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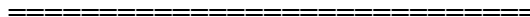


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SEVEN SITTINGS WITH MRS DUNCAN

L.S.A. – 1930-1



Note by LP:

In his book *Medium on Trial - the story of Helen Duncan and the Witchcraft Act* (1996) Manfred Cassirer listed some documentary sources for the 1930-1 sittings which were held at the L.S.A. One of these is “an extensive but updated and unsigned manuscript” in the SPR archives entitled *Seven sittings with Mrs Duncan*. (p.17) Peter Meadows at Cambridge University Library kindly examined this and replied to me:

“It is undated, but shows no sign of having been ‘updated’. It appears to be the same text that you have transcribed for *Psypioneer*. I don’t know of a MS in the SPR archives, and Cassirer doesn’t give any clues as to where in the archive any MS might be lurking”

The typed version reproduced below was written by the journalist Prevost Battersby, who was listed as an early sitter; he also was present at later sittings in the series, but whether his enthusiasm diminished is not as yet known. Later he became a regular reviewer for the newspaper *LIGHT*, and his portrait is in the National Portrait Gallery.¹

By reference to the verbatim séance records, it should be possible to identify all the sitters to whom the author alludes, though with the exception of Lodge, this has not been done here. It is not known yet if Lodge changed his mind about Mrs Duncan.



Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan (née
MacFarlane)

November 25th, 1897 – 6th, December 1956

¹ Francis Prevost (Henry Francis Prevost Battersby) (1862-1949), Poet, novelist and journalist:
<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp99005/francis-prevost-henry-francis-prevost-battersby>

Seeing how scarce in this country today are mediums able to produce any sort of materialization,² the London Psychical Laboratory invited Mrs Duncan, whose powers in that direction had been brought to their notice, to give some sittings in London under test conditions.

The cabinet was formed by a dark curtain, which did not reach the ceiling, screening an absolutely empty corner of the room. The medium, under conditions to be presently described, was seated in a chair which was drawn back and placed just behind the central opening of the curtain, which could also be withdrawn where it met the corner walls.

The sitters sat in a single or double crescent parallel to the curtain, and behind them was the reporter and Mr Duncan, who worked the gramophone.

The medium was thus completely isolated, and, at the sitting of 25th October, had, after being stripped, donned stockings, knickers and a black sateen coat, all of which had been carefully examined.

In the séance room she was placed in a sack, tied closely round her neck, thus imprisoning all her limbs. Tapes, attached to the outside of the sack, were swathed twice round her arms and waist, and tied to the back and arms of the chair. Every knot on the chair or her person was carefully sealed.

The light was provided by four red lamps at opposite corners of a chandelier in the centre of the room, which could be and was increased to an illumination sufficient to read the figures on the second hand of a watch.

The sitters on the seven occasions to be described, varied in number from five to ten. The medium's control is known as Albert. He showed throughout an inclination to be helpful, and a desire for as much light as possible, but very little use was made of him psychologically.

The sitting of the 25th,³ with eight observers, began at 6.5 [sic- L.P.] p.m., and at 6.30 ectoplasm was observed emerging from the mouth of the medium who a little later came forward and allowed some of the sitters to touch it.

Albert asked various sitters to describe its smell, and the failure of several to detect anything remarkable about it, seems a commentary on the effect of tobacco on the nasal organs, for the smell is strong and objectionable.

There followed various imperfect attempts at materialization, and then the medium, in deep trance, and without her sack, came forward and sat in the circle.

² The author consistently spells this with a "z" LP

³ Cassirer (p.16-17) points out that there is confusion about the date LP.

The sack and seals were examined, and found unbroken. After a good deal of rather pointless talk with the control, the medium, who had withdrawn, again reappeared with ectoplasm streaming out of her mouth down to the floor. She came right in front of the light, and walked out of the circle, with ectoplasm some twelve feet long trailing behind her, on which she was careful not to step, on returning to the cabinet.

Albert asked for the curtains to be slightly closed, and brought the medium forward again that the slow return of ectoplasm into the mouth should be observed.

At the close of the sitting the sack was again examined, and it, the seals and tape were all found to be intact, the sack, minus the medium, being still sealed to the chair.

At the second sitting on 30th October, with ten observers, the medium, after being completely undressed, donned a pair of black sateen knickers, stockings and felt shoes that had been bought for her, and only unpacked when required, and the black sateen overall of the previous sitting. She was, as soon as the change was made, and her mouth and nostrils examined, accompanied to the séance room, placed in the sack, the tapes of which were tied and sealed as at the first sitting. The sitters' chairs were arranged as before in a double crescent.

Ectoplasm made its appearance some seven minutes after the curtains were drawn, and Albert (the control) asked if any one would like to feel it.⁴

One of the observers took the substance in his hand,⁵ and it could be seen wriggling slowly over his fingers towards the medium, and a little later---after another of the sitters had handled it---he was invited, within the cabinet to observe the medium's condition.

He reported her to be in a profuse perspiration, still completely enclosed in the sack, and---after a pause, when the curtains were again closed---that ectoplasm was pouring out of her mouth, like a bundle of strings, that it was heavy, cold and clammy, like a skein of parallel



Photograph of a Duncan séance in 1941

⁴ Typescript does say "any one".

⁵ The verbatim record indicates this was Sir Oliver Lodge. LP

threads, forming a mesh two inches thick. That it was stringy, unlike woven material, with a slight, curiously unpleasant odour, which clung to the hand for a long time after.

Albert had been complaining about the constriction of the bag, and, in reply to a suggestion that he should remove it, as on the previous occasion, had made the illuminating comment that he must wait for someone to get the medium out and take the atoms to pieces. Unfortunately, no attempt was made to elucidate the remark; and throughout the sittings the contribution Albert might have made to an understanding of method was neglected.

He seemed to be a person of, if somewhat uncultured, intelligence, and his irritation at stupid observations was pronounced.

As the medium appeared to be suffering from its constriction, the tape closing the mouth of the sack was cut.

Later various ectoplasmic shapes were seen, but without definite contours; one a small form that swayed rhythmically to the music of the gramophone, and two of the sitters were slapped by some substance that failed to take the shape of a hand, but which was held and melted in the grasp.

After that the sitting ended, the remaining tapes and seals being found unbroken.

At the third sitting, on 2nd November, with eight observers, the same conditions were observed, except that the medium wore a new black overall, and that the bag in which she was placed on entering the séance room was made of a dark blue net with open meshes, three-sixteenths of an inch square. The bag was sealed as before at the neck and to each arm of the chair.

After five minutes the medium's false teeth were placed in one of the sitter's hands, and presently a mass of ectoplasm, somewhat resembling a human figure, was seen, the control continually asking for more light which was given him up to the full power of the red lamps; he also expressed approval of the new bag, which was much cooler for the medium. He could be heard whistling and singing.

There were various glimpses of ectoplasm, and something like a half formed figure appeared at the side of the curtain, and a child's voice, whispering, was heard to say:—"I don't know where I am. What is wrong?" She objected to one of the sitters "staring" at her, and added, "I don't know where my mammy is."

Asked what her name was, she said; "Rosie. I am not a girl;" and to a question if she were grown up---"No, I am not. Wait till I come out."

There was, however, no further development; and, to an enquiry why children came, Albert explained:—"It is to help them forward. They are very good assets, and help us later on;" adding, to a further question, that he was gathering a group to help him.

Ectoplasm shaped like an arm and hand appeared and moved quickly in and out of the curtain, and slapped the hand of one of the sitters.

After a pause, more of the substance, faintly luminous, was seen over and hanging down from the medium's head, and an incomplete hand once more appeared with the bluish luminosity behind it.

With that the sitting ended, the seals on the confining tapes being examined and found intact.

After this sitting the medium expressed a wish to return to the séance room, and the sitting, with three observers, was prolonged for about forty minutes.

The production of ectoplasm continued, apparently with greater ease than before; the control explaining that though the net bag in itself was not a deterrent, it affected the medium's mentality. A full length form with holes for the eyes appeared; another which seemed an attempt at a child, about two feet high; then a miniature hand, of a bright flesh colour, like a baby's which was afterwards placed upon that of the medium; who later came out of the cabinet with ectoplasm streaming from her mouth and nose, curled round the left hand side of her face; and afterwards, swathed round her head in the form of a wide bandage, ending in what looked like half a dozen wafer biscuits with rough edges.

A drastic examination after the sitting ended, revealed no ground for suspecting the reality of the phenomena.

At the fourth sitting, with five observers, all the previous precautions were observed, the medium having been stripped before entering the séance room, and dressed in the shoes, knickers and coat purchased for the former sittings.

She took nothing, not even a handkerchief, into the room with her, and everything she wore was black.

No one had handled the clothes in the interval.

The medium went at once into trance, and, ten minutes after the sitting began, the voice of Albert, the control, was heard asking for more light, and continued to express his desire for it, when it had been twice turned up.

After various glimpses of ectoplasm, a vague figure some six feet high with a small indistinct face, emerged from the right hand side of the curtain, the medium with ectoplasm issuing from her mouth and reaching to the floor, being visible in the centre at the same time.

A little later, at the request of the sitters, the figure of the control appeared in the centre, with the medium standing on the right hand side.

Some conversation followed with the control, who still demanded more light, and, after what were apparently unsuccessful attempts to produce hands and arms, the medium came out on the right hand side of the curtain, walking backwards, with some five yards of ectoplasm---which when she came directly beneath the light was seen to be tied in a knot under the nostrils---streaming from her mouth and trailing on the floor in front of her.

She withdrew, to appear again in the centre, with the ectoplasm now in two long strands. A second time she emerged from the side, and, as she backed towards the door, the chair

could be heard being dragged, as if by the ectoplasm, after her; and, after a return to the cabinet, the ectoplasm was seen wreathed all over the chair, and, during successive reappearances, swathed round her head, trailing down to the floor, and spread right across her chest.

Albert then expressed a desire to illustrate the extreme length of ectoplasm he can produce---he always calls it “the substance”---and, at his command the medium, who seemed to be gasping for breath, emerged from the side of the cabinet, trailing the stuff in front of her. She went right back to the far wall, the ectoplasm, which was coming from her mouth only, reaching to the cabinet, a matter of some eighteen feet. As she returned to the cabinet the stuff seemed to dart away in front of her, and, when the curtains again opened, was spread all over her head, chest and lap.

Later a little figure, about three feet high, appeared in the centre and curtseyed to the circle.

“I have a ball,” it said in a childish treble. “See! One, two, three, four, five, six, seven.”

Sounds were heard of a ball bouncing.

“I can dance,” she said, and then:

“Baa, baa, black sheep, have you any wool?

“Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full:

“One for the master, and one for my dame,

“And one for the little boy who lives down our lane. Ta, ta!”

She withdrew, but reappeared to wave her hand with a final “Ta, ta!”

Albert, then, after an irritated retort to an offer of music from Mr Duncan, made an interesting remark.

“It is very disappointing I have no friends with me isn’t it?” adding, “I meant someone like myself, you see, that I could bring to you.”

But in the quest for ectoplasm Albert’s personality from which much might have been learnt, was unfortunately ignored.

He promised to do what he could to produce a more human-like figure, but his effort, which appeared later, was only a slight improvement. Later a little figure appeared, dancing, the movement of knees and hips being clearly seen; and twice reappeared at the other side of the cabinet, waving her arms and bowing.

With that the sitting ended.

At the fifth sitting, with Mrs Duncan on 28th November, there were six observers, placed as before, and the medium wore the usual séance costume, but the band and front of the overall were sewn together. Thus dressed she was, on arrival at the séance room, placed in the net bag, sealed at the neck and to the arms of the chair, thus restricting the movement of her arms within the bag.

The medium went into trance before being drawn back into the cabinet, and in five minutes the exhibition of ectoplasm began, in the centre and at the sides.

The control declared himself to be not Albert, but Henry James Williamson, and that he liked everything but stubborn men and women. Albert, however, presently reported that the new control was no good, and that he would take the control over.

There were various ectoplasmic appearances but no definite form. Then a child's small voice exclaimed: "I don't know what is wrong with me. I don't seem to have all my body." and, indeed, the shape representing her seemed curiously deficient.

She continued to keep up a conversation with the sitters, giving her name as Ruby, her age as ten, and proving that, though concealed by the curtain, she could see what all of them were doing.

After a while a small form about 3½ feet high came out of the curtains, but the outline was still very vague. She continued to talk to the sitters, but soon disappeared, and was replaced by a shapeless mass of ectoplasm, which, proceeding from the medium's mouth, spread out fan-wise towards the ground, being all the time in motion like the writhings of a snake.

A length of rope had been left in the cabinet, hanging over the medium's chair, and it was suggested to Albert that he should try and tie the medium up in it.

He expressed a willingness to try, and overhearing some conversation in the circle as to the effect of hypnotic suggestion on the production of ectoplasm asserted that he alone was the channel by which suggestions could reach the medium, that his intelligence was responsible for the building up of the substance into human form, and that the direct voice was dependent on a tube from the medium's vocal organs to his back.

Deep groans were heard from the medium, and when the light was turned up she was found, though still in the bag, and with all the tapes and seals intact, to be completely bound by the rope.

A slip knot was drawn round either ankle, and the slack brought up and twisted doubly round her neck, the ends carried down and round each wrist which were bound together behind her. The binding was everywhere painfully tight, cutting into the flesh, and it was no easy matter freeing the medium, the knots having to be cut, so trying was the position in which she had been trussed: and all this, of course, while still within the bag, which was uninjured and exactly as it had been at the commencement of the sitting. Even apart from the bag, such trussing up of a heavy woman could only have been achieved by a considerable exhibition of strength. As it was, within the bag, no mortal hands could have done it.

At the sixth sitting, on 2nd December, there were six observers. A new dress had been made for Mrs Duncan of fine black woollen material in one piece, with an opening from the neck to the waist at the back, with legs like a pyjama suit, shaped at the ends like stocking feet. This was sewn and not buttoned. Tapes were attached to the wrists and secured her arms to those of the chair, allowing a play of 3 inches to each hand.

The medium went into trance before the sealing was finished, and the control at once asked that the light should be put up as high as possible.

Ectoplasm appeared flowing from mouth and nostrils over the medium's figure, almost transparent; and again coiled round her face; and then looped over her left ear, falling to the back of her neck.

Later a small, ill-formed figure, with only a suggestion of head and shoulders, appeared and bowed.

Then Albert, referring to a previous request for ectoplasm, asked that a bowl of water should be provided at the next sitting in which the material should be placed, to be transferred to once [at once? L.P.] to a firmly corked bottle full of water, as the substance could only survive when protected from air.

He wanted it to be examined through a microscope and to be given a report on it; stating that it was very like the life germ, though what he meant by that was not stated. He got, he said, a vaguish sort of wish from the lady's brain---apparently the medium's---and wanted her to learn all that there was to be learnt about it. He could not leave much as it was part of the medium, and only a small portion could be taken from her.

A loop of half inch rope, six feet long, with the ends woven together and sealed, had been placed in the cabinet, in the hope that the control might be able to tie the single knot in it which cannot be done by any mortal contriving; but unfortunately he misunderstood the desire, and used it on the poor medium.

After some conversation with Albert, very human but not illuminating, more ectoplasm appeared, in two long strands, moving like coiling snakes, or the arms of an octopus; and then, after a longish pause, Albert called for "Light, quickly", and it was found that the rope had been looped round both feet of the medium, and then carried through a slip knot, over her head, the unfortunate creature being doubled up in such a cramped position that only by the vigorous and united effort of three of the observers could she be freed from the rope.

All the seals on the tapes were intact, but even had they been broken, the position in which she was found could hardly have been contrived by herself. As they stood, it was, of course, impossible.

At the seventh sitting on 5th December with nine observers, the medium, after being carefully examined, was dressed in the one piece suit previously used, sewn from the neck to the waist at the back; her mouth, throat, ears and hair were all scrutinised; and the tapes, as before, were sealed at her neck and to the arms of the chair.

The medium went into trance while the tapes were being tied, and, one minute after her entering the cabinet, a glimpse of ectoplasm was obtained.

A little later a strip appeared on the left, and a childish voice, which claimed to be Ruby's addressed one of the sitters, proved an ability to see through the curtain, and requested and obtained a watch from him.

The sitter felt the small hand touch his, and a sleeve and tiny fingers were visible as the watch was taken, which, a few seconds after, with a cry from the child, was dropped on the floor.

Another sitter then offered Ruby his watch; and after some more conversation, during which the child made the somewhat cryptic remark that the gas seemed to melt her down, and that she did not like the control, who put a piece of string round her neck; the watch was handed in to her, the donor feeling a distinct pull as the watch was taken from him, but seeing nothing very definite in the shape of a hand.

Ruby described the watch accurately, but said she could not tell the time because it had a white face. The control sternly discouraged the suggestion that the child might keep the watch, and later volunteered as a reason that it might stick in her throat, but unfortunately no attempt was made to elucidate this somewhat curious assertion.

The child finally wound up the watch and laid it on the chair which had been placed within the cabinet to carry the vessel containing water for the promised ectoplasm; which, it was suggested, should be a couple of inches square.

Ruby showed parts of her anatomy of an uncertain shape, and then in experimenting with a new kind of light, the shutter slipped, and for an instant the room was illuminated by the naked bulb.

Though behind the curtain, and not directly exposed to it, the medium emitted a fearful groan, following as closely on the flash as though she had been shot, and Albert described the effect on him as resembling a horrible blow from a red hot poker, a description suggesting a materialized shape.

The medium, still groaning, as if in great pain, was evidently unfitted for further effort, and the sitting had to be brought to a conclusion.

The medium was still exactly as placed and sealed in the chair, and could not possibly have placed the watch where it was found. A small piece of ectoplasm was found in the water placed for it, and a larger, about two inches square and an eighth of an inch thick, was on the chair just clear of the vessel, the disaster of the light being probably accountable for its position. It was a creamy-white leathery material something like tripe.

The medium's right jaw was red and inflamed, the centre portion as though superficially burned; the skin being excoriated over a small area.



CLAIRE FRANCES CANTLON & MISS MERCY PHILLIMORE



Early in April 1928, Detective Inspector Walter Burnaby, of Scotland Yard, had ordered three policewomen, Miss Lilian Wyles, Miss Violet Ritchie, and Mrs Dorothy Harrison to visit the London Spiritualist Alliance at their headquarters situated at 16, Queensberry Place, (today it is known as College of Psychic Studies.⁶) In July of that year, medium Mrs Claire Cantlon was charged at Westminster Police Court for “professing to tell fortunes,” and the society’s secretary Miss Mercy Phillimore was charged with “aiding and abetting”.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
1859-1930

Mr. H. D. Roome, K.C., opened the case for the prosecution, and he quoted the words of a learned judge in connection with a similar case: “We are not called upon to express any opinion on the subject of Spiritualism generally.” He submitted also that, in the light of preceding cases, “even if Mrs. Cantlon believed she possessed the powers claimed by her, that would be no defence to the charge”.

The LSA did not regard this as just a charge under the Vagrancy Act against one of their mediums, and secretary. But to make it abundantly clear that at no time was there any fortune-telling element in the work of the Alliance, their president Sir Arthur Conan Doyle outlined the work of the LSA stating:

“There was nothing whatever in the activities of the Alliance connected with fortune-telling, and any person requesting to have their fortune told would be immediately discouraged.”

Sir Oliver Lodge, and Dr. Hector Munro, would also take the stand for the defence, and the prosecution would cost the London Spiritualist Alliance almost £880.00 in costs.



⁶ See *Psypioneer* Volume 10, No. 12: December 2014: *The College of Psychic Science – Change of Name*: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP10.12December2014.pdf>

As reported below:

Light July 21st, 1928 pages 340-341:

THE “FORTUNE-TELLING” CASE

Westminster Police Court has seating accommodation for about thirty-two members of the public. I was the thirty-third (and last but one) person to be admitted, and was allowed to stand in a corner, to observe the trial of the case against Mrs. Cantlon, the well-known medium, accused under the Vagrancy Act of “professing to tell fortunes”, and Miss Mercy Phillimore, secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, for “aiding and abetting”.⁷

Some two hundred people, many of whom had waited three hours in the main hall on the chance of gaining admittance to the court, were shut out. Among these I caught sight of the Viscountess Molesworth, Mrs. Philip Champion de Crespigny, Captain Q. C. A. Craufurd, R.N., Captain Seton-Karr, Miss Nellie Tom-Gallon, Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, two ladies from New York, Mrs. Cornell and Mrs. Cannon, who are interested in Psychical Research, and many others. It was a smartly-dressed crowd, and one that might have been seen awaiting admittance to some fashionable *cause célèbre*; certainly there was no suggestion of “vagrancy” about them.

Inside the court, in front of the railed-in dock, sat the two accused persons, Miss Phillimore in neat black-and-white, Mrs. Cantlon in a light summery dress. Both ladies listened attentively to the unfolding of the case, and occasionally exchanged whispered comments. On the bench sat the magistrate, clean-shaven, spectacled, obviously bored. A group of youthful reporters crowded one corner of the court, most of them standing, through lack of seating accommodation. A few uniformed police tip-toed about the court, while a young woman constable peeped half-timidly around an open door. Seated shoulder to shoulder at a desk on the magistrate’s right were three clean-shaven men. These were the learned counsel engaged in the case. Only one of them conveyed the impression of being a barrister; this was Mr. H. D. Roome, K.C., who opened the case for the prosecution on behalf of the police. Tall, handsome, restrained, soft-voiced, he seemed the perfect stage-type of K.C., and might have stepped off the boards of the Haymarket Theatre. His neighbour, Sir Patrick Hastings, K.C., briefed for the defence, is an entirely different type; with his alert glance, and watchful movements, he might have passed for a successful stock-broker waiting for a favourable chance to “bull” the market. His junior, Mr. Eustace Fulton, who took copious notes, is still less like the popular notion of a barrister; he seemed to belong to the naval petty-officer type, and one almost expected him to hoist the anchor or splice the main-brace, or indulge in some similar nautical manoeuvre.

⁷ A quick look on the Psypioneer search engine at www.woodlandway.org under vagrancy/witchcraft acts will bring up various cases. Henry Slade was the first Spiritualist medium to be convicted under the Vagrancy Act at Bow Street Police Court, London in October 1876, but escaped three months hard labour on a technicality. Later in the same year at Huddersfield, Francis Monck was found guilty under the Vagrancy Act and later sentenced to three months hard labour. See also Psypioneer Volume 7, No 6: June 2011. Ernest Oaten’s 1919 Presidential Conference address to the Spiritualists’ National outlines the Union’s hard struggles during the war years, with the added hindrance of the police prosecutions under the 1824 Vagrancy Act: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.6June2011.pdf>

Quietly, almost sedately, Mr. Roome outlined his case. The defendant Mrs. Cantlon, he submitted, had acted contrary to the provisions of the Vagrancy Act, and he proposed to call three witnesses, Miss Lilian Wyles, Miss Violet Ritchie, and Mrs. Dorothy Harrison, who would testify, that the defendant had “professed to tell fortunes”, on three separate dates, at 16, Queensberry Place, South Kensington, London, the headquarters of the London Spiritualist Alliance. He quoted the words of a learned judge in connection with a similar case: “We are not called upon to express any opinion on the subject of Spiritualism generally.” He submitted also that, in the light of preceding cases, “even if Mrs. Cantlon believed she possessed the powers claimed by her, that would be no defence to the charge”.

His first witness, Miss Wyles, an inspector of women police, would testify that she had sat with this medium, who had “made a series of astonishingly bad shots” in the descriptions she gave to her visitor. After certain convulsive movements, she had spoken in a guttural voice and described a small boy Alec or Eric; an old man named William; an aunt named Ellen or Eleanor; none of these was known to Miss Wyles; she had also spoken of a husband who was temperamental, and had gone to America, and stated that Miss Wyles, who was unmarried, had a mother who suffered from her heart or head, though Miss Wyles would testify that her mother was in robust health.

Miss Ritchie, a woman patrol attached to Bow Street, would testify that Mrs. Cantlon had asked if she knew the name of Bobbie. This was Miss Ritchie’s nickname. The medium had also spoken of a Jewish husband, and stated that Miss Ritchie, who was also unmarried, would have a girl child who would be a great comfort to her.

The third witness, Mrs. Harrison, would say that Mrs. Cantlon had described her children inaccurately, and had stated that she would receive a letter about a fortnight hence.

Each witness would testify that during the seance, Mrs. Cantlon had asked the time, though why the disembodied spirits should show any anxiety about the clock he, Mr. Roome, failed to understand.

Miss Lilian Wyles, a smartly-dressed woman, then took the oath, and gave evidence as follows: She was an inspector of women police at Scotland Yard. On April 11th she visited No. 16, Queensberry Place; there was a brass plate on the door bearing the words, “Office of ‘Light’ ”; “London Spiritualist Alliance”, and “National Laboratory of Psychical Research”.⁸ The door was shut, but opened to the touch. In a ground floor room she found Miss Phillimore, who, upon request, gave her particulars of membership. She told Miss Phillimore she knew nothing about Spiritualism.

On April 13th, she returned and asked for a sitting that day. Miss Phillimore replied that it was too late, although there was a chance of obtaining a seance with Mrs. Cantlon, who was then telephoned. Miss Wyles then bought three books, *Is Spiritualism Dangerous? What does Spiritualism Teach?* and *Objections to Spiritualism Answered*.

On April 17th Miss Wyles telephoned to Miss Phillimore asking for an appointment with Mrs. Cantlon for the following day; after some delay, this was arranged.

⁸ See *Psypioneer* Volume 10, No. 02: February 2014: *Harry Price Explained – Comments and Reflections – Miss Mercy Phillimore*: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP10.2February2014.pdf>

Next day she visited the London Spiritualist Alliance and paid 17s. 6d. for the séance. On entering the séance room, the medium drew the blinds, afterwards saying: "I don't want you to tell me anything. My control is a North American Indian called White Chief. When he comes, speak to him, for I shan't be here. Before I go off I give clairvoyance."

The medium had said, "You have a feeling of resentment against a man, or men"; she then gave the name of Edith or Ethel, and asked if Miss Wyles knew it; witness knew nobody of that name.

Next came three sets of three sharp knocks—nine knocks in all—on the landing wall.

After that Mrs. Cantlon lay back in her chair, with her hand over her eyes, and made convulsive movements. She then spoke in a different tone of voice, guttural, with clipped sentences.

A little boy was described, Alec or Eric, who had suffered from the head, possibly from meningitis; he was said to "have his white rabbit with him". Miss Wyles knew of no such person.

There was next described "an old man of noble appearance, about seventy years of age, giving the name of William. Also an aunt Ellen or Eleanor. She had no aunt, alive or dead, answering to the name or description given, and did not recognise the old man.

There was then described a man in khaki, and the words "Mons" and "Armentières" given. She knew several men who served in the war, one at Mons.

Next was a small, fair, thin girl, named Mary, who had a cough, or consumption. She was described as a sister of Miss Wyles, who, however, had no sister. Asked if her mother was in the spirit, Miss Wyles replied no. The mother was described as suffering from head, or heart, and possibly the legs. Her mother, on the contrary, was really a perfectly strong woman.

Asked whether she wrote, Miss Wyles had answered, "Yes", although she wrote police reports only. Her writings, she was told, would be sent to America, and she was advised to attend psychic developing classes, as she was difficult to communicate with.

Her husband was described as a tall, dark man, with blue or hazel eyes and hair turning grey. "I said, 'that fits very nicely'," said Miss Wyles. This husband was spoken of as being Irish and temperamental, and it was stated that he was in America.

The medium's voice changed to a severe tone, and said: "Lady, it is your own fault that your husband left you. Your work distracted your attention from him, but he is faithful to you."

A nun was then described, who would help Miss Wyles with her writings, and also a black spaniel dog. At this point the medium asked the time, and on being told, replied, "I can give you ten minutes more". During the final ten minutes Miss Wyles stated she was told that help would be given her in her writings from the spirit world; she was told she would be able to make money by her writings; that she and her husband would be reconciled to each other, but she was to hold out her hands to him. It was also stated that her sister Mary wished to say that her mother would soon be joining her.

At the close of the seance Mrs. Cantlon resumed her normal voice and manner. The case was adjourned.

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Continued – *Light* July 28, 1928 page 352-53:

The part-heard case against Mrs. Cantlon for “professing to tell fortunes” and against Miss Mercy Phillimore for “aiding and abetting” was resumed at Westminster Police Court on Wednesday afternoon, July 18th. Sitting beside Mr. Oulton, the magistrate, was Capt. E. N. Bennett, J.P.

The voices of some of the persons concerned were pitched in low and indistinct tones, possibly owing to the intense heat, which discouraged all unnecessary effort; anyhow, there was some difficulty in hearing everything that passed.

Sir Patrick Hastings, K.C., in a preliminary statement, said that on the previous hearing, consent had been obtained for the charges against Mrs. Cantlon and Miss Phillimore to be heard together; but circumstances had arisen which made it desirable that the two cases should be heard separately. Mr. Oulton, the magistrate, agreed to this course.

It was understood that the line of defence in the case of Mrs. Cantlon would be different from that in the case of Miss Phillimore. This would make no change as regards the evidence.

Mr. P. W. Bullock represented Mrs. Cantlon.

Miss Wyles, recalled, stated under cross-examination by Mr. Bullock, that she was not a Spiritualist though she did not disbelieve in Spiritualism. She denied that her object in visiting the London Spiritualist Alliance was to try to secure evidence on which to obtain a conviction. She would not say that the convulsive movements of the medium were due to acting; it was very naturally done. She thought the condition of Mrs. Cantlon after the convulsive jerks was one that could be simulated by an impostor.

Miss Wyles stated she was a member of the Church of England as also did the other police witnesses, Miss Violet Ritchie and Mrs. Dorothy Harrison.

Mr. H. D. Roome, K.C., for the prosecution, read extracts from the syllabus of the London Spiritualist Alliance relating to the arrangements for private seances held at the Alliance headquarters.

It was admitted by a woman police witness that Mrs. Cantlon had given two names correctly. The first name, “Bobby”, was her nickname, another, “Leonard”, was that of her brother.

Detective Inspector Walter Burnaby, of Scotland Yard, stated that he had ordered the three women to visit the L.S.A. He received instructions from the Commissioner of Police.

Sir Patrick Hastings: “Have you instructed anybody to go and attend sittings at this same address with anyone except Mrs. Cantlon?”

Inspector Burnaby: “No.”

Sir Patrick: “As far as you know has any other police officer gone to this address for sittings with anybody except Mrs. Cantlon?”

Witness replied, “No,” but, correcting himself, said, “I beg your pardon, there was another—”

Sir Patrick (interrupting): “Just wait. I asked you to answer, ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. As far as you know, have any other police investigators gone to a sitting at this address with anyone except Mrs. Cantlon?”

Inspector Burnaby: “Yes.”

Miss Phillimore, on whom he had served the summons, had replied:

We are a limited company founded to investigate psychic phenomena. Our mediums are all genuine.

Mrs. Cantlon’s reply had been:

I do not tell fortunes. I wish I could, for I should be a rich woman.

By Mr. Bullock: “Are you aware that the London Spiritualist Alliance has been in existence for over 40 years and that no proceedings of this nature have ever been taken against them before?”—“I have no knowledge.”

“Are you aware that the London Spiritualistic Alliance numbers among its members people of the highest repute and integrity, such as Sir Oliver Lodge,⁹ Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, etc.?”—“I believe that is so.”

Miss Violet Ritchie, a woman police patrol, who appeared in full uniform, stated that she visited the Alliance in plain clothes and asked for a sitting with Mrs. Cantlon. She told Miss Phillimore it was her first experience at a seance. Miss Phillimore had replied, “Don’t expect too much at the first sitting; do not be too critical”. Describing her experience with Mrs. Cantlon, witness stated that the medium said, “I get the name Bobby”. This was her nickname. The medium then said, “I see a lot of water” and described a husband and wife writing from a long distance across the water; they might return this autumn. The name “Charles” was given and reference was made to the placing of a chain of rhinestones. The names of “George” and “Mary” were given and a description of a lady of medium height aged between 50 and 60. Witness knew nobody named George or Mary. She was told that her sister had a delicate chest, although this was not true in fact. The name “Leonard” was given. This was the name of witness’s brother. The medium said that Leonard’s future was bright, that he was persevering and would rise to a good position and might become a partner. Mrs. Cantlon said, “Is Leonard connected with the law? I see him handling a lot of papers?” Witness replied that her brother handled a lot of papers, but had nothing to do with the law. Names and descriptions were given which she did not recognize. The medium said, “Your

⁹ Lodge later appeared as a witness and denied he was an L.S.A. member. See below. LP.

husband in spirit is a soldier about 25 or 27". Witness stated she was told she would have a child within a year; it would be a girl, with dark hair and eyes, "like its father". She was told she had been thinking about a divorce on account of her husband's bad temper.

Witness stated that she was unmarried but that when asked by the medium, "How long have you been married?" had replied, "About a year".

Cross-examined by Mr. Bullock Miss Ritchie said she was instructed not to go in her uniform. She had no experience of Spiritualism. She denied that she had encouraged the medium in the assumption that she was married.

Mrs. Dorothy Harrison stated Mrs. Cantlon had described a beautiful lady and that she, the witness, had two children aged 8 and 12. She had in fact two children, a girl aged 14 and a boy aged 18. The medium said the boy had a delicate chest. Both her children in fact were quite strong. The medium said, "You will receive a letter in about a fortnight's time"; this letter would ask for forgiveness which the witness was to accord. Cross-examined by Mr. Bullock, she considered Mrs. Cantlon an impostor. She stated that the medium went into a trance immediately and there was no preliminary clairvoyance.

Mr. Bullock, on behalf of Mrs. Cantlon, said, "She is a lady of gentle birth and good breeding, whom I have had the honour of knowing for many years. I have also known her husband many years. From my knowledge of her I regard any suggestion of fraud or imposture on her part as completely out of the question. She has never at any time consciously told fortunes. She is an earnest believer in Spiritualism and practises as a trained medium. Everything she has done has been done *bona fide* in the exercise of her functions as a trained medium."

Mrs. Cantlon's case, said Mr. Bullock, was that she was entirely unconscious during the trance state and had no knowledge whatever of anything that went on in the room.

As regards the police interviewers, in each case Mrs. Cantlon and her sitter were alone in the room; she was completely ignorant of what took place during the trance sittings with the three police witnesses.

"Mrs. Cantlon is not wholly astonished at the record of the sittings," said Mr. Bullock, "nor at the futility of the statements alleged to have been made. She makes no allegations against the witnesses, however, but she says that such evidence as these police witnesses have given is entirely at variance with the experiences of others who have sat with her."

Mr. Bullock quoted the following passage from Sir Oliver Lodge's book *Why I Believe in Personal Immortality*, which would, he said, throw some light on the conditions of trance mediumship:

There are certain people whose value for the purpose of enlarging our experience is much greater than has yet been recognized, who self-sacrificingly allow the bodily part of themselves to be employed in conveying messages which are received telepathically, or they know not how, from intelligences other than their own. Their own personality goes into abeyance or into trance for a time, while their body and brain continue active, and thus messages are transmitted about facts previously unknown to them and which subsequently may leave no accessible deposit in their memory.

Mr. Bullock said his client strongly resented the allegation that she was a fraud and an impostor. If that allegation were withdrawn by the prosecution he would advise his client to plead guilty to the technical offence. Mr. Roome objected.

The Magistrate: "On the evidence before me I should hesitate to come to the conclusion that there was an intention to deceive which had been proved. I do not think the evidence is sufficiently strong. That is my impression with regard to the evidence for the prosecution on that point."

Mr. Roome submitted that although, no attack was made by the prosecution on the various distinguished ladies and gentlemen interested in Spiritualism, he could not see his way to withdraw the allegation.

Mrs. Cantlon then gave evidence. She had devoted the whole of her time for the last four and a half years to the development of her mediumistic powers; she was unaware of what she told her sitters and during the trance was absolutely unconscious. Her object was to prove the reality of life beyond the grave through her mediumship. She did not rely on fees. If she were an impostor how would it be possible that she could have been employed for two years by the London Spiritualist Alliance?

Mr. Roome: "Do you think it honest to charge 17s. 6d. to Miss Wyles for the information you gave her?"—"I did not charge it. Fees are nothing to do with me." She, herself, received 12s. 6d. for the sitting.

Mr. Roome: "Do you think that honest for the information you gave?"—"I do not know what information I gave; I was unconscious."

Cross-examined as to her control, Mrs. Cantlon said she believed "White Chief" to have been a member of the Sioux tribe who lived about 400 years ago at a time when white settlers first landed in America.

Mr. Roome: "Do you say that the spirit of this Indian who lived 400 years ago is prepared to attend at 16, Queensberry Place at any hour of the day or week by appointment?"—"Yes, I do. I know that he uses me as an instrument and that he will come."

Mr. Roome: "Is it not stupid that he should not have seen that Miss Wyles was a police woman?"—"No, he was not on the lookout for traps. Understanding psychic mediumship and its science, I am not surprised."

Mr. Roome: "Why should 'White Chief' say that Miss Wyles has a husband?"—"I am not in a position to say; I was unconscious."

Mr. Roome: "Do married women often come to you over matrimonial troubles?"—"No, they come for investigation into the spiritual world and to find their friends."

Continuing, Mrs. Cantlon said, "These women came to trap me and they got what they came with—they got utter futility. I am not surprised considering the spirit in which they approached me."

Asked by Mr. Roome why each of the three witnesses had been asked the time, Mrs. Cantlon replied that this was the first occasion she had ever heard of such a thing in connection with her mediumship.

Mr. Bullock pointed out that there was an explanation of this seeming futility of the medium's utterances in that a super-sensitive condition during trance would subject her to the mental influences of her sitters. She would be subject to subtle influences. She denied vigorously that she was an impostor. He had before him a number of letters from satisfied sitters testifying to the reality of Mrs. Cantlon's mediumship and was prepared to call witnesses who would give similar evidence.

The magistrate said this was hardly necessary as he was quite prepared to accept all that in Mrs. Cantlon's favour.

Mr. Bullock said that on the technical offence he was prepared to plead guilty, at the present stage of the case.

Sir Patrick Hastings said that his case might take some time as he might have to call certain important witnesses to lay before the Court the position of the London Spiritualist Alliance. The magistrate was understood to say that this might not be necessary as the Court was prepared to deal leniently with the matter.

Sir Patrick, while thanking the magistrate, respectfully pointed out that certain issues were involved which he felt made it absolutely necessary to continue his case. He hoped to convince the Court that during the whole of its life the London Spiritualist Alliance had been absolutely free from any fortune-telling element.

The case was adjourned.

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Continued – *Light* August 4th, 1928 page 362-364:

THE POLICE COURT PROSECUTION.

SUMMONSES DISMISSED, BUT DEFENDANTS TO PAY COSTS.

The prosecution under the Vagrancy Act of Mrs. Cantlon, the medium, for "fortune-telling", and Miss Mercy Phillimore, the secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, for "aiding and abetting", was ended on Tuesday morning, July 24th, at Westminster Police Court, when Mr. Oulton, the magistrate, ordered the summonses to be dismissed under the Probation of Offenders Act, Miss Phillimore to pay £20 and Mrs. Cantlon £10 costs.

The Court was filled, and a considerable number of people unable to obtain admittance waited in the lobby, many well-known persons being present both inside and outside the Court.

Sir Patrick Hastings, K.C., and Mr. Eustace Fulton presented the case for the Alliance as an institution which had nothing to do with fortune-telling but was occupied with the investigation of evidence for human survival.

Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dr. Hector Munro gave evidence in support of the facts of psychic science.

Mr. H. D. Roome, K.C., appeared for the prosecution, and Mrs. Cantlon was defended by Mr. P. W. Bullock.

Sir Patrick Hastings made a long, opening statement at the beginning of this hearing, dealing with the aims of the London Spiritualist Alliance. He desired to make it abundantly clear that at no time was there any fortune-telling element in the work of the Alliance.

Sir Patrick said: "On the last occasion the case for Mrs. Cantlon was concluded, and all I am concerned with here is the case of Miss Phillimore. I am particularly anxious to make that clear, having regard to one or two observations which I shall have to make, because this case against Miss Phillimore is regarded by a considerable body of people as one of great importance, and for this reason: the only offence charged against her is that of abetting the person who professed to tell fortunes. I think I can say without much doubt that I shall be able to call before you persons whose evidence I am sure you cannot fail to believe, on their statement of fact, when they say that the telling of fortunes is no part whatsoever of the self-appointed task of the London Spiritualist Alliance, and that if any person in fact tells fortunes—which I understand to mean professing to foretell the future—that person in fact is acting entirely contrary to the express wishes and intention of the Alliance. I am bound to say this, sir, and I say it of course in a way which cannot possibly affect Mrs. Cantlon, that after hearing the evidence in this Court and after certain further investigations the nature of which I do not intend to particularise, Mrs. Cantlon's association with the London Spiritualist Alliance has been definitely and finally determined."

Sir Patrick then briefly described the work of the Alliance. It was, he said, a branch of a very large body of people all over the world who were earnestly studying to arrive at real conclusions on a matter in regard to which most of them were already convinced. Their view was that "Life as we understand it does not end with death as we understand it"; they believed that there was a means, at present inexplicable, by which it was possible to receive communications from people who were dead. It was not part of his duties to say how far that view was right, but, he added, it would be a very brave man who said that there was no foundation for beliefs of that kind. Among the Council of the Alliance were scientists, members of the medical profession of the highest distinction, and also a member of his own legal profession, and in view of this he submitted that it was a little unfair (on the part of the prosecution) to Miss Phillimore to compare the mediums employed by the Alliance with fortune-telling gypsies at Epsom.

Mr. Roome, Counsel for the prosecution, explained that he made no aspersion on the Alliance in using that expression; he only referred to Mrs. Cantlon's activities.

The Magistrate: "You retake no imputation against Miss Phillimore with regard to intention to deceive?"

Mr. Roome: "No."

Sir Patrick Hastings: "The intention to deceive is not an inherent element in the charge, if I satisfy, as I hope to do, that fortune-telling *per se* and foretelling the future is no part of the activities of this Alliance. If—merely because some person in whom they have hitherto

placed implicit trust may be held guilty of or plead guilty to telling fortunes—it is to be held that this Alliance is guilty of aiding and abetting, no member of the Alliance would ever again be safe because, as I understand, the discussion with regard to the fee of 17s. 6d. has nothing whatever to do with the offence. The offence is committed just as well by a person who professes to tell fortunes for nothing; therefore the conviction against Miss Phillimore would sound the death-knell of this and every other association of people whose endeavour is to arrive at the truth or falsity of these ideas and doctrines of which I have spoken.”

Sir Patrick referred to the Balance Sheets of the London Spiritualist Alliance, pointing out that not one penny-piece is made by anybody in the way of profit. It was merely an association supported by subscription, and the revenue was entirely devoted to lectures and study. Its memorandum of association forbade profit-making. Money, of course, had to be paid to their mediums, but no other moneys were expended by the Alliance except for the purpose of printing and circulating documents with which they were intimately concerned. The whole idea of the Alliance, said Sir Patrick—and it was only a branch of many other similar organisations throughout the country—was that they were satisfied that there were people possessing a power of conveying messages which those that study the science were satisfied were messages from people who are dead. Whether this was well or ill-founded was of course quite immaterial, but he could satisfy the magistrate as a fact that trance, as a medical existence, was real. It might be said that on certain occasions messages might come bearing upon a future matter, but it was no part of the medium’s work to tell anything of the future. If any person went to this Alliance asking to have the future told them, such persons would be immediately asked to go away.

It would be recalled that each one of the police witnesses had received or had offered to them a syllabus of the Alliance. In that syllabus there was not one single suggestion even remotely touching on the question of fortune-telling. As regards Mrs. Cantlon, he understood she had spent large sums of money in studying this science. “We subjected her to very careful tests and we were satisfied and are satisfied that she is one of those persons who do go into this complete state of insensibility, but—there is always a ‘but’ in these cases; possibly it may be apparent to you—there are occasions when the state of insensibility does not arise.

“Miss Phillimore will tell you it frequently happens that mediums employed by the Alliance say it is impossible for them, at a particular moment to arrive at that state,” said Sir Patrick; “therefore the sitting does not take place. But it would be equally possible—I say no more than that—that there may be some people who have this power but at the same time if they are not in that state, are able to persuade themselves (to put it in a purely non-committal way) that it would be better to assume or pretend that they are. If we discover that, we at once sever all connection with the person of that kind and this is what has happened in this case.”

Sir Patrick reiterated that the intentions and endeavours of the Alliance were wholly dissociated from anything in the nature of fortune-telling of any kind whatsoever. Evidence had already been given that there had been occasions when the police (or people at their instigation) had attended this Alliance but of which nothing had been heard. “It is perfectly obvious that if the police are making inquiries with a view to prosecution they would be careful to attend at a time when there was something in the nature of fortune-telling; and the cases where nothing of that sort has happened would not be brought before you at all.”

Mr. Roome protested at this statement, saying it must not be assumed that every other sitter had come away satisfied.

Sir Patrick: "I object to that statement by my friend. If my friend is suggesting that he has other evidence of a similar nature I invite him to call it. I shall be delighted to cross-examine them, or if my learned friend goes into the box himself I shall also be delighted to cross-examine him."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was then sworn. He stated that he was President of the London Spiritualist Alliance, a body which was formed without any idea of making profits, but purely for furthering investigations and the study of the science in which the association believed. The Alliance was largely concerned with studying the causes, effects and possibilities of receiving messages from the dead, among other things. It was necessary and desirable to have the services of people known as mediums. For the purpose of receiving messages the medium might go into a condition of unconsciousness, or not. In the case of a very good medium there were all kinds of intermediate stages; they might sometimes go into a state of complete insensibility; sometimes not.

Sir Arthur said he had been President of the London Spiritualist Alliance for about three years, having taken over from Lord Molesworth.

Examined by Sir Patrick Hastings:

Q.: "Before they are accepted as mediums in your Alliance is any care taken to see whether or not they are genuine mediums?"

A.: "As far as possible their career is watched and their powers are tested, but that does not come within my own personal purview." He did not personally test them.

There was nothing whatever in the activities of the Alliance connected with fortune-telling, and any person requesting to have their fortune told would be immediately discouraged.

Asked what was the purpose of sitting with a medium, Sir Arthur said: "There may be several purposes. One purpose, which many of us hold, is to refute the idea that death ends all. We wish to strengthen what we regard as the central core of religion, which is that man carries on after death. This is to me the higher purpose. The lower purpose is to get in touch with those we have loved and who have passed over to the other side." These were not the only two purposes; one might well sit for physical phenomena, this being the ground work which interests people. By physical phenomena he meant things apparently against the law of Nature but which are really according to some law of Nature not yet understood. So far as he knew, Miss Phillimore had always carried out her duties entirely in accordance with the wishes of the association.

Cross-examined by Mr. Roome:

Q.: "Are we to understand that Mrs. Cantlon has been dismissed from the service of the Alliance?"

A.: "I understand it is under consideration. I really do not know what has actually been done. I have been away a good deal, in Edinburgh, and I have missed some of the things that have passed."

Q.: “Has Mrs. Annie Brittain [whose name appeared in the L.S.A. syllabus] been convicted of telling fortunes?”

A.: “I believe she was convicted of practising mediumship. I do not know whether it was for telling fortunes or not.” He did not know that Mrs. Brittain was convicted of telling fortunes in 1910. “I knew she was convicted of mediumship,” said Sir Arthur, “because it was, I understand, against the law of the country; but I did not know it took the form of telling fortunes.”

Q.: “What did you think the offence was that she had been convicted of?”

A.: “Simply the practice of mediumship for money. I understand that in itself is a legal offence.” He had recommended Mrs. Brittain as a medium in the year 1919 and still continued to recommend her. He judged her by the results and knew the enormous amount of comfort she had given to many suffering people. He had sat again and again with Mrs. Brittain and she had never told him his fortune. Sir Arthur said it was understood that the future was not a proper subject for mediumship, but he did not see how one could absolutely prevent the future being touched upon unless there was a witness in the seance room to stop the medium during trance. As to Mrs. Cantlon’s fitness to be a medium, although he had never had a sitting with her he understood that Captain Craufurd, R.N., had obtained remarkable messages as to Morse transmission through Mrs. Cantlon—a thing absolutely outside her normal knowledge. He had no objection to a journalist attending a sitting with a medium with a view to reporting what happened, providing he came in a reasonable frame of mind.

Q.: “Suppose a police spy comes. Can you give us any reason why a spirit should not break up the sitting at once?”

A.: “No. The laws governing these things are very much beyond our comprehension. The police spy would bring in such a discordant element that it seems to me anything might happen.”

There was a sensation in Court when Sir Patrick Hastings announced that Sir Oliver Lodge had arrived and would give evidence. It had been understood that Sir Oliver would not be able to attend owing to the illness of Lady Lodge, so his presence came somewhat as a surprise.

Sir Patrick Hastings: “We are very much obliged to you, Sir Oliver, for coming to help us. You are not a member of this Alliance?”

Sir Oliver: “No.” He was, however, a member of the Society for Psychical Research since 1882.¹⁰

¹⁰ This reflects the consistent policy of Lodge. Though sympathetic to mediumship, he kept himself apart from involvement in the Spiritualist Movement. See for example *Psypioneer* July 2014 “Conan Doyle was not First Choice as LSA President – Leslie Price”. Lodge turned it down.

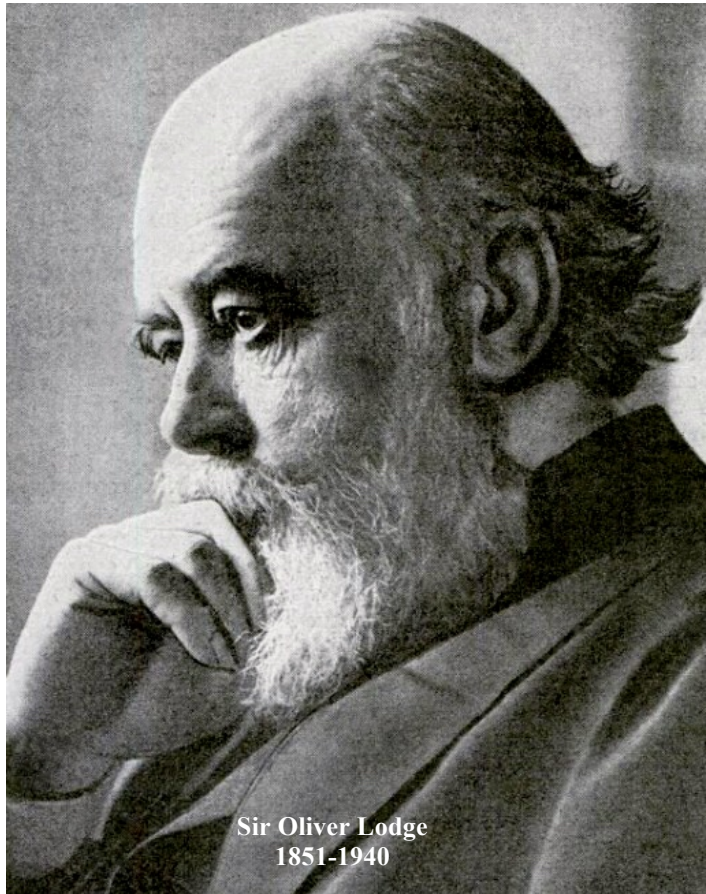
Sir Patrick: “The Society of which you are a member and in which you have studied and which you have helped for so long, is a society which is inquiring into the phenomena generally known as Spiritualism?”

Sir Oliver: “They are popularly known by that term.” He added that he had always approached the matter purely from the scientific point of view with a view to arriving as far as possible at the explanation of such experiences as had come his way.

Sir Patrick: “I only want to ask you two general questions dealing with this science. It necessitates the use of mediums, does it not?”

Sir Oliver: “In my case it does, because I have no power myself.”

Sir Patrick: “From your scientific experience are you satisfied that there are mediums who are perfectly genuine in the work they do?”



Sir Oliver Lodge
1851-1940

Sir Oliver: “There certainly are. There are others also.”

Sir Patrick: “Is it any part whatsoever of the task of a medium to tell fortunes?”

Sir Oliver: “The popular idea of telling fortunes is looked upon by us as rather an absurd procedure. We do not come across it.” He added that the ascertainment or the perception of something in the future might come into it, but he would not call that telling fortunes.

Sir Patrick: “What you mean to say is that there may be something of the future which may emerge?”

Sir Oliver: “Yes. In science we often try to predict the future—never infallibly; in certain cases it is possible to predict it.”

Sir Patrick: “As far as the duties of a medium are concerned are they anything else except to transmit the messages which she receives?”

Sir Oliver: “That is the idea of the medium—to act as an intermediary, and it is a kind of human faculty which we do not fully understand but which we are trying to investigate; the ordinary recognised human faculties do not exhaust all those that are possible; the Society for Psychical Research was founded to investigate what we call the supernormal human faculties, whatever they might be.”

Sir Patrick: “And the mediums are used for the purposes of that study?”

Sir Oliver: “The mediums, if you call them mediums, are instruments for the purpose of the study.”

Mr. Roome cross-examining:

Would you have any objection to a medium who delivered a message predicting some future event?”

Sir Oliver: “No. My practice when I go to a reputable medium—and I hope to go to no other—is to take what comes and judge on its merits what value it has.”

Mr. Roome: “Have you ever had a sitting with Mrs. Cantlon?”

Sir Oliver: “Never.”

Dr. Hector Munro was next sworn. He stated he was a Master of Medicine and a Master of Surgery of Aberdeen University. He had been a member of the London Spiritualist Alliance for about three years and a member of its Council for about one year. The Alliance was not run in any way for profit. Mediums employed by the Alliance were put through such tests as were possible before being employed. He had been interested in Spiritualism for about 22 years and had himself tested a number of mediums.

Mr. Eustace Fulton: “In the course of your long experience have you ever heard fortunes told when you have been attending a sitting?”

Dr. Munro: “It depends entirely on what you mean by fortune-telling. I have heard great events, as it were, foreshadowed—such as the war.”

Mr. Fulton: “You have never had your fortune told in the ordinary sense of the term?”

Dr. Munro: “I have had events predicted or suggested.”

The Magistrate: “It is difficult to know what fortune-telling really means. You have heard the future foretold?”

Dr. Munro: “Yes, I have—one future event certainly.”

Mr. Roome (cross-examining): “Was it true?”

Dr. Munro: “Absolutely true. The last war was foretold to me by a medium about a month before it happened, and a certain event which had a bearing upon myself was also foretold”

Mr. Roome: “Were you told a month before the Great War that England and Germany would be at war within a month?”

Dr. Munro: “Not England and Germany, but that there would be a war in which England would be involved. The date was not given. There would be a scar immediately—immedi-

ately' was the word used." He had not acted on that information or communicated it to anybody; he had not believed it at the time.

Questioned as to the conditions of trance, the witness stated that a well-trained medium could go into trance quite voluntarily. He would not say that they could do this at any time required, but at the various times he had arranged to see mediums for this purpose they had always been successful in obtaining the trance condition.

Asked if he had ever applied medical tests to satisfy himself of the complete insensibility of the medium, Dr. Munro said: "I have not gone into it to the extent of taking blood pressures, but I certainly once tried the conjunctival reflex—the eye reflex. But that again would not be a test of complete insensibility because you get the same thing in hypnosis. I think they are very much the same."

Mr. Roome: "Did you take the pulse?"

Dr. Munro: "No, I have not taken the pulse. I do not think there would be much indicated by the pulse."

Miss Mercy Phillimore was then sworn. She testified that she was secretary of the London Spiritualist alliance and had been so for four years, but had been associated with the Alliance since 1913. When the question of employing new mediums arose she usually sat with them first and reported to the Council her impressions. She had reported on Mrs. Cantlon to the Council. The sitting had been satisfactory.

Sir Patrick Hastings: "You sat with her yourself and were satisfied?"

Miss Phillimore: "I was satisfied that she was a genuine psychic." Members of the Council had also personally investigated Mrs. Cantlon, who was then appointed. The association made no profit out of its activities; the sum of 2s. 6d. was deducted from the fee received for the medium, this sum being for overhead charges. If non-members asked for sittings it was her practice to ask their motive in seeking a sitting; to try to discover if the enquirers were sincere and whether they had any knowledge of psychic science. If she found them to be apparently sincere and genuinely interested a sitting with a medium would be arranged. "I always urge them to make themselves familiar first with the principles of the science, although many press for an immediate sitting. Many non-members who call are not given the sitting they ask for; I find they want ordinary fortune-telling, and I always refuse to act for them. . . . I tell them that our mediums do not do that kind of work; therefore I cannot help them in that way. I explain what the purpose of our work is,"

She had never at any time arranged a sitting for any person who came to have the future foretold.

Sir Patrick: "When you introduced these three people [the woman police witnesses] to Mrs. Cantlon had you the slightest idea that the future was going to be told to them?"

Miss Phillimore: "None whatever." Mrs. Cantlon had had about 59 sittings during the current year out of a possible 106.

Sir Patrick: "Does it sometimes happen within your experience that a medium is not able to get into the state of trance which we have heard spoken of?"

Miss Phillimore: "Yes." On these occasions the medium had reported the fact to her. She remembered one such instance fairly recently, and in that case the money was returned to the sitter.

Sir Patrick: "The medium told you she was unable to arrive at a state of trance?"

Miss Phillimore: "Yes. She came down to me with her sitter and said, 'I am sorry I cannot sit to-day; I cannot get into a state of trance'." Mrs. Cantlon had never reported she was unable to get into a state of trance.

Mr. Roome, cross-examining: "Do you consider that Miss Wyles was not honest in her purpose?"

Miss Phillimore: "I remember my original talk with Miss Wyles when she came to the Alliance, and she impressed me as being an honest woman."

Mr. Roome: "What control have you over Mrs. Cantlon once she and the sitter are alone together?"

Miss Phillimore: "No control, once she is alone with the sitter; but of course I have reports of her work from time to time from people who sit with her."

Mr. Roome: "Has any sitter ever told you that Mrs. Cantlon has predicted future events?"

Miss Phillimore: "Never." She added that if any complaint of fortune-telling were reported to her she would report it to the Council, and they would look into the matter. As regarded foretelling the future, there might be reference to the future in a certain way, but the witness thought no honest medium or any honest control would practise "vulgar fortune-telling as it is generally understood". The evidence of the three police witnesses represented vulgar fortune-telling.

Mr. Roome: "Has Mrs. Cantlon been dismissed from the service of the Alliance?"

Miss Phillimore: "Yes."

Mr. Roome: "Is it because she told fortunes?"

Miss Phillimore: "No; as a consequence of incidents that have arisen since this case commenced."

Sir Patrick Hastings at this stage said he had an immense amount of further evidence of the same sort. The magistrate intimated that this would not be necessary.

The Magistrate: "I do not suppose that my views on Spiritualism are of much moment to anybody except myself, but I have lived long enough to know that there are very few things in this world that you can be absolutely certain of, and there are probably fewer to-day than ever before. I have a perfectly open mind on the subject. There is no dispute by either

defendants as to the substantial accuracy of the police evidence. Three witnesses have testified to the telling of the future by Mrs. Cantlon by occult means. Mrs. Cantlon has pleaded guilty; Miss Phillimore has pleaded not guilty. I may say at once that I am of opinion that both defendants are guilty. On her own admission Mrs. Cantlon has surrendered herself to an occult power; if this is so she is responsible and must face the consequences should the law be broken. The law makes no provision for the appearance of a spirit either in the dock or in the witness box. What is the position of Miss Phillimore? . . . The public is invited to attend and pay for the services of these mediums, one of which undoubtedly tells the future on three different occasions. How can it be contended that Miss Phillimore does not aid and abet in the offence? Can she restrain the occult power in which she believes, or limit its manifestations to the present or past? Fortune-telling when it possesses the elements of menace and extortion may be a grave offence. Here there is no suggestion of this kind. It is, however, suggested against Mrs. Cantlon but not against Miss Phillimore that there was fraud—in other words, that Mrs. Cantlon intended to deceive the three police witnesses by pretending to be under the control of White Chief. . . . I give Mrs. Cantlon the benefit of the doubt in my mind and assume that on these three occasions she did believe she was under the control of this defunct Indian Chief, but I should strongly advise Mrs. Cantlon to get rid of a disembodied spirit who wants to know the time when the hour of lunch or tea approaches. The history of Spiritualism is tarnished by fraud and chicanery. On the other hand, there have been, and are, great men and women whose honour is unquestioned, striving to show that from the undiscovered country the traveller does return. I am willing to believe that the existence of this Alliance is due to an honest attempt to further knowledge and to benefit mankind, but the earnest searcher after truth must be amenable to the law and must not break it. If he deems the law out of date and thinks it frustrates his efforts, his remedy is to alter and modernise the law. For the reasons I have given, and because I think that fortune-telling is an unusual incident and not an object of this Alliance, I will deal with this case as leniently as I can. The summonses in both cases will be dismissed under the Probation of Offenders Act, and the costs (£30) will be apportioned—£20 for Miss Phillimore, £10 for Mrs. Cantlon.”

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Continued on pages 366 & 372:

THE POLICE COURT CASE.

The magistrate's decision in this case, after a long hearing, was to dismiss the summonses against the two defendants, Mrs. Cantlon, the medium, for fortune-telling, and Miss Mercy Phillimore, the Secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, for aiding and abetting in the offence. But the decision was tantamount to finding them guilty, for they were discharged under the Probation of Offenders Act and condemned to pay £30 towards the costs of the case (Mrs. Cantlon £10 and Miss Phillimore £20).

Sir Patrick Hastings urged, in the course of his defence, that the case affected people in every part of the country: “A conviction against Miss Phillimore,” he said, “will sound the death-knell of the Alliance and of every other association whose object is merely to arrive at the truth or falsehood of these ideas and doctrines,” i.e., those held by Spiritualists as such.

The position created by the decision is the more difficult because the defendants were neither convicted nor acquitted, in set terms. But it is clear that in effect the decision really amounted to finding them guilty and dealing with them under the First Offenders' Act, whereby, although discharged, they are condemned to pay the costs of the case. This might

mean very serious results if the offence were repeated. The legal weapon has been brandished even if it has not been used with full effect. As to the kind of stuff which formed the basis of the charge, as put forward by the three policewomen, that is quite indefensible. The statements imputed to the medium seem to have been mainly spurious and absurd. But if the results obtained had been blameless and convincing, then there would apparently have been nothing for the police to prosecute upon, nor the newspapers to report.

The appearance of Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Dr. Hector Munro in the witness-box provided an opportunity for the defence to put forward the facts underlying mediumship; and this was all to the good. The testimony given by these witnesses was impressive and valuable, and formed an important feature of the hearing.

Nevertheless the position disclosed by the case is rather disquieting, and must be the subject of earnest consideration by those who have at heart the interests of Spiritualism and Psychical Research. It is not a matter on which any quick and easy conclusion can be safely arrived at, although the legal position is clear enough. In no circumstances must a medium or a clairvoyant predict the future, for it was publicly stated that the offence remains, even if there is no question of fee or payment for the services rendered by the medium or psychic. Any person aiding and abetting in the offence (except of course the consultant) is liable to penalty.

We observe that the *Morning Post* has some strong remarks on the case. It says: "No wonder the police are overworked when their time and energy are occupied in this petty and vexatious procedure. . . . The point is that perfectly honest, sincere and reputable persons do believe in Spiritualism, and have as much right to liberty of conscience as the professors of any other faith. The London Spiritualist Alliance is a well-accredited organisation, and to prosecute its secretary as aiding and abetting the telling of fortunes is to bring the law into disrepute."

As the *Morning Post* points out, such prosecutions are not only vexatious and contrary to opinion and policy: they are repugnant on account of the methods by which they are prepared.

Referring to the three policewomen who gave evidence, the *Morning Post* remarks: "Was it for this office that women were enlisted for the police force, in response to the importunity of eager feminists? Is that all the use that can be found for them?" And the article concludes with the suggestion to the Home Secretary that he would not only serve the comfort of his days, but would much increase public confidence by insisting on a little more discretion and discrimination in his agents in enforcing a law that is so easily and obviously overstrained.

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POLICE PROSECUTION

In the news columns of this issue will be found a full report of the final hearing of the case, *Rex v. Cantlon and Phillimore*, including the magistrate's decision.

The total costs are about £800—a very heavy sum, which the Alliance has had to meet.

The Council express their gratitude to all friends and sympathisers for the donations already sent, and will be pleased to accept and acknowledge all further amounts towards the remaining portion of the costs.

All donations should be sent to the Honorary Treasurer, Captain A. A. Carnell, 16, Queensberry Place, S.W.7, who will acknowledge.

Following is a list, of donations received up to the Present time:—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Amount already acknowledged	353	14	6	Robertson, C. L., Esq.	1	1	0
M. L. (Member of the British College)	5	0	0	Ritchie, T., Esq.	5	0	0
Baines, Miss M. E.	2	2	0	Bowyer, Mrs. E. M.	1	1	0
Hill, J. Arthur, Esq.	1	0	0	Ward, Mrs. E.	0	10	0
Hill, Miss M.	1	0	0	Wilson, Mrs. H. E.	1	1	0
Brewer, Mrs.	1	1	0	Wallas, Miss H.	1	1	0
Thomson, W. E., Esq.	0	10	6	Lamond, The Rev. J., D.D.	2	0	0
Thomson, Mrs. W. E.	0	10	6	Lee, Mrs. E. T. E.	1	1	0
Alderson, M. G., Esq.	5	0	0	Fry, Mrs. E.	5	0	0
Lee, The Misses A. H. and E. M.	0	5	0	Boulter, Miss G.	2	2	0
E. C. M.	1	1	0	Kemp, Mrs. B.	1	1	0
Meinecke, Mrs. H.	1	1	0	Withrington, Henry, Esq.	1	1	0
Heath, A. S., Esq.	5	0	0	Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan (Second donation)	35	0	0
Corney, E. H., Esq.	0	5	0	Forbes, Mrs.	1	1	0
Baggallay, Mrs.	2	2	0	Hogg, Mrs. Roughton	5	0	0
J. G.	0	1	0	Skeate, D., Esq.	0	10	0
Moullin, Mrs. Mansell	0	5	0	Shepherd, C., Esq.	1	0	0
				Anonymous	0	2	6

Further reports – *Light* August 11th, 1928 page 378:

LEGALISING PSYCHIC INVESTIGATION.

A QUESTION IN PARLIAMENT.

MR. HARRY DAY, the Labour MP. for Southwark Central Division, in the House of Parliament on Aug. 1st, asked the Home Secretary whether his attention had been drawn to a recent case heard at the Westminster Police Court, in which Miss Mercy Phillimore, secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, and Mrs. Claire Frances Cantlon, a medium, were charged with fortune-telling; and whether the Home Secretary would consider the appointment of a committee for the purpose of investigating the claims of Spiritualism, apart from those of fortune-telling, with the object of legalising investigation in psychical research and Spiritualism. Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Home Secretary: "The answer to the first part of the question is in the affirmative, and to the second part in the negative." He added, in reply to a further question, that he did not consider that the case would hinder the class of investigation referred to.

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“British College of Psychic Science,” October 1928:¹¹

EDITORIAL NOTES.

FROM the point of view of Spiritualism, the event of the quarter has been the prosecution of Mrs. Cantlon for telling fortunes and of Miss Mercy Phillimore for “aiding and abetting.” It was thought that the police action, initiated by some “common informer”—a venomous woman, disgruntled enquirer, or religious fanatic of one kind or another—might be a move of policy against all spiritualist societies, and the L.S.A. found it necessary to procure the best legal assistance available.

I have before me as I write, the issues of the *Sunday Mail* of Glasgow, from October 18th to November 15th, 1925. They contain the names of Mr. Wm. J. Tylar (psychic expert) and Mrs. Starkey (medium), consulted by Inspector Brewer and Sergeant Fisher of the Boscombe police who had been urged by Sir Basil Thomson of the C.I.D. to “leave no stone unturned” to discover Allaway, the murderer of Irene Wilkins. The paper contains full details of the séance which put the police on his track. Subsequent issues contain other cases of the employment of mediums for the detection of crime.

Now even the police cannot have it both ways. If they follow the Continental practice by collecting supernormal evidence to put them on the track of criminals, and use a medium to reconstruct a crime from some small article belonging to the criminal or to the injured person, they obviously believe in the genuine power in certain cases, and the value of the legitimate use is manifestly great. But they are not expert psychologists and are quite unfit to distinguish the genuine from the fraudulent, or the strong from the weak, unless by results over a long period. Nor is it their business to do so. But their own practice debars them, or should debar them, from the hateful rôle of *agent provocateur*. They should call on the “common informer” produce his, or her evidence, and act or forbear action on that.

This has been plainly shown by the attitude of the Press. The *Spectator*, the *Saturday Review*, the *Morning Post*, the *Evening News*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Daily Sketch*, the *Liverpool Post*, and the *Dundee Courier*, all take the same line of condemnation. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote an excellent letter to the *Times*, exposing the action of the police as *agents provocateurs*, so foreign to the English sense of justice. Editors are more in touch with public opinion than any other class of men. They are aware of many cases of genuine mediumship, and their opinion is well expressed by the *Saturday Review* which says of the L.S.A.: “To strike at it because, independently of a serious body of researchers, a medium tells fortunes, is unfair.”

Apparently it would cost some £2,000 to make a case for Parliament to repeal, or alter, the Vagrancy Act; and even if this money were forthcoming it would possibly, or even probably, not be successful. Public opinion is the best safeguard, and it has been shown in no uncertain fashion, If spiritualists would come forward as a body and make up the £800 that this prosecution has cost the L.S.A.,—it could be done by general contributions however small—the feeling of the country would be even more manifest. But, as Fouché said: *Malheureusement, les honnêtes gens sont des laches.*”

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¹¹ *Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science Ltd* – Vol. VII.—No. 3 October 1928 pages 79-80.

THE CANTLON CASE.

Mrs. C. F. Cantlon writes:—

“I hope that you will be good enough to publish in your paper the following statement of facts with regard to the action of the London Spiritualist Alliance, Ltd., in dismissing me from my engagement with them during the recent Police Court proceedings, without giving me any reason or explanation whatever.¹² Miss Phillimore stated to an *Evening Standard* representative that there was no mystery about me and that if I asked for an explanation it would be given fully.

“My husband wrote to the Council of the L.S.A.; the reply stated that the Secretary had no power to deal with the matter, but that it would be dealt with at the next meeting. That meeting has taken place but no answer has been received. My husband wrote a second time, and addressed his letter to Miss Phillimore personally. The reply to this letter was to refer him to the Solicitors, Messrs. K. Brown, Baker and Baker, who defended the L.S.A. in the case.

“Mr. Percy Bullock, my solicitor, therefore wrote on August 9th to this firm. I enclose the reply which he received for publication.” [This reply is to the effect that no useful purpose would be served by entering into correspondence in the matter, and the writers therefore could not see their way to do so.]

“I hold copies of a number of letters which were written to Miss Phillimore at her request, to report on my work. All of these speak in high terms of the results obtained through me during the time, two years, that I worked for the Alliance. I cannot in justice to myself or my work allow the matter to stand as it is, as I wish to put myself right for the benefit of the rest of the Spiritualist community, many of whom cannot understand what has happened, or what was the real reason of the Alliance in acting as they did at such a critical time.”

Mrs. Cantlon wishes to correct any impression that she rented a room at the offices of the London Spiritualist Alliance, and to make it clear that she was engaged by the Council of the L.S.A. as one of their mediums. She adds: “No instructions were ever given me about my work, or what I should or should not do at my sittings.”

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¹² The CPS archivist informs me: I have had a further look at the box of papers at CPS about this case. It appears that the LSA became progressively dissatisfied with Mrs Cantlon during the case. She made difficulties about the gathering of defence evidence, once for example, refusing to stay to consult with a leading counsel because she had another appointment. Even worse, the LSA and their counsel came to believe that she had not been in trance at least some of the time when she professed to be giving trance sittings. They also felt she gave an incorrect account of how Mrs De Crespigny was recruited in her defence. So the LSA separated their defence from hers, and also refused to let her continue working at the Alliance. They had to be very careful what they said publicly because of defamation laws.

The case was important because it could have led to other raids on reputable bodies. Generally, it did not. Lots of prominent people were lined up as defence witnesses – G. R. S. Mead for example. Not all were called. Mercy exchanged letters with Mrs Leonard about Sir Oliver’s aid, which he gave.

It would be worth a serious student going through the case and making a re- assessment.

I have found no evidence to support the Richard Morris (“Harry Price – The Psychic Detective” 2006) theory that it was Price who tipped off the police. Leslie Price

Continued – *Light* November 24th, 1928 page 561:

THE CANTLON CASE.

We have received from Mrs. Cantlon a further communication giving an account of various interviews, test sittings and statements made in connection with the Police Court case. She complains of errors and inconsistencies in some of the statements, and disputes the evidence given against her. But the case has been decided, and we see no profit in continuing a controversy that might well become interminable, to say nothing of the fact that we have no space for it naturally, also, there are other considerations which would occur to the intelligent observer. The L.S.A. acted throughout on the best legal advice obtainable, and while we may regret those hardships which such cases usually entail, whether on one side or the other, it is obvious that we have all been made to suffer in one way or another. The reactions of the case, however, have been so greatly to the benefit of the movement at large that we must be content individually to face the “moral and intellectual” damage, not to speak of the pecuniary cost, with as good a grace as we can.

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It appears for whatever reason the L.S.A., closed the public correspondence. Cantlon would continue to advertise her services in *Light*. By the year’s end, it can be noted the Defence Fund had achieved a substantial amount of its total costs:

Light December 29, 1928 page 624:

DEFENCE FUND.—The Council desire to tender their hearty thanks to the numerous friends who have made such a splendid response to the appeal made for the Spiritualists’ Defence Fund. Many of these generous donors are non-members, and others are complete strangers, some of whom live in far-off countries. The total amount received to date is £763 18s. 8d. The cost of the prosecution was £879 19s. 2d. This includes the whole of Mrs. Cantlon’s solicitor’s costs and the Court charges both before and after the separation of the defence in the two cases.

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Leslie's Seasonal quiz – the answers

Here are the answers to our annual quiz to test how much you recall of Psypioneer last year. Each question related to an issue in sequence, so that question one was about the first issue January 2014 and so on. Only 11 questions however, as September-October 2014 was a double issue:

January

Q: Which Spiritualist organisation was overrun by cats?

A: The Spiritualist Association of Great Britain, in the opinion of its president in 1976.

February

Q: Who considered Harry Price a first class public entertainer?

A: Mercy Phillimore, secretary of the London Spiritualists Alliance.

March

Q: Who suggested Helen Duncan had a secondary personality who misbehaved?

A: Dr Robert Fielding-Ould, LSA president, after an LSA committee returned a negative verdict on her.

April

Q: Which medium's troubles abroad were raised in the House of Commons?

A: D.D. Home, who had annoyed the Vatican.

May

Q: What distinguished five motor ambulances in the Great War?

A: They were donated through the Spiritualists' National Union.

June

Q: Why did a Dutch Spiritualist group call itself Oromase?

A: The meaning of the name is uncertain. It may be “principle of good”.

July

Q: What was unusual about a recording of Conan Doyle speaking at Camp Chesterfield, Indiana

A: The recording was made in 1940, but Doyle had passed in 1930.

August

Q: Who was the other founder of the Link besides Noah Zerdin; and why is he otherwise celebrated?

A: He was Harold Chibbett, a pioneer of Fortean studies in the U.K.

September/October

Q: In what sense did Psypioneer make a new beginning for this issue?

A: This edition of Psypioneer was the first to be produced using new hardware and software made possible by the JV Trust, Spiritual Truth Foundation and the Survival Joint Research Committee Trust.

November

Q: What became of the Newcastle Psychological Society, England?

A: Lis Warwood noted that some modern scholars had referred to this association as the “Newcastle Society for the Investigation of Spiritualism,” but when formed in July 1872, it was named the ‘Newcastle Psychological Society,’ and operated under that title for seven years when it was reconvened as the Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society.

December

Q: What medium’s home in Putney was over run by fairies and gnomes?

A: Mrs Cantlon of the Faery Investigation Society. Earlier she had appeared in court, as described in this January 2015 issue!



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:—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 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



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Paul J. Gaunt

