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IN MEMORIAM—GUSTAVE GELEY.

1868-1924.

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THE sudden and untoward calamity which has removed from us an indefatigable and devoted worker in metaphysical science calls for an appreciation of his personality as well as of his work. Dr. Geley is not well known in this country: I doubt if he is well known personally in any country except in France and Poland; for, whether through overwork or through a habit of concentrated thinking, there was an outer husk to break through before one came upon the man himself. The first time I saw him was at Mariemont, Edgbaston, in 1919, when, in company with Mr. Stanley de Brath, he called upon me unexpectedly one afternoon during what was at that time an infrequent, perhaps exceptional, visit to England. I too was very busy at the time; and though he brought a letter of introduction from my friend Charles Richet, calculated to predispose me in his favour, I found him rather reserved and *difficile*. Very likely he got the same impression of me; and I was by no means as hospitable as I would now like to have been. Doubtless the diffi-

culty of language and of nationality is partly responsible; but something of the same kind was felt at first by others whose control of language was much superior to my own. Later, during several visits to France, I got to know him and his family, and, with the friendly assistance of Madame Geley, felt that I knew him better, and established the beginning of a friendship. Moreover, I met at his house some delightful people, and realised the importance of his life and mission.

He was a philosophic thinker of no small magnitude. His physiological and medical training gave him many advantages, he was well read in the writings of philosophers who had dealt with the relations between the conscious and the unconscious, and he had made a special study of the views of M. Bergson.

His best known book, *De L'Inconscient au Conscient*,¹ aroused the attention of many in France. In it he tried to deal with the philosophy and rationale of psychophysical phenomena in general, and it may be regarded as the most important treatise on that aspect of the subject since F. W. H. Myers's great and more comprehensive work. Moreover, Geley had the advantage of being better acquainted with physiological phenomena (which are evidently of vital importance in supernormal psychology) than even Myers was. And whether his views hold their ground, whether they really form the initial chapter of a new science, or whether they are destined to be replaced as well as supplemented,—questions which cannot be lightly or quickly decided,—they are certainly based on an apprehension of ectoplasmic phenomena, some personally apprehended, some collated from the experience of others, which, as far as I know, is without a parallel. Had he lived there seemed every prospect of our learning a great deal more through his indefatigable work amid the opportunities which friends of the subject had provided, and of which, with rare self-sacrifice (comparable with that of Richard Hodgson), he availed himself to the uttermost.

¹ Published by Alcan in 1919, and now translated into English, *From the Unconscious to the Conscious* (Collins.)

In addition to his own contemplation and study of the subject he patiently devoted a great part of his time to the convincing of others, especially of his medical confrères, or the few who would allow themselves to be subjected to a demonstration, through first-hand experience, of the reality of the supernormal physiological phenomena, which had long attracted the attention and overborne the scepticism of Richet, Schrenck Notzing, Osty, and others.

Gustave Geley—killed by the crash of an aeroplane as he was leaving Warsaw for Paris on the 15th of July 1924—was born in 1868 at Montceau-les-Mines. He studied in the hospitals of Lyons (where incidentally he obtained the first prize from the Faculty of Medicine for his thesis), and then established himself as a medical practitioner at Annecy, being at an early age specially attracted by the study of metapsychic phenomena. His first book was virtually on the origin of species, or what was called in France (and occasionally by Huxley) "*Transformisme*," to express capacity for racial change, *Les Preuves du Transformisme*, with a sub-title *Enseignements de la Doctrine Evolutionniste*, in which he criticised the doctrines both of Darwin and of Lamarck, and argued for an element of guidance or plan as necessary to account for the origin of variations. In his second book, *L'Être Subconscient* (published in 1899), he attempted a synthetic explanation of obscure phenomena in normal biology as well as in abnormal psychology, and broached his doctrine of what he called "dynamo psychism,"—a sort of soul-energy akin to the *élan vitale*, and not very different perhaps from the conceptions, otherwise arrived at by ancient writers, of *entelechy*, and the Logos. This conception of dynamo psychism was fundamental in Geley's scheme, and in his mind took the form of a vitalistic theory which sought to escape from the trammels of materialistic philosophy through what may be treated in a wide sense as the interaction of soul and body, or, more generally, a dynamic power of the mental and spiritual regions competent to control, guide, and rearrange atoms of matter. The fact of such control is familiar in

the bodily processes of digestion and the like, carried on with a definite object or on a definite plan, but quite unconsciously; and of these normal analogies he makes full use.

This book attracted some attention, but not till 1920 did it develop into a more comprehensive treatise, the outcome probably of a philosophy which was no longer satisfied with the duality inseparable from the usual idea of interaction, but was seeking for a unification of the two main aspects of the universe by postulating a passage or development or evolution of one into the other,—the gradual growth of the conscious at the expense of the unconscious,—somewhat perhaps as is suggested by De Morgan's title *From Matter to Spirit*. Geley's thesis, however, is purely biological, it does not deal with the non-living, it treats of the gradual unfolding or emergence of consciousness out of subconscious or unconscious life.

In this work (*De L'Inconscient au Conscient*) Geley traces many analogies in the animal kingdom, where from a formless mass of protoplasm a full-fledged self-determining, and in some sense conscious or ultimately conscious, organism is gradually elaborated. From the formless pulp of the chrysalis, in which all the organs except the nervous system of the larva have completely disappeared, biologists admit that limbs and organs are reconstituted, under the guiding influence of "Life"—a term which here at any rate must be left vague,—operating apparently through the residual trace of nervous mechanism, until a fully developed insect appears, with characteristics quite different from those of the larva, though doubtless to some extent foreshadowed by them in rudimentary and barely recognisable form. From an egg again, which is mainly a mass of unorganised food material, isolated from all external influence save the random molecular agitation which we call heat,—yet which must contain a microscopic germinal vesicle, the nucleus and container or vehicle of the vital principle,—a bird emerges, completely constructed and able to function in every detail, with an intelligence enabling it to stand erect, to move, to see, and intentionally seek its food.

In analogies such as these, and by appeal to the pheno-

mena of reproduction generally, whether in association with a placenta or otherwise, Geley and others are seeking to rationalise the strange phenomena exhibited by ectoplasm—the reality of which is testified to also by Prof. Richet, who gave it its name,—from which there appears to be quickly formed a temporary living organism, having inevitably some of the main characteristics of the pre-existing normal organism whence the ectoplasm must have been derived. In beginning the study of such temporary formations, controlled by intelligence and yet arising out of apparently formless pulp, we seem at first to be in the region of the frankly incredible, certainly of the plainly mysterious. But biological analogies, which are undeniable though equally mysterious, may serve to mitigate our initial incredulity, and enable us more placidly to contemplate, and perhaps accept gradually and circumspectly, the strong and repeated evidence for the existence of such things, which from time to time is forthcoming.

For these apparitions or simulacra, or whatever they may be called, are able to make an appeal to our senses; not only to the sense of sight, but the sense of touch, and the muscular sense also. They are visible, they are sometimes tangible, and they can exert force on matter; they simulate human bodies or limbs. Indeed the analogy of our own bodies may be pressed into the service; for these too are constructed by the vital principle out of materials which, whatever their previous history, are first reduced by the processes of mastication and digestion to a formless pulp or even to their molecular constituents. Yet under the mysterious guidance of Life, each portion of food or assemblage of molecules, when it arrives at its destination, is there converted into the organ or structure appropriate to that particular locality, forming here a skin, there a hair, here again a blood-vessel, or a part of some internal organ; filling up artificially made cavities, such as wounds, to the proper level, and, under healthy conditions, stopping there without going beyond the normal limits; in some of the lower organisms actually replacing lost limbs, or even reconstructing a whole amputated body; so that by section it is possible to get two animals

where only one existed before. In vegetable life the process is still more familiar, as when the mere cutting from a tree reproduces not only the tree, but flowers and fruit and innumerable descendants.

To those who would study the operations of Life, whether as displayed by mediums in the laboratory or by organisms in the field, all these things have to be taken into account. And we shall presently find that one class of phenomena is no more incredible than any other, but that every class must be examined and verified, and the laws of its being gradually ascertained. There is much work to be done, and Geley was on the track. Fortunately a few biologists are waking up to the importance and interest, not only of normal, but what appear now to be supernormal phenomena: and in the course of a few generations we may hope, not for a full understanding—for that must be far distant—but for a clearer comprehension and more active receptivity of all responsibly vouched for occurrences, not only in the chemical and physical and biological, but in the psycho-physical direction as well. For the boundary between the normal and the supernormal shows signs of breaking down. We are beginning to get a glimpse of a continuity running through the whole of animate nature. The interaction of mind and body is attracting more attention than ever before, and in due time Philosophy may succeed in its great and difficult and perennial task of unifying the vital and the material, and realising that the ultimate clue is to be found not in the material and transient but in those permanent realities which appeal to us as Life and Mind.

But to return to Geley the man. In 1918 the Institut Métapsychique Internationale was founded by the munificence of M. Jean Meyer, and was established by him at 89 Avenue Niel, Paris; and Geley was invited to become its first Director.¹ This involved his abandoning his

¹ Prof. Charles Richet accepted its Honorary Presidency, and some responsibility for experiment. The President is Dr. Santoliquido, lately the head of the Italian Sanitary Service. The Committee included Dr. Leclainche, Inspector-General at the Ministry of Agriculture; Dr. Cal-

medical practice and prospects of success in his profession, and entering upon an arduous and unpopular task, which he must have known would subject him to a painful amount of ridicule and hostility. Even in this country such a step would be a sacrifice; although here, through the exemplary and cautious labours of Sidgwick, Myers, Gurney, not to mention such of the founders of the S.P.R. as are still living, the ground has been to some extent prepared; the hostility of the press, of the scientific world, and of theologians, has been, not indeed removed, but to some degree restrained or mitigated. In France, however, it must be conceded that both among clerics and among professional men hostility is rampant, though the eminence of some of the workers is such as to render them more or less immune from personal attacks. Geley was not immune. His standing in normal and medical science was not such as to curb the fiercest kind of criticism. Scientific men in this country, as elsewhere, have been accused of a kind of insanity, over credulity, mal-observation, and the like; but Geley was accused, not so much of those things, or not only of those, but of downright fraud and deceitful co-operation; in other words, he was accused of being an accomplice and a liar.

Older members of the Society for Psychical Research will remember that it was Henry Sidgwick's ambition to make the evidence so strong that this accusation of complicity would be the only one left to opponents. He could well afford to take that line; for his transparent honesty was such that accusations of that kind, in his case, would have been preposterous. But a comparatively unknown and junior man could hardly suffer such accusations without pain; and to rebut such scandal Geley consented to have his premises examined for secret doors and the like, and to being chained up along with other investigators,—himself as well as the medium being subject

mette, Medical Inspector-General (France); Professor Bozzano (Italy); Professor Cunéo; the veteran astronomer Camille Flammarion; Count de Gramont of the French Academy; M. Jules Roche; M. Gabriel Delanne; and Professor J. Teissier. A bi-monthly journal, *Revue Métapsychique*, is published by the Institut.

to control. In the interests of truth, all these things were submitted to; and a whole year of work was devoted for the most part to convincing doctors and publicists and men of science that under the most rigid scrutiny and complete control of everybody present, normally inexplicable phenomena actually occurred. That at least was the aim. Whether it was accomplished or not, is not a matter for assertion. Some were convinced, others were not: each must speak for himself.

It may be argued that the effort to convince people against their will is neither necessary nor wise. It may be argued on the other hand that the asserter of strange and apparently unwelcome truth is bound to make the attempt. Crookes made the attempt, and failed. But many things have happened since the seventies of last century. Geley made the attempt, and partially succeeded; the most stringent evidence that he has been able to produce—evidence from which it is difficult to see any loophole for escape—being the casts of hands and other limbs, but mainly of hands, which he obtained at Warsaw through the unpaid mediumship of Franek Kluski. I use the term “unpaid” because it was so, not because that is a matter of any importance. Precautions are just as necessary in one case as in another; and remuneration is perfectly reasonable if a medium is willing to accept it. Kluski, though a manual worker, was not.

The paraffin gloves from which these casts were made, considered in conjunction with the conditions under which they were produced and the crucial tests made to ensure their genuineness, are a standing demonstration of something inexplicable by normal science; they constitute the kind of demonstrative evidence which Zöllner, long ago, and many others have sought, without success; a permanent material record, which can be examined at leisure, and which,—given ascertainable and recorded conditions,—are, as it were, a standing miracle. These casts repose on the shelves of a cabinet in the Institut Métapsychique, and this is not the place to describe them. They represent or typify the material side of Geley's achievements: his books represent the other side.

The last book he wrote was an account of these and other experiments conducted at the Institut, or in other countries with the Institut as base. Under the title *L'Ectoplasmie et la Clairvoyance*, it narrates experiments establishing his assurance of the genuineness of meta-psychic phenomena. The book has only just appeared; and I hope that a translation will be forthcoming through the industry of Mr. Stanley de Brath, whose friendship with the author, and whose close acquaintance with his work, will certainly make it a labour of love.

On the note of friendship and personal appreciation I propose to conclude this notice. In answer to my enquiries, one of my daughters, who a year ago was kindly invited by the Geley family to pay them a long visit, has sent me the following personal information:—

“Dr. Geley was quiet and difficult to understand, but always felt friendly and kind. He worked much too hard: it seemed as if he was always writing in his study or holding a séance. These sittings seemed to take it out of him, giving him a tired look, and making him rather abrupt in his manner; he was so conscientious about them, and worried if sceptics went away still sceptical. At meals he was never too tired to be thoughtful enough to talk slowly and carefully whenever he spoke to me, so that I should understand. There seemed but little peace for him. His heart was in his work, and he showed great delight when any important person obtained favourable and impressive results. Very often he would sit silent, apparently immersed in thought. Madame Geley of course managed everything in the house: and the family life was peaceful and affectionate.”

As showing the estimation in which Geley was held by his friends and co-workers, I shall here translate or paraphrase from a panegyric in *La Revue Spirite* a few passages which speak for themselves:—

“What we would speak of, we who have known and loved him, is his magnificent intelligence coupled with high scientific conscientiousness; also his exemplary simplicity, his rare faculty of reconciling the

enthusiasm of the investigator with the reflective wisdom of the savant and philosopher; finally, and above all, his charity which extended itself unmeasured to his most sceptical adversaries. . . . Serenely he persevered in his honest task, remaining indifferent to attacks, seeking only one end, to which he was valiantly devoted: namely, the advancement of the status of a subject, of which the principles are already indisputable, and which he sought to raise above the cloud of suspicion in which it had too long been enveloped and hampered by the negation of orthodox materialistic science. He knew that time was on his side and that by slow but sure increments his hypothesis in some form would gradually become certainty. His faith equalled his courage. He saw opening before him a long stretch of life. He preserved that quiet faith which sustains and guides all the great leaders, he pressed forward in spite of obstacles, towards the goal; striving only to bring about, one day, this victory, towards which the advances are better and securer when gradually and cautiously made. He felt assured that the barriers would yield, one by one, to persuasive pressure before the evidence of facts, without any necessity for using violence; although nevertheless violence was employed against him by adversaries who doubtless felt that their ground was beginning to shake under them.

“This achievement was for him the mission of the future—of his future. He is no longer among us. The torch has slipped from his fingers. Those who hereafter carry on the interrupted work will not find in the history of Truths courageously conquered a finer example than that of Gustave Geley.

“For us spiritists, Gustave Geley is not dead. . . . He falls, but his spirit rises. An active worker for truth while on the earth, he will remain the same, in the luminous regions which he has entered, without surprise, and where he has reopened his eyes on a vaster vision. His mission has entered on a more active phase.

“If this conviction can be any alleviation to the grief of his wife and children and many friends, we may bless once more the knowledge which enables us to mingle with our tears the vivifying promise of future reunion.”

To this tribute M. Jean Meyer adds a touching note of remembrance and sympathy, speaking of the admiration and regret which he feels for “this great savant and benefactor of humanity, who lived only for the advancement of his nascent science.” “His work remains: it is founded on a rock, and will be continued in the same spirit. . . . He left the earth in that fragile aeroplane, his eyes fixed on the heavens whence he came, . . . his great soul will continue to inspire the strictly scientific work of the Institut.”