

WHEN MEN TALK TRUTH  
AND OTHER STORIES

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*By*

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## PREFACE

ONE of the stories included in this volume is the worst I have ever written. The critics, if they trouble to read them, which I doubt, for I am a critic myself, will not know which it is. They will say that several are so bad that it is impossible to tell.

But you, not being a critic, will know, just as I know.

I have included it, in spite of its manifest faults, because it helps to cover a vast ground of partly-explored phenomena with which, to-day, the world is gradually getting familiar.

All the stories printed here were originally published in *Britannia and Eve*, one of the most enterprising of our monthly magazines.

"I will write you a short story a month," I said to Jesse Heitner, the editor, "but you must order them. I cannot write on spec."

He took the chance.

They seemed to puzzle the staff. After reading the first, they called it "Studies in Psychology, Number 1." For months they included them, in the index, among the "Articles." Perhaps they thought them too unusual to be fiction, too extraordinary to be anything but fact.

Besides, who was I, a mere journalist, someone

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must have asked, that I should be put among the "authors," people who made things up?

"Is your article ready yet?" they used to ask on the telephone.

I did not protest, for months, that I was a fully-fledged author now. . . .

Anyway, they published them.

No-one uttered a word of praise. No-one wrote in, so far as I heard, and said, "Stop that fellow!"

So I went on.

There was one strange reaction. I heard that the story was going round that, "When he was in Palestine, Swaffer saw Jesus!"

Characteristically—it is a way I have—I started the story, "The Mirage Of God," with my favourite "I," and so some people read it as meaning that the "business man" into whose mouth I put the story was the author himself!

Yet, how much of "The Mirage Of God" is true of my own experience? I would not like to say. In it, I have dramatised a good many of my own feelings during my never-to-be-forgotten pilgrimage to Palestine. It was, I believe, an experience not so uncommon as you might think.

I dictated the stories one by one, on the days

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they were due at the printer's, and on going through the proofs of this book I did no more than alter a few words.

The ideas nearly all came, automatically it would seem, just before I began to put them into words, beginning and end and middle, all at once.

Now, how much of it all is based on fact?

I have spent a great part of over ten years, now, on what some people call psychical research. In consequence, I can personally vouch for the reality of much of the phenomena described in the stories.

As regards "Dogs Know," which I put first merely because it is a story told by a dog, and love of dogs is a great part of my life, there would seem to be evidence that animals are what is called "psychic." You may not believe it, but that does not worry me.

As for the rappings described in "A Modern Hamlet," well, have you never heard on your wall raps that no water-pipe or gas or trick of the climate could explain? Edgar Wallace once jeered at mine, heard some of his own, and then publicly recanted. "I will never laugh at spirits again," he said.

"The Old Woman Who Knew" is a record, in narrative form, of a good deal of teaching about the life beyond the grave that has poured through

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mediums all over the world. I do not expect you to credit it.

The essential parts of the story told by a judge in "That Ye Be Not Judged" could be duplicated by many experiences vouched for by my friend Dr. Carl Wickland who, in Los Angeles, treats cases of obsession by psychic means. If you are interested, read his book, *Thirty Years Among the Dead*. I could tell of two cases in my own investigations.

Have you ever tried the planchette? Thousands have done so. Many, to say the least, have been puzzled. In "The Planchette Laughs," I merely carry the known into the realms of the speculative.

The Churches talk glibly of "ministering angels," but do not believe them. John Wesley preached about them as a reality. If "The Everlasting Arms" is nonsense, well, let us make an end of Religion.

"The Trumpet Sounds," imaginary though it is, makes liberal use of an experience of my own—the hearing of a genuine supernatural voice during a séance at which Dennis Bradley and I were sitting, "for fun," with a former medium who we knew had descended to habitual fraud. In this case, no-one was so surprised as the "medium" himself!

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When you come to "When Men Talk Truth," try and understand that many parsons know, to-day, much more than they dare to preach. I know it because they have told me.

In "Eternal Triangle," I deal with reincarnation, in which I do not believe. It would seem to be an open question. I do not see the logic of the theory, although it is the faith of many intelligent people of my own acquaintance.

Do you believe in inspiration? I write of it in "The Wrong Sort of Story." Alfred Noyes, the poet, does. So does Cosmo Hamilton, the dramatist. So, to a degree, did Hall Caine. I could quote many others. . . .

"The World's Lover Smiles" is about clairvoyance, a very commonly-possessed form of mediumship. You may have seen it. You may possess the gift yourself.

Then, in "Her Last 'Messiah,'" I dramatise something I know to be true—that the end of this life and the beginning of the next are so much a part of each other that, for a time, some people do not know which one they are living.

Now, after reading all this, you know whether to read the stories or not. If I were you, I would now shut the book up—and throw it away.

You see, if you know anything much that you



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shouldn't, you are wiser than this. If you do not, it is "wicked."

If some parsons had their way, this book would be specially dealt with by the Disaffection Bill, if it becomes law. . . . They will not realise that my evidence is largely on their side—and that millions welcome it in place of their theories, assertions and appeals to "Authority."

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