

***My Books: How they were written – Robert James Lees***

***This manuscript was found amongst a mass of his papers and possessions shortly after Robert James Lees' death in January 1931. It is published here verbatim. It makes no reference to Lees' later novel 'The Gate of Heaven' which was published posthumously, nor to his first book(let) 'A Corner Wall Mystery' which was published by Arrowsmith on 25 November 1897***

In my work, extending over half a century, in connection with spiritual, as distinct from psychic, phenomena -a difference not yet recognized as it deserves to be- I have learned how futile it is for us to imagine ourselves to be capable of formulating the test conditions under which the said phenomena shall take place. Psychic entities may be hampered, even frustrated, by the precautions of scientific watch committees, who set their guard and seal the tomb; but the Christ will find no impediment to His resurrection-will not even be cognizant of the fact that the attempt has been made. So far we are only entering on the enquiry, and it "hath not entered into the heart (to conceive) what is laid up" for us to discover. So far many of us have only come into contact with what Bulwer Lytton calls "the dwellers on the threshold". Very few can say that, at present, we are able to affirm more than a reasonable certainty that the supposed "undiscovered country" does actually exist, and consequently we are sadly ignorant of its real nature, or the laws that govern it. How, then, can we be in a position to dictate the terms upon which they who may return shall enter into communication with us? If they whom we believe to be there have passed from hence thither, surely they may be presumed to hold the superior position; therefore, while we watchfully guard ourselves against deception, we are in duty bound to leave the initiative in their hands and reverently give them an opportunity to prove their case upon their own lines.

This is a conclusion I have been driven to many times by events taking place in my own experience. For instance, when Cynthus, at my suggestion, dictated to me the Recorder's note for Through the Mists, I hesitated about endorsing it, not that it was untrue, but it stated the fact so abruptly that I laid it before Myhanene, thinking he would tone it somewhat.

"What is wrong with it?" he enquired.

"There is nothing wrong," I replied, "but imagine what a sensation it will create."

"Is that all? Then let it stand by all means. I suppose the appearance of an angel would naturally create a sensation. I would not have it otherwise."

Accordingly the note stands in its original form, and I have long ago rejoiced that it was allowed to do so. It has opened up more avenues of ministry from the enquiries it has prompted than all the other agencies of my life combined. But I am asked to relate the incidents which led to the book being written.

For a considerable period, on two, and sometimes three, evenings of the week my house was open to a numerous company anxious to enlarge their acquaintance with Myhanene and his associate band who spoke through me. These gatherings were altogether of an informal character, without any opening or closing ceremony or other approach to an ordinary séance. They were just free and easy friendly talks until some one of our many friends made his appearance known. So naturally was this accomplished that strangers frequently would not notice the change, for Myhanene was always most careful to avoid any signs of eccentricity in the communion. Another point he never allowed to be lost sight of was the fact that the reunion was between fellow-mortals who gathered from two contrary sides of existence. He was in no sense morbid, nor averse to a pleasantry, but any attempt to get from him a test, or to gratify a curiosity for prying into the future, would meet with an instant mild rebuke. Still, if at any time that which he was pleased to call an illustration would accomplish some beneficial purpose, he would never hesitate to use one, and the method by which it was afforded would carry far more weight and conviction to the individual than any test a captious critic could devise. To the truth of this, let the following incident bear witness.

Speaking one night to a few friends, Myhanene discovered that one of the ladies was mourning the recent loss of her only child, and he was told that she daily visited the grave in order to be near the little one.

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“But that must not be,” he said: “before a week is over I will find some means of showing you that your child is not dead - that it is not in the grave.”

The last day of that promised week was not two hours old, when the other was awakened to find her room in a blaze of mysterious light, and near her bed was a lady holding the playful infant in her arms; she approached the mother, and, holding out the infant, said:

“Here is your baby; take it, and see that it is not dead.”

But the mother, startled by the unexpected nature of the vision, cried:

“No, no! Take it away; I am satisfied.” Then she buried her head under the bedclothes.

The vision presently faded; but the mother’s heart was healed.

If Myhanene were asked whether that did not constitute a test, I believe he would give some such reply as this:

“No not a test. It is true ministry of the Christ as I understand it, carried out in some such way as He would desire to see it.”

This incident will show you better than a lengthy description the character of the gatherings I have alluded to. Is it to be wondered at that the favoured few who met week by week began to wish that some means could be found for others to share their privileges? In this sympathetic thought lay the germ of the request that a book should be written.

I believe this suggestion did not meet with an unqualified approval from Myhanene at first. But there was a good and sufficient reason for it. It was the first time he had been in charge of a mission across the border, and he was naturally desirous to secure the best results. As an aid to this he had watched how his own leader, St. Clear, had come to my own assistance in times of stress as afterwards mentioned in *The Heretic*. This led Myhanene to the idea that it might be possible to so perfect materialization as to be able to stand upon a public platform and address the audience. In pursuit of this hope he had progressed so far as to visit me and remain for a considerable length of time, and on several occasions was also seen by Mrs. Lees. His next objective was to meet the friends gathering at my house, but if he accepted the suggestion of writing a book he saw that this cherished project would have to be put aside, at least for a time. In his indecision the matter was laid before St. Clear, on whose advice Myhanene determined to accede to the request.

Keeping clearly in mind the primary object of the ministry in which he was engaged, as well as the service he was asked to render to humanity, he proposed to proceed by selecting a man from the street, free on the one hand from any settled orthodox conviction, and on the other equally void of vice - a man who had felt that “touch of nature (that) makes the whole world kin”, and lived under the motive power of it. He would follow such a man through the process of death, and allow him to tell the simple story of his experience on the other side. As far as possible any controversy with theologians was to be avoided, as being beside the object to be attained in relating the incidents connected with a pilgrimage over a forgotten stretch of the road which lies between the swine trough in the far country and the Homeland. Nor were the geographical and other aspects of the surroundings to be allowed to distract attention from the nature of the ministry which would be offered to the soul who sought to reach his cherished ideal.

In Aphraar, Myhanene soon discovered the model he required. His life had been clouded from infancy by an ardent yearning for the maternal love he had never known. But in order that his story might not be weakened by misinterpretation or exaggeration due to the surprises he would meet with by the way, it was necessary that it should be revised by one who had previously met with a similar experience, and had since rendered assistance to others who had been similarly circumstanced. Such a one was readily at hand in Cynthus, a member of Myhanene’s own band, and he was at once installed as editor, with a further proviso of calling in for consultation all who might be connected with the story.

We were a curiously composed quartet as we met to commence our work: Myhanene and Cynthus coming from the spiritual realm where they see and serve Him who, after having burst the bonds of

death, declared, " All power is given to me in heaven and in earth" ; I, of the earth "earthy", represented the opposite end of the ladder; while the intermediate state, to reveal which Christ for a moment raised the veil in His parable of Dives and Lazarus-where the "comforted" and the "tormented" are found within speaking distance-where the prayerless one at length is found praying, "Send him to my father's house", that psychic abode which we seldom allow to enter our mind, that strangely neglected but terribly real condition- was represented by Aphraar. And the difference between us was almost painfully obvious. It taught me one of the most powerful lessons of my life. Three of us were able to:maintain our positions with ease, but the case was very different with Aphraar, whose visibility could only be sustained by the help Myhanene afforded and a certain contribution Aphraar was allowed to draw from myself. On at least two occasions during our first meeting he suddenly disappeared, and a new body had to be built up again before we could proceed.

Coming to the actual way in which the story was received, it will be seen that my part in the transaction is very fully and suitably described as Recorder. It was seldom that we were less than four in number during our sessions. Aphraar would describe the experience in his own words, and I wrote as he dictated. Sometimes Cynthus would intervene with a question; at other times one of the friends who had figured in the incident would venture a correction. But, generally speaking, the first draft was made according to the best of Aphraar's recollection, until he came to the point where he reached his mother's home and he was about to realize the satisfaction for which he had endured a life's hunger. He was within touch of the goal that had bounded his great ideal. Here Cynthus thought he reached a fitting conclusion to the first volume, and' at his suggestion Myhanene somewhat reluctantly consented for it to be so"

At this stage the work was nothing beyond a bald, disjointed, and inanimate outline, but Cynthus was able to dispense with the regular attendance of Aphraar and proceed to throw movement into the story by collaboration with others who had played their part, and himself throwing in the necessary background to give suitable colouring and perspective to the picture. This was still done by dictation wherever it involved consultation, but in such scenes as " A Magnetic Chorale" and "The Sanctuary of Silence" he took control and wrote without any hindrance to the free expression of his poetic thought.

Such is a brief but actual statement of the facts in connection with the production of Through the Mists. I know full well by the stream of correspondence which has continued through the seventeen years since its publication the kind of thoughts which will rise in the minds of many who read the above. This is not the place either for me to anticipate or attempt to answer them, though perhaps I may be allowed to ask one question in passing: Is anything I have asserted contrary to affirmations which have been made by the foremost men of science? Is it more wonderful than that by wireless telephony the voice of a speaker in New York can be distinctly heard in London? It is certainly dangerous now to say that anything is impossible.

The Life Elysian continues the narrative of Aphraar, and was written in the same way, the only difference being that the editorial chair was in this instance occupied by Gladone in place of Cynthus. It embraces the period he spent in the company of his mother, in the first embrace of whom, he says, "I tasted something of the sweetness to be found in the compensation heaven bestows on those whose happiness has been deferred". But it was not long before he discovered that there are other heights to climb, which only come into view when the peak of the material love is scaled. After a little while there was another love calling him with irresistible voice, which he felt constrained to obey. Parental love had become a fingerpost pointing him to the Divine, and his active soul longed to be away, in the consciousness that his going would draw his mother after him, away from the psychic into the spiritual state, where she would presently rejoin him and partings would be no more.

At this point the second volume closes. The other three volumes are more of the nature of supplements to matters which arise out of questions discussed in Through the Mists, but needing more extended treatment than could be given to them in the pages of that book. They are more editorial than personal, and consequently were written entirely under control altogether apart from Aphraar. A brief description of their scope and purport may perhaps be of interest and suggestive of the more detailed assistance they are designed to give.

The Heretic was unexpectedly called for by the continual stream of correspondence which ensued, asking whether the Recorder's note was to be taken literally-by what process of development I had arrived at the possibility of a visible and tangible communion. Myhanene was quick to read between

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the lines of these enquiries, and would only allow a brief reply saying that the whole scheme of such development should be explained in a volume which was in course of preparation. This question of development was not one of sitting alone or with a carefully selected company regularly at a certain hour and for a given time. To whoever would answer the call to such a service it meant a life surrendered to the duty and responsibilities laid upon it; and Myhanene would have any who would aspire to wear the laurel of such a service first sit down and contemplate something of the price which would have to be paid, the battle to be fought, and the nature of the crucible by which the necessary refining would need to be secured. These are some of the phases of initiation through which the development passed, the detailed record of which may be read in *The Heretic*. I am neither vaunting myself nor complaining, but simply stating plain facts.

As the results of my long training have been unique and inviting, so the way by which my friends have sympathetically led me have been far away from the highway of usual mediumistic experiences, and if it had not been for the heights of the visions I have enjoyed on the mountain tops, I should never have had the courage to face the shadows of the valley. The picture painted may be a sombre one-too much so I have ventured to suggest- while the high lights of success have been correspondingly toned down. But the slight service I have been enabled to render has been somewhat helpful to the angels of God, and, knowing all I now know, I would gladly go through it all again to secure even a tithe of the results which have been attained.

*The Car of Phoebus* and *The Astral Bridegroom* are both written to give emphasis to Myhanene's desire to direct attention to the most simple and natural means of entering into and retaining a continual enjoyment of communion with the friends who have passed away from earth-a healthy development of the power to remember what we see in our sleep-Life. This is the Biblical method. It may be gained by most people if carefully cultivated, and will be the means-to all who succeed-of eliminating the idea of death. *The Car of Phoebus* is an example of the perfection to which this memory of the sleep-life may be cultivated. When I found myself in possession of such a treasured gift, one of my first endeavours was to discover some clue to the identity of St.Clear, who had helped me so wonderfully in times of stress, and the story as told in this book is a record of what I discovered transcribed by Gladone from the tablets of my memory. It is a romance of love, intrigue and torture, found in a setting of barbaric splendour, with St. Clear (as Glarcees) as the hero, and two tame lions playing a leading part, ultimately solving an otherwise inscrutable mystery.

*An Astral Bridegroom* is perhaps a deeper study of the same phenomena-a warning as to the results accruing from a neglect to develop the gift that is within us. Ignorance breeds superstition, and superstition gives birth to a whole family of fallacies and illusions. From some such data as these Cynthus-who in his earth life was an ardent disciple of Pythagoras-starts out to investigate the idea of reincarnation. Around an Academy picture with a fascinating atmosphere of the occult he gradually assembles a group of admiring critics who presently identify each other and rehearse reviving memories of friendship and association extending in some instances through several previous lives.

From this material he builds up an apparently impregnable argument in favour of the revived eastern cult. Then he introduces an old Army pensioner, who has been caught in the same toils when in India, but, having escaped the fowler's net and learned where the seat of the great delusions lies, he sets out to deliver the heroine by practically demonstrating that the whole mischief is to be found and the mystery explained by a better knowledge and cultivation of the possibilities which lie open to us in the sleep-life.

So the two volumes came as a guide and warning to the two sides of this neglected study, but of the value of the arguments used I must leave others to speak. To this, however, I can personally bear witness, that not the least part of the successful ministry Myhanene and his coadjutors have accomplished has been in the help and comfort they have afforded to many by their assistance in this direction.