

## Biography of “Mrs. Holland” (1868-1948)

**A**lice Fleming, the sister of author Rudyard Kipling, adopted the pseudonym “Mrs. Holland” because members of her family were opposed to her involvement in occult matters. She was one of the seven principal mediums involved in the famous cross-correspondences cases.

The wife of John Fleming, a British Army officer, Mrs. Fleming lived in India from about 1884 until about 1898, when an illness forced her to return to England. In 1893, she began automatic writing, often receiving poetry but occasionally letters for friends purportedly coming from their deceased loved ones.

On September 19, 1903, soon after reading “Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death,” Frederic W. H. Myers’ seminal work completed after his death in 1901, Fleming began receiving messages purportedly coming from Myers via automatic writing. The initial messages were short and apparently an attempt by Myers to convince her of his identity. He told her that much of what he would write through her was not meant for her, that she was to be the reporter. She was asked to send the messages to the SPR in London. Fleming complied by contacting Alice Johnson, then secretary of the SPR.

In a subsequent message, Myers told Fleming not to worry about being made a fool or dupe. “It’s a form of restless vanity to fear that your hand is imposing upon yourself, as it were,” Myers communicated to her. “...If it were possible for the soul to die back into earth life again I should die from sheer yearning to reach you – to tell you that all that we imagined is not half wonderful enough for the truth...If I could only reach you – if I could only tell you – I long for power and all that comes to me is an infinite yearning –

an infinite pain. Does any of this reach you – reaching anyone – or am I only wailing as the wind wails – wordless and unheeded?”

On January 5, 1904, Myers wrote that he was in a “bound to earth condition.” but it was largely of a voluntary choice. “I am, as it were, actuated by the missionary spirit; and the great longing to speak to the souls in prison – still in the prison of flesh – leads me to ‘absent me from felicity awhile.’”



On another occasion, Myers wrote that “to believe that the mere act of death enables a spirit to understand the whole mystery of death is as absurd as to imagine that the act of birth enables an infant to understand the whole mystery of life.” He added that he was still “groping ... surmising ... conjecturing.”

Fleming also received messages from Edmund Gurney and Roden Noel, both, according to Sir William Barrett, unknown to her. A message from Noel said to ask “A.W.” what the date May 26, 1894, meant to him, and if he could not remember, to ask Nora. Not knowing what to

make of the message, Fleming sent the message to the SPR in London, where it was recognized that Noel was referring to his good friends, Dr. A. W. Verrall and Dr. Eleanor (Nora) Sidgwick. May 26 was the date of Noel's death.

On January 17, 1904, Fleming recorded another message purportedly coming from Myers. He gave the biblical reference I Cor. xvi, 12. He told her that he tried to get the entire wording through in Greek but could not get her hand to form Greek characters, and so he gave only the reference. On the very same day, thousands of miles away in England, Margaret Verrall also received the same biblical reference from Myers by means of automatic writing. The biblical passage, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong," was the wording inscribed in Greek over the gateway of Selwyn College, Cambridge, under which Myers frequently passed.

This was apparently the first of what came to be known as the "cross-correspondences" – similar messages through different mediums around the world or fragmentary messages sent through different mediums which in themselves had no meaning until the SPR linked them up and made a complete message out of them.

Fleming continued to do automatic writing until she suffered a nervous breakdown in 1910.

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