

Evidence of Survival of a Human Personality.

By Dr. R. J. TILLYARD, F.R.S.

"We are sitting in front of one of Nature's shows as a respectful audience. We are not to blame for the phenomena. We don't manufacture them. We don't have to defend them or explain them. Here they are for any honest man to behold."

Dr. L. R. G. CRANDON, *in litt.*

THE supernormal phenomena studied in the nascent science called psychical research are essentially phenomena associated with living organisms, and fall, therefore, within the limits of the wider science of biology. It has long been a reproach that biologists in general have refused to study them. For myself, I have been endeavouring, during the past five or six years to remove that reproach by studying them whenever opportunity presented itself. Two years ago, in the columns of NATURE, I pleaded for a recognition of the reality of the phenomena and asked that science should keep an open mind about them. At that time I was not convinced that the survival of a human personality, after the change which we call death, had ever been demonstrated, although I had to admit that there was much that was puzzling in the phenomena and much that could be most simply explained by accepting survival. As the result of further experiments with the remarkable Boston medium, Mrs. L. R. G. Crandon, I feel that a *scientific proof* of survival has at last been obtained, and it is the purpose of this article to set it before the reader of NATURE, who, one might venture to believe, would be interested in what appears to me to be, in Dr. Crandon's own words, "one of Nature's shows."

In submitting this proof, I desire to emphasise three things about it:

(1) The possibilities of fraud have been eliminated in two ways:

(a) By using such controls as the nature of each experiment clearly calls for if a charge of possible straight-out fraud is to be avoided.

(b) By devising experiments which, in their very nature, are either manifestly impossible to human beings in the flesh, or at any rate admittedly impossible under the conditions of actual performance.

(2) The experiments can be repeated time after time, and the same results obtained. In future, no scientist can level the charge of non-repetition against the experimenters of this particular group.

(3) The main proofs of survival obtained lie in phenomena which, whether of the so-called mental or physical type, are normally *impossible* of performance by human beings.

Before giving a condensed account of these phenomena it will be necessary for me to outline briefly the history of the mediumship which is now known widely in psychic circles as the 'Margery' mediumship. Margery's maiden name was Mina Stinson. She is now the wife of Dr. L. R. G. Crandon, a well-known Boston surgeon. She was born in Canada, and had a brother named

Walter Stewart Stinson who was killed on Aug. 8, 1912, in a railway accident. There was a great affection between the brother and sister. The mediumship began in May 1923, with table-rapping and such-like familiar phenomena, but developed later into trance form, with a very striking characteristic, namely, the formation of an independent voice, not proceeding from the lips or throat of the medium, and claiming to be the voice of her dead brother Walter. This voice was quite strongly developed two years ago, and was tested very fully by me in two sésances at the end of April 1926. The voice does not utter inanities or banalities, but shows a fully developed human personality, very masculine, forceful, and humorous, so that it tends to dominate the whole proceedings and clearly exercises an independent will of its own in relation to the other sitters. Many remarkable experiments have been performed through the agency of this control, which anyone may call 'Walter' without thereby committing himself to the belief that it is truly the surviving voice of Margery's dead brother.

Coming to Boston after an absence of more than two years, I had the privilege of attending and controlling four remarkable sésances. The first two of these contain all that is requisite for a strict proof of the survival of the human personality of Walter Stinson. Even more remarkable were the results obtained in the third and fourth sésances; but these logically form a portion of a series of experiments not yet completed, and therefore the account will be both simpler and clearer if I keep mainly to the first two.

The proof of survival lies along two well-marked lines, one of the mental type, namely, *supernormal cognition of unknown objects*, and one of the physical type, namely, *production of supernormal thumb-prints*. The former type clearly belongs to the category of normal impossibilities, while the latter is probably of the same type, and should appeal more especially to biologists.

SUPERNORMAL COGNITION OF UNKNOWN OBJECTS.

Sésance held at Dr. Crandon's house, 10 Lime Street, Boston, Mass., 9 to 10 P.M., May 31, 1928.

PREPARATION.—Accompanied by Mr. J. W. Evans, B.A. (Cantab.), a young entomologist who had never before been to a sésance and had no interest or belief in psychic phenomena, I arrived at Dr. Crandon's house and proceeded to make the following preparations for supernormal tests:

(1) *Calendar Tests*.—Mr. Evans and I each obtained a calendar with separate sheets for each day of the month, slung together, by two punched holes, on a pair of metal rings. Going alone into another room, I took all the slips for the month of May off the rings, turned them over and signed each separately on the back. I then shuffled

them face downwards, like a pack of cards, replaced them on their rings, and put them into my pocket.

Mr. Evans dealt similarly with his calendar, selecting the month of September 1927.

Neither Mr. Evans nor myself, nor any living person, knew the order of the arrangement of the dates on these two calendars when we took them into the séance room.

The object of the test was to see whether 'Walter' could select numbers from the calendars in the dark, impress his results on Margery's mind by telepathic hypnosis, and cause her to write them down accurately in bright light after the séance was over. In addition, we had arranged to test 'Walter' for supernormal results at a distance, by asking another medium, Mrs. Sary Litzelmann, to sit at the same time at a tiny village called Ogunquit in Maine, about eighty miles north of Boston, and to report her results to us later in the evening by trunk telephone.

séances would be out of place here, and will be published elsewhere later.¹ I will confine myself to a general statement of what actually happened at the first two séances.

The medium having been searched by one of the women sitters, the circle was formed, with the medium controlled by myself on her left side and by Dr. Crandon on her right side; lights were turned out, the door having been previously locked by myself and the windows barred and shuttered. The darkness was so intense that I could see no more at the end of an hour than at the beginning.

Under these conditions, the first phenomenon which occurs is always the production of 'Walter's' psychic voice. This voice is objective, as it has been recorded on the dictaphone; it does not proceed from the medium, but from a point in the air outside her, sometimes near, sometimes quite a considerable distance away. By means of the Richardson Voice Cut-off Machine, now

almost too well known to need description, it is possible to wake the medium up and block her mouth completely, also those of all the other sitters at the same time, yet 'Walter's' voice is still produced as loudly as ever under these conditions, and has been tested by me a number of times, and by many other investigators. I have also heard it speak in bright red light, while watching the lips and larynx of the medium carefully, and I have noted that the normal position from which the sound issues is a point about eight to ten inches in front of the medium's upper abdomen. The voice is masculine, fairly loud, slightly hoarse, and its possessor has a really remarkable power of whistling.

With running humorous comments by this voice, the next phenomena noticeable are movements and the handling of objects placed on the table within the circle. On presenting my calendar by laying it on the table just in front of my face, 'Walter' at once handled it and tore a number out; soon afterwards he returned it to me by neatly placing it between my thumb and the medium's left hand which I was holding. Three numbers were similarly torn from Mr. Evans's calendar, one of these being stated by 'Walter' to be 'Heaven's special number.' Four drawings were also torn from Mr. Evans's set and given to me, and finally six pieces were torn from the pages of the magazine which had been presented to 'Walter.' All these, returned by him to me in the same way, were carefully put aside, some in my own pocket, some by Mr. Evans, and one or two passed to other sitters.

During the séance, 'Walter' several times asked for quiet and said he was off to Ogunquit. On the

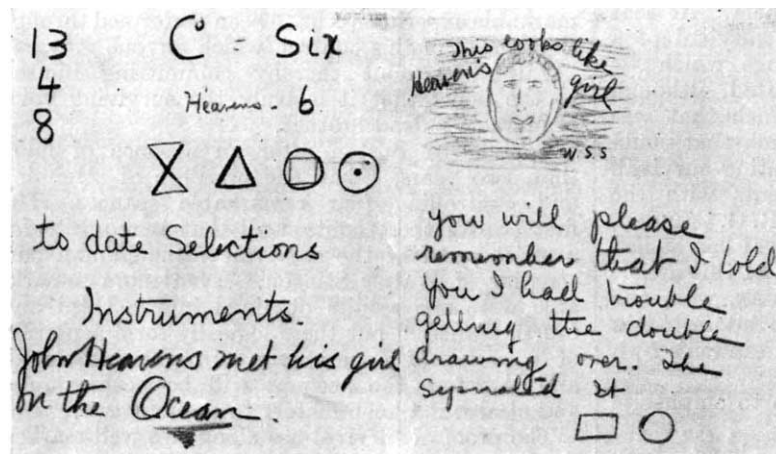


FIG. 1.—The two pages of script written by Margery in bright light in the drawing-room after the first séance. (Reduced to one-fourth natural size.)

(2) *Drawing Tests.*—In order to rule out the charge that I myself might be an accomplice of the Crandons, I entrusted this test entirely to Mr. Evans. He took some slips of paper and made a number of diagrammatic drawings on them, ten in all, which he then shuffled face downwards and tied together by string. These were taken into the séance room in his pocket.

Mr. Evans knew the diagrams, but not their order; nobody else knew what they were at all.

(3) *Magazine Tests.*—Mr. Evans went into Boston a few minutes before the séance began, having previously listed all the magazines which he could find in the Crandons' home, and bought one which had only just been issued and was not taken by the Crandons, viz. the "Radio Listeners' Guide and Call Book" for June 3, 1928. He slipped this under his coat and brought it secretly into the séance room.

Nobody but Mr. Evans knew the name of the selected magazine, and nobody in the séance room knew any of its contents.

As a full report of this and the succeeding

¹ *Proc. Nat. Lab. Psychical Research*, vol. i. part 2, to be issued about September 1928.—R. J. T.

third occasion, after announcing his return, he appeared worried, and said that he had not been able to get 'Sary' to reproduce a drawing properly; it was a double drawing, and "she had separated it."

The dark séance ended at 10 P.M., the medium woke up and we all adjourned downstairs to the drawing-room. I went down with Margery; Mr.

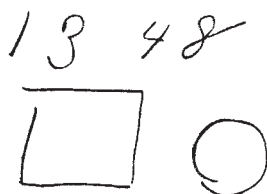


FIG. 2.—Portion of the script written by Mrs. 'Sary' Litzelmann at Ogunquit, Maine, 80 miles away from Boston, during the time of the first séance. (Reduced to one-fourth natural size.)

Evans brought up the rear, seeing that all the other sitters came into the room within a very short time. Nobody spoke to the medium. I sat down beside her on a sofa, with the telephone close by on the mantel-piece, and pencil and paper handy, in bright white light. Soon Margery said she wished to write, and I handed her the paper and pencil. She

wrote the two sheets reproduced in Fig. 1. We then produced all the numbers, drawings, and magazine pieces which Walter had handed to me during the séance, and found that they corresponded exactly with what Margery had written. The '8' was my number; 'Heaven's special number' was the '6'; and the other two from Evans's calendar were '13' and '4.'

We did not fully understand the allusion in Margery's writing about the double drawing until about ten minutes later, when I took a trunk call on the telephone and found it was from Mrs. Litzelmann at Ogunquit. She dictated her results



FIG. 3.—Four of the magazine pieces torn out by 'Walter' during the first séance.

through the telephone to Mr. Evans, and also posted them, signed by all her circle of sitters, the following day. Though not so fully accurate as Margery's, it will be seen from Fig. 2 that she had some remarkable successes, getting three out of the four numbers, and also reproducing the very drawing, which 'Walter' and Margery both commented on, as a square alongside a circle instead of a circle inside a square.

It does not seem necessary here to reproduce the calendar numbers or Mr. Evans's drawings, but Fig. 3 shows the four most striking of the magazine

selections, which should be carefully compared with Margery's writings.

The remark, written by Margery, that "John Evans met his girl on the Ocean," refers to the fact that he had become engaged on the voyage across the Pacific the previous month. This fact was not known to anybody in Boston.

In case anybody should direct attention to the fact that Dr. Crandon had control of his wife's right hand and leg during this séance, I must mention that, two evenings later, I replaced Dr. Crandon by a stranger, Capt. Fife. Under these conditions, equally good results were obtained.

This article cannot be extended to discuss the results. It seems to me that they speak for themselves.

SUPERNORMAL PRODUCTION OF THUMB-PRINTS.

Séance held at Dr. Mark Richardson's house, 117 Lake Avenue, Newton Centre, Boston, Mass., eight miles from Dr. Crandon's house, 9.30 to 10.15 P.M., June 1, 1928.

PREPARATION.—The venue was changed in order to eliminate possible charges of fraud connected with apparatus or fittings in the Crandon's séance room. Dr. Crandon also agreed to my desire for a séance at which he and all the usual members of his circle should be absent. The only other sitter besides myself was Capt. Fife, the finger-print expert of the U.S. Navy Yard.

I took an unopened box of the dark-red dental wax called 'Kerr,' opened it myself, counted eight pieces inside, took out three and gave them to Mr. Evans, and kept five myself. Each piece was then marked secretly on the back by us, a number given to it, and a piece broken off from the side. The eight smaller pieces were placed in a box, for purposes of verifying the counterparts later. The eight larger portions were placed in the original box and carried out to Dr. Richardson's house in my pocket.

The room selected for the séance was a small annex of a larger room, only opening from the latter by a door, and with a high barred window. In this room we arranged a small table, three chairs, and a red shade over the electric light. No cabinet or gramophone. For the purpose of making thumb-prints, a kettle of hot water had to be provided, also a jug of cold water, a folded cloth, and two dishes. The procedure is to pour hot water into one dish until the temperature is about 140° F., the cloth being placed in the dish of water. The plate of 'Kerr' is then placed on the cloth under the hot water until it is sufficiently soft, when the cloth is drawn out on to the table. One can then press one's thumbs into the wax, which sticks tightly to them until it is quite cooled down.

With only the medium, Capt. Fife, and myself present, Mr. Evans guarding the door outside, and with red light frequently turned on to verify the position of the pieces of 'Kerr,' to remove each one from the cold water when Walter reported it done, or to put in a new piece into the hot water when he asked for it, we had a most extraordinarily quick and accurate performance by 'Walter' of the technique of making thumb-prints. In taking

Margery's, Capt. Fife's, and my own thumb-prints, which I did in bright light within a few minutes of the end of the séance, considerable difficulties were met with, especially owing to the wax melting too much if the water were too hot, and sticking closely to the thumb until the water was quite cool. I

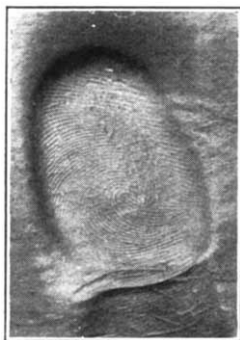


FIG. 4.—Margery's (Mrs. Crandon's) right thumb-print.

timed Capt. Fife, a fingerprint expert, taking one of his own thumb-prints, and it took him ten minutes. 'Walter' did seven good prints in the dark in about half-an-hour, remarking, *en passant*, that it was easy for him, as he "carried his cold about with him."

The procedure for each thumb-print was as follows: When the hot water had been poured into the dish by Capt. Fife, and the cloth suitably arranged in it (the medium being asleep and with her two hands and legs fully controlled by us), the red light was turned out by myself. 'Walter' would wait until the water had cooled to the requisite temperature, and would then ask me to put a cake of 'Kerr' into the dish. When I had done this, we could hear movements in the water, and soon the cloth would be dragged out of the dish and the 'Kerr' removed to the cold water. 'Walter' would then tell me to put the light up, and I would take the 'Kerr' out of the dish, examine it, note the presence of a thumb-print, put it aside into my box, and get ready for another.

By inadvertently failing to follow Walter's directions, I twice caused him to talk in bright red light. On one occasion he said "No," in a loud voice, as I was about to put some 'Kerr' into the dish. On the second occasion, while I was looking straight at the medium, he said, "Go ahead, put it in." I noted that neither the medium's lips nor her larynx moved at all.

When doing the fourth print, 'Walter' said that it would prove to be a mirror-image of his ordinary thumb-print. This we verified as correct later.

During the séance I was frequently touched and stroked by 'Walter's' teleplastic terminal, and water was several times sprinkled over me.

An examination of the prints showed that there were seven clear right thumb-prints in all, two of them being on No. 6. No. 4 differed from the rest, and a later examination showed that it was a positive mirror-image.² All the rest were negative.

² A *negative* impression is the same as would be obtained by pressing a normal human thumb on wax. A *positive* is the same as the actual pattern on the thumb itself.—R. J. T.



FIG. 5.—Captain Fife's right thumb-print.

All seven belonged to the same thumb and were markedly different from the thumb-prints of Margery, Fife, and myself. The next evening I took the thumb-prints of all the usual circle of sitters, including Dr. Crandon, and these also were found to differ from 'Walter's.' A comparison of the 'Walter' thumb-print with a portion of the ulnar area of his actual thumb-print made during life, and found on his razor (used on the morning of the fatal accident in 1912), has been made possible through the fact that his old mother, who is still alive but very infirm, had preserved this and other treasures untouched since the day of the tragedy. The ulnar area of the prints obtained supernormally agrees exactly with that on the handle of the razor.

The eight smaller pieces of 'Kerr' were then produced by me, and six of them were easily fitted to the six retrieved from the cold water in the séance. The secret marks, numbers, etc., were also verified, though some of them were more or less obliterated through flowing of the wax in the hot water.

I should like to summarise the results of the above two séances as follows:

The *personality* of 'Walter' is shown to be independent of that of the medium by the possession of a distinct, masculine voice and strong whistling powers, these never proceeding from the mouth or larynx of the medium; by his alert mental powers, tendency to impatience and the use of swear words, by a marked sense of humour, a Canadian accent, and many other qualities which cannot fail to produce in a sitter the definite feeling that he is dealing with an independent personality. Besides this, 'Walter' shows that he has the power of smell, can see in the dark, can handle delicate objects and place them accurately in the dark without doing any damage. He can select and cognise objects not known to any living person in the world, thus proving that he does not depend on telepathy or knowledge stored up in any person's subconscious mind. He can hypnotically influence the medium to write down his selected results, and can also influence mediums sitting at a great distance to do the same. Finally, he can produce his thumb-prints in dental wax in the dark more quickly than an ordinary man can do them in the light.

Experiments closely similar to the above are now being done twice a week regularly by 'Walter,' and it is therefore within the power of any man who wishes to do so to verify the phenomena stated in this article. My own conclusion is that Walter Stinson, who died in 1912, has fully proved *in a scientific manner* his claim that his personality has survived physical death.



FIG. 6.—'Walter's' right thumb-print. Normal negative.