

ask ourselves, whether we are not getting close to exhausting the usefulness of limited symbols on cards arranged in carefully randomized sequence as our main experimental source of information about ESP? Must we continue to sever all emotional relationship between agent and percipient; to inhibit any capacity for free fantasy; to pursue a method which after a few sessions reduces the keenest subjects to the depths of boredom? It is surely astounding that, under such conditions, successes, and great successes too, have ever been achieved. And is it reasonable to lament the dearth of good subjects when we impose upon them techniques which, in many respects, may be ideally framed to discourage the elusive psi?

The price we would have to pay is, of course, that we shall certainly class some accidental resemblances as telepathic hits. But is this a worse danger than that of ignoring evidence? The longing for the mental security that cut and dried statistics provides, can sometimes inhibit discovery.

It is remarkable that some percipients will try to invest the plain geometrical designs of Zener cards with some sort of associations. I had one subject—successful from the point of view of hits scored—who managed to associate some of the symbols with erotic significance. And once I was testing a patient in a mental hospital. The target-card happened to be a Star and the percipient called out excitedly 'I see diamonds!' nor could I obtain any other response. I fear I marked it down as a 'miss' because I was suffering from the prevalent contagion of criticalratio-itis. Had I been more alert I might have taken it as a clue to an improved and more productive method of research.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Frederic Myers and 'Phyllis'

SIR,—In an article on *F. W. H. Myers's Posthumous Message* (*Proc. S.P.R.*, Vol. 52, pp. 1-32), Mr W. H. Salter for the first time revealed the story of Frederic Myers's love for Annie Marshall (d.1876), the wife of his cousin, Walter James Marshall. Mr Salter accepted Myers's avowal in *Fragments of Inner Life*, his posthumously published autobiography, pp. 17, 38-9, that the love was an innocent one; but now Mr A. Jarman, reviewing the autobiography in *Tomorrow*, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Winter, 1964), pp. 17-29, makes the following suggestions. Myers met Annie

('Phyllis') in 1873, and pursued her until, in 1876, she finally surrendered to him. She became pregnant, her husband lost his reason when he learned what had happened, Myers deserted her for fear of jeopardizing his career, and, in despair, she committed suicide.

These assertions about someone to whom the Society is deeply indebted are based upon a number of errors and misrepresentations of fact, and some comment seems called for. I shall present Mr Jarman's views in a sequence of nine numbered sections in italics; and at the end of each section I shall indicate some obvious flaws in the material just set down.¹

1. *By his own admission, and according to the testimony of Mrs (later Lady) Jebb, Myers was a sensualist. He was also untruthful. At Cambridge, in 1863 he won the Camden Medal for Latin Verse with a poem into which he had inserted about 25 lines from past Oxford prize poems. The story became known, and Myers was forced to resign the Medal. In his autobiography he glosses over the incident, and this shows he was wanting in frankness. The implication seems to be that being a sensualist and a liar, Myers was quite capable both of wronging Annie and of concealing what he had done.*

Myers may have had a sensual disposition, but he was not a hypocrite or a liar. If he had been he would hardly have enjoyed the devoted friendship of Gurney, the Sidgwicks, James, Hodgson or Lodge. Mr Jarman makes him appear to gloss over the Camden Medal incident by quoting the paragraph about it in the *Fragments* (p. 9) with some of the most self-condemnatory sentences left out; a piece of condensation which also disguises his real motive in the affair, which was not, as Mr Jarman supposes, to win the Camden Medal a second time—he was quite capable of winning the Camden without cheating (he had, after all, won it the previous year)—but to preen himself over the (supposed) fact that only the very best Oxford lines could stand comparison with his own.

Mr Jarman does not refer to the curious statements on the first page of the *Fragments*; 'I am tempted, of course, to try to make myself appear worthy of love and respect. But I am kept in check by another belief. I hold that all things thought and felt, as well as all things done, are somehow photographed imperishably upon the Universe, and that my whole past will probably lie open to those with whom I have to do. . . . This unusual check, I say, I strongly

¹ For information about Annie Marshall, and about Myers's relations with her family after her death, I have drawn upon Myers's diaries and correspondence, and especially upon letters to him from his mother; other information has been obtained from standard year-books and directories and from Somerset House.

feel. . . .’ There is every indication that Myers held this belief sincerely (see for instance his article on *The Drift of Psychical Research* in the *National Review*, Vol. XXIV, 1894-5, pp. 190-209), and that being so, his avowals of the innocence of his relations with Annie Marshall cannot be lightly set aside.

2. *Myers met Annie in 1873, and records that he saw her altogether 426 times, or nearly three times a week for the remainder of her life. ‘Considering that Myers’s work lay in Cambridge and London, nearly three-hundred miles from Anne’s home on Ullswater, a great amount of travelling by either, or by both, is implied.’*

Myers had met Annie long before 1873; it was in 1873 that his love for her began. In any case, since he frequently stayed with his and Walter’s mutual relatives in Cumberland, and since Walter and Annie had a house in London (23 Thurloe Square), no ‘great amount of travelling’ ‘is implied’.

3. *Myers’s attentions to Annie caused a rift in her previously happy marriage. The last of her five children was born in 1873; and this shows that after meeting Myers she discontinued normal relations with her husband.*

Annie’s last child, Ellen Harriet, was born not in 1873, but on August 14th, 1872. Myers’s first ‘intoxication’ with her dates from the summer of 1873. In any case, one might readily suppose that a couple unhappily married, and constantly in ill-health (there is plenty of evidence on both these points, including a letter of 1871 from Annie herself to Myers’s mother), would think five children sufficient.

4. *Though the poem Honour (Fragments, p. 19) suggests that Myers’s early relations with Annie were innocent, the later poem A Sister of Phyllis (Fragments pp. 34-5), which is ‘undoubtedly written of Anne’, shows that she surrendered to him in April 1876. The surrender is indicated by the lines*

*I spake; she listened; woman-wise
Her self-surrendering answer came;*

and the month of April, the link with Annie, and the year 1876 are indicated by a supposed reference to Annie’s death (29th Aug. 1876) in the lines

*For ere the fourth moon, August-bright,
Had rounded o’er the glimmering plain,
Beyond the clear-obscure of night
Her lovely life was born again.*

Far from being ‘undoubtedly written of Anne’, *A Sister of Phyllis* is almost certainly not about her. The title indicates as

much, and the poem itself is not among the Phyllis poems in the *Fragments of Inner Life*. Nor could it refer to any meeting with Annie in April or May 1876, because it is set by the sea, and Myers's diaries show that his single visit to the sea during that period was a routine school inspection.

It can, I think, be decided with near certainty to whom *A Sister of Phyllis* really refers. From studying the poem itself we can reasonably assume:

(a) That the lady concerned must in history, temperament and appearance have resembled Annie sufficiently to be called her 'sister'; (she could not actually have *been* her sister, because Annie's sisters Harriet and Mary Ellen were still alive in 1893 when *Fragments of Inner Life* was first printed).

(b) That she must have been with Myers by the sea ('Serenest than the height of heaven/This summer sea lies clear and far'), probably sometime between 1880 and 1893 (the poems in the section of *Fragments of Inner Life* which contains *A Sister of Phyllis* date from that period).

(c) That the sea-side incident probably took place in April, and that the lady probably died the following August ('For ere the fourth moon, August-bright', etc.).

(d) That she had suffered severe mental or emotional troubles ('On thee no random angers fell', etc.).

(e) That she had fair hair and blue eyes ('The blue, the gold, of eyes and hair').

(f) That she was a person much interested in religious or spiritual matters ('Breathe in me too thine ardent aim;/Let me too seek thy soaring goal', etc.).

(g) That she impressed Myers deeply.

On April 12th 1890 Myers went for a three-day visit to Folkestone, the object of his stay being to interview two sensitives, *protégées* of his friend Hensleigh Wedgwood. They are referred to under pseudonyms in various early S.P.R. publications (see especially *Proc.*, Vol. IX, pp. 92-106), but their real names were Mrs Everett and Mrs Turner. They were sisters, and, seemingly, widows, and Mrs Everett kept copious diaries (mostly concerned with their 'psychic' experiences) which are preserved in the S.P.R. archives. From Mrs Everett's diaries it is clear that the sisters felt much in sympathy with Myers and his aims in life, and, on the night of 13th-14th April 1890, the younger sister, Constance Turner, twice clairaudiently heard the name 'Annie' called out. During his stay at Folkestone, Myers several times went out by the sea alone with Constance, and he took her out again on June 1st when he was passing through Folkestone.

Constance Turner corresponds in almost every respect to the 'sister of Phyllis' of the poem.

(a) Her history, temperament and appearance resembled Annie's (see (d), (e), (f) and (g) below); and she would certainly have been associated with Annie in Myers's mind because of her clairaudience of Annie's name.

(b) She was by the sea with Myers at a time between 1880 and 1893, i.e. in 1890.

(c) She was by the sea with Myers in April (to be precise on April 13th and 14th, 1890), and she died the following August (August 10th), 'ere the fourth moon' had passed.

(d) She had had severe emotional troubles, and was continually prompted to suicide (Everett diaries, p. 7909), allegedly by malignant spirits. Although she was only 25, however, her death was not suicidal.

(e) She had fair hair (Everett diaries, p. 7913), which usually goes with blue eyes.

(f) She was undoubtedly very much interested in religious or spiritual questions (Everett diaries, *passim*).

(g) She made a considerable impression on Myers. He wrote to her in earnest tones about her mission in life as a sensitive (see Everett diaries, facing p. 7779), and noted her death in his diary. The line in his diary for 23rd Sep 1890 has inserted above it a note 're CT', which may perhaps refer to his composition of *A Sister of Phyllis*.

It seems to me that the identification is almost certain. I should perhaps add that the Everett diaries give not the slightest ground for supposing that Myers was physically involved with Constance; and that the lines about the 'self-surrendering answer', quoted by Mr. Jarman, would have appeared in an altogether different light had he also quoted the two lines which succeeded them:

The azure of those constant eyes
Shone with a stilled unworldly flame.

5. *Annie Marshall was pregnant at the time of her death. Since she had discontinued relations with her husband, Myers was presumably the father of the coming child. Walter must have known this, and a complete rift between him and Annie took place. In the early summer of 1876 Annie left Hallsteads on Ullswater, 'her husband's roof', and moved into Old Church, a smaller house in the grounds of Hallsteads.*

As far as I am aware the principal evidence for Annie's being pregnant at the time of her death is an ambiguous phrase used by her father at the inquest. He said she had lately made to him a

proposition concerning her husband which could not be entertained 'in her state of health'. Annie's state of health (both mental and physical) was at that time very poor and there is no necessity to suppose that the phrase 'state of health' refers to what, in those days, would probably have been termed 'a delicate state of health'. Myers's mother wrote full accounts of the events of those few months to her son, and nowhere does she give the smallest hint that Annie was pregnant. (Mr Jarman says the pregnancy 'was believed to have dated from about April'. Believed by whom?)

Annie did not leave Hallsteads to move to Old Church 'in the early summer of 1876'. At that time she and Walter were living in their London house, 23 Thurloe Square. Early in May Walter's mind gave way, and he was taken to an asylum at Ticehurst, in Sussex. Annie remained in London until the first week in July. She then went with her father, the Rev J. R. Hill, to their Yorkshire home at Thornton Dale, returned to London, and, on Saturday 19th August, went to stay with Walter's uncle, H. C. Marshall, at Derwent Island. She went to Old Church on Monday 28th August, the evening before her death. Walter was still at Ticehurst.

6. *Perhaps Myers and Annie approached Walter for a divorce and so precipitated his mental breakdown. Walter refused, and Myers was afraid to jeopardise his career by eloping with Annie. There were probably 'discussions, perhaps quarrels, emotional scenes, arguments and the shedding of tears. This seems to be described in Fragments of Inner Life (p. 25) with the verse beginning "Ah, friend!"* Myers was unmoved, and went to Norway to escape his responsibilities; when he left, Annie fell into a depression and, early on the 29th August, drowned herself in Ullswater.

At the beginning of June Walter's illness was pronounced incurable. According to a tradition in the Myers family, Myers and Annie agreed that under these circumstances it would be best if they stopped seeing each other; this tradition receives support from an entry in Myers's diary for Wednesday 21st June 1876 'A. VIRTUTE · EXTENDERE · VIRIS'. No special significance need be attached to his visit to Norway—he often went abroad, and on this occasion was accompanied by his brother Arthur, who was taking a holiday for the sake of his health. Annie's suicide, and the emotional state described in the poem to which Mr Jarman refers, can be sufficiently explained by Walter's (supposedly) incurable illness; by his recriminations over being certified; and by her parting from Myers; all coming on top of many years of ill-health, nervous strain, marital unhappiness and religious doubts and self-questionings.

7. *The completeness of the rift between Annie and her husband is shown by the fact that she was buried at Thornton, in Yorkshire, her father's home, and not in Cumberland, where Walter lived.*

Walter was still at Ticehurst at the time of Annie's burial, and could scarcely have had any say in the matter. Prior to the Burial Laws Amendment Act of 1880 the burial of suicides presented difficulties, which Mr Hill could perhaps have overcome by burying his daughter in the parish of which he was himself rector.

8. *Throughout the rest of his life Myers suffered agonies of guilt and remorse for deserting Annie. To illustrate this point Mr. Jarman quotes, in whole or part, six poems from Myers's Fragments of Prose and Poetry (1904), and Collected Poems (1921), viz. Retrospect, 'I wailed as one who scarce could be forgiven', 'I knew a man in early days', Morning, Evening, and The Genesis of a Missionary.*

At several periods in his life Myers was obsessed with religious problems. It is ridiculous to assume that all, or indeed any, of the references to sin and atonement in his poems were inspired by the circumstances of Annie Marshall's death. Of the six poems which Mr Jarman cites in connection with the events of 1876, *no less than four* were printed in Myers's *Collected Poems* of 1870—six years before the suicide and three years before his infatuation began.

9. *Myers seems to have visited Hallsteads many times after Annie's death, 'and if Myers were indeed welcome at his cousin's house after the tragedy, it would help to suggest an innocent interpretation of his association with Anne. Walter Marshall would hardly invite to his home a man whom he must, at least, have suspected of being his wife's lover.' However when Walter recovered from his illness towards the end of 1876 he moved to Enholmes Hall, near Patrington, and his brother John, as shown in Walford's County Families for 1877, took over Hallsteads. 'Since Myers was of the family, doubtless Myers was granted access to the grounds.'*

Walford for 1877 does indeed list Hallsteads among John Marshall's addresses; but so do the Walfords for 1875 and 1876. There was no question of his moving there in 1877. John was titular head of the family, and, though the estates were administered for him by a trust, all the family houses were listed as his. In fact, Hallsteads was, and remained, the residence, not of Walter Marshall, or even of John Marshall, but of their (and Myers's) uncle, Arthur Marshall. Arthur Marshall had no children, and seems to have allowed Walter and Annie and their children liberal use of the house, or more generally of Old Church, which functioned as an annexe to it. Mr Jarman's whole elaborate story—that first Annie, and then Walter, quitted Hallsteads, their 'home', under emotional stress—is fiction from beginning to end.

Enholmes Hall was, and remained for some years, the residence of another brother, George Hibbert Marshall, who was a J.P. and Deputy Lieutenant for the East Riding of Yorkshire. Walter Marshall may well have *stayed* at Enholmes Hall after his recovery; but he did not take it over. He retained his house in Thurloe Square for at least the remainder of the decade.

There is ample evidence from Myers's correspondence and his diaries that after Annie's death he remained on friendly terms with Walter. Walter stayed on occasion both with Myers at Cambridge and with Myers's mother at Cheltenham; and after 1887, when Walter succeeded to Patterdale Hall, Myers and his wife and family went to stay with him there on a number of occasions. Myers took a considerable interest in Annie's children, and also remained on friendly terms with her father and sisters, going more than once to stay with them at Thornton.

There are several other points in Mr Jarman's article to which objections might be raised; but the above will sufficiently illustrate his turn of mind and standards of accuracy. To smear a dead man's character on the basis of such flimsy evidence is an irresponsible and wholly deplorable action; and even if Mr Jarman were right about his facts, the flatulent moral comments with which he intersperses his article (and also his subsequent letters on the subject in *Psychic News*) would leave a nasty taste behind them. He justifies his inquiry by saying 'To some extent the validity of Frederic Myers's final conclusions depends on the answers; or, at least, it may be determined whether his scientific work was unduly shaped by a cankering emotion'. This is an odd argument. Myers advances *reasons* for believing in the immortality of the soul; they may not be valid reasons, but they can be met only by advancing reasons for scepticism. A psychological inquiry, however full, into the *causes* of his belief, (his upbringing, the death of Annie Marshall, etc.), could not upset either the reasons which might be advanced to justify that belief, or the reasons which might be advanced against it. A belief can be both a rationalization (the outcome of psychological forces) and true (that is, supported by the evidence).

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SIR,—Alan Gauld's refutation of Mr Jarman's attack on F. W. H. Myers leaves little more that can usefully be said. According to Mr Jarman's imaginative reconstruction of the relations between Myers and Annie Marshall ('Phyllis'), he was

not only an adulterer and a heartless coward, but a consummate hypocrite. Now Myers admits the sensuality of his nature, but he consistently claims that his love for Phyllis, his 'amour' in Mr Jarman's tendentious phrase, was innocent and a check on his sensual temperament. This claim is forcibly made in the poem 'Honour', written in 1873, published in 1882 in *The Renewal of Youth and Other Poems*, and reprinted in his privately printed *Fragments of Inner Life* in 1893. The 1882 publication is particularly deserving of notice. He was at that time closely associated in founding the S.P.R. with Henry Sidgwick and Edmund Gurney, who had been his allies in research from 1874 on, and with the other men, several of them very eminent, whose names are printed on page one of Vol. I of our *Proceedings*. Is it seriously suggested that if Myers, but six years before, had been guilty of the villainy attributed to him by Mr Jarman, they would none of them have detected his falsity and refused to join him in an inquiry demanding before all else integrity and candour?

For integrity and candour Sidgwick was well known. Ever since Myers became his pupil he had known him well, and for him he retained a close friendship till his own death in 1900, as is clear from a long series of letters to Myers published in his *Memoir*. It is sufficient to quote the latter part of a letter written in May 1900, in which, after telling him that he had to face a serious operation, one from which he never fully recovered, Sidgwick continues:

'But to-day I am telling brothers and sisters and one or two intimate friends. *Only* these; please tell no one . . . I wish now I had told you before, as this may be farewell. Your friendship has had a great place in my life, and as I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I feel your affection. Pray for me.'

It is not to hypocrites that men like Sidgwick write in that strain.

As for the publication of Myers's *Fragments of Inner Life* which Mr Jarman deplures, I was very glad that I was able, by the loan of Sidgwick's copy of the original, to assist in the carrying into effect of the express wish of an 'amateur scientist and minor poet', to quote Myers's own description of himself, who more than any other man set going the important enquiry to which we in this Society are committed, and who, notwithstanding the faults he confessed, retained all his life the affectionate esteem of all who knew him best.

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