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STRANGER THINGS: SOME REFLECTIONS
ON READING 'STRANGE THINGS' BY
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by G. W. LAMBERT

THE scope of this volume is more precisely defined by the sub-title 'The Enquiry by the Society for Psychical Research into Second Sight in the Scottish Highlands; the story of Ada Goodrich Freer, the Ballechin House Ghost Hunt, and the stories and folklore collected by Fr Allan McDonald of Eriskay.' The title is taken from a notebook by Fr McDonald containing a number of anecdotes probably collected in connexion with the S.P.R. Enquiry, and now published for the first time (pp. 279-301). The first section of the book (pp. 1-92) is entitled 'The S.P.R. Enquiry into Second Sight in the Scottish Highlands'. The author is Dr John Campbell, who lives in the Inner Hebrides, and is a Gaelic scholar.

He explains the origin of the project which seemed to have been initiated by Lord Bute (3rd Marquess 1847-1900), who also gave it valuable financial support.

It began to take shape in 1892, when the Rev. Peter Dewar, Minister of North Bute, was put forward as Secretary of the Enquiry. He was an admirable choice, and a Gaelic speaker. He was instrumental in sending to selected recipients a large number of requests for information schedules drafted by Professor and Mrs Sidgwick and F. W. H. Myers. The response, both in quantity and quality, was disappointing, and in 1894, after a further issue of schedules, with a covering letter from Lord Bute, a total of about 157 affirmative replies was collected. The 'follow

¹ London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968. xvi + 350pp. £2 15s.

up' of these was a task far too heavy for the Rev. P. Dewar to undertake on his own.

The man on the spot had got the knowledge but not the leisure, whereas in England a person with the requisite leisure was likely to be available, but without the knowledge. It is a difficulty which continually hampers progress, and cannot be charged to the incompetence of the S.P.R. leaders. In the event Miss A. Goodrich Freer was sent to be interviewed by Lord Bute and Mr Dewar, both of whom were favourably impressed by her. She was not an ideal choice as she was Assistant Editor to W. T. Stead for *Borderland*, a Spiritualist periodical, and a practicing clairvoyant, a faculty which made her a suitable subject for investigation, rather than an investigator.

Dr Campbell gives the reader copies of a good many letters from Miss Freer to Lord Bute, reporting progress as she travelled about the Highlands and Hebrides. They show her to have been very self-assured, and unduly optimistic about 'the harvest to be reaped here to which nothing the S.P.R. has yet touched can compare' (p. 52). On Eriskay in the Hebrides, she made contact with Fr Allan McDonald, and his folklore collection, including the Notebook 'Strange Things' described above. Much use was made of this material, without sufficient public acknowledgement, and in Section 3, Chapter 2 (pp. 229-46) Dr Campbell has done what he can to rectify the situation, by showing in detail her indebtedness to Fr McDonald's work. Meanwhile, the S.P.R. Enquiry was proceeding, and Miss Freer made her first interim report in a lecture to the Society on 7th December, 1894—(*Journal* 7, 2 and p. 60 of this book). None of the material collected, however 'interesting' it may have been to the audience to whom she spoke, was up to S.P.R. standards of evidence. It was so lacking in dates and corroboration that the publication in *Proceedings* even of selected parts of it, would have brought the S.P.R. into derision. On the other hand, if Miss Freer had not been allowed to describe the results to a Meeting of the Society, there would have been grounds for criticism that her work had been suppressed.

Thanks to the generosity of Lord Bute, Miss Freer was able to widen her field of enquiry, and a second appeal for information was sent out covering a wider circle of addressees. Further visits to Scotland were made in the autumn months of 1895/6, but there was no noticeable improvement in the *quality* of the evidence from the S.P.R. point of view. In the event no report of the Second Sight Enquiry ever appeared in *Proceedings*, and in that sense the enquiry was a failure. Dr Campbell (p. 92) refers to the

'uncritical acceptance' of her two reports by the S.P.R. But some polite remarks by the Chairman of the Meeting at which they were read about her interesting 'findings' did not amount to any judgement of their value.

Dr Campbell (p. 91), expresses surprise that Miss Freer embarked on the task without previous study of the history of second sight in the Highlands, as her ignorance must have proved to have been a barrier in her relations with seers. At the same time it must be remembered that when she was asked to undertake it, she was heavily involved in work for W. T. Stead in *Borderland*, to which she contributed extensively, and answering requests for advice on experiments in automatism obtained through an advertisement in that periodical (p. 146). By the end of 1896 she had become involved in the Burton case (pp. 146-51), and the Clandon Park Case (158-65). In short, she took on far more than she could perform, and left no time for study between one task and the next. A breakdown sooner or later was inevitable.

In Section II Mr T. H. Hall takes over (p. 95), and he has done some very ingenious and painstaking work on the antecedents and upbringing of Miss Freer. There is no doubt that she romanced a good deal in her later years about her ancestors, and the kind of society she was born into in 1857. How she managed to get such a good education, and to acquire manners and graces, which commended her to those with whom she had to deal, still remains something of a mystery. But one is hardly justified in writing her down as a complete adventuress, whose word cannot be trusted on any topic, including her own subjective experiences.

According to her own statement, she was studying the subject of crystal-gazing as early as 1887 at the British Museum, but it was not until 1888 that she met F. W. H. Myers. That is confirmed by an entry (5th Jan., 1888) in the Myers Diaries. She may well have been studying at the British Museum before their meeting, as she approached the subject through an interest in folklore. Mr Hall's inference (p. 132) that she must have met Myers before 1888 cannot be sustained.

She had already met Myers before the death of Edmund Gurney on 23rd June, 1888, as she claimed to have had an 'experience' on the following day in the form of a conviction that some calamity had happened connected with her friend Myers (p. 128). That, and a private note by Myers that she had 'beautiful grey eyes' constitute the foundation on which Mr Hall bases his suspicion that there was an 'affair' between Myers and her.

In the field of Psychical Research investigators are often brought into close relations with total strangers of the opposite sex, in

unusual circumstances, which, if Mrs Grundy had been present, would have caused her to gossip. Myers was a rather enthusiastic person, and perhaps liable to overrate the merits of his latest discovery in the way of a sensitive.

Mr Hall in an attempt to confirm his suspicion, refers to Myers' alleged 3-year liaison with another man's wife (meaning Anne Marshall)—(p. 129), but the evidence for that earlier affair is entirely wanting. It was not certain, but only a rumour, that Anne Marshall was pregnant at the time of her death in Sept. 1876; and even if she was, the presumption is that it was in the ordinary course of married life, as she and her husband Walter had been together as recently as the previous February and May. (*The Founders of Psychical Research* by A. Gauld, Kegan Paul, 1968, pp. 120-1.)

In a footnote on p. 131 of the book under review, Mr Hall makes another attempt to confirm the belief to which he has lent his support. Mrs Marshall's father, the Rev. R. Hill, had his daughter's body removed to her old home at Thornton Dale in Yorkshire for burial, instead of arranging for burial in the churchyard of Matterdale, where she was living at the time. His reason for so doing is not recorded, but it can be guessed. To get her buried at Matterdale meant making arrangements with the local Vicar (at that time an elderly John Bell) who had been there since 1851. His recourse would have naturally been not to a law manual, but to the Book of Common Prayer. The rubric at the beginning of the Office of the Burial of the Dead says that 'the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptised, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves'. If the local incumbent had read or heard the evidence at the Inquest, and had asked himself 'Did the deceased lay violent hands upon herself?' would he have been unreasonable if he had thought that the answer was 'yes'? It is true that if he had consulted a lawyer, he would no doubt have been told that a finding of 'unsound mind' allowed burial in the churchyard, even before the Burial Laws (Amendment) Act of 1880. But old Mr Hill presumably wanted his daughter to be buried according to the rites of the Church of England, without the risk of any unseemly contention with the local clergyman.

Although as Mr Hall observes, Mr Hill ceased being Rector of Thornton Dale in 1857, he thereafter became squire of the parish, and Patron of the living, and the rector there in 1876 was his brother-in-law Edward Heslop, who had married Lucy Hill (*Landed Gentry* 1914—Hill of Thornton Hall). These two parsons no doubt were close friends and understood one another.

All risk of unseemly argument would be avoided by having the funeral service conducted at Thornton instead of Matterdale. If that was the reason, it had nothing to do with the state of the unhappy woman, or with her reasons or motives for suicide.

The foregoing is an example of the danger of reasoning from circumstantial evidence. Two or more quite discrepant conclusions can be drawn from the few known facts.

The above reference to Edmund Gurney's death and Miss Freer's experience apparently connected with it affords another example. Mr Hall, in his book *The Strange Case of Edmund Gurney*—(Duckworth—1964) holds the view that Gurney committed suicide at Brighton, having been let down by some of his thought-reading friends there, and that deliberately false evidence was given at the Inquest. I offer here a quite different conclusion, drawn from actual facts, which had nothing to do with the S.P.R. or its work. I leave it to the reader to choose between them.

Shortly before 23rd June, 1888, Edmund Gurney received in London a letter which caused him to go to Brighton on the 22nd for a night or so. He did not tell his wife the object of his visit, and stayed at the Albion Hotel which was well away from any of his S.P.R. associates in Brighton. The writer of the letter was, I suggest, a Mr 'Z', who was no doubt identical with the man of the name who on 14th June took lodgings in a street about a quarter of a mile from the Albion Hotel. On arrival on the 22nd Gurney probably saw Z at his lodgings, where Z disclosed to Gurney a fact about himself (Z), which caused Gurney acute distress of mind. It was no doubt a secret at that time known only to Z and his physician. Gurney, who was a sensitive man, was so overborne by the calamity that he could not sleep. That night he took in consequence a rather heavier dose than usual of the chloroform which he had brought with him in an old hair-oil bottle. Unfortunately the result, whether he intended it we do not know, was fatal.

I identified Z from sources available to any enquirer, and traced his lamentable decline, first to a private medical home in the provinces, and eventually to an asylum in the London area, where he came to a shocking and premature end in 1896, apparently with no member of his family present. I do not mention his name in order to avoid causing distress in any quarter.

This account of Gurney's death affords understandable reasons—(1) for the fact that he did not mention to anyone even in vague terms, the object of his journey to Brighton. The statement in 'Light' (30th June, 1888) that Gurney went to Brighton on some

business connected with Psychical Research seems to have been a surmise, as there was never any information on the point.

(2) for the efforts made to keep secret any references to Gurney's death in Mrs Piper's sittings in England, which started in the following year (1889), lest they should lead to the disclosure of the secret about Z, who was still alive. By then Fred Myers doubtless knew the truth, and probably warned the Sidgwicks of the danger of giving any occasion for renewed curiosity about the calamity (pp. 96 and 213).

(3) for the extraordinary efforts made to keep secret the contents of the letter found in Gurney's pocket.

That account does not involve imputing by inference any unworthy actions or motives to Dr A. T. Myers, or to the Sidgwicks, or to anyone else (e.g. G. A. Smith) engaged in Psychical Research. Z's name, the details about him, and the sources of information, are now on the file at the S.P.R.

A third case, illustrative of the perils of arguing from circumstantial evidence, is referred to on p. 127 as the 'Hornby imbroglio' (pp. 127 and 214). It is only mentioned in passing, but it has been and still is used to support charges of bungling and incompetence against the early leaders of Psychical Research. I make no apology for dealing with it here.

Briefly, Judge Sir Edmund Hornby, formerly Chief Justice at Shanghai, sent to the Society for Psychical Research a story about an experience he had had, his wife being with him at the time, while serving at Shanghai about 9 years before. The experience coincided in date with a local event, the sudden death of a journalist. The Judge said it occurred in 1875 or '76, when he had been married about three months. The story was published in this country, with the Judge's consent, not only in *Proc. II*, 180 (original edition) but also in *The XIX Century*. No objection was raised until it reached Shanghai, when a journalist there pointed out that three months or so after the Judge married there was no sudden death of any journalist. So there was something wrong with the story as told. Gurney, who was handling the case, took this rejoinder down to Torquay, where the Judge and his wife were living in retirement, and confronted them with it. The Judge was embarrassed, and agreed that the story must be withdrawn. His memory, he said, had played him 'an extraordinary trick'. But he would not withdraw any detail of his account of the experience, of which he had a vivid memory. The old couple made a very favourable impression on Gurney, as giving their evidence about it in good faith.

The solution of this 'imbroglio' is relatively simple. The

certain date is that of the death of the journalist Hugh Lang, whose apparition the Judge saw. According to the local papers that was 19 January 1875. (See e.g. *North China Herald*, etc., 21st Jan., 1875, p. 45.) The undisclosed date, which was concealed by the vague description '1875 or 1876', was that of the Judge's marriage—his third. If the incident took place *after* the marriage, as the Judge said it did, and his wife testified to having been with him at the time, then they were married before 19th January, 1875. But the correspondent from Shanghai said they were not married till 29th April, 1875. The Judge's bride was an American lady, and the couple presented themselves for marriage both to the British Consul and to the U.S. Consul, presumably sometime in 1874, and considered themselves married, no doubt setting up house together accordingly. They were both eligible, he being a widower since December 1873 and she a spinster. But they had not reckoned with 'red tape', and overlooked the fact that, each party being a foreigner in relation to the other, neither the British Consul nor the U.S. Consul could complete the arrangement, and it was some months before they could get married in Church (*North China Herald*, etc. 1st May, 1875). The disclosure of this nine years later in England was naturally inconvenient, and of course Gurney did all in his power to stop *further* circulation of the story, and took more than his fair share of the blame for what had occurred, in the interests of the Judge and his wife.

Thus, the story was stopped, not because it was proved untrue, but because it was socially embarrassing. As an investigator, should Gurney have asked Sir Edmund and Lady Hornby to produce their marriage lines?

This is not the place to discuss the story as such, and if anyone wants to read it it is still in *Proc. S.P.R.* Vol. II (original edition). But it can no longer be used as a stick with which to belabour the early workers in this field, nor to give support to a generalization like the following—"The consistent attitude of researchers in this field, since the formation of the S.P.R. in 1882 to the present day, is that stories by such individuals (i.e. the educated, mentally gifted and socially accomplished) of their experiences, however improbable and uncorroborated, must be accepted without question' (pp. 96-7).

It is frequently forgotten that the majority of stories sent to the Society have to be dropped in the course of an investigation because the case is found to be one of natural causes or human error. It often happens that the whole truth of the story cannot be told, because to do so would diminish the value of a house, or damage the reputation of some person. In such cases the kindest

course for the investigator is to withdraw quickly and quietly, and to publish nothing. If the case has already become notorious, investigation may give the impression that the story has been 'accepted' (whatever that means), and that the Society's investigator has left the victim in the lurch. On the contrary, the investigator may have put the person concerned onto the right course for obtaining relief from fear or annoyance.

Nor is it true to say that the early leaders of the Society, anyhow towards the end of the 19th century, were motivated by a determination to prove at all costs the existence and reality of psychic phenomena (p. 127). Its declared object is still the same today, namely to approach each case without prejudice or prepossession.

Mr Hall (p. 126) cites a case in which, as he thinks, Myers showed so much prepossession in favour of the survival hypothesis that he (Myers) withheld from publication some evidence that would from his point of view, have discounted the value of a story he had published. The case in point, known later as 'The Leeds Library Ghost', was first published without real names in his paper 'On Recognized Apparitions Occurring more than a year after Death' (*Proc.*, 6 13-65). The first and relevant incident in the series of occurrences which took place in the Leeds Library in 1884-5 was the seeing of a ghost late at night in the Library by the Head Librarian, Mr (later Sir) John Y. W. MacAlister. It disappeared in a manner inconsistent with its having been a real person. MacAlister did not recognize the figure as anyone he knew, but a local clergyman called Hargrove, to whom he described it next day, identified it as the late Head Librarian, V. T. Sternberg, who had died in March 1880. Mr Hall regards the whole affair as 'open to the gravest doubts', a view with which I personally agree, but when Mr Hall charges Myers with having suppressed material evidence available to him, because it ran counter to his (Myers) prepossession in favour of the survival hypothesis (*New Light on Old Ghosts* p. 49), I cannot follow him. Myers was restricted in what he published by an express request from MacAlister, on grounds of public interest, to conceal identifying detail. The publication *at the time* of the 'concealed' documents was clearly impossible, as they disclosed subsequent actions of members of the Library Staff which were open to criticism. Common prudence was enough to discourage Myers from even suggesting publication, which MacAlister would surely have forbidden. The disclosures did not lessen the credibility of MacAlister's original experience, i.e. the seeing of a ghost, though whether it was really Sternberg's ghost is a question upon which opinions may differ still, irrespective of the subsequent happenings

in the Library, which are now only of 'antiquarian' interest.

To return to Miss Freer and her activities, we left her at the end of 1896, having undertaken a good deal more than she could perform. Yet in 1897 the load on her was increased by the case of Ballechin House in Perthshire. The investigation of the supposed haunting there was sponsored and largely financed by Lord Bute. The hiring of the furnished house for several months was arranged by Col. Taylor, a Member of the S.P.R. acting on his own account, and the responsibility for all domestic and receptionist arrangements was placed upon the shoulders of Miss Freer, who had to engage the servants, allot the rooms to a series of changing visitors, and cater for the household. The S.P.R. as a body took no part in the project, and when the case became notorious in June 1897, they issued a disclaimer, containing the following sentence: 'The question of hiring Ballechin House was never brought before the Council in any form whatever, and they are entirely without responsibility in regard to it. They desire also to impress upon their Members the importance of taking all possible care to prevent the publication of names, where there is any reason to suppose that this would cause annoyance.' (*Jnl.* 8, 116)

There is no reason to suppose that the composition of the 'S.P.R. party', as it was called, which visited Ballechin House from 12th to 22nd April, 1867 during Col. Taylor's tenancy, was officially recognized by the Society. It included Frederic Myers, representing the S.P.R. and some other volunteers.

Among these was a Miss Chaston, a medium (and her chaperone). Miss Chaston was nominated by Dr Abraham Wallace, then a Member of the Council of the S.P.R., as being a sensitive well known to him (letter from F. W. H. Myers to Lord Bute, written from Ballechin House on his arrival there).

Miss Freer was responsible for the allocation of rooms at Ballechin House during the tenancy of Col. Taylor, and was naturally anxious to keep control of the dates of arrival and departure of guests. If she reacted sharply on hearing that Miss Chaston at the last minute was intending to stay longer than originally planned, there is no need to assume the emotional overtones which suggested themselves to Mr Hall; much less that Myers was having an affair with Miss Chaston. Four days after Myers left, Lord and Lady Bute were expected, and any muddle over the allocation of rooms just before they arrived would have been very unfortunate. As it was Miss Chaston left as late as the morning of the day on which Lord and Lady Bute arrived. (*The Alleged Haunting of Ballechin House*, p. 200.)

The publicity given to the affair by the Press and hostile critics

made so much stir that it became urgently necessary for the S.P.R. to withdraw at once. A plan was on foot to follow up the clues furnished by Sir J. Milne, the seismologist, suggesting that many, if not all, the unaccountable noises were due to natural causes, and Miss Freer had agreed to give the necessary facilities. But the lease came to an end before instruments could be installed, and the owner of the house, fearful of its reputation, refused to extend it (*ibid.* p. 229).

Experience since the time of the 'Cock Lane Ghost' (1762) has shown that once a case has attracted crowds, all hope of getting reliable evidence from individuals thereafter vanishes. Suggestion, inflamed by superstition, runs riot.

The history of Psychical Research is strewn with examples of so-called 'haunted houses', the investigation of which has been abandoned because the occupants have been unwilling to face the inconvenience of being 'in the news'.

In spite of the supposed breach with Myers over the Ballechin affair, Miss Freer continued in her public utterances, to pay compliments to the S.P.R. and its founders (see e.g. *Essays in P.R.* by Miss X, Redway, 1899, p. 18). It is true that by the beginning of 1899 Miss Freer had developed what Hodgson called an *idée fixe* on the subject of Mrs Piper and her handling by the S.P.R., and there is enough evidence of a widening breach on policy matters to account for her losing support in that quarter. There does not seem to be any ground for supposing that Miss Freer was 'furious with Myers' from the day in April 1897 when she discovered that Myers and Miss Chaston had been at Ballechin House in the same party, when she was not there (p. 199). Things really began to get difficult for Miss Freer when she parted from W. T. Stead who employed her on 'Borderland', which came to an end in 1897, and in 1900 lost by death her patron Lord Bute. Mr Hall, on the basis of some new evidence, thinks that by 1901 she had become so hard-pressed that she stooped to fraud in sittings at Swanley, where she was then living in a very modest way. Probably she had had to cease her membership of more than one Society owing to financial stringency, and there were many people about ready to suggest that she had been 'thrown off', and that she was 'not genuine' (see p. 211). Mr Hall's attempts to pin-point the incident at Swanley in 1901 which brought about the necessity for her to go abroad, and thinks it may have been an attempt by her to produce physical phenomena (table raps) by fraudulent means (pp. 211-12). He credits Podmore with the 'knowledge' that there was nothing in the *published literature* that even hinted that Miss Freer had ever separated from her chosen and safe

field of clairvoyance, visions, telepathy, shell-hearing and the like. So when Podmore, in a footnote (*Modern Spiritualism*, London 1902, Vol. II, p. 332, n.1) wrote that, apart from Mrs Piper, he knew of no 'clairvoyant medium of note since 1848 who has failed at one time or another to exhibit physical phenomena, if only to the extent of table rapping' he must have included Miss Freer in his generalization, on the strength of some *very recent* reports of table-rapping from persons at her sittings at Swanley. That is Mr Hall's argument.

What then are we to make of the following statement in *Borderland*, I, 118-19, in an editorial written by Miss X (i.e. Miss Freer) in 1893 or 94 'As an illustration of the splitting of one's consciousness, I have seen a table dance across the room, and kick itself to splinters in a corner, but I should not record the fact as anything but a psychical phenomenon, showing how very much my fingers could do, without my sanction and consciousness!' I take that to mean that she had witnessed physical phenomena in her presence, produced by unconscious muscular action on her part (and not by spirits or telekinesis).

It is thus to be inferred that such things as table movements and taps were by no means novel incidents in her 'mediumship', and Podmore probably knew it. She herself no doubt regarded them with disdain, as being of no more significance than an involuntary sneeze or cough. So Podmore's footnote cannot be held to sustain the argument Mr Hall has rested on it.

On p. 210, Mr Hall broaches another 'mystery' connected with the Swanley period. On 28th February, 1901 one unnamed lady wrote to another 'She (Miss Freer) talks of coming to live in London, and asked me if I would go and "stroke" her sometimes, as it does her good. I don't think that can all be flattery, because she couldn't stand it if it didn't do her good, but on the other hand she must know how I should enjoy immensely anything of the sort.' Dr Campbell thought that simply meant that Miss Freer wanted to be soothed and flattered, but Dr Dingwall is quoted as thinking that it might mean flagellation. Surely the word 'stroke', in inverted commas, here refers to curative stroking by the hands. It is a form of treatment popular in circles which believe in psychic healing, and was certainly known to Miss Freer. In *Borderland* for April 1894 (p. 297), in an editorial doubtless from her pen, she wrote 'Nothing is better attested than the fact that some people have healing powers which others have not'. Again, in her Essay on *Psychic Healing* (*Essays*, p. 293) she relates how a friend accompanying her on a visit to St Winifred's Well in North Wales, applied treatment of a similar kind (rubbing, with verbal

suggestions) to pilgrims who, 'over and over again' received benefit from it.

In the New English Dictionary, under 'stroke', and 'stroking', several early 17th century examples of the use of the words in their curative sense are given, and the expression was made widely known by Valentine Greatrakes (1629-83) who treated for rheumatism the famous astronomer Flamsteed with little or no benefit from the 'stroking' (D.N.B.). Poverty and poor health were quite enough to account for Miss Freer's acceptance of employment in Palestine at the end of 1901, and after that date she passed out of the field of Psychical Research, until her death on 24th February, 1931 in America. In *Proceedings* 14, 393 Richard Hodgson, reviewing *Essays in Psychical Research* by Miss X (i.e. A. Goodrich Freer), criticized her sharply for not acknowledging indebtedness to others, and for ignoring corrections of mis-statements she had made, especially about Mrs Piper. That verdict left little to be said.

Mr Hall (p. 214) refers to 'the obliteration' of Miss Freer's name from the S.P.R. literature after 1901, and the disappearance of all the files etc., and the suppression of Sidgwick's early praise of her.

It is doubtful whether there ever were any records at all to obliterate. Apart from the originals of one or two papers or addresses by Miss Freer published in the *Journal* or *Proceedings*, there would have been nothing from her to file at the Society's Headquarters. The Burton case was started by her in her personal capacity, published first in *Borderland*, April 1896, with Lady Burton's full permission. It may well be that later Lady Burton said that she wanted to withdraw her consent (p. 150), but left it too late to stop the April issue of *Borderland*, which by 22nd March, the date of her death, must have been in print. To persons familiar with the 'habits' of automatic writings, there was nothing unusual in a 'message' purporting to come from a total stranger. Sometimes a name and address to which it should be sent are given. In some cases the whole thing turns out to be pure fantasy, but here the script seems to have turned Lady Burton suddenly from a dislike of such activities to a fervent belief in them, a development which Miss Freer regarded with some misgivings. There was no firm ground for charging Miss Freer with imposture, as some critics did.

To sum up, the new evidence furnished by Dr Campbell confirms the charge against Miss Freer originally brought by Richard Hodgson, of having made extensive use of materials about Scottish folklore collected by her friends, without due acknowledgement. The information about Miss Freer's origin and career

brought to light by Mr T. H. Hall, though interesting in itself, does not sustain the wholesale aspersions on her character which he derives from it. Miss Freer's violent antagonism against Mrs Piper and other mediums can be put down to her finding that the arrival of Mrs Piper in England in 1889 led to her (Miss Freer) being no longer the 'leading lady' of the S.P.R. stage. That, together with the loss of her chief patrons, was enough to account for her eclipse, and the paucity of records about her still remaining in the files of the S.P.R. is no evidence of misdeeds by her or by those in the S.P.R. with whom she had to deal. Mr Hall's contribution shows too many examples of the perils of arguing from circumstantial evidence, and from negatives. The book has a good index.

I am indebted to Mrs E. Q. Nicholson for allowing me to examine F. W. H. Myers' diaries, and also unpublished letters from Myers to Lord Bute; also to the Council of the Society for permission to quote from the *Journal*.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE DIEPPE RAID CASE

by ROBERT J. HASTINGS

INTRODUCTION

THE Dieppe Raid case was originally investigated by G. W. Lambert and Kathleen Gay. Their report appeared in the *Journal S.P.R.*, May-June 1952. The case concerns the experiences of two English ladies, who, whilst on a visit to Puy (two miles east of Dieppe) in 1951, claimed to have heard sounds resembling those which they thought would have been audible at Puy at corresponding times during the war-time raid which had taken place in 1942. The investigators concluded that the ladies' experiences could be rated 'a genuine psi phenomenon' which they described in the title of their report as a 'Collective Auditory Hallucination'.

Letters about the case were written by Denis Chesters and W. H. W. Sabine, and were answered by G. W. Lambert (*Journal S.P.R.*, July-October 1952). Mr Sabine's letter called attention to points of similarity between the ladies' experiences at Puy in 1951, and the experiences at Versailles in 1901 described by Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain in the book entitled *An Adventure* (Macmillan, 1911). In both cases there were two English ladies