

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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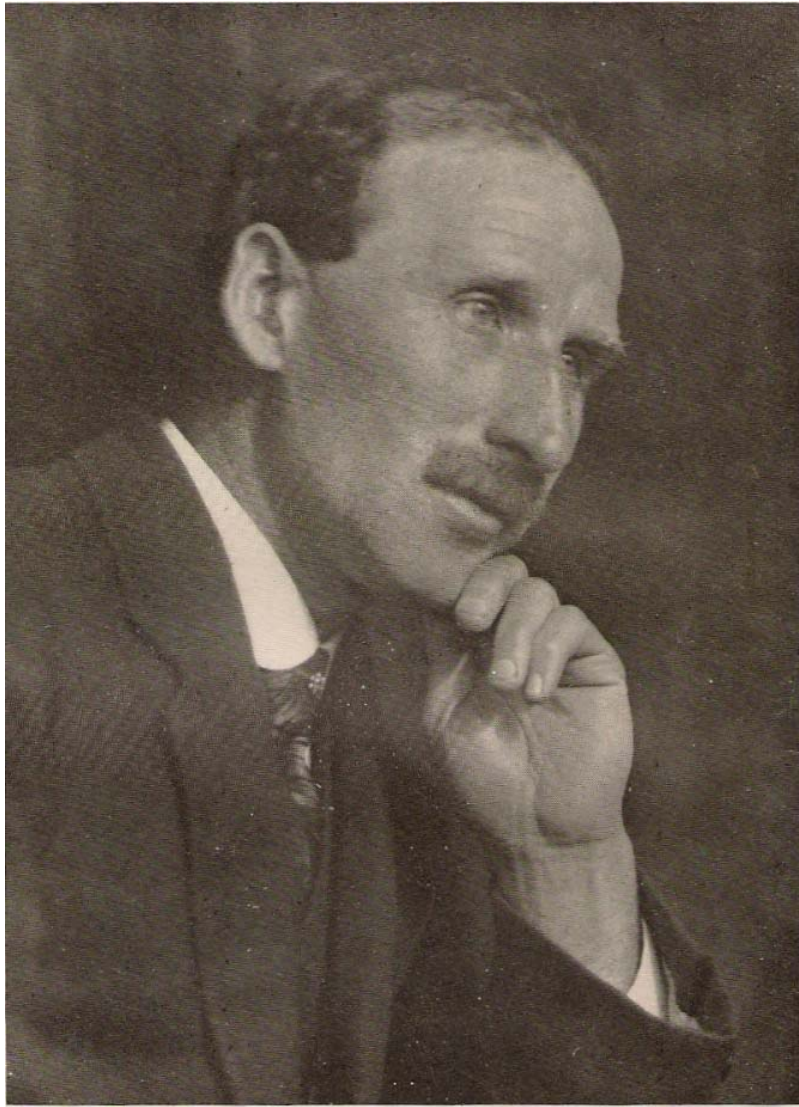


Photo by Dora Head]

[125, Cheyne Walk, S.W.

**EVAN POWELL,  
MATERIALISING AND VOICE MEDIUM.**

# Evan Powell

(1881-1958)

In the last issue of *Psypioneer* we published “Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Evan Powell”.<sup>1</sup> We continue in this issue with Evan Powell’s earlier life and his mediumship as recorded at the British College of Psychic Science (BCPS);<sup>2</sup> this is published below. In the next issue we will conclude our research into this once well-known and respected Spiritualist medium.

Paul J. Gaunt.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.7:—*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Evan Powell* – Paul J. Gaunt; and *Evan Powell’s Mediumship* – Leslie Curnow, pages 219-227:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.7July2011.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.2:—*Whatever happened to the British College? - The International Institute for Psychic Investigation (IPI)*, pages 35-46:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.2February2010.pdf>

# EVAN POWELL

## THE WELSH PHYSICAL MEDIUM

*Psychic Science*:—<sup>3</sup>

By the Hon. Secretary<sup>4</sup>

THE present report deals with some séances given at the College by Evan Powell during January and February of this year, and the fine photograph of this remarkable psychic, again made possible to our members through the kindness of Mrs. Dora Head,<sup>5</sup> will show to many the kind of man “Evan” is in outward appearance.

For “Evan” he is and will remain to great numbers of his own countrymen, and to adherents of the Spiritualistic Churches throughout England, who knew him and his work long before he swam into the field of our vision. He is now a man in the early forties, well built, with fair complexion and hair, good features, and with excellent brain capacity. He is highly sensitive, and quick tempered, but pleasant and agreeable to meet and converse with, for he keeps well abreast of all general knowledge, and more especially with all that pertains to the Spiritualistic cause.

I will not presume to give a sketch of his mediumship—that must come from those who know his early triumphs better than myself, but I have heard from his own lips that the happiness of his early childhood was often marred by the fear of the unknown which assailed him when he went to bed. He was always conscious of presences with him, breathing and in tangible form, and no reasonable explanation was available to soothe the child. In a Welsh mining village in those days neither gas nor candles were plentiful. Light would probably have dispelled the physical forces at work. When in his distress he called on his grandmother to come to him, the only comfort he could get from her was that it was probably “the cat again.”

He entered the colliery at an early age, like other Welsh boys, and grew to young manhood, without realizing what these strange happenings of his childhood meant. He was interested in his native Church, in politics, in miners’ problems, and read and discussed all manner of subjects with the greatest eagerness.

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<sup>3</sup> *Psychic Science: Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science*. Vol. II.—No. 1. April, 1923 pages 67-74.

<sup>4</sup> Barbara McKenzie at this time was the Hon. Secretary to the British College of Psychic Science, founded by her husband James (Hewat) McKenzie. The College was opened on April 12th, 1920. See *Psypioneer* Volume 3, No.8:—*A Knight Errant of Psychic Science James Hewat McKenzie - Barbara McKenzie*, pages 169-178:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.8August07.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the duration of the British College, and also after its amalgamation, numerous portraits by Dora Head have adorned the pages of their journal, *Psychic Science*. We have from time to time published various portraits, for example, Mrs R.W. Dundas.

Some chance talk drew him to some Spiritualistic gathering, and to a circle of investigation, and very soon it was found that the young man became deeply entranced, and that a "control" - an Indian - spoke through his lips, promising the group that Evan would become a powerful medium, if they would agree to sit with him regularly. The circle asked what length of time would be required, and a space of nine months was requested. This was agreed to, and then ensued a period of the most regular and unremitting attendance of this group of Welsh folk. The leader of the circle, a man of great ability, was the most rigid disciplinarian, and demanded punctuality to a minute, or a locked door faced the delinquent, and absence, unless under dire stress, was not condoned.

Amongst the group were some fine singers, and the inspiring rhythm of the sacred airs made excellent conditions, which the medium misses to this day when he has to endure the feeble choruses of the Southern people. It looked at first as if their labours would be in vain, but just as the allotted time came to a close, the first independent physical manifestations took place and steadily improved. This circle kept well together for nine years, a remarkable example of the patience exercised in developing mediums by home circles. A Judge has recently stated in the courts that no one knows what the training of mediums consists in, and decides that a legacy for such a purpose is not of public benefit. Let him ask those who remain of the group which developed Evan Powell what the training consisted in, and whether they consider the result has been to the public benefit.

"Apports," lights, movement of physical objects, materialization of hands and of full forms, were of frequent occurrence with the medium even in a degree of light, I believe; whilst "voice" phenomena, carrying most evidential communications purporting to come from deceased friends, became an outstanding feature of the sittings. These "voice" phenomena were both "direct" reproducing often the very voice of the deceased person named or made audible by the use of the trumpet, which unfortunately somewhat distorts the voice, although it may increase its volume.

The editor of a well-known Welsh daily paper is amongst those who have in recent years received some astounding demonstrations at Evan Powell's seances. Later, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle confesses to having received in Merthyr the inspiration which sent him round the world as a lecturer on fire with his subject. In "The Wanderings of a Spiritualist," he says, "For two hours my wife and I had sat listening to the whispering voices of the dead - voices which are so full of earnest life and of desperate endeavours to pierce the barrier of our dull senses. They had quivered and wavered round us, giving us pet names, sweet, sacred things, the intimate talk of the olden time. Graceful lights . . . had hovered over us in the darkness. It was a different and a wonderful world to us now. God had given us wonderful signs, and they were surely not for ourselves alone."

Merthyr Tydfil became one of the strong centres of Spiritualism, and Evan Powell was for many years resident pastor of the Church. His trance-speaking and answers to questions under various "controls" became a source of attraction to the young miners, and much healthy instruction on liberal lines was given by this means on religious and philosophical problems. An accident to his hand, combined with his general excellent standard of

education, almost entirely self-won, procured his release from underground work, and he then became a colliery clerk.

Within recent years he has established a business of his own, and is now resident in the West of England. His seances as a trance speaker have been at the disposal of the Spiritualistic cause for years, both for ordinary services and for propaganda work, and this voluntary service still continues.

The College is fortunate in having the advantage of his gift at intervals, and many in London, through this arrangement, have for the first time had the pleasure of meeting one who is in himself such a repository of spiritual gifts.

This medium to-day requires darkness for physical manifestations which take place through him, and he insists on being roped to his chair at every séance, and his thumbs tied together with thread. This rule has been enforced by him since the seances began to be held in darkness for the production of “voices,” for it seems that earlier in his career complete darkness was not necessary. Urged again and again to sit quietly with only personal “control,” he answers that it has been tried, but with no success, that unless tied he cannot let himself go into the trance condition necessary for manifestations. Whether this is the result of long-continued habit, or of some more real cause, it is impossible at present to ascertain.

To many persons, amongst whom can be numbered prominent Psychological Researchers, this rope-tying is an abomination. They say, “Why doesn’t he sit and be controlled personally? anyone can get out of ropes.” My answer to the first remark is that I do not know, but it is a feature of much good mediumship, private and otherwise, that the touch of other hands is distasteful; with other mediums again it does not seem to matter. The answer to the second is that perhaps anyone can get out of ropes with enough practice, but what conditions do they require, and can they get into them again? I have sat in St. George’s Hall, and seen Mr. Maskelyne’s best rope-trick performer endeavour to show the audience how Will Thomas, another Welsh physical medium, got out of the ropes which bound him, during a test the “Daily Express” carried out with him some years ago. The conjurer was well tied up by two members of the audience, with occasional advice thrown in by the victim, with a rope much thicker than that used by Thomas or Powell. His thumbs were not tied together. A screen was then placed round him—and in a minute or two he emerged, profusely perspiring and as red as a turkey cock, looking for all the world as if he had been mangled. He probably lay on his back and perhaps had nails conveniently placed to undo the knots, and then the audience was blandly informed by Mr. Maskelyne that this was exactly what took place in the seance room. I noticed that he did not offer to *re-enter the ropes*, so that they might be pronounced intact by those who tied them, as happens in genuine mediumship. How Mr. Maskelyne’s conjurer would manage in the limited space afforded a medium I do not know.

When a séance is held with Evan Powell he sits outside a curtained cabinet. Sometimes this is only a curtain slung across the corner of a room. In the recess is placed a small table, on which are placed sleigh-bells and a vase of flowers, and on the floor is a cardboard

trumpet. It frequently happens that about half an hour before the séance the medium feels a kind of nausea come upon him, and can scarcely touch food of any kind, but a short time after the séance is over, he usually feels very well and very hungry. On the whole his digestion is his weakest part, as has been noticed with so many other mediums.

Here follow notes from a record made by Dr. Ellery Pollard, of Birmingham, a member of the Birmingham and Midland Psychical Research Society. This was Dr. Pollard's first seance with Powell, and he came with a good knowledge of what to expect, and with a good idea of what should be done to render the medium secure. Dr. Pollard has given me permission to use his report. He says:—

“On Saturday, January 6th, I had the pleasure of a sitting with Mr. Evan Powell at the British College. I was invited by Mr. McKenzie in company with another member of the circle to examine Mr. Powell prior to his entering the seance room.” [At each séance the medium is examined by his own wish—two of the men sitters are chosen to do this, they differ on each occasion, and the medium never knows who is to undertake this duty.—ED.<sup>6</sup>]

“My companion and myself most carefully examined him, stripping him and making sure that in his clothing and pockets there was nothing which might be of any assistance to him in his coming séance. Mr. Powell lent himself to anything we desired, and expressed a wish that we should leave nothing undone which we might wish to do. I, personally, am satisfied that neither in his clothing nor on his person could he have concealed anything from us.” [Dr. Pollard does not mention it, but I believe he examined the mouth also.—ED.] “He took my arm on the way to the séance room after examination, and until we were all seated in the circle I was in constant contact with him. At Mr. McKenzie's further request, I and my co-partner in the examination tied Mr. Powell in a chair and also to the pillar which formed part of the cabinet.” [I believe Dr. Pollard tied the ropes in a manner specially recommended by a conjurer as being impossible to escape from. This consisted I understand, of passing the ropes through the rings of the braces of the medium.—ED.]

“After tying Mr. Powell in the chair, his thumbs were tied together with thread, and the length of the thread was taken.” [The medium's feet were controlled as is usual during the seance by one foot of the sitters on his right and left being placed against his feet.—ED.] “Soon the ‘control,’ ‘Black Hawk,’ spoke through Mr. Powell's lips. Heavy breathing and hissing sounds were heard from the medium, and several of the sitters at a distance from him were touched by what seemed to be flowers and hands. I was touched on face and hands simultaneously, a bunch of flowers was pressed to my face on several occasions, and then a vase was pressed into the hands of my wife and myself as we sat side by side. My wife sat next Powell on his right. I followed, and other members of the circle all joined hands during the séance. My wife and myself had our arms tightly squeezed. During singing by the circle a deep bass voice joined in harmony and occasionally a soprano.

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<sup>6</sup> The Editor (from the onset) was Mr. F. Bligh Bond, who held the office until October, 1926; he was followed by Stanley de Brath, who resigned for reasons of health in April, 1936, when the Editorship was assumed by Mrs. Hewat McKenzie.

These were “independent voices.” A voice spoke to my wife with deepest affection and this was heard by all in the circle. Two arms were placed round her neck and an affectionate conversation took place. I was also spoken to and hands were placed on my shoulder and my head patted. A pause followed this manifestation—and ‘Black Hawk,’ who always uses the medium’s lips to speak, said that he would produce something that had not been done before. Soon a fairly large light appeared and disappeared, lights seen by all passed round the circle and were seen whereappings were heard on the electric globes, a height of six feet. Then a light something like an electric globe in the shape of a tulip enclosed in a fine piece of linen came from the cabinet and above it was a very dim shadow like a head and face—the features were too misty to be recognized, but the voice said it was our son and gave his Christian name.

The light returned to the cabinet and then reissued in front of my wife and myself, but we could see nothing of the face. My wife said it was as if a body pressed on her back and the arms were lovingly pressed around her neck, when she was kissed and spoken to most naturally. On examination of the medium at the close of the séance the ropes and thread were intact and in position as placed.” [Dr. Pollard omits to mention that at every séance the cabinet and room is examined by the sitters, and the doors locked and the keys taken possession of. The flowers and vase and bells were out in the Circle at the close.—ED.]

### SEANCE WITH RESEARCH GROUP

Here is a short record of conditions at another seance with a special Research group on January 9th. Weather damp and cold. The medium was thoroughly examined by two members, Mr. S. and Mr. M., and these gentlemen tied the medium. The ends of the rope were sealed with wax, which was imprinted with Mr. M.’s private seal. The medium’s thumbs were tied together. A string was tied around his right wrist and held throughout the sitting by a sitter. A second string was tied round his left ankle and held by another. In this way a perfect control was exercised, and any movements of the medium easily noticed. On the table, with the other usual objects were placed three photographic slides containing plates previously initialled by Mr. S and Mr. M. When the light was put out the shutters were drawn by Mr. S. so exposing the plates, and the medium’s “control” was requested to attempt to get these affected by some of the psychic lights, so frequently seen with the medium.

A very clear low voice was heard in the trumpet, and a few words were spoken in German, evidently addressed to Frau Silbert<sup>7</sup> who was present, and a name was given, which she partially recognized. The bells were taken from the cabinet and carried around the circle, being taken up to the ceiling, the cabinet and the electric light fittings. They were rung with great power. Bright lights, some seemingly with a pink and blue colour in them, were seen. Flowers were carried around and outside the circle to where Frau Silbert sat with a friend at a distance from the other sitters. Brilliant flashes of light were seen in the cabinet—reflecting on the ceiling. The curtains, previously open, were closed by an unseen

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<sup>7</sup> Frau Silbert was an Austrian (Graz) physical medium. The British Home Office allowed the British College to bring Silbert from Austria to Britain in 1922, for the purpose of scientific study. Reference:—*Psychic Science* Vol. 1, No.3 October 1922 page251. We will continue with Frau Silbert after Evan Powell.

force, and one curtain was pushed out, touching the sitter on the medium's left. Two of the lights were so brilliant that they showed the medium clearly sitting in his chair as he had been tied. A brilliant light moved around the circle and seemed to be in the midst of flowers, which could be seen, felt and smelt. They were brushed three times across one sitter's face. The lady beside Frau Silbert outside the circle played a zither occasionally. She reported that her tuning-key was lifted and dropped in front of her, and she found several of the strings loosened. Some psychic force drawn from Frau Silbert may have been used for this manifestation.

At the conclusion of the sitting the medium was examined carefully, and all knots and seals and cotton were found intact. The three slides, whose shutters had been replaced before the light was turned up, were taken and the plates developed by Mr. S. One was obviously a good deal affected by light, and although it does not appear clearly in the print, there is a fairly clear suggestion of a face (Fig. 1). No. 2 was slightly fogged (Fig. 2) and the third was perfectly clear and totally unaffected. The three slides lay side by side on the table.

### **RECORD OF A FURTHER SEANCE**

The medium had been most carefully examined, and when in addition to the usual tying, the controlling ropes were carefully held—one passing across the entrance to the cabinet and held by the second sitter on the left of the medium—the small heavy table placed in the cabinet was brought out by an invisible force and lifted over the cords. It was made to jump about the middle of the circle in a very lively way. This demonstrated an intelligent force acting in complete independence of the medium or any of the sitters, all of whom were well-known persons. At this sitting the light had not been out thirty seconds when the sitter on the left of the medium felt a heavy hand upon his knee, while the sitter on the medium's right was spoken to by a clear voice, heard by all at the self-same moment.

During the February visit, the above table-phenomenon was repeated on two occasions, the table jumping repeatedly with all four legs off the floor, according to the hearing senses of all the sitters. It was also pushed vigorously against some of the sitters who tried to control it with their feet, but were constantly resisted. This at a distance of some feet from where the medium was held by other sitters. On occasion various voices, very different from the medium's were heard either "direct," and close to a sitter—or through the trumpet, and sometimes very near the ground. These voices gave names, and often evidential messages to those present.

On February 6th (weather wet and cold) the Research Group sat again. The medium was examined and tied and fully controlled, by both legs and arms. A pail of liquid paraffin-wax and water was placed in the cabinet with the "control's" permission, to endeavour to secure moulds of materialized hands or feet. The medium had stated that some years ago feet-moulds had been secured by a group of sitters with him, but on this occasion the attempt was unsuccessful. Probably the "intelligence" who succeeded before was not now a member of the band of unseen workers, and new help had to be found. The Research Group was asked to have the wax in readiness upon the next visit.

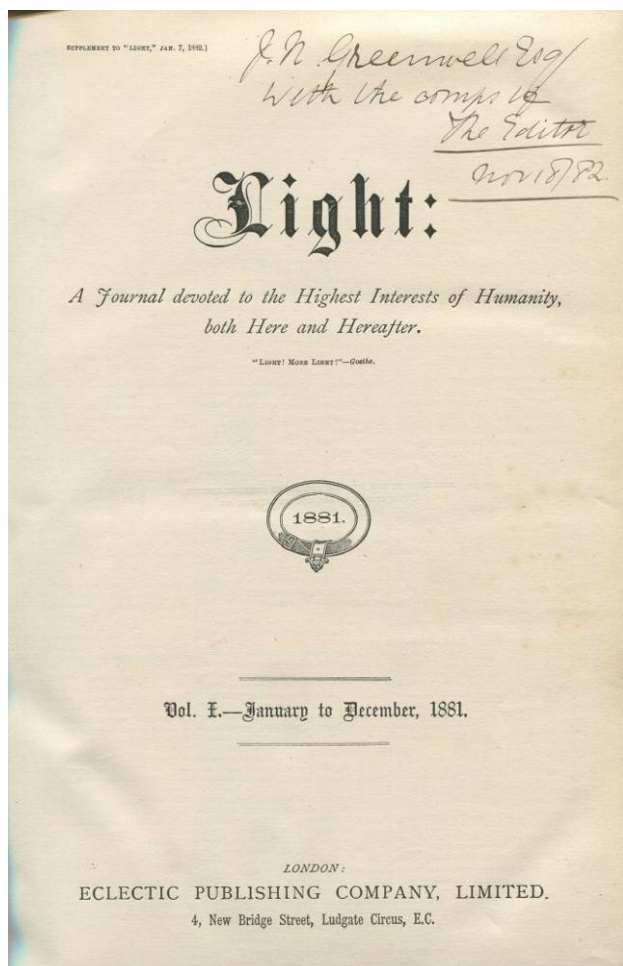
At this sitting very heavy knockings were heard within the cabinet. Frau Silbert had by this time left England, but “Black Hawk” said that Frau Silbert’s guide, “Prof. Nell,” was present, and was producing the raps, which are not a usual feature of Evan Powell’s mediumship. This statement we cannot verify, but duly note it. The sequence of three raps given was certainly that of “Prof. Nell,” and this was known to the medium E.P. A very powerful male voice joined in the singing, and a sweet female voice also. The sitter on the left of the medium reported that he felt what appeared to be two small cold hands stroking his hand and pulling his sleeve, and then his arm was gripped by a large and strong hand which held him firmly and pulled him towards the cabinet. The curtain of the cabinet was pulled out and laid across his knee.

The knots and seals were examined carefully at the end of the sitting and all were found intact. The wax did not seem to have been touched, although raps were heard upon the receptacle.

During this visit, the medium asked half a dozen friends to sit with him privately. The same controls were put upon him at his request—the strings applied to wrists being held as usual—strong twangs on these were reported by the two sitters, and pulling away from the medium. “Black Hawk” asked that the sitter upon his right should place her hand on his right wrist where string was attached and report if she felt any movement. She could feel the wrist perfectly still, while the pull on the cords continued on both sides, showing that these were being affected somewhere out in the circle and by no movement of the medium. The string attached to the left wrist sometimes swung in circles like a skipping rope, and was pulled with great strength. One “control” called “Ethel” sang two verses of a hymn in a woman’s voice in the ear of the sitter on the medium’s left, and at the same time, she most carefully noted that the medium’s heavy nasal breathing (he was suffering from a cold) was heard synchronizing exactly with the voice of the singer. The sitter was not specially watching for this but, hearing the two together, exact observation was made for at least two minutes.

Readers will see from above reports how conscientious this medium is with his work, and how excellent are the demonstrations of the ‘independent’ movement of matter, of the production of psychic lights and of voices ‘independent’ of any use of the medium’s direct organs. These demonstrations ought to be of the profoundest value to the scientific world—but until that world is willing to give the subject due attention, the records must be made by laymen and women who are not afraid to venture out in researches in these little-trodden paths of Psychic Science, researches which to some of us at least seem to be fraught with the deepest significance for mankind.





## ORIGINS AND EDITORSHIP OF LIGHT

In the November 2008 issue of *Psypioneer* we published the *Origins of "Light."*<sup>8</sup> *LIGHT* is the oldest spiritualistic journal still in existence. It was founded by Edmund Dawson Rogers (August 7th, 1823 – September 28th, 1910) with the first issue appearing on January 8th, 1881 and published by The Eclectic Publishing Company, Limited. It was noted in the 2008 issue of *Psypioneer*, that the early editorships of *LIGHT* still *remains obscure*.

This was also noted in the October 2004 issue of *Psypioneer*, when Leslie Price offered a cautionary note that Stainton Moses *was not* the first editor of *LIGHT* as was sometimes assumed.<sup>9</sup>

Later in the October 2009 issue of *Psypioneer* we published *The Editorship of Light*.<sup>10</sup> The article was left open—to be continued ..., now some more information has come to hand which fills in some of the earlier years of *LIGHT* and its editors, giving us a much fuller picture, which in turn brings in new information on the early years of the London Spiritualist Alliance (LSA), still today surviving as the College of Psychic Studies (C.P.S.).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Volume 4, No. 11:—*The Origins of "Light"*, pages 276-281:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.11November08.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Volume 1, No. 6 page 44:—[http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP6.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP6.pdf) *Stainton Moses and the editorship of LIGHT*:—"Care should be taken in referring to the first editor of *LIGHT*, who was not Stainton Moses... Dr Dingwall emphasised this in his paper "Light and the Farmer Mystery" (JSPR 1981 vol. 51 p22-25.) Edmund Dawson Rogers appears to have controlled the paper on its foundation in 1881, but J.S. Farmer edited it for a time, and also the "Psychological Review". Farmer was the author of "Spiritualism as a New Basis of Belief" (1880), and "Twixt Two Worlds" a biography of the medium William Eglinton. Moses succeeded Farmer as editor about 1886."

<sup>10</sup> Volume 5, No. 10:—*The Editorship of Light – Paul J. Gaunt*, pages 316-324:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.10.October09.pdf> (please note the quote below was wrongly inputted as 2005, should read 2004)

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/college/history.html>

**Firstly:**

## **THE JUBILEE OF LIGHT**

*LIGHT*:—<sup>12</sup>

MR. F. W. SOUTH who, after forty-two years' service with the L.S.A. and *LIGHT*, retired some eight years ago, has been good enough to give us some of his reminiscences. He writes:

I was with *LIGHT* from the first week of its publication. It was founded by Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers and Mr. E. T. Bennett, as the Eclectic Publishing Co. That Company existed for about twelve months and was then dissolved. The first office was at 4, New Bridge Street, E.C. Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers supervised all the Press matter, Mr. J. J. Morse, the famous Trance Medium, acting as sub-editor and manager.

In 1882 we moved to Wine Office Court, Fleet Street, for a short time and Mr. John S. Farmer was made editor. Subsequently we removed to 3, Great James Street, Bedford Row, remaining there for about a year before we went to the office of the British National Association of Spiritualists at 38, Great Russell Street. It will be remembered that the British National Association was afterwards merged into the London Spiritualist Alliance and that society, with *LIGHT* as its organ, took the premises at 16, Craven Street, Strand in 1884. Later we moved to 2, Duke Street, Adelphi, and here the Rev. William Stainton Moses became editor. He had previously written *Notes By The Way* under his *non-de-plume*, "M.A. (Oxon)," <sup>13</sup> and here he conducted the paper until his death. *LIGHT* was then temporarily edited by Mr. William Paice, M.A. and at his death by Mr. Richard Harte and Mr C.C. Massey. Afterwards Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers resumed the editorship and the Rev. J. Page Hopps wrote the *Notes By The Way* and the leading articles.

Some years after that we removed to 110, St. Martin's Lane, and Mr. E. W. Wallis, the well-known Trance Medium, who was at first sub-editor, succeeded to the editor's chair at the death of Mr. Rogers in September 1910.

On the death of Mr. Wallis in January, 1914, he was succeeded by the present editor, Mr. David Gow.

Mr. Henry Withall, who did so much to support and carry on both the L.S.A. and *LIGHT*, was the Honorary Treasurer at the time when, while we were at 16, Craven Street, *LIGHT* fell into financial difficulties. While Mr. Withall was wondering how these could be surmounted there came by post two anonymous letters each containing a bank note for £1,000 to be devoted to the benefit of *LIGHT*. We learned afterwards that these munificent gifts came from Mr. E. H. Bentall.

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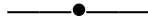
<sup>12</sup> *Light*, March 28, 1931 page 154.

<sup>13</sup> Stainton Moses during the first year of publication in 1881 was writing "Notes By The Way", under the pseudonym "M.A. (Oxon)." This early editorial involvement may have given rise to the misconception that he was the first editor.

I may mention that Mr. Rogers was the founder of the National Press Agency, of which he was manager and editor, and working under him in those days were two well-known journalists, Mr. H. G. Massingham and Mr. T. P. O'Connor.

I have very lively memories of the Rev. William Stainton Moses for I frequently carried proofs to him at the time he was editor. He was often ill and suffered much pain. When he stayed as the guest of Lord Tennyson at Freshwater,<sup>14</sup> he wrote telling me what a great interest Lord Tennyson took in LIGHT.

It is strange to look back remembering what bitter opposition we had in those days. Spiritualism was under a social, religious and scientific tabu. How times have changed!



**Secondly some delightful nostalgic reminiscences:**

## **SOME REMINISCENCES OF “LIGHT” AND THE L.S.A.**

*LIGHT*:—<sup>15</sup>

*Mr. Arthur Butcher who was early associated with LIGHT as a contributor—his memories go back for over forty years—writes:*

I FIRST became acquainted with LIGHT in the early 'eighties. The Editor at that time was the Rev. William Stainton Moses, and the office of the paper was at 2, Duke Street, Adelphi. The Alliance occupied the rooms on the first floor reached by a fine old panelled staircase, with frequent broad landings. The rooms themselves were old-fashioned and rather dark. The Editor sat in a little alcove in a corner of the principal room.

LIGHT at that period was not much known outside spiritualistic circles, and a stray copy in the hands of a sceptic was usually the occasion for many bantering remarks. In appearance it was much the same as at present, but there were fewer pages. Long descriptive accounts of seances were a prominent feature, and “Letters to the Editor” were largely concerned with the development of mediumship, and the genuineness of manifestations.

Owing to lack of accommodation at Duke Street the more important meetings of the Alliance were held in the Banqueting Room of the old St. James' Hall in Regent Street.

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<sup>14</sup> Note by LP:—This passing remark is important as indicating Tennyson's interest in Spiritualism. So Tennyson was an early reader of LIGHT – it would seem so.

<sup>15</sup> *Light*, February 21, 1931 page 93.

You sometimes experienced difficulty in finding the meeting place and found yourself by mistake in the restaurant. Inquiry of a passing waiter elicited the reply, with a disdainful sniff, "Spooks? Piccadilly entrance-upstairs!" Resuming your quest you wandered about until the sight of a contents bill of LIGHT pinned to a curtain gave you confidence as to your whereabouts.

I remember being present at one of these meetings when Eglinton, the slate-writing Medium, sitting on the platform with the late Dr. Wylde, in full light and view of the audience, obtained a spirit communication between locked slates held by the doctor. (Deception if you will, but convincing enough at the time).

Despite its many vicissitudes, LIGHT has never suspended publication nor departed to any great extent from the programme put forward at its inception. It has been fortunate in securing the services of a succession of earnest, able editors, and looking back one feels that its championship of a much derided subject has had some substantial results.



An important name associated with the early years of Light and the L.S.A., who should not be forgotten, is Henry Withall. Below is a tribute by Edmund Dawson Rogers' son, Dawson Rogers:—

## **THE LATE MR. HENRY WITHALL**

*LIGHT*:—<sup>16</sup>

### **EARLY DAYS of THE L.S.A.**

**By DAWSON ROGERS**

I should like to pay a small tribute of affection and esteem to the memory of my brother-in-law, Henry Withall, Vice-President of the London Spiritualist Alliance, for whose practical counsel and help in some of the emergencies of my life I owe a deep debt of gratitude. Looking back in old volumes of LIGHT I see that the L.S.A. was the outcome of a conference of the members of the Central Association of Spiritualists held on October 25th, 1883, which conference appointed from its body a committee of a dozen gentlemen, including the Rev. William Stainton Moses, Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers (my father) and Mr. Henry Withall, to liquidate the affairs of the Association and adopt a scheme proposed by Mr. Stainton Moses for the foundation of a new society. The committee discharged its task, and the London Spiritualist Alliance was launched in December, 1883, with about a hundred members. The inaugural meeting was held in St. James' Banqueting Hall on May 5th of the following year. Mr. Stainton Moses was the first President, Mr. Rogers one of the Vice-Presidents, Mr. Morell Theobald, Secretary, and Mr. Withall Treasurer. Mr. Withall's appointment as Vice-President appears to date from 1892, when that post was

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<sup>16</sup> *Light*, October 25, 1924 page 661.

rendered vacant by the election of Mr. Rogers to the presidentship in place of Mr. Moses, who passed away on September 5th in that year.

Since then, up to quite recent years, when he retired from active service and when the ownership of LIGHT passed into other hands, Mr. Withall has freely borne by far the major share of responsibility for both the Alliance and the business side of LIGHT, keeping the accounts of both, enrolling members of the Alliance, preparing each session's programme, making arrangements for meetings, conducting correspondence, etc. Always distrustful of his own powers and averse to publicity, he could never be induced to appear on any platform or even to take part in a discussion at the close of a meeting, till the transition of Mr. Rogers compelled him to preside at the Thursday evening lectures. Then indeed he came out of his shell. The ice once broken, he revealed himself as a ready thoughtful and persuasive speaker, as all will agree who have heard his utterances on such occasions. It has always, however, been a matter of regret to many of us that he could never be prevailed upon either to give an address before the Alliance embodying his experiences in Spiritualism (and they must have been many and varied) or to write any account of them for publication. But though he shrank from taking any part in platform work, he was always ready to introduce the subject of spirit-return in conversation and awaken the interest of his hearers, and on several occasions he, with Mrs. Withall, invited parties of local people, including ministers of neighbouring churches, to "Oakwood" to meet Mrs. M. H. Wallis or some other medium and learn something of Spiritualism at first hand. Of the quiet influence he exerted in many quarters something may be guessed from the following extract from a letter written to him by a gentleman, a member of the Alliance, only about a fortnight before his death:—

I shall never forget the trouble you took—now not so very far short of twenty years ago—to help me when I first tackled the difficulties of Spiritualism. There was, and there is, as no one knows better than you do, a lot of perplexity, and your kind and sympathetic help was invaluable, both then and also in the dark days of the war. And what you did for me you did, I know, for many others.

So, while, you are laid aside, these must be comforting and helpful reflections, for there is nothing I know of that gives deep and abiding satisfaction like the memories of good turns done to one's fellows.



A further tribute to Henry Withall:—



MR. H. WITHALL.

## DECEASE OF MR. HENRY WITHALL

*LIGHT*:—<sup>17</sup>

We regret to record the transition of Mr. Henry Withall, who passed away at his residence, Oakwood, Finchley, on Wednesday morning, 8th inst., at the age of 76. His health had been failing for some considerable time previously, but the end, which was brought about by a complication of diseases, came, for many of us, rather unexpectedly.

Mr. Withall represented practically the last link between the London Spiritualist Alliance and *LIGHT* and their early beginnings. He was the last survivor of the group associated with the foundation of the Alliance and of this journal,

which included Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers and the Rev. William Stainton Moses (“M.A. Oxon”).

Mr. Withall was an active supporter of both enterprises, to which he gave generously of his time and his means, and after his retirement from his own business, he devoted his whole time and energy to the welfare of each.

But for him it is probable that *LIGHT* would not have survived the decease of Mr. E. Dawson Rogers, the veteran journalist who founded it and who, after the death of “M.A. (Oxon),” became its editor and President of the Alliance. On the death of Mr. Rogers, Mr. Withall, who was Vice-President, decided to keep the post of President in abeyance, and so it remained and Mr. Withall continued as Vice-President and Chairman of the Council almost up to the time of his decease.

His presence on the scene and his self-denying labours bridged over a long gap at a time when Spiritualism (as represented by *LIGHT* and the L.S.A.) was going through a period of tribulation and neglect, its great leaders having passed away and those who have arisen in these latter days being still to seek.

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<sup>17</sup> *Light*, October 18, 1924 page 654.

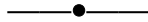
In our departed friend it might be said were embodied the whole history of LIGHT and the London Spiritualist Alliance, and had he ever written his memoirs they would have been of the deepest interest, for his career covered the most historical period of Spiritualism in its earlier days and brought him into touch with its most famous figures.

We hope to publish later some further particulars of Mr. Withall's life, for much remains to be told. In the meantime we join with their many friends in expressions of sympathy with the family of the departed veteran, notably his widow, who is the only surviving daughter of the late Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers, and who took an active part with her husband in the social side of the work of the Alliance.

The funeral took place on Saturday morning last at 9.30 at Golders Green; the disposal of the remains being by cremation. The service was conducted in the Crematorium Chapel by the Rev. F. Fielding-Ould, Vicar of Christ Church, Albany-street.

Amongst those present were: Mrs. H. Withall, widow of the deceased gentleman, Mr. Fred Withall (his surviving brother), Mrs. Fred Withall, and their three daughters, the Misses May and Violet Withall and Mrs. Thos. Colyer; Mrs. Bernard Wilkinson, Miss Kate Withall, and Mr. Will Withall (daughters and son of Mr Withall's deceased eldest brother); Mr. Thos. Colyer, Mr. Alfred Relf, and Mr. Dawson Roger (brother-in-law); Mrs. Byam, Mr. Leslie Curnow, Mr. and Mrs. David Gow, Mr. and Mrs. Heywood, Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Hunt (representing the Marylebone Association), Mr. Kelland (of the Friars Printing Association), Mrs. Lucking, Mr. William Leggatt, Mrs. and Miss McKay Heriot, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Meads, Major Peters (of the L.S.A. Council) ; Mr. W. B. Picken, Miss Phillimore (General Secretary of the L.S.A.), Mr. Rix, Mr. and Mrs. John Scott, Mr. Kensett Styles, Mrs. M. H. Wallis and Mr. John Watkins.

At the service of the Marylebone Association on Sunday evening last in Æolian Hall, appreciative reference was made by the Presiding Officer (Mr. F. Brittain) to the work of Mr. Withall for Spiritualism, at the conclusion of which the congregation rose and remained standing for a few moments in token of their regard and sympathy.



**I will conclude with this short obituary for Edmund Dawson Rogers' daughter Alice, wife of Henry Withall. We can note by this obituary that her brother, who authored the above tribute to Withall, had also presumably died bringing an end to the Edmund Dawson Rogers family:—**

## **TRANSITION OF MRS. WITHALL**

*LIGHT*:—<sup>18</sup>

We have regretfully to record the decease of Mrs. Alice Withall, who passed away on the 6th inst. at her residence, "Oakwood," Hendon Avenue, Finchley. She was the widow of the late Mr. Henry Withall, who was associated with *LIGHT* and the L.S.A. from their earliest years, as Honorary Treasurer and afterwards as acting President of the L.S.A. Mrs. Withall was the younger daughter of the late Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers. Since the death of her husband she had been in failing health for some years and with her passes the last of the family of Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers.

We record the fact with regret tempered by the reflection that Mrs. Withall had for some years been in a state in which she could derive very little happiness from continuing her bodily existence.

The cremation took place at Golder's Green Crematorium on Thursday afternoon, 9th inst., amongst the mourners being Miss Thelwall, Mr. & Mrs. Heywood, Dr. Brian Heywood, Mrs. M. H. Wallis and other friends of the family. The Rev. Basil Morton, M.A., who conducted the service, referred to the deceased lady as pure, true and helpful in her life, which was a life of usefulness.

**The editorship of *LIGHT* and the early L.S.A., will continue in a later issue**



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<sup>18</sup> *Light*, April 18, 1931 page 189.

# Hannen Swaffer

“Swaff”

Hannen Swaffer was born in Lindfield, Sussex, on November 1st, 1879 and died in London, on January 16th, 1962. After the death of Arthur Conan Doyle on July 7th, 1930, Swaffer took his place as the Hon. President of the Spiritualists' National Union. One cannot truly regard Swaffer as just an S.N.U., pioneer, for he held numerous positions in other organisations and excelled as a propagandist for the Spiritualist movement in general.

Today the S.N.U., Yearbook reads:—*Hon. Presidents-in-Spirit: Sir A. Conan Doyle, J. Arthur Findlay, G.M. Higginson, H. Swaffer.*<sup>19</sup>

*The Two Worlds* for March 1962 is a memorial issue and is mainly dedicated to Hannen Swaffer. The Editor and close friend of Swaffer was Maurice Barbanell, I quote the first few paragraphs of his lengthy obituary:—<sup>20</sup>

WITH the passing of 82-year-old Hannen Swaffer, a strange, unique, wayward genius has left the earthly scene. Of all the people who crusaded for Spiritualism during its more than a century of existence, Swaff was the most extraordinary and the most unpredictable.

He was a living paradox. He possessed tremendous courage, yet he feared physical pain. He wrote millions of words and made hundreds of speeches on Proved Survival, yet he would have preferred annihilation. He was honorary president of the Spiritualists' National Union, which has nearly 500 churches, yet he did not believe in prayer or worship. He was a reformer and pioneer, yet for years he dressed like a Victorian and looked like a Dickensian figure.

His tireless crusading for Socialism—he believed Socialism and Spiritualism were two halves of one whole—sprang from compassion and anger at the way in which millions of common people were denied what he regarded as fundamental rights and liberties. Yet he wanted nothing for himself. Though he could well afford it he did not possess a motor car. Neither did he have a watch, a fountain pen or even an umbrella—he regarded them as needless complications. His clothes were bought “off the peg.”

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<sup>19</sup> I wondered if this was the correct order, but Garth Willey, in proof reading, pointed out that it was alphabetical – probably for consistency with committee membership – rather than by chronological appointment; the latter being irrelevant since time is a property of the physical universe only!

What the S.N.U.'s says about its Honorary Officers and Members:—“*Persons of distinction who are Spiritualists or in sympathy with the work of the Union have from time to time been invited to become honorary officers or honorary members of the Union.*”

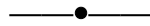
<sup>20</sup> *The Two Worlds*, March 1962 page 579.

## **Barbanell Commented:**

*This is the most unusual "obituary" ever printed, for its subject, Hannen Swaffer, read it, corrected it, and passed it for publication. About three years ago, when Swaff had a serious illness, it seemed as if his passing was imminent. I wrote his obituary, but he recovered. Regularly, it arrived in galleys of "over-matter."*

*One day, returning from lunch, I saw Swaff seated at my desk. He had found these galleys and was calmly reading them. After greeting me with a perfunctory wave, he resumed his task. Soon he produced one of his many pencils and began to make alterations. "You might as well have it right," he said, adding with almost detached journalistic praise, "It's a good story."*

*I have merely brought it up to date.*



## **Who's Who in the S.N.U.**

*The National Spiritualist:—*<sup>21</sup>

### **HANNEN SWAFFER, ESQ., Honorary President, S. N. U.**

Hannen Swaffer, the new Hon. President of the Spiritualist National Union, is the best known working journalist in England. He is "Swaff" to half journalism, and a man who is so well known that few music-hall programmes are complete unless at least one comedian mentions his name. He has been a journalist ever since he was sixteen, starting in Folkestone, and then going to Preston and Birmingham before reaching Fleet Street, the Mecca of journalism when he was twenty-four.

He was, more than anybody, the creator of daily illustrated journalism, being for nearly nine years Picture Editor of the "Daily Mirror" and then Acting Editor of the "Daily Sketch," into which he introduced the first "Gossip" feature now copied all over the world.

When, in 1914, he took charge of the "Weekly Dispatch," a century-old newspaper which Lord Northcliffe had owned for fifteen years, in which time he had tried over a score of editors, he so transformed it that Sunday journalism was revolutionised.

He worked for seventeen years for Lord Northcliffe in three different periods. Northcliffe called him "The Poet," and allowed him an independence and freedom of opinion never given by him to any other member of his staff.

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<sup>21</sup> *The National Spiritualist* was the official Journal of the Spiritualist National Union Ltd. Taken from the front page, and page 134, No.78. Vol. VII December, 1930. The duration of its existence was from July 1924 – December 1932, it always remained at twopence.

Hannen Swaffer has always been a crusader. He stopped “Black and white” fights in England. He championed the pit pony. He worked hard for the suffrage for women. He attacked the night clubs and racing in war time. He closed the Empire promenade and those at the Alhambra, Oxford and London Pavilion. He supported earnestly the Bishop of London’s attempts to clean the stage. He has championed actors and actresses in all their fights for decent treatment and he has supported, and attacked, the censorship on scores of occasions.

He hates money and he has few possessions. He opposes vivisection, has spoken and worked for the animals, and, during the last year, has violently assailed the Drink Traffic. He knows from bitter, and personal, experience the need for reform. “I used to drink,” he says.

He is a Socialist, having been made one when he was sixteen by reading “Merrie England,” and he has violent views on many things. He has been thrown out of a theatre because of his opinions!

His many crusades prepared him for his work in Spiritualism, which began five or six years ago when, as Editor of “The People,” he went out to enquire into the alleged survival of Lord Northcliffe. When convinced in a few days by the direct voice mediumship of his old friend, Dennis Bradley, he printed his new-found convictions, acknowledged his conversion from modernist-agnosticism and at a crowded gathering at the Queen’s Hall, he made his first speech on Spiritualism, calling his lecture “Is Lord Northcliffe Dead?”

He soon became one of the best-known propagandists for Spiritualism in the United Kingdom, and he has addressed large crowds in Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Westcliffe, Ramsgate, Brighton, Leicester, Portsmouth, Northampton; spoken many times at the Albert Hall, the Queen’s Hall, the People’s Palace and, indeed, most of the largest buildings in the country. He has also written extensively on Spiritualism in the newspapers of both Britain and America.

He has also spoken on Spiritualists in the Prussian Parliament House in Berlin, and the largest Hall in Copenhagen.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s death left vacant many places. Two of these at least, Swaffer has already filled, for he followed him as President of the Spiritualist Community, which now owns the Grotrian Hall, and he has just been elected Hon. President of the S.N.U. in the body, Sir Arthur continuing as Hon. President in the spirit.

Swaffer regards Spiritualism as the means by which, ultimately, mankind will be united, and a new era will reign upon the earth. That, alas, will not be in our time.



Shortly after he was elected president, Swaffer gives this account of ....



## How I Became a Spiritualist

*The National Spiritualist*:—<sup>22</sup>

**HANNEN SWAFFER.**  
**Honorary President, Spiritualists' National Union.**

It is hard to think back to the time when, nearly seven years ago, I was convinced of the truth of Spiritualism.

It seems now that I have been a Spiritualist all my life. It is difficult to remember a time when I was a sort of agnostic, made one, I suppose, by Robert Blatchford,<sup>23</sup> and when my way did not seem perfectly clear to me. Blatchford accepted the truth of proved survival just before I did.

I enquired into Spiritualism as a journalist. I went out in search of a “story.” Being an honest journalist, I printed what I found. That is all.

Some people admit what happens to them. Some people are afraid of recording what happens to them. One memorable day, Louise Owen,<sup>24</sup> Lord Northcliffe’s former secretary, told me she had sat with Mrs. Osborne Leonard and that Northcliffe, although “dead,” had spoken to her through Fedra. I did not laugh. Her honesty had always impressed me. Besides, those who were associated with Northcliffe were brought up straight.

Within four days of my enquiries beginning, I sat with Dennis Bradley<sup>25</sup> and his wife.

“Come down,” he telephoned to me, knowing I was enquiring, “and bring Louise Owen, or anyone else you like. You can hear the direct voice without any professional medium. Will you believe if it happens to-night?”

<sup>22</sup> *The National Spiritualist*, page 482.

<sup>23</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No.5:—*Mrs. Osborne Leonard - Her life and Mediumship* – By D. A. Nickelson, *Light*, 1965, page 123:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.5.May2010.pdf> See also *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.3:—*More Things about Robert Blatchford—Leslie Price*, pages 72-78:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.3March2011.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No.7:— *A.C.D. as I knew him* – Barbara McKenzie, *Psychic Science*, 1930 , page 182:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.7.July2010.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 3, No.3:—*The Failure of Spiritualism in the Past* - Herbert Thurston, pages 48-56:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.3March07.pdf> Use also *Psypioneer* Search Engine at:— [www.woodlandway.org](http://www.woodlandway.org) then *PsyPioneer* Journal.

“Yes,” I said.

We sat in Dennis Bradley’s house, merely six intimate friends. We all trusted each other. We all respected each other. Not one of the six would have tricked any one of the others about anything in the world, especially about this great big thing.

I did not believe it would happen, although I respected Bradley’s word. I was in that sort of doubt. I believed, yet I did not believe.

Well, then, with Bradley and his wife as the mediums, I heard the direct voice. Then I knew that Spiritualism was true!

I knew that the dead were not dead; that professional or amateur, or whatever it was, it was not all fake, but that a woman, who had been dead nine years, had really spoken to her daughter in my hearing, and that we were in the presence of the living dead, in sacred communion with the saints.

I knew that Doyle was right, and that Lodge was right, and that the fools and the sceptics were wrong.

I knew that the Life Hereafter, referred to in the Prayer Book, was going on around us, a blending of the present and the future, that what the Bible had taught us was right and that the phrase, “He shall give his angels guard over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,” was not merely an idle phrase that they repeat in church, but a profound thing written by the will of God.

I went back to my office, and printed it.

Since then, confirming and checking the evidence, I have sat with mediums of all kinds, Mrs. Osborne Leonard, Evan Powell, Noel Jaquin, Mrs. Estelle Roberts, Arthur Ford, Mrs. Lydy, Vout Peters, Ernest Oaten, Maurice Barbanell, Mrs. Rudolph Mayer, Rudi Schneider, Frau Silbert, professionals and amateurs.

Hundreds of spirits have communicated with me—Conan Doyle, among them, Irving, Leslie Stuart, Tree, Lord Northcliffe.

I have seen fourteen different kinds of phenomena, so far as we could sort them out, in my own drawing-room, in full light, on the same evening, without any professional medium being within a mile, so far as I knew.

I have spoken in Copenhagen and Berlin, and most of the great cities of England, to vast audiences on the subject, and I have met Spiritualists of high degree and of very humble station, of every colour and of every creed.

I have opened three Jewish psychical research societies, and addressed nearly 100,000 people in less than two years. I have spoken in churches, in the Prussian Parliament House,

at Rotary clubs and in Wormwood Scrubs, and, the more I see of Spiritualism and the more I experience it, the more I know that, like Socialism, it is destined to change the history of the world, to transform mankind and to lead, in the end, to a universal religion in following which all men and women will be equal, both in the sight of God and in the sight of men.

We are making greater progress than we deserve. We are stupid, we are ignorant, we are mean, we are badly organised. So were the apostles.

Yet we are a great permeator, a great leveller. We are the proud holders of knowledge which, ultimately, will illumine the mind of the world.

Since I became a Spiritualist, I have had a sense of direction. I have learned that I am not here to make money, or to achieve what the world calls success, but that I am here to do my job, whatever it is, as well as I can.

I have learned much from the pioneers of the movement. I have studied their settled calm and their great persistence, and I have paid tribute to the courage with which, when things were difficult, they stood by a truth which I had then hidden from myself.

I spend a great deal of my time in spreading the truth of Spiritualism, not only on the public platform but in private conversation, and I regard it as my greatest privilege that I am allowed to do this.

Yes, it is very hard now to say how I became a Spiritualist. We spiritualists take it for granted, you know, after a few years.

A man cannot remember the day on which, as a young baby, he first saw the sun.





## The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England

Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Wood  
1854-1884

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In the last issue we gave an account of “Miss Wood’s Mediumship” by the early Newcastle Spiritualist, author, and Psychological Researcher Alderman Thomas Pallister Barkas, F.G.S. We published some of his earlier work in *Psypioneer* 2006,<sup>26</sup> which was taken from his 1862 book, *Outlines of Ten Years’ Investigations into the Phenomena of Modern Spiritualism, Embracing Letters, lectures, &c.* Now we bring you:—

## FACTS FROM THE HISTORY OF MISS WOOD’S DEVELOPMENT AS A MEDIUM

*The Medium and Daybreak:*—<sup>27</sup>

By MRS. MOULD, Newcastle-on-Tyne

As no two blades of grass are alike, so no two minds, however nearly they may be allied, are exactly similar: we find this in thoughts, moods, feelings, and likings, and must expect to find the same law ruling the spiritual part of our nature, causing us all to vary in our experiences, on our first acquaintance with Spiritualism.

Speaking of my own personal reminiscences of it, my first enlightenment upon the subject arose from hearing lectures delivered by Mrs. Emma Hardinge (as she was then called) and Dr. Sexton, at times wide apart, each speaker treating the theme differently; the one telling us how spiritual growth must accrue by inquiring into this subject, and the close alliance of a higher life with this material one; how man must approximate to all that is

<sup>26</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 2, No.11:—*Early Spiritualism in England continued ...*, pages 235-238:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.11November06.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> *The Medium and Daybreak*, October 26, 1877 pages 674-676.

pure and good by such intercourse, and become fitter for his entrance into the other life, by learning something of it here. The gentleman lecturer pursued another course: he recited the marvels of it; how anyone could find the truth of it out for himself, urging each one to spell it out by his own personal endeavours.

Spiritualism was so new to me, that, however easy it might seem to be to try it, to one not at all acquainted with it in any way, it was impossible for me to believe that I could in such a simple manner as placing my hands upon a table, thus upset the law of gravitation. So I waited for some years for a way to be opened up to me, when the lectures delivered by Mr. Morse while in the trance condition aroused attention, and became the means of our introduction to him, and through this gentleman to our Newcastle mediums, by whose aid we were able to pursue the inquiry so eagerly desired.

Miss Wood was first introduced to us as a medium for good manifestations in the dark, and through whom we could likewise obtain raps, with or without a sitting, by merely holding our hands for a minute or two in the light, not only on a table, but on any object we chose to prefer. By these means we were introduced to all her spirit-guides—the light, heavy, or medium taps being severally indicative of them.

As public seances are, of all sittings, the most unsatisfactory ones for investigators; a recapitulation of the phenomena observed in the hall at Weir's Court would be useless and unprofitable; suffice it to observe, that our first initiation into the mysteries of Spiritualism was begun there, and consisted of rappings, and touches, and the possession of the medium's faculties by entrancement, when several and distinct individualities could be traced, altogether different from the personality of the medium in her normal condition.

But there are so many clever people in the world, who are able, by sharpness, nimbleness, by control of the minds of those about them, or of the circumstances in which they may be placed, to confuse, or blind the senses, that, without at all impugning the honour of those who are essential to the production of such wonderful manifestations as the spiritual phenomena, yet, for the sake of quickly arriving at the truth, and of establishing lasting convictions of it upon the mind, it is most desirable for both sitters and medium to be personally acquainted, and to form as select and as properly organised a circle as is possible, especially at the commencement of an investigation; when, with this thorough grounding, and not till then, may we firmly build up our theories upon this perplexing topic. We came to this conclusion after what could not be called other than a useless waste of time, during which the inquiry was conducted amidst a heterogeneous mixture of individualities, the nature of the phenomena inducing their continual re-assertion, while their wonderfulness occasioned the extremest scepticism; but as there is good in all things, we learned this lesson, that, just as no other study can be conducted under unsuitable conditions, so only by repeated and careful observation could we expect to understand the circumstances that would be productive of the best results.

For the reasons already advanced, some friends with ourselves agreed to form a circle at our house, and we commenced holding our sittings in April, 1873. These we continued holding weekly, for only dark seances at first, of which the annexed are specimens.

Forming a circle of from twelve to fifteen persons (including the medium, whose hands were held on either side of her), we commenced by singing until Miss Wood became entranced by one of her guides, who, after introductions and small talk, soon left her, and then commenced manipulations by the spirits upon the various sitters, those who were most mediumistic receiving the greatest share of attention, while others who were somewhat fearful got little or none at all; it was, besides, observed that those who were kind and open in manners, and most expressive of their feelings, and desirous of favours shown them, were the soonest noticed.

The manifestations given were taps with tubes, pulls of the dress, strokes upon the head, and pressures from soft hands; the pockets of some were rifled of their contents, and placed in out-of-the-way positions; the heads of some would be ornamented with others' belongings; boots and slippers were pulled off, and a host of other exercises of power, too numerous to mention, were afforded. One or two of us felt a little child sit upon our knees and embrace us, and then appear to go round us, touching the shoulders and back part of the head, answering to our thoughts at times by pats upon the person.

When the power was used up, we again sang until the medium awoke from trance, when we were allowed to turn on the gas, which revealed confusion on all sides of us: boots, slippers, handkerchiefs, bonnets, tubes, &c., strewn here and there, or thrown to some far corner of the room, where, they were not easily found.

The room was thoroughly darkened for these sittings. If a speck of light was observed when we commenced, it had either to be immediately subdued, or it tended to delay, or in some cases prevent the unseen working altogether. We thus had a great many seances by simply holding the medium's hands; but, as perfect satisfaction was required by all that they were never loosened during the sitting, it was suggested, and acted upon, that Miss Wood be secured so as to prove to all simultaneously that the power was outside of her. This, after some delay, was accomplished by fastening her hands and feet to the chair, and that piece of furniture and her thereon placed in the centre of the circle. Sometimes the fastenings used were of tape, oftentimes of thread, thoroughly knotted, and once or twice by fine strong silk; yet whatever was used was, found as secure at the finish of the sitting as at the beginning. At a further advanced sitting we sat in a horseshoe position, the piano meeting each end of it, while the end sitters had both hands held; by the hand of his neighbour, all the rest of the sitters joining hands, and Miss Wood was most securely tied in a chair, in the centre of the sitters.

At first we had the usual manifestations of touches and noises, while the piano was strummed every now and then, the music-stool was pushed backwards and forwards, and one or two of the sitters were well castigated with a paper tube, while two or three distinct and separate manifestations were produced at once. Then gradually the noises subsided, when "Benny" entranced Miss Wood and appeared to waste time in profitless remarks. At last he sang the "Song of the Birds," and recited "The Auction" most humorously and poetically. When this was concluded there was again a complete cessation of all manifestations for a while; then, by the sounding of notes upon the piano (in lieu of raps), we were requested to move close round that instrument, in doing which a gentleman's foot

accidentally came in contact with Miss Wood's chair. Immediately afterwards he told us he was touched by something behind him, when his foot again went forward, but he could not find the chair. Books were, brought to us from a far side-table at the other end of the room; the easy chair was wheeled against our chairs, outside of the sitters; the fender followed suit; we heard the movements of articles upon the mantelpiece, which was at the extreme end of the room opposite to the piano; and eventually "good night" was rapped out at the far end of the room. When we struck a light we were astonished to find both Miss Wood and chair behind the screen, near to the mantelpiece; she was still tied, and in a deep trance, and must have been carried over the heads of the sitters.

After a short time we commenced with a dark sitting, when, after it was concluded, with a subdued light we gained materialisations. Miss Wood, lying upon a mattress behind a folding screen, was not placed under test conditions. The results of this phase of her development may be best illustrated by the following facts. When the first part of our meeting was over and Miss Wood had placed herself in the cabinet, "Pocka" entranced her, merrily chatting with us, and saying she intended to materialise and dematerialise in our presence. Of course we thanked her cordially, when she next proceeded to make puns upon all our names. She then left her medium. After we had sung about twenty minutes we saw a small white speck in front of us upon the floor, which grew larger and larger very gradually until it assumed the form of "Pocks," when we gave her our warmest greetings. After she had remained in front of us for a while she gently faded away until she had completely disappeared.

We then sang for about ten minutes, when another speck of light was seen, which in the same slow manner rose up and up, higher than the last, till a tall form in white robes emerged out of it and began most energetically to fling books and other articles about. By raps he told us he was "Benny," and on being asked if he would kindly measure and mark his height upon the wall he consented, when a pencil was given him, and he made a mark immediately above his head. He then gradually dematerialised out of sight. We then sang until Miss Wood came out of trance, when she was measured and found to be seven inches less in size than the figure. Another similar seance was held shortly afterwards, when "Pocks" in like manner first formed from a speck of light and disappeared, followed by a like process on "Benny's" part; but this seance had an additional importance attached to it, from the act that the screen was so far opened that the wall inside the cabinet was distinctly visible, and something dark could be seen lying upon the ground.

Soon following this last sitting, was formed a seance for photographing the materialised form, by the aid of the magnesium light. The preliminaries having been arranged, Miss Wood, with Miss Fairlamb, both entered the cabinet, and were carefully wrapped up in shawls, to protect them from the sudden glare of light, which is often so injurious to the medium. After talking with the two controls, "Pocks" and "Cissy," and singing for awhile, a signal was given by raps for the plates to be prepared. In a little while, "Cissy" made her appearance, and was photographed, then retired into the cabinet, coming out a second time to undergo a similar process, both processes turning out failures as far as the face was concerned, although the form was pretty accurately described. Before she came out a third time, the sitters were requested not to gaze too much at her, as that prevented her keeping

steady enough to be taken well. Miss Wood was then brought out of the cabinet and placed on a chair well muffled up to increase the power, when another attempt was made, which might be called successful as far as the face was concerned, as that was well defined.

This seance was not thought satisfactory, the face of what was supposed to be a little Hindoo girl appearing as a big, ugly, blackened one, unlike either of the mediums. It occasioned some ill-feeling, and is instanced because it was the means of developing the mediumship in another way, for when Miss Wood next sat for materialisation she insisted upon having tests applied, when it will be observed that the figure then, instead of forming before us, formed in the cabinet, and then appeared to us. To satisfy her, a gentleman fastened some tape round her neck, knotted it, and sealed the knot, the tape was then passed from thence to the wrists, which were each tied, knotted, and sealed, when she lay down, and the ends of the tape were nailed to the skirting-board, knotted and sealed as the others. Presently "Pocks" controlled her and conversed with us, full of wit as usual; then we sang for awhile, when the leaf of the screen was gently opened, and "Pocks" appeared, rather cloudy at first. She then gained a little in intensity. Going every now and then to where her medium was, she playfully hid herself behind the arm-chair, and also seated herself in the empty fire-grate, appearing to put her head up the chimney. When she was before us, we asked if "Benny" could give us some raps in the cabinet, when knockings were heard distinctly two or three times. At that time she was fully three feet from the screen, holding out both hands towards us as to let us see she did not do it. Then it was desired that the leaf of the screen be moved, and it was opened and shut two or three times. Shortly afterwards "Pocks" went in to her medium and rapped out "Goodnight." When the gas was turned up and the medium examined, all the fastenings, were found to be intact.

About this time a new feature in the development began to manifest itself. When the sittings were concluded, and the medium was disentranced, a coffee supper was always partaken of by her and other mediums who might be present, with any of the rest of the company who chose to remain. This was usually accompanied by so-called spiritual manifestations, consisting of raps, movements of plates; &c., and efforts at table-tilting. The table at which we sat was a large dining one, and unusually heavy, so that with the efforts to tilt it, the creaks, and what might seem stretching of its various parts, were often prolonged and loud, and a leg was often visibly raised. This led to one of the gentlemen present asking if he lifted up one side of it himself, could the other side be raised by this invisible agency, when an affirmative reply was rapped out, and the gentleman placed both of his arms in a-kimbo fashion beneath it, and with an effort contrived to lift and hold it up. As he raised up the one side, the other rose as well, without anyone touching it, remaining poised and perfectly level, with all the supper things spread upon it, until the gentleman declared it was too heavy for him to hold up any longer, and consequently lowered it down again on *terra firma*, the opposite side descending much more gently than his own. At the next sitting, a week later, it was asked if the table could be raised without help, when the reply was rapped out, "We will try;" and after a little interval of straining, it was lifted four or five inches into the air, remaining thus suspended for a few minutes ere it again gently resumed its proper position. A few minutes afterwards, an oil painting upon the wall was lifted from two supports and lowered a few inches further down. It must be observed that

these manifestations took place in the full glare of a three-light chandelier, while at the same time a huge fire was burning in the grate.

Of the 200 or more seances which I have attended, perhaps the most satisfactory ones to myself were the third or fourth, and nearly the last one.

The first one was a dark seance, where the medium's hands were held by sitters on either side. At previous sittings I had often been singled out for taps from tubes, &c., somewhat puzzled to conjecture how particular parts, such as a finger, or some part of the head, could be so aptly struck, even when an effort was made to change its position, yet the stroke was always unerring. I, on this particular evening which I wish to record, was placed very near Miss Wood, to receive a touch direct from the spirit, and, feeling somewhat awestruck to be placed in such close proximity to the invisible, I took my place three sitters from the medium. After the usual manifestations of touches with tubes, &c., or pulls of the dress, I was gently kissed upon the cheek, and a little while after felt a very soft hand touch me. A grape was next put into my mouth so unexpectedly, that without intending injury I instinctively brought my teeth together before the finger and thumb that inserted the grape could be withdrawn, yet I felt no substance between the teeth, and the parts of the finger and thumb were dematerialised in my month. "Pocka," the little sprite who favoured me, aware of my concern for her if I had in anyway hurt her, and knowing the unintentional nature of the action, soon quieted my fears; for though the nip was not beneficial, there was no injury to her medium. This seance introduced me to spirits, as they have ever been since to me, viz., as human beings like ourselves. Any fear that might happen to arise would be of the same nature as is experienced in meeting with company here with which the soul is not in accord.

The next seance which I wish to specify, was held in Weir's Court, when Miss Wood, after requesting the usual test-conditions, was placed in the cabinet, taped and sealed as usual. The floor of the room had just been washed, and was very wet, and as I had thin boots on, I sat behind the circle of sitters, with my feet resting upon the rung of one of the front chairs. A demur was raised, when "Pocka," who had entranced Miss Wood, told me to sit in a cabinet, facing the one in which her medium was thus I was placed very near her shut off somewhat (by the form of case I was in) from the rest of the sitters, with my feet resting upon a gas- stove, which one of the gentleman had kindly sought for me. After singing some time, we were told "Benny" was going to materialise, when presently a shadowy figure, issued forth in a very dim light, from the cabinet opposite, so very noiselessly and ghostly it glided out—in spite of myself, I felt a chill creep through me. As long as this feeling of awe pervaded me, the figure kept well away, but as soon as I had imbibed the notion that really it was a human being like myself, it came nearer and nearer, and, tubing some of the gentlemen present, hit me a few strokes by way of a change; dancing backwards and forwards with remarkable agility, until at one time coming much too near my footstool, while wheeling round towards me, it fell sheer over my right shoulder—a huge mass of drapery that was of no weight whatever; in fact I felt nothing more than the weight of a light muslin curtain. The spirit took some little time to regain its balance. When I asked the spirit if it had any body? "No" was tapped out upon my hand. I next requested to be allowed to hold the drapery; this was agreed to, and I was allowed to

squeeze the whole of it; next he lifted up his foot and let me grasp it, one seemingly of veritable flesh and blood; then the hands, they, too were as real; afterwards I stroked the beard upon the face, which felt shaggy and wet; when, after some further demonstrations of his power to lift and move things about, he passed into the cabinet where his medium was, and I saw him no more.

Both of the tests which I received in these two seances were unexpected and very convincing, besides furnishing a fund of information on the subject of materialisations, which were a study in themselves: how much only as was necessary of a body was formed under stringent conditions and need of conclusive manifestations of power to the sitters; how rapidly the substance of it could be dissolved; how that substance was derived from the medium direct, as a hurt seemingly given to the spirits only affects the mediums.

Then what appeared frivolous small-talk seemed on after-consideration to be a means of diverting reflection and of conforming all minds to an equal state to produce the nearest approach to harmony; and again, when this vapid conversation was so lengthily continued as to cause dissatisfaction, it was then noticeable that they were correct in their statements that they had been gathering up power, for these delays were often followed by the most powerful manifestations; and although not exactly understandable at all times, it was pleasant to feel them all as one, in a sense, in their anxiety to help us and prevent causing unnecessary alarm; and yet for all their solicitude and trouble how little can we repay them. Ofttimes a few poor expressions of love and assurances (maybe) minus the feeling, which nevertheless often serve as condolences to those not emancipated far enough in spirit to have knowledge of the all in human nature. Yet all who have in some earnest way endeavoured to probe this enigma, with after-reflection' must experience unutterable gratitude for their help in the hour of need; so that, as the spirits themselves tell us, if we cannot evidence our most sacred desires, which, by acts, feelings, and thoughts, can be exercised, and (being eternal) are most reaching to those who have parted from earth, which we hope will aid most the gradual growth (then as now) from the finite to the infinite.

During the course of our investigations we experienced the difficulties of having to contend with what we called evil controls, when the most stubborn aspect of human nature was exhibited, combined with low, reckless manners. These we found difficult to manage, and it is a still harder matter to express an opinion about them. Sometimes we supposed them traceable to the humour of the medium, sometimes to the system being overtasked; when due to the latter cause, absolute rest was the only remedy, whilst the former, having a moral cause for it, had in like manner to be treated. We were not successful in our treatment of them, but, from what I then and have since observed, I should suppose the exercise of a strong will-power to be sufficient to cope with the difficulty as it occurs.

Various opinions have been expressed as to the cause of the evil, some supposing it assignable to the nature of the noviciate, others to the body, having been rendered so sensitive, it readily imbibes the atmosphere of either good or evil in the company that is encountered during the day, bearing the unseen influence to the circle room, where it

becomes manifest. No doubt there is some truth in this, rendering it important for the medium to keep as free as possible from such malaria till the spiritual nature is strong enough to resist its incubus; but a great deal depends upon the mode of developing. Sitting too much, and too long, by trying the powers too much, weakens them, inducing morbid feelings, till the healthy tone of their whole nature, becoming lowered, and unfit for proper control, is acted upon unhealthily, thus deteriorating the manifestation and preventing progress. But I believe the chief cause of evil controls proceeds from developing in a miscellaneous circle of sitters, when the medium's sensitive nature and passive state receives the combined yet often antagonistic action of the inharmonic mass of minds, thus preparing the way for, and furthering the introduction of, spirits of a like nature, at any time, from the untraceable and spiritual source. Hence the necessity of selecting a harmonious circle with freedom from intrusion or disturbance of any kind, from mind or matter, till the development is so far advanced as to be beyond the risk of them.

Seeing the difficulties encompassing the growth of mediums, and the little care that has been exercised in that direction, we cannot wonder at the often so-called "exposures" that have taken place; and I think it behoves us at times, in our intercourse with sensitives, to ensure absolute test-conditions, that we may have the firm conviction impressed upon us that it is a power outside of them, so that we may unflinchingly bear testimony to the genuineness of their mediumship when we feel called upon to state our opinion through any mishap that may have come to them.

Having seen so much of the development of Miss Wood, and witnessed the power exercised under test and other conditions, I feel free to express my convictions as to the genuineness of her gift, and besides having known her personally for three years and a half, and seen a great deal of her during that time, I consider myself qualified to sketch a true portrait of her as she has appeared to me. As expression is said to be the index of character, I must define Miss Wood to be determined and inflexible, denoting one well able to plunge through what has been dived into; thoroughly honest, so being thus true to herself, "it must follow as the night the day" she will not "then be false to any" one; and naturally kind, her guides are correspondingly so, and will strain a point to serve sitters to the utmost of their ability. Of a friendly nature, when her sympathies are evoked she will cordially respond to her share in any undertaking, be it menial or elevating. Abiding steadfast to those whom she respects, she is stern in front to her enemies; appearing more so; however, than she really is, and is not unyielding, even to those who do not deserve such lenity. This is as I know Miss Wood to be. There are very many points of character not touched upon at all, which I have not had an opportunity of observing sufficiently to define correctly, but if by accurate analysis of the principal part we may safely infer the rest, then we may conclude that the shadows always necessary to relieve the lights must have a harmonising and not a disjointed effect.

**Kate Wood will be continued in the next issue**

## SOME BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

*If you have any problems locating a copy we can contact the author*

**An Extraordinary Journey:—The Memoirs of a Physical Medium**, by Stewart Alexander, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England, 2010. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9557050-6-9., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 294-296:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

**Helen Duncan The Mystery Show Trial**, by Robert Hartley published by H Pr (Publishing), London 2007. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9553420-8-0. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 244-247:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

**Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as It Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling**, by John Benedict Buescher Theosophical History Volume XI available at:—<http://www.theohistory.org> then—Occasional Papers. Psypioneer references by Leslie Price page 7:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08.pdf>

**Dead Men’s Embers**, by Gerald O’Hara, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2006. Large Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9514534-6-9., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 1-2:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

**Mrs Miller’s Gift’ - a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library**, by Gerald O’Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1-4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

**Mrs Miller’s Gift CD:—Helen Duncan Séance, Ernest Oaten and Harry Edwards**, Written and produced by Gerald O’Hara B.Sc. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 106-107:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

**The Indescribable Phenomena – The Life and Mysteries of Anna Eva Fay**, by Barry H. Wiley published by Hermetic Press, Inc., Seattle Washington 2005. ISBN: 0-945296-50-9., available at:—[http://www.hermeticpress.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=45](http://www.hermeticpress.com/product_info.php?products_id=45) Psypioneer references by Leslie Price pages 39-42:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

**Immortal Longings – FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death**, by Trevor Hamilton published by Imprint Academic in Exeter, U.K (also VA, U.S.A) 2009. ISBN: 9-781845- 401238 H.B, 9-781845-402488 PB, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 157-148:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

**Talking to the Dead – Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism**, by Barbara Weisberg published by HarperSanFrancisco New York 2004. Hardback ISBN: 0-06-056667-1., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 9-10:—[http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP2.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP2.pdf)

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