

The members of that Society are aware that the evidence already published—the carefully edited and sifted evidence published by their own organisation—occupies some 40 volumes of Journal and Proceedings; and some of them know that a great deal more evidence exists than has been published, and that some of the best evidence is not likely to be published,—not yet at any rate. It stands to reason that the best evidence must often be of a very private and family character. Many, however, are the persons who are acquainted with facts in their own experience which appeal to them more strongly than anything that has ever been published. No records can surpass first-hand direct experience in cogency.

Nevertheless members of the Society for Psychical Research are also aware, or ought to be, that no one crucial episode can ever be brought forward as deciding such a matter. That is not the way in which things of importance are proven. Evidence is cumulative, it is on the strength of a mass of experience that an induction is ultimately made and a conclusion provisionally arrived at; though sometimes it happens that a single exceptionally strong instance, or series of instances, may clinch it for some individual.

But indeed the evidence in one form and another has been crudely before the human race from remote antiquity, only it has been treated in ways more or less obfuscated by superstition. The same sort of occurrences as were known to Virgil and many another seer—the same sort of experiences as are found by folk-lore students, not only in history but in every part of the earth to-day—are happening now in a scientific age and sometimes under scientific scrutiny. Hence it is that from the scientific point of view progress is at length being made, and any one with a real desire to know the truth need not lack evidence if he will first read the records with an open mind and then wait his time and be patient till an opportunity