silent on the subject until that period had expired, when I related to her the whole story. She then told me that denied before her sister's letter arrived she had a dream, which she repeated to her husband, respecting one who would come to live with them and whom that they would find a very agreeable lodger, and when the letter arrived it was at once apparent that the dream had relation to the message it contained. but, she added, it was fortunate the explanation had been delayed until she knew me well, as, had she known at first how I came to their house, she would have been afraid to take me in. Shortly afterwards, what I regarded as a very good test was given me. A spirited communicated, giving his name and other particulars, amongst them the fact that he had been a doctor, and that his father was a barrister in the neighbourhood of London, and he gave both his own and his father's address in fall. I searched the directories in Cardiff Free Library without success, but on my mentioning the matter to a friend belonging to the legal profession, he turned up some old law directories and found the name and address of the barrister exactly as given. This circumstance induced to me to press the matter further, and getting access with some difficulty to Mr Saddlers circle, I soon was able to satisfy myself that there was some intelligent power at work of a different nature from any I had hitherto known.'

'You now, I suppose, commenced in earnest to develop those mediumistic powers you believe you yourself to put possess?'

'Yes. Becoming acquainted with Mr Reece Lewis, that fine old spiritualist of the West, I arranged with him for a series of sittings; have few friends being admitted to the circle who were willing to conform to the conditions prescribed. These conditions, particularly in my own case as a medium, where rigid and even severe. Mr Lewis had strong opinions on the subject, and the communicating spirit backs him up. Every sitter abstained not only from drink and tobacco, but also from meat; in fact, we were all vegetarians during the period over which the sittings extended, and more than that, we always fasted from breakfast until the sitting was over in the evening, sitting being held on three nights each week. It will also prescribed that each member of the circle should take it a bath before coming into the séance room, which was scrupulously kept apart for the purpose and not used for anything else.'

'do you attribute this remarkable degree of success that was achieved to the observance of these elaborate regulations, Mr Spriggs?'

'In a large measure I do. They were prescribed, as I say, by the spirits them -selves; and if useful in no other way, they at least had the effect of impressing on the sitters a sense of: solemnity of the proceedings, and of bringing them to the séance room in a fitting state of mind. But I am satisfied that there was a more in them than that alone.'

'From your experience, then, you would recommend circles for development or investigation to adopt, as far as practicable, similar rules?'

'If they wish to guard against evil influences and give the controlling spirit is the best conditions, yes; but after all, the condition most conducive to satisfactory result is to sit in a reverential, trustful, and receptive spirit.'

'Is that for certain? I have known estimable people sit in a perfectly trustful and receptive spirit, and get most woefully taken in. As well as Trust, you want to keep dry the powder of your reason. But I quite agree that a clean heart is more essential than a clean body, in traffic with the unseen world; and that to attend scrupulously to such things as abstinence from flesh and cleanliness of the body would be to draw on one the curse of the Scribes and Pharisees if one went to Communion also with impure, cynical, or selfish thoughts. All the same, then the speed soundness of head as well as purity apart and divinely bold affections, must then not, in the man who mentions on the borderlands?'

'You are quite right; that is what I meant. Foreign media and in particular, however, I think abstinence from alcoholic drink most necessary. A The temptation to stimulants is almost irresistible in the state of exhaustion that often follows a séance; and many a good medium has gone under as a result. I know, from my own experience, how host and hostess is, with the kindest of intentions, will persistently press on one a glass of something, and almost refused to take no for the answer, not dreaming of the mischief they may be doing. Without prejudice, I say emphatically that the medium should be a rigid total abstainer. Whilst on the subject, it is interesting to note that in the early days of the sittings at Mr Rees Lewis's I was after each sitting at tacked with sitters, which occasionally took a very severe form. this was explained by our spirit friends to be due to the number of controls with widely differing influences that took possession of me, and at length, when I couldn't stand it any longer, it was arranged that won control only should operate. This was " Swift water, " late a Red Indian, with pure, forest bread magnetism; and with his advent all unpleasant symptoms disappeared.'

'From that I judge that you are in favour of a single control, Mr Spriggs?'

'Decidedly. Mixed to controls, I consider, cannot fail to work mischief, and this must be the case even in the controls are all goods, as the combination of different influences at left behind is bound to dangerously affect the sensitive organism of the medium.'

'It was not long,' pursued Mr. Spriggs, 'before our Cardiff circle got beyond the use of the table. We had writings and various other phenomena; and then shadow like forms began to appear. The forms, with repeated sittings, gradually grew more distinct, until they were perfectly recognisable, and after a while they were able to move freely about the room, and even about the house and into the garden.'

'How often it did you sit?'

'The circle continued for about five years, and during that period we sat regularly three times a week.'

'You were not particular about keeping exactly the same circle, I understand, or about the admission of strangers?'

'No, we were less particular than I think we ought to have been. Three visitors, in addition to the regular circle, were admitted each evening, and practically any person applying who appeared respectable and earnest was allowed in. In most cases, I ought to say, the spirits themselves decided who should be present, but I am not certain they were always in a position to judge accurately of the applicants, for more than once we had some very unpleasant company. For instance, one man who got in loudly expressed the opinion that a form who came was I, masquerading to deceive the sitters. This, I was subsequently told, seemed to have a most peculiar effect on the form, which assumed a pained expression, began to shrivel up, and slowly retreated to the Cabinet, a voice at the same time directing the circle to look to the medium at once. They found me in a shocking condition, quite insensible, with blood flowing from my mouth and nose. Great difficulty was experienced in restoring me, and I was ill from the shock for some time.'

'Did you get any explanation of how this unpleasant thing came about as a result of the interruption?'

'I learned from Mr Smart, who was present, and who wrote an account of the occurrence to "Light" some 14 years since, that the controlling spirits described it to the disturbance of the whole mental atmosphere of the circle, consequent upon and members being startled by the abrupt and an unexpected assertion - a disturbance which re-acted upon me in my highly sensitive condition of body and brain.'

'If a large portion of your physical substance was withdrawn for building up the materialised form, it is conceivable that the shock to the spirit, by which it was temporarily animated, occasioned either directly by the act of interruption, or indirectly by the sudden change in the mental atmosphere which you mention, may have had a prejudicial affect on a substance which became an effect upon you, when the substance returned to its place in your physical organisation. And perhaps the blood that was found on your face and beard may have been blood of your own employed in the materialisation and, through the disturbance, not restored to your physical system?'

'I think that is a not unreasonable hypothesis. The blood appeared to be on my face at the lower part and particularly on the beard, and whether it became so deposited in coming *from* the body or going *to* the body, it is impossible to say, but it was certainly not flowing at the moment when Mr Reece Lewis, at the summons of the control, rushed into the Cabinet.'

'After this incident, I should think you were more careful in admitting strangers.'

'We wear; but it was this very care in the admission of strangers that led finally to a little discord in a circle; ill-feeling was engendered, and the phenomena in consequence fell off in a marked degree. I received an invitation to go to Australia - the result and of a visit to Cardiff of J Carson, Esq., of Melbourne, who attended one of our meetings, and on his return reported what he had seen to his Spiritualist friends on the other side of the world. As an earnest of their good intentions they send over a draft for £80 to pay the expenses of myself and my friend, Mr Smart, who was to accompany me, and with very little hesitation we accepted the "call." I must tell you that before I let Cardiff, Mr Reece Lewis, who was much distressed by the want of unity in the circle, prevailed on me to give a series of private sittings in his own house, in the hope that my mediumship, which he fancied must have deteriorated under the adverse conditions introduced, might be restored to its highest point before my departure. During these sittings, which lasted about five months, many phases developed, which, in the eagerness for materialisation, had been so far neglected. The direct voice became a complete success, and was heard to perfection, whether I was entranced or not. Numerous communications were received from old friends, and long conversations were held with loved ones who had passed over, with the same freedom as if they were still on earth. The passage of matter through matter, in broad daylight, was of common occurrence; flowers, fruit, nuts, corn in the ear, branches of trees, and pieces of rock were brought through walls, closed windows and doors, in profusion, and at the last sitting I remember there came a shower of nuts upon the table, continuing for a quarter of an hour, and when gathered up they filled a large bowl.'

'In Australia you continued, I believe, to have the same manifestations as at Cardiff?'

'Yes, in abundance, extending over a series of years; but not very much that was new was learned from them. We had some very interesting experiments in weighing and measuring the materialised forms. We found that they weighed just anything, some evenings scaling at not more than two or three stone, others running up to seven or eight stone. So too with height; the same, or professedly the same, spirit would not only be quite a different weight one night from another night, but also a different height; they seemed to be able to arrange both details at will. But we noticed this fact, that when there were tall people in the circle the forms were taller than when the sitters showed a low average stature.'

'From which you gathered, of course, that the sitters were drawn upon for materialisation as well as a medium?'

'That was our conclusion. It was found that I myself used to lose about half a pound, taking three days or so to recover my normal avoirdupois', and I have no doubt several, if not all, of the sitters would have found a difference, had they experimented, in their weights also, though probably not to the same extent. Another fact we established conclusively at Melbourne, and that was the remarkable extent to which the presence of an objectionable person affected the manifestations. The sitters having this influence when not necessarily ill-disposed or had bad characters: in several instances, indeed, they were a good, earnest Spiritualist against whose character nothing could be said; but there was something about them that did not agree, and if such people were present we either have got very indifferent manifestations or nothing at all. One man especially, a very good sort of fellow, was a perfect wet blanket in this way, and we were not only obliged to keep him out of the circle, but the mere fact of his having sat reading in the same room during the day was enough to spoil our séance at night. It became, in fact, necessary to ask him to keep out of the room which was the Library of the local Association - during the day, and read his books elsewhere.'

'Poor fellow! It is a hard case to be a thorn in the flesh of the spirits - or in the way of their assuming the flesh - like that. How long did you continue to sit for normal manifestations in Australia? I understand you have quite given it up for some time.'

'I continued to give materialising séances in Victoria for six years, and as I have been abroad now for 15 or so, a simple sum in arithmetic answers your second question. Why did I give up? For the very sufficient reason, from my point of view, that the power began to wane, and with the waning of the power came loss of vitality and a disinclination to sit.'

'You were wise to give up, then. But you did not abandon sitting altogether, I suppose?'

'Oh dear, no! Other phrases developed, in particular the director voice, which I found not only less exhausting to myself, but frequently more satisfactory to sitters, who felt greater pleasure in hearing their friends speak to them in recognisable voices rather than in seeing more or less indistinct and uncanny looking forms moving about the room. Since I have taken up diagnoses and prescription I have given time to little else, as the healing work has required all my strength and attention. I have quite a large practice and many hundreds of patients in the course of the Year.'

'You speak like a regular medico. It's your status as a medical practitioner generally recognised?'

'Not officially, of course; but I am not interfered with, and the doctors are, on the whole, more friendly than not. Some of them, indeed, occasionally seek my assistance. My work is almost entirely to diagnose and prescribe, both of which I do know by the aid of my clairvoyant mediumship. I give prescriptions and supply herbal medicines, but write out for my clients what is to be obtained at the chemist's. This is my card.'

'Skiwaukie! I had understood that was the name of your principal control, not of your house.'

'It is the name of both - the one in honour of the other.'

'As you have told me that you believe in a medium having one control only, I presume that Skiwaukie is alone entertained by you.'

'That is practically the case, and has been so for many years for materialisation and direct voice. Ski, as we always call him, came to me whilst the Cardiff sittings were proceeding, and has been a constant attendant ever since. It was at a sitting given by Mrs. Billing at Mr Burns's, which I attended whilst on a visit to London, that I first met him. He was director of Mrs. Billing's circle, and he told me he knew all about our sittings at Cardiff and the difficulties in the way of the materialised forms speaking to us in the direct voice, and would come down and help us. On my return, we had a sitting at Cardiff simultaneously with one held by Mrs. Billing. Ski came as promised, with the immediate result that the forms were able to talk freely - if you ask me how he managed it, I can't tell you - and he has stuck to me ever since. A right good friend, too, has been Ski.'

'Before we get to the materialisation at the Cardiff sittings,' said Mr. Spriggs, 'When We met again after the conversation recorded last week, I would just like to give you one or two odds and ends that have occurred to me in

thinking over the past, and of which I will unburden myself before they steal out of my memories back door again. At Melbourne once, at the House of Mr. Samuel, father of the blind young lady who sang at their recent conference, conversazione, a number of different things were being conveyed into the room. A visitor asked that an oak tree should be brought. This was rather a tall order, as not only would an ordinary oak tree be about as big as the house itself, but Oakes are very uncommon in Victoria, only a few growing in gardens. The control, however, promised to try, and within five minutes a perfect shower of acorns fell on the table. They had evidently been brought from the public gardens some distance off. Another story, told by Mr. Hugh Junor Brown, was published by him in Australia, and perhaps also in this country, for the peculiar circumstances caused some stare at the time. One of Mr. Brown's sons bought a yacht, and, accompanied by his brother and a man in his father's employ, went out from Melbourne for a Saturday to Monday sail. Mrs. Brown experienced unusual apprehensions about this trip, and begged the boys not to go, but her fears, which were strong as to be almost prophetic, were taken little account of, as the man who accompanied her sons was an experienced sailor with a mate's certificate. The yacht not having returned, and the mother being ill with foreboding, Mr. Brown asked me to give them a sitting on the Tuesday evening, not mentioning anything about the yacht or the boys' absence, and merely saying that his wife, whose home I had attended in my capacity as a medical clairvoyant, was not feeling very well. I went into a trance, under the control of Swift Water, who said at once, " Oh, I perceive it is all about the sea. Give me some think belonging to them, " - no mention of anybody having so far been made - " And I will endeavour to trace them. " The absent boys' pocket-books having been placed in my hands, Swift Water proceeded to trace them, from the time of their leaving home, till 9 o'clock on Monday morning, when, as he said, the yacht foundered through the jib-halyard fouling in a squall, as the occupants were putting the vessel about on another tack. All three were drowned, and the yacht, having sunk in deep water, would not be recovered. I sat again with the Junor Brown's on the following day, when both of the sons, and the young man who had lost his life with them, spoke through me, and corroborated their details already given, the latter begging Mrs. Brown's forgiveness for taking the lads out, and the sons stating that they experienced no bodily pain or shock in drowning, the one feeling which deadened all sense of physical suffering being that of remorse, when their mothers' discarded words came vividly back to them as they found themselves in the water. A few days after this, the body of the younger son was washed ashore with one of the arms bitten off by a shark. Almost simultaneously, came a letter to Mr. Brown from another medium, a great personal friend of his at Adelaide, 600 miles away, stating that the elder son had come to him, and had mentioned that part of my right arm had been torn off, and his waistcoat also swallowed, by a big fish, which might have been a shark, but was different from those he was acquainted with. Now comes the remarkable corroboration of the story, which, so far, had come

only through myself and another medium. Two days after the receipt of the letter, an immense white deep-sea shark, quite different from the Blue sharks that infest the bay, was caught near Melbourne, and in its body was found the right arm of Mr. Brown's elder son, bitten off at the elbow, and also part of his waistcoat, containing in the pockets his gold watch, keys, and several coins. The watch had stopped at 9 o'clock exactly - the hour I had stated the accident occurred. The articles were handed over to Mr. Brown by the local magistrate, and all the facts published in the Melbourne Press. Subsequently, I believe, Mr. and Mrs. Junor Brown frequently, but not through me, talked with their sons, and saw them in materialised form at séances, both in Australia and in the United States.'

'Tell me more of Skiwaukie, Mr. Spriggs. He seems a very interesting personality?'

'He is, indeed: the most attractive spirit I have ever known or met. He has winning manners, and speaks in a rich, mellow-toned voice very pleasant to here. I was seldom unconscious when he talked in a direct voice with the circle, and myself joined in the conversation as freely as anybody. He never saves "yes," but always "soh," for the affirmative, and by modulation extend that one expression to an almost infinite number of shades of meaning. You would never believe that a single monosyllable would be made to imply so much, and so many things, until you heard Ski with his "soh." His speech is studded with expressions redolent of Indian life and thought, and he has a happy knack of applying to people most appropriate names of his own, often summing up their character in a single word. Is invariably truthful and reliable. I have never known him say anything that was not fact, and never known him to make a mistake. His power of discerning the characters of persons, their thoughts, feelings, and wishes, is remarkable: and he is as accurate and thorough in reading what the future has install as in seeing what has occurred in the past. At one of the sittings at Cardiff - the Circle of Light, by the way, we called it - I remember Ski, addressing Mr. Adams in the direct voice, described a young lady closely related to him who, although present, had not passed over to the other side, and whose face was enveloped with some kind of covering, but for what reason Ski could not make out. The description tallying exactly with Mr.. Adams's sister, he wrote to her at Plymouth, asking were she was, what doing, and how attired at the time of the occurrence, but not giving her a reason for the inquiry. Her reply confirmed all of that Ski had said, and it turned out that she was suffering acutely from toothache, and had her face bound up at that time, her thoughts, in intervals of relief from the paint, turning to her brother at Cardiff, whom she remembered as having suffered much from toothache when a boy. On another occasion a young lady, who was a perfect stranger to Cardiff and the circle, came to a sitting, and Ski, without introduction, preceded forthwith to describe her occupation, her distant home, it's inmates, and the decoration of its rooms, so minutely and exactly the lady was filled with astonishment,

and unreservedly admitted the complete accuracy of the description. Incidences like this were of almost a nightly occurrence; in fact, so common, that after a while we ceased to think much about them. Ski not only was able to give descriptions of communicating spirits, but almost always both Christian and a surnames, which added immensely to the interest exhibited by strangers, and brought conviction to the mind of scores who attended the séances.

'Some of Ski's expressions,' went on Mr. Spriggs, was a laugh at the recollection, and were very amusing. He always called a letter or anything written, a "Scratch." Once, at Melbourne, I remember, when we were expecting Dr Peebles from America, he told us a " quick scratch, " meaning the a telegram, was coming, and the next morning we received it. Ski used to speak to me in my bedroom in the direct voice, and one night my friend Smart, who was sleeping in the adjoining room to mine at Melbourne, heard him talking, and came in, telling Ski that he was out of work and down at heart. Ski bayed him not be distressed, as in "half a moon, " a fortnight's time, he would receive a " scratch " respecting some employment. He was to reply, but would not have any further communication for another fortnight, when he would be offered a place which he was to accept, as it would be good for him. All this came to pass exactly as prophesied, and Mr Smart is in the same situation at the present time.'

'Does Ski continue this association, and talk to you as hereto for? I notice you speak to him in the past.'

'Yes, he is still with me, but it is only occasionally now that he makes his presence known. Since I have gone in for the medical work it has not been necessary.

Talking about the direct voice reminds me of a curious thing that happened at Cardiff. A Mrs. M - well, her name must not to be given - joined the circle, and brought her husband with her. Among others, her father spoke to her in the direct voice, and said casually, " Oh, Harry is here. He gives you his love. "Immediately Mrs. M became very much confused, and not only hurried her husband off directly after the séance, but never again appeared at the circle. I learnt subsequently that Harry was the name of a deceased child she had had before marriage, and Mr. M was not acquainted with the fact. You see, the spirit world does not make distinctions of that sort. A Roman Catholic priest, who was a frequent visitor at Cardiff - there is no harm, I think, in giving his name, the Reverend Father Butcher - was asked if he believed it was a direct spirit-voice he was listening to, and he answered impressively, " yes; it is my mother I am conversing with. She has told me things that occurred years ago, and that were known only to her and me. "This reminds me of another Catholic priest, Father Backhouse, who used to communicate with us, and who always signaled his coming by showing a large brilliant light in the form of a cross.'

'It is more surprising to here of a priest coming up to a séance before his death than after it.'

'I fear it is. Father Butcher and his qualms. I think it was the very first night he came that the spirit of a nun materialised. Every time she passed him she bowed low. When she had disappeared Ski said to him, " You must not be conceited about that. It was not to you she was bowing, but to what you have in your pocket. Before you came here you prayed that if this thing was evil no spirit should appear, and as a charm against evil you put in your pocket some holy water and consecrated water. " The priest acknowledged that this was true.'

'If Ski was always correct,' I remarked, 'he did not invariably satisfy everybody. Your friend Mr. Paynter has told me one or two interesting incidents within his own experience. Mr. Paynter says he brought a skeptic to you, and that Ski told him the spirit of a little child whom he had lost was by his side. " Boy or girl? " asked the visitor. " Boy, " replied the control, " and he suffered frightful pains in the head prior to death." " That's quite true, " replied the sceptics, " but I don't believe in spiritualism, all the same. " '

'That gentleman,' said Mr. Spriggs, 'belonged to the class who do not believe though one rise from the dead, but I remember the incident, and he did condescend to admit that he was puzzled.'

'I wonder if you remember, too, and the occasion of Mr. Paynter's introduction to you. No? Well, to vary the proceedings, I will tell you what he has told me. " I was on a short flying visit to Cardiff from Spain, " said Mr. Paynter, " and one afternoon called on my old friend Rees Lewis, quite unexpected by him. He asked me in to a room where I saw two young men, and with out any introduction by name or otherwise I sat down, and the interrupted séance went on. The median, who was Mr. Spriggs, continued a conversation (apparently broken by my arrival) after shivering in a magnetic-shock kind of way, and then turning suddenly to me he said, 'You have not come alone,' and described this spirit who he said accompanied me. The description of my deceased father was perfectly correct. The spirit controlling Mr Spriggs then said, 'I will go and have a look at your house and be back shortly.' On his return in about half-an-hour he said, 'Your house is quite different from those in England,' and went on to picture the sleeping alcoves forming a part of the living room, the smoke issuing from a factory across the way, and other details, such as the number of persons in my family and their appearance. All this I thought at the time might be a kind of thought-reading, gathered from psychic atmosphere, so to speak, but when I was told that at that moment my two children's dresses were being changed by two persons on whose knees they were sitting, they having just returned from a walk, I was incredulous, it not being the custom to allow young children

to go out during the great heat of the early afternoons in July. Their dresses were then described, that of the girl being tied at the shoulder with a peculiar coloured ribbon of which I knew nothing. Upon my arrival home shortly afterwards, I learned that every item of information was scrupulously correct. The children had that afternoon been allowed to go to a church to witness some grand function, and the ribbon mentioned had been purchased after my departure for England. This," said Mr. Paynter, "entirely disposed of my thoughts transference Theory. " '

'It ought to have done,' said Mr. Spriggs, 'Ski did not get his information at second-hand.'

'That is not all. At the same séance Mr. Paynter was asked to hand you any letter he might have in his pocket, without looking at it. He took one out, and, handing it over, heard from your lips a complete description of his wife, and the writer, the one detail wherein it appeared to be inaccurate, being that her hair were spoken of as a very dark chestnut, whereas he had always taken it up for black. He found out that the spirit was right, and he was wrong. The next letter resulted in a curiously mixed description of two persons, Mr. Paynter's wife and his brother, and it turned out that the letter had been written by Mrs. Paynter, and the letter addressed to her by his brother.'

'You have told me of the careful personal preparation for your Cardiff sitting, Mr. Spriggs. What sort of room did you sit in, and How was the circle?'

'The room used at Mr. Lewis's was a fairly large apartment and on the first floor; and a little inner, opening only into the first, served as a Cabinet. The circle sat in horse-shoe shape, with the two ends about six feet away from the entrance to the Cabinet, which was covered by a curtain hung from the top, the door itself being kept open. The forms would materialize about three feet in front of this curtain, in view of the sitters the light was always sufficient for exact observation, and often full on, so that the smallest print could be read and every detail of the forms examined. Their gas jets were shaded by a blue or a pink globe. The sittings were not always held at Mr. Lewis's; and in such cases the Cabinet was often nothing more than a curtain or tablecloth, stretched across a corner of the room.'

'And as to the number of forms that were in the habit of appearing?'

'We have had as many as 20 or more in one evening, men, women, and children, several out at the same time, and all entirely different from one another, exhibiting alike different physical peculiarities and marked mental distinctions. Kilted Highlanders, dusky Indians, priests, tall men with snowy hair and beards, men of almost giant stature and men of giant stance, beautiful girls roved in ethereal garments, children fair and bright as the

angels, all most variously and some most richly and rarely dressed. Many of the figures wore a profusion of drapery, which sometimes as they walked, extended in a train of several yards behind, without crease or fold, and immaculately white. It was noticeable that the male forms generally wore a drapery Corsair in kind than the female, but some of the former, as, for instance, the Egyptian priest, already mentioned, were very gorgeously apparalleled. Mr. Lewis once cut off a piece of silk, of a rich crimson colour, from a girdle one by one of the forms. It began to fade after being kept a few days but being taken back into the séance room, was manipulated by one of the spirits and restored at once to its original luster.'

'If materialized spirit would only leave behind them something that was not silk or satin, gauze or common Linen, something different in make an appearance from everything we know, something that one could see at once was, if not certainly of spirit manufacture, obviously not have known human make, that would serve a useful purpose. No doubt they don't because they can't.'

'No doubt. But unless observers surrounded their judgment to the spell of the hour, and imagined the thing that was not, they always declared that the beauty of the garments of the spirit forms was beyond that of the finest of mundane habiliments. In one of his written records, Mr. Smart tell of a stream of light coming in at a window and falling on a form with indescribable effect, the white garment glistening like purest silver; and its arm, raised to shade the Spirit's eyes, was of the ordinary fresh tint, with the veins plainly visible. One, with full beard and turbaned head, and having the appearance of an ancient priest, is described as wearing a magnificently, coloured long robe, with what looked like a brass plate studded with precious stone which glistened and flashed with great brilliancy. The circle over and over again saw the material manufactured, apparently, out of nothing before their eyes. Snowdrop, a little Indian spirit, in full view would produce yard after yard of beautiful soft white stuff, drawing it slowly as it seemed, out of the air. Shawls too, as we called them, she used to make in a similar manner, some heavy and thick, some flimsy and delicately fine; and that desire she would then large or diminish, or vanish and immediately restore, them with all possible ease. The manufacture of clothing, indeed, seemed at the least difficult part of the materializing spirit's task, and almost every imaginable kind of dress suited to the forms was from time to time exhibited. Mr. William Nicholson, for instance, records how, being a descendant of the chiefs of the Clan MacNicol, believed to be extinct, six kilted Highlanders, in the colours of the clan, materialized one night when he was present, and, what is more, conversed with him in the Gaelic dialect.'

'No one else in the circle, of course, had the Gaelic. Mr. Nicholson must have found that a good test.'

'I question if he was quite satisfied even so. But tests were as common with us as black berries in autumn. For example: one of the forms that came to a stranger gave him the Masonic grip and signs, and by that means entirely convinced him on his identity. I have since joined the craft, but was not at the time a Mason. By way of Test, too, if not of identity, of powerful muscular development, the forms used frequently to perform feats of strength, some of a most remarkable character, the sitters declaring that in some instances these were beyond the natural ability of the strongest man. Zion, swarthy in feature, with dark piercing eyes, and over six feet in height (who was a constant and welcome visitor), Would, they tell me, literally bound out from the Cabinet, right into the centre of the circle, evincing much satisfaction in this temporarily clothing his erect, stalwart and vigorous figure with the garments of our materiality. He would then go round the circle greeting each sitter with a handgrip, which was something to remember. Grasping the top rail of a chair with one hand, he would hold it out straight at full arm's length, and then setting it down, melt promptly away in the sitters' site like morning mist, to return a moment later from the Cabinet, or rise again from his ashes, if you might call the handful of white vapor that remained on the floor. Here was a curious thing Zion would often do. Together with two or three other materialized forms he would twirl the curtain of the Cabinet, and the forms would follow each other around the curtain so rapidly as practically to make a simultaneous appearance. Charity, a graceful female form, was another adept at Materialisation, and also of notable strength when closed in the flesh. She almost invariably made a point of beckoning forward the heaviest person in the circle to sit upon a chair placed in front of the Cabinet, and then lifting both chair and occupant about a foot from the floor with the greatest of ease. As the heaviest person who regularly attended, and was almost always selected, weighed it just 16 stone, this was no slight feat. Charity was an Egyptian in earth life, and their most graceful dancer. Her drapery consisted of fold upon fold of delicate gossamer lace. At the sound of music she would whirl around the room in a most weird and picturesque fashion. Sometimes she would go to Mr. Lewis's little grandson's bedroom, take him out of bed, and dance with him in her arms with marvelously wild and rapid motion. She was also a bit of a conjuror, but there was no trickery about air feats - they wear what they seem to be. Coming forward, she would hold out her beautifully formed hands to the sitters, to show that nothing was on the fingers, borrow or a gold chain, manipulated it a moment, and then reveal a gold ring on one of her fingers.'

'Do you mean that the whole of the chain disappeared, or was reduced to do the bulk of the ring?'

'No, the treatment consisted of laying the chain on the table, making passes over it, and, I suppose, in some way abstracting the particles from it which formed the ring. The chain remained on the table without any perceptible diminution, and the ring appeared on the finger. To show that it was solid, she

clicked it at the gas globe, and pressed it against the sitter's hands. Zion and charity when not the only one who performed feats of strength. Shicu, a Hindu control, manifested a remarkable degree of power, and Mr. Smart records having on one occasion seen him lift up on to a chair, with the aid it of the knee, a tolerably large harmonium, supporting it on a chair. It was not so much, remarked Mr. Smart, that these feats of strength were performed, as though they were executed with an ease and calmness that betokened real power. Joey, the spirit who had been a clown, and who appeared to many circles, was fond of startling the sitters by suddenly bounding out of the Cabinet, jumping into a chair, and seating himself on the back, at the same time repeating his name.'

'By the way, Mr. Spriggs, that wandering about in their house, and even going out into the gardens, which you mention - she was it a frequent occurrence?'

'It occurred over and over again. A favorite point in the garden was a pear tree, a distance of ninety or a hundred feet from the séance-room. On one occasion three separate forms were clearly seen in the garden at the same time; one of them himself opened the back door to get out, and danced in the open air before those of the circle who accompanied him. Not only were the form seen by the sitters, but by the next-door neighbours, who were Wesleyans, and who angrily threatened Mr. Lewis with the police, having religious objects in to what they regarded as dealings with the devil. It was Peter, the well known spirit, who like Joey, appeared at so many circles, and whose curiously shrill voice will be remembered by many, that performed the feat of going into the garden with Mr. Reece Lewis and his grandson, and Mr. John Carson of Melbourne, cutting a bunch of grapes in the greenhouse and returning with it to the séance room, where he divided the fruit among the sitters. Peter it was to, who, one night, when downstairs no less than nine times in succession. Finally, he be dematerialized in front of the curtain, and from the white mist that remained, after numerous attempts and failures as shown by repeated risings and sinkings, due to lack of sufficient power, the figure of a little girl was at length evolved. Long absence of the form was found to occasion great exhaustion to me, and the same happened when strong light was thrown for any length of time on the form.'

One other regularly attending spirit friend, resumed Mr. Spriggs; Zion, did in fact one night quit the room and walked downstairs, returning shortly with a dish of fruit which he had taken from the larder and which he distributed among the circle, besides eating some himself. He repeated this performance on several occasions, bringing up something to show where he had been. On other nights he also went out into the garden, returning once with an armful of fuchsia sprays taken from a bush at the far end, and on another night with a handful of branches from a Rose tree.

Mr. Reece Lewis's garden must have been nearly and denuded by these predatory associates of yours. From what you say I gather that these excursions about the house and into the garden were of almost nightly occurrence.

During one period of the sitting they were. Here is a case that made a great impression on the minds of all who were present. It was a bright moonlit night during a stay of Mr Carson, of Melbourne, in this country, and, as he was a visitor that evening, there was a manifest unanimity on the part of the control and sitters alike to insure the best possible result. I was myself entranced, as usual, but I give you there details as kindly furnished me by Mr Adams, who, with his wife, was a constant member of the circle. A portion of the circle indicated by Zion were requested to go downstairs into the front sitting room and wait for him to join them there. They did so, four gentlemen, including Mr Carson, and one lady, Mrs Adams, and formed a group near the window through which a brilliant moon afforded ample light. In a few minutes Zion, strongly materialised, but restraining his exuberance for obvious reasons, passed from the Cabinet, through the séance room, downstairs to where the others were awaiting him and sat on the sofa. He beckoned to Mrs Adams to go and sit by him, which after some pressure, feeling a little nervous, she did, Zion moving to make room for her. The lady, being herself an excellent medium, was doubtless selected with the object of sustaining the necessary conditions. Placing his hand on her shoulder Zion said in a deep voice and with a reassuring manner, 'you're not afraid?' He then rose, took her arm, walked over to the gentleman and bowed to them with dignity, Mr Carson and the others expressing their extreme pleasure at so splendid a manifestation. Next, accompanied by the whole group, Zion walked out of the room, through the passage, and into the garden, where he picked some twigs from a fruit tree, and returning with them to the séance room presented one to each of the sitters. Bowing with evident pleasure at his success he finally retired to the Cabinet. All saw him thoroughly well whilst this was going on. John Cobham, who appeared there as aged and crippled, and Maude, his wife, were also indefatigable in the work of materialisation and in endeavouring to demonstrate its nature and possibilities. The former invariably had the gas turned up by degrees until it reached its full power, he meanwhile making repeated visits of inspection to the picture hung in the séance room, or appearing to be interest himself in some similar way. His wife was a tall and very graceful form in gossamer attire, and both in turn on several occasions left the room and went to other parts of the house. On one occasion what might be called a transference of the elements used in the process of materialisation took place between them on the way, for certain it was that the well-known form of John Cobham who left the séance room and went downstairs and the equally well known form of Maud Cobham who returned instead of her husband.

Your circle must have marvelled indeed at such a transformation?

'Yes, and it occurred not once, but repeatedly, and with other forms besides those named; though for the moment I forget which. For a considerable time a Mrs Wayland, of Newport, used to come and materialise whenever her husband and daughters were present. With the gas turned on to the fullest she would stand in front of them, as plainly visible and unmistakable as she had been to them while still in the earth body. She would walk about the house with Mr Wayland, upstairs and downstairs and from room to room. There was also a spirit leave-taking I could tell you of, if you cared.'

'Do, by all means, Mr Spriggs.'

It was a touching and impressive séance of which my friend Smart, who was present, has given the details. The occasion was a leave-taking between the members of the circle and the spirit wife of one of the sitters, who had passed from the earth life about a year before, and she was about to enter a higher sphere from which she would not be able to continue, under ordinary conditions, to visit us in the material form. "After an invocation and the singing of a hymn," says Mr Smart, "we waited patiently until they issued from the Cabinet and stood in our midst the fully materialised form of our Spirit friend, clad in robes of such a snowy and dazzling whiteness as forcibly to remind us of the 'shining garments' of those other glorified spirits who 1800 years ago stood within the Sepulchre. Taking a bouquet of flowers from the table she presented them in turn to some of the sitters to inhale their fragrance. Then as we stood up to receive them she took up from the table a platter containing a few biscuits, one by one she herself handed them round to those present. Retiring a little distance she took up a small piece of cake and ate it. Next we sat down and she came round handing us pieces of cake. Our Spirit friend then several times travelled the entire length of the room and opened and shut the room door. After this she advanced again to the table, and taking up a tumbler containing milk she again passed round the room, handing the tumbler to each in succession for the purpose of taking a sip from the contents; in doing this she had several times to return to the Cabinet to gain fresh power, but eventually succeeded in favouring all the sitters in this way, she herself in each case, handing it and receiving back the tumbler. Finally she retired and stood a few feet from the curtains, and raising a glass to her lips she was clearly observed to drink a portion of the remaining contents, the sound of the drinking being quite audible. Our friend then retired into the Cabinet and thence wrapped out a message that she would attempt to walk downstairs. It was found that at the moment there was more light in the hall than a temporarily materialised form could stand; she however, took the arm of Mr Lewis, walked across the room, passed with him through the open door, walked a few steps just outside and across the upper landing, as far as the door of the room opposite, and then returned. The fanlight having been darkened she next, again accompanied

by Mr Lewis, proceeded downstairs, touched the hall door, and returned the whole distance being about 50 ft.

This performance was repeated, but with the power rapidly waning, our friend had to retreat to the Cabinet. After this, standing at the table and being unable to articulate with sufficient distinctness, she gave through the alphabet the message, 'I shall go after tonight to a higher sphere,' in answer to questions, she intimated that she had no hesitation what so ever in passing through the change, but afterwards she could only come among us when the conditions were very superior, that this change was analogues to the physical process of death, but without its gloom and terror, and she concluded with the message, 'God bless you all. Go on with the good work.' She shook hands with each one present (placing two or three of her fingers in contact with the sitters', but not grasping them) byway of farewell and leading her husband to a vacant seat she placed herself beside him, embraced and kissed him. ""

Note: (For cake and milk understand bread and wine, and in its main incidence this Passover supper presents marked points of resemblance to that at which Christ, of which we have records, took farewell in anticipation of removal to another sphere.) It occurs to me, by the way, to ask if attempts were ever made at materialisation without a Cabinet?

Yes, a series of sittings was arranged for that express purpose. After a few nights a semi-luminous formation became distinctly visible, and I have no doubt, had the sittings have been continued, they would have culminated in the full form, but the experience was found to be too exhausting to me, and was abandoned. We had been sitting 10 months, indeed, before the spirits were able to show me and themselves at the same time. On the first occasion a member of the circle was called forward and introduced just inside the Cabinet, where she saw the white robed figure of the control standing by the side of my own outstretched insensible form, which was surrounded by a beautiful halo of light. In succession, all the sitters were allowed to witness the spectacle. Subsequently this occurred over and over again, and in time the spirits were able to raise the curtain of the Cabinet to disclose me sitting in a deep trance, while two or three of them would be standing outside. I can give you a case of that kind, and repeat the circumstances as nearly as possible as given me by Mr Adams. The scene was held at the Cardiff spiritualist society's place on the first floor, and at the corner of the street from which a gaslight burned brightly, and this, together with a very clear moon, gave abundant light of a suitable kind. There were about 25 sitters present; the Cabinet was triangular, and improvised by a curtain stretched across one corner of the room, facing the window at which the light was admitted, and behind a curtain the only article was an easy chair for me to sit in. On entrancement, with an accompaniment of particularly good conditions, materialisations speedily ensued. At the close, Charity, showing a profusion of drapery, came from the Cabinet, and, in the absence of the champion

heavyweight sitter usually selected, chose a Mr Adams for her feat of lifting, raising him and his chair a foot or more up and forward. Zion next bounded out in fine form, gripped hands with several of the circle, and moved about with great activity, even showing his agility by getting up on to the Mantel shelf. Then a third form, I think, John Cobham appeared, and for two or three minutes, in full view in a good light, all three moved about manifesting their usual individual characteristics.

When the power began to wane, Charity, followed by the other two, went up to the Cabinet, lifted a corner of the curtain, showing me reclining entranced in the chair, and kissed me on the forehead. The curtain was then dropped, and the forms one by one retired into the Cabinet. Thus closed, to use Mr Adams own words, " a luminous event, the recollection of which ever stirs my soul to a profound sense of the goodness of God, and are grateful recognition of the fact that he has never left mankind without a witness to the spiritual varieties by which we are encompassed. "

Dematerialisation, I think, was also frequent in the site of the sitters, was it not?

It occurred repeatedly, and often in the full light. Forms would melt slowly away until nothing was visible, and then slowly build up again outside and away from the curtains across the entrance of the Cabinet. On one of the numerous occasions when the spirits went down from the séance room to the friends in the drawing room below-stairs, Mr Lewis's spirit father, in passing through the hall on the way back, took Mr Lewis's hat from the stand, and he returned to the room with it on his head. He desired that the sitters examined him to assure themselves that he was as solid and as substantial as any of the company, which they did by pinching and punching him, and then retiring a little they saw him regularly decrease in stature and bulk, sink until he had quite melted away, leaving nothing but the hat on the floor. The hat remained a little while, and presently was seen to lift up and turn over, and on the spot stood the little grandchild of Mr Lewis, who had but recently passed into the spirit life, where its great-grandfather had disappeared a short time before. I have now, I think, told you everything worth noting; at any rate that I can remember.

What you have said has been intensely interesting from first to last. By the way, one of your old Cardiff friends has written me, making fun of the description I gave of you as the most modest medium I have met. He says, "Talk about modesty! The travel and experience Spriggs has had since he left Cardiff have quite metamorphosed him. You should have known him 15 or 18 years ago. The most modest girl ever created was not more so than G. S. Then."

Mr. Spriggs blushed deeply, and turn the subject to his contemplated pleasure tripped across the continent and through the Holy Land on his way back to the Antipodes.

Below is a portrait of Mr Reece Lewis's the gentleman friend of Mr Spriggs who was closely associated with him during the long course of interesting manifestations which we have recently recorded.

