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The Psychic Series

# THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS

FARTHER SCRIPTS AFFORDING EVIDENCE OF  
PERSONAL SURVIVAL

BY

THE RIGHT HON. G. W. BALFOUR

WITH A DISCUSSION OF THE EVIDENCE

BY

MISS F. MELIAN SHAWELL

AND A REPLY BY MR. BALFOUR

Reprinted by authority from the Proceedings of the  
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I.

THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS



# I

## THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS:

### SCRIPTS AFFORDING EVIDENCE OF PERSONAL SURVIVAL.<sup>1</sup>

ON the 26th of August, 1910, the automatist who is already well known to members of the Society under the name of Mrs. Willett sat for script with Mrs. Verrall.

The script produced on this occasion, partly written and partly dictated—I use the word script for convenience sake to include the spoken as well as the written word—contained the phrase “Dionysius’ Ear the lobe.” The phrase occurred in the dictated part of the script, and the name *Dionysius* was pronounced as in Italian. It has no obvious relevance to the context, and this first appearance of it in Willett Script remains even now without any satisfactory explanation.

To Mrs. Verrall herself, as we shall see presently, the words conveyed at the time no meaning what-

<sup>1</sup>This Paper was read at a meeting of the Society for Psychical Research on November 9th, 1916, substantially in the form in which it is now published, except that considerable additions have been made to the argumentative portion.

ever. As a good many of my audience may be in like case with her, I had best explain at the outset that the Ear of Dionysius is a kind of grotto hewn in the solid rock at Syracuse and opening on one of the stone-quarries which served as a place of captivity for the Athenian prisoners of war who fell into the hands of the victorious Syracusans after the failure of the famous siege so graphically described by Thucydides. A few years later these quarries were again used as prisons by the elder Dionysius, Tyrant of Syracuse. The grotto of which I have spoken has the peculiar acoustic properties of a whispering gallery, and is traditionally believed to have been constructed or utilised by the Tyrant in order to overhear, himself unseen, the conversations of his prisoners. Partly for this reason, and partly from a fancied resemblance to the interior of a donkey's ear, it came to be called *L'Orecchio di Dionisio*, or the Ear of Dionysius; but the name only dates from the sixteenth century. The grotto is still one of the objects of interest which every visitor to Syracuse is taken to see.

No further reference was made in any Willett Script to the Ear of Dionysius until more than three years later. The subject was first revived in a script written in the presence of Sir Oliver Lodge

on the 10th of January, 1914. The sitting was a very long one, and in the course of it occurred the following passage.

## A.

(*Extract from Script of Jan. 10, 1914.*)

Do you remember you did not know and I complained of your classical ignorance IGNORANCE

It concerned a place where slaves were kept—and Audition belongs, also Acoustics

Think of the Whispering Gally

To toil, a slave, the Tyrant—and it was called Orecchio—that's near

One Ear, a one eared place, not a one horsed dawn [here the automatist laughed slightly], a one eared place—You did not know (or remember) about it when it came up in conversation, and I said Well what is the use of a classical education—

Where were the fields of Enna

[Drawing of an ear.]

an ear ly pipe could be heard

To sail for Syracuse

Who beat the loud-sounding wave, who *smote* the moving furrows

The heel of the Boot

Dy Dy and then you think of Diana Dimorphism

To fly to find Euripides

not the Pauline Philemon

This sort of thing is more difficult to do than it looked.

There are several interesting points to be noted in connection with this passage. Earlier in the script it was stated that a message was to be sent to Mrs. Verrall; but at the point where the extract commences, Mrs. Verrall is directly addressed in the second person, although she was not herself present. The communication must be taken as purporting to come from Dr. A. W. Verrall, the incident recalled in the extract having actually happened very much as described. I will relate it in the words of Mrs. Verrall's own note, written on Jan. 19, 1914, after, this portion of the script had been shown to her.

My typed note on the Willett Script of Aug. 26, 1910, is as follows: " 'Dionysius' Ear the lobe' is unintelligible to me. A. W. V. says it is the name of a place at Syracuse where D. could overhear conversations." This makes clear what was instantly recalled to me on hearing the Willett Script of Jan. 10, that I did not know, or had forgotten, what the Ear of Dionysius was, and that I asked A. W. V. to explain it. I cannot say whether on that occasion he asked "What is the use of a classical education?" but he expressed considerable surprise at my ignorance, and the phrase of the script recalls—though it does not, I think, reproduce—similar remarks of his on like occasions.

The incident to me is very striking. I am quite sure that Mrs. Willett was not present when I asked A. W. V. about the Ear of Dion-

ysius; no one was present except A. W. V. and myself. . . . She therefore had no reason to suppose that on this particular subject, of the Ear of Dionysius, my information had been obtained from A. W. V. On the other hand, the form given to my contemporary note—"A. W. V. says etc."—confirms my own vivid recollection of the incident above described. It is not easy, I think, to devise a more convincing single incident.

The incident is certainly striking; but I have to confess that its evidential force is weakened by a dim though haunting recollection on my part of a conversation having taken place between Mrs. Willett and me sometime previously on this very subject of Dionysius' Ear. She has no memory of it herself; but I still think she told me one day that the words "Ear of Dionysius" had been running in her head, and asked me what they meant; whereupon I explained, adding that they had come in one of her own scripts several years before. I do not believe I referred to Mrs. Verrall, or to Dr. Verrall's having rallied her upon her ignorance. But as I had been told of the incident by Mrs. Verrall herself shortly after it occurred, it is just possible I may have done so; and this possibility spoils what would otherwise have been a good piece of evidence.

Returning now to the extract from the Willett

Script of Jan. 10, 1914, I proceed to apply a running commentary to the other allusions, certain or probable, which it contains.

The "place where slaves were kept" refers of course to the stone-quarries where the Athenian captives were imprisoned. The words that follow describe the Ear of Dionysius, with its peculiar acoustic properties. Dionysius himself is not named either in this or in the succeeding scripts to which I shall presently call attention; though the syllables "Dy Dy" towards the end of the extract probably represent an attempt at the name. The use of the Italian for Ear, *Orecchio*, is noteworthy, and recalls the Italian pronunciation of "Dionysius" in the earlier script. I may say that Mrs. Willett knows Italian and has spent some time in Italy, though she has never been in Sicily. Much play is made later on with the phrase "a one-eared place." It seems to have little point in the present extract save to bring in our old friend the "one-horsed dawn"—an appropriate reminiscence for Dr. Verrall, as readers of the *Proceedings* will not require to be told.<sup>1</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge's record tells us that the

<sup>1</sup> The words "a one-horsed dawn" refer to a telepathic experiment tried by Dr. Verrall in his life-time on Mrs. Verrall, of which a full account was published by her in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, Vol. XX., pp. 156-167. See also *Proceedings*, Vol. XXVII., pp. 237-238.

automatist laughed as she wrote "not a one-horsed dawn." From my experience of Willett Script I have no doubt that the laugh represents amusement on the part of the communicator, not on that of the automatist herself. It is Dr. Verrall—or the personality purporting to be Dr. Verrall—who laughs as he transmits the words; the laughter of the automatist is but an echo.

The meadows of Enna, a town in Sicily, were famous in antiquity as the scene of the Rape of Proserpine. They are introduced here either to indicate *Sicily* as the country with which the message is concerned, or, more probably, to add to the various literary and historical associations which are piled up in this and the immediately succeeding scripts.

Another such association, and a strangely far-fetched one, seems to be dragged in in the next line "An ear ly pipe could he heard." The allusion here is apparently to the lines in Tennyson's well-known poem "Tears, idle tears:"<sup>1</sup>

"The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds  
To dying ears."

<sup>1</sup> Since this Paper was written it has been suggested to me that the "pipe" is the shepherd's pipe, and that the allusion is to Theocritus, the famous Sicilian bucolic poet. Theocritus is said to have imitated the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus in his eleventh idyll.

The bringing of this poem into forced connection with the Ear of Dionysius, and that by means of an abominable pun, is certainly not characteristic of the automatist. I doubt however whether Dr. Verrall's intimates would scout it as a sally impossible to his more playful moments. Indeed, there may even be an evidential point about the jest; for Mrs. Verrall writes in her contemporary note: "The non-serious or parody-like introduction of this poem is consistent with the feeling of the supposed communicator; A. W. V. always considered the sentiment of the poem somewhat overstrained, and maintained that that view was warranted by Tennyson's own description of Ida's reception of it 'with some disdain,' as a fancy 'hatched in silken folded idleness.'"

The next reference in the script is almost certainly to the ill-fated Athenian expedition against Syracuse. The words "who beat the loud-sounding wave, who smote the moving furrows" are probably reminiscent of Tennyson's *Ulysses*:

"Sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows,"

though I do not think that any allusion to Ulysses is intended here, in spite of the fact that he plays,

I am still inclined to prefer the explanation given in the text.

as we shall see, an important part in subsequent developments. "The heel of the Boot" may be taken to indicate the route followed by the Athenian fleet, which passed from Corcyra to Tarentum in the heel of Italy, thence coasted along to the toe, and so reached Sicily.

"Dy Dy" I have already explained as probably an attempt at the name *Dionysius*. The communicator fails to get the whole name through, and then addressing the automatist, who repeats his language, reproaches her with thinking of words beginning with *Di* which are not what he wants.

The final allusion in the extract calls for a somewhat longer comment. A script written by Mrs. Holland in 1907 contains the words "To fly to find Euripides Philemon." The script is quoted by Mr. Piddington in Volume XXII. of the *Proceedings* (p. 215), and the source of the reference to Euripides and Philemon given—namely, Browning's *Aristophanes' Apology or the Last Adventure of Balaustion*.

In *Aristophanes' Apology* [writes Mr. Piddington] Balaustion tells to Philemon the story of how, on the night on which news of the death of Euripides reached Athens, Aristophanes, flushed with wine and with the success of his *Thesmophoriazousæ* came to her house and there justified his attacks on the dead poet; and of how, the apology ended, Balaustion read to Aris-

tophanes and the assembled company the *Hercules Furens*, the original tablets of which Euripides had presented to her as a parting gift. The poem ends by Balaustion telling Philemon that she sent the original tablets to Dionysius, tyrant of Sicily, who placed them in a temple of Apollo with this inscription:

"I also loved

The poet, Free Athenai cheaply prized—  
King Dionusios,—Archelaos like."

Balaustion then asks Philemon

"If he too have not made a votive verse!"

and Philemon replies:

"Grant, in good sooth, our great dead, all the  
same,

Retain their sense, as certain wise men say,  
I'd hang myself—to see Euripides."

Mrs. Willet has not read *Aristophanes' Apology*. She had, however, seen the Holland Script, and recognised at that time that her own script had borrowed from it. She had also read parts of Vol. XXII. of the *Proceedings*, and may have seen the passage I have just quoted. From the evidential point of view we must assume that she had seen it, and that she may thus have become aware of a connection between Browning's Philemon and the tyrant Dionysius. On the other hand, it would not be legitimate to infer that this literary contribution to the subject in hand must have proceeded from her own mental activities unprompted by any external

influence. Whatever view we take of the genuineness or otherwise of the supposed communicators and communications, it is clear that what is already in the mind, conscious or subconscious, of the automatist, will also be that which will most easily emerge in automatic speech or writing.

In any case the reference to Browning's poem is aptly chosen. Not only does it bring in Dionysius the Tyrant in the manner described, but also, though indirectly, the two other main topics alluded to in the script, namely, the Athenian expedition against Syracuse, and the stone-quarries where the Athenian prisoners worked until they were sold as slaves or released because they were able to recite Euripides. The second "Adventure" of Balaustion inevitably recalls the first, related in the companion poem; and the first adventure starts from the defeat of the Athenian Expedition, and ends with Balaustion seeking safety for herself and her whole ship's company from the threatened hostility of the Syracusans by the exercise of a similar gift of recitation.

One other point is perhaps worthy of mention. Browning's line<sup>1</sup>

"I'd hang myself—to see Euripides."

is misquoted by Mrs. Holland, and after her by

<sup>1</sup>This line is an almost literal translation from a fragment of Philemon which has come down to us.

Mrs. Willett in the form "To fly to find Euripides." I owe to Mrs. Verrall the suggestion that the remark in the Willett Script, about "this sort of thing" being "more difficult to do than it looked," is due to a recognition by the communicator of the misquotation—a misquotation which in his life-time Dr. Verrall, "who was much interested in Mrs. Holland's allusion to Lucus and Philemon, never failed to note and regret."

So far all is plain sailing. The reproduction of what Dr. Verrall said to Mrs. Verrall anent the Ear of Dionysius it is possible to explain in the manner I have suggested. The other allusions, historical, geographical and literary, have a natural connection; and all of them might be supposed, without any rude violation of probability, to have been at one time or another within the normal knowledge of the automatist. But up to now we have only been laying foundations for what is to follow. In the succeeding scripts the plot begins to thicken.

Before I enter upon these further developments it will not be out of place to make a brief statement concerning the conditions in which the Willett Scripts are produced. Many of these are written when the automatist is alone, awake, and fully aware of her surroundings. The remainder, pro-

duced in the presence of a "sitter,"<sup>1</sup> fall mainly into two classes. Either the automatist is in a normal or nearly normal state of consciousness, much as when she writes scripts by herself, or else she is in a condition of trance. There have been a few intermediate cases, when it is hard to say whether the sensitive is in trance or not. But these are a very small number: in general there is no difficulty whatever in distinguishing. Scripts obtained in a normal state of consciousness, whether in presence of a sitter or alone, are always annotated by Mrs. Willett shortly after they have been produced. The originals are carefully preserved in the custody of the investigating group; but she keeps copies to which she can at any time refer. Of scripts produced in trance, on the other hand, she remembers nothing, even immediately after waking; and the contents are carefully kept from her knowledge. The script of Aug. 26, 1910, in which the first reference to the Ear of Dionysius occurred, was a trance-script. That of Jan. 10, 1914, from which Extract A has been taken, was written in

<sup>1</sup>A few of Mrs. Willett's scripts have been produced in the presence of some member of her family, and two in the presence of a friend who does not belong to the investigating group. Apart from these rare occasions, she has never sat for automatic writing save with Mrs. Verrall, Sir Oliver Lodge, or myself; and never at any time in the presence of more than one person.

normal conditions of consciousness. All the remaining scripts I shall have occasion to quote in this Paper were trance-scripts. Until May of this year (1916), Mrs. Willett had never been shown any of them or any portion of any of them: there is no doubt in my own mind that in a normal state of consciousness she was totally ignorant of their contents. In that month I allowed her to see, not the entire scripts, but just those passages which I am about to cite, and which have been printed for distribution among the audience. The date of the last of these scripts was August 19, 1915. It is clear, therefore, that Mrs. Willett's having been shown the extracts nine months later could in no way weaken any "evidential" value which the episode they relate to may be thought to possess.

I now proceed to read and comment on Extract B from the Willett sitting of Feb. 28, 1914, at which I was myself present.

B.

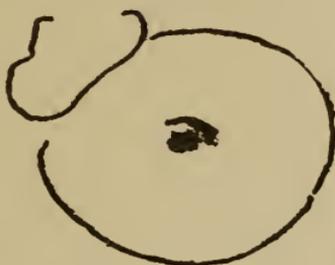
*(Extracts from Sitting of Feb. 28, 1914.)*

(Present: G. W. B.)

Some confusion may appear in the matter transmitted but there is now being started an experiment not a new experiment but a new subject and not exactly that but a new line which joins with a subject already got through  
a little anatomy if you please

Add one to one

One Ear  $\times$  [*sic*] one eye



the one eyed Kingdom

No, in the K of the Blind the 1 eyed man is King

It is about a 1 eyed man<sup>1</sup> 1 eyed

The entrance to the Cave Arethusa

Arethusa is only to *indicate* it does not belong to the 1 eyed

A Fountain on the Hill Side



What about Baulastion [*sic*]



<sup>1</sup> "man" crossed out in the original.

[Laughs] Supposed to be a Wellington Boot  
 12 little nigger boys thinking not of Styx  
 Some were eaten up and then there were Six  
*Six.*

[At this point Mrs. Willett ceased to write  
 and began dictating to the Sitter.]

Some one said—Oh I'll try, I'll try. Oh!  
 Some one's showing me a picture and talking  
 at the same time.

Some one said to me, Homer—and some one  
 said—I'm so confused, I'm all with things flit-  
 ting past me; I don't seem to catch them. Oh  
 dear!

Nor sights nor sounds diurnal.  
 Here where all winds are quiet.<sup>1</sup>

Oh!

Edmund says, Powder first and jam after-  
 wards. You see it seems a long time since I was  
 here with them—and I want to talk to them and  
 enjoy myself. And I've all the time to keep on  
 working, and seeing and listening to such boring  
 old—

Oh, ugh! [Expression of great disgust.]

Somebody said, Give her time, Give her  
 time . . . Oh, if I could only say it quickly and  
 get done with it. It's about a cave, and a group  
 of men. Somebody then—a trident, rather like  
 a toasting fork *I* think.

Poseidon, Poseidon.

<sup>1</sup> Swinburne: *The Garden of Proserpine.*

Who was it said, It may be that the gulfs will wash us down—find the great Achilles that we knew?<sup>1</sup> He's got a flaming torch in his hand.

And then some one said to me, Can't you think of Noah and the grapes?

Optics—Oh! *that*, you know [putting a finger to her eye].

Oh, if I could only say what I hear! Oh, I *will* try, I *will* try.

Somebody said to me, Don't forget about Henry Sidgwick, that he pleased not himself. Do you know he used to work when he hated working. I mean sometimes he had to grind along without enjoying what he was doing. That's what I'm trying to do now.

Do you know that man with the glittering eyes I once saw? He hit me with one word now. [Here Mrs. Willett traced a word with one finger along the margin of the paper. I failed to make it out, and handed the pencil to her, whereupon she wrote]

Aristotle

[Dictation resumed] And Poetry, the language of the Gods. Somebody killed a President once and call out—something in Latin, and I only heard one word of it, Tironus, Tiranus, Tiranius—something about sic.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson: *Ulysses*.

<sup>2</sup> *Sic semper tyrannis*—uttered by Booth when he murdered President Lincoln. The phrase had already appeared in Mrs. Piper's trance of Apr. 17, 1907. See *Proceedings*, Vol. XXIV., p. 30.

What is a tyrant?

Lots of wars—*A Siege* [spoken loud and with emphasis]. I hear the sound of chipping. [Here Mrs. W. struck the fingers of one hand repeatedly against the palm of the other.] It's on stone. Now, wait a minute. Oh, if I could only get that word.

Fin and something gleba. Find [pronounced as in the Latin *finditur*]*—oh!* it's got to do with the serf. It's about that man who said it was better—*oh!* a shade among the shades. Better to be a slave among the living, he said.<sup>1</sup>

Oh, the toil—Woe to the vanquished.

That one eye has got something to do with the one ear. [Sighs] That's what they wanted me to say. There's such a mass of things, you see, rushing through my mind that I can't catch anything.

[A pause and then sobbing] He was turned into a fountain that sort of Stephen man, he was turned into a fountain. WHY? that's the point: WHY? . . .

Oh, dear me! Now I seem to be walking about a school, and I meet a dark boy, and—it's the name of a Field Marshal I'm trying to get, a German name. And then something says, All this is only memories revived: it's got nothing to do with the purely literary— There are two people in that literary thing, chiefly concerned in it. They're very close friends—they've thought it all out together.

<sup>1</sup> Spoken by the shade of Achilles to Ulysses in Hades.

Somebody said something about Father Cam walking arm in arm—with the Canongate?! What *does* that mean?

Oh! [sniffing] what a delicious scent!

No rosebud yet by dew empearled.

I'll try and say it. Hold me tight now while I try and say it. [Pause.]

It may take some considerable time to get the necessary references through. But let us peg away; and keep your provisional impressions to yourself. May<sup>1</sup> is to hear nothing of all this at present; *because this is something good and worth doing*, and my Aristotelian friend—

[At this point the subject is abruptly broken off and not referred to again until the very end, when E. G. (Gurney) intervenes to close the sitting.]

Enough for this time. There is sense in that which has been got through though some disentanglement is needed. A Literary Association of ideas pointing to the influence of two discarnate minds.

You will doubtless have noticed the recurrence in this extract of most if not all of the topics already found in Extract A. I will briefly enumerate but need not dwell on them further. References are once more made to

The Ear of Dionysius;

The stone-quarries in which the vanquished Athenians worked;

<sup>1</sup> "May" = Mrs. Verrall.

Enna (by means of a quotation from *The Garden of Proserpine*);

Syracuse ("Wars—a Siege," and "Arethusa");

The heel of Italy (Wellington Boot).

The Adventures of Balaustion.

There is also, however, much in the Extract that is new.

We are now told that an "experiment" is being attempted; and that this experiment consists in "a literary association of ideas," some of which have already appeared, while others are now being introduced for the first time. Much importance is attached to the experiment: it is "something good and worth doing." There are additional references yet to come, which may take a "considerable time" to "get through." Meanwhile Mrs. Verrall ("May") is not to be told about it: any provisional impressions the other investigators may form are to be kept to themselves.

The literary riddle—for such it proves ultimately to be—which is thus in the course of being propounded is the work, we are told, of two intimate friends no longer in the flesh. It is intended to be characteristic of them, and to serve as evidence of their personal survival.

The identity of the two friends, indicated without

disguise in the later extracts, is made sufficiently clear even in the present one to anybody acquainted with previous Willett Scripts. They are Professor S. H. Butcher and Dr. A. W. Verrall.<sup>1</sup>

The "man with the glittering eyes I once saw," from whom proceeds the word *Aristotle*, is Professor Butcher. The incident referred to is a vision of Professor Butcher seen by Mrs. Willett on the night of Jan. 21, 1911, a few weeks after his death. I quote the record of it made by Mrs. Willett on the day following:

"Last night after I had blown out my candle and was just going to sleep I became aware of the presence of a man, a stranger, and—almost at the same moment—knew it was Henry Butcher. I felt his personality very living, clear, strong, sweetness and strength combined. A piercing glance. He made no introduction, and said nothing. So I said to him: 'Are you Henry Butcher?' He said 'No, I am Henry Butcher's ghost.' I was rather shocked at his saying this and said, 'Oh, very well, I'm not at all afraid of ghosts or of the dead.' He said, 'Ask Verrall if he remembers our last conversation, and say the word to him:

Ek e tee.'"

<sup>1</sup> Professor Butcher died in December, 1910, and Dr. Verrall in June, 1912.

A more detailed reference to this vision will be found in Extract D. I do not discuss it here further than to say that the name of the goddess *Hecate*—for that is apparently what is meant—has a significance in connection with Dr. Verrall which would have been known to Professor Butcher. In the present context the incident is apparently recalled only to serve as a clue to the identity of the man who says ‘Aristotle.’ The word ‘Aristotle,’ combined with ‘Poetry,’ is itself an additional clue; for Butcher wrote a work upon Aristotle’s *Poetics* which is well known to all classical scholars. Hence the description of him as “my Aristotelian friend” given later on in the extract.

Two other symbolic references to Prof. Butcher are contained in Extract B. “Father Cam walking arm in arm with the Canongate” signifies the association, in the persons of Verrall and Butcher, of the Universities of Cambridge and Edinburgh. Butcher was himself a highly distinguished Cambridge man, and in later life represented his University in the House of Commons; but he was also for many years Professor of Greek at Edinburgh.

The *Rose, and the perfume of the Rose* are repeatedly used in Willett Scripts as symbols of Prof. Butcher, for a reason which his personal friends will readily understand. We shall come across the

same symbols again in Extract D. Note that here the automatist seems to become conscious of the *scent* before she connects it with the *flower*. "No rosebuds yet by dew impearled" is a quotation from Swinburne's *Étude Réaliste*, with the substitution of "dew" for "dawn."

Mrs. Willett, it may be as well to say, had never met Professor Butcher. She knew him, however, by name, and knew that he was a close friend of the Verralls.

As regards Dr. Verrall, there is only one direct allusion to him in Extract B apart from the Father Cam reference already mentioned; but that one is unmistakable. The automatist says she seems to be walking about a school and to meet a dark boy. She tries to get the name of a German Field Marshal. "Then something says, All this is only memories revived; it has nothing to do with the purely literary thing" in which the two friends are closely concerned.

The school is Wellington; the dark boy is Verrall; the memories revived are his memories. The German Field Marshal is Blücher, whose name was given to one of the college dormitories. Mrs. Willett probably knew that Verrall was educated at Wellington; and she certainly had had the opportunity of knowing that one of the College dormi-

tories was named after Blücher, as this circumstance was mentioned in the notes to a script of Mrs. Verrall's which she had seen. The passage gives no ground for inferring a knowledge supernormally imparted though it effectively serves its purpose of designating a particular individual.

To resume: We have now learnt that the subjects associated together in Extract A and reproduced in Extract B are intended to find their place in some kind of literary scheme carefully thought out and devised by two friends who in their lifetime were eminent classical scholars. They are, as it were, pieces which have to be fitted into a single whole more or less after the manner of a jig-saw puzzle. The tale of pieces, however, is not yet complete. Two additional subjects of great importance lie embedded in Extract B, and my next task must be to disengage them. They are the stories of Polyphemus and Ulysses, and of Acis and Galatea—the first derived from Homer's *Odyssey*, the second from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*,<sup>1</sup> though best known to most people through the famous musical setting of the tale by Handel.

In the story told by Homer, Ulysses is overtaken by a storm on his voyage home from Troy, and

<sup>1</sup> Book xiii. 738 ff.

driven to the country of the Lotus Eaters. He reaches next the land of the Cyclopes,<sup>1</sup> a race of one-eyed giants to whom the laws of hospitality are unknown. Going ashore with twelve of his companions he enters the cave where dwells one of the giants, by name Polyphemus, a son of the sea-god Poseidon. Polyphemus is away tending his flocks and herds, but returns towards evening, and, discovering the strangers, imprisons them in his cave, and proceeds to devour them two at a time in three successive meals. But Ulysses and his six remaining companions have devised a terrible revenge. They prepare a stake of olive wood with its end sharpened to a point; and having made the Cyclops dead drunk with wine they had brought from the ship, plunge the end of the stake into the embers, and bore out the monster's single eye with its glowing point. Next morning when the blinded giant rolls away the stone from the mouth of the cave to let his flock pass out himself remaining in the doorway to catch his tormentors, Ulysses and his companions escape from his clutches concealed beneath the bellies of the sheep and clinging to their fleeces.

The allusions to this story are scattered in a fine

<sup>1</sup> Ancient tradition placed the Cyclopes in Sicily. Homer himself is silent on the point.

confusion through the script; but once we have the key in our hand there is no difficulty in detecting them. The one eye, the "12 little nigger boys thinking not of Styx, Some were eaten up and then there were six," the reference to Homer, to a cave and a group of men, to Poseidon with his trident, to the flaming torch, to Noah and the grapes—all fall into place once we realize that they belong to the story of Ulysses and Polyphemus.

The allusion to the meeting of Ulysses in the Underworld with "the great Achilles whom we knew" seems at first sight irrelevant. I suspect it is only a roundabout way of suggesting Ulysses himself. The actual names of the two principal characters in the story are never mentioned; and the same remark applies to the story of Acis and Galatea. In this tale, as in the other, the one-eyed Cyclops plays the part of villain of the piece. Acis, a shepherd dwelling at the foot of Mount Etna, and Galatea the sea nymph, are lovers. Unfortunately for them, Galatea is also beloved of the "monster Polypheme," as Handel's libretto calls him. Rejected by the nymph, and mad with jealousy, he hurls a mighty rock at his rival and crushes him to death. Galatea cannot save her lover, but she gives him a kind of immortality by changing him into the stream which bears his name and has its source in a fountain

issuing from the rock beneath which he was overwhelmed.

Two passages in Extract B refer to this story. The first speaks of "a Fountain on the hill side," followed by a rough drawing intended for a volcano. The second occurs towards the end of the Extract: "He was turned into a fountain that sort of Stephen man, he was turned into a fountain. WHY? that's the point: WHY?" "That sort of Stephen-man" describes, of course, the manner in which Acis came by his death. To the question Why? an answer is given in Extract C. There *is* a point in it, but a point which only becomes intelligible when the whole of the riddle has been read.

Up to this stage the riddle remains a riddle still. At all events, it did so for me. We are told to join the one ear to the one eye; but I doubt if any one in this room can say how the Ear of Dionysius and the stone quarries of Syracuse are connected with the stories of Polyphemus and Ulysses and of Acis and Galatea except by the geographical accident of their all belonging to Sicily. Such a mere geographical unity would hardly justify the communicators in describing their scheme as "something good and worth doing" which it had taken the united industry of two distinguished scholars to think out.

Let us see what assistance we can get from the next script.

C

(*Extract from Script of March 2, 1914.*)

(Present: G. W. B.)

The Aristotelian to the Hegelian friend greeting. Also the Rationalist to the Hegelian friend greeting.<sup>1</sup> These twain be about a particular task and now proceed with it.



a Zither that belongs the sound also stones  
the toil of prisoners and captives beneath the  
Tyrant's rod

The Stag *not* Stag, do go on  
Stagyr write rite

[Here Mrs. W. ceased writing and proceeded  
to dictate.]

Somebody said to me Mousike.

Do you know, it's an odd thing, I can see Ed-  
mund as if he were working something; and the  
thing he is working is me. It isn't really me, you

<sup>1</sup> "The Aristotelian friend" is S. H. Butcher. "The Rationalist friend" is A. W. Verrall, possibly with allusion to his book *Euripides the Rationalist*. "The Hegelian friend" is myself. It would have been natural for Butcher and Verrall so to describe me in old Cambridge days.

know; it's only a sort of asleep me that I can look at. He's very intent—and those two men I don't know. One's very big and tall, with a black beard. The other man I don't see so well. But he holds up a book to me.

Oh! Somebody wrote a book about something, and this man, who's holding up the book, wrote a book about *him*. And the reference he wants isn't just now to what *he* wrote, but to what this person he wrote about wrote.

What does *Ars Poetica* mean?

Edmund said to me Juvenal also wrote satires—and then he laughed and said, Good shot.

The pen is mightier than the sword. Oh, it's so confusing—stones belong, and so does a pen. Oh!

Somebody said, Try her with the David story. She might get it that way. The man he sent to battle hoping he'd get killed, because he wanted him out of the way.

A green-eyed monster.

Now, all of a sudden I had it. Jealousy, that first infirmity of petty minds.

What does Sicilian Artemis<sup>1</sup> mean? [Pause.]

Such an odd old human story of long ago

He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear.

What is an ear made for?

Oh, this old *bothersome rubbish* is so *tiresome*.

[As she said this Mrs. W. banged her arms down in the table as if in disgust. Presently she

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps a reference to *Artemis Alphaea* (or *Alpheia*), who had a temple at Syracuse, and was associated with the story of the nymph Arethusa. See under *Alpheus* in the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*.

seized my pencil and drew the same figure as in the previous sitting, of an ear and the oval of a face. From this point onwards she wrote instead of dictating.]



Find the centre [Here she added the eye.]

Not to you to Golden numbers golden numbers,<sup>1</sup> but add 1 to 1 two singles, dissimilar things, but both found normally in pairs in human anatomy— Good.

Gurney says she has done enough now but there is more, much more, later. Until the effort is completed the portions as they come are not to be seen by any other AUTOMATIST.

E. G.

After what has already been said there is comparatively little in this extract that requires further explanation. Nevertheless some important additions are made in it to the stock of materials at our disposal.

First, an answer has been given to the emphatic question asked in the previous script concerning the cause which led to Acis having been changed into

<sup>1</sup> From Dekker's *Patient Grissel*: "To add to golden numbers golden numbers." There seems to be no special point in the quotation here.

a fountain. The cause was Jealousy—a lover's jealousy, like that which sent Uriah to perish in the forefront of battle. Jealousy, then, is one of the pieces which have to be fitted into the finished picture of our jig-saw puzzle.

Next, mention is made for the first time of a *Zither*—the sound of which instrument, we are told, “belongs”—also of *Mousike*, the Greek word for the Art of Music. Further, the references to Aristotle seem to carry with them a significance beyond what they possessed in the previous script. There they appeared to serve merely as a symbol of S. H. Butcher. Here they are apparently introduced on their own account as well. “The Stagirite” is a correct description of Aristotle, who was born at Stageira, a seaport in Macedonia. It would seem, however, an odd title to use in this place unless with the deliberate purpose of inviting attention. Again, a few sentences later it is explicitly stated that a reference is wanted not to what Butcher wrote about Aristotle, but to something which Aristotle himself wrote; and we are left to infer from the words *Ars Poetica* which follow that this something is to be found in Aristotle's Treatise on Poetry.

Lastly, a rather quaint transition leads up to yet another new subject. The Latin words *Ars Poetica* to a classical scholar suggest *Horace* more readily

than Aristotle. Horace is not actually named; but the thought of him is clearly implied in the interpolated remark attributed to Edmund Gurney, "Juvenal *also* wrote Satires." "Juvenal *also*" must mean "Juvenal as well as Horace." Aristotle, I need hardly say, did not write satires.

We have here, I think, one of those subtle touches not uncommon in Mrs. Willett's automatic productions, and making strongly for their genuineness. The idea which the communicator wants to "get through" is that of *Satire*. The name of Juvenal, the Satirist *par excellence*—a name which has previously occurred in Willett Script—serves as a stepping-stone, by means of an association familiar to any educated person. On the other hand, the train of association which leads from Aristotle's *Poetics* to Juvenal, using Horace as an *unexpressed middle term*, seems to me altogether foreign to Mrs. Willett, and outside the scope of any knowledge with which she can reasonably be credited.

At the risk of over-refining I venture further to suggest that the transition to Juvenal was an impromptu one for the communicator himself. It occurs to him on the spur of the moment as a "happy thought"; and it is this as well as its success in eliciting the required idea of *satire* that makes him laughingly describe it as a "good shot."

The notion of satire is continued in the words that immediately follow: "The pen is mightier than the sword. . . . stones belong and so does a pen." As they stand these words are rather obscure; but the sequel shows that the "stones" are the stones of the quarry-prisons, and the pen is the pen of a satirist.

Let me now recapitulate. The scripts have furnished us with a number of disjointed topics: the problem is to combine them into a literary unity.

Here is list of the leading topics so far given:

The Ear of Dionysius.

The stone-quarries of Syracuse in which prisoners were confined.

The story of Polyphemus and Ulysses.

The story of Acis and Galatea.

Jealousy.

Music and the sound of a musical instrument.

Something to be found in Aristotle's *Poetics*.

Satire.

I have already compared these topics to the separate piece in a jig-saw puzzle. They might perhaps be still more aptly likened to the letters in a letter-game. Each letter has a significance of its own; their joint significance is only realised when the

word they together spell has been discovered. The whole is more than the sum of its parts.

Now obviously, if one or more of the parts are missing the difficulty of divining the whole is progressively increased. Extract C, you will notice, ends with an intimation that more is to come, and repeats the injunction, already given as respects Mrs. Verrall, but now made general, that the portions as they come are not to be shewn to any other automatist until the effort is completed. Mr. Piddington and I, who were studying the scripts were accordingly content to wait without troubling our heads overmuch about an answer to the conundrum, until more light should be vouchsafed, either by further scripts from Mrs. Willett, or by means of cross-correspondences elsewhere.

For a long time we waited in vain. There is, indeed, reason to think that some attempts were made to produce a cross-correspondence in the script of one of our automatists, whom we call Mrs. King—especially by means of references to the story of Acis and Galatea.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise the whole subject seemed to be unaccountably dropped; and it was not until nearly a year and a half later, in August, 1915, that a return to it was made. The “sitter” on this occasion was Mrs Verrall, who, it must be remem-

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix to this Paper.

bered, had not been allowed to see either of the scripts from which Extracts B and C have been taken.

The relevant passages in this new script are contained in Extract D.

## D.

(*Extract from Script of Aug. 2, 1915.*)

(Present: Mrs. Verrall.)

Someone speaks a tall broad figure with a dark beard & eyes that emit light with him stands the man who said I am Henry Butcher's ghost do you remember?

Ecate

(Mrs. V. Yes.)

not the one who holds a Rose in his hand. His hand is resting on the shoulder of the younger man & it is he who calls.

The Aural instruction was I think understood *Aural* appertaining to the Ear

(Mrs. V. Yes.)

and now he asks HAS the *Satire* satire been identified

(Mrs. V. I don't know.)

Surely you have had my messages concerning it [it] belongs to the Ear & comes in

(Mrs. V. I have not had any messages.)

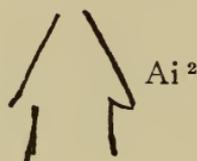
It has a thread. Did they not tell you of references to a *Cave*

(Mrs. V. No, not in connection with the Ear of Dionysius.)

The mild eyed melancholy Lotus Eaters came.  
That belongs to the passage<sup>1</sup> immediately before the one I am now trying to speak of. men in a cave herds

(At this point Mrs. V. repeated, half aloud, the last two words.)

*listen* don't talk, herds & a great load of fire-wood & the EYE  
olive wood staff



the man clung to the fleece of a Ram & so passed out

surely that is plain

(Mrs. V. Yes.)

well conjoin that with Cythera & the Ear-man

The Roseman said Aristotle then Poetics The incident was chosen as being evidential of identity & it arose out of the Ear train of thought.

There is a Satire

write Cyclopean Masonry, why do you say masonry I said Cyclopean

Philox He laboured in the stone quarries and

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* to the passage in the *Odyssey* preceding that which tells the story of Polyphemus.

<sup>2</sup> "Ai," perhaps an expression of pain, representing the Greek *aiai*.

drew upon the earlier writer for material for his  
Satire Jealousy

The story is quite clear to me & I think it  
should be identified

a musical instrument comes in something like  
a mandoline

6

thrumming thrumming that is the sense of the  
word<sup>1</sup>

He wrote in those stone quarries belonging to  
the Tyrant

Is any of this clear?

(Mrs. V. Yes, a great deal, and when I know  
some things I have not been told, probably all.)

[Drawing of an Ear.]

You have to put Homer with another<sup>2</sup> & the

<sup>1</sup> What word is here meant? It would seem to be a word—perhaps a Greek word—which the communicator has been unable to get the automatist to write. I suspect an allusion to a passage in the *Plutus* of Aristophanes (1. 200), which parodies the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus, and perhaps actually quotes from the poem. In this passage the made-up word *θρεττανελο* (threttanelo) is used to imitate the sound of the cithara. The mysterious figure, or letter, which precedes “thrumming” in the script, may be the beginning of an attempt to write this word.

<sup>2</sup> “You have to put Homer with another.” Who is this “other”? Perhaps Philoxenus himself is meant, though this interpretation does not consist very well with the statement which immediately follows, that what resulted was “the pen dipped in vitriol.” The more natural meaning would seem to be that the “other” who is to be put with Homer is a second writer from whom Philoxenus had borrowed in constructing the plot of his *Cyclops*. Can the in-

Ear theme is in it too The pen dipped in vitriol  
 that is what resulted & S H<sup>1</sup> knows the passage  
 in Aristotle which also comes in There's a fine  
 tangle for your unravelling & he of the impa-  
 tience<sup>2</sup> will

Let her wait try again Edmund  
 Sicily

He says when you have identified the classical  
 allusions he would like to *be told*.

(Mrs. V. Yes.)

In this Extract, again, there is little with which  
 we are not already familiar. But that little contains  
 the key to the puzzle.

“Cythera”; “Cyclopean, Philox, He laboured  
 in the stone-quarries and drew upon the earlier

attention have been to refer to the unknown Greek original  
 from which Ovid derived the story of Acis and Galatea?  
 Ovid is our earliest extant authority for this story; but  
 there can be little doubt that he took it from a Greek liter-  
 ary source, though we do not know what that source was.  
 “The earlier writer” from whom, according to the script,  
 Philoxenus drew the materials of his satire, might on this  
 supposition be, not Homer, but the Greek predecessor from  
 whom Ovid borrowed.

I by no means dismiss this conjecture, which has come  
 to me from a scholar of repute. It is a pity, indeed, that  
 the evidence for it is not stronger. An allusion to the original  
 source of the tale of Acis and Galatea, like the allusion sug-  
 gested in a previous note to a passage from the *Plutus* of  
 Aristophanes, would come naturally enough from Verrall, but  
 could never have proceeded from the unaided resources of  
 Mrs. Willett.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Butcher was familiarly known among his old  
 friends by the two first initials of his name.

<sup>2</sup> See footnote on p. 52.

writer for material for his Satire, Jealousy"—in these words I will not say that he who runs may read the riddle, but he will certainly have a fair inkling of it if he first takes the trouble to read up the account given of a certain Philoxenus of Cythera in *Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* or in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

Those of us who are not specialists in classical literature need not blush to confess ignorance of the very name of Philoxenus. He was nevertheless a poet of considerable repute in antiquity though only a few lines from his works have actually come down to us.

Philoxenus was a writer of dithyrambs, a species of irregular lyric poetry which combined music with verse, the musical instrument most generally employed being the Kithara or Zither, a kind of lyre. He was a native of Cythera, and at the height of his reputation spent some time in Sicily at the Court of Dionysius the Tyrant of Syracuse. He ultimately quarrelled with his patron and was sent to prison in one of the stone-quarries.

So far the accounts that have come down to us agree; but they differ as to the cause of the quarrel. Most writers, according to the *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, ascribe the

oppressive action of Dionysius "to the wounded vanity of the tyrant, whose poems Philoxenus not only refused to praise, but, on being asked to revise one of them, said the best way of correcting it would be to draw a black line through the whole paper." This version of the quarrel is also followed by the writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and by Grote in his *History of Greece*.<sup>1</sup> There was, however, another account, mentioned in the *Dictionary of Biography and Mythology* only to be rejected, which ascribed the disgrace of the poet "to too close an intimacy with the tyrant's mistress Galatea."

I now come to the heart of the mystery which has hitherto baffled us. The most famous of the dithyrambic poems of Philoxenus was a piece entitled *Cyclops* or *Galatea*. Of this poem only two or three lines have been preserved; and any attempt to reconstruct its plot must depend on other sources of information. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says of it: "His masterpiece was the Cyclops, a pastoral burlesque on the love of the Cyclops for the fair Galatea, written to avenge himself upon Dionysius, who was wholly or partially blind of one eye." This falls in well with the references in the scripts to *Satire*; but does not provide much of a foundation for the references to the stories of Ulysses and Poly-

<sup>1</sup> Vol. X. 303.

phemus and of Acis and Galatea, and to the topic of jealousy. The *Dictionary of Biography and Mythology* helps even less. Moreover, it states that the poem was composed in the poet's native island; whereas the script affirms that it was written in the stone-quarries.

I have searched through various other English authorities and books of reference as well as a few foreign ones, in order to discover, if possible, whether there was any single modern source from which the story told or implied in the scripts could be supposed to be derived. Apart from works in German or Latin—languages which Mrs. Willett does not understand—there are only two books, so far as I have been able to discover, which can fairly be said to fulfill this condition. One of these is Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary*. Lemprière's account is as follows: "A dithyrambic poet of Cythera, who enjoyed the favour of Dionysius tyrant of Syracuse for some time, till he offended him by seducing one of his female singers. During his confinement Philoxenus composed an allegorical poem, called Cyclops, in which he had delineated the character of the tyrant under the name of Polyphemus, and represented his mistress under the name of Galatea, and himself under that of Ulysses." The other is a work on the *Greek Melic Poets* by Dr.

Herbert Weir Smyth, Professor of Greek at Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania, obviously intended for scholars, and not in the least likely to attract attention from the general public. The copy I have seen was a presentation copy sent by the publishers to the late Dr. Verrall, who thought well of the book and used it (so Mrs. Verrall told me) as a textbook in connection with some of his lectures.

“Like Simonides,” writes Professor Smyth, “Philoxenus was a man of the world, a friend of princes, and many stories are told of his nimble wit at the Syracusan Court. His friendship with Dionysius the Elder was finally broken either by his frank criticism of the tragedies of the tyrant or in consequence of his passion for Galateia, a beautiful flute-player, who was the mistress of Dionysius. Released from prison by the prince to pass judgment on his verse, the poet exclaimed: ἄπαγέ με εἰς λατομίας [take me back to the quarries]. In his confinement he revenged himself by composing his famous dithyramb entitled either *Kyklops* or *Galateia*, in which the poet represented himself as Odysseus, who, to take vengeance on Polyphemus (Dionysius), estranged the affections of the nymph Galateia, of whom the *Kyklops* was enamoured.”

Here evidently is the literary unity of which we were in search and which was to collect the scattered

parts of the puzzle devised by the two friends on the other side into a single whole. It is to be found in the version just given of the plot of the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus. Dionysius and his "Ear," the stone-quarries of Syracuse, Ulysses and Polyphemus, Acis and Galatea, Jealousy, and Satire—all these topics fall naturally and easily into place in relation to this account of the poem.<sup>1</sup> Music and the thrumming of a musical instrument can be fitted in without much difficulty, as belonging to the characteristics of dithyrambic poetry. It only remains to trace the passage in Aristotle which "comes in" and which "S. H. knows."

There are two passages occurring within a page of each other in the first and second chapters of Aristotle's *Poetics*, either of which might be the passage referred to. One of these is general, and classes the dithyramb with those kinds of poetry which depend for their effects not only upon rhythm and metre, but also upon melody. The other distinguishes between the poetry which aims at representing men as worse, and that which aims at representing them as better, than they really are; and mentions the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus as a specimen of

<sup>1</sup> The ancient authority followed by both Lemprière and Prof. Smyth is Athenæus, a late Greek writer, whose work may well have been known to Butcher or Verrall, but could not possibly be known to Mrs. Willett.

the former—that is to say, as a Satirical poem. This second passage is referred to by Professor Smyth in the paragraph following the one I have already quoted.<sup>1</sup> The same paragraph lays stress upon the essentially musical character of the dithyramb, and upon the fame of Philoxenus as musical composer no less than as poet. It quotes the comic poet Antiphanes, who spoke of him as “a god among men, cunning in the true art of music”—*αἰδῶς τὴν ἀληθῶς μουσικὴν*.

Extract D closes with a request from Gurney that he should be told as soon as the classical allusions had been identified. This request was complied with about a fortnight later, as will be seen from Extract E, the last with which I shall have to trouble you.

### E.

(*Extract from Script of Aug. 19, 1915.*)

(Present: G. W. B.)

(G. W. B. First of all, Gurney, I want to tell you that all the classical allusions recently given to Mrs. Verrall are now completely understood.)

<sup>1</sup> Professor Smyth's words are: “Aristotle says that Philoxenus was realistic in distinction to the idealistic Timotheos.” This interpretation gives a somewhat different shade of meaning to Aristotle's language from that which I have adopted above.

Good—at last!

(G. W. B. We think the whole combination extremely ingenious and successful.)

& A W ish—

(G. W. B. What is the word after “A. W.”?)

A W-ish

(G. W. B. Yes.)

Also S H-ish

(G. W. B. Yes.)

The communicator hints that a little more expedition might have been shown in solving the problem set to us. He apparently forgets that in March, 1914, he himself informed us that there was much more to be got through, and that we had waited for a year and a half before any additional light was forthcoming. The surprise shown in Extract D that no message concerning a Satire and the Ear of Dionysius and the Cave of the Cyclops had been handed on to Mrs. Verrall shows an even more marked forgetfulness; for we had been expressly warned to tell her nothing. Such forgetfulness is very rare in our experience. I doubt whether a parallel instance could be found in the scripts of any of our group of automatists. I have no explanation to offer of it.

For the rest, the extract I have just read is chiefly interesting for its insistence upon the claim that the whole scheme is characteristic of the two friends

who have devised it, and therefore points to the survival of their distinctive personalities.

That the case described in this Paper is an extremely remarkable one, few, I think, will be disposed to deny. Mrs. Willett is in no sense a "learned" lady. She has a taste for poetry, and a good knowledge of certain English poets; but with classical subjects she is as little familiar as the average of educated women. This I can affirm with confidence, and I have had good opportunity of judging.

In order to test her knowledge of the particular topics referred to in this series of scripts I prepared six questions, writing them out on separate pieces of paper, and asked her to answer them then and there as each question was handed to her. This was on the 27th of May last when I was setting to work on the present paper. Questions and answers were as follows. (You will of course bear in mind that all the scripts, except that from which Extract A is taken, were obtained when the automatist was in trance, and that no memory of what she writes or speaks in trance is carried on into her waking consciousness.)

*Qu.* 1. Please say what you know about the Ear of Dionysius?

*Ans.* I have heard this expression, but do not know what is the meaning of it.

*Qu.* 2. (a) Did you know that Aristotle had written a Treatise on Poetry?

*Ans.* No.

(b) Were you aware that S. H. Butcher had written a book on the subject of this Treatise?

*Ans.* No.

*Qu.* 3. Does the name *Cythera* convey any meaning to you?

*Ans.* Yes, it conveys to me the Greek name of one of the winds—I believe mentioned in *In Memoriam*.

*Qu.* 4. Do you know anything about the story of *Acis and Galatea*?

*Ans.* Of *Acis* I know nothing; of *Galatea* I know the story of the statue that comes to life.

*Qu.* 5. Does the name *Polyphemus* convey any idea to you?

*Ans.* I seem to have heard the name, but it has no associations for me.

*Qu.* 6. Does the name *Philoxenus* convey any idea to you?

*Ans.* None whatever.

Having obtained these answers I decided to show Mrs. Willett the extracts which I have read to you to-day, and explain to her the scheme and its

*dénouement*. This involved a departure from our usual practice of withholding from the automatist any written or spoken utterances produced by her in a state of trance. No harm, however, was likely to result in the present case, seeing that the experiment had evidently reached its conclusion and that no further amplifications from "the other side" were to be looked for. My object was to ascertain whether perusal of the extracts would awaken any memories that had remained dormant when the automatist was answering the questions put to her a few hours before. As a matter of fact, nothing of the kind occurred. The nearest approach to a revival of memory was upon my mentioning Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. She then said that Handel and *Acis and Galatea* seemed to go together in her mind; but she was certain she had never either heard the music or read the story. On the other hand, her ignorance of matters referred to in the extracts went even beyond what her answers to the questions indicated; for instance, she could not recall ever having heard of the Expedition of the Athenians against Syracuse. Her surprise and almost excitement were quite interesting to watch as the elements of the literary puzzle were gradually made clear and finally brought to a unity in the Satire of Philoxenus. It was abundantly evident that both the elements them-

selves and the final solution were entirely outside any conscious knowledge she possessed.

In March, 1914, I read a Paper to the Society giving an account of an earlier case derived from Willett Scripts in which the principal agent purported to be Dr. Verrall. This Paper was subsequently published in Volume XXVII. of the *Proceedings* under the title "Some recent scripts affording evidence of personal survival." The facts of the case, which I shall refer to as "the Statius Case," were briefly these: A passage was to be searched for which described a traveller looking across a river and wishing himself on the other side, but hesitating to battle with the current. If it were possible to identify the passage, "the matter," so we were told, "would prove interesting." No passage satisfactorily answering the required conditions could be found by those who were studying the Willett Scripts, and the subject was almost forgotten until the scripts suddenly returned to it more than a year later. Two new lights were then thrown upon the problem. In the first place, Dr. Verrall was unmistakably designated as the propounder of it; in the second place, a sign-post was provided by the statement "Dante makes it clear." Guided by these indications we ultimately traced the required passage to an Essay by Dr. Verrall entitled "Dante

on the Baptism of Statius," which it was practically certain that Mrs. Willett had never seen. Thus the promise, that if the passage could be identified the matter would prove interesting, was amply fulfilled, and a valuable addition made to the evidences hitherto furnished by automatic writings in favour of personal survival.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is only fair to say that criticisms of my Paper on the Statius Case have appeared in the *Proceedings* (Vol. XXVII., pp. 458-574), attacking my interpretation of the scripts on the double ground that I had shown no sufficient reason for connecting Dr. Verrall with the case at all, nor for selecting the River of Baptism which Statius hesitated to cross as the particular river referred to, when the River of Death in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, or the Rubicon, or any other river on the brink of which anyone had ever paused might have served the purpose equally well.

As regards the connection of Dr. Verrall with the case, this was to my mind clearly given by the reference to the communicator who "Swears he will not here exercise any patience whatever, not even about Lavender and Lub," and by the plain allusions (as it seemed to me) to Dr. Verrall's recently delivered Lectures on Dryden. That the scripts meant to indicate Dr. Verrall as the communicator it did not occur to me that anyone would question, else I would have laboured the point more. Of course it does not follow that he actually was the communicator; and though I fancy my critics have confused the one thing with the other, I am sure no such confusion can be found in my Paper.

As if to remove any possible uncertainty as to who was meant, the phrase "He of the little patience," which had already been employed to describe the communicator in the earlier scripts, is again repeated in the Dionysius Case (see Extract D "he of the impatience"), and this time beyond all cavil as a synonym for Dr. Verrall.

The identification of the passage describing the timid

Between the Statius Case and that described in the present Paper, which I may call the Dionysius Case, there is obviously a strong family likeness. The method employed, the object proposed, and the chief professed agent are the same in both.

The *method* is to propound a literary problem *the construction and solution of which are outside the range of the automatist's normal knowledge*. The solution is at first kept purposely obscure and it is left to the industry of the interpreters of the script to discover it. When they have failed to do so after ample time given additional indications are doled out in successive scripts until at last the riddle is read.

The chief ostensible *agent* in each case is Dr. traveller is, I admit, more conjectural. I have, however, little or no doubt that it is right. It explains (1) the special interest attached to the discovery of the passage; (2) the statement that "Dante makes it clear"; and (3) the paraphrase of the lines in the *Purgatorio* which Dante puts into the mouth of Statius and which Dr. Verrall's Essay quotes. The rivers suggested by my critics do none of these things. It also gives a point and significance to the whole incident, which would otherwise be wanting, by making it into a problem with a solution. Additional corroboration is, I think, furnished by the circumstance that another problem with a solution, similar though much more complicated, follows so soon afterwards. The Dionysius Case throws light on the Statius Case that preceded it. In this connection it may be of interest to note that the scripts had already begun on the former before my Paper on the latter had been published, and therefore before anything had been done which could put Mrs. Willett on the track of our interpretation.

Verrall, though in the Dionysius case he is associated with S. H. Butcher.

The *object* in each case is to furnish ground for believing that the ostensible agent or agents are also the real ones continuing to exist as individuals after bodily death.

How far has this object been achieved in the case now before us?

There are two ways in which this question may be approached. The hypothesis that the ostensible are also the actual communicators is one of several possible alternative explanations. If we can test these alternatives in relation to the facts of the case, and find ourselves compelled to reject all but one, that one must be regarded as holding the field. This negative method of procedure is to my mind likely to prove the most fruitful; but we shall also have to consider how far the facts afford positive grounds for accepting the identity claimed in the scripts.

In my Paper on the Statius Case I analysed with some care the various alternative explanations which appear, I will not say probable, but at all events possible. What I have said there applies *mutatis mutandis* here also; and therefore I may be the more brief on the present occasion.

In all such cases four main questions have to be

asked. The first two relate to the *knowledge* exhibited in the scripts:

(1). Did this knowledge reach the automatist normally?

(2). If not normally, is there anybody living from whose mind it can be plausibly supposed to have been supplied?

The third and fourth questions relate to the use made of the knowledge, however acquired—in other words, to the design exhibited in the scripts. *Design* implies a planning or constructing intelligence. Accordingly:

(3). Can the planning intelligence responsible for the *design*—in the Dionysius Case the extremely elaborate design—which the scripts reveal be plausibly supposed to have been that of the automatist herself whether conscious or subconscious?

(4). Can it plausibly be supposed to have been the mind of some living person actively impressing its thoughts upon the mind of the automatist?

In the Dionysius Case, if we are willing to follow where the evidence actually before us leads, instead of attaching ourselves immoveably to preconceived ideas of what is possible or impossible, our answer to all these questions must I think, be in the negative.

(1). The evidence goes to show that knowledge

concerning Philoxenus of Cythera, his relations with Dionysius, and his poem *Cyclops* or *Galatea*, was not normally acquired by the automatist.

On this point we have first of all her own declaration of complete ignorance. Mrs. Willett is a lady of good social position, personally well known to all the members of the investigating group, every one of whom has the most absolute confidence in her integrity and *bona fides*. She is herself keenly alive to the importance of noting and recording anything that can help to throw light upon the contents of her scripts and the possible sources which may have been drawn upon in their production. In this respect she has, on many occasions, been of material assistance to the investigators. When Mrs. Willett says she is totally ignorant of a particular topic, no one who knows her as we do would for a moment question her word.

No doubt it is possible for knowledge once possessed to be forgotten and yet to persist as a dormant memory in the subconscious mind. But this possibility must not be pressed too far. It is pressing it very far indeed to suppose that at some time or other Mrs. Willett either read or heard the story of Philoxenus that she then forgot it completely so far as her normal consciousness was concerned, but was nevertheless able subconsciously to retain and

use it in the concoction of an elaborate puzzle such as we are now considering.

Nor is this all. It is not merely of Philoxenus and his poem that Mrs. Willett declares herself ignorant, but also of other main elements in the puzzle, the story of Ulysses and Polyphemus for instance, and that of Acis and Galatea, to say nothing of the "passage from Aristotle." The intelligence that constructed the puzzle was certainly aware of the details of these stories, and also knew that the adventure of the Cyclops' Cave immediately follows the tale of the Lotus Eaters in the Homeric narrative. It is not easy to believe that the various threads so cunningly woven together all belong to the category of latent memories which the subconscious self can utilize for its own purposes while the normal self remains blissfully unconscious of them.

Again: Let us suppose for argument's sake that the knowledge of the story of Philoxenus exhibited in the scripts was normally acquired. From what source was it in that case derived? It might be conjectured that Mrs. Willett, having in one way or another had her attention called to the name of Philoxenus, proceeded to study a variety of authorities, and from their different accounts pieced together the story as it appears in the scripts. I am

not suggesting that such a conjecture has any plausibility. Mrs. Willett's knowledge of things classical is small, and her interest in them but slight. That she should have undertaken the labour involved in this research is very unlikely. But that, having undertaking it, the whole subject should then pass out of her conscious memory is, to me at least, incredible.

The alternative (and less improbable) conjecture is that she took the story bodily either from Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* or from Professor Smyth's *Greek Melic Poets*, and then forgot that she had ever known it.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the *Greek Melic Poets*, I think it on general grounds very unlikely that she ever had the volume in her hands, much more than she read any page of it with care. The book itself is, as I have already indicated, of an extremely technical charac-

<sup>1</sup> On this point Mrs. Willett writes to me as follows: "Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* is quite unknown to me. I am as certain as I am of anything that I never saw or heard of Prof. Smyth's book. I have never taken a single volume from the shelves of Dr. Verrall's study. To the best of my belief, I have never been in that room alone. During Dr. Verrall's life it was not entered by visitors staying in the house unless they were taken to see him. After his death I stayed, I believe, only once with Mrs. Verrall, and I have sat in the room with her, but I believe I never was in the room alone at any time." This confirms a similar statement made to me verbally by Mrs. Verrall herself.

ter. Merely to open it at random would repel anybody but an expert. One would certainly be surprised to come across it anywhere outside a scholar's library. It is true that Mrs. Willett has once or twice stayed for a short visit with Mrs. Verrall at Cambridge, and may conceivably have seen the book on one of these occasions. But as its place was on one of the many shelves in Dr. Verrall's study, a room rarely entered by visitors unless they were taken there specially, the chances of such a thing having happened seem to me very remote. Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* is no doubt a more accessible work. On the other hand, it is decidedly more difficult to suppose it the sole or main source of the puzzle as a whole. Even Professor Smyth's account of Philoxenus by no means covers all the elements employed in the puzzle. It does no more than allude to the story of Ulysses and Polyphemus, it refers to the stone-quarries only by their Greek name which Mrs. Willett would not have understood, and it makes no mention whatever of Acis and Galatea. Lemprière's *Dictionary* not only makes no mention of Acis and Galatea, but is silent also upon the very important topics of Aristotle and of music. The old difficulty is thus still with us. *All* the topics associated in the scripts must be assumed, on the supposition that the knowledge

shown therein was normally acquired, to have been at one time or another consciously known to the automatist. There is no single source from which they could all be derived. Of nearly every one of them she now professes total ignorance. Can she have really forgotten them so completely that no memory of them is recalled even when the scripts are shown to her and the whole scheme explained? To my mind this is most difficult to believe. But, if we insist upon regarding the knowledge shown in the scripts to have been normally acquired, then we must either believe this or believe that Mrs. Willett's statements are deliberately false. Deliberately false I am sure they are not.

(2). There is no living person from whose mind the more essential materials utilized in the construction of the puzzle can plausibly be supposed to have been supplied. The members of the group who were engaged in studying the Willett scripts were six in number, namely Sir Oliver Lodge, Mr. Piddington, Mrs. Sidgwick, Miss Johnson, Mrs. Verrall and myself. No one outside the group had seen the scripts. Mrs. Verrall herself had not seen the scripts from which Extracts B and C are taken until after the script containing Extract D had been written. None of us—and in this statement I expressly include Mrs. Verrall—knew anything about Philoxenus or

his poem until the mention of "Philox" in the script of Aug. 2, 1915, led Mrs. Verrall to look up the name in the *Dictionary of Biography and Mythology*. The automatists who were collaborating with us were equally ignorant. The number even of professed classical scholars able to supply the required knowledge without consulting books of reference is, I venture to think, an extremely limited one.

Perhaps it will be urged that, limited as the number may be, there are assuredly some few individuals in possession of the necessary information. May it not have passed telepathically from one or more of these to the automatist?

This supposition appears to me to be one of those which it is impossible to disprove, but which have practically nothing to support them.

How are we to conceive of the process taking place? Are we to imagine Mrs. Willett's mind, conscious or subconscious, reaching out at large to an unknown  $x$  (or to unknown  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$ ), and gathering in knowledge of the various subjects out of which the puzzle is woven? That seems a somewhat fantastic notion; and moreover it implies at least a nucleus of knowledge if not some general conception of the puzzle itself, round which the rest of the otherwise miscellaneous information could

crystallize. Not less fantastic is the suggestion that an unknown  $x$  has been engaged in impressing his own thoughts upon Mrs. Willett's mind after the fashion of a hypnotiser trying to act upon his patient from a distance. If such an  $x$  exists let enquiry be made and let him be produced. Or finally, has there been no activity on either side, but only an automatic infiltration from mind to mind, unaccompanied by any consciousness on either side that such a process was taking place? This last supposition is, I think, even less plausible than the others, as it entirely fails to account for the fact that the ideas which have thus been unconsciously communicated are not haphazard ideas, but such as have evidently been *selected* in order to serve a purpose. There must be conscious agency somewhere, else this selection remains unexplained.

There is no warrant, so far as I am aware, in any facts hitherto observed in connection with the phenomena of telepathy for believing that particular and detailed knowledge of the kind involved in this case is ever telepathically transmitted or received where no link already exists between the minds concerned in the process.

(3) and (4). I believe the instinctive judgment of trained scholars will be that the Dionysius puzzle could not have been invented, and elaborated with-

out slip or blunder, except by somebody who was himself a scholar, and a ripe and good one. Mrs. Willett herself cannot reasonably be credited with its authorship. This point is raised in question (3), but need not be further insisted on her. For the answers to questions (1) and (2) being in the negative, the answers to question (3) and (4) must be in the negative also. As regards question (3), this conclusion can only be escaped by supposing the mind of the automatist to have constructed the puzzle out of materials super-normally derived from some non-living source—a supposition which not only has little to recommend it in itself, but also practically gives away the case against communication from the dead. And as regards question (4), if there was no living person from whom the materials could plausibly be supposed to have been derived, still less could there be any living person responsible for the weaving of these materials into a design.

If these conclusions be accepted, the only alternative left would seem to be that the communications have their source in some intelligence or intelligences not in the body. It does not even then follow that they proceed from the disembodied spirits of the individuals whom we knew in life as A. W. Verrall and S. H. Butcher. Those, however,

who have got so far as to ascribe them to intelligences not in the body are not likely to find any additional difficulty in the personal identity claimed for the communicators. To do so would be to strain at a gnat after swallowing a camel.

Independently of the negative grounds we have just been considering, are there any positive ones that may fairly be urged for accepting Verrall and Butcher as the real authors of this curious literary puzzle? I think there are, though it is not easy to estimate their exact value.

The reminder to Mrs. Verrall of the surprise expressed by her husband at her not knowing what was meant by the Ear of Dionysius, would be a very striking incident if it were certain that I had not mentioned it to Mrs. Willett. As I said before, I do not believe I did mention it. But I cannot be absolutely sure, and the doubt precludes me from laying stress upon it as evidence of identity.

Extract E claims for the scheme as a whole that it is "A. W. ish" and "S. H. ish." I think this is true. The ingenuity of the combination, the unexpectedness of the solution, and the out-of-the-way knowledge utilized in it are eminently Verrallian. In constructing the puzzle Verrall appears to be the

leading spirit. Butcher helps with his contribution from the *Poetics* of Aristotle. But he is content in such a matter to play the second part; and this too is not uncharacteristic.

The personal traits and mannerisms which impressed Mr. Bayfield so strongly in the Statius Scripts, and which he dealt with so happily in his Note appended to my former Paper, are perhaps not quite so marked in the present case. But I think old friends of Verrall's will agree with me that they are not wholly absent, however difficult it may be to enable others to realize them.<sup>1</sup>

Finally—and this I think is a point of some importance—we have the remarkable circumstance that the only account of the contents of the *Cyclops* of Philoxenus which at all closely resembles that followed in the scripts, and at the same time includes references to Aristotle and the art of music (*mousike*), is to be found, so far as my researches extend, in a book which we know Verrall to have been familiar with and to have used as a text-book for lectures. If this is a chance coincidence it is at least a curious one. It may well be that the communicator had this very circumstance in mind when

<sup>1</sup> Note, for instance, the characteristic Verrallian impatience, eagerness, and emphasis in such phrases as “*not* Stag, do go on” in Extract C, and “*HAS* the *Satire* been identified?” and “*listen*, don't talk” in Extract D.

he made the statement (to be found in Extract D),  
“The incident was chosen as being evidential of  
identity, and it arose out of the Ear train of  
thought.”

## APPENDIX

*Containing extracts from the Scripts of Mrs. King referred to at p. 36 of the foregoing Paper.*

IN Mrs. Willett's Script of March 2, 1914 (*Vide* Extract C, above), instruction was given that until the "effort" was completed the portions of it as they came were not to be shewn to any other automatist. This was almost equivalent to saying that a cross-correspondence with the script of some other automatist belonging to the group was about to be attempted. I believe some attempt of the kind was made in certain passages from scripts produced by "Mrs. King." I have not included these in the text of my Paper on the Ear of Dionysius, partly because I was unwilling to break the narrative, partly because the cross-correspondences themselves are not so clear and unmistakable as to carry unquestioning conviction. That Mrs. King's scripts taken as a whole exhibit manifold connections with those of certain other automatists, of whom Mrs. Willett is one, I have no doubt at all. But what may well be

in their origin genuine "messages" seem in her case peculiarly liable to get blurred and sophisticated in transmission, and therefore difficult to interpret. My readers must judge for themselves how far the interpretations which I tentatively put forward of the passages here collected are justified. In support of the view that a cross-correspondence is being attempted, it should be noticed that the first three passages all belong to March, 1914; that is to say, that they were all produced within a few weeks of the Willett scripts from which Extracts B and C in the Paper are taken. The dates of the Willett scripts are Feb. 28 and March 2. The first passage I quote from Mrs. King was written on the intervening day, March 1.

(a) (*Extract from King Script of March 1, 1914.*)

Floating on the waters. People in glass houses should not throw stones. Very good. Go on like this and it will be famous. The flames are fanned. The green leaves in the merry ring time. . . .

Protoplasm and poly—Something like polyphera, cannot quite get it.

Note here the following ideas:

(1) Waters, (2) throwing stones, (3) fanning of flames (cf. *Acis and Galatea*: "Hush ye pretty warbling choir, Your thrilling strains awake my

pains And kindle fierce desire;" and again, "No grace no charm is wanting To set the heart on fire;" and again, "I rage—I melt—I burn—The feeble god has stabbed me to the heart"), (4) Life in the country in spring time (cf. opening chorus in *Acis and Galatea*).

"Polyphera" may possibly be an attempt at *Polyphemus*, or *Polypheme*.

(b) (*Extract from King Script of March 13, 1914.*)!

The living water—the foam of the torrent. Margaret, Margaret. Just a stone's throw. The prick in the finger. Love lies bleeding. The merry merry ring time, Sweet lovers love the spring. The folded hands. Now write this, that many words are missing, but the sense is there—it is a part of something else.

Here we have, repeated from the former script:

(1) Water, (2) throwing of a stone, (3) the spring and lovers' motif.

The "waters" of the former script have, however, now become more distinctively a *stream*; and the phrase "living water" seems specially appropriate as applied to the fountain and river into which the dead Acis was changed, becoming thereby immortal. "Margaret, Margaret" (from Arnold's *Forsaken Merman*), may be intended to suggest

the *sea-nymph* Galatea; while "Love lies bleeding" is an apt description of the fate of Acis.

Note that a cross-correspondence is claimed in the last words of the extract.

(c) (*Extract from King Script of March 24, 1914.*)

Hark hark the lark at Heaven's gate sings

And morn begins to rise.

The happy happy lovers.

Now comes the storm, the whispered warning  
of their fate. Say this that the stones in the pool  
are round—the doctored sense.

The first part of *Acis and Galatea* ends with a duet between the lovers "Happy! happy! happy we." The second part begins with a chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds, *pianissimo* at first (cf. "whispered warning of their fate"), but finishing *fortissimo* (cf. "the storm"). The words are as follows:

"Wretched lovers! Fate has past  
This sad decree,—no joy shall last.  
Wretched lovers! quit your dream,  
Behold the monster Polypheme!  
See what ample strides he takes!  
The mountain nods! the forest shakes!  
The waves run frightened to the shores!  
Hark how the thundering giant roars!"

Note again the connection in the Script of stones and water.

For "the doctored sense" see under Extract (d).

(d) (*Extract from King Script of April 1, 1915.*)

Dionysius . . . Arethusa . . .  
 Stones in the market place—crying —  
 the filtered sense . . .  
 The Sicilian Ode. Blest pair of Sirens.  
 The meaning is quite clear—Do you understand  
 it . . .

*Arethusa* occurs in connection with *Dionysius' Ear* in the Willett Script of Feb. 28, 1914 (Extract B in the Paper), where it is apparently used to indicate the locality, viz. Syracuse.

"Stones in the market place—crying—" though more naturally reminiscent of *Luke* xix. 40, may possibly be an allusion to the stoning of Stephen. Cf. Acts vii. 59 and 60: "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit! And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." In the same Willett Script (Feb. 28, 1914) *Acis* is referred to as "that sort of Stephen man."

With "the filtered sense" compare "the doctored sense" in Extract (c). So far as I am aware there is no similar phrase to be found anywhere in King script. The meaning is obscure; but possibly a reference to the acoustic properties of the Ear of Dionysius may be intended. In any case "the doctored sense" in Extract (c) must be taken to refer back to "the filtered sense" in Extract (d).

The words "Sicilian Ode—Blest pair of Sirens" suggested to me that "Sicilian" must be a mistake for "Cecilian," and that the "Ode" must be Dryden's *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day*. On my asking Mrs. King, however, immediately after the script was finished, in what sense she had understood the adjective, she at once replied "Sicilian, not Cecilian, was what I saw—difficult to say whether seen or heard first." This is confirmed by her contemporaneous note on *Arethusa*: "Impression of river in Sicily—I have been there."

It seems to me not unlikely that in "The Sicilian Ode" we have an allusion either to the *Cyclops* or *Galatea* of Philoxenus, or to the *Acis and Galatea* of Handel—perhaps to both. An essential feature in both is the combination of music with verse: and this is, I think, the point of the reference to Milton's "Blest pair of Sirens" which follows:

“Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven’s joy,  
Sphere-born harmonious Sisters, Voice and  
Verse,  
Wed your divine sounds and mixed power  
employ. . . .”

Aristotle’s *Poetics*, I. 10, has already been referred to as probably the passage (or one of the passages) in Aristotle “known to S.H.” (see Willett Script of Aug. 2, 1915, Extract D in the Paper). The following is Butcher’s own translation: “There are again certain kinds of poetry which employ all the means above mentioned—namely, rhythm, melody and metre. Such are the dithyrambic and nomic poetry, and also Tragedy and Comedy; but between them the difference is that in the first two cases these means are all employed at the same time, in the latter separately.”

(e) (*Extract from King Script of October 3, 1915.*)

Handel and the berries.

I take this to refer to the famous Air in Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*: “O ruddier than the cherry, O sweeter than the berry!” etc., in which Polyphemus declares his love for Galatea.

Mrs. King told me that she did not know this air, nor indeed to the best of her knowledge had ever heard of it and that Handel's *Acis and Galatea* conveyed no idea to her mind.

II.

THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS: A DISCUSSION  
OF THE EVIDENCE.



## II.

### THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS: A DISCUSSION OF THE EVIDENCE.

A PAPER READ TO THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL  
RESEARCH AT A PRIVATE MEETING ON  
APRIL 26, 1917.

BY MISS F. MELIAN STAWELL.

To my mind the most striking single piece of evidence pointing towards survival that has appeared lately in our records is that furnished by the cluster of scripts connected with the "Ear of Dionysius," and it is to these that I wish to devote my paper. I choose them instead of the evidence in "Raymond," partly because they are more within my compass, and partly because it seems to me that the possibility of chance-coincidence is less great here than in "Raymond." The most remarkable incident in "Raymond" is that of the photograph, unknown to the medium or the sitters, but in which the general features of the background and the relation of two figures—one leaning on the other—were correctly described. Can we say confidently

that this coincidence, remarkable as it is, is yet beyond the reach of chance? I could not myself, though no doubt answers will vary. For it is extremely difficult to collect enough evidence about chance-coincidence. All I can say is that I have been impressed by the amount of chance-coincidence that has come under my own observation. For instance, the experiment of artificial scripts made by the S.P.R. in 1911 showed, I thought, a surprising amount of cross-correspondence, entirely due to chance. You may remember that six persons, none of whom possessed any supernormal powers, were asked, each on six several occasions, to open at random some book of English literature, choose a passage, and write down the thoughts suggested. In comparing the thirty-six writings, at least one distinct cross-correspondence, that on "Moonlight," was to be observed. I myself, who happened to be one of the experimenters, found to my astonishment that the casual script of another possessed for me personally the greatest significance. In fact so astonished was I that I thought some telepathic agency must be at work. The phrases in this script, which to an ordinary reader had no obvious connection, could all be interpreted, and very easily, as connected with a friend of mine who had lately died. "Moonlight" also had a

special significance for me in the same connection. Miss Johnson then pointed out that to test the matter we should ask the writer, another lady, if she could remember how the phrases came into her mind, and that we should also make experiments to see if there was, in fact, the possibility of telepathy between us. What was the result? No thought-transference took place in our experiments, and the writer had a complete and satisfactory explanation of how the phrases, so significant to me, had come into her own script, carrying for her quite other associations than they did for myself.

Again, I have noticed for the last few years an absurd frequency with which either the number 11 or a multiple of it is associated with some date, place, or topic, in which I am interested, so much so that it would be easy to make out a case for a mysterious connection between myself and the number 11.

I mention this topic of chance, partly to urge the need for further investigation and partly because of its bearing on the "Ear of Dionysius." It is obvious, I think, that all the statements in the scripts we have to consider cannot be due to chance, though some of them may be.

Mr. Balfour has stated and analysed the incident in a masterly fashion. His argument that the com-

municator was really Dr. Verrall's discarnate mind is certainly extremely cogent. But I do not feel it entirely convincing. There is a difficulty, and, apart from this, another hypothesis is possible. Of course, if there were no general reason to doubt survival after death, there would be less reason to trouble about another hypothesis. But there is plenty of reason for doubt, because of all the negative evidence that exists, some of it collected by the S.P.R. itself, *e.g.* the failure of test-questions, or the inability, shown on more than one occasion, to state the contents of a sealed envelope written before the communicator's death.

The positive evidence, however, furnished by the "Ear of Dionysius" seems, as I said, very considerable, and may be summarised thus, though the summary cannot do justice to its intricacy and fullness. In two scripts of Mrs. Willett's, herself no classical scholar, there appeared a number of classical allusions, some of them recondite, and all said to be connected with the "Ear of Dionysius" (a whispering-gallery constructed by the tyrant and opening on the stone-quarries of Syracuse which were used as a prison). Further, the allusions were given in such a way that their connection was a regular puzzle, even to trained scholars, *e.g.* the "One Ear" (of Dionysius) was, the script

indicated, to be connected with the "One Eye," evidently the one eye of the Cyclops Polyphemus. But how? At last, in a later sitting, the clue was suddenly revealed by the half-word "Philox," indicating the name of Philoxenus, a Greek poet, closely associated with Dionysius, whom he satirised as Polyphemus. The story of Philoxenus, according to one version, a somewhat peculiar one, made all the allusions and connections perfectly clear. The communicator purported to be Dr. Verrall, aided by his friend Prof. Butcher, and the style in which the references were given strongly resembled his. Finally, after all the scripts were written, it was discovered that the story of Philoxenus in the appropriate version happened to be told with some detail in a book, Smyth's *Greek Melic Poets*, that Dr. Verrall used and had in his library.

I said there was a difficulty in the hypothesis that Dr. Verrall was communicating. It is this. In the two leading scripts (Feb. 28, Mar. 2, 1914, Scripts B and C) the communicator said that Mrs. Verrall was to hear nothing of the matter, and that there was much more to be got through. Yet, abruptly, immediately after this, all communication on the topic ceased, so far as Mrs. Willett was concerned, for a whole year and a half, until sud-

denly, at a sitting where Mrs. Verrall herself was present, the subject was re-opened, the clue given, and great surprise expressed that Mrs. Verrall had received no message on the matter. This implies a very strange lapse of memory on the part of the communicator, so strange that one is forced to ask, Can it be explained satisfactorily on the hypothesis that there really was a deliberate conscious personality controlling the communications? I find it hard to think so.

And another hypothesis is at least plausible. We may, I think, rule out pretty confidently the suggestion that Mrs. Willett herself had ever known the whole story of Philoxenus and all the references involved. For we are told that she is not a classical scholar, and a non-classical reader could hardly have acquired the knowledge necessary without deliberately hunting through classical books for the purpose. If Mrs. Willett had done this, she could scarcely have forgotten it. But if she did not forget it, she must have acted in bad faith. And not only is her good faith vouched for by our investigators, but no one acting in bad faith would have left the communications with the inconsequent ending I have described. The messages could so easily have been neatly rounded off long before the sitting with Mrs. Verrall, and so gained greatly in

impressiveness. But it by no means follows that Mrs. Willett, acting in perfect good faith, did not have a fair amount of relevant knowledge latent in her mind which would help to build up the script. It is plain that Mrs. Willett's conscious mind does forget very easily. When asked by Mr. Balfour (May 27, 1916) what she knew about the "Ear of Dionysius," she said she had heard the expression, but did not know the meaning of it. Yet only two years before she had written, *in her normal consciousness*, script containing a fairly full account of the "Ear," a script of which she had kept an annotated copy to which, as Mr. Balfour tells us, she could refer at any time (p. 205). I feel, therefore, considerable hesitation in thinking that she had really never known that Prof. Butcher had written on Aristotle's *Poetics*. For she was interested in Prof. Butcher, and she was a friend of Mrs. Verrall. She must have had many opportunities of seeing or hearing some reference to his most important work. Nor can I feel sure that an educated woman "with a taste for poetry" had never come across the story of Ulysses and the Cyclops Polyphemus; though I can readily believe that she had forgotten the name Polyphemus and the fact of Prof. Butcher's connection with the *Poetics*, the knowledge remaining dormant even in

her sub-conscious mind until stimulated by some outside influence.

That influence, I suggest, was the sub-conscious mind of Mrs. Verrall. It does seem to me that Mr. Balfour dismisses this possibility far too lightly. In the first place, I think it not only possible, but probable, that Mrs. Verrall had at the bottom of her mind all the classical references required. It is true she thought she knew nothing about Philoxenus and never had known. But so did I, when I heard Mr. Balfour's paper, and yet I must have known something, and very likely all, that was needed. I have read the *Poetics*, the *Politics*, and Grote's *History*, and they all refer to Philoxenus. I think it highly probable that I had read the article in Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* that gives the very version of his quarrel with Dionysius mentioned in the notes to the *Greek Melic Poets*, and followed in the script. I cannot be sure but this is my reason. There are a very considerable number of allusions to Philoxenus, conjectural or certain, scattered up and down Greek literature—how many the non-classical reader may judge by consulting Smith's *Dictionary of Classical Biography*. Three of these occur in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, *Clouds*, and *Plutus* (*Frogs*, 1506; *Clouds*, 332; *Plutus*, 290). I have read all three plays with

some care, and it is the usual practice of a student in such cases to look up the names of classical authors referred to in the text, or the notes, if otherwise unfamiliar.<sup>1</sup>

Now I cannot doubt that Mrs. Verrall had read at least as much as I and studied as carefully. Further, before the evidential scripts occurred, there was a good deal to attract her attention to the whole topic of Dionysius and his prisoners, Philoxenus included. On Aug. 26, 1910, before Dr. Verrall's death, Mrs. Willett, when sitting for script with her, dictated the phrase "Dionysius' Ear—the lobe." Mrs. Verrall did not understand the phrase and talked it over with her husband, who twitted her with her ignorance or forgetfulness. Now, is it not natural to suppose that, after this, she looked up the subject or got Dr. Verrall to tell her all he could about it? Surely any classical student would have done so much. And then, either in her own reading or in the course of conversation, she might easily have come upon the story of Philoxenus, closely connected as he is with Dionysius.

<sup>1</sup> Since writing the above I see that in Rogers' edition of the *Plutus* (published 1904) the relevant version of the Philoxenus story is given with considerable detail in the notes, *ad versum* 290. It would be interesting to know if Mrs. Verrall had seen this excellent edition.

Moreover, the whole story, as we have said—including one express reference to Aristotle and to music, *Mousike*—a word expressly dictated in Mrs. Willett's script—is compactly given in a page of Prof. Smyth's *Greek Melic Poets*. Dr. Verrall had a presentation copy of this work and thought well of it. It is certainly not far-fetched to suppose that Mrs. Verrall at some time or other had at least glanced through the pages. The book is full of interesting bits of information very useful for a classical teacher.<sup>1</sup> If Mrs. Verrall had once read p. 461 of this handy little volume she would, with the rest of her normal classical knowledge, have been, at one time or other, in possession of all the facts necessary to build up the scheme of associated ideas that seemed so complicated to an outsider.

This "odd old human story of long ago," as the Willett script calls the tale of Philoxenus, is just the kind to catch an imaginative student's imagina-

<sup>1</sup> It contains, by the way, a special reference to the Sicilian worship of Artemis and her connection with Arethusa and the Alpheus (p. 301). "Sicilian Artemis," it may be remembered, appears in the Willett script for no apparent reason.

I have since been told by my friend, Miss Matthaei of Newnham College, that Smyth's book is the standard edition of the Greek lyric poets now in use at Cambridge, and that almost every classical student at Newnham has a copy on her shelves, no other edition having such helpful notes. Miss Matthaei said she could scarcely imagine that Mrs. Verrall had not read the book.

tion. Indeed it is doubtless just the kind to have interested and amused Dr. Verrall himself, but then, if so, he would have been likely to mention it to other scholars, especially to his wife. It may be said in objection that it would be very strange for Mrs. Verrall to have known this story and then forgotten it so completely. But I cannot agree. I forget too much myself. And it is surely at least equally strange that the "Ear of Dionysius" should have conveyed nothing to her either. That is much better known, and must, I should think, often have been matter of her conscious knowledge.

I can see no real difficulty, therefore, in assuming that the knowledge required may have been latent in Mrs. Verrall's mind and that her subconscious self could weave the associations together, much as it might in a fairly coherent dream.<sup>1</sup> On this hypothesis I should proceed to explain what happened somewhat as follows. *Rapport* between Mrs. Willett and Mrs. Verrall on the subject of the "Ear of Dionysius" had already been established before Dr. Verrall's death. Afterwards, Jan. 10, 1914, there appeared a fairly long piece of Willett script

<sup>1</sup>I note that this comparison to the *modus operandi* of our minds when dreaming has been made independently by Miss May Sinclair in an acute letter printed in the *S.P.R. Journal* (May-June, 1917).

(script A) written in normal consciousness and sending messages to Mrs. Verrall about the Ear of Dionysius, the stone quarries, Sicily, and poetry. All the allusions, as Mr. Balfour himself points out, "might be supposed . . . to have been at one time or other within the normal knowledge of the automatist." But further, all the allusions are of such a kind that they would, if seen by Mrs. Verrall—and they were both seen and studied by her (Jan. 19, 1914)—stimulate any latent memories she might have about Dionysius and Philoxenus. I assume that they did in fact so stimulate them, just enough to make them active, but subconsciously, not consciously.

Owing to this activity, about five weeks later (Feb. 28, Mar. 2, 1914), when Mrs. Willett sits for script with Mr. Balfour (Scripts B and C) the topics in question leak through in an obscure and fragmentary fashion, from Mrs. Verrall's mind into Mrs. Willett's. Here they find congenial soil, for Mrs. Willett herself had already been thinking about the Ear of Dionysius, Sicily, poetry, Dr. Verrall, Prof. Butcher, and their joint interest in classical literature, (script A, Jan. 10, 1914, and compare her vision of Prof. Butcher and his classical message to Verrall, Jan. 21, 1911).

Unconscious leakage from mind to mind is not

a new hypothesis. We have good evidence for it (*e.g.* the leakage of the idea "seven" from Mr. Piddington's sealed letter: the leakage of the passage about "moly" in the "one-horse-dawn" experiment).

But, it may be said, the Willett scripts show an elaborate design in the way the facts are communicated. Can we suppose this design was *not* due to conscious agency? I answer by another question: Is the elaborate design of a kind that forces us to assume *purpose*? There is certainly what might fairly be called an elaborate *association of ideas*, and this is reflected in the scripts, but I have shown, I think, that this association might have been in Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind. Of design in *communication* the evidence is much less clear. Much is made of the fact that the allusions are given in a scholar-like form, that they are veiled and fragmentary, and that the clue seems purposely withheld. But the scholar-like form would be natural to Mrs. Verrall, and we know that telepathic messages do often come through in a veiled and fragmentary form. They did when Dr. Verrall made his famous "one-horse dawn" experiment, and yet the veiling was no part of his plan. And if the clue was purposely withheld, why was it given in the end to the very person, Mrs.

Verrall, from whom it ought to have been kept till all was complete?

I suggest therefore that the effect of purposive design is accidental, due to the chance that Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind, owing to her sight of Willett script A, was working in Jan.-Mar., 1914, on the Dionysius-Philoxenus cycle of ideas and that Mrs. Willett's mind could at first receive fragments of them, but only fragments, as her own insistence on her difficulty in catching the ideas indicates. I suggest also that she wove round them fancies of her own, *e.g.* that Mrs. Verrall was not to be told, and that there was an important experiment on foot, etc. Then Mrs. Verrall's mind, I assume, drifted away from the subject, and nothing further appears for a long while in the Willett scripts. But when Mrs. Verrall sits for script with Mrs. Willett, a year and a half later, the contact of the two minds happens to revive subconsciously the dormant memories of the Dionysius-Philoxenus story and this time it emerges in a form that is practically complete, just as we often do find that telepathic impressions are much more clearly received when the communicator is in the room. (It would be of great interest, by the way, to know if this was the first time that Mrs. Verrall sat for script with Mrs. Willett since the writing of the

evidential scripts B and C.) Once more, I suggest that Mrs. Willett's subconscious mind wove fancies of its own, but this time fancies that do not tally with the earlier ones, *e.g.* they now assume that Mrs. Verrall *ought* to have been told. Thus we have, I submit, a hypothesis with certain merits of its own to put against the hypothesis of Dr. Verrall communicating. I do not claim it as more plausible. Apart from the fact that there are *other* reasons to doubt survival I do not think it *as* plausible. Both hypotheses have weak points: one involves an astonishing lapse of memory on Dr. Verrall's part, the other a remarkable extension of unconscious leakage.

And what I want to urge now is the imperative need both for further observation and further experiment to help us to decide. I admit that I cannot conceive any one experiment as decisive. The evidence, from the nature of the case, cannot, so far as I can see, ever be demonstrative: it can only be cumulative. We have no demonstrative evidence even of the existence of individual incarnate minds other than our own. But that is all the more reason for making as many experiments as possible. And with some hesitation, for I have no claim whatever to speak as an investigator, I would ask first if more test-questions and more exploratory ques-

tions could not be put to the automatists. For instance, has any attempt been made to find out from the automatist in trance any explanation of that strange lapse of memory? If so, with what result? Test-questions were put, I believe, through Mrs. Piper to the supposed communicator Myers. Could not similar questions be put through Mrs. Willett to Verrall? If they have been put, what has been the result? And further, I would urge that every possible opportunity should be taken to repeat the experiment of sealed letters. It is true, of course, as Mrs. Sidgwick says, that these experiments are not crucial. My own paper indicates that the contents might leak from one mind to the other while the writer was still alive. But if a large number were written, if, in a large proportion of cases, the contents were not disclosed till after death and then were disclosed, should we not all feel, in spite of loopholes for doubt, that the positive evidence had gained enormously? Failure in the experiment would, of course, add a certain amount of weight to the negative side. But that seems to me exactly the reason for making it. If the evidence must be cumulative, and it seems to me that it must, we cannot test its weight unless we take full account of negative as well as positive results.

NOTE. Reading Mr. Balfour's most courteous and interesting answer to my paper, I notice that, —entirely through my own looseness of phrasing, —I may have given the impression that I doubt survival after death. On the contrary, I believe in survival; what I doubt is the possibility of direct purposeful communication with minds still incarnate. I ought to have made this clear and I wish to do so now, since all these matters are important, although this special point does not affect the actual discussion between Mr. Balfour and myself.



III.

THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS: A REPLY.



### III.

#### THE EAR OF DIONYSIUS: A REPLY.

BY THE RIGHT HON. GERALD W. BALFOUR.

By the courtesy of the Editor of the *Proceedings* I have been allowed to see the foregoing paper by Miss Stawell in manuscript, and invited to comment upon it. I accept the invitation all the more readily inasmuch as I was unfortunately prevented by illness from being present at the meeting at which the paper was read.

Miss Stawell's criticism of the argument for survival put forward in "The Ear of Dionysius" is of that serious and thoughtful kind that helps to throw light upon a problem even where one cannot agree with it. The alternative hypothesis which she suggests is not one that commends itself to my judgement. But it touches upon points of real interest, and the care and acumen with which she has handled the subject deserve respectful consideration.

The point of view from which Miss Stawell starts is not quite the same as that which I took

up in my paper. Let me quote her own words: " [Mr. Balfour's] argument that the communicator was really Dr. Verrall's discarnate mind is certainly extremely cogent. But I do not feel it entirely convincing. There is a difficulty, and, apart from this, another hypothesis is possible. Of course, if there were no general reason to doubt survival after death, there would be less reason to trouble about another hypothesis. But there is plenty of reason for doubt, because of all the negative evidence that exists, some of it collected by the S.P.R. itself, *e.g.* the failure of test-questions, or the inability, shown on more than one occasion, to state the contents of a sealed envelope written before the communicator's death."

Again, after giving her own alternative explanation, Miss Stawell sums up the case as follows: " We have, I submit, a hypothesis with certain merits of its own to put against the hypothesis of Dr. Verrall communicating. I do not claim it as more plausible. Apart from the fact that there are *other* reasons to doubt survival I do not think it *as* plausible. Both hypotheses have weak points: one involves an astonishing lapse of memory on Dr. Verrall's part, the other a remarkable extension of unconscious leakage."

It is evident from these passages that Miss

Stawell avowedly starts from the assumption that survival is antecedently improbable *on general grounds*, that is to say, on grounds independent of any considerations that are to be drawn from the facts of the particular case under review. Were it not for these external grounds of objection she would prefer my explanation to her own.

No doubt the attitude of any of us towards this or that suggested explanation of a particular case must inevitably depend on the presuppositions or predispositions which we bring to the study of it. Those who disbelieve in the possibility of survival will prefer *any* explanation to one that rests on survival. Those who disbelieve in the possibility of telepathy—and they are still probably the majority among scientific men—will be equally emphatic in also rejecting the explanation offered by Miss Stawell. On the other hand, those who on general grounds have already come to regard survival as probable will be prepossessed in favour of spirit communication as against elaborate and complicated hypotheses of subliminal agency.

In these circumstances it seems to me that in a paper professing to deal with only a single case of what purports to be spirit communication, the proper course is to start from the assumption that survival and spirit communication are open ques-

tions; and this is what I tried to do. Once we begin to weight the scales, as Miss Stawell has done, with considerations of a general character, it is difficult to see how there can be any logical halting place short of a discussion extending beyond the particular case to all the pros and cons by which our final conclusions will be determined. At that rate a paper would quickly swell to a volume.

An obvious corollary from what has just been said is that no single case should be treated as crucial and decisive. Here I am entirely at one with Miss Stawell, and I may add with all serious students of the subject. The evidence must be cumulative. In the end, the hypothesis which offers the *simplest* explanation of *all* the observed facts bearing on the question at issue will doubtless become generally accepted. But we are far from having reached that end as yet. I do not claim for the "Dionysius Case" more than that it is an important contribution to the evidence, and that it tells strongly in favour of survival and of the actuality of communication from "the other side." Miss Stawell herself, it appears, is inclined towards a similar view, though much more doubtingly and waveringly.

This brings me to the main substance of her paper. Miss Stawell finds *in the facts of the case*

*as narrated* a difficulty which militates against the supposition that the communications really proceed from Dr. Verrall. Further, she offers an alternative explanation which, even if less plausible on the whole, and considered by itself, than that which I have advocated, is nevertheless regarded by her as sufficiently plausible to come into serious competition with it.

Miss Stawell states her "difficulty" thus: "In the two leading scripts (Feb. 28, Mar. 2, 1914, Scripts B and C) the communicator said that Mrs. Verrall was to hear nothing of the matter, and that there was much more to be got through. Yet, abruptly, immediately after this, all communication on the topic ceased, so far as Mrs. Willett was concerned, for a whole year and a half, until suddenly, at a sitting where Mrs. Verrall herself was present, the subject was re-opened, the clue given, and great surprise expressed that Mrs. Verrall had received no message on the matter. This implies a strange lapse of memory on the part of the communicator, so strange that one is forced to ask, Can it be explained satisfactorily on the hypothesis that there really was a deliberate conscious personality controlling the communications? I find it hard to think so."

That the surprise expressed in the later scripts is inconsistent with the instructions given in the

earlier ones is clear; and undoubtedly the most natural account to be given of this inconsistency is to ascribe it, as I have done in my paper, to a lapse of memory on the part of the communicators. Miss Stawell's alternative hypothesis explains the inconsistency by arbitrarily transferring the responsibility for it to the automatist herself. On this point let me note that the inconsistency requires to be not merely explained but *explained away*, if the incident is to lose the highly exceptional and perhaps unprecedented character which I assigned to it. What is so rare is that scripts written by the same automatist should contain statements startlingly at variance with each other. The question whether the true origin of the statements is external or subliminal is from this point of view irrelevant. It is what may be called a non-committal phrase "the script memory" which in our experience is so seldom found to be seriously at fault.

When I treated the inconsistency in the scripts as due to forgetfulness on the part of the communicators and added that I had no explanation to offer, I meant that I had no explanation to offer which seemed to me preferable to the assumption that a lapse of memory had taken place. But I must candidly own that when I wrote my paper I attached no particular significance to the incident, though I

noted it as being very unusual. The use made of it by Miss Stawell was entirely unforeseen by me. I still think that she has greatly overrated her "difficulty," and that such a lapse of memory after a year and a half, during which the subject was dropped so far as communications through Mrs. Willett were concerned, is not inconsistent with the control of the communications by a "deliberate conscious personality." But for those who attach more importance to her objection than I do, I venture to suggest an explanation of this discrepancy in the scripts which I think well within the bounds of possibility, though I refrained from offering it in my paper.

Let us see just how the case stands. Script B tells us that Mrs. Verrall is to hear nothing of the matter at present.

Script C says there is much more to follow, and that until the effort is completed the portions as they come are not to be seen by any other automatist.

Script D, returning to the subject a year and a half later, asks if the Satire has been identified, and finding Mrs. Verrall unable to give a reply, expresses surprise that the messages concerning it and references to a Cave have not been passed on to her.

Finally, in Script E, a fortnight later, Gurney, upon being informed that all the classical allusions are now understood by the investigators, exclaims "Good—At last!"

In the long interval between C and D a complete change has taken place in the attitude of the communicators. *Can anything have occurred during this period to account for the change?*

It is certain that the expectation held out in C of further contributions to the problem was not fulfilled in any scripts produced by Mrs. Willett between the dates of C and D. Of these there were about a dozen altogether. They dealt almost exclusively with a single subject of a private nature which had no connection whatever with the Dionysius case, nor with either of the two principal communicators concerned in it. It does not, however, follow from this that the Dionysius topic had been wholly lost sight of by the group on the other side. The statements in B and C do indeed strongly suggest, if they do not directly assert, that a return to it would shortly be made *in subsequent Willett scripts*. But in C there is also something very like an intimation that attempts would be made to produce cross-correspondences on the subject in the scripts of other automatists. That at all events is the meaning I attached at the time to

the instruction that "until the effort is completed the portions as they come are not to be seen by any other automatist"; so much so that from then onwards I began to look out very carefully for any signs of such cross-correspondences.

The suggestion I have to make is this. For some undisclosed reason the intention to send additional matter on the Dionysius topic through Mrs. Willett was not carried out. Possibly Gurney, who appears to take chief charge of arrangements on the other side, was unwilling to allow the important series of scripts, occupied with a totally different subject, that began shortly after the date of Script C, to be interrupted. In the meantime attempts were made to refer to the Dionysius case elsewhere. There is good ground for believing that these attempts met with at least a partial measure of success in the scripts of Mrs. King. (See Appendix to my original paper, *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXIX., p. 239) It is quite possible that the communicators may have thought that they had succeeded in "getting through" more than they actually had. Uncertainty as to what has and what has not been effectively transmitted and duly recorded by automatists is frequently admitted in the scripts, and perhaps rather specially so in Mrs. King's script. As time passed the group on the other side may have

thought that sufficient lights had been given, and have assumed that the investigators had discovered the solution of the puzzle. Had we really discovered it the instructions that Mrs. Verrall "is to hear nothing of this *at present*" and that "*until the effort is completed* the portions as they come are not to be seen by any other automatist" would have ceased to be applicable; and Mrs. Verrall would have been taken into our counsel and been shown the scripts.

If this is really what happened, the surprise expressed in D becomes intelligible. It is inconsistent with the instructions given in B and C, but would not be inconsistent with the impressions subsequently formed by the communicators during the long interval that followed. The exclamation "*At last!*" used by Gurney on hearing that the classical allusions were now all understood, would also be not only intelligible but natural, if he took the view that the information supplied to us before Script D was produced had been sufficient, or ought to have been sufficient, to give us the solution of the problem.

I offer this explanation for what it may be worth. There is too much of the conjectural element in it to satisfy me. But in any case I should prefer it to the explanation given by Miss Stawell's alterna-

tive hypothesis, in which conjecture seems to me to play at least as prominent a part.

To that alternative hypothesis I now turn. It may be summed in three main propositions:

(1) That Mrs. Verrall possessed, consciously or subconsciously, *all* the classical knowledge implied in the scripts.

(2) That after receiving the message in Script A she subconsciously wove together a number of topics, not for the most part connected with one another by any obvious associations, into a coherent whole, the separate items of which, by reason of this subconscious activity, "leaked" from her subconscious mind into that of Mrs. Willett and emerged in the successive scripts, Mrs. Willett's own latent memories co-operating in the process.

(3) That the collocation of the ideas thus brought together may be said to exhibit "design"; but that of "purpose in communication" as distinguished from "design" the scripts furnish no sufficient evidence.

This account of the matter is ingenious and carefully thought out; but I am unable to accept it as probable.

As regards (1), everything turns upon whether Mrs. Verrall had at some period before the production of the evidential scripts (B, C and D) become

acquainted with the story of Philoxenus, and more especially with the version of that story implied in the scripts. If she had not, *cadit quaestio*: the alternative hypothesis falls to the ground.

Miss Stawell thinks I have dismissed too easily the possibility that the scripts had their source of inspiration in Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind. I admit that when stating that Mrs. Verrall "knew nothing about Philoxenus or his poem," I took it too much for granted that she never had known anything. Present ignorance, however complete, cannot wholly exclude the possibility of knowledge once possessed but since forgotten. But there are cases—and this, I think, is one of them—where it may go far towards doing so; especially where there is really nothing to be set on the other side except pure conjecture. I can readily believe that at some time or other in the course of her classical studies Mrs. Verrall had come across a mention of the poet Philoxenus and afterwards forgotten about him. But we have to suppose far more than that in order to account for the distinctly recondite knowledge concerning the plot of the *Cyclops* exhibited in the scripts. Miss Stawell's own suggestion is that Mrs. Verrall was led to look up the associations connected with the Ear of Dionysius by her conversation on the subject with Dr. Verrall

in 1910, and in this manner acquired the necessary information. Conjectures of this kind are plausible enough in themselves. But they are not easy to reconcile with the fact that in January, 1914, the message which (according to Miss Stawell) produced such very remarkable results in Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind, found no appropriate response in her normal memories; and that in August, 1915, even a study of the reference books on the subject failed to recall to her that she had ever heard of Philoxenus. Again, Miss Stawell thinks it "not far-fetched to suppose that Mrs. Verrall at some time or other had at least glanced through the pages" of Professor Smyth's *Greek Melic Poets*. Perhaps not; but what evidence we have is in the other direction. My strong impression is—though I cannot absolutely vouch for the fact—that Mrs. Verrall told me she believed she had never looked into the book until she had recourse to it in connection with the references in Script D; and Mrs. Salter (Miss Helen Verrall) informs me that she is sure her mother never had any previous occasion to use it. Unfortunately Mrs. Verrall is no longer with us to appeal to on points like this. As things are, it is perhaps hardly possible to carry the controversy further. I can only say that my personal opinion remains un-

shaken. Mrs. Verrall herself was convinced that the Philoxenus story which contains the key to the puzzle was entirely new to her. I continue to believe that she was right.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Coming next to Miss Stawell's account of the genesis of the scripts, let me begin by noting a point of detail. The order of events is supposed to be as follows: Mrs. Verrall (who is credited, as we have seen, with a complete, though latent knowledge of all the classical references in the scripts) receives the message contained in Script A. Her latent memories are thereby stimulated "just enough to make them active, but subconsciously not consciously." This subconscious activity in its turn produces a "leakage" of ideas from Mrs. Verrall

<sup>1</sup> Miss Stawell credits not only Mrs. Verrall, but also Mrs. Willett, with a more extensive subconscious knowledge than I should be prepared to allow probable. The more or less of Mrs. Willett's knowledge is in no way essential to Miss Stawell's main contention, and therefore I have not thought it worth while to discuss it. I must, however, take exception to the argument by which she supports her opinion. "It is plain," she writes, "that Mrs. Willett's conscious mind does forget very easily. When asked by Mr. Balfour (27 May, 1916) what she knew about the 'Ear of Dionysius,' she said she had heard the expression but did not know the meaning of it. Yet only two years before she had written, in her normal consciousness, script containing a fairly full account of the Ear, a script of which she had kept an annotated copy to which, as Mr. Balfour tells us, she could refer at any time." Surely there is a fallacy here. It is true that Script A contains a description of the Ear of Dionysius. But it does not describe it *by name*. Unless Mrs. Willett *already knew* that the description applied to the Ear of Dionysius, she might have read and re-read Script A without ever discovering the fact.

to Mrs. Willett, and is thus the true source and origin of the "evidential scripts."

What remains unexplained in this account is the origin of the message in Script A. Miss Stawell, of course, assumes that all the topics in this message had at one time or another been within Mrs. Willett's normal knowledge, and might, therefore, have emerged in her script without any external prompting. But even granting this, why did they emerge at all? On Miss Stawell's hypothesis no answer to this question is forthcoming. On the hypothesis that Dr. Verrall was the real as well as the ostensible communicator, the answer is plain. Evidently the message was sent in preparation for what was to follow.

This, however, is, after all, a point of minor importance, though not, I think, without some interest.

A much more serious objection to Miss Stawell's account of how the scripts originated is one of which she is sensible herself, though I doubt whether she has realised the full force of it. The essential basis of her explanation is "unconscious leakage" of ideas from mind to mind. Miss Stawell has not told us exactly what she means by "unconscious leakage." The term may signify much or little. If A represents the mind from *which*, and B the

mind *to* which the leakage is assumed to take place, are both A and B to be regarded as unconscious of what is happening, or only A? And further, when we speak of A, do we mean supraliminal A only, or subliminal A also, and similarly of B? I am not quite sure, but I *think* Miss Stawell uses the term in its widest significance, which excludes any kind of awareness or intention either on the one side or the other, and either supraliminal or subliminal. In other words the whole process is to be taken as involuntary and automatic. It is in this sense that the term is to be understood in the discussion which follows.

Miss Stawell tells us that unconscious leakage is not a new hypothesis, and that we have good evidence of it. Certainly it is not a new hypothesis; on the other hand, the actual evidence in support of it is singularly scanty. The reason of this may be, at least in part, that such evidence is, from the nature of the case, difficult to obtain. But it may also be owing to the rarity of the phenomenon itself.

Two supposed examples are cited by Miss Stawell—the case of Mr. Piddington's sealed letter, and the leakage of the passage about "moly" in the "one-horse dawn" experiment. Neither of these can be regarded as conclusive, even if we ignore

the possibility of chance-coincidence. The incident of Mr. Piddington's letter forms part of a complicated cross-correspondence. Miss Johnson, to whom we owe a careful review of all the circumstances (see *Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. XXIV., pp. 222 ff.), finds in them strong evidence of a *single external directing intelligence*; and though she thinks that this intelligence may have utilised telepathic communication between the automatists concerned and Mr. Piddington, it is obvious that the introduction on the stage of such a *deus ex machina*, while not negating the hypothesis of unconscious leakage, does render it superfluous.

As to the passage about "the herb moly" in the "one-horse dawn" experiment, it is true that the appearance of it in Mrs. Verrall's script could not be directly due to any conscious mental activity on Dr. Verrall's part. But we know that he was trying to transmit certain words to Mrs. Verrall, and we cannot be sure that this conscious effort on his part was not a *conditio sine quâ non* of the transmission of certain other words of the connection of which with the subject of the experiment he was only subconsciously aware. For a fuller discussion of this question, perhaps I may refer to an article of mine published in *Proc.*, Vol. XXV., in which I pointed out that no proof of purely sub-

conscious telepathy can ever be obtained from *experiments*. All experiments necessarily start from supraliminal activity; and having once started from supraliminal activity it is impossible to be certain that one is justified in eliminating it from results.

If proof is to be obtained of unconscious leakage it is among cases of spontaneous (*i.e.* non-experimental) telepathy that we must look for it. Veridical phantasms of the living that have appeared to persons unknown to the presumed agent, collective hallucinations, and the psychological characteristics of crowds, will perhaps be found to afford the best examples—in other words, cases where nothing more complex is in question than sensory impressions or emotional states.

Whether even single mental concepts are ever transmitted by unconscious leakage is doubtful. What we have in the Dionysius case is a series of mental concepts, apparently unconnected, or only loosely connected, but ultimately found to be cunningly linked together by a central idea that unites all the rest into a single whole. The transmission of a combined scheme of concepts in the way suggested has, I feel confident, no sort of warrant from experience. Miss Stawell may well call such an extension of unconscious leakage “remarkable.”

Can we say that the hypothesis, even though unwarranted by experience, is nevertheless intrinsically plausible? I do not think so. Unconscious leakage must from the nature of the case be in large measure at the mercy of chance. It would be unreasonable to expect from it the unity and coherence that might be looked for in a message deliberately sent by an intelligent communicator. Yet it is just such unity and coherence which are exceptionally manifest in these Willett scripts. What we see in them is not chance but design. Moreover, they show a noticeable absence of anything like surplusage or extraneous matter. There is hardly an idea to be found in them that does not contribute to the building up of the scheme as a whole. Even granting for a moment that the design itself originated in Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind, how can mere leakage account for the fact that practically no ideas emerged in the scripts except such as were relevant to the design? It seems to me that this is a real difficulty, and that neither the *rapport* which may fairly be taken to have existed between Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Willett, nor any aid which the dormant memories of the latter may be supposed to have rendered, suffice to meet it. Indeed I see no way of meeting it fully except to suppose that Mrs. Verrall's subconscious

mind was at the time occupied with these ideas *and with no others*. If the leakage occurred contemporaneously with the emergence of the ideas in the scripts of Feb. 28 and March 2 (Scripts B and C), the coincidence must be ascribed to a happy accident. If it extended over a period antecedent to the emergence, are we to suppose that Mrs. Verrall's subliminal concentration on the Ear of Dionysius extended over the whole of the period? This is possible, but is it also plausible?

Other difficulties suggest themselves which I can only briefly indicate. Mrs. Willett's automatic productions are incomparably more striking than Mrs. Verrall's, and the Dionysius Case is among the most striking of all. Yet we are asked to suppose that the true source both of materials and of plan in this case was Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind, whence they leaked into that of Mrs. Willett. If so, how comes it that nothing remotely similar to these scripts appeared in Mrs. Verrall's own automatic writings? And again, if the influence of Mrs. Verrall's subliminal mind on Mrs. Willett's scripts is so powerful as the hypothesis implies, how comes it that that influence has not left a more conspicuous impress on the Willett scripts generally? Perhaps the Statius case may be cited in reply to this question. I agree that the Statius Case and the

Dionysius Case must stand or fall together, and that to explain the one is almost certainly to explain the other also. But they form only a small fraction of the total volume of Willett scripts. It is true that cross-correspondences occur from time to time between Mrs. Verrall's scripts and Mrs. Willett's, and may, from Miss Stawell's standpoint, be held to indicate telepathic leakage from one writer to the other. None of these cross-correspondences, however, are at all on the scale of leakage required to explain the Dionysius Case; nor do they, so far as I can judge, markedly surpass either in number or quality the cross-correspondences to be found between Mrs. Willett's scripts and those of other members of our group of automatists.

Considerations like this cannot, of course, be properly appreciated without a full knowledge of all the scripts. I will not dwell on them further, but will pass on to the last of the three propositions which summarise Miss Stawell's alternative hypothesis.

Miss Stawell draws a sharp distinction between "design" and "purpose in communication." "Design," in the sense of "an elaborate association of ideas," she admits and ascribes to Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind. "Purpose in communication" she disputes, and the appearance of it she

ascribes to the subconscious mind of the autom-  
atist.

The distinction between design and purpose, and the separation of rôles between Mrs. Verrall and Mrs. Willett, were inevitably forced on Miss Stawell by the premises from which she starts. She rejects—I believe quite rightly—the supposition that Mrs. Willett had ever known the story of Philoxenus. It follows that Mrs. Willett could not have originated the “design.” The hypothesis of spirit communication being excluded, responsibility for the design is fixed upon Mrs. Verrall. But Miss Stawell insists that the associated ideas passed from Mrs. Verrall to Mrs. Willett by “unconscious leakage.” Now, unconscious leakage is clearly incompatible with “purpose in communication.” In fact it is the very opposite of it. Hence any appearance of purpose must either be explained away as illusory, or it is upon Mrs. Willett that the responsibility for it must be thrown.

To my mind this treatment of the matter is forced and unnatural. I look upon the “elaborate association of ideas” (or, as I should prefer to describe it, the skilful construction of a problem) as forming part and parcel of the manifestation of purpose in the scripts, and as practically inseparable from it. Miss Stawell herself seems tacitly to

admit the closeness of the relation between the two. For she allows that "the way in which the facts are communicated" might be evidence of purpose. In particular she mentions the withholding of the clue all through Scripts B and C, and its final revelation in D. Is not this the very attitude of one who propounds a riddle, and deliberately waits before producing the answer to it? And, on the other hand, if the materials of the problem found their way into the scripts through the operation of unconscious leakage, should we not expect the central and dominating idea of the combination to leak out early instead of late in the history of the case? Miss Stawell, however, has her counter-question ready. "If," she asks, "the clue was purposely withheld, why was it given in the end to the very person, Mrs. Verrall, from whom it ought to have been kept till all was complete?"

The argument in support of purposiveness is not really met by raising a difficulty on the other side, even if that difficulty was a formidable one. But is it so formidable? Surely there may have been good reasons in February and March, 1914, for asking that the scripts should be kept from Mrs. Verrall "for the present," and yet those reasons might have lost their weight a year and a half later. My own view is that the communicators had for-

gotten that the injunction had ever been laid. But whether they had forgotten this or not, they may well have thought that, the investigators having failed to solve the problem, the time had now come to bring matters to a conclusion by supplying the key to the enigma themselves. The analogy of the Statius Case deserves to be considered in this connection.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence of purpose is, however, by no means confined to that indirectly furnished by the construction of the problem and the manner of its presentment, but is to be found scattered in plenty throughout the scripts.

The communicators tell us they are trying "an experiment;" it is "something good and worth doing," which takes the form of "a literary association of ideas pointing to the influence of two discarnate minds." The "Aristotelian" and the "Rationalist" (S.H.B. and A.W.V) are described as being engaged in "a particular task," an "effort" which still awaits completion. "The incident," we are informed, "was chosen as being evidential of identity;" and it is claimed that the combination is characteristic of its authors—that it is "A.W.ish" and "S.H.ish."

Statements like these plainly imply purpose. How does Miss Stawell deal with them? By the

<sup>1</sup> See note at the end of this paper.

simple expedient of sweeping them aside as "fancies" woven by Mrs. Willett round the ideas received by her from Mrs. Verrall.

We unfortunately possess no general criterion by which genuine messages *ab extra* can be distinguished from the imaginations and embroideries of the automatist. I am, therefore, far from asserting that the peculiar distribution of subconscious activities assumed by Miss Stawell is inadmissible. But this, I think, may fairly be said; that so far from affording support to her alternative hypothesis it is an additional difficulty in the way of that hypothesis being accepted.

Why Miss Stawell should be so wedded to the idea of "unconscious leakage" I own I do not fully understand. If I were seeking some way of escape from the hypothesis of spirit communication, and were willing to believe that Mrs. Verrall, possessing, though partly in the form of latent memories, all the raw material required, had evolved out of them the complicated design presented in the scripts, I should see no advantage in trying to discredit the clear evidence of purpose which those same scripts exhibit. On the contrary, I should be inclined to ascribe both design and purpose to the same source, namely Mrs. Verrall's subconscious mind. The difficulties which this explanation of the case involves

are serious enough, no doubt. That the subconscious mind of a living person, herself an automatist, should elaborate such a puzzle and communicate it telepathically to another automatist in order to manufacture fictitious evidence for survival, the normal self of the communicator remaining the while entirely innocent of what was taking place, is a hypothesis with as little support from experience as the "unconscious leakage" which finds favour with Miss Stawell. But at least it avoids some of the objections to which I cannot but hold the latter to be open; and among them the artificial separation of the construction of the puzzle from the use to which it is put.

Let me in conclusion repeat once more that though I am unable to agree with Miss Stawell, I nevertheless regard her paper as a valuable contribution to the study of the subject. It raises questions which ought to be raised; and I frankly admit that she has directed the lance of her criticism against what is probably the least protected point in the armour of her adversary. May I on my side hope that the considerations I have urged in reply will go at least some way towards reconciling her to a view of the case which already, as it would seem, she only half-heartedly opposes?

NOTE ON THE ANALOGIES BETWEEN  
THE STATIUS CASE AND THE  
DIONYSIUS CASE.



NOTE ON THE ANALOGIES BETWEEN THE STATIUS  
CASE AND THE DIONYSIUS CASE.

IN my original paper I called attention to certain features which were common to the Dionysius Case and to the Statius Case which preceded it.

Both present a literary problem the solution of which appears to be purposely withheld at first, and is finally revealed only after the lapse of a considerable interval of time.

In both the part of principal communicator is assigned to Dr. Verrall, though in the Dionysius Case he is associated with his friend S. H. Butcher.

Both purport to furnish evidence of the continued existence after death of their presumptive author or authors.

A careful comparison of the two cases shews that there are other points of resemblance, as well as some points of difference, which it may be worth while to note.

The two cases are *similar* in that:

- (1) Both open with a message to Mrs. Verrall.
- (2) In both the final clue is given in Mrs. Verrall's presence.
- (3) In both the sitting at which Mrs. Verrall was present was her only sitting with Mrs. Willett during the periods covered by the two sets of scripts respectively.
- (4) In both the interval of silence, during which the subject appeared to be ignored, was

occupied with scripts relating to matters of a private nature.

The cases *differ* in that:

- (1) The Staius Case is started in a trance-script, but developed and concluded in three scripts written in a state of normal consciousness; whereas the Dionysius Case is started in a script produced in a normal state, but developed and concluded in three trance-scripts.
- (2) The interval of silence occurred in the Staius case between the first and second scripts, in the Dionysius Case between the third and fourth. In the Staius Case the sitter present when the subject was resumed was myself, in the Dionysius Case Mrs. Verrall.

While I think these points of similarity and difference may be worth noting, and, in some instances, not without interest as bearing on the present controversy, it does not appear to me that any important argument can be drawn from them in support of either one side or the other. Miss Stawell asks whether Mrs. Verrall had any sitting with Mrs. Willett during the interval between scripts C and D. The answer, as may be gathered from the above statement, is in the negative. In fact up to the date of script D Mrs. Verrall had not sat with Mrs. Willett since Sept. 8, 1913, the date on which the final clue to the Staius problem was given. I cannot see, however, that this circumstance is in any way inconsistent with Dr. Verrall's being the real communicator; while, on the other hand, the fact that in the Staius Case the return to the subject occurred in two scripts produced not in Mrs. Verrall's presence but with myself as

sitter, tells, so far as it goes, against the supposition that in the Dionysius case the resumption of the subject was dependent upon Mrs. Verrall's attention being once more directed to it.



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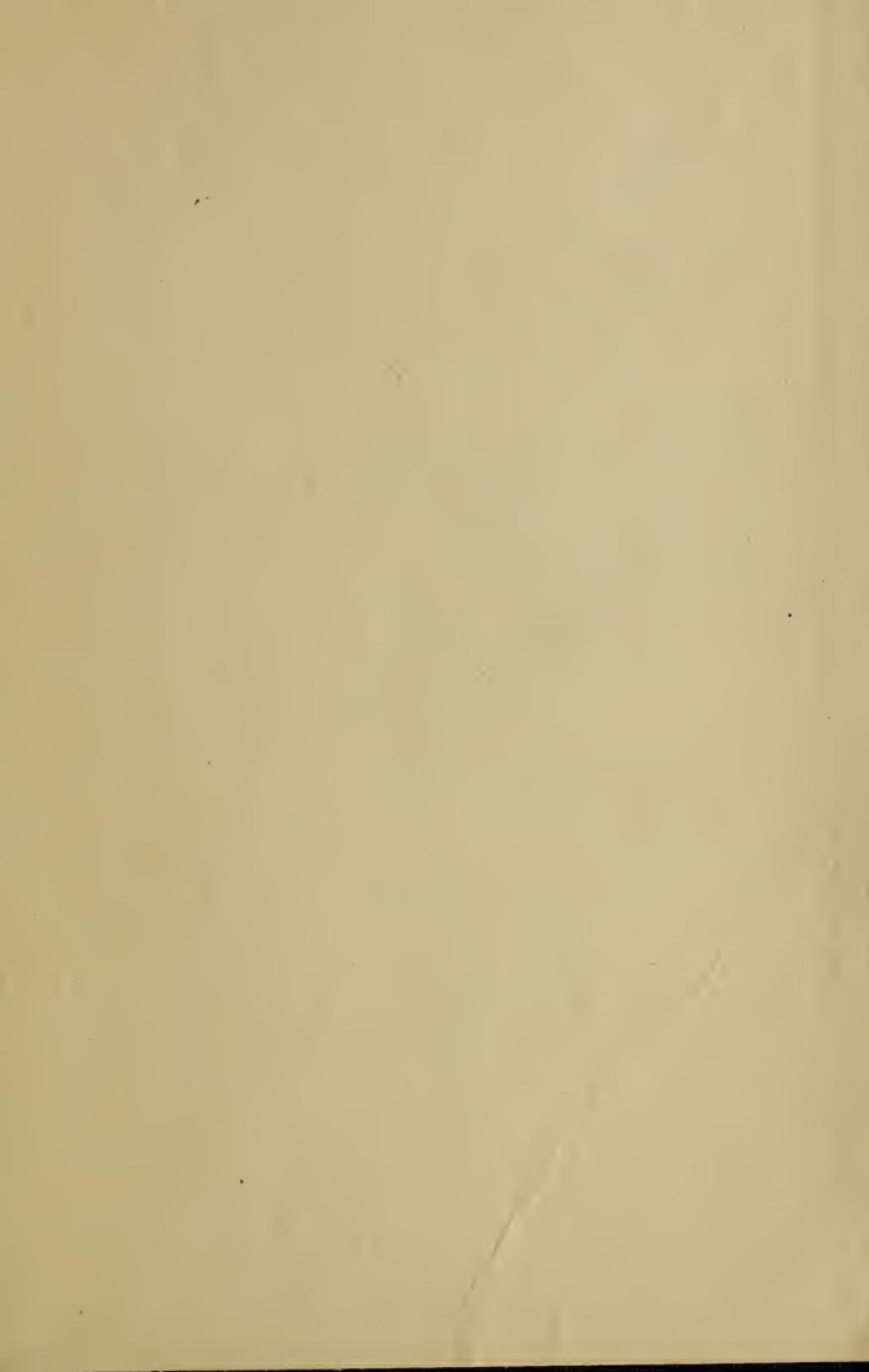












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