

## OBITUARY: MR W. WHATELY CARINGTON, M.Sc.

*The President, Mr W. H. Salter, writes as follows :*

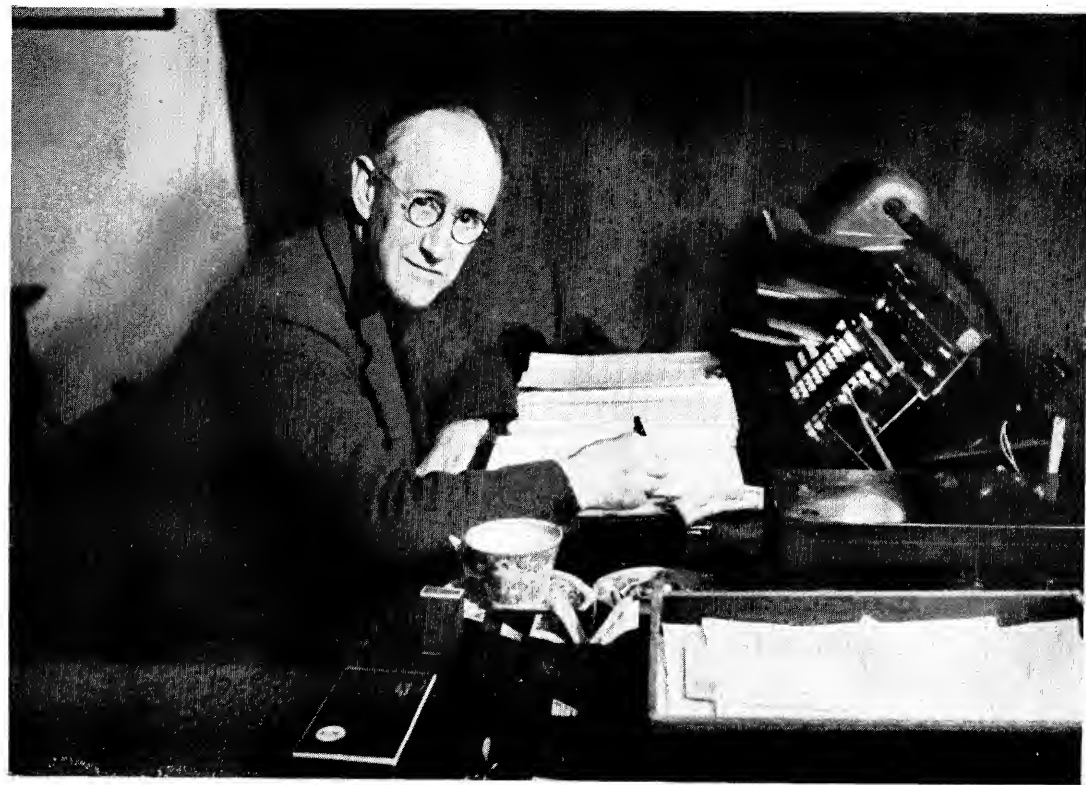
IN the middle of the First World War there joined the Society a young man, whose science studies at Cambridge had been interrupted by Army Service. Mr Whately Smith (as he was then called) was destined during the succeeding thirty years to be one of the leading figures in our Society, distinguished by his originality in introducing methods new to psychical research, his ingenuity and pertinacity in applying them, and the lively skill with which he presented his results.

During the first few years he was content to follow well-beaten trails. In December 1916 he had a sitting with Kathleen Goligher in Belfast, and in *Proceedings* vol XXX he described the sitting, and at the same time reviewed the Goligher phenomena as a whole, summing up in favour of their genuineness. In 1920 he was a member of the S.P.R. committee, which investigated "Eva C." on her visit to London that year and reported cautiously—most cautiously—in her favour. In the same year he published *The Foundations of Spiritualism*, a small book containing an admirable summary of the evidence for survival, as it then stood. In it he shows a thorough understanding of what may be called the traditional work of the Society. He was, however, soon after to break with tradition, and launch out on lines of his own planning.

It was the freshness of his approach to old problems that must have struck everyone who first met him soon after his return to Kings. There is nothing more attractive than a young, tall, good-looking intellectual, witty, widely read and desperately keen on his chosen task. Science and psychical research divided between them his main intellectual interest. The relations between them were not as cordial and intimate as he thought they should be, and he made it one of his main objects to place them on a better footing.

There were, he recognised, faults on both sides. The materialist bias of many scientists was repugnant to his philosophy, and his book *The Death of Materialism* (1933) was written to combat it.

It is clear, however, that he considered the main fault to lie on the side of psychical research. The Society, when he joined it, had been in existence for thirty-four years, long enough for nearly the whole generation that saw its birth to have passed away, and long enough, in many institutions, for the process of fossilisation to have become well-advanced. As to some time-honoured branches of psychical research he thought this had already taken place, and he was at no pains to conceal his opinion that the collection of spontaneous cases, and qualitative experiments in telepathy, however useful as pioneer work in the "eighties," offered no promise of progress. The great contributions which Myers and Gurney had made to the medical psychology of their generation seemed to have little bearing on the doctrines of Freud and Jung, which were then gaining publicity in this country. He was not unaware that the Society had in its studies of automatic writing struck out a new line of research, but though, as he showed in *The Founda-*



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tions of *Spiritualism*, he was familiar with this work and its implications, it did not seem to him a work likely to convince, or even attract, men of science. The Society, he urged, ought to make more use of quantitative methods familiar to the scientist, in combination with recent developments in psychological technique. This led him, as early as 1921, to suggest as a "New method of research" (*Proc. XXXI*) the application of the word-association test, to the investigation of the psychological status of mediumistic Controls, as it had already been applied by American psychologists to one case of abnormal secondary personality. It was not, however, till some years later that it was found possible to apply the method to three mediums, Mrs Leonard, Mrs Garrett and Rudi Schneider, and their Controls. In a series of later investigations the same method was applied to several communicators. The results were set out in a series of papers in *Proceedings*, entitled "The Quantitative Study of Trance Personalities" (Q.S.T.P.) from 1934 on. The difficulties of interpreting the figures aroused much controversy, but the method of analysis strongly suggests that in some instances at least Controls are secondary personalities of the medium produced by repression. This was an important result, in itself, but the uncertainty of interpretation attaching to most of the data of this very elaborate investigation was a disappointment.

In 1933 Mr Whately Smith resumed the family name of Carington, under which his later work is to be found indexed in our *Proceedings* and *Journal*.

It was a belief firmly held by him that the Society would make more progress if it attempted fewer tasks at one time. He had for long been interested in the implications of telepathy (see *Journal XXVIII*, 57), and was anxious that the Society should concentrate its energies on demonstrating telepathy to the scientist by methods the scientist would recognise as cogent. With this in view, as soon as the labours of Q.S.T.P. began to ease off, he worked out a technique of repeatable, quantitative experiment. This required the collaboration of a representative group or groups of percipients. It was not the least of Carington's merits as a psychical researcher that he was able to inspire others with his own keenness, so that the necessary groups were not lacking. Important data were obtained, but the experimental side of the work was interrupted by the outbreak of war. This did not, however, interfere with Carington's analysis of the data already obtained.

His work on telepathy is too recent and too well known to need description here. Mention may, however, be made of two matters which illustrate his qualities as an investigator and as a man. He was very generous in passing on to other persons conducting research on similar lines points arising in his own work which struck him as likely to be of interest to them: the phenomenon of "displacement", for example. He was, again, most anxious that his readers should have every opportunity of following not only his results, but the reasoning by which he arrived at them, and he sometimes credited his readers with an ability to master involved statistical argument which they were far from possessing. His book on *Telepathy* gained immediate recognition as an outstanding contribution to the theory of the subject.

He was the fortunate possessor of an extremely lively style. Quantitative

work inevitably tends to aridity, but Carington's reader is constantly refreshed by passages of keen, sometimes pungent, wit and apt illustration. These qualities appear in all his numerous writings, which in this respect conform to the best traditions of S.P.R. literature.

Carington was a believer in survival of some kind, while having, he confessed, a strong repugnance to "Spiritualism" as frequently expounded. He did not think that the problem could be usefully debated until various philosophical difficulties had been cleared up. This was the task on which he was engaged at the time of his death, but he left unfinished the book that was intended to embody his solution. May we hope that it will be completed and brought to publication by some other hand?

From his schooldays on everyone who knew Carington was struck by the thoroughness and pertinacity with which he carried out any work he undertook. Without these qualities he could never have accomplished what he did in the face of obstacles. First of these must be mentioned his health, which compelled him to live abroad for considerable periods. It is a mark of the high regard that the Council had for his work that he was retained as a member both of the Council and of the Committee of Reference and was chosen as Myers Memorial Lecturer, during his long residence out of the country. None the less, the lack of close personal contact with colleagues during these years and still more during the war raised difficulties which were not wholly met by the fullness with which he was prepared to discuss in correspondence matters relating to psychical research.

Life abroad was congenial to him, and exclusion from it as the result of the war would have depressed him, even if the alternative had not been the discomforts of a small Cornish cottage, which nothing could have made tolerable but the housewifely skill and devotion of Mrs Carington. For his finances were not such as to permit him those amenities which the intellectual worker highly values.

*Dr. Thouless, who was brought into close contact with his experimental work, writes as follows:*

After the war of 1914, Whately Carington returned to Cambridge to do research on the psycho-galvanic reflex; his book *The Measurement of Emotion* (Kegan Paul) was based on this work. His main interest was not, however, in the reflex itself but in the possibility of using it as a means of studying trance personalities. While doing this work at Cambridge, he had already devised the plan of the method by which he hoped to find out whether the spirits which communicated through mediums were genuine autonomous personalities, and also whether the controls were autonomous personalities or merely dissociated parts of the medium's own personality. This work was completed many years later and published in the *Proceedings* as a series of articles on "The Quantitative Study of Trance Personalities". This was a brilliantly designed experimental plan which well displayed Whately Carington's gifts of boldness and originality. In its main purpose the plan miscarried since critical analysis of his figures showed that he was mistaken in believing that they showed evidence that "spirits" were autonomous personalities. There were, however, clear indications of the truth of the hypothesis that the controls were dissociated parts of the medium's personality.

After a not very successful set of experiments on precognition in dice throwing, Whately Carington started work on the paranormal cognition of drawings (also published as a series of articles in the *Proceedings*). Early in this work he suspected that the straightforward methods of marking success were vitiated by the subjects being paranormally influenced by the drawings exposed on nights before that on which they made their reproduction and also by those to be exposed on succeeding nights. The correctness of this surmise was amply confirmed and his discovery of the fact of temporal displacement in experiments on paranormal cognition is the principal new fruit of this research. During recent years, he had been engaged in work on psycho-kinesis with the same energy and enthusiasm. The results of these investigations have not yet been published.

In his attitude towards quantitative experimental work Whately Carington challenged tradition and showed himself a progressive. He was not interested in the mere repetition of standard experiments already performed by other people in the hope of accumulating an ever increasing weight of evidence of the same kind. He regarded quantitative experimental investigation as primarily a means of making discoveries about the nature of psychical phenomena and not merely of proving that they exist. This function of quantitative experiment is commonplace in other branches of the biological sciences although it has been little employed in psychical research. When Whately Carington repeated his own experiments, his object was not merely to accumulate proof but to obtain data the analysis of which would reveal something of the laws underlying psychical phenomena. He may sometimes have overestimated the revealing power of statistical analysis but he never doubted that the function of quantitative experimentation was to find explanations and not merely to increase the weight of evidence.

The two most obvious characteristics of Whately Carington as an experimenter were his industry and his boldness. Both sometimes led him astray. His industry sometimes led him to embark on an elaborate mass of calculations with only a trivial end in view; his boldness sometimes led him to try to extract significance from mere accidental peculiarities of his figures. But these were also gifts which made him a fruitful experimenter. His boldness led him to explore possibilities that a more cautious enquirer would have ignored, and his industry led him to examine them with a thoroughness that extracted the last grain of information from them. These explorations did not always lead to fruitful results and he was from time to time misled by over-confidence in his conclusions, but they did succeed often enough to justify his departure from the beaten track of conventional experimentation. He might often go along a cul-de-sac with the confidence that others would feel only when their feet were on the high road, but his justification was that sometimes what appeared to be a cul-de-sac turned out to be really a path to something new.

*We are indebted to Mr. Fraser Nicol for the following personal appreciation:*

My tale was heard, and yet it was not told ;

My fruit is fallen, and yet my leaves are green ;

My youth is spent, and yet I am not old ;

I saw the world, and yet I was not seen ;

My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun ;  
And now I live, and now my life is done.

TICHBOURNE, *On the Eve of Death*, 1586

WHATELY CARINGTON once described himself as "a member of the smallest profession in the world—the Profession of Psychical Research." He went on to remark (surprised a little by his own reflections) that there were only half a dozen men whose only occupation and main means of livelihood was psychical investigation. I remember the occasion well, for it was the first time I had met him. He gazed into space in that curiously abstracted way of his, and began to reel off the names on the roll of the Profession. At each name he bent a finger, and having disposed of the whole of one hand he paused searching his mind for the sixth and last name. For a time it could not be found; then with a sudden smile of enlightenment he exclaimed, "Of course—*myself!*" This momentary forgetfulness of self was the cause of some surprise to him, for he was presently confessing himself to be "beastly egocentric". A disarming candour was one of Carington's most attractive characteristics.

As a man he could be fitted into no known pattern or category. In his greatness (and those who knew him well will scarcely question that he had the stuff of greatness in him) and in his limitations he was unique of his kind. He could always be depended upon to do the unusual and unexpected thing. The occasion mentioned above was the culmination of a long, and on one side at least, a lively correspondence, in the course of which I had invited him to visit me in Scotland. Nothing came of this proposal for many months—I cannot remember that he even acknowledged it, such was the man absorbed in other things—until one summer evening the telephone rang and a distant voice announced itself as that of Whately Carington speaking from Amsterdam Airport. He badly needed a change, he said, and (hesitantly) might he be allowed to arrive next morning?

So, the following forenoon, he stood on the doorstep, smiling with a curious shyness. He was immensely tall, somewhere over six feet two inches in height, and like many very tall men, slightly stooped. His eyes were pale blue-grey and looked with a gentle penetrating gaze through thick glasses, and his fair hair crowned a head which seemed proportionately greater than his body. He was then about forty years of age, but even at that time the complexities and strains of life had aged him beyond his years.

With him he brought all he found necessary to pursue (on holiday) the daily work of psychical research—a massive and burdensome electrical calculating machine, and an outsize in suitcases which he was soon disgorging of the greater part of its contents—files of mediumship data, stationery, books and—an ashtray which accompanied him on all his travels.

He was born Walter Whately Smith, but in later life reverted to the old family name of Carington, derived from Carentan in Brittany, the original home of the family. Looking back on his life he could not remember a time, even in early childhood, when his disposition was not shy and painfully sensitive. Those difficulties never left him, and he attributed some of the distress they caused him to early ethical teachings which were de-

rived more from the rigorous outlook of the Old Testament than the comparative gentleness of the New.

His days at Eton and Cambridge were memorable mainly—and almost exclusively—for the rapturous delights of Science. Sport, in most of its forms, interested him not at all: he had no competitive instinct. In science he had all the physical and intellectual endowments that go to make a great experimentalist and thinker—an enquiring cast of mind, acute powers of observation, intelligence that was both analytic and constructive, a pair of clever and sensitive hands, and not least a spirit of adventure tempered by a shrewd caution. In any piece of work undertaken by him his thoroughness was extraordinary.

In the latter part of the first world war he served in the Royal Air Force and took some pride in having piloted twenty-nine types of aircraft. He was involved, however, in a perilous and unnerving forced landing on the Channel coast which seriously disturbed his health. Illnesses thereafter interrupted the course of his work.

It was during that war that his interest was drawn to psychical research by some experiences with mediums narrated to him by a relative. Soon afterwards, December 1916, he had the first of several sittings with Mrs Osborne Leonard. As he wrote long afterwards, he was then “a wholly obscure convalescent subaltern, unconnected in any public way with spiritualism or psychical research and only beginning to take a rather dilettante interest in them.” The striking evidence offered by Fedá (supported and strengthened by encyclopaedic reading of the literature thereafter) was sufficient to destroy the apologetic dilettantism.

From that time forth—and although for a period after the war he was engaged in psychological research at Cambridge and spent some years in acoustical research with special reference to psychological problems, for the Air Ministry and War Office—it may be said that the strongest urge of his life was to explore and, if possible, to solve some of the most resistant problems of the invisible world.

He made two journeys to Belfast to examine the telekinetic mediumship of Kathleen Goligher. On the first occasion he was convinced—and never afterwards changed his opinion—that the phenomena *at that time* were genuine. But four years later (his second visit) he found a “conspicuous and startling deterioration” and he concluded that the mediumship had become fraudulent. In 1920 he was a member of the S.P.R. Committee which investigated the materialising medium Eva C., with inconclusive results.

Many years later I tried to attract his interest to physical mediumship, but he was not to be drawn. You try scores of experiments with a medium, he said in effect, and at the end of it all you do not know even whether you have been testing a medium or merely a clever conjuror. He believed that progress in psychical research was most likely to come “at the present stage of our knowledge” from the study of comparatively simple things like telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition. Nevertheless he showed great interest in the telekinetic mediumship of Rudi Schneider when he saw that the phenomena had a close bearing upon his own work in psychokinesis.

In the early nineteen-twenties his literary output was considerable. In

1920, when he was in his twenty-eighth year, he published *A Theory of the Mechanism of Survival* and *The Foundations of Spiritualism*. The latter consisted for the most part of a summary of the evidence favourable to the survival hypothesis together with a note on his own views at that date. Briefly, his opinion was :

The experimental evidence for Survival and Communication with the deceased is distinctly good, and shows a tendency to become increasingly so. But it is very difficult to set a limit to the potentialities of the incarnate mind, and it would be rash to assess the chance of the "spiritistic" hypothesis at a value appreciably greater than one half.

In later years he came gradually to the view that some part of the personality survives death.

The other book was more important and showed some of Carington's qualities as a speculative thinker. For purposes of discussion he assumed that consciousness survives physical death and proceeded to construct a theory of Four-dimensional Space which would, he considered, go some way towards explaining the mechanism of survival and also some of the phenomena of sleep, trance, anaesthesia and other forms of insensibility. The book seems to have attracted little attention—it was not reviewed in our *Proceedings* or *Journal*. In the course of years the theory underwent a gradual modification at his own hands, due in part to a growing interest in modern conceptions of Non-Euclidean Space. Those revised theories and views would have found their place in a large-scale work on *Survival* which was under consideration—and a small part of it written—at the time of his death. (Here, as in other matters of authorship and research, "his thread was cut, and yet it was not spun".)

The year 1920 was a period of intense activity. He produced the two books already mentioned ; in April he was co-opted a member of Council ; in July he issued the first number of *The Psychic Research Quarterly* ; he was engaged also in psychological research at Cambridge ; and the idea was germinating in his mind for the future "Quantitative Study of Trance Personalities". If high quality of contents could have ensured success the *Quarterly* would still be in existence today ; in fact after a year it was found necessary to reconstitute it as *Psyche*, "a quarterly review of psychology in relation to education, psycho-analysis . . . psychical research etc.", Carington continuing as editor of the re-fashioned review for some years.

So far as his activities as an investigator are concerned—as distinct from his work as a contemplative thinker—Carington will best be remembered hereafter for his ingenious and vast application of quantitative methods to psychical phenomena. His first use of mathematical methods of assessment goes back to the early nineteen-twenties when he was employing, in Dr William Brown's words, "highly original" methods in the investigation of emotion and affective tone in his Cambridge experiments with the psycho-galvanic reflex mechanism. Some ninety subjects were tested in this way and more than 45,000 observations were made. The results of those studies were described in *The Measurement of Emotion*. About the same time he was proposing the use of the same procedures as "an entirely new line of attack" for the investigation of the psychological status of the "Controls" of mediumistic trance.



A dozen years were to pass before he was able to put the project into action. Carington's cogitations on the state of survival research at this time (*ca.* 1933) were gloomy. The Society for Psychical Research had been in existence for half a century. In its early days there appeared to have been an expectation amongst its membership that some great new scientific truth was about to burst upon the world. The Society had now published some seventy volumes, a large proportion of whose pages contained evidence bearing upon the survival problem. But the world was no nearer accepting the great new truth (if truth it were) than ever it had been.

By this time Carington had come very cautiously to the opinion that the survival hypothesis offered the most economical explanation of the published mediumistic evidence. He was quick to add, however, that that was no more than a personal *opinion*. It was a judicial judgement and as such was a long way from being a scientific truth. He considered that so long as "witness-box" methods (as in the examination and study of ostensible communicators) continued to be used as the main instrument of research, there was little prospect of bringing the matter to a critical issue.

He had no illusions as to the long and hard road that lay ahead for psychical researchers, but he firmly believed that the pace of their journey might be quickened by the adoption and exploitation of new methods. These methods were the instrumental methods of scientific men, the results being assessed by mathematics. But it had to be made clear that "Outside of pure mathematics and other organised symbol systems there can be no such thing as absolute proof, but only the establishing of a greater or smaller probability." It was likely, he thought, that a long time would elapse before the demonstrable probability of survival would reach so overwhelming a value as to be universally coercive.

Discarding the old "judicial" methods of attack, he called in the procedures of the laboratory. This was his "Quantitative Study of Trance Personalities". It occupied almost the whole of his daily life for five years. Four reports were issued between the years 1934 and 1939. It is scarcely possible to give an adequate summary of the work in a short space; the reader may be referred to Carington's own published accounts, or to Dr Thouless's very lucid and valuable review of the first three reports, printed in *Proceedings* vol. 44. The general method employed was that of the Word Association Test of Jung, use being made of the Psycho-galvanic Reflex mechanism, the Reaction Time, and Disturbances in Reproduction. Those techniques were applied to four mediums (in their normal state)—Mrs Leonard, Mrs Garrett, Mrs Sharplin and Herr Rudi Schneider—to their trance Controls, and to the ostensible spirit Communicators. By such means Carington hoped to show whether the Controls and Spirits were independent of the mediums.

On only one point was he able to come to any firm conclusion—that the so-called Controls were secondary personalities of the mediums. As for the question of the autonomy of Communicators no certain answer could be returned—the statistical assessment did not permit of a plain yes or no reply. It appeared to Carington, however, that there was on the whole good reason to suspect the operation of some "non-medium" factor and that therefore the case for the independence of the communicators was strengthened.

Whately Carington was a pioneer. Never for him the well-worn paths nor the well-tried methods of approach. And as an audacious pioneer he encountered all the difficulties and suffered all the disappointments attendant on pioneering work. Shortly before the investigation began he had almost no knowledge of modern statistics. He set himself to learn—out of intolerably difficult books—and the wonder was that he learned so much. When the books did not supply a valid method, Professor Fisher and Mr W. L. Stevens could be depended on to elucidate difficulties.

Almost any other man would have realised early on that the work was too much for one mind and one pair of hands, and would probably have cut it short on the not unreasonable excuse that the problems he had set were impossible of solution. But Carington had unlimited powers of perseverance.

Physically alone, the work was a serious strain. To begin with he worked many thousands of calculations on a little hand-operated calculating machine, which caused an affection of his elbow. The Society's Council came to his aid with a magnificent electrically-driven calculating machine which greatly eased the labour and speeded up the work. "It does more work in a day", he wrote with exultant exaggeration, "than any six men could do in a month—and more accurately!"

But even so, the anxieties were not removed. His health was in an indifferent state, and he was living in Holland at a village on the edge of the Zuyder Zee, and subsisting on an income of £120 a year. The Society came to his assistance with a grant (the first of a number of grants) which alleviated his situation but at the same time intensified his fears—the haunting fear that after all the award might be wasted on work which in the end would produce no conclusive result. His extreme conscientiousness only added to his distress and may have contributed to the steady undermining of his health. At one period he was writing of "an indescribably purgatorial time," of "mistake after mistake" being found; and again, "I have never had such a struggle in my life as with this work. The drudgery alone, of which, I suppose not more than a fifth part is even suggested by the final product, was formidable. . . I won't write more or I shall start telling you all about how tiresome everything is. . . If one insists on grossly overworking for five months one must not be surprised at breaking down. . . (But Phoenix is my middle name and I'm not (unfortunately I sometimes feel) dead yet; though I have no reason to suppose that the next life will show any improvement on this."

During an interval in the trance-personality work he conducted some exploratory experiments in Precognition. He recruited some forty subjects whose task it was to forecast the fall of dice. The investigation was of a very tentative nature, and the experience gained proved of great value when he later conducted his very important research in the Paranormal Cognition of Drawings. It was in the course of the dice-work that the idea of the Displacement Effect first occurred to him, and a hint of it is given in the *Journal* of June 1935, where he compared each guess—there were 51,240 guesses in all—not only with the throw for which it was intended but with the next and also with the next but one.

The results of the experiments were suggestive rather than significant, and they formed another example of Carington's vast and laborious spade-

work in previously unexplored fields. He would often say, with amused self-depreciation that he "tried all the wrong ways first". I do not think that in so doing it ever occurred to him how much he was preserving later workers from the innumerable pitfalls that beset his pioneering labours.

In the spring of 1938 Carington was married to a German lady, Hedda Enders. The circumstances were such as are not usually associated with such ceremonies—though they do not appear surprising against the background of pre-war Germany. They had known each other for some years, and in recent times Hedda Enders had suffered the grim experience of being jailed and put through the third degree by the German Secret Police. Carington's moral and physical courage never showed itself better than at this time. He entered Germany in order to effect an escape and was well aware of the risks he was running. He thought it would be advisable to leave a "life-line" open to this country, and this precaution took the form of a simple but ingenious code based on the way he wrote the date on his letters—2. i. 38 as compared with 2 January 38 and so on—each form of writing having its particular meaning. He laughed at this sort of arrangement as being "melodramatic". Anyhow it was a frightening experience.

Plans for the crossing of the frontier were laid in Frankfurt-am-Main by Carington, his wife-to-be and the husband of one of her friends. Carington then lay low in Berlin, living in a room near the Potsdamerplatz, until the plans matured. What he saw and heard in Berlin during those weeks made him (who had previously shown little interest in politics) a savagely angry enemy of National Socialism for the rest of his days.

As for himself, in Berlin, "The mere fact that one did not know [whether the secret had been uncovered by the authorities] was very wearing—or so I found. For weeks I was scared stiff whenever I heard a male voice in the flat (e.g. telephone inspector, gas merchant, postman) fearing that it might be a Secret Police agent come to interrogate or arrest. And, of course, at one time I thought there was a distinct possibility of war and being cut off in hostile country."

Mrs Carington was eventually got across the frontier by a mountain pass into Czechoslovakia, a journey greatly facilitated by the knowledge and guidance of her family friend. The latter turned back at the frontier; the Caringtons were married in Prague the same day. Mrs Carington's friend perished in a concentration camp during the war.

The years following this marriage were the most fortunate in Whately Carington's life, and they also formed his most abundant period as a psychical research worker. If Carington was the restless worker and writer, his wife was the adviser, critic and collaborator. On at least one occasion—in the Paranormal Cognition of Drawings—she was the originator of an impressive piece of research.

At first they lived in Cambridge, but in 1940 moved to Cornwall. Carington's health rapidly improved, and for a year or two he felt himself stronger and his mind more at rest than at any time since he was young. A holiday spent in the south of France just before the war had also done him a power of good. Years afterwards he used to look back, with a painful longing, on one particularly memorable day of that holiday. It was spent on a quiet, sunny beach, and—"I hadn't a care or thought in the world... It was the only completely happy day of my life."

Their little cottage stood at the end of Sennen Cove, a stone's throw from Land's End. There was a cold water supply and electric light (part of which Carington had fitted up); there were no other of the ordinary requirements of civilisation, but somehow the place had been made comfortable, and Mrs Carington's garden in summer was a delight.

Here Whately Carington passed the last years of his life, and most of those years were spent in his study, which was a small, narrow room with, at one end, a tiny window that overlooked the Atlantic. He rarely looked out of the window, in my recollection—the passing show interested him not at all. (On the other hand, he followed with too much excitement the progress of the war.) On a vast ex-dining table pushed against the window-corner were all the tools of his labours—the calculating machine, typewriter, pens, rubber, multi-coloured inks, index cabinets containing summaries of thousands of calculations; and at one side of him, as he sat at his table, were well-thumbed sets of our own and other Societies' *Proceedings*. Round the walls and overflowing into his adjacent bedroom were row upon row of thick files—they must have numbered about 200—containing complete records of his work in past years.

He worked with extreme care and precision, and treated his data with a thoroughness that at times seemed more a failing than a virtue. He light-heartedly excused this on the ground that he was "a pathological perfectionist". Moreover, in psychical research it was a rare experience, he held, to get a straightforward "Yes" or "No" answer to a question; it was therefore necessary to drag out of the data every particle of information they could offer—if only as a signpost for further work and for future investigators. He felt that his elaborate statistical methods were fully justified by his discovery of the Displacement Effect in the Paranormal Cognition of Drawings.

To collaborate with Whately Carington was an education in how psychical research should be done. Nothing but the best one could do would satisfy him; and having done one's best he would then propose improvements. But if he imposed heavy demands on others he was no less severe on himself. His own criteria were summarised in his own words—"We must always remember that the methods of orthodox science are not necessarily good enough for psychical research." Without such rigorous standards he would probably never have been able to enlist the co-operation of the many university psychologists who collaborated with him in the PNC research.

But the rigorous methods had an account to render. The care taken of his health allowed him to write, in 1941, "I'm working harder and better than I have for years", but in the same letter, "I just can't keep abreast with what has to be done." From 1942 onwards he worked at an ever accelerating pace. It had been his custom to work eight hours a day—"like an honest working man". When this proved insufficient he stepped it up to ten hours, then to twelve, and sometimes until he fell asleep from exhaustion over his worktable. In his last years he began work about 7.30 in the morning, and never later than 8 o'clock.

He refreshed himself with endless cups of tea—a beverage which he described as his only remaining pleasure—poured from a half-gallon pot, which was replenished from time to time during the day. A short rest after

lunch, then he returned to further calculations, or to deal with his large correspondence, or to write more pages to whatever manuscript was in progress at the time. Most of his own experiments were carried out at night in collaboration with his wife.

The sense of urgency grew more intense each year. "Time is so short," he would exclaim. When advised to rest he retorted, "No, I must work and *I must work*, for the time cometh when no man shall work." The awards of the Perrott Studentship and later a Leverhulme Research Fellowship gave him deep pleasure. Perversely, those marks of recognition contributed to his worries, for his high sense of responsibility was always at the mercy of his nervous temperament, and the fear of failure (to fulfil his undertakings) was very real to him.

Yet it was in such circumstances that he produced two papers by which his name will be best remembered hereafter. The first was the highly technical paper called "Steps in the Development of a Repeatable Technique", (*Proc. A.S.P.R.* vol. 24). The construction of an experiment that would meet one of the prime requirements of all scientific work, namely one which could be repeated at any time with approximately similar results on each occasion, had long been Carington's aim in psychical research, and he considered that his Frequency-Catalogue invention fully met such requirements. He conceded to critics that the method would require amendment, but he felt that it was fundamentally sound. The preparation of the catalogue, which occupies some thirty pages of the report, entailed the re-examination of the work of 741 percipients and the individual examination of 10,006 drawings. The mere physical labour alone was monstrous, it occupied Carington for many months, and during the whole of this time his wife was seriously ill.

It would be a mistake to think of him as always borne down by duty and anxiety. He had periods of gaiety when his infectious laughter would involve the whole company. He was not a great talker—the reading of a paper at the S.P.R. was invariably an ordeal to him—but he was a witty and lively conversationalist. He had a genuine humour, for at times he would joke at his own misfortunes. He was the perfect host, for in him "the desire to please" had no known limits.

The conception and development of the Association Theory of Psychical Phenomena was the cause of much lively correspondence. (The theory was set forth in *Proc.* vol. 47, and forms the second of the two papers mentioned above.) One was forewarned to look out for the draft of a paper, "in which I propose to plunge into theory feet first with a loud splash, and try to produce one which is applicable not only to PNC but (in outline) to practically the whole range of psychic phenomena." The paper was duly received, and was returned to him accompanied by some minor suggestions and a word of doubt about the "flippancy" of some of his paragraphs. To this he characteristically replied—"To a certain extent this kind of thing is natural to me; but also it is part of a deliberate policy of debunking, and of a refusal to be intimidated by pundits or by the profundities and awe-inspiringness of the subject. Unlike Kant, I refuse to be cowed either by the Immensity of the Starry Heavens or by the Moral Sense in Man. There ain't no moral sense in man that I can see—at least not as K meant it—and I see nothing reverential in being large, hot,

distant and unintelligent. An onion is much more interesting and important than a star . . . ”

Few men can have written so many letters enlivened with so much gusto. Often the words jump and dance on the page. Some of this vitality comes out in the best of his published works, especially *The Death of Materialism* (a gorgeous book, surely) and in *Telepathy*. Most of the latter was written at breakneck speed—sixty thousand words in three weeks. When he got the book off to the publisher he wrote, “Got book off yesterday after violent spurt, which approximately killed me.” He immediately flung himself with unrestrained intensity into further analysis of PNC drawings, and abruptly broke off a letter with the exclamation that something was “suddenly becoming *frightfully* exciting.” This was an examination of the scores of women as compared with men. Three days later there followed an apologetic postcard pleading, “You know how it is when some new finding beckons.” The feverish pace had always to be paid for, and a few weeks later he wrote—“I can neither work nor relax properly . . . I feel as if some super-vampire had sucked *all* my blood out and left me pallid and deflated, as an eviscerated flounder.”

Occasionally he would be persuaded to rest, perhaps for a week or so; but the best form of relief he found was in “tinkering” old motor bicycles. One ancient machine he fitted with a four-cylinder engine, reconditioning every part with meticulous care, and eventually he drove it along the Cornish roads at 90 m.p.h. He found that working with his hands for a couple of hours every afternoon did him a lot of good.

It was once suggested to him that in order to moderate the strain of unceasing psychical research and also to improve his financial position, he might seriously consider engaging part of his time in some other form of occupation. During a walk round the cliffs near Land’s End he brought the matter up and said quite suddenly (and with apparent seriousness)—“I wonder if I could be a successful grocer.” It happened that I had lately heard of a distinguished poet who had in fact run a grocer’s shop. Carington had to be told all details (which were few) but at the story’s *dénouement* when the poet-grocer was declared insolvent for £1000, Carington stopped in his tracks in a state of uncontrollable mirth. He presently said something about the cobbler and his last, and with utter finality—“I will *not* be a grocer!”

It should, I think, be recorded here that the subject of this memoir was invited to offer himself as a candidate for a post of great distinction in a University. The invitation did not come from any quarter that might be described as “psychical research” but from the academic world. It is safe to say that no other proposal in his career had so deeply moving an effect as this. He thought about it a little, and reluctantly turned himself from it. On speaking of this soon afterwards he tried rather haltingly to educe reasons why so golden an opportunity was impossible to pursue. Some of his objections were not perhaps without substance, but for the most part they were excuses and rationalisations rather than strong reasons. The matter was soon closed. He glanced round his study, saying—“And what would happen to all this?” That was all that need be said, for “all this” was psychical research.

He shared the views of W. E. Gladstone that psychical research “is

the most important work which is being done in the world—by far the most important.” But Carington knew (what the statesman perhaps never suspected) that “psychical research is probably the most intricate subject with which the human intellect has ever grappled.” The intricacies might sometimes dismay him. His own discoveries might yield at times little more than an ever-expanding world of complexities to which there seemed no end; then he would feel himself “wobbling all the time on the edge of a nervous breakdown.” (And, “I wish to god I hadn’t so much to do.”) He might be shaken to the roots of his being by the discovery of “three months work wasted through a mistake.” (“Hell! I’d give a leg to be able to quit and rest for a year.”) He might feel—as he often did when working his hardest—“pretty lousy” and “finance very gloomy, though something may turn up”; but when he had achieved his nadir of frustration he would take refuge in self-mockery. “Pray for my soul, or modern equivalent” on one occasion, and on another, “Unless I get to some sort of stopping place in my present abominable labours first, I shall start having kittens in public.”

And yet how often he would exclaim with pride and self-assurance, “I am a man of incomparable psychological resilience.” Or how pleased he would be when work turned out better than expected, as at the close of the collaborative PK investigation, published after his death, “I seem to have got more out of it than, to be quite frank, I at one time thought was in it.”

For all the trials and the bitter disillusionments that the work sometimes imposed, it never seems to have occurred to him to turn his energies to other and more profitable scientific fields—though for such work he was superbly, lavishly endowed. Psychical research was his chosen calling—and was it not “the most important work . . . in the world?”

The last year of his life was on the whole the most contented and satisfying that he had known for many years. His book *Telepathy* had passed through three editions and was being translated into foreign languages, and he had two new books on the stocks. The long PNC work had drawn to a close, and its place had been taken by some fresh and exciting PK experiments initiated by Mrs Carington. Most important of all his wife’s health had improved greatly; and though his too-active mind would continue to deny him rest, still on the whole he felt more at ease—though often “tired”. He and his wife would enjoy travelling about Cornwall on their reconditioned motor-cycles.

He seldom walked about the countryside. His shyness was such that he feared contact with his neighbours. On a visit, he was persuaded to take me to see the Sennen lifeboat. Coming out of the boathouse (about fifty yards from his cottage) he passed the seated fishermen without a word or look. I stopped and made the conventional remarks one is liable to make on such occasions. When I had overtaken him along the road he said in words that were almost a whisper, “Did you speak to them?” “Yes.” “I couldn’t do that.” Then, having raised the subject he quickly and gladly dropped it.

In dress he preferred comfort before appearance, and his favourite clothes were a pair of ancient grey slacks, a much-loved brown sports jacket, and an open-necked shirt. He could say that he had not used a collar or tie

for five years; he rarely wore any headgear and his thin and prematurely white hair blew easily in the wind. Whately Carington was always Whately Carington and none other. According to his own account he was regarded by the Cornish people as "a harmless eccentric crank"—harmless because he interfered with no one. In some sense he "liked" the people—especially the "ordinary" people—but he never knew them. Yet no one was more eager to lend a helping hand when needed, and his acts of kindness were many. He was therefore liked and respected; in the words of an old fisherman—"He was a foine gentleman . . . We allus liked un."

A rumour that he "dabbled in the occult" and "consorted with spirits" was never confirmed, and on the whole it was assumed that he lived in the Cove for the benefit of his health. That the recluse of Ommen Cottage worked and slaved three thousand hours a year on research was not known.

The last year he spent in the writing of two books, *Survival*, which remains a fragment, and *Matter, Mind and Meaning*, which he judged his *magnum opus*. Of this he had written two-thirds at the time of his death. The book has been edited and prepared for publication by Professor H. H. Price.

In past years the Society has often had to mourn the death of distinguished members at the height of their intellectual powers. Gurney died at the age of 41, Hodgson at 50, Podmore at 55, Myers at 57. Carington died at 54, and his loss is to be measured not only by what he achieved—which was large enough—but what he still had in him, awaiting only the creative act. He believed that his Association Theory offered a sufficient explanation of a wide range of psychic phenomena. The theory might eventually require amendment (perhaps extensively) but for the present it brought order out of chaos. Nevertheless the creation of a theory was not enough to satisfy its creator. Psychical research was not an end in itself.

It was necessary to build a new metaphysic. Ninety per cent of all philosophy had outlived its usefulness; hence the time had come, he wrote, to "construct a genuine metaphysic from first principles . . . of which all physics and all psychology will be derivatives. That might conceivably be done by processes of pure thought without reference to facts at all (*i.e.* by purely epistemological methods)—I'm not at all sure . . . but if we are to use facts at all, we must take cognisance of all (types of) facts, so-called paranormal as well as normal. It is futile to talk about "reality" and ignore hallucinations, veridical and otherwise; or . . . about time and ignore precognition; or cognition generally and ignore P.N.C." He therefore planned "a tentative essay . . . to be entitled something like 'Attempt at Thinking—with special reference to Apparitions, Normal Cognition, Precognition and Psychokinesis'." The projected essay was abandoned, its place taken by the unfinished *Matter, Mind and Meaning*, the most ambitious creative work he had ever attempted.

At Christmas 1946 he and his wife were preparing their departure for Provence where they intended to live permanently. Carington was pressing forward with the writing of his book, when he was suddenly stricken with partial blindness of both eyes. He could read no more. In the weeks that followed his strength steadily fell, and a brief visit to hospital proved



unavailing. Of death he had no fear. His great regret was at leaving work unfinished ; his only anxiety was that in the faltering of consciousness that might come upon him before the end, he might recant or in some way modify his strongly held convictions regarding the destiny of the Mind. He accordingly prepared, and signed, a statement which was written down for him by his wife :

I should like to make it clear that, speaking within a few days of my probable death, my views on Survival are substantially those set out in the relevant sections of my book *Telepathy*. That is to say : it is my firm intellectual conviction that Conscious Existence does not terminate with the death of the body, though the form it takes is unlikely, in my judgement, to be closely similar to any of those commonly accepted.

WHATELY CARINGTON

10.ii.47

His mind remained strong and clear to the end. Towards the close of February the Society at its annual meeting adopted a resolution of sympathy for him in his illness. When the letter containing this news was read to him he was too weak to speak but on hearing words concerning his "brilliant and original contributions" to psychical research he smiled with evident happiness—the kind of smile that always lit up his features in moments of intensest pleasure.

On the following morning, the 2nd of March, he was dead, soon after sunrise, and two days later he was buried with Spartan simplicity, in the churchyard which overlooks the Atlantic near Land's End.