

RICHARD HODGSON, MRS PIPER AND 'GEORGE PELHAM':
A CENTENNIAL REASSESSMENT

by JAMES MUNVES

The whole talk gets warmed with your own warmth, and takes on the reality of your own part in it; its confusions and defects you charge to the imperfect conditions, while you credit the successes to the genuineness of the communicating spirit.

[William James in *ProcSPR 23*, p.32]

Richard Hodgson has come under criticism of late for alleged questionable practices in the Blavatsky exposure.¹ In examining his 1897² report on the American medium, Mrs Piper, and the 'G.P.' control, it is not our purpose to put back in the dock a defendant whose voice has long been silenced; but rather to show the social and cultural context in which he worked, a perspective that renders comprehensible the report's shortcomings.

Although he was capable of brilliant work, as in his papers on mal-observation,³ Hodgson's methods as a psychical researcher of 'mental mediums' were wanting, so much so that it is necessary to explain the esteem with which he was regarded by the Sidgwicks, William James and other contemporaries.

A significant feature of Hodgson's era was the shock of deprivation of naïve religious faith.⁴ Hodgson, 'G.P.' and his friends belonged to the first generation to mature in a non-human-centered universe. Indeed, the Sidgwicks, Myers and the other founders of psychical research, in fearing the implications of denial of the immortal soul and trivialization of mind, subject to 'nature red in tooth and claw,'⁵ were prophets of our barbaric century. All this, plus naivety about the complexities of the human psyche, placed Hodgson's work in a context different from today's.

The existential anxieties of the age lent to Hodgson's work a heroic Orpheus-like quality: descent into an underworld of dimly-lit parlors occupied by gasping women with wild hair, the sifting of appallingly dull and repetitive phrases for tiny evidences of the supernatural. And, in a period of astonishing

NOTES

Page numbers in square brackets in the text (and some footnotes) refer to *ProcSPR 13*, 284-582. All transcripts, automatic writing, tablets of automatic writing and *Q Notebooks* are in the SPR archives at Cambridge University.

Abbreviations Used in Footnotes

FWHM = F. W. H. Myers RH = Richard Hodgson WJ = William James

¹ Harrison, V. G. W. (Apr.1986) *JSPR 53* (803), 286-310; and (1987) *JSPR 54*, 160-3; Inglis, B. (1987) *JSPR 54*, 110; Coleman, M. H. (1987) *JSPR 54*, 158-9.

² presented at Westminster Town Hall, 5 Nov. and 10 Dec.1897.

³ *ProcSPR 4* (Mar.1886), 381ff; *JSPR 2* (Oct 1886), 409ff; *JSPR 3* (Jan.1887) 8ff.

⁴ Gauld, A. (1968) *The Founders of Psychical Research*, ch 2. London.

⁵ Tennyson, A. *In Memoriam*, 56, st 4.

scientific and technological advance, it seemed likely that the endangered and comforting concept of the 'immortal soul' might be validated by experiment. Hodgson and sitters compared spirit communications with the telephone [p.301], or machinery [p.332], and mysterious senses with X-rays [p.405].

Hodgson's report remains a monument to a certain kind of dedication. It did not stand, however, as Hodgson had hoped, as evidence for the survival of personality. Hodgson professed not "to have any doubt but that the chief 'communicators,' . . . have survived the change we call death, and . . . have directly communicated with us . . . through Mrs Piper's entranced organism." [pp.405-6]. But even William James, the godfather of the SPR-Piper relationship,⁶ focusing on Hodgson's admission that "many difficulties remained to be solved" [p.405], emphasized that Hodgson was "far from ascribing certainty to the spiritistic conclusion which he adopts".⁷

Certain widely-held psychological concepts made the spirit hypothesis more plausible to Hodgson than we would find it today. William James, vastly influential not only in the world of academic psychology, but also in the British and American SPRs, was a student of Consciousness. With psychological reality synonymous with Consciousness, the influence on behavior of Un-Consciousness was beyond consideration. In saying that "The same brain may subserve many conscious selves, either alternate or co-existent",⁸ James, who saw multiple personalities as "changes in the self" caused by amnesia,⁹ was not referring to co-existing Consciousnesses influencing each other. This would have subverted his deeply-held belief in Free Will, which he saw as an exercise in Conscious choice. Hodgson supposes [pp.394-5] "that the personality of Mrs Piper exhibits numerous individually coherent but different fragments of consciousness . . . at least dual consciousness, acting independently of the normal Mrs Piper . . ." In all this the emphasis was on independence of Consciousnesses, not interaction.¹⁰

It follows that the awake, conscious Piper, whose honesty had never been impeached,¹¹ was considered independent of her dishonest controls who, as Podmore put it, were "nonmoral . . . few scruples . . . little aptitude for

⁶ WJ brought Piper to the SPR's attention (*ProcASPR* 1, 102ff); which led to R. Pearsall Smith's dispatching RH to Boston (Baird, A. T., *R. Hodgson*, 32 [London 1949]; RH to Hackett, J. T., 16 Oct. and 14 Nov.1887, *JASPR* (Jul.1935), 205-7); then outlined the Piper project (*ProcASPR* 1, 102); which eventuated in Sidgwick et al. paying Piper \$1000/yr and funding RH and a good part of the American Branch (Baird (*supra*), 45; Nicol, F. & Lambert, G. W. (Mar.1972) *ProcSPR* 55 (205), 362; FWHM to WJ, 31 Oct.1889 (Myers papers, Trinity College)).

⁷ *Psychological Review* 5 (Jul.1898), cited in James, W. (1986) *Essays in Psychical Research*, 190. London.

⁸ James, W. *Psychology*, Vol.1, 401.

⁹ James, W. *Psychology*, Vol.1, 390.

¹⁰ The idea of buried impulses influencing the waking or Conscious self followed publication of Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* in 1904 after which, abetted by the insanity of the Great War, rational man was replaced by psychological man. See Schorske, C. E. (1980) *Fin-de-Siècle*, ch.1, 3-22. Vienna and New York.

¹¹ see James, W. (1886) Report of Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena. In *Essays on Psychical Research*, 16 (*supra*); (1890) A Record of Observations of Certain Phenomena of Trance, *ibid.*, 83; Review of Hodgson's 1897 report, *ibid.*, 188; *ProcSPR* 4, 443fn, 438; *ProcSPR* 14, 72; also Hodgson [p.285], as well as reports of Lodge, Podmore and others.

distinguishing fact from fiction".¹² Hodgson and his colleagues could not see that, honest as she was, Piper could have sought out information for reasons of which she was unaware, or that what Hodgson called her "fragments of consciousness" could, unknown to Piper, have actively sifted the voluminous information showering Piper's senses, most of which the conscious mind filters out, and kept it filed for future reference.

The filing, of course, refers to what James calls Piper's "prodigious trance memory", which, in his review of the 1897 report, he offered as favoring the spirit hypothesis. He thought that with "hundreds of sitters, many appearing only a few times, at years of interval, and conversing of inconceivably paltry personal details, [Piper] seems never to fail to make connection again, or to take up the conversation just where it was left . . . Mrs Piper's trance memory, then, is no ordinary human memory. . . ." ¹³ If we accept a complexity of consciousness strange to James's and Hodgson's assumptions, we can find that Piper's was an "ordinary human memory" after all, singular only in accessibility, with the trance state giving controls the kind of access to Piper's memory that others achieve only in hypnotic states.¹⁴ The case of the Welsh housewife, Jane Evans, whose so-called 'past-life regressions' proved to be amazingly detailed reconstructions of novels she had read years earlier is, in my view, no more difficult a feat than Piper's cross-referencing of data associated with numerous sitters.

In addition, the conditions of the séance created an atmosphere that helped Piper acquire information. The increasing amount of automatic writing in the 'G.P.' sittings focused attention on the hand, which acted as 'G.P.'s ear, the sitter directed to address it clearly in close proximity [pp.398-9]. This led those present at some distance from the medium to assume that Piper, whose hearing was acute, would not overhear their whispered or *sotto voce* remarks.¹⁵ Furthermore, sitters assumed, before the trance took hold, that 'G.P.' was absent. Also, treatment of a control "as [one] would a living person," [p.396] to appreciate better its "emotional quality" [p.427] encouraged leaks (of which details below). Nor does Hodgson consider other ways in which Piper could have acquired information. As she and the sitter usually held hands, it is odd that Hodgson ignored muscle reading,¹⁶ especially as Washington Irving

¹² Podmore, F. (1910) *The Newer Spiritualism*, 162. London.

¹³ *Psychological Review*, 420 (*supra*); WJ had first mentioned this in 1890, in *ProcSPR* 6, 655-6, where, however, he had gone no further than to say he was at a loss to understand it.

¹⁴ Baker, R.A. (1990) *They Call it Hypnosis*, 22-23. Buffalo, N.Y.: "Our minds are libraries of years . . . of accumulated information, and fortunately for our sanity, most of it is not available to us and subject to recall. On occasion, however, these hidden memories can be revived . . . they not only can be recalled in minute detail and in uncanny accuracy in some respects, but quite erroneously in others." Baker also remarks on the willingness of those manifesting such hidden, or cryptomnesiac memories, "to assume, because they cannot remember ever having acquired their knowledge, it must be due to their 'psychic' powers . . ." (p.23). For the neural mechanisms involved, see Penfield, W. (1975) *The Mystery of the Mind*, 21 et seq. Princeton, N.J.

¹⁵ Tanner, A. (1910) *Studies in Spiritism*, 309. N.Y.

¹⁶ see Macaine, S. *Mind Reading or Muscle Reading as Exhibited by Washington Irving Bishop: A Physiological Study*. Dublin 1889; James Peirce, dean of the Harvard graduate school, thought the control "seemed . . . to be constantly groping after indications from me to correct and direct his intelligence . . . a struggle for knowledge to whose issue the sitter contributes" [pp.461-2].

Bishop was at that time widely exhibiting the art.

The communications from the dead 'Pelham' constituted the centerpiece of the 1897 report. These were presented in an emotional vacuum and could not be assessed in ignorance of 'Pelham' and the Howards' tangled relationship, of the Howards' problems, and Pelham's standing with his family. Nor can we ignore Hodgson's own position at the time, and the place of Piper in his career.

The true identities of the *personae* in Hodgson's report remained hidden for many years. Except for a few members of the Harvard faculty, those mentioned bore pseudonyms. Hodgson was generous with clues, however, and it would not have been difficult to learn who these people were by checking statements in the report against membership records of the American Branch of the SPR and of the Tavern Club, to which Hodgson belonged.¹⁷

'George Pelham's' real name, thinly disguised by Hodgson, was George Pellew.¹⁸ Hodgson tells us [p.295] that:-

G.P. met his death accidentally, and probably instantaneously, by a fall in New York in 1892, at the age of thirty-two years. He was a lawyer by training, but had devoted himself chiefly to literature and philosophy, and had published two books which received the highest praise from competent authorities. He had resided for many years in Boston or its vicinity, but for three years preceding his death had been living in New York in bachelor apartments. He was an Associate of our Society . . . explicable rather by intellectual openness . . . than by any tendency to believe in supernatural phenomena. He was in a sense well known to me personally, but chiefly on this intellectual side; the bond between us was not . . . emotional friendship . . .

Pellew was born in England in 1859 to Henry Edward Pellew and Eliza Jay. His father was a younger son descended from Lords Exmouth and Sidmouth, and his mother was a granddaughter of John Jay, a Chief Justice of the U.S., patriot and diplomat. George, brought to the U.S. in 1873 by H.E. and his second wife, Augusta (the deceased Eliza's sister), graduated Harvard College in 1880 and took his law degree in 1883. His father pulled strings to situate George in a Wall Street firm,¹⁹ or with the new Cleveland administration in Washington;²⁰ but while nothing came of those efforts, Pellew wrote a book on the Irish land question and a biography of his great-grandfather Jay, and became known as a literary critic.²¹ George moved back to Manhattan in 1889 as New York correspondent for the *Boston Transcript*. In the fall of 1890, he became an editorial writer for the *NY Sun*, a lively, irreverent paper whose opinions and manner outraged his family and many of his friends by, for

¹⁷ For example, RH mentions [pp.338, 413] that the 'Howards' lived near W. L. Parker, who is listed as an ASPR member at 339 Marlborough St. Other members on that street included Thomas S. Perry, whose biography (Harrow, V. (1950) *Thomas Sergeant Perry: A Biography*. Durham, NC) mentions acquaintances with Pellew, Heard, Hodgson and Piper. RH says 'Rogers' had an MS book of poems of Pelham's to edit [p.313]; this was published with foreword by Howells. Gauld (*supra*) revealed that 'Marte' was the writer John Fiske (p 363).

¹⁸ George Pellew's name was made public by his brother Charles (1921) letter to Rationalist Press Association's *RPA Annual*, 40.

¹⁹ Pellew, H. E. to Jay, J. 20 Nov.1888, Jay Family Papers, Columbia Univ., NY.

²⁰ Pellew, H. E. to Jay, J. 26 Feb.1887, Jay Family Papers (*supra*).

²¹ The New Battle of Books (Jul.1888) *The Forum*, 564-73; Ten Years of American Literature (17 Jan.1891) *The Critic*.

example, condoning the city's political corruption.²² Even more troubling to Pellew's family was the way George lived. He resided at the Alpine apartments at 33rd Street and Broadway, in the heart of the city's notorious Tenderloin, streets teeming with bawds, bunco steerers, and assorted loafers and low-lives.

The 'John Hart' of the report was John Heard, Hodgson's oldest friend in Boston.²³ Born in 1859 into a Massachusetts shipping family whose fortunes were in decline, and educated abroad, Heard worked as a mining engineer in Mexico and Canada, drawing on these experiences for the romantic stories he contributed to leading magazines. He was friendly with the Perrys, at whose home he met Pellew.²⁴ By 1892 he was married, had a three year-old son, was devoting full time to writing, and was planning to move to Florence.²⁵

'Jim and Mary Howard' were Thomas and Lilla Perry. Thomas Sergeant Perry, born 1845, grandson of naval hero Oliver Hazard Perry and great-grandson of Benjamin Franklin, was reputed to know "more about literature than any man living".²⁶ Lilla Cabot Perry, born 1848, a Cabot related to Lowells and most of the Boston establishment, was a talented poet who eventually inclined to painting.²⁷ The Perrys had three daughters, Margaret, Edith and Alice, and lived at 312 Marlborough Street,²⁸ in the Back Bay area on newly-filled land along the Charles River.

William Dean Howells, the 'Rogers' of Hodgson's report, never attended a sitting, but was frequently referred to by 'G.P.' Heard and the Perrys. Howells, who had met Pellew at the Perrys,²⁹ appreciated Pellew's literary criticism, which favored his type of realistic fiction. He was a major magazine editor as well as a leading American novelist. Minna Timmins Chapman, 'Mme Frederica,' and her husband, Pellew's cousin John Jay Chapman, 'Aleck Bousser,' figured in Hodgson's report, as did Minna's younger sister Gemma, 'Mme Elisa Mannors'. Minna and Gemma, children of Bostonian George Timmins and an Italian princess, and orphaned at an early age, were adopted by Timmins' sister Marianne and her husband, Martin Brimmer, (the 'F' of Hodgson's report), a pillar of Boston Brahmanism. Minna, vivacious and uninhibited, captivated Chapman, who became aware of his love for her when, in a fit of jealousy, he caned Percival Lowell (cousin of Lilla) for flirting with Minna. Remorseful, Chapman thrust his right hand into a coal fire, crippling himself.³⁰ Eventually a remarkable essayist, he was subject to periodic break-

²² Perry, T. S to Opdyke, L. E., 26 Jan.1892 (Perry papers, Colby College, Maine). Pellew's ridicule of his cousin John Jay Chapman's campaign to bring saloons into compliance with the closing laws pained his mother's brother, John Jay. (Jay, J. to Pellew, G. 28 Nov.1891, Jay Family Papers (*supra*)).

²³ Hodgson, R. *Minute Book* (pocket diary) lists 'Herd' on 25 May 1887.

²⁴ Harvard Class of 1880 (1883) *3rd Class Book*. Cambridge, Ma.

²⁵ *The Critic* (10 Sep.1892), 192; *The Book Buyer* (Sep.1895), 438.

²⁶ Howells, M. (1928) *W. D. Howells' Life in Letters*, Vol.1, 170. NY.

²⁷ Her cool, skillful work in the American genre style was widely exhibited. See Feld, S.P. (30 Jul.1969) *Hirsch & Adler Galleries Catalog*.

²⁸ Harlow (*supra*), 39; 312 Marlborough Street was a handsome four-storey attached-brick structure. (It still stands and retains brass Perry nameplate, although converted to flats.)

²⁹ Howells, M. (*supra*) Vol.1, 388.

³⁰ Sedgwick, E. (1947) *Atlantic Harvest*, 604. Boston.

downs. Gemma died tragically in 1890, having entertained a hopeless attachment to Bishop Phillips Brooks, the minister of the Back Bay's Trinity church, of which her uncle Brimmer was chief vestryman.

'Y.Z.' was Barrett Wendell, Back Bay neighbor of the Perrys and a member of the Harvard English faculty. 'Mrs Warner' was Mrs Charles Fairchild, Beacon Hill hostess and wife of a prominent stockbroker. 'Miss Warner' was her daughter Sally. 'Helen Vance' was Helen Quincy, one of three attractive daughters of Josiah Quincy (author of *The Peckster Professorship*, a novel about psychical research), sister of Pellew's Harvard classmate Joe Quincy, and a friend of Pellew's.

From the very first, evaluation of the report was hindered by considerations of privacy. Hodgson was "unable to use as evidence" many "written reports of first sittings . . . owing to the reluctance of the sitters to allow the private matters . . . to be published in any form," or, if published, "under such restrictions and . . . alterations that they would lose much . . . significance . . . a large amount of the best evidence derivable from first sittings is unavailable . . ." [p.288]

As far as we know, no one looked at the original records of the sittings until Mrs Sidgwick and her brother Gerald Balfour did so a decade after Hodgson's death. Mrs Sidgwick, easily the most scientifically accomplished of the SPR's early investigators,³¹ found these unpublished transcripts wanting, noting that sitters were at times "known to Mrs Piper in her normal state" and "sometimes known to each other," and that Hodgson was not always present, having been sent away by 'G.P.' or another control. They concluded that little was to be gained by close study and focused their analysis on other trance phenomena, particularly communications during the interval between trance and waking, when the control was absent.³²

The original records are mainly interesting as a way of seeing how Hodgson used them in preparing the 1897 report. At the most important sitting, for example, that at which 'G.P.' made its first appearance (22nd March 1892), Hodgson concealed that he was not present for some 24 minutes, during the one-fourth of the sitting that included the unprecedented spelling of names of several absent friends and of Pellew."³³ He insists [pp.296, 298] that *he* made the notes when, in fact, Heard did so.³⁴

³¹ Mrs Sidgwick, a mathematician, collaborated with her brother-in-law, Lord Rayleigh, at the Cavendish Laboratory, refining electrical units and in publishing three papers in the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions*. (Sidgwick, Ethel (1938) *E. Sidgwick, A Memoir*, 72-3. London.)

³² *ProcSPR* 28, 5.

³³ transcript 22 Mar.1892, p.1; the transcript is six pages long, and these show that Hodgson was out of the room for 1.5 pages. Sittings generally lasted about an hour and a half (the average of four sittings at the Perrys' in which times of entering and leaving trance are recorded was 97 minutes). 25% of 97 minutes is 24 minutes.

³⁴ Hodgson, sent out of the room by the control, supposedly to keep from him matters too intimate for his ears, could have continued making notes by eaves-dropping, assuming the voices were audible; but he did not. Heard, while Hodgson was gone, is referred to in the notes in the first person, while when Hodgson is present Heard appears in the third person. RH's not revealing this dismissal was not an oversight, for he does mention [p.313] having been sent out on May 16, 1892, during one of Lilla's sittings.

The notes are also woefully incomplete, those of the seven 'G.P.' sittings in the spring of 1892 being only 20% the length of those made stenographically in the fall. Nor can the longer stenographic notes be said to be reliably complete. It is not possible for a single stenographer to record the words of the multi-party conversations that often prevailed when more than one sitter was present, nor even to be accurate when just a sitter and the control talked simultaneously.³⁵ Hodgson therefore had at his disposal a fraction of what was said at the sittings.

For reasons of privacy, Hodgson could not reveal more than that Pellew and the Perrys were friends and that Pellew had boarded with them. There is nothing to indicate that their interest in 'G.P.' represented other than ordinary curiosity: no hint, for example, that Pellew kept a photograph of Lilla in his pocket,³⁶ that Lilla cried in disappointment when 'G.P.'s appearance at a sitting was delayed,³⁷ nor of the stress the Perrys suffered.

Pellew boarded with the Perrys from the time he entered Law School in 1880, until he qualified for the Massachusetts bar in 1883; that is, between the ages of 21 and 24 [pp.297-8].³⁸ Tom Perry was 35 in 1880, and Lilla 32. They had been married six years and had two daughters, Margaret, four, and infant Edith. A third daughter, Alice, was born in 1883. Pellew, who had become acquainted with the Perrys through Tom, whose course in English composition he had taken, moved into a household traumatized by Perry's dismissal from the Harvard faculty. The refusal of Harvard's new president, Charles W. Eliot, to offer Perry a permanent contract was a minor *cause célèbre*, with students circulating petitions and elders pressing complaints.³⁹ Perry, completely unsettled, churned out book reviews, translations and literary studies that brought little remuneration. Lilla, with an infant and four-year-old daughter and a household to manage, had to cope with her husband's uncertainty and disdain for chores.⁴⁰

In the summer of 1884, the year after Pellew moved out, Lilla had expressed her fear that Pellew's lack of success in establishing a local legal practice would cause him to leave for New York, in which case "we shall only have 'Visits' from him in the future. This is too grievous for me to realize . . ." ⁴¹

³⁵ typescripts of stenographic notes of the 14 sittings at the Perrys' average 31.5 double-spaced pages; those of the first seven sittings, 5.6 double-spaced pages; the stenographer was Anne M. Robbins, herself a confirmed spiritualist (Robbins, A. (1909) *Both Sides of the Veil*. Boston). As a spiritualist, Miss Robbins might have been no less efficient; but when faced with difficulties (e.g. more than one person or control talking simultaneously) she may have unconsciously selected in favor of her belief.

³⁶ transcript 22 Mar.1892, p.2; transcript 13 Apr.1892, p.24; the report merely states that Heard brought "articles . . . I surmised belonged to 'G.P.'" [p.296].

³⁷ transcript 22 Apr.1892, p.2.

³⁸ Howells, M. (*supra*) Vol. I, 388.

³⁹ Welling, R. (1929) *My Classmate TR*, 25. NY.

⁴⁰ Almost 14 years after her husband was fired, Lilla writes his friend, Hercules W. Fay (February 1893): "Do you want to make me happier? . . . You can do it by suggesting a subject for [Tom] to write a little book about and pushing him to do it. You perhaps do not realize (only seeing him when he is happy seeing you) how much his enforced inaction and his disappointed hopes weigh upon him & eat his very soul . . . if [this] goes on it will kill his heart and my body for I cannot stand the strain." (Perry, L. C. to Fay, H.W., 28 Feb.1893, Perry papers (*supra*)).

⁴¹ Perry, L. C. to Opdyke, L. E., Aug.1884, Perry Papers (*supra*).

January 24, 1886: George was here last Tuesday. I am sorry to say he seemed rather blue and I had a very sad despondent note from him afterwards . . . when one loves a friend as I do him it is a heavy trial when one has not more power to help . . . My friendship for him is one of the sorrows as it certainly is one of the blessings of my life . . .

A few months later, Lilla was herself depressed, "a good deal worried about George who . . . thought me very horrid . . . Well—I got so worried and run down during the next three weeks and Tom ever so vexed with me for being so."⁴²

Some verse from *Heart of Weed*, published by Lilla anonymously in 1886:—

How can I go and leave thee all alone?
 Mine own grief I could bear, but ah! not thine.
 Can I help loving you who love me so
 That all my thoughts, is yours, my heart, your heart. . . .⁴³
 As silent, hand in hand, we tread
 The darkling path where twilight's softened shadows hide,
 Dark rustling branches over head
 Soft whisper tenderness our lips dare not confide.
 Low hanging branches sweep my cheek,
 And draw me to thy side as that mute touch were thine,
 Fragment caressed that would speak
 The love that neither knows and each fears to divine.⁴⁴

In the posthumous collection of Pellew's poems, many written while he lived with the Perrys, are some addressed to 'Elsie' ('L.C.', Lilla Cabot):—

You say: "Without hope love cannot begin",
 So saying and believing, you are calm
 Resting one slender hand upon my arm
 That thrills beneath its pressure. . . .
 I will love you with such skill,
 I shall seem contented, till
 I become so; for a while
 Love and friendship reconcile . . .⁴⁵

Pellew accompanied the Perrys abroad in the summer of 1887,⁴⁶ disembarking at Cobh to research his book on Irish Home Rule.⁴⁷ The Perrys went on to the Continent, eventually settling in Giverny, near Claude Monet.⁴⁸

At the time of Heard's 22nd March sitting, Hodgson did not know the Perrys [p.295]. He must have met them shortly thereafter, to arrange sittings on 11th and 13th April. We do not know if he knew Lilla was grieving, or that she had rushed down to the funeral in New York without her husband,⁴⁹ or what, if

⁴² Perry, L. C. to Opdyke, L. E., 26 Apr.1886, Perry papers (*supra*).

⁴³ Perry, L. C. (1886) *Heart of Weed*, 11. Boston.

⁴⁴ Perry, L. C. (1898) *Impressions*, 3. Boston.

⁴⁵ Pellew, G. (1892) *The Poems of George Pellew*, 17 ("You say . . ."), 20 ("I will . . ."). NY.

⁴⁶ transcript 28 Nov.1892, note 10.

⁴⁷ Pellew, G. *Poems (supra)*, W. D. Howells' Introduction, p vii; John Morley, Chief Secretary for Ireland, declared Pellew's *In Castle and Cabin* [NY 1889] the best work on the subject.

⁴⁸ Perry, L. C. (Mar.1927) *American Magazine of Art*.

⁴⁹ Perry, T. S. to Opdyke, L. E., 18,19 Feb.1892, Perry papers (*supra*).

anything, the Perrys' neighbor, Barrett Wendell,⁵⁰ a Tavern Club acquaintance of Hodgson's,⁵¹ may have revealed about them.⁵²

Whatever Hodgson knew, it is strange, given the importance he was to attach to 'G.P.', that he sent the Perrys unaccompanied to their first two sittings. And how are we to account for his giving his notes of the early sittings to Heard when he went abroad [p.304, fn]? As it turned out, he never saw them again, and had to wait for the Perrys' return to Boston in August 1897 to get *their* notes, which, he implied, were deficient, lamenting the loss of his "original documents."⁵³

From the time Lilla first went to Piper in Arlington Heights, until she returned to Giverny two years later, there were few sittings involving 'G.P.' she did not attend. Indeed, the Perrys' intense engagement, culminating in a series of 14 stenographically-recorded sittings in their home, would have a lasting influence on their lives.

Finding 'G.P.', and two other spirits, John Heard⁵⁴ and Gemma Timmins, convincing, Hodgson had yet to dispose of a difficulty that had plagued the Society from the beginning: the possibility that the source of uncanny messages was the sitters themselves, the medium 'reading' their minds. Obviously, anything revealed at a sitting, if recognized, had to have been previously known to the sitter.

Hodgson and other researchers sought to overcome this ambiguity by plying controls with questions the answers to which were unknown to those at the sitting. He tried this repeatedly with 'G.P.' None of these tests, with the possible exception of the 'Matie' message [p.309],⁵⁵ had much success.

Hodgson's ingenious cluster theory offered another solution to this ambiguity, by suggesting that a control's unerring selection from a large number of sitters of just those it had known in life was less explicable by

⁵⁰ He lived at 358 Marlborough St. (Bromley, G. W. (1890) *Atlas of Boston*).

⁵¹ Wendell knew RH well enough to have had a Piper sitting previously (*Essex Institute, Salem, Mass. speech, 29 Feb.1892, Were the Salem Witches guiltless? Intelligence and Other Essays* [NY 1893]). His "test question" was submitted ([pp.424, 426], transcripts 5 Dec.1892, 7 Dec.1892).

⁵² Relations between Perry and Wendell, who acceded to the faculty job Perry lost, were strained. RH's mention of Wendell provoked an outburst from 'G.P.': "... supposing any friend of yours had created a sensational scandal about very dear friends of yours and yourself..." transcript 7 Dec.1892, pp.12,13. RH, claiming ignorance of all this, found the outburst convincing [pp.426-8].

⁵³ Hodgson had lost "notes in my own handwriting of which I have no other copy. I seem to remember some of my own writing on the typewritten sheets." (Hodgson to Perry, T. S., 2 Mar.1895, Perry papers (*supra*)). Heard gave his notes to Charles Richet of the French Societie des Sciences Psychiques, which was all set to print them when RH intervened. RH then himself wrote the report for the Societie's *Annales*, the quid pro quo apparently being that details were limited to the Heard ('Smith') sitting, with only passing mention of the Perrys ('Howards'). (*Annales des Sciences Psychiques* (Oct.1896), 212-30.) This pre-emptory disclosure forced RH, at its October 1895 meeting, to give the first accounting of 'G.P.' to the SPR.

⁵⁴ Heard died in Florence, 2 May 1895 (*Boston Evening Transcript*, 3 May 1895).

⁵⁵ transcript 29 Apr.1892, Tablet of automatic writing, p.56, "cat he". This occurred as Piper was coming out of the trance, in absence of control, per E. Sidgwick's theory (*ProcSPR 28*, 330). However, Matie's real name was 'Katherine' (transcript 14 May 1892, p.5), not 'Catherine,' which suggests leakage, and possibly vitiates Sidgwick's theory.

reading sitters' minds, which would have contained memories of many different dead each had known. 'G.P.' met this criterion by never claiming "any personal acquaintance with a sitter to whom G.P. living was unknown; and in . . . cases where he was known the recognition was clear and full . . . there are thirty cases of true recognition out of at least one hundred and fifty persons who have had sittings with Mrs Piper since the first appearance of G.P., and no case of false recognition." [p.328]

The problem here is that sitters were not introduced to 'G.P.' at random. The purpose of the Marlborough Street sittings, Piper knew, was to bring friends to see 'G.P.' [p.316]. Then, the laxity of the Heard sitting leaves in doubt the recognition of Heard and of the Perrys; nor was there any discipline at the Marlborough Street sittings, with Piper mixing socially with the Perry children,⁵⁶ and their mother [p.419] and at least one imminent sitter mentioned while Piper was awake [p.434].

Hodgson did not explicitly list failure to recognize as a negative criterion. He did excuse the non-recognition of Sally Fairchild ['Miss Warner', p.324] on the grounds of her changed appearance, and of her mother because she sat before 'G.P.' was fully fledged and brought mementoes of Blavatsky and Walt Whitman. Other non-recognitions, however, were ignored: of Richard Welling, one of Pellew's closest Harvard friends, whom 'G.P.' had repeatedly asked to see.⁵⁷ Two other recognitions were dubious: Arthur Carey,⁵⁸ and Charles Perkins.⁵⁹ 'G.P.' addressed neither by name; but Carey was hailed as 'Arthur' as Piper was coming out of the trance, after 'G.P.' had gone;⁶⁰ and 'G.P.' wrote 'Opdyke' and an illegible name before coming up with Perkins,⁶¹ and did not communicate anything to him.

More interesting were three recognitions that surprised Hodgson who, therefore, could not be said to have knowingly introduced them. In the case of the Rev. Minot J. Savage, Hodgson [p.326] had forgotten that Pellew and Savage, as members of the ASPR's committee on mediumship, had attended an attempted sitting with Piper in 1888. The other two surprises were, however, unconfirmed by those recognized. These were a gentleman called 'Smith' and Mrs L. C. Moulton. 'G.P.' claimed to have met 'Smith' at a University Club reception for Fiske in New York. 'Smith' did not remember Pellew, but had been at the reception [pp.440-1]. Moulton had recited her poetry at a party in Boston that 'G.P.' said Pellew had attended.⁶² The 'Smith' and Moulton recognitions are either false claims of acquaintance or evidence of what made Piper fascinating.

⁵⁶ transcript 30 Nov.1892, note 17; Piper helping Edith with sewing.

⁵⁷ transcript 28 Jan.1893; also Tablet of automatic writing, 16 May 1892, p.1; Welling was unacknowledged when he accompanied another sitter from NY on December 18, 1893 (Kelly, E to Perry, T.S., 10 Mar.1894, SPR archives).

⁵⁸ transcript 18 Nov.1893.

⁵⁹ Tablet of automatic writing 19 Jan.1894, p.47.

⁶⁰ transcript 18 Nov.1893, p.5; automatic writing purportedly from Arthur's dead brother Harry. This also supports Mrs Sidgwick's theory, see note 54 (*supra*).

⁶¹ Tablet of automatic writing, 19 Jan.1894, p.47.

⁶² transcript 26 Nov.1896.

If the cluster theory fails we do, on the other hand, have evidence that messages did reflect what was in the minds of sitters, for 'G.P.' uttered sitters' misconceptions of the circumstances of Pellew's death.

About seven a.m. Thursday, February 18, 1892, contemporary newspaper accounts tell us, Pellew's body "clothed in evening dress," was found lying in the areaway of a brownstone house at 70 West 35th Street. According to the *New York Sun*,⁶³ an eye "inflammation" that affected his vision led to his opening the "area gate at No. 70" and falling, "striking his head".

This was consistent with what 'G.P.' said about his death. He told his father that he was alone when he died,⁶⁴ and at the seventh Marlborough Street sitting mentioned, "I fell down the steps, you know, accidentally. You know how I passed out . . ." ⁶⁵

There is nothing to indicate that either Hodgson or any other sitter declined to accept the newspaper story. Pellew's death certificate, however, shows that his brother Charles was summoned that icy February morning not to West 35th Street, but to 524 Sixth Avenue.⁶⁶ Number 524 was between 31st and 32nd Streets. Ostensibly a cigar store, it was a gambling dive where, in an atmosphere redolent of cigars and cheap whisky, those trying their luck at faro, red and black, and poker mingled with convicts, confidence men and pick-pockets.⁶⁷

The coroner's report by medical attendant, Dr William A. Courwar, gives as cause of death "dislocation of axis & Haemorrhage (*sic*) into Brain caused by accidental fall into area way of 70 West 35th Street during early morning". Upon examination of this report, a retired NYC Medical Examiner concluded that it had been falsified. Dr Courwar was required to support any findings. With respect to the claim that Pellew's brain was hemorrhaged, he would either have to have reported exterior signs such as a fractured skull or contusions, or had to open up the head, a procedure he could only have performed in an autopsy in an operating room, concerning which there would have been an additional autopsy report, and which certainly could not have been performed the very day the body was found.

"Dislocation of axis", a broken neck, could have been seen on the spot by Dr Courwar, and by itself is a sufficient cause of death. The inclusion in the 19th February death certificate of 'brain hemorrhage', *in the absence of mention of contusions or skull fracture*, does not make sense as it stands. The most likely explanation, in my opinion, is that Dr Courwar did observe damage to the head and that Charles, who was as conventional as his brother was not, (he was a chemistry instructor married to the department head's daughter⁶⁸) induced the examiner, in addition to disguising the location at which the body was

⁶³ 19 Feb. 1892.

⁶⁴ Tablet of automatic writing, 14 May 1892, p.83.

⁶⁵ transcript 9 Dec. 1892, p.20.

⁶⁶ NYC Death Certificate #6216, 1892; Charles was only family member in NYC. His parents lived in Washington, D.C.

⁶⁷ *Vices of a Big City: New York's Market Places of Sin*, 96. [NY Press, NY, 1890]; it was a favorite hangout of Columbia University students, the university then at 48th St. and Madison Ave.

⁶⁸ *Who Was Who* 4, 743, [Chicago 1968].

found, to omit describing head damage which, hinting at foul play, might have led to revelation of the sordid surroundings in which his brother died. This falsification was not surprising in an era in which the coroner's office, like most city departments, was notoriously corrupt. (It even concealed murders for a fee, selling 'accidental death' verdicts.)

The irregularity of the description of the cause of death, together with the implausibility of Pellew's body having been toted three blocks to, of all places, a gambling hole, presents a strong case for disbelieving the story that Pellew fell into an areaway on West 35th Street. Conclusive, I think, is evidence that Pellew frequented such dives. For at his sitting in April 1894, Chapman mentioned that he had persuaded Henry Pellew to allow him to burn papers of George's that "might contain matter that would shock him". Hodgson was pushed out of the room by the hand, which then wrote, "other things I could not or would not have him see, cigar checks . . ." 'Cigar checks' were gambling chips, sold in the cigar stores that fronted for the upstairs gambling dens.⁶⁹

That G.P.'s allusions to Pellew's death were consistent with the newspaper accounts certainly weighs against the control having represented Pellew's surviving spirit.⁷⁰ Nor was there any hint at the Chapman sitting that the cigar checks were in any way associated with Pellew's death. Yet here, if anywhere, Pellew, had he survived, would have referred to his tawdry end. Nothing more was said, nor was the manner of his cousin's death known to Chapman, who was out West the week of Pellew's death and funeral.⁷¹ One would be tempted to call the 'cigar checks' a reading of Chapman's mind, as Chapman himself thought,⁷² except that we know too little of what took place at the sitting, attended as well by Minna. Hodgson, like everyone else associated with 'G.P.', accepted the newspaper story as true and had no idea what cigar checks were. In commenting on them, Hodgson thought they represented "payment of Club bills" [p.319].

Piper was "staying in New York" with a member of the American Branch, a prominent lady physician, Dr Anna Lukens, "at the time 'G.P.' met his death. She went to New York February 8, 1892, and returned to Boston February 20" [p.296, fn]. Hodgson states that Dr Lukens "knew nothing of G.P.," from which one is supposed to infer that, as Lukens didn't know Pellew, Piper's New York visit could not have contributed to the 'G.P.' utterances that commenced several weeks later.

In view of the fact that Mrs Piper was in New York when the obituaries of Pellew were published, it was disingenuous of Hodgson to dismiss the matter in this fashion. Hodgson was surely familiar with the SPR's reports on Miss Ada Goodrich-Freer,⁷³ who read in her crystal ball an obit. "that she had forgotten having seen . . . which . . . fell into a special corner of her memory and came out as a visual hallucination . . ." ⁷⁴ And not long after he met Piper,

⁶⁹ *Vices of a Big City*, 94ff (*supra*).

⁷⁰ transcript 9 Dec. 1892, p.20; 28 Jan. 1893, notes by T. S. Perry.

⁷¹ Chapman, J. J. to Minna, 15 Feb. 1892, Chapman papers, Houghton Library, Harvard.

⁷² Tablet of automatic writing and transcript 17 Apr. 1894.

⁷³ *ProcSPR* 5, 507.

⁷⁴ James, W. (1897) *The Will to Believe and other Essays in Philosophy*, 314-5.

Hodgson had found that her trance personality made use of newspapers. Some 1887 sittings concerned 'John Genster' and 'Mabel Fuller', who had drowned in Lake Pepin in Lake City seven or eight years previously. Finding that Lake City, Minnesota, harbored a Lake Pepin, Hodgson opened a correspondence. That both the newspaper story dateline and Piper omitted 'Minnesota' led Hodgson to conclude that she "had . . . casually seen these items of news [in 1876] without noting them, but that the 'Phinuit' personality had noticed them and reproduced them afterwards."⁷⁵ As a consequence, Hodgson had instructed the medium to cease reading newspapers.

Hodgson considers neither the possibility that Piper could have seen Pellew's obit. nor that, Pellew's funeral occurring a few blocks from the railway station,⁷⁶ at 10 a.m. on February 20, the day of Piper's return to Boston, she could have seen the funeral notice in the morning paper⁷⁷ and attended it, and/or returned to Boston on the same car as Lilla Perry.

How did Hodgson, on the basis of such methodology and evidence, reach his startling conclusion? We have already remarked on the role of prevalent psychological theory. The inability to attach weight to unconscious motivation probably contributed to Hodgson's spiritualist inclinations. Indeed, as far as we have been able to determine, no one at the time remarked on Hodgson's bent. It was, to say the least, underestimated. James, for example, set the tone of much of the comment on the 1897 report, remarking that "This conversion to spiritualism of so critical an investigator, until lately disinclined to any such conclusion, marks . . . the passage of a 'critical point' in the history of the Society for Psychical Research, as well as Dr Hodgson's own career."⁷⁸ Yet Hodgson had made no secret of his belief that spirit communication was possible. "My own conviction," he had written two years before 'G.P.'s appearance, ". . . is that the human individual survives the change that we call death . . . [and that there are] conditions, in special cases, that render communication between the dead and the living possible."⁷⁹ He even referred to this belief in the report itself, in connection with a discussion with 'Pelham' [p.295].⁸⁰

Of course it does not follow that a disposition to believe will influence the

⁷⁵ *ProcSPR* 8, 37-9; WJ, who worked closely with RH until 1892, admitted "that in certain persons, at least, the total possible consciousness may be split into parts which co-exist but mutually ignore each other". (James, W. *Principles of Psychology* 1, 163-70, 206; RH's allusion to 'Phinuit' is puzzling, as Piper's mediumship began eight years after 1876 (Piper, A. (1929) *Life and Work of Mrs Piper*, 18-20. London.

⁷⁶ the funeral was at the Church of Holy Communion, 6th Ave and 20th St. (Perry, T. S. to Opdyke, L. E., 18,19,19pm Feb.1892, Perry papers (*supra*)). The N.Y. Central Railway station was on 23rd St.

⁷⁷ *NY Morning Sun* (20 Feb.1892).

⁷⁸ *Psychological Review* (*supra*).

⁷⁹ *The Forum* (Apr.1890) Truth and Fraud in Spiritualism; *Religio-Philosophical Journal* (6 May 1893). N.Y.

⁸⁰ Discussion with Pellew on survival of personality was at the Puritan Club, Boston, October 1890 (RH's minute book, SPR archives). RH himself had psychic experiences referred to in James, W. (1902) *Varieties of Religious Experience*, 58ff. [NY], as per RH to WJ, Sep.1900 (James papers, Houghton Library, Harvard).

course or outcome of an investigation. Perhaps the high esteem in which Hodgson was held banished such thoughts. The only criticism on these grounds is Dr Morton Prince's comment, several years after Hodgson's death, that the "adoption of idiosyncratic theories . . . has wrecked many splendid minds . . . When once Dick . . . had accepted the concept of spiritualism all his critical facilities were lost."⁸¹ It may also be that his colleagues did not understand the difference between Piper and the physical mediums on whose exposures Hodgson's reputation was founded.⁸² Unlike Blavatsky, Palladino and the slate writers, Piper's manifestations were purely words, often freighted with emotion. Hodgson's familiarity with magic, sleight of hand and the arts of distraction⁸³ was irrelevant to phenomena in which endearments and little expressions that evoked the departed counted more than names, dates and other facts.

If the Perrys' emotions colored their opinions of Piper's communications, so did James's and Hodgson's. Interestingly, James occluded the fact that his first encounter with Piper occurred when he and his wife were grieving over the death of an infant son, Herman. He claimed that he first saw Piper "in the autumn of 1885," Herman having been "lost the previous year,"⁸⁴ when, in fact, Herman had died just a few months before.⁸⁵ (Did his wife's, his mother-in-law's, and his own state prevent him from considering that the "power as yet unexplained" that accounted for Piper's "startling intimacy with this family's affairs"⁸⁶ was the Piper's Irish maid, who had "a friend . . . in the household of William James"?⁸⁷ Or was the family maid below his consciousness, a kind of below-stairs subconscious?) Now if one cannot absolve him from having been 'under the influence', James, who more than any other psychical researcher of the era (Sidgwick possibly excepted) was able to sustain the tension between willingness to believe and standards of proof, it is not surprising that such influence was persuasive with Hodgson.

Hodgson was reticent about his long involvement with the spirit of Jesse Tyler Dunn, his Australian sweetheart who had died in Melbourne in 1879, three years after he left for Cambridge. Many of the messages Hodgson received during his first sittings with Piper involved Jessie, or 'Q.' as he referred to her. On February 7, 1890, he gave the name 'Jessie' to Phinuit after "trying in vain to get more than ---sie."⁸⁸

'Q.', except for a brief mention [p.500], is absent from the 1897 report, even though during most of the period she remained the principal communicator

⁸¹ Prince, M. to Putnam, J. J., 26 Nov.1910 (in Hale, N., jr. (1971) *Freud and the Americans*, 213. NY).

⁸² such was RH's reputation that the Society, before declaring Palladino genuine, recalled him from Boston in the summer of 1895. After a few sessions with Palladino, RH demonstrated her deceptions to the others' satisfaction (FWHM to WJ, 8 Aug.1895; *JSPR* 7, 148, 154).

⁸³ *ProcSPR* 4, 382-3 (Mar.1886); *JSPR* 2, 412-3 (Oct.1886).

⁸⁴ *ProcSPR* (Dec.1890); Murphy, G. & Ballou, R. O. (1960) *William James on Psychical Research*, 103. NY.

⁸⁵ Allen, G. W. (1967) *William James*, 229. NY; Herman died 9 Jul.1885.

⁸⁶ *ProcASPR* 1, 102ff.

⁸⁷ Piper in *NY Herald* (20 Oct.1901); cited in *Medico-Legal Journal* (1904), 162.

⁸⁸ Hodgson notes on early sittings, typescript in SPR archives.

in Hodgson's many solo sittings, showering him with declarations of undying love.⁸⁹

On February 26, 1895, some pages from 'Q' about her long-deceased father made no reference to her mother.⁹⁰ The following week, Hodgson wrote Perry that he had heard from his sister in Melbourne that 'Q's mother had died the week before, February 14. "A most grievous thing . . ." Hodgson says. "This death . . . makes wildly improbable that certain statements made by 'Q' can be fulfilled . . . about my hearing from her mother and receiving certain articles from her mother in memory of 'Q'. The non-mention of death . . . is awful!"⁹¹

One would expect that Q's ignorance of her mother's death would have made Hodgson doubt her *bona fides*. But Hodgson was distressed because he would not receive the mementoes. Of more significance, with respect to Hodgson's report, is that 'G.P.' often escorted Jessie. Hodgson could hardly believe in one without the other. "Miss Dunn wanted to get hold of you," 'G.P.' wrote.⁹² On another occasion 'Q' told Hodgson, "I have no secrets I wish to keep from Mr. Pellew, he knows all about me now and showed me how to write ---Darling, did anybody ever do as much for you as he has . . ." ⁹³

It is safe to say that by February 1895 Hodgson was a confirmed spiritualist, confiding to 'G.P.', for example, that he had received a letter from Tom Perry stating that they were "not coming over now. They took their passage but altered their minds . . . Edith is here in Boston staying with some friends but I haven't seen her yet."⁹⁴ And again, telling 'G.P.' that "Heywood" was coming to see him alone in two days, and that Piper's husband was out of work.⁹⁵ "Just before you go, George, I want to tell you that I've seen Edith and will bring her, not the next time nor the time after, but the time after that."

G.P.: Good, good, good.

Hodgson: You'll be surprised to see her. She's an enormous great thing.⁹⁶

Two days later, Hodgson told 'G.P.':—

You'll be ready for Edith tomorrow?

G.P.: You bet.⁹⁷

To understand that Hodgson did not deceive his colleagues, we must understand that his consciousness was unlike ours. He believed in his integrity, in the dominance of the conscious mind, was a stranger to the divided self introduced by Freud. Robust and assertive, he lacked the temperament of a Sidgwick or James, the iron or, perhaps, indecisiveness, that keeps one testing

⁸⁹ "the only man I ever truly loved" *Q Notebooks* (28 Nov.1893); RH communed with 'Q' at solo sittings Nov.27,29, Dec.1,26,27,29, 1892; 8 times in Jan., 3 in Feb. and once in Mar.1893, before Piper underwent operation; Piper inactive until May 19, when another Q sitting; 2 in Jun., before Piper left for summer; 2 in Nov.; 1 in Dec.; several in Jan.1894.

⁹⁰ all references from *Q Notebooks* on dates indicated. The four notebooks have 163 pp. from 27 Nov.1893 to the end of 1896; 100 pp. from first 3 months, 27 Nov.1893 – 24 Feb.1894.

⁹¹ RH to Perry, T. S., 2 Mar.1895 (Perry papers (*supra*)).

⁹² *Q Notebooks* (9 Jan.1894).

⁹³ *Q Notebook II*, 89.

⁹⁴ transcript 28 Oct.1896.

⁹⁵ transcript 9 Nov.1896.

⁹⁶ transcript 23 Nov.1896.

⁹⁷ transcript 25 Nov.1896.

standards of proof. As Piddington put it, "Once his mind was made up he became constitutionally unable to appreciate another point of view"⁹⁸ or, one might add, viewing evidence in a different light.

The arrival of Hodgson in Boston (where he was known as 'Dr.' Hodgson, not 'Mr.', as in the U.K.)⁹⁹ was a godsend to the young American Society for Psychical Research, which, from its earliest days, had suffered a deficiency in local support. By 1890, three years after Hodgson's arrival, it had relinquished its independence to become a branch of the SPR, supported largely by Sidgwick and Myers,¹⁰⁰ support predicated on the importance of the Piper investigation, Piper having impressed them, during her 1889/90 UK visit, to the extent that she was paid £200/yr for her exclusive services.¹⁰¹

Boston also suited 'Dr.' Hodgson. He was a popular club man, widely known and admired. Hodgson knew that it was the Piper project that kept him there;¹⁰² but if its continuation suited Hodgson, it also suited his American friends and colleagues. If one could interpret the five years between his arrival and his first report's tantalizing ending,¹⁰³ and the five additional years that passed until the 1897 denouement, as procrastination, his sincerity eclipses any suspicion of opportunism. The hand-outs from London were meagre¹⁰⁴ and he was often short of funds.¹⁰⁵ Psychical research entailed sacrifice. Desperate to marry,¹⁰⁶ he reportedly refused to give up his profession as the price of matrimony.¹⁰⁷

My own conclusion, for what it is worth, is that the 'G.P.' control drew on what Piper unconsciously retained from reading the Pellew death notices in New York, and was enhanced by John Heard, who, like Pellew, was intimate with the Perrys. We shall never know what Heard had in mind when he took Pellew's mementoes to Piper. Whatever his motive, he found, on seeing the Perrys' reaction to his news of the sitting, that he had provided a distraction from his friends' grief and despair from which he could not extricate himself without embarrassment.¹⁰⁸ He may also have worried about annoying Perry,

⁹⁸ *ProcSPR* 19 (1907), 365-6.

⁹⁹ see *ProcSPR* 6, 436-442, for example. Hodgson had earned an LL.D. in Melbourne in 1878, but even in the U.S. LL.Ds were rarely called 'Dr.'.

¹⁰⁰ see minute books, SPR, SPR archives, 5 Dec.1890; 6 Mar.1891; 17 Jul.1891; 5 Oct.1894; 1 Mar.1895; 13 Mar.1896; also FWHM to WJ, 3 Oct.1889.

¹⁰¹ Baird (*supra*), p.45. Piper may have charged additional fees. The Bourgets (1893) paid \$10 for a sitting (Bourget, P. (1895) *Outre-Mer*, 354-5 [NY]); see also James, W. *Essays in Psychical Research*, 394-6 (*supra*).

¹⁰² Recalled in 1897 to England, where he was needed, RH hoped that "something may be attempted to enable at least the Piper investigation to be continued". RH to Hackett, J. T., 2 Sep.1897; E. Sidgwick, in *ProcSPR* 19, 357, says, concerning difficulty of keeping RH in London, that "the attraction of America was too strong".

¹⁰³ *ProcSPR* 8, 58.

¹⁰⁴ RH to Hyslop, J. H., 2 Sep.1897; *ProcASPR* 3, 495; *JASPR* 13, 450.

¹⁰⁵ *JASPR* 13, 450 (Hyslop, J.); Piper, A, (*supra*), 122-3, *JASPR* 11, 150.

¹⁰⁶ RH to Hackett, J. T., 17 Jan. and 23 Oct.1894, and 25 Jul.1895 (ASPR archives, NY).

¹⁰⁷ Nicol & Lambert (*supra*), 348.

¹⁰⁸ this is prefigured in an 1884 novel of Howells' in which two scholars abet a medium whose fake messages save her father from despair (Howells, W. D. *The Undiscovered Country*. NY 1884).

who served as his literary agent,¹⁰⁹ and on whom he would depend while in Italy.

Tom Perry became convinced that 'G.P.' was Pellew on the evening of December 22nd [p.321], when 'G.P.' wrote of some of Pellew's peccadillos.¹¹⁰ Perry's nephew, the Jesuit John La Farge, found it "curiously pathetic to see such intelligent and cultivated people, so wise, charming and thoughtful, guided by . . . psychics who directed even their smallest actions. . . ." ¹¹¹ James's role in these developments cannot be overestimated. Piper would never have been a subject of serious research without the credibility he bestowed. Then, after some initial collaboration with Hodgson,¹¹² he left her to the Australian, under whom the focus shifted from the medium to her controls. This opened the way to a *folie à trois* (Hodgson, Lilla Perry and 'G.P.'), in which useful evidence depreciated with every additional sitting.¹¹³

230 West 78th Street
New York,
NY 10024, U.S.A.

¹⁰⁹ Minute book of Perry, T. S. (Perry papers (*supra*)).

¹¹⁰ Tablet of automatic writing, 22 Dec. 1892, pp.64-8 (67 and part of 68 torn off).

¹¹¹ La Farge, J. (1954) *The Manner is Ordinary*, 72. NY.

¹¹² *ProcSPR* 6, 653.

¹¹³ Two months after Hodgson's death, James gave his "private impression that [Hodgson] lately got into a sort of obsession about Mrs Piper . . ." (WJ to Flournoy, T., 8 Feb. 1906. In (1920) *Letters of William James*, 242. Boston).