

CHAPTER TEN: I MEET SOME MEDIUMS, A PALMIST, AN ASTROLOGER AND...A GHOST OR TWO!

Not So Much About Subud- But You Might Find This Interesting (I Did!)

The advice to look beneath the appearance of people to the “raw person underneath” was very good advice and led to my meeting some very interesting people at this time. Several of the most interesting to me were people whom I would not usually have gone out of my way to meet but, fortunately, the latihan had clearly made me less judgemental and more open to people generally and this meant my previous prejudices and “spiritual superiority” did not rule things out as much as they had before. As a result I found myself getting to know people from varied walks of life and I was most surprised to find some of them having a spiritual interest, albeit a very different one from mine. I guess things took off in this new direction first when I met a couple who were then very active in the local Spiritualist Church. We took an immediate liking to each other and consequently I was invited to their home to meet some of their mediumistic friends. I found them all (and there were many of them) delightful people who were all similar to each other, I felt, in having absolutely no “airs and graces” but who were content to be seen as the ordinary people they clearly were. Clearly, too, some of them also had quite extraordinary gifts.

A Personal “Reading” From A Spiritualist

The first to particularly impress me was a quite ordinary, rather well-built lady who looked a typical, professional middle aged woman, comfortably off and probably with a pleasantly well-furnished home in the better part of town. I would not have expected to have much in common with such a person and left to myself I probably would not have gone out of my way to talk to her. As it was I found her to be an extremely kind person with a beautiful, soft voice (I learnt she was also a classical singer!) and within minutes of meeting her she began giving me a “reading” (i.e. a passing on of information she was receiving from what she would call Spirit) which fascinated me. I, who so hated relationships that took ages to get beyond the superficial, was to find myself over and over at this time plunging into the depths of intimacy, really, within moments of meeting some of the most ordinary looking people! She began by saying:

“I get this lovely, gentle feeling with you and straightaway I see that there is a link with your father who is in Spirit (!) There should have been a strong bond here with the two of you, just as there should be an equally

strong bond between you and your son (!) Your father says he is amazed at the Spirit world; he simply never had a clue about it before he came over. He is especially pleased to be finding his own family now and reuniting with them (my father had no family of his own here: he had been fostered!). He is SO proud of you!

I see that you are in the mood for change in your job. You have just changed your job haven't you? (I had become Head a week previously!) It's a bit of a challenge but Spirit clapped their hands when you accepted that job, saying: "Now he has no choice. We can PROVE to him that we are with him now!" It is a bit of a challenge but with their help you CAN do it BUT you must ASK for their help and NOT take it for granted. You have it in you to be successful IF you turn to Spirit for help and realise you are not doing it by your own strength...Beware of the dangers of your own ego. Say every day: "Spirit I know you are with me in my job. Help me today. I know I cannot do it without you!" Then you must not doubt yourself. You have given yourself a scathing time over this job... Yes, we can all do that! Now I know you WILL do this job to the best of your ability and you will be successful, so don't doubt yourself! It will take you six months to get the groundwork done for this job. Then you will feel settled in and you can really get started." (Yes, I did have all sorts of doubts about my ability to cope with being Head and I was very nervous at times about it all. I knew, too, that my best help was to find the "Higher Forces" that had helped me in my life and, especially in my job up until this point, and hope that they would also see me through these new and very real challenges. Interestingly, too, I began as Head in the summer term, which meant I had a temporary teacher and no deputy Head until almost 6 months later, in September. Then I would have my own staff appointed and would be ready to "really get started" as she said!) Then she continued:

Spirit will even help you with the curriculum. You have had your teacher training, I know, but Spirit will help you with the grass-roots part of the job." (I was not sure about this bit at the time but as I have already described in the previous chapter, I was to feel "inspired" almost daily during both my morning Quiet Times and in surprising coincidences in my school day. Both did actually help me with specific activities etc. for the day!) Then she said:

You still have more to learn. There is still more studying for you to do! (I was surprised by this but some years later I went back to College and studied for 4 years, part-time...)

You will also have links with the North of England later. There is a Geoff who will be quite helpful to you. (True, Geoff was from the North and was an experienced local Head who I was to get on very well with! In my early days as a Head, he was a great help)

Experiments With A Healer

Next, I met a healer and I learnt something of spiritual healing from him. His technique was to stand behind the sick person and place both his hands on the patient's shoulders. Then, he said, he waited quietly, for as long as it took, to feel an "attunement" with the patient: i.e. until, he said "the twoness becomes oneness".

Then he would let his hands go down the sides and the front and back of the patient, without touching them, until they "found" the parts that needed healing.

He would continue this while various images would keep going through his mind and he would know that when they stopped then it was time for the healing session to end.

A session like this might just be the start of the healing process- several such sessions might be needed or the healing may come after a sleep after the very first session, as was very often the case, he said.

Finally, the patient would be asked during a healing session like this to think positively about himself and "see" himself in imagination becoming well again.

With him, I experimented a little with this technique myself. I could certainly feel a kind of magnetism between my hands, which intrigued me, and sometimes led me to diagnose a person's complaints without knowing about them beforehand! This was particularly convincing when the person before me was young and very fit-looking! I did also manage to cure my friend of long-standing indigestion and the occasional headache but, alas, not permanently! To date, I have not got any further than that, however. I also learnt to detect when a person was thinking negative thoughts because this had the effect of "pushing" me away from them. On the other hand, positive thoughts brought us closer together! I did this over and over again as a test set up by my healer friend: I would be paired with a number of different people and one of us would decide to think either negatively or positively without the other person being told which and then the effect would be recorded. It proved very easy to

“guess” right and every time negative thoughts pushed away and positive ones brought people together! I felt there was scope for a lot more research into how our thoughts or feelings can be found to affect the people around us. Once again, I have not done anything about this, although I am convinced that it could prove to be a very interesting thing to do.

A Course Of “Re-Birthing”

Fortunately for me, an interesting “New Age” type of shop opened near to where I lived and I got to know the owners quite well. Again, one was a healer and the other an “intuitive counsellor”. Through them I met some more interesting and surprising people. The first was a “re-birther” who believed that an hour or so’s session of “connected breathing” (i.e. breathing rather more quickly and deeply than usual with no pause between the inhale and exhale and vice versa) could lead to a person experiencing nothing short of a “re-birth” in his or her life...

I met her one afternoon when she was giving free demonstrations of healing at the shop. I was impressed by her lovely, wide-open face and the ease with which she responded to me. As she began her healing I experienced a sensation of heat down one side of my face and then a sense of something probing down into my ear. She would not have known this but I had been suffering with a slight earache at the time! Then I had a sense of her close and large physical presence; it was both slightly sexual and very motherly! I felt warmly embraced in this big, close motherly presence and it was highly pleasurable. Then I felt a strong feeling of LOVE coming from this woman and then I found myself realising, with some surprise, that I had not, until now, ever really felt a motherly love like this in my life! I am sure that my mother did love me but for some reason I had never really felt it that much. The result of this, it seemed, was that I had problems ever after in relationships, especially with women! The answer to these problems was to, first, experience myself as lovable and the beginnings of this were in these moments with the healer. So, for awhile, I simply bathed in these feelings of close, almost physical love that I was now experiencing. I felt them to be truly healing and I believed that they would now help me to go forward in life with more openness, more tolerance and more LOVE for other people. Perhaps I could be less demanding of them, too? From all this came, then, the realisation of the very real responsibility that a mother has. What a responsibility it is for a mother to, not only love her children but also-and equally-important, to help her children FEEL loved. This may be much more difficult than is commonly realised but the consequences of not

getting it right were so destructive and made for so many problems. This was all something of an eye-opener to me and I felt what I had learnt from this “re-birthing” experience was very important. I was also particularly pleased to receive something from a mother’s point of view for a change. Usually, such people tended to focus on my relationship with my father.

After this I had a few “re-birthing sessions” with this lady and, although I had some very interesting and colourful experiences with re-birthing, I was never to experience such a depth with this lady again as I did during this first healing session. My most interesting “re-birth” was to experience myself completely alone, floating blissfully, on some kind of “bed-boat” underneath an intensely beautiful, brightly coloured sky and on an equally *orange* sea! I felt what I can only describe as bliss; and it was a bliss that I did not want ever to be disturbed. Alas, a disturbance came in the sense of “something,” rather frightening appearing in the distance. I not sure at all what the disturbance was and I never found out because the session ended at that point. When I looked around me I saw I had been lying on the floor, breathing connectedly, for nearly two hours! I struggled to my feet and could hardly move my legs and arms, so “dead” were they... I continued my re-birthing sessions alone for about a year or so after but I never really experienced anything so striking after. I did, however, get to know many people whose lives had been changed powerfully by this technique and I am sure it can be a very beneficial thing to do.

What A Surprise: I Take A Palmist Seriously!

After my second Deputy Head was appointed, I was surprised to learn that she was quite interested in the “New Age” ideas that were very popular at that time. One day she came into school saying that a friend of hers had cancelled an appointment with a well-known and “very good palmist and clairvoyant” who lived locally and suggested I might like to take it up instead. She had herself recently seen him and could vouch for him but felt it was too soon for her to see him again. Normally, she said people wait **months** for an appointment to see him! Now I have to admit that I did not have a very positive view of either “palmists” or “clairvoyants” (seeing them as fairground entertainers, I guess). Anyway, she was persuasive so I went. I was very glad I did.

It turned out that he lived only 10 minutes drive away, in a picturesque little village, in a 14th. Century cottage. I arrived on time and was immediately led into a very tiny room where two chairs were placed close

and directly opposite to each other. The man himself was quite tall, very smartly dressed in a coloured shirt (purple, I think!), contrasting plain tie and a suit! Somewhat flamboyant, I thought, a little unkindly. An Egyptian ankh also hung rather dominantly around his neck like some huge necklace. His manner was gentle and kindly, although slightly cranky, I guess. He was the sort of man whom I could imagine my mother saying “gave her the creeps”! I was slightly taken aback, and somewhat amused, when he took a large magnifying glass, which had been carefully placed in pride of place on a little table next to his chair, and he began holding my hand with one, rather hot, very soft hand while he examined my other hand so closely with the magnifying glass that his face was almost touching it! However, within a couple of moments of his beginning his “reading” he had my full, undistracted attention.

“You are a very cautious chap,” he began, “somewhat analytical and deliberate. Already there is a contradiction because in some ways you can be impatient. (true!) You have high standards and like everything in its place. This can be very threatening to others, especially women. You are your own worst critic; you give yourself a hard time. Sometimes you feel a failure but you are certainly not in your job.” The next bit was to prove significant later although I did not think so at all at the time: “You have gone as far as you can in your job and I see the need for a career change, ideally in the next 2 to 3 years. You have an analytical mind, an eye for detail, and you are thorough: you could go into some sort of research. P.R. (Public Relations) would be good for you. You could be a T.V. researcher or collaborate as a producer for T.V. You are good at detail and collecting data and collecting and using statistics.

There is a frustrated writer in you... You could make a good journalist. Some free-lance work would be best for you- you need to explore working through agencies, some for an employer and some for yourself. You would make a good social commentator.

All this might take you away from your present home, which feels temporary. You need to be free to follow an opportunity for change that may present itself through your work. I see you having the choice of two developments. All I can say about them is that the one most apparent to you now is not necessarily the one you will follow.”

All this about my job was quite captivating. I did think that I had gone as far as I could in my job because the next move for me would be to a bigger school and I did not want that. The idea of staying in my present post for 30 odd years was not very appealing either. In the next few years

two “opportunities” did present themselves to me, although one turned out to be quite unrealistic, and the other-to train as a Jungian analyst (that’s another story!!)- was, I felt at the time, too much of a risk, at least financially. Certainly, though, I was to feel the need for change in my job in a couple of years into the future and that was to become a very big issue for me (more later!)

Then he continued, just as challengingly:

“I am not in the business of breaking relationships but you need to follow a more self-fulfilling life and that may mean separations from your present relationship. Otherwise your creativity will suffer. I see two women in your life. One is a broken relationship; that is past, move on. You are an incurable romantic-that is where the sentiment comes in. You are every bit a man but you have a feminine inside. You need a superior relationship, not just a domesticated woman (!)- that would bore you to tears and leave gaps, spaces, in your relationship. Such a relationship is very important to you and you may need to put a lot into it. Living alone would be more of a burden to you than not because you look for, and want, female support. If you were to end your present relationship it would be very hurtful to her because she does not reject you. Do some things together; some alone. At present an open relationship would suit you best.

You need to be free to go where your future wants to take you... You are a sensitive, gentle person and you don’t want to hurt anyone. You underrate yourself; you are a self-sacrificer with a strong sense of duty. That leaves you open to being manipulated. (My friends have, alas, agreed with that more quickly than I would have liked!)

There is a danger that you will take the negative way and say: “I’ll make it on my own!” You are a loner and there is a part of you that no-one can have. You are a loner because you were not recognised sufficiently by your mother and this has given you a suspicion, even a fear, of women. (My mind immediately went back to my encounter with the healer/re-birther where I felt exactly the same thing!)

Yes, my friends with whom I discussed this did agree that I was a romantic in the sense that I wanted much more sharing of my deepest self in a relationship than many would. The trouble was that one effect of my divorce was to make me cynical about the whole business of relationships with some disastrous results later on (again, more later!) At this time, in my hurt, I did often think: “To hell with it I will keep the deepest part of

myself to myself (you will not be interested anyway) and I will go my own way. I will not expect anyone ever to be really interested in me!”

The reading was going really well, I thought. I was being given a lot to think about as this man, unknown to me before today, was aware of some very significant things about my life (my broken relationship, my new relationship, my job and some important things about my inner thoughts and feelings). More was still to come:

“You are a good father and would like to be so again (true. Children were an important part of my life). Your older child is closer to you. He is a survivor. If he sees you in a happy relationship he will come to accept it. The younger one will never accept your present relationship (again, true) She is closer genetically to the mother. This is a closeness you should encourage. Tell her: “You are a young woman. Your mother is a woman. You should support her. She needs your support.” (This was to become absolutely and obviously true. As time went on mother and daughter grew almost unnaturally close and, certainly, my daughter became an important support to her mother as time went by). If the two of them had to choose between the two of you they would choose their mother because she is more manipulative than you. (Yes, the children would have gone to Yorkshire with their mother IF it had come off!) But that is all your past. Remember, a cigar lit for the second time is never as good (!)

You are a very interesting chap. The next few years are very interesting for you. Do not allow yourself to be manipulated or let your present situation trap or stifle you. There will be opportunities for you. Finally do not be afraid to be unconventional. This is an interim phase... a re-birth (!). The pains you feel now are the pains of a birth.”

After the “reading”, I met the palmist’s wife and the three of us sat in the comfort of their warm, pleasantly and dimly lit, attractive lounge discussing what had just been said. I was impressed by the wish they had for honest “feedback” on the reading. All in all I found the reading impressive-in the analysis of my character, the fact that I was separated from one relationship and in another that needed careful thought, that I had gone as far as I could with my job and would need to change careers in the future, and that I had two children. The careers mentioned I had never considered but the character-traits they were based on seemed to be true. And I was quite sure that none of this was known beforehand- my Deputy assured me that she had said nothing and had been more concerned with her own reading on the one occasion when she had met

him anyway. “No, John,” she said, “he is just good at this sort of thing. Why do you think he is booked up so far in advance?”

And Now An Astrologer (And With A Computer)- Surely Not!

So, I had learnt that I could no longer sustain my prejudice against palmists! This one had certainly surprised me with his abilities and given me a lot to think about too. Still, I was not prepared for my next encounter, which was to test my narrow-mindedness just as much, if not even more!

I was talking in the local, “New Age” shop one day to the assistant and she mentioned to me that she had just had a surprisingly accurate and helpful reading from a visiting astrologer. “You should have a talk to him” she said, “I bet you’ll find him interesting.” Again I was not keen. Astrology I associated with the sweeping generalities of the daily newspaper forecasts, which I did not look at, even “for fun”. I believed there could well be something in the ideas behind astrology but I doubted if anyone could really have enough detailed knowledge to make it worthwhile, not without a lot more study than I thought most astrologers had given it. In short it all seemed to me a bit too much like a “table game” that you might distractedly, but not too seriously, play on a rainy, dull afternoon! Anyway, I was finally talked into it and, eventually, I found myself in a little room, sitting opposite a young man in a white T-shirt and well-lived- in trainers. No wizard of old this...more a modern youth. Most of the space around him seemed to be taken up with masses of papers with various charts and diagrams on them, all surrounding a huge computer and printer! My heart sank as I gave him my date and place of birth and he simply typed them into the computer. This seemed to confirm my worst fears that I would simply be given a mass of generalities that could apply to a whole mass of people, if not to just about everyone. To order and at the press of a button, the computer produced a chart for me, consisting of a large circle divided into 4 sections, I think it was, with all sorts of interesting and odd-looking symbols on. The astrologer then said he would use his knowledge and his INTUITION to interpret this for me. At the mention of the word “intuition” I grew more interested! Experience had taught me that that is where surprises might come from! Slowly, he began:

“You are the sort of person who likes to be noticed and appreciated so that you don’t like it if you arrive home and everyone is watching the T.V. and hardly seems to acknowledge you. (Yes, I did not like it one bit if I came home from work to that sort of “welcome”!) You are artistic but

also very critical; you are your own worst enemy and often give yourself a hard time” (Where had I heard that before?!) Then came something completely new and also, I think *now*, very true: “You have access to the Higher Life but you pull things to pieces until there is nothing left! Remember the old saying: “Never look a gift horse in the mouth!” Accept what you receive and try not to over- analyse it! However, you do also have very often a good balance between intellect and intuition. You can receive through the mind and the feelings. You can be talking to someone and be totally surprised by what you say and think to yourself: “I didn’t know I knew that!” (Oh yes, that was a familiar experience to me.) You are an intellectual psychic if there is such a thing. (Yes, I liked that description!) You have an empathy with people. You know things about them before they speak” (I think this is often true). Then came some advice: “Don’t take on the depressions of other people. Because you can be so empathetic this is a real danger to you. What you must then do is to project the positive at those times.” (Depression was to become something of a problem for me later and then I found it extremely difficult to project the positive at those times. I had times also when I felt depressed for no apparent reason. Positive thinking was a partial help. For a long time latihans and Quiet Times were the most effective means I had for dealing with it. I would often wake up depressed only to find my feelings completely transformed just by sitting quietly for awhile!) He then continued on another tack:

“A good relationship for you is one not based on conversation or on the trivial: it is one based on empathy. You look for a higher relationship than the normal.” (The palmist had said much the same thing!) Then came another shock: “You are like a magnet to people who are emotionally scarred. You are a polarisation for them and they take from you the equipment they need for their own repair.” (not sure about that!) You can attract the future like a magnet by being optimistic (alas, I have never really been one of life’s optimists and I have never really known how to be!) You have to make your own luck. You are the sort of person who can be in the right place at the right time so you pick up the one magazine that’s left, for example, and that is just the one you need (yes, that sort of thing happened a lot, including Bennett’s Subud book, e.g. that got me started on Subud that time)

You need a stable home but you don’t like moving because it has become associated with more loss than gain to you (when I thought about that, it seemed absolutely true. Most of my moves, especially the last, seemed to carry a lot of “loss” with them. I certainly did not like moving!). It might be because you have not moved far enough away. You could even

emigrate, the desire is there, but don't just wait for it to happen: you need to organise it, don't just get up and go." (I have had the "desire" many times but, as yet, I have not acted on it).

Then came the first bit of jargon:

"You have a failed, or retrograde, organising function which is what you most need to deal with at this time. You always feel that you have too much to do and not enough time to do it. (Yes, I still do!!) You need to organise this by slowing down. Do this by breathing exercises and slowing down your heartbeat and so create your own time. (I wish I had heeded this more. It was only some years later when I was diagnosed with high blood-pressure that I discovered the benefits of this). Relax in moments of tenseness and you will find you will be shown the way forward (yes, I already had plenty of evidence in my daily life of this). Emotions can lead to disaster through panic; they can make you ill. You need to detach yourself from them. (I did receive some help with my many negative emotions by realising that my emotions were "mine and not me". I understand this is a recommended approach in some forms of counselling, too. I do think, too, that my emotions were to play a significant part in making me ill later on...) Accept some chaos in life-remember the Fascists got the trains to run on time! (Yes, I knew I was a bit too much of a "perfectionist" in my wish to be organised and in control and this was adding significantly, I am sure, to the tension in my life)

I see that you feel insecure in your job. I think you would be happiest as some kind of researcher (Amazing, just the same as the palmist had suggested. Still I never followed this up. I was, in common with most people in my profession, feeling increasingly insecure in my job as the Government initiatives were yet again coming in fast and furiously)

I see you are creating some kind of library at home: I see you cataloguing in some way. Your information retrieval is very good; you can recall significant details from way back. This will later be used in a special way. (I had been cataloguing information about Subud and my Inner Life for some time and I had always hoped it would be used in "a special way" -in this book?!)

Well, again, I came out of this encounter grateful for what had been said to me. I felt I had learnt significantly about my life and been given some important advice. I still could not really believe it had come from an ASTROLOGER!! I could not help but reflect on how my life had, since

the advent of the latihan, brought me into contact with, not only so many inner experiences that I had never had before, but also, quite naturally and easily, it had brought me into contact with a much greater variety of people than ever before! I was also amazed at how much in common these very different people had, so that I found mediums, an astrologer and a palmist having many of the same things to say to me. I knew for a fact that these people did not know each other and the chances of them ever having met were negligible. On the basis of this alone I had to take their words seriously--- quite apart from the fact that in all cases I found these people to be sincere about what they did and, I am sure, completely honest in what they were saying.

I Love “Paddy The Ghost”!

My next encounter was to be another highlight of my life- and yet there was to be nothing personal about it except that I was to be a witness of it along with about 50 other people. The two spiritualist friends I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter invited a very well-respected “trance medium” to give a demonstration at their local church. I had never seen anyone in trance before, let alone someone who could function as a medium while thus entranced, so I was particularly pleased to get the chance to attend and witness this personally. At last the evening came...I walked into the little church, which seemed particularly and respectfully quiet this evening, and lit in a relaxing and rather subdued way. Numbers had been restricted for this occasion so there was plenty of room and I chose a seat about a couple of rows from the front. The seats were placed so that everyone had a good view of the medium at the front. After a few minutes in he came: he was a rather tall man, dressed in a suit and looking extremely normal! He began the proceedings with a little introduction and a prayer and I was immediately impressed by his voice- it was what my family would call “very upper class”. In fact, the whole manner of the man was so English: so much the traditional English gentleman: dignified, very upright and slightly military in bearing, carefully and correctly spoken; a man with the discipline and manners, perhaps, of a former age- and that was, of course, the age of the “stiff upper lip”. He also seemed to have in abundance that other traditional English quality: charm! Yes, a man of a type perhaps not seen too often these days!

After the introduction and prayer, he loosened his tie and sat in the middle of two “protectors”: the lady secretary of the church on one side and a local man medium on the other. The audience relaxed, too, and the medium began to breathe very deeply and slowly. I was not prepared for

what happened next! Suddenly from this dignified, very English and rather refined medium came a loud and very Irish voice, which filled the entire room immediately! I could not believe the transformation! Suddenly, the room was filled with this SO different character, with his own mannerisms, phrasing, down to earth colloquialisms, and above all, what I can only describe as an all-embracing, earthy sense of humour. He spoke loudly, clearly and directly to individuals in the audience. Now I have experienced this sort of thing in some Spiritualist Churches and I have to say I have often been bored out of my mind by the poor quality of the “messages” and their painfully slow delivery. Not so this time! Here was a real liveliness; a powerful delivery that meant everyone’s attention was riveted on the man and his words.

The “messages” were not always convincing in themselves but MOSTLY they were and there was a fair amount of the homespun, feel-good, cliches (you know, “It is always darkest before the storm” etc.) Yet most of the messages were surprisingly specific, accurate and helpful and uplifting to the individuals concerned. For example, I was most impressed when he came out with a long foreign surname (Polish, I think it was). It was not exactly right- he missed out one letter- but it was so near to the correct sound of this strange word that it was immediately identified by the person concerned who gasped in surprise to hear it – and then burst out laughing when the Irishmen correctly said: “You have been quietly sitting there listening to me getting all these names and thinking “I bet he’ll never get mine!” Well, now you know!” (After the meeting ended I talked to this man who was still shocked and excited by his message. He assured me nobody in the hall could have given his name to anyone beforehand! And it was such an unusual name, too)

Many convincing details were given to up to about twenty of the audience: people’s names were correctly given (and these included some less well-known names of the time), sometimes both Christian and surnames, house numbers and street names were given, deceased family members were identified by name, nickname and often by distinguishing characteristics (“You enjoy poetry and have a poetry book with the praying hands on it .You have recently given a copy of that to a friend also and she has found great comfort in it”), family and personal problems were discussed and encouraging advice given and so on...I felt all of this was genuine but, of course, I could not stake my life on it. Could someone have researched all of this beforehand? After all, we had to book beforehand to get a place...At the time I dismissed that as not really being likely but a sceptic, I am sure, would treat the whole thing far more critically than I did (and do!) But, anyway, this was not what

impressed me most of all. That was the real sense I felt of this man's character filling the entire room: it really was as if someone new HAD come into the room as soon as the trance began!

And what a character this man had. He seemed, undoubtedly, a powerful character in his own right. As soon as he began speaking, everybody's attention was grabbed. He was what might be described as "the life and soul of the party"! In short, he was nothing less than an entertainer: somewhat like a stand-up comedian whom you would pay to go and see knowing that he would give you "a good night out"! Every two or three things he said led to a burst of laughter from the audience and, at times, some of the audience were literally crying with laughter! I kid you not!! Some of this humour was very down to earth ("How lovely it is to set the ladies' hearts a fluttering!" When you come over to our side of life, ask for Paddy- he'll be the handsome one! "Just think now, you are the people and I am the ghost! Think of the people going by outside this little building. They see the light on in here and wonder what is going on in here...If they knew you were listening to a ghost, they would go on the other side of the road and hurry by as fast as they could!" etc. etc.) Here is what I think was another wonderful-and typical- example of the humour, which I found so winning:

"Now is there a Sadie (!) here? (There was). Now you came here in a car with a friend, did you not? (Yes) Am I right, now: you thought you would never get here because your friend kept giving you the wrong instructions. ("Yes," said with something of a squeal of laughter) I hope you are following what I am saying to yer? She would say: "Oh, you should have gone right here and I told you left! (more and louder laughter) And you said: "Why did you not tell me before?!" And she kept doing this and you got more and more irritated. (abandoned laughter from the person being addressed. This obviously hit home!)) Now listen to me now: I should come on your own next time, not with----!" (abandoned laughter from just about everyone!)... Now we know this because there were two of us sitting in the back of the car with you and so we know. Every time you turned round to get something from the back seat, I have to tell you, you were putting your hands through the knees! Oh, I'll have to come myself and see what it is like! It would be nice to go back and say: "I felt a mortal!" I'll be very disappointed if they demote me and I can't come back! Say in your prayers tonight how very inspired I was tonight and they'll promote me! If you laugh too much they'll take away my power!"

Much was said, of course, that was much more serious than this and did seem to be helpful to the people concerned. I watched many of them as they were being spoken to and very often there was a real look of surprise and sometimes shock in their eyes. At the end each one would be genuinely grateful. I was not chosen for a message but I was grateful to have been there. The character called Paddy really touched my heart : he came across as being so real to me as a “complete” and winning human being, warm-hearted and even loving in his own inimitable way! I also felt that he worked really hard to get his messages across, treating them very seriously so that he would come back to them if, as often happened, he got sidetracked through humour or the audience’s laughter. I felt that through Paddy I had got a glimpse of another world; a world that was full of kindness, encouragement, warmth, humour and even some deep communication. Yes, it was a special experience for me.

A second and altogether different character also “spoke” to the audience: a Chinese philosopher called Choo Chow. He gave a lecture about “planes of consciousness” etc. all of which I found rather obscure and, worse for me, it was delivered in a rather pedantic, gentle voice which kept taking me to the shores of sleep...However having said this I should also say that many of the audience found this as valuable, and even sometimes more valuable to them, as the Paddy bit. The evening ended with a few minutes of deep breathing from the medium and a gradual wakening. He looked as if he was waking from a very deep sleep: he stretched, straightened his tie, rubbed his face and, like us, went off into the night...