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MRS GLADYS OSBORNE LEONARD:
A BIOGRAPHICAL TRIBUTE

by ROSALIND HEYWOOD

PSYCHICAL research owes more than is always realized to Mrs Osborne Leonard, the famous medium who died last year. For nearly forty years she provided investigators with material for which a normal sensory source seemed out of the question; hence, those who lack her conviction of survival, yet cannot swallow the hypotheses of so long a stream of coincidences, or of equally long-term fraud in apparently impossible circumstances by a patently honest woman, seem to be left with repeated examples of complicated mundane ESP. Moreover, her own books and her sittings provide a useful picture of the psychology of an exceptional medium who was also a fine character. It is interesting that, like two very different twentieth-century figures, Pope John and Krishnamurti, she did not appear to arouse personal hostility even in those who found her ideas absurd.

Gladys Osborne was born at Lytham in Lancashire on 28th May 1882. Her parents were prosperous conventionally Church-going English people, with a touch of Scottish blood. They seem to have been kind enough, but not over imaginative, and she clearly did not look back on her childhood as a time of bliss. For one thing, her mind seems to have been more enquiring than theirs. Her friend and executor, Mr D. A. Nickelson, tells me that she taught herself to read at the age of six and thereafter devoured any books she could lay hands on. In her autobiography, *My Life in Two Worlds* (1931), she recorded that her parents were careful to keep from her all knowledge of the fact of death, and she attributed the initial impulse of her mediumship to the painful shock of its discovery at the age of eight.

Every Sunday her father took her to visit one of his friends, a cheerful kindly man. One Sunday they arrived to find the blinds drawn down, and the parlourmaid who opened the door had a tearstained face. 'The master's gone,' she sobbed, and when later the frightened Gladys asked her father where he had gone, the reply was, 'Don't ask questions, dear'.

Two days afterwards she saw her father leave the house clad in mournful black. She tackled the housemaid about this and was told, 'They're burying Mr Underwood . . . deep under the earth . . . of course he can't get out . . . stop asking questions.'

'Will my mother be buried?'

'Of course . . . and you and me and everybody.' After this the child found and read the burial service, 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust. . .'

But Gladys experienced another side of life which did not at all tally with this traumatic experience. 'Every morning,' she recorded, 'soon after waking, even while dressing or having my nursery breakfast, I saw visions of most beautiful places. . . . Walking about were people who seemed radiantly happy. . . . I remember thinking to myself, "How different they are, how different from down-here people, how full of love and life and peace they are".'

Other well-known mediums have written of roughly similar experiences, and these may be more widespread than is realized. I remember offering to read to my six-year-old son, who grew up into an efficient mathematician, on a day when, not being well, he was kept in bed. 'No, thank you,' he said decidedly, 'I shall be going.'

'Going where?', I asked and the reply was that he would get himself swallowed by a dragon and would then rise up to the surface of a sunny blue sea, from which one could swim to the shore and climb a beautiful mountain. And on one occasion he had gone somewhere even better—to an island where all the people were shining and he was *very* happy. One could not question a six-year old too closely, but it seemed clear that when alone and quiet he could induce this experience more or less at will, and that it was as real to him as my presence at his side.

Gladys's variant of Elysium was not a mountain but a 'Happy Valley' and she apparently saw rather than entered it. She was careful not to mention it to her parents, but one day, unfortunately, she forgot and pointing at the dining-room wall she cried to her father to look at the 'specially beautiful place we are seeing this morning'. This brought trouble. She was *not* to make up things like that. She was *never* to look at her Happy Valley again!

Naturally enough, it gradually ceased to appear, to be replaced, perhaps, by visions of the deep, dark grave.

Later on, in her 'teens, the girl saw the advertisement of a Spiritualist meeting, went in, was enthralled, and hastened home to tell her family the wonderful news. The dead were not dead. They were alive and happy. And the living could actually talk with them. But once more her family were horrified. 'All that' said her mother, 'is wicked and vile. I forbid you ever to go to that place again.' A number of other well-known mediums have experienced similar disapproval. Mrs Eileen Garrett, for one, writes of it in her autobiography and Mrs Ena Twigg told me recently that as a child she had been gravely reprimanded if she spoke of her ESP-type experiences.

So once again a means of escape from the deep dark grave was barred. And in other ways, too, Gladys Osborne's adolescence was a shadowed period. She began to train as a singer, but lost her voice through diphtheria; and her family also lost their money. As a result she was driven to earn her living by taking humble parts in theatrical touring companies. Her interest in Spiritualism never wavered and in her early twenties came an experience which for her confirmed its teaching. While away from home she woke up at 2.00 a.m. to see her mother in a bright light, looking years younger and smiling at her. Although she had known her mother was unwell she had not thought the trouble serious; but next day came a telegram, 'Mother passed away at 2 o'clock this morning.' The girl accepted her vision without question as being her mother herself, and it stimulated her to attend Spiritualist meetings and to try to develop her own psychic powers. This she did at first through table-tilting. From the beginning her intense desire was not only to comfort the bereaved but to demonstrate to the world at large that man could survive death.

In the course of her theatrical work she met and married a fellow actor, Frederick Leonard, who was also interested in psychic matters, and he became her devoted support and companion until his death. At first theatrical engagements were very hard to get for both of them, and they were often short of food and their possessions in and out of pawn. In her third book, *Brief Darkness* (1942), she tells of a grim period when she was driven to work fourteen hours a day making women's blouses, for an average wage of 12/- a week. However, she continued to try to develop her psychic gifts, and in 1913, when she and her husband were working at the London Palladium, she used to practise table-tilting between acts in the cellar with two actress friends, one of

whom was later the Mrs Blanche Cooper of Dr Soal's well-known Gordon Davis case. At these sessions messages purported to come from a young girl who called herself Feda. She claimed to be a Hindu ancestress of Mrs Leonard's, who, according to family tradition, had died very young in childbirth in 1800. Then one day Mrs Leonard fell asleep while using the table and on waking she was told that Feda had spoken through her. From now on Feda became her main Control and the only one known to investigators from the S.P.R. But Mr Nickelson told me that in early years a Control who called himself North Star would give healing through her and that during the Second World War Feda said that another Control would soon appear. Shortly afterwards, he said, a deeper-toned quiet voice greeted the sitters and thereafter came at intervals to a few old friends among them.

Early in 1914 Feda gave Mrs Leonard repeated, urgent instructions, both *via* a planchette and *via* her sitters—her surface consciousness did not communicate with Feda directly, since she was in trance when Feda appeared—to start work as a professional medium as soon as possible. 'Something big and terrible is going to happen to the world,' Feda insisted, 'and Feda must help many people through you.'

Such an appeal could hardly fail of its effect on a young woman as sensitive and warm-hearted as Mrs Leonard, especially one who had suffered a traumatic shock about death at an early age and whose youthful tendency to ESP-type experience had been repressed; so she obediently gave up her acting career, took a room and held daily sittings. And her husband too gave up his own career to help her in her new work. At first they were miserably poor, for she charged very low fees—and poor people nothing—but soon her sitters increased in number and one day there came a French widow who was broken-hearted at the loss of her two sons in action. To identify them Feda gave her such accurate information, including names, that the widow told the wife of Sir Oliver Lodge about it, and eventually Lodge himself went for a sitting, disguised as a Mr Brown—and went again. One incident which greatly impressed him was that soon after his son, Raymond, was killed in action, a purported Raymond sought to identify himself through Mrs Leonard by describing in some detail a group photograph of Raymond and his brother officers which had been taken shortly before his death, but of which Lodge had never heard. Shortly afterwards such a photograph was unexpectedly sent to him by the mother of one of those officers. Feda also made statements as from the 'Myers' group, and in the well-known *Faunus* case she reminded Lodge of a communication purporting to come

from Myers through the American medium, Mrs Piper, which he had forgotten. All this Lodge recorded in a book, *Raymond* (1916) which became something of a best-seller and caused Mrs Leonard's stream of sitters to become a flood. On Lodge's advice she raised her fee for a sitting to one pound, so poverty became a less insistent problem. By now she was entirely dedicated to her work and, under guidance, as she believed, from the discarnate, had even given up such mild mundane pleasures as her previous moderate smoking and drinking, and had also become a strict vegetarian. *Nothing* was to be allowed which might reduce her sensitivity to contact with the 'next world'. Such dedication indicates considerable strength of will in one who frankly enjoyed singing, dancing and acting and all the gaieties of this world. Yet though utterly convinced of the nearness of the discarnate, she was not unduly starry-eyed about them. 'We have a tendency to accept every utterance made by those who have passed over as infallible,' she wrote in her last book, *Brief Darkness* (1942). 'This is responsible for a good deal of disappointment and misunderstanding.' And she added that for years she had been advising students to avoid this tendency.

An honest medium's life can never be an easy one, liable as they are either to be stuck on a pedestal or jeered at as crooks or cranks. Here Mrs Leonard was helped by her lack of conceit and sense of humour. In *My Life in Two Worlds* she recorded with obvious enjoyment a remark made by a stranger on being told that she was a medium: 'Good gracious, you look quite sensible!' Quite sensible too was the help she poured out in her later years when money was less short—anonymous weekly gifts of coal and comforts, for instance, to old-age pensioners and other hard-up people.

Psychical researchers first came in contact with Mrs Leonard through Sir Oliver Lodge, and so well did she understand that their task was to search for solid evidence that in 1918 she agreed to give sittings for three months exclusively to persons introduced by the S.P.R. (see *Proceedings S.P.R.*, 32, 1-143). She also promised never to read any literature connected with psychical research, a promise she was still holding to when I first knew her over twenty-five years later in the nineteen-fifties. I referred casually to some well-known landmark in the literature at which she looked puzzled and then said, 'I'm sorry, but you know I promised from the beginning never to read any publications connected with the S.P.R. for fear it might diminish the value of evidence I might produce. And I never have.'

Little more need be said here about Mrs Leonard's personal life.

It revolved around her mediumship and her marriage. She helped and supported the Greater World Spiritualist League and built a small meeting place for the use of Spiritualists near her home at Tankerton on the Kent coast. Her favourite relaxation was gardening. Her husband, with whom her bond grew ever closer as the years went by, died in the mid nineteen-thirties, and during his last illness she nursed him devotedly night and day. Even so, Mr Nickelson told me, three hours before his death, when she had been up all night, she gave a sitting to someone in grave distress.

Mrs Leonard's second book, *The Last Crossing* (1938) gives a psychologically instructive account of her apparent contacts with her husband in, as she believed, her 'etheric' body. She wrote that in this book she 'bared her inmost self to give—hope'. In it she also recorded frankly the mistakes she had made. On one occasion, after a desperate attempt to reach her husband—'I *must* get to him, I *must*', was her attitude—she appeared to find him, but in very great pain. The next day she appeared to have a visit from him, during which he explained that he had not in fact been in pain at all, but she had let herself be affected by her own subconscious memory of the pain he had suffered before he died. She must learn to forget unprofitable subconscious memories. Mrs Leonard's conclusion from such experience was that extreme anxiety to reach the dead in their own world can defeat its own end, and this is in accord with the feeling often expressed by sensitives that intense effort inhibits 'this-world' ESP. Nevertheless Mrs Leonard had no doubt that on occasion she did find herself in the 'next world'. Sometimes she felt that she passed into it through dream and came back through dream again—but it differed from the dream world in being orderly. This tallies with Professor Michael Whiteman's belief that on occasion he too can pass through the incoherent world of dream into an orderly rational 'inner' world.

Mrs Leonard tried to remain at her home in Tankerton during the Second World War, but eventually moved inland to stay with a friend, Mrs Plant, at Jordans in Buckinghamshire. She was induced to do this by another friend, Helen MacGregor, who was also a sensitive and who sent a message from her Guides that to stay on the coast of Kent during the aerial warfare would damage her mediumship. She returned home when the war was over and continued to work as hard as ever until the last twelve years of her life when Feda decreed that she must take no new sitters. It also became necessary greatly to reduce the number of old sitters. She died peacefully of cerebral thrombosis at Tankerton in March 1968.

Mr W. H. Salter has summarized the special characteristics of Mrs Leonard's phenomena in his S.P.R. pamphlet on *Trance Mediumship*. For the most part they were produced when she was in trance, but occasionally messages came when she was table-tilting with another person, or automatic writing would supervene when she was writing normally. Some idea of the quantity of material she provided for study is indicated by the fact that there are thirty-odd articles about her in S.P.R. publications and seven in the *Journal of the American S.P.R.* Among the investigators who made long-term studies of her mediumship were Sir Oliver Lodge's secretary, Miss Nea Walker, to whom she gave proxy sittings for nineteen years, Una, Lady Troubridge and Miss Radcliffe Hall, Mr and Mrs W. H. Salter, and the Rev. Charles Drayton Thomas, who had over five hundred sittings with her.

Such long-term investigations do not, of course, produce the kind of 'shock' evidence as when detailed information about a deceased person unknown to the medium is given to a new anonymous sitter, but they do give scope for characterization, at which Mrs Leonard was brilliant. Mr Salter points out that this went much further than the most startling reproductions of tricks or manner of speech. For years on end a 'communicator' would give message after message without speaking out of character or putting the mental or emotional emphasis wrong. Even were this accuracy achieved by no more than telepathy from the living, plus subconscious inference and dramatization on the medium's part, it was still a feat, he says, which suggests remarkable subconscious powers of characterization.

It is, of course, only by reading hundreds of sittings that the characterization in them can make its full impact, but Mr Drayton Thomas's account of his purported father's first attempt to take over control of Mrs Leonard from Feda may give some idea of it. Feda said: 'There's something he [the father] wishes to try now, so Feda will keep quiet for a minute.'

Then, after a long pause, says Mr Thomas, came a deep, slow, dignified voice, entirely different from Feda's childish treble. It was not his father's earth voice but it was his manner of speech. 'Charlie, Charlie,' said the voice, 'it is extraordinary. Who would have thought it possible? I can control the hands and head, but apparently not the lower part of the body. I fear I could not stand. Each time I will try to do this a little. It will be good to be able to talk freely together'. The 'communicator' then clasped Mr Thomas's hand, slapped his knee and continued to repeat, 'It is extraordinary!' Then 'he' felt, smilingly, for his moustache

and beard and spoke of some joke about his face which, he said, Mr Thomas's mother would know of, but Mr Thomas would not. He said he had forgotten it himself until back in a body again. Mr Thomas's mother later confirmed this joke.

A crucial question, of course, is who, or what, was Fedra. Most psychologists would probably look on her as a submerged portion of Mrs Leonard's own psyche. What she claimed to be was her youthful Hindu ancestress. What she appeared to be was a cheerful, childlike creature, with a squeaky voice, odd pronunciation and a marked sense of humour, which she occasionally indulged in at Mrs Leonard's expense. She once, for instance, gave away her jewellery. Though politely sympathetic with the bereaved, she was anything but sentimental and did not approve of outbursts of sorrow. In my own few fleeting apparent contacts with the discarnate I have noticed a similar attitude—why make so much fuss about so unimportant an affair as the death of the body?—and it appears again in many accounts of out-of-the-body experience when death seems imminent. But it is anybody's guess whether this attitude is due to translation to improved surroundings or to the fact, as Jung suggests, that, survival or no, the unconscious is quite indifferent to death.

Fedra was as keen as Mrs Leonard herself to produce watertight evidence for survival and to that end she suggested a new type of experiment. This was for her to indicate something written on a particular page of a particular book which stood on a particular shelf in a house where Mrs Leonard had never been. This she did successfully on many occasions, sometimes even when neither the sitters nor Mrs Leonard knew the language in which the book was written. There is a valuable analysis of these book tests by Mrs Sidgwick in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, 31, 241-400. Fedra also had many successes with proxy sittings. One account of these can be found in Nea Walker's book, *Through a Stranger's Hands* (1935), and another good case in which Fedra gave highly specific information about a deceased water engineer, Mr Macaulay, at three removes, is recorded by Mr Drayton Thomas in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, 45, 275-306.

To list Fedra's successes in this way may give the impression that all her statements hit the mark, and this, of course, was not the case. No medium can be on top of her form all the time, and Mr Nickelson told me that Fedra herself said she could not get results for everyone. Nor did she always choose to try. On one occasion, he said, a certain Ambassador asked for a sitting, and although Fedra demurred Mrs Leonard thought she ought to give it. The Ambassador duly arrived, Mrs Leonard went into trance,

and then the two sat opposite one another for an hour in total silence. 'Tell her' said Feda afterwards, 'that if she sits with someone we don't think right, we won't come.'

In *Brief Darkness* Mrs Leonard gives another instance of Feda's disapproval. Sir Walter Gibbons had come for a sitting and Mrs Leonard had mislaid the rug she always wrapped round her knees during a sitting as the trance condition made her cold; so to save time she used her almost new fur coat instead. Sir Walter told her afterwards that when Feda arrived and was about to speak she paused suddenly, sniffed the air and muttered, 'Dead animals; hurt animals. I feel their vibrations all over me. Where are they?'

Mrs Leonard's hands then felt around, pounced on the fur coat and tore it apart, and Feda remarked, 'She ought to know better than to wear dead animals all over her.' After that Mrs Leonard wore fur fabrics to keep herself warm.

The most illuminating all-round study of Mrs Leonard's mediumship can be found in Chapter XI of Professor C. D. Broad's *Lectures on Psychological Research* and also in Chapter XIV, where he compares the picture painted by her with those of Mrs Willett and of Swedenborg. In Chapter XI he points out certain resemblances between Feda and the secondary personalities in the classic cases of Miss Beauchamp and Doris Fisher, and he discusses Whately Carington's pioneering attempts to compare by means of word association tests the conscious personalities of Mrs Leonard and other mediums with those of their controls and communicators. Although he doubts how much Carington actually achieved he feels that 'the ideas at the back of his work are sound and should be better known'. It is to be hoped that one day it may be repeated and improved upon.

Although, except for occasional dim post-trance impressions, Mrs Leonard's knowledge of Feda came at secondhand through sitters, Feda claimed that she could become aware of Mrs Leonard's thoughts and feelings whenever she liked. But she could not always grasp the ideas that 'communicators' wanted her to transmit. Professor Broad makes an interesting analysis of the different methods they employed to convey these to her. She would sometimes have trouble if they used words with which she was not familiar, and this could induce an intriguing phenomenon which became known as the Direct Voice: a voice which differed from Feda's would be heard by a sitter as coming from a point outside Mrs Leonard's body, as if the 'communicator' were helping Feda or correcting a mistake she had made. In Mr Drayton Thomas's paper 'A New Hypothesis Concerning Trance Com-

munications' (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, 48, 121-163), he lists various types of intervention by the Direct Voice, including occasions when it appeared to spar with Feda. On one of these Feda reported of a 'communicator' 'He says you must have a good working. . . . What? Hippopotamuses?'

Direct Voice: Hypotheses.

Feda (more loudly): Hippopotamuses.

D.V.: Hypotheses—and don't shout.

Feda: I'm not shouting. I'm only speaking plainly.

On another occasion Feda remarked that a certain 'communicator' was not used to fitting in with other people. He wanted his own way. 'He's just like that.'

D.V.: I am not!

Feda: Yes, you are . . . (to the sitter) He's a funny gentleman!

D.V.: Not funny!

Later Feda said that this communicator was talking about 'the sinner that repenteth' and then commented, 'I think the sinner that repenteth is an awful nuisance.'

D.V.: No, he isn't.

Feda (having the last word): Well, he sounds as if he is.

Mediumship is usually thought of in relation to the evidence it claims to produce for survival, and as nowadays the idea of survival is somewhat out of fashion it is perhaps less studied by psychical researchers than it used to be. This seems a pity, for even if survival were proved a myth, mediumship of the class of Mrs Leonard's in a person of her integrity would still be of psychological interest. For one thing it seems to provide ESP which is more far-reaching and complex than any met elsewhere; for another its dramatisation is more coherent and long-lasting than that of the best dreaming. In fact, at the least, it hints that a Dickens or a Dostoevski may lurk in the depths of every human psyche, however pedestrian its surface level appears to be.

I add this postscript with diffidence because the first item seems like comparing Schnabel with a person who can just manage to play chopsticks, and the second too trivial to be mentioned. My justification is that they may have been first-hand examples of Mrs Leonard's non-trance ESP, which is seldom referred to.

We first met at a party where another guest, the well-known psychiatrist, Dr Eric Strauss, asked us back to his flat for a talk. While he fetched a drink she looked at me consideringly and then said, 'I see you do what I do, but you do it direct. I put it outside', and she waved a hand. I don't think she even knew my name, and in those days I was careful to keep quiet about my own

chopstick-level flashes of apparent ESP, but for me that remark cleared up a lifelong bewilderment: why did some people *see* apparitions when I seldom did more than *feel* invisible presences? Why did I merely 'know' that certain action was needed when others could visualize the distant situation which caused such a need? And so on. Now I wondered, were they putting things 'outside'; in other words, making images to convey extra-sensory information to their conscious minds? If so, need I try so hard to explain away my own imageless 'direct' impressions? Was it more intellectually honest to let them be, withholding judgement?

Soon afterwards Mrs Leonard came to see me and we were sitting together upstairs when downstairs the front door opened and my son came in. She at once gave an excellent sketch of his very individual personality and then she added, 'Yes, you must be disappointed at not having a photo of him, grown-up.' This was not in my mind at the time, but two days earlier I had been consciously regretting that I only had a schoolboy photo of him and could not induce him to be photographed as a man.

MRS GLADYS OSBORNE LEONARD: SOME REMINISCENCES

by MURIEL HANKEY

HAVING been invited to add something to the tributes subscribed by other writers on the life and work of Mrs Osborne Leonard, I am happy to contribute a few personal recollections of this supremely fine sensitive.

My first meeting with her was early in the summer of 1915, when Mr James Hewat McKenzie directed that in addition to normal secretarial duties I should apply myself to the study of mediumship. One could start under no better mentor, though I complied reluctantly, accompanied by warning admonitions from my parents against becoming involved in 'this nonsense'. So, I first attended a small group in the McKenzie home, when Mr A. Vout Peters was giving a demonstration of psychometry. Having been told to take a trinket, or such like, with me, and not possessing any trinkets, my mother lent me a gold ring I had never seen. It was a thin ring, chased, and mounted with a deep red garnet; could have been worn by man or woman. The medium picked it up from the table and asked whose it was. When I timidly claimed

ownership, he frightened me with direct contradiction. He then proceeded to say that it had belonged to a very young man, who had passed on many years ago; this man had died from an accident; he had gone to a loft to fetch hay for his horse, and had fallen from the loft to the cobble stones in the yard below, etcetera. When I recounted this at home, my mother said it was quite true. The ring had belonged to her brother, Harden, who had died before I was born, but had never been mentioned to me owing to the reticence that surrounded death in those days. I was forbidden to attend another meeting, but I was already briefed to visit Mrs Leonard, which appointment I kept.

This was in the very early days of her mediumship; she had only recently become professional after seven years of practice. Mr McKenzie said that I must pay the charge myself, as one must never expect something for nothing, and I would value my experience more if I had to buy it. The fee was only a modest half-a-crown, albeit a heavy tax on my purse. This first sitting cost me five 6d. lunches!

The notes I made at the time have long since disappeared. I did not recognize anything as being *communication* with the dead—at that age I knew of few—but Mrs Leonard did speak of 'Hardy', and referred to a house with a river running through the garden, which described the house in which my Uncle Harry (Harden's brother) was still living. Reference was made to the significance of the initial 'H' in this family. I knew Harris, Henry, Harvey, but now learnt of Harden, Horace, Harriet. I have forgotten most of what I heard during that first private sitting, but this was only the first of many hundreds that I attended with Mrs Leonard during the next 45 years, in various capacities, personal sitter, proxy-sitter, or just recorder. During this period I once gave up a fixed job and spent two whole years devoted to note-taking at séances, mostly with Mrs Leonard, and many with Mrs Garrett. The sensitives were not always aware that I had been present, as some researchers preferred that I enter the séance room after the medium was in a condition of trance, and leave before his/her return to normality.

Naturally, I came to know Mrs Leonard, and her husband, Fred, very well indeed. We became close friends, but never once did either of them discuss the sitters or the subjects raised during séances. Mrs Leonard exercised remarkable self-discipline, for which I think Mr McKenzie's personal coaching was partly responsible. She often expressed her indebtedness to him but she was also helped by Mrs Kelway Bamber, Sir Oliver Lodge, the Rev. Drayton Thomas, and others. The progress of her

mediumship and its various expressions, her clients, her background and characteristics, are all well known from the experience of the many people who have recorded their indebtedness to her. I can therefore add little except personal anecdotes but they may serve to illustrate the peculiarities sometimes expressed in her mediumship.

One noticeable feature at the sittings was Mrs Leonard's very definite loss of body heat. Even on the hottest day she would envelop herself in three rugs or heavy shawls, from the feet to the shoulders. Thus cocooned, she would sit facing her client, who was placed slightly to her left, their knees almost touching. The only contact was when *Feda* (the control entity or personality) would stroke or pluck the sleeve of the sitter, to emphasize a point. On one such occasion, when I was wearing a blouse made of satin, she gripped and stroked it and exclaimed: 'Oh! Isn't you slimy! Nice!' The window curtains were always drawn together to exclude light, but one became acclimatized to the twilight conditions, and there was always a small table nearby on which stood a lamp for the use of the sitter or stenographer.

Mrs Leonard asked no questions; never once tried to ascertain whether I was there for myself or on behalf of any absent sitter, yet she never failed to link up with the appropriate business or communication. This cannot be attributable to mind-reading for very frequently I was completely ignorant myself. In any case, any person acting as proxy sitter for another, be they known or anonymous, should be close-minded and mechanical as possible otherwise there may easily be cross-currents. One quite experienced sitter who acted as proxy on my behalf spoilt the whole experiment by interrupting and contradicting the communicator. The results were chaotic.

Mrs Leonard would enter the séance room generally after the client was seated, and nothing other than a courteous greeting was uttered until she was in a state of trance. First there was stertorous breathing, then the personality completely changed. The control, *Feda*, would announce herself very excitedly, generally with clapping hands, and an announcement, yes, she had come! sometimes little jumps in the chair, despite the wrappings. Then she would proceed to the subject of the séance. She always KNEW for whom the sittings were held, even if Mrs Leonard did not. Appointments lasted never less than 80 minutes, and quite often continued for well over two hours. There was repetition, of course, but never laboured. It was a friendly, often intimate, conversation, and often, instantaneously after, and sometimes seemingly simultaneously with, *Feda's* statements there would

come a separate tone of voice, very slightly sibilant but quite audible and clear, sounding as though located in the air rather than issuing from the medium's mouth. This has been attributed to ventriloquism, but I do not accept this. The voice had a valid quality; it was quite different from the normal or entranced voice of the medium, and in every instance this 'outer' voice either corrected what had been said, or added to it. More than once I questioned why this extra voice manifested, or, another question, why did *Feda* sometimes fail to conclude a message, or at other times (rarely) give a wrong one? This was explained as being due to the sitter. *Feda* would whisper (touching my hand confidentially), 'Murul, they (sitters) make me say it! they *make* me; they want to hear it; they are too strong; I *have* to say it', and then she said that when she was 'outside' Gladys she knew what to say, but when she got inside her sometimes she would forget, but she wouldn't say anything wrong unless the sitters wanted to hear it. If they were 'easy', it was all right, but if they 'only wanted to hear what they wanted to hear' and were strong about it, she couldn't help it.

On one occasion, when she raised a topic and I remarked 'This is most unexpected', the reply was, 'Oh! Was it unexpected? Well, he kept saying before the sitting, "Two important things; don't let us forget them", because when I get inside Gladys, Murul, I am very liable to forget what they told me before that I must remind them to say.' When the 'extra' voice reprimanded with 'That is exaggerating; say what I say', *Feda* explained 'Perhaps it will interest you to know that sometimes, if they want me to say something that I mightn't think was right, or might use my judgment about, in Gladys's brain, they electrifies me, and I know then I have to listen to what they say. With this electrifying feeling, I couldn't live or feel at all unless I did what they say. . . . It has grown the last few years. If it is something they want me to say that is going to make a fight with Gladys's brain, then they give me this sort of galvanized or electrified feeling as a signal to *Feda* to turn off all ordinary conceptions and listen to what they say.' (*Feda* sometimes referred to herself in the third person.)

As time passed, and over the years *Feda* became more facile in language, she did occasionally make quaint mistakes which became habitual, or mispronouncings, some of which also remained permanently with her, as, for instance, 'Chisk' for Chiswick. Also, with reference to me, 'He says he sees more stubble-ability', and 'You *is* a human being; you isn't a rhinoveroususus'. She would sometimes decide to explain the message she was trying to convey, e.g. 'There is something like a kind of weakness that croaches.

He means cock-roaches. "No," he says, He says "E.N." Yes, I know! Hen-roaches; that's the same thing only one makes eggs and the other doesn't.' On another occasion, when a surgical operation was referred to, I was told 'He didn't take the ovaries away' with the added comment, 'Feda knows what they is; you keeps birds in them.' Again, referring to Mr McKenzie's proposal to train me for mediumship, 'You could have been developed, a full-blown one! There is some fat ones, isn't there?'

When I asked *Feda* if she could explain the *modus operandi* of her work, she said 'As I stand [*sic*] here there is only about 50% of me in this room. I can't bring my whole life into these conditions, and the vac-vac-vacuum created by this is liable to be filled up in a second by any influence from any person or conditions on the earth.' Referring to another question, 'John says, if you go by train it is better to let the train take you than you take the train; such a waste of effort. . . . Put all your powers into the day instead of trying to take in tomorrow as well. Mr James (McKenzie) says, "One step enough for me. Give us to-day's bread, not tomorrow's."'

When *Feda* had difficulty in reporting words, she would often have recourse to picture form. For instance, 'He is holding a flat round black thing, in connection with himself; something shiny. Haven't you got one to do with a span of bridge? Reaching across? A bridge? And a big capital F. He likes music. It isn't a joke because I am still with music.' It was not until after the sitting I could recognize that the flat round black thing, connected with him, shiny, to do with a span of bridge, a big capital F and music added up to his favourite record, Flanagan and Allan's 'Underneath the Arches' which he had given me.

It has been stated that *Feda* was an ancestress of Mrs Leonard, an Indian girl who had been married to William Hamilton, in India, and died at the age of 13 giving birth to a child. There is also a suggestion that she came to England with Pocahontas. Was she indeed the spirit manifestation of an ancestor of the medium, or was she a dramatization on the part of the medium who assumed this personality deliberately or subconsciously for use in her trance work? It would be interesting to *know*. During the many years' work with Mrs Leonard I accepted the hypothesis of the separate spirit control. The identity of the alleged communicators and the validity of the communications were the important aspects. During sances I listened, answered, questioned, recorded; the evaluating process could come later. The medium's integrity was undoubted; her sincerity absolute. The atmosphere of the séance room, her own self-discipline and loyalty to her

clients were qualities of a rare order. Whatever doubts as to the how, why and wherefore may have presented themselves from time to time, she certainly believed in life after death, which she said was daily demonstrated to her by her husband after his passing. Every Christmas she would send me a card 'With love from Gladys, Freddie and Feda'. Three separate entities? Two? Be the answer what it may, during the hundreds of times I sat with this sensitive her own normal personality never intruded. She was so deeply unconscious when in trance that she was quite unaware of what was happening, even when something occurred which no woman would welcome. Such an instance Gladys told me of herself, with some emphasis on her horror. She had undergone dental surgery, and had had new dentures fitted, which she wore for the first time when sitting with a new client, who was unknown to her, I think. When she awoke from trance she was horrified to find her mouth empty and her dentures lying on the table in front of the sitter. He told her that during the sitting there seemed difficulty in her speech and she had *taken out her teeth and put them in his hand*.

Another incident occurred with another client. Mrs Leonard was a strict vegetarian, fond of fruit and chocolate. I had taken a basket of strawberries to her, but as we never spoke before the sitting I had placed the fruit on a ledge behind my chair. During the sitting, *Feda* bent forward, put her arm over my shoulder, and poked a hole through the paper on the basket. She then proceeded to dig a finger in the berries and suck Gladys's fingers. I told her not to do this but to take the whole strawberry and eat it properly. Thereupon *Feda* declared 'Oh no; Gladys won't let me do that since I ate the horse's hair; I mustn't put anything in her mouth.' At the conclusion of the sitting I asked the medium about this, and she shuddered; 'Dont' remind me of that, or I shall be sick.' On being pressed to explain, she told me that on one occasion *Feda* had pushed a finger through a hole in the upholstery of the chair-arm, pulled out some horse-hair stuffing and crammed it into her mouth, trying to eat it. Mrs Leonard was jerked out of trance to find herself choking, the wire-like horse-hair lodged in her throat. She was violently sick. If this incident does not demonstrate separate personality, at least it confirms the complete unawareness of the medium. It does not, however, guarantee that what is already in the mind of the medium will not emerge as 'communication' during a séance. For instance, at one period some sitters told her that there had been some talk from *Feda* with reference to shoes, which had no meaning for them. Mrs Leonard realized that she was in the habit of taking a short



MRS. GLADYS OSBORNE LEONARD ABOUT 1922
(kindly lent for reproduction by Mr. D. A. Nickelson, Mrs. Leonard's executor.)

walk every morning, and looking at half a dozen shops nearby, with particular interest in the shoes. From that day she did not permit herself the morning stroll; no chat with her husband; no glance at the newspapers, lest extraneous matter emerge during the séance. At its conclusion, however, there was usually a little time spent on pleasantries, current opinions, and so on.

As far as I know, Mrs Leonard never had a child, but she—and *Feda!*—loved cats. She also became a strict vegetarian, and said that in the dream state she visited the 'animal spheres' where were congregated the astral bodies of animals that had been slaughtered for food. Sir Walter Gibbons claimed that he, also, visited the animal spheres with Mrs Leonard. I could not accept this, myself, but it is a fact that at a time when I was working for Sir Walter he would frequently write a note to Mrs Leonard recounting his dream or astral journey of the night before. Crossing this memo, by the same post, would come a letter from Mrs Leonard telling of her experience which coincided with his. They would not telephone the information lest it was picked up telepathically. If it is a fact that they saw the same scenes, they were not sharing the same reaction; Sir Walter did not become a vegetarian.

There is a deal more I could remember perhaps, but it has all been said before. I must conclude but not without an expression of gratitude that I enjoyed the privilege of friendship and shared experiences with this gifted sensitive who used her gifts with absolute integrity.

MRS GLADYS OSBORNE LEONARD: A TRIBUTE

by ZOË RICHMOND

IT is difficult to give a real picture of such a remarkably good, gifted and extraordinary woman as Mrs Gladys Osborne Leonard, in an Obituary Notice.

On 27th October 1956, the late Mrs Gay, also a friend of mine and a member of the S.P.R. Council, wrote the following brief remarks about her, which I will quote, as I agree with every word. 'I think Mrs Leonard is by far the best medium I have ever met, or read about, and I think it is largely because her whole character is so selfless and so above all the pettiness of everyday life, that she is a perfect channel through which real messages can come.'

It is interesting to note that Mrs Piper's connection with the S.P.R. ending with 'The Faunus' incident, and the first mention

of sittings with Mrs Leonard, both appear in the same article by Sir Oliver Lodge in *Proc.* 29, 111-18. As a result the S.P.R. had the enormous benefit during the lifetime of two outstanding mediums, Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard, of detailed reports from several sources of their activities, and the cordial co-operation with the Society of both of them.

My husband, Kenneth Richmond, and I were introduced to Mrs Leonard anonymously by Sir Oliver Lodge in 1916, soon after the publication of 'Raymond' which my husband reviewed for *The Times*.

My brother was killed on 15th August 1915 and Raymond Lodge on 15th September 1915. Mrs Leonard had been prepared before the war to give comfort and hope to hundreds in those early days of the First World War, and the S.P.R. had wisely asked her co-operation with the Society for a period of full-time service, so sittings were booked for people by the Society, without any details being given, not even their names. Our first sitting was an unforgettable experience and followed by many others, but not only for personal reasons.

Gladys was as open-minded and as anxious as any member of the S.P.R. to get proof of survival although she was completely convinced herself from her own personal experience, so when we left London and moved to Cornwall late in 1916 and started our own experiments, she agreed to join in from her home in Maida Vale. We had become real friends with 'Feda', her control by this time, as well as friends with Gladys.

Feda had a very distinct and charming childlike personality. We had regular sittings in our cottage in St Merryn in which Feda would suddenly announce her presence. We used a small four-legged stool as a table and it was amazing the way various communicators could produce a feeling of their presence through that little stool, even before starting to spell out their names and messages.

Feda would spell out her name with the stool and then we would have a conversation—about the flowers in our room perhaps—and she would say she would tell Gladys about these. Then Gladys would write and report this and often add more that Feda had seen—unbeknown to us. One unimportant but amusing item of this kind was the following, quoted from Mrs L's letter dated 27th March 1918 among several more important details.

'Blue and white basin. Mrs Ken uses it—rubs, rubs. Mrs Ken does not walk properly, jumps, jumps. Feda see her hop, make noises.' This refers to the daily chore of washing our baby's nappies in a blue and white bucket—which I still have—and the

silly antics one plays with a nine-months old baby, jumping about and making noises to make it laugh. The more important details give several excellent book tests, which were in a peculiar hanging L-shaped bookcase well described.

There were several very successful book tests given in this same letter, too long to include here, especially as Mrs Sidgwick analysed Mrs L's book tests from the evidential point of view in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, 31, 1921, page 241, control experiments being set out to show whether similar success would be obtained from books chosen at random.

There is however, I think, another point not emphasized in those articles, i.e. that the subject of the passages indicated was, in itself, relevant to the circumstances of interest to the sitter, and this was certainly true of the book tests in Mrs L's letters to K.R. in March 1918, as I have K.R.'s long analysis of them all in a letter he wrote to Mr Arthur Hill dated 29th March 1918.

I think all the other book tests were given at sittings with Mrs L in her house. In our case, she was in Maida Vale and we were in Cornwall and she had never visited us at all.

Feda often came and talked to me through K.R. and on 8th March 1917, after a long conversation, she said 'Feda must go soon'.

I said 'Thank you awfully for coming. God bless you'.

A long pause followed in which I felt I'd said the wrong thing.

Then Feda said very solemnly 'Do you believe in God?'

I said 'Yes, don't you?'

'Feda does not know. She used not to, but bright spirits that come think there is something. Feda will know someday.'

Then, after a little she said 'Feda did not like talking about God on earth with Parsons, a horrid revengeful God. Feda didn't want him.'

I wrote to ask Gladys on 17th October 1956 if she could comment on these strange remarks. In a letter dated 24th October 1956 she replied as follows.

I cannot remember ever hearing anything to cause me to think that Feda did not believe in God, but years ago she said solemnly to many sitters on different occasions that she was 'learning and progressing through controlling me, and helping to link people on earth up with the ones they loved on the other side'.

No, I have never had any doubts myself about the existence of God, but even when I was young the orthodox church did not help me to realize Him or feel Him. I felt as Ken did about orthodoxy.

I found Him, or realized Him through my own work, becoming more

and more conscious of Him through my mediumship, unconscious though I was of so much of it.

It seems from these remarks that Feda differed in her views, both from Gladys and K.R. as she referred to 'Bright spirits that come think there is something', or could she have mixed up their 'bright spirits' with those she helped to join up from the unseen?

While looking up all the old sittings, I came upon the following letter from a cousin of mine, Mrs May Firmstone, who lived next door to Gladys at Tankerton and was a great friend of hers. She was badly bombed in a Mortimer Street Club, London, and the letter is dated 3rd May 1941 from Stoke Mandeville Hospital. It shows Feda and Gladys as certainly 'Kindred spirits' but not, to my mind, identical ones. I will quote my cousin's remarks.

'I suppose I came off as well as could be expected. I was the first one hit except for Miss Ostler who was in the bedroom just near where I was sitting. When she got into bed, she said to me with a happy smile "I am going tonight!" The man she was engaged to had, only a month or two ago, been killed by a bomb. She was very much in my mind, as she was desperate, and while I was having a sitting with Mrs L. some weeks before Feda said "Mrs May, tell Gladys I must give the girl you are helping a sitting without any pennies, before you go today. Tell Gladys to arrange it as soon as possible", which Mrs May did.'

The letter continues 'Miss Ostler had a marvellous sitting, which kept her sane. Feda told her she was going by a bomb and had better be by herself, as they hoped to protect Mrs May.

'As it so happened, I was next to her. I had just tucked her up and went to see how everyone was getting on, and sat down, when it happened.'

The Club got a direct hit and half collapsed in flames, with Miss Ostler's bedroom. It must have been a very sudden death which she so wanted, while Mrs May was damaged, but recovered, though she was then over 70, so Feda used a sitter on this occasion, to give Mrs L. a message which, with her usual kindness, she arranged in time.

I know Gladys regarded Feda as a separate individual spirit attached to herself for a purpose. In a letter to K.R. dated June 1917 she says (after remarking she was in a hurry to get away) 'Feda comes to me very little when I am resting, in fact she grumbles if I ask her to do anything in strange surroundings, or rather she did last time I was away. I am so glad she goes to you. She told me, before leaving London, that she was going to have a lovely time going round by herself to "special friends".'

Again in a letter dated 9th July 1918, she writes 'I so seldom get into touch with Feda except when I am writing to you. It is very strange, but I expect there may be a band working for some particular object on the other side, and Feda is trying to help.'

That the two of them *did* help, hundreds of people could testify.

We know so very little about what we really are in any case. In dreams we often seem to fish in a mutual pool and catch bits of each other.

On 29th November 1959 I had an extraordinary dream, carefully noted at once, which did not seem to be for me, but for Gladys, and it gave me a feeling she was not well, so I sent her the dream.

In her enthusiastic reply, she recognized the people in the dream—total strangers to me, and she explained it all and regarded it as a message and warning to her from a friend and healer who had greatly helped her keep well, while he was on earth and whose advice she had been neglecting of late and so had had an attack of vertigo.

It is a very interesting letter but would take up too much space to include here in full, but I would like to end with her own view of what her work had done for her, with which she ends this letter—'How thankful I am that I was allowed and helped to do that work, above all others. Zoë, it brought me so much comfort and peace too.' And I know exactly what she means. She was 77½ when she wrote that letter on 1st December 1959.

MR HASTINGS AND THE BORLEY REPORT

by E. J. DINGWALL, K. M. GOLDNEY and
T. H. HALL

IN Part 201 of the *Proceedings* (March 1969) Mr Hastings contributed a hundred-page article complaining of the methods adopted by the three authors of *HBR*,¹ published thirteen years ago (*Proc.* 1956, 51, Pt. 186).

It appears from the contents of this paper that after some years of cogitation Mr Hastings does not find himself in agreement with the great majority of the reviewers of this report when it first appeared. We regret that this be so and would have even greater cause for regret had Mr Hastings produced any sound and solid

¹ In this reply the abbreviations are as stated in Mr Hastings' paper (p. 67).