

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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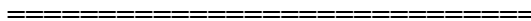


Established 2004

**Volume 11, No. 02: February 2015**



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## CATHARINE ELIZABETH WOOD (1852 – 1884): THE FINAL TWO YEARS



During 2011, and early 2012, *Psypioneer* published an extensive review of the career of the Newcastle-on-Tyne medium, Miss C. E. Wood.<sup>1</sup> The final article in the series,<sup>2</sup> dealt with Wood's fraudulent impersonation of the spirit 'Pocha,' at a séance in Peterborough in September 1882. At that time it was noted Wood wrote to the editor of *Light*, in response to comments published in the paper by her accusers. Her letter, published on September 23, 1882,<sup>3</sup> stated in part:

I think it will not be denied by my bitterest enemies that I have always been anxious to do service to Spiritualism. I have sat thousands of times, with of course varying results, and whenever I have been requested, either through poverty of the sitters or for the benefit of a society's funds, to attend free of charge, I have invariably complied. It is very difficult for me to "keep a brave

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<sup>1</sup> The coverage of C. E. (Kate Wood) can be found in 1) *Psypioneer* 7.7:—*Miss Wood's Mediumship*, by T. P. Barkas, F.G.S., Newcastle-on-Tyne, pages 229-232:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.7July2011.pdf>

2) *Psypioneer* 7.8:—*Facts from the History of Miss Wood's Development as a Medium*, by Mrs. Mould, Newcastle-on-Tyne, pages 257-264:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.8August2011.pdf>

3) *Psypioneer* 7.9:—Séances – experiments at Newcastle-upon-Tyne – later at Belper, Derbyshire, pages 291- 298:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.9September2011.pdf>

4) *Psypioneer* 7.11:—After spending a week at Derby, Kate – returned to Belper and accepted more tests. In addition, a séance report with the "Sidgwick Group," (F. W. H. Myers, Edmund Gurney), pages 366-373:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.11November2011.pdf>

5) *Psypioneer* 8.2:—Third Test (Wax) Moulds at Belper, *Miss Wood Caught Personating a Spirit – The Medium and Daybreak*, Miss C. E. Wood exposed – *Light*. :—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.2February2012.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.2February2012.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> 'Miss Wood's Exposure – To the Editor of *Light*,' *Light* No. 90 Vol. II. September 23, 1882, p. 418.

heart still” when I see inserted in a periodical of the Spiritual movement such violent attacks and misrepresentations, the date of which, compared with the date of the issue of the paper itself, shews that no verification of any kind has been attempted before the insertion. How can this further the cause of truth? Again, this happens immediately after a prolonged correspondence about tests in which my name has been freely used, not altogether to my satisfaction, and makes the burden hard for me to bear. . . .

I have sat under every possible “reasonable test” for years, including sitting outside the cabinet as a member of the circle, with successful results, and in conclusion I offer to sit either three times or such a number of times as a national representative committee of Spiritualists may judge proper, and under such conditions as may be decided upon unanimously by them, free of charge, and will stand or fall by the final result. It is not improbable that once my innocence is publicly established in such a manner in the minds of Spiritualists I shall retire from a field of labour where I have received so many hard knocks, and where so little consideration has been shown to one who has never evinced any selfish pretensions, but has always done her best to help forward the cause by whatever time, labour, and money she could devote.—Yours, &c., C. E. WOOD. September 16<sup>th</sup>, 1882.

Catharine Wood’s offer to sit under test conditions was taken up by the Central Association of Spiritualists, who by November 1882 had appointed a committee, “arranged satisfactory terms with Miss Wood, and [taken steps] to constitute the ‘circle’ by whom the experiments shall be conducted.”<sup>4</sup> A series of test séances were held at the C.A.S. London premises concluding in January, 1883. The association, in response to a claim published in *The Harbinger of Light* (Melbourne) that the séances had been of “an eminently satisfactory character” stated in *Light*:

We have no desire to say a word to the injury of Miss Wood; and if her late séances at the rooms of the C.A.S. had really been “eminently satisfactory,” it would have given us great pleasure to announce the fact. But her recent course of “test” séances – Miss Wood sitting near the curtains of the cabinet, but outside of it, and in view of the committee, the light never being sufficiently subdued to prevent her being seen – were absolutely without results. It is, however, due to Miss Wood that we should say that she has herself proposed another course of sittings, expressing confidence that they will be attended with success.<sup>5</sup>

Back in Newcastle, during February and March, Wood eventually appeared to have some success, *Light* reporting on March 10, 1883:

It is with the greatest pleasure we notice a paragraph [in *The Medium and Daybreak*] to the effect that Miss Wood has at last been successful.

We are informed that Miss C. E. Wood, the well-known medium, has been having séances with a private circle at a private house in Newcastle, at which some excellent results have been obtained. There was no placing the medium in bonds or durance vile; but simply some dark window curtains were stretched across a corner of a dining room,

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<sup>4</sup> ‘The test Séances with Miss Wood.’ *Light* No. 99 Vol. II, November 25, 1882 p. 530.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Miss Wood’s Mediumship.’ *Light* No. 111 Vol. III. February 17, 1883, p. 82.

and the medium was seated a short distance in front of them, in full view of all, and dressed in a white jacket, the better to observe any movements on her part. The first five or six sittings were productive of no important result, but at both of her last two séances, a small childlike form has emerged from the curtains, and whilst standing near the medium essayed to speak. The form was somewhat attenuated and lacked the robustness which is experienced when the medium is isolated behind the curtains, but hopes are entertained that this may be overcome in time. On inquiry we are assured that there was no possibility of fraud, that Miss Wood had nothing to do with preparing the room for the séance, and that invariably she was only in the house about ten minutes before the séance commenced. About sixteen persons were present.<sup>6</sup>

On April 7, 1883, Henry Burton, in a letter published in *Light* described two successful séances with Wood in Newcastle. These, the last in a series of fourteen, were held under conditions where “every precaution . . . as to preclude the possibility of even the appearance of fraud,” was maintained.<sup>7</sup>

The cabinet was arranged . . . in the corner of the room near the fire-place, and the medium’s chair was placed in front of the centre of the cabinet, with the back directly opposite the chandelier, one jet of which was used, with a light brown paper placed over its globe to mellow down the light. After all our arrangements had been made, Miss Wood was brought into the room, and in our presence covering herself with a white jacket, provided for her, with a white antimacassar on her head, she took her seat, at a distance of two feet from the cabinet.

On Tuesday evening, March 27<sup>th</sup> . . . under the above conditions, the light being good, and every movement of the medium being visible . . . we had the pleasure of seeing the chair that we had placed against the wall at the right of the cabinet with a bell and tube on it, dragged quickly into the cabinet and in a short time heard the bell ring from within. This was soon afterwards followed by a dusky white form protruding itself from the right aperture of the cabinet and standing forward to within about a foot of the left of the medium. After making several motions backwards and forwards, the medium all the while being perfectly motionless and quite easily visible, the form disappeared behind the curtains, to re-appear in a little while at the left aperture of the cabinet, standing clearly visible at a distance of about two feet from Miss Wood, who lay back in the chair as perfectly motionless as when the form appeared at first.

At the final séance held on March 30, with more light than previously, and Wood somewhat further from the cabinet than before, the chair was again dragged into the cabinet and knocked about before once again a clearly defined white form appeared, retired, and re-appeared several times, on each occasion leaving a clearly visible space between itself and the medium of not less than two feet. The series came to an end with Wood’s departure for London to give the second series of sittings with the Séance Conditions Committee of the C.A.S., who, they announced, hoped “to be in a position to present a satisfactory report at their close.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Our Contemporaries – The Medium and Daybreak,’ *Light* No. 114 Vol. II. March 10, 1883 p. 118.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Successful Séances with Miss Wood.’ *Light* No. 118 Vol. III. April 7, 1883, p. 166.

<sup>8</sup> ‘Miss Wood’s Séances at the C.A.S.’ *Light* No. 118 Vol. III. April 7, 1883. p. 162.

No record of Wood's séances for the Committee appointed by the C.A.S. appears to have ever been published, however, the Association's minute book shows that a report was agreed on at a council meeting on June 19, 1883. Pasted into the minute book, now preserved in the archives of the College of Psychic Studies, is a "one sheet handwritten report" titled "Abridged report- Miss Wood's sittings 1882-3."<sup>9</sup> The record notes that Mr. Morell Theobald acted as director of the séances and Mr. J. G. Collingwood as recorder. The other committee members listed are J. S. Farmer, C. C. Massey, J. J. Morse, Hon. Roden Noel, Dr Nichols, E. D. Rogers, Rev. W. Small, Mrs James, and Mr and Mrs. Withall. From the minutes of the individual sittings it seems that Frank Podmore also attended some of the séances, however his name is not listed on the report.

The second series of nine sittings held during April and May 1883 were, according to the report "void of any physical phenomena worth recording."<sup>10</sup> Despite this remark, the report continues by noting that during the seventh sitting, held "at a private home in Gt. Russell St.," with Wood as previously, sat outside the cabinet, the curtains of the cabinet, "on which were affixed white papers for more easy observation" were "projected from 2 feet to 2 and a half feet," these movements being observed by most, but not all of the committee.<sup>11</sup> At the next sitting,

the movements of the curtain continued for an hour and were visible by all the circle. The medium was 3 feet from the curtain leaving a clear space next to the cabinet and in constant view of those who sat on each side. The curtains were on this occasion pushed out for a distance of 3 feet at the bottom and extended for some 4 or 5 feet upwards.

In reply to questions, the papers on the curtain were moved upwards & horizontally frequently & without hesitation. By this means the circle was told that a form was materialized within the curtains but it had not sufficient power to come out into the room.<sup>12</sup>

While this was occurring Wood was apparently controlled by her spirit guide Pocha and talking animatedly throughout.

Morell Theobald, who admitted he recognised the difficulty of them achieving the desired results under the rigid conditions imposed,<sup>13</sup> did however offer the readers of *Light* a report on two sittings held in April 1883, one impromptu, the other arranged, at his home where Wood stayed while in London. Theobald related how one evening Pocha entranced the medium and asked to play cards. With the medium's eyes bandaged with a silk handkerchief, Pocha was

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<sup>9</sup> The C.A.S. abridged report was kindly accessed and transcribed for me by Leslie Price, Archivist at the College of Psychic Studies.

<sup>10</sup> "Abridged report of the Committee appointed by the C.A.S. to sit for physical phenomena through the mediumship of Miss C. E. Wood Dec 1882 – January 7, April & May 1883."

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Morell Theobald, 'An Unsought Séance with Miss Wood.' *Light* No. 120 Vol. III April 21, 1883, pp. 190-1. Note: The C.A.S. report also recorded that four members of the committee "were more successful and obtained remarkable physical phenomena" at Theobald's house.

able to tell every card thrown down and when playing a game of whist with Theobald as her partner, she never played a false card, he observing that while all they saw was Miss Wood completely blindfolded, yet she, or Pocha, who had entranced her, “could deal out, and sort her cards into suits, and then play absolutely correctly so as in fact to win the game against good players.”<sup>14</sup>

The following evening, an improvised cabinet formed by using a large clothes horse covered with rugs and some curtains at the front was set up in a corner of the room. Outside the cabinet to one side was set a chair on which a black cardboard box with marked paper and pencil inside, and lying on it a “speaking tube” while inside the cabinet was placed a musical box. The family and medium sat round the dining table. After a period during which Pocha and Benny entranced the medium and spoke, they formed a horse-shoe around the cabinet, with Wood in the centre in sight of them all. The light was turned down, though they could still see one another, and the objects in the room, including Miss Wood, who had a white cloth placed over her head and shoulders. Theobald’s report continues with a description of what then occurred:

After about a quarter of an hour sounds were heard in the cabinet; then the box was taken in, and we heard it moved about, and then the chair, with a great noise, was taken in and knocked upon the floor, which, being the edge of the room and covered with floor-cloth, must have caused the noise to be heard next door! Then the musical box was started on its round of tunes, all this time Miss Wood sitting still, and ‘Pocha’ continually returning to talk through her. . . . one corner of the cabinet . . . soon opened, and we could then see a white hazy form for a considerable time. The white haze was distinctly visible to me and others ascending from Miss Wood’s head and going into the form at the corner of the cabinet; in fact, Miss Wood seemed to grow into the form as though she were its root!

John S. Farmer<sup>15</sup> was happy to add his testimony to Theobald’s, especially as, he informed the readers, Miss Wood was “determined for the future always to sit in view of the circle, and in light sufficient for observation.”<sup>16</sup> He had attended a séance, also held at Theobald’s home, where under what he considered good conditions, good results were achieved. On this occasion Wood sat by Farmer’s side in the circle, on a large library chair, with her feet tucked under her on the seat. She was six feet or more from the cabinet and further still from a small cane-bottomed chair placed by its side, and he was sure he had observed her every movement throughout the séance. Pocha quickly entranced the medium and maintained a dialogue with the sitters broken only on one or two occasions when she informed them she had gone to see what the spirits were doing behind the curtains.

A short time after the séance commenced, raps were heard on the small chair, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to move it into the cabinet. Despite this, for Farmer what was accomplished was more interesting, he being able to observe the manner in which the chair began to sway and then “very slowly, and by jerks, [move] a couple of inches at a time towards the cabinet, the scraping of the legs being plainly heard, as it was thus moved across

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>15</sup> John Stephen Farmer (b. March 7, 1854 Bedford, Bedfordshire, d. January 18, 1916 The Rookery, West Bergholt, Essex) journalist, author and editor and contributor to *The Psychological Review*, during the 1880s.

<sup>16</sup> John S. Farmer, ‘Another Séance with Miss Wood.’ *Light* No. 121 Vol. III April 28, 1883, p. 197.

the carpet. When it had been drawn close to the aperture, it was then suddenly thrown over, falling half way towards the medium. It was then picked up again, taken to the cabinet, and then thrown once again,”<sup>17</sup> this time falling close to Farmer’s feet.

Towards the end of April, 1883, a further séance was held in Theobald’s home, this time with three other members of the C.A.S. Séance Conditions Committee in attendance. The séance cabinet was again placed in a recess in the room, while Wood remained seated on an easy chair quite away from the cabinet and in full view of all the sitters. In a letter published in *Light*<sup>18</sup> Theobald described some of the phenomena that occurred on this occasion:

The curtains were first pushed out for about two feet. A chair, upon which was a small box and a cardboard tube, was then slowly dragged to the corner of the cabinet, outside, and some five or six feet from the medium. Now the tube was taken up, and moved upwards and downwards, then horizontally, clear of everything . . . The chair was then pushed over, and the things on it scattered about the floor.

Considerable commotion then occurred inside the cabinet, and the curtains again opened for about two feet from the ground upwards. In this aperture we all saw a glistening white drapery covering the lower part of the form . . . The curtains again shut, when the heavy [cloth] on the top [of the cabinet] was lifted up and down, and at length the whole cabinet was bodily brought out of the recess, and turned completely round so as to be at a right angle to its former position. It was thus moved away five feet or more and left standing clear of the walls of the room.

On April 27, 1883, Farmer had taken an opportunity to test Pocha’s “power of reading clairvoyantly the names of cards”<sup>19</sup> hidden both from him and the medium. Despite claiming to be suffering from a severe headache, and therefore not in the best condition to obtain satisfactory results, Wood was keen that the experiment be tried. Farmer had purchased a new pack of cards which he shuffled and then placed face down on the table. Wood was blindfolded with a silk handkerchief and after placing her hands on the pack would choose one and lay it apart from the others and while it was still face down attempt to name it. Of the five experiments, three attempts were correct, while in the other two the right suit was named though the number of the card was wrong. While acknowledging these tests were not conclusive, Farmer felt that they “seemed to establish a *prima facie* case for further experiments,”<sup>20</sup> he hoping that Wood would cultivate this aspect of her mediumship.

By May 1883, Wood was back in Newcastle and at a séance held in the rooms of the Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society, while she was secured in the cabinet, and in good light,

the diminutive form of “Pocha” was well observed; she shewed us her black arm and hand, then dematerialised in our presence. After the medium (still sitting in her chair), had been moved out of the cabinet by the invisibles, and while in *full view* of the sitters, a

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Morrell Theobald, ‘A Second Séance at Home with Miss Wood’ *Light* No. 122 Vol. III May 5, 1883 p. 204.

<sup>19</sup> John S. Farmer, ‘Thought-Transference v. Clairvoyance’ *Light* No. 123 Vol. III May 12, 1883 p. 219.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

form shewed itself at one corner of the curtains, and quite out of the reach of the medium. Four forms in all were presented to us. The first form which shewed itself intimated by signs that it was a friend of one of the sitters, and it transpired that the sitter in question (a lady) had been given to understand at another private circle that this particular spirit friend, who only recently passed over, would endeavour to appear at our sitting yesterday afternoon. The medium, Miss Wood, was quite unaware that this friend was in the spirit-world.<sup>21</sup>

In completing his coverage of the career of Catharine Elizabeth Wood up to the time of the Peterborough affair, Paul Gaunt noted that some time after she went to Australia. Recent investigation has established that it was Samuel Defries,<sup>22</sup> who in July 1882, first discussed with Wood the possibility of her going to Australia, “for the purpose of giving experimental scientific séances to the members of the Liberal Association of Sydney.”<sup>23</sup> Defries, an Englishman, had migrated to Australia in the 1850s, but made regular return trips to England. In 1883, when he was again in London, the plans for her visit were finalised.

On learning of the proposed trip, James Burns, the editor of *The Medium and Daybreak*, was quite scathing about its value, in part due to concern that were Wood to be exposed there she would not have any “old friends to fall back on” as she had done in England, but more critically because in his view, in the final analysis, while extraordinary phenomena had been observed in her presence, there had been much which was ambiguous and much that had been quite deceptive.<sup>24</sup> She had been, he declared, “one of the greatest drawbacks” which the Spiritualist Movement had had to contend against, but, “If the Sydney people covet an acute attack of Miss-Wood it is, with grave chronic consequences, by all means let them treat themselves to the luxury.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> ‘Observer,’ ‘A Séance with Miss Wood’ Letter dated May 28, 1883, published in *Light* No. 126 Vol. III June 2, 1883 p. 260.

<sup>22</sup> Samuel Defries was born in Aldgate, Middlesex in 1834, and migrated to Australia in 1853, settling in Sydney, dying there on November 20, 1906. A gas engineer by trade, and a talented amateur actor, he was known to Spiritualists in England and Australia as a trance and healing medium. During his regular visits to England Defries attended a number of materialisation séances with various mediums including Wood, William Eglinton and Cecil Husk. His father, Jonas Defries (1805-1860), founded a firm of chandelier manufacturing and developed a business as a gas lighting specialist that became famous in London supplying high society and government departments with their lighting needs and providing illuminations for outdoor events. Various family members, including Samuel, were also heavily involved in Jewish community affairs.

<sup>23</sup> Miss Wood at Cape Town South Africa *Light* No. 150 Vol. III November 17, 1883 pp. 505-6; p. 505. At the time Wood was first invited to Australia to give séances for the Liberal Association of NSW, John Bowie Wilson (b. June 17 1820 Irvine, Ayrshire, Scotland, d. April 30, 1883, Sydney, NSW) was the association’s first president. Wilson, who had migrated to Australia, arriving in Sydney on July 18, 1840, became a prominent politician, and free-thinker in NSW. He had a life-long interest in Spiritualism and dabbled in phrenology. Given Wilson’s death in 1883, five months prior to Wood’s arrival in Australia, it is unclear whether any séances were held for the association. To date no record has been found of séances between her arrival in Australia in October 1883 and February 1884, when those recorded by Adrian Wentworth Bucknall\* appear to have commenced. \* See Footnote 34.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Notes and Comments,’ *The Medium and Daybreak* No. 689 Vol. XIV June 15, 1883, p. 376; ‘Our Position in Respect to Public Medium,’ *The Medium and Daybreak* No. 687 Vol. XIV June 1, 1883, p. 345.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Notes and Comments,’ *The Medium and Daybreak* No. 689 Vol. XIV June 15, 1883, p. 376.



Despite such strong criticism, the trip went ahead, with Wood travelling to Australia via Cape Town, South Africa,<sup>26</sup> where Defries had arranged she would stay with Mr Berk T. Hutchinson, who had attended some of Wood's séances in Newcastle in 1877. In a letter to the editor of *Light* dated October 18, 1883,<sup>27</sup> Hutchinson gave a report on her visit. In part he recorded:

Knowing Miss Wood would only be with us about twelve days, I made arrangements with a few inquiring minds to attend a few séances. She arrived per "Lusitania" on 3<sup>rd</sup> and left per "John Elder," on the 15<sup>th</sup> inst., with her guardian and my friend and brother-worker, Samuel Defries.

I had four sittings at my own house, and two at the rooms of the Psychological Society, under what I consider test conditions, and, considering the hurried preparations, strange sitters (I was the only one who knew Miss Wood,) and rainy weather, the results were extremely satisfactory. Most of the persons at my private sittings, although honest inquirers, were not conversant with the subtle conditions for spirit intercourse, especially materialisation, so I simply risked their forming erroneous impressions.

Miss Wood was literally sewn up in my dressing-gown, and tied down to a heavy arm chair and nailed to the ground, as in these experiments she was sitting behind a curtain out of the view of the sitters. We had tolerably good materialisations, and direct writing by "Pocha;" my guitar was manipulated intelligently, and many other simple manifestations. The time being so short we could not sit for *personal* tests, which I consider are the only ones to bring conviction to novices and those who are simply seekers after signs and wonders. I explained to the sitters that what they saw was only a faint idea of what did take place, and that they should sit for three or four months with her in order to see varied and convincing phenomena.

What did take place was done by human intelligence, which claimed to be spirit agency. Miss Wood solemnly declares that she takes no active part in the manifestations. I have securely tied conjurers, who proposed to imitate spirit manifestations. In many cases the imitations were really good, and deserved credit, but they tell you that what they do is pure trickery, which shrewd observers know and can imitate. Spirit manifestations can easily be *imitated* and *burlesqued*, but the conditions under which they are done are as different as a candle is to the sun.

The two sittings given to the members of the Cape Town Mesmeric and Psychological Society, under test conditions, thoroughly convinced every sitter (about thirty-five or forty). The materialised form came outside the curtain, and at request waved its arm, as it

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<sup>26</sup> Wood travelled on the Orient Line steamer, the 'Lusitania,' arriving in Cape Town on September 3, 1883, and left for Australia on September 15, on the Orient Line steamer 'John Elder,' arriving in Sydney on October 9, 1883, having travelled Saloon class.

<sup>27</sup> B. T. Hutchinson, 'Miss Wood at Cape Town, South Africa.' Letter to the Editor, *Light* No. 150 Vol. III November 17, 1883 pp. 505-6. Berks T. Hutchinson, was an ardent supporter of Spiritualism. In 1879 he had attempted to get the Australian trance and clairvoyant medium, John Tyerman, to visit Cape Town, and, at that time, had extended a general invitation to "any trance mediums, or other workers, going out to (or coming from) Australia, . . . not forget that I have a beautiful public hall, holding over 500 people, which I will give free for lectures, &c., on the subject of spirit-communion, and besides, guarantee them free quarters for a month, or more, and do all I can to make their stay both a success and a pleasure."

had no power to speak on this occasion; took a bell from off the table and rang it, in order to prove that our senses – eyes – were not deceiving us. It came out at one corner of the curtains, and by urgent request, moved round to the front of the extemporised cabinet, and entered at the middle aperture, opened the curtains and shewed another spirit form. Pocha informed us the magnetic conditions and mental emanations of the sitters were exceedingly good, and if they could but sit for eight or ten times several spirit forms could come out simultaneously, walk about the room, and allow themselves to be touched. . . Miss Wood and Mr. Defries hope to return to Cape Town in fifteen months.

This visit of Miss Wood was not professional, and no one paid a farthing for what they saw. God bless this and all other true mediums.

Hutchinson's letter noted that Defries had been unable to get passage to Cape Town by the same steamer, so Wood travelled alone to South Africa, with him joining her later for the journey on to Australia, arriving in Sydney on October 9, 1883.<sup>28</sup> There, according to an article in *The Harbinger of Light* (Melbourne) reproduced in *Light* some time later, the series of séances were "carefully conducted under the supervision of Mr. Gale"<sup>29</sup> and Mr. Bucknall.<sup>30</sup>

A report of the séances held under the supervision of these two men was published in January 1885, shortly after Wood's death. The eighteen page pamphlet titled '*A Narrative of Sittings with the late Miss C. E. Wood at Sydney*,'<sup>31</sup> is largely made up of notes taken shortly after each séance by Bucknall. Adrian Wentworth Bucknall was a man of some stature in the colony of New South Wales, as a well-to-do landowner of a large sheep station on the borders of New South Wales and Queensland, and a house in the Sydney suburb of Newtown.<sup>32</sup> His interest in the phenomena associated with Spiritualism resulted from reading the 1871 London Dialectical Society's report on the subject,<sup>33</sup> William Crookes's account of the 'Katie King' materialisations, and his personal observation of materialisations at a George Spriggs séance in Melbourne. It was, however, witnessing Catharine Wood's materialisations in his own home and that of Henry Gale, who acted as Wood's manager during her stay in the colony, that had brought him to the conviction Spiritualism was "positively true."<sup>34</sup>

That Henry Gale and also his wife Susannah, played an important role in Wood's time in Sydney is not surprising, both were committed Spiritualists from as early as the mid-1870s;

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<sup>28</sup> New South Wales Unassisted Immigrant Passenger Lists, 1826-1922.

<sup>29</sup> 'Transition Notes' *Light* No. 215 Vol. 5 February 14, 1885 p. 77. The article in *Light* regarding this was taken from the January 1885 edition of *The Harbinger of Light*.

<sup>30</sup> Note: Mr. Bucknall was incorrectly recorded in *The Harbinger of Light* article as Mr. Buckland.

<sup>31</sup> A. W. Bucknall, *A Narrative of Sittings with the late Miss C. E. Wood at Sydney*. Sydney: H. Garforth, Printer, 1885.

<sup>32</sup> Adrian Bucknall was the son of William Bucknall and Martha Wentworth. Born on the ship 'Adrian' in 1826 on-route to Australia, he died October 6, 1895 in Moree, NSW.

<sup>33</sup> James Burns, Ed., *Report on Spiritualism of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society*, London: Longmans, Green, Reader and Dyer, 1871.

<sup>34</sup> Bucknall, *A Narrative of Sittings* p. 3.

their involvement in the Spiritualist movement in New South Wales continuing for many years.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the Gales also regularly attended Annie Fairlamb Mellon's séances in Sydney from her arrival in the colony in February 1892, and were present on the evening in October 1894, when the man known as Thomas Shekleton Henry<sup>36</sup> claimed he had exposed Mellon as a fraud.<sup>37</sup> It was to Mrs Gale's nephew, Justice Sir William Charles Windeyer, a senior judge in the colony, that Fairlamb Mellon looked, when seeking a committee to be set up to hold test séances and enable her to refute Henry's claims.<sup>38</sup>

Bucknall begins his narrative of the Wood séances by noting that they "often *saw* and *spoke with*" 'Pocha,' the spirit control said to be a child of American-Indian descent, and also occasionally caught a glimpse of 'Benny' another control, he being a Scotsman with a strong accent.<sup>39</sup> In describing the set-up used for a number of séances held at his Sydney home, Bucknall recorded,

Miss Wood was seated in a small verandah room or office, the outside door of which was securely locked. The door from this room to the dining-room had been taken off its hinges, and replaced by a netting fixed on a wooden frame which, after Miss Wood was seated in the office, was securely fastened. In front of the netting a recess was formed of about three and a half by two feet, between the fireplace which projects into the dining-room and the wall of that room. Across this recess was hung a double curtain meeting in the middle. The company, in number from ten to thirteen, took their seats in a half circle in front of the curtain, and the light was lowered.

For some nights nothing took place beyond the medium speaking in entirely different voices, when purporting to be controlled by "Pocha" or "Benny," and the appearance more than once of white drapery between the curtains, which seemed to push aside to make room for it. About the 9<sup>th</sup> February, the medium being seated and everything in order as above described, Pocha soon controlled, and said we should likely see something good. In a short time, in a light quite sufficient to distinguish, a small lithe figure covered with white drapery, apparently a child seven or eight years old, opened the curtain and

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<sup>35</sup> Henry Gale, born circa 1837, Oxfordshire, arrived in New South Wales in 1852. He died December 17, 1895 at Post Office Quarters, Paddington, NSW, and buried at Waverley Cemetery, Sydney. On April 2, 1856, Gale married the widow Susanna Gordon Phillips, neé Windeyer, daughter of Charles Windeyer. Her brother, Richard Windeyer (b. 1806, London, d. 1847, Sydney) was a journalist, barrister, agriculturist and politician, who, with his wife Maria Camfield, and young son, William Charles Windeyer, arrived in Australia on November 28, 1835. The 1863 Sydney Sands Directory shows Gale was the Paddington Council clerk. By the following year he was also employed as the Registrar of Birth, Marriages and Deaths, and in 1871 the Census Enumerator for the Districts of Paddington and Alexandria.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Shekleton Henry was born Thomas Henry in Kingstown, Ireland, on November 8, 1856, and shortly after moved with his parents to England. The inclusion of 'Shekleton' to his name was mere affectation on his part until he formally adopted it by Deed Poll in 1919, after he returned to England from Australia.

<sup>37</sup> A paper on Annie Fairlamb Mellon's early career, alleged exposure, and what happened after, is currently in preparation. A synopsis of the findings will be published in *Psypioneer* in due course.

<sup>38</sup> For further on Windeyer's involvement see 'Some Test Séances,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 1, 1894, p. 12; 'Spiritualism in Sydney – Sir W. Windeyer's Committee – A Progress Report,' *The Brisbane Courier* December 1, 1894, p. 5. William Charles Windeyer (b. September 29, 1834 Westminster, d. September 12, 1897 Bologna, Italy) was knighted in 1891.

<sup>39</sup> Bucknall, p. 7.

came out, took in her hand from a small table close to the curtain a paper of lollies and threw some of them singly to some of the sitters. She then took up a doll and handed it to a lady, and afterwards a bell and handed it to another lady, after ringing it. We heard the child speak, and some of us saw her little black arm.

At a séance on February 21, this small figure again showed itself outside the curtains as did a female figure of medium height, whom rang a bell and wrote their name on a piece of paper, while on February 25, Pocha opened the curtains and came, throwing the front part of her flowing robe towards the sitters, enabling parts of her small black body to be visible to the sitters. After writing her name Pocha retired into the cabinet and another female form appeared, who to make clear for whom it was present tapped one sitter on their hands three times then moved to the other side of the room and tapped that lady's sister. On this figure's retiring into the cabinet another more slender female form appeared, this apparently being Bucknall's sister who had died some twenty-seven years earlier.

One notable event at the séance on March 3, was Pocha appearing several times, moving a small table about two feet, and on claiming to be tired, lying down on the floor in the place from which she had lifted the table, whereupon "she then gradually faded away (dematerialized)" before their eyes.<sup>40</sup> The séance on March 10, however, proved entirely unsuccessful, despite their being according to Bucknall, a harmonious group of sitters present, the weather being inclement. Greater success was achieved on the 13<sup>th</sup>, when while Pocha was outside the curtains, another figure stood at the middle opening of the curtain, and as the small spirit form moved to re-enter the cabinet at the left side of the curtain another form emerged from the right side of the curtains and into the room, thus Bucknall states, "we may consider therefore three figures were visible at once."<sup>41</sup> Yet more forms were seen at this séance, one of which approached Mrs Gale and seemed to be recognised as her son, while another that remained standing at the left curtain for some minutes, was perceived as a male, in a tight-fitting upper garment, rather than the usual flowing white drapery. Finally, Pocha reappeared, hummed a tune, and danced to it, the sounds of her naked feet heard on the floor.

The séance on March 18 was again unsuccessful, and that on March 20, obtained only limited success, although Pocha made an appearance. At the March 27 sitting Pocha appeared, spoke, gave a black doll to one of the sitters and threw a packet of lollies towards Bucknall's son Theodore, which unfortunately struck Bucknall's wife on the forehead. Bucknall also gives an account of a séance written by his wife when he was absent dealing with the business of his sheep stations<sup>42</sup>:

Mr. Gale had consented to our shifting the cabinet. So the piano was moved, and I hung the curtains across the corner of the drawing-room. Miss W. was tied to her chair and the knots sealed to the back of the chair, and *directly* the curtains were closed Pocha's 'You thought we wasn't coming' was heard. She told us we should have a good and short sitting. She talked about an hour, when she whispered, 'I'm so frightened; there's someone materialising. Oh! I am so frightened. I'll go away, I am so frightened.' . . . while she was still saying she was frightened, a tall figure opened the curtains; we then

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<sup>40</sup> Bucknall, p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Bucknall, p. 12.

heard Pocha go. The figure opened the curtains a few times, and then Pocha came out and went in and out a good while, dancing a doll and singing, and then threw the doll right across the circle into my lap. She then came out near the piano and twice struck a note and retreated. Then Lizzie (a first wife of one of the sitters) came out well, went to the table, retreated, and came out near the piano and struck a note. Pocha soon after controlled the medium and told us there would be nothing more. It was just 10. Those who had tied the medium found the knots and seals as they had left them.

At a sitting on May 10, Wood was seated outside, and some four feet from the cabinet curtains on which two sheets of white paper were pinned. After Pocha controlled the medium and stated Benny was in the cabinet, “the curtain was pulled *from the inside* most unmistakably several times,” while on May 12, with Wood once again inside the cabinet Pocha came out and then drew back the curtain, “when she and the medium were both plainly seen at the same time.”<sup>43</sup> On May 14, in addition to the usual sitters, Bucknall’s brother William, and a Mr and Mrs Cox from New Zealand, among others, were present. Mr Cox received a written message from Pocha, however William Bucknall’s attendance seems to have been an inhibiting presence according to the spirit control. At the sitting two days later, Wood was tied to the chair, and the knots sealed, the chair was also tacked to the floor, after which she was also sewn to the chair with the knots sealed and the seals marked.

After a short time something white appeared at the curtain, which after receding more than once, stood fairly between the middle curtains, revealing a tall broad man with a flowing black beard, who was recognised by several of the sitters as a Mr Cavanagh, who had died about five weeks before. The face was uncovered. In answer to Mr Wright’s question, “Have you come as you promised me?” the form answered “Yes” in a deep manly voice. “Shall I continue your letters to the *Religio*?” answer again, “Yes.” Mr Gale then asked, “Shall I tell this to the friends at the office?” The reply was “No.” When challenged by Mr Gale whether he was Mr Cavanagh, and if so to make some demonstrative sign, he put his hand forward and waved his garment in a most emphatic manner. As he closed the curtain and retired he said “Good night.”

Pocha had told us several times previously that Cavanagh was behind the curtain endeavouring to materialize. Miss Wood had never seen Mr Cavanagh. . . Shortly after Mr Cavanagh retired, a graceful female form came outside, and was visible for some time.<sup>44</sup>

On May 19, a dark circle was held in the Bucknall drawing-room. Again the medium was tied to the chair and her feet held by a sitter’s feet throughout the sitting. A small table was placed behind her with “illuminated tubes,” and a “flutina” among other objects.<sup>45</sup> According to

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<sup>43</sup> Bucknall, p. 13.

<sup>44</sup> Bucknall, pp. 13-14. Charles Cavanagh had written on a number of occasions to the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, published in Chicago. He was employed in the Electric Telegraph Department of the General Post Office in Sydney until his death in early April, 1884. Somewhat ironically Cavanagh died of typhoid fever, the same illness that would claim Wood’s life some seven months later. ‘Death of Mr C. Cavanagh,’ *Evening News* (Sydney) Monday April 7, 1884, p. 4, noted that Cavanagh “was a warm friend of religious liberty and of progress” who left behind him a young widow, one child and many sorrowing friends.

<sup>45</sup> Bucknall, p. 15. According to Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flutina> a Flutina was “an early precursor to the diatonic button accordion, having one or two rows of treble buttons, which are configured to have the tonic of the scale, on the ‘draw’ of the bellows.”

Bucknall, the tubes were carried around the room, several sitters were touched by invisible hands and the flutina was played accompanying a song sung by Pocha controlling the medium. He noted, in particular, that two hands were required to play a flutina correctly.

Dark and light séances continued to be held during the remainder of May, and most of June, with more or less success, but nothing very remarkable, until on the afternoon of June 29, at a sitting held at Henry Gale's house, wax moulds were obtained. Though neither Bucknall nor his wife attended the sitting, they saw the moulds the next day, these being, "Two moulds of hands past the wrist, which apparently dematerialised after the moulds were taken," and also "several moulds of portions of hands both opened and closed."<sup>46</sup> The following Sunday (July 6), at the Bucknall residence they obtained the moulds "of a large hand and a small chubby foot," the sounds of these being formed heard "while Benny was speaking through the medium – some distance away."<sup>47</sup> Two days earlier, at a sitting where Wood had been securely tied, Pocha appeared and remained outside the cabinet for fifteen or twenty minutes distributing to various sitters small articles that had been placed on a stand near the curtain. Bucknall's wife was given a small bell, which she accidentally dropped, the noise frightening Pocha who withdrew behind the curtains, and on re-appearing she "had diminished four to six inches in height, and shrunk in size. She again went behind the curtain, and when she re-appeared had attained about her full size."<sup>48</sup>

On July 16, another dark sitting was held at the Bucknall house, this time with only the Bucknall's, their three children and a guest, Mr Wright, present. There seemed to be a great deal of power, the illuminated tubes were moved about and struck the sitters on the head and face. Bucknall's daughter's shoulder was clasped by a hand, and her chair was pulled from under her. In addition:

The table which was in the midst of us was moved from under the gas light; the chair was then lifted and stood on the table, and another chair turned over on top of the first chair. We all sat with joined hands round the table, but away from it; all also held a copper wire which went round the circle. I feel quite positive no known earth-power was at work here.<sup>49</sup>

Two days later, on July 18, Wood accompanied the family as they started out for Bucknall's sheep station on the borders of Queensland. While on route, a sitting around a small table was held at a neighbour's property, where, with Wood's hands held by Mrs Bucknall and the neighbour, Pocha was able to write her name on a piece of paper. After a short stay with the Bucknall's Wood left them to return to Sydney via Brisbane, from which she soon after headed for Adelaide, in South Australia, to hold a series of séances, the visit arranged by Mr Christian Reimers.<sup>50</sup> Only a few sittings had been held, allegedly giving promise of good results, when illness overtook her.

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<sup>46</sup> Bucknall, p. 15.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Bucknall, p. 16.

<sup>49</sup> Bucknall, p. 17.

<sup>50</sup> Christian Reimers (b. June 19, 1827, Altona, Germany d. July 24, 1889, on board a ship travelling from Melbourne to Europe) was a notable cellist, cartoonist and Spiritualist. His career as a musician included involvement with Robert and Clara Schumann. He moved to England in the mid-1850s and to Australia in 1882.

When she first became unwell it was thought “she was suffering from neuralgia,” and that her condition was not serious, however, in the early part of December “typhoid fever set in, and [Wood] had to be removed to a special ward of a hospital, and isolated from her friends.”<sup>51</sup> Her condition deteriorated rapidly, and she died on the morning of Thursday December 11, 1884, at the Private Hospital, North Adelaide. Wood was buried the following day, the funeral taking place in the morning in the Cemetery at West Terrace, Adelaide.<sup>52</sup> Australian newspaper reports of Wood’s death varyingly describe her as being aged 26 or 30.<sup>53</sup> In reality she was just two months short of her thirty-third birthday when she died.<sup>54</sup> Sadly, although the cemetery maintains a record of her burial, it has advised that as the internment “was paid for by the government at the time [and] no lease was purchased [the grave] was therefore unfortunately not adorned with any memorial.”<sup>55</sup> As an unleased burial plot it was later offered for sale, and in 1918 it was purchased and re-used.<sup>56</sup>

Within a week of her death, Mr Kirkham Evans,<sup>57</sup> a fanatical opponent of Spiritualism declared at a lecture delivered in the Adelaide Young Men’s Christian Association Hall

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Residing first in Edithburgh with his sister Bertha and her husband, he moved to Adelaide in 1883. There he played with the Adelaide String Quartet, led a German choir, and became heavily involved in the Spiritualist activities in that city. In 1886 he moved to Melbourne and played with the Zerbini Quartet, considered the most respected company in the country at that time.

<sup>51</sup> ‘Transition Notes,’ *Light* No. 215 Vol. 5 February 14, 1885, p. 77. This report was taken from the *Harbinger of Light* for January 1885.

<sup>52</sup> In Psypioneer’s coverage of Wood (see <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.2February2012.pdf>) it was stated, in reliance of a report of her death in a Melbourne newspaper (*The Argus* Saturday 13 December 1884, p. 10) that she had died on Friday December 12, 1884, however, a report ‘Funeral of a ‘Medium’’ in the *South Australian Register* on Saturday 13 December 1884, p. 6, reveals the correct date of her death and funeral. Thomas Brown, a medium originally from Newcastle-on-Tyne, arrived in Adelaide two days after Wood’s death and was advised by her doctor “she had received every comfort and attention during her last illness.” ‘Mr. T. M. Brown,’ *The Medium and Daybreak* No. 786 Vol. XVI April 17, 1885 p. 249. Brown also wrote a narrative of the work Wood had done in Sydney, but was unable to get it published.

<sup>53</sup> The death notice in *The Argus* on December 13, suggests she was 26; that in *The Sydney Morning Herald* also on December 13, gives her age as 30.

<sup>54</sup> Wood was born February 5, 1852. See ‘Catharine Elizabeth Wood and Annie Fairlamb – Correcting the Record,’ <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP10.11November2014.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> Personal Correspondence dated 18 August 2014 from Matthew Adam, Team Leader Records Management, Adelaide Cemetery Authority.

<sup>56</sup> Wood was buried in Row 3, Site 4, of Plan 3, of the West Terrace Adelaide Cemetery. On February 23, 1918, the grave site was re-used to inter 28 year old Florence Annie Edna Carslake. The Adelaide Cemetery Authority has in recent years been creating a historical document about those buried at West Terrace Cemetery and now plan on adding details of Catharine Wood’s life to their official records.

<sup>57</sup> Evans alleged he had at one time been a convert to Spiritualism but its influence had been so malign he had almost lost his senses, and in an effort to expose the errors of Spiritualism had spent years investigating confirming his belief all mediums were impostors praying on the weak and the vulnerable. A tailor by trade, Evans was also an accomplished amateur conjurer (‘Clairvoyance,’ *Bunyip* (Gawler, S.A.), Friday 25 January 1889, p. 2) and mesmerist, and a member of what Evens [incorrectly] called the “British Psychological Society”, in London. According to Evans, Edward W. Cox, president of the Society, considered him to have “written the best instructions for mesmerizing” Cox had ever seen, (‘The Divining Rod,’ *South Australian Register*, Saturday 18 October 1884, p. 7). He claimed to have exposed Anna Eva Fay at a demonstration “in the Public Hall, Runcorn, Cheshire, during the week of the great Sunderland disaster” (‘Kirkham Evans and Spiritualists,’ *The Advertiser*, Tuesday 29 June 1897, p. 6).

attended by more than 1,100 people<sup>58</sup> that Miss Wood “was a trickster.”<sup>59</sup> He alleged the spirit raps heard at her séances in Adelaide were made “by means of the rings she had upon her hands,” and her “trances were all a sham.”<sup>60</sup> He had hidden in the rafters above the room where the séances were held, and there, unknown to the sitters, produced raps, rang bells, and carried out other deceptions which the sitters thought were produced by the spirits. He impersonated Pocha by making raps that, according to Evans, Miss Wood knew nothing about and therefore put them down to Mr Reimers. He on the other hand, being certain that he had not produced them, attributed them to Miss Wood. At a circle one evening when Wood was not present an accomplice of Evans seated in the séance room made knocking noises against the leg of the table, and when one of the sitters asked if it was Pocha rapping, knocked in the affirmative. Evans declared,

Miss Wood was informed of this occurrence, and at a subsequent meeting, when in a trance, Naylor [another accomplice] enquired if Pocha was present at the previous circle. The reply was – “Yes, I just looked in and rapped three times, but you were so noisy that I went away again.”

The false response on the part of the supposed spirit Evans declared proved Wood was an impostor.

When making the matter public, Evans was aware of her death, and claimed he deeply regretted speaking ill of the deceased medium, however a Mr A. Walker, in attendance at the meeting, felt compelled to reveal that “Evans had prior to Wood’s illness mentioned to him his desire to make this exposure” and had discussed the plan with Board members of the Y.M.C.A.; it was “clear, therefore, that the lecture was arranged at a date prior to Miss Wood’s decease, and it was Mr Evans intention to have delivered it while she was in the city.”<sup>61</sup>

While there is little doubt that Evans did hide in the rafters and impersonate sounds and communications from the spirits, it is less certain that his description of what occurred is entirely accurate, and his suggestion Wood used her rings to make rapping sounds and was pretending to be in trance is mere supposition on his part. Certainly, not all who attended the lecture were convinced that he had succeeded in exposing Wood, or Spiritualism, one gentleman, who was not a Spiritualist, remarking,

“I am sure that the majority of those present . . . will agree with me that he has not done so, but rather exposed and proved himself to be a mean and contemptible trickster, not worthy of such an audience as was present.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> ‘In the Rafters,’ *South Australian Register* Wednesday 24 December 1884, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> ‘In the Rafters,’ *South Australian Register* Friday 19 December 1884, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> J.A.S Letter to the Editor dated December 19, 1884, *South Australian Register*, Saturday 20 December 1884, p. 6.



That Catharine Wood had no opportunity to defend herself against the allegations, and Christian Reimers's attempts were refuted by Evans on the basis he had been duped and revealed as a gullible and credulous Spiritualist, were viewed by some, at least, as evidence of Evans's contemptible and ungentlemanly behaviour. That Evans was rather less than the reputable and honest man he claimed to be was borne out some years later, when he was obliged to hurriedly depart South Australia under cover of darkness after found to have been introducing young boys "to a knowledge of certain things of an unwholesome nature."<sup>63</sup>

The news of Catharine Wood's death did not reach England until early in February 1885, being first announced in *Light*,<sup>64</sup> incorrectly stating it had occurred in January of that year. A week later James Burns, in *The Medium and Daybreak*, in an article headed "Obituary Miss Kate Wood," reflected on her career, bemoaning her involvement in professional mediumship, and her "professional anxiety to hire herself out to be 'tested' by all and sundry," an action Burns considered to be "a great mistake."<sup>65</sup> While he thought she had been attacked wrongly at Macclesfield, and again, at Blackburn he "did not think the evidence complete against her," undoubtedly there was foul play at Peterborough, though "the circumstances were so self-convicting," that he could not "imagine the medium to have been so stupid as to wilfully place herself in the position."<sup>66</sup> Of her departure for Australia, he noted,<sup>67</sup>

It was a sad going away. Fancy it, friends! your sister leaving London to go to a far-distant colony amongst strangers, to exercise the precarious calling of a medium, and yet so destitute that she had not the wherewithal to pay her cab to the railway station! Such was the case with poor Miss Wood, utterly deserted by those who should have stood by her in her painful leave taking, and provided her with means to fulfil all obligations and see her comfortably off, if we can associate comfort with such a going off. Few strong men would have had the courage to face it.

In the same edition of *The Medium and Daybreak* one of the Spiritualists of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who knew her best, felt compelled to write,<sup>68</sup>

The news of the decease of Miss Kate Wood, physical medium . . . was received with sorrow and many expressions of regret in Newcastle-on-Tyne. She was only mortal, but her mediumship was genuine and of a very powerful nature. She herself was so convinced

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<sup>63</sup> 'Kirkham Evan's Disappearance,' *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill, NSW), Wednesday 1 August 1917, p. 6. Evans had gained considerable status in South Australia due to his involvement in the Boy Scout movement, and as General Secretary of the 'Our Boys Institute.' The allegations of his improper sexual conduct with the boys in his care caused a sensation in the colony, however, after hurriedly leaving Adelaide under cover of darkness, and subsequently relocating to America, Evans was never held accountable for his indiscretions.

<sup>64</sup> 'Transition of Miss K. E. Wood,' *Light* No. 214 Vol. V February 7, 1885 p. 62.

<sup>65</sup> 'Obituary Miss Kate Wood,' *The Medium and Daybreak* No. 776 Vol. XVI February 13, 1885, p. 102. Note: Burns wrote of his antipathy to professional mediumship on many occasions, and was notable for his earlier support of Wood, and later his condemnation.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> ATHOS, *The Medium and Daybreak* No. 776 Vol. XVI February 13, 1885, p. 102.

of its strength that she willingly submitted to any test that could be devised, and has had the honour of sitting with many scientific gentlemen in various parts of the country. There may be different opinions as to the value of professional mediumship, but I think all will agree that whether professional or not genuine mediums can be ill spared at the present time.

Curiously, it would seem that prior to any announcement of Wood's death in the Spiritualist papers, 'Annie Wilson,' a 'spirit control' of the non-professional Gateshead materialisation medium, Mrs Mary A. Hall, informed Mr C. G. Oyston and others at a sitting, "that Miss Wood had died of fever in Australia, and the news would be published in the paper at the week's end."<sup>69</sup> This was, indeed, a prediction that proved correct.

Some years later, Annie Fairlamb Mellon in an article published in *The Medium and Daybreak* would refer to a 'death pact' with her one time colleague Catharine Wood.<sup>70</sup>

I remember many years ago when Miss Wood and myself were in London holding experimental séances, we then promised each other that whoever should pass on first, would appear to the other. This promise was carried out . . . I did not take note of the date, but I know it was at the beginning of the year, and before news came of Miss Wood's decease.

One night, while in bed, Kate came to me, stood by my bed, drew aside the curtain; the room was quite dark, but in one hand she held a very bright light which illumined her face, which almost touched mine as she bent down to look at me, then instantly vanished. I felt almost fainting with fright. I know I was wide awake then, but whether it was a dream, and the fright woke me up, or it was a vision, I am not sure, but I am inclined to think it was a vision. It left on my mind an everlasting impression.

Perhaps, Catharine Wood, the medium who had been responsible for so many apparent materialisations during her career, had, in the final reckoning, become one of them herself.

© Lis J. Warwood

January, 2015.



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<sup>69</sup> C. G. Oyston, 'Biographical Sketch of Mrs. M. A. Hall, Gateshead,' *The Medium and Daybreak* No. 789 Vol. XVI May 15, 1885, pp. 305-307; p. 306. Mrs Hall was born in Leinstar, County Wexford, Ireland on March 25, 1831.

<sup>70</sup> *The Medium and Daybreak*, March 25, 1892, p. 199, quoted by Pasquale Garofano in a letter published in the 'Members Write' section of *The Ark Review*, July/August 2003, Issue 131. Kindly supplied by Paul Gaunt.

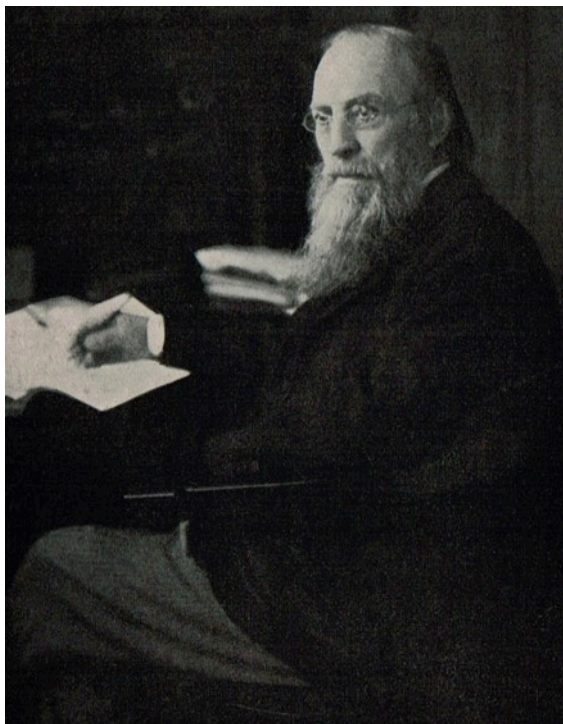
# SPR RECOGNISES DAWSON ROGERS AT LAST

The Society for Psychical Research has acknowledged Edmund Dawson Rogers as a founder in 1882. This follows a ten-year campaign by Psypioneer.

In our first issue of May 2004 we carried a lead story, “SPR was conceived by a Spiritualist” and cited evidence of the significant role played by Rogers, a journalist. He did not hold an academic position, however.<sup>71</sup>

In November 2014, we presented new evidence from both Rogers and Professor William Barrett, the other prime mover in the first meetings.<sup>72</sup>

On Christmas Eve, we were informed that the SPR had revised the history section of its web site to state:



*The SPR, the first learned society of its kind, was founded in London on 20 February 1882, following initial discussions between William Barrett and Edmund Dawson Rogers, and then a conference convened in London in January to discuss the viability of such a Society.*

This is excellent news, and we hope the S.P.R. will also mention Rogers in leaflets, etc. about its origins.

LP.

P.S. The inaugural SPR conference in January 1882 was held at the rooms of the British National Association of Spiritualists.



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<sup>71</sup> [http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP1.pdf](http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP1.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP10.11November2014.pdf>

# Helen Duncan

## Early reports of her mediumship

Early reports on the development of Helen Duncan's mediumship and of her controls/guides are somewhat sketchy and appear contradictory in the published accounts of recent years. These accounts are:

Alan Crossley *The Story of Helen Duncan*, 1975, reprinted 1999

Gena Brealey *The Two Worlds of Helen Duncan*, 1985, reprinted and revised in 2008

Manfred Cassirer *Medium on Trial The Story of Helen Duncan and The Witchcraft Act*, 1996

Mary Armour *Helen Duncan, My Living Has Not Been in Vain*, 2000

Malcolm Gaskill *Hellish Hell Last of Britain's Witches* 2001

Nina Shandler *The Strange Case of Hellish Nell*, 2006

Robert Hartley *Helen Duncan The Mystery Show Trial*, 2007



The development of Duncan's physical mediumship took place in the 1920's. A circle formed on Thursday nights, and the first sitters according to Brealey (Duncan's daughter) were Helen's husband Henry, brothers Jim & Frank Murray, and Joe Sauter. The circle was halted, according to Brealey, due to Henry having a heart attack; when it resumed it included another sitter Mrs MacLain.<sup>73</sup> This made a total of five sitters, but Crossley adds another unnamed lady (p.19).

It is difficult to say when the circle began. Crossley gives the early part of 1926, however, this does not fit in with Brealey's account as Crossley states Henry and Helen were married in 1918, and three years later Henry had his heart attack. This would mean the circle had began in the early 1920's (Brealey states her parents were married on May 27th 1919, Cassirer, Hartley, Shandler & Gaskill give 1916 but the general date remains as May 27th),<sup>74</sup> Hartley states the home circle began in September 1925 but there is no direct reference to this account.

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<sup>73</sup> Known as Mac, or Auntie Mac to the children.

<sup>74</sup> Lis Warwood confirms: "I have found the marriage record for Helen Duncan – she married Henry Duncan on May 27, 1916, when both were just 19 years old."

The first circle control was “Dr. Williams,” agreed by: Gaskill, Armour, Shandler, Brealey, and Crossley. Gaskill states “Matthew Douglas” followed Dr. Williams “... a deceased gentleman of Kirkcaldy, advised the circle to invest in a trumpet, ...” He continues: “After Matthew Douglas came the spirit of ‘Donald’, a controlling intelligence they all found unbearably lewd, not least Henry, ...” (p.81); only Gaskill states this actual order of controls.

Cassirer and Hartley state the first control was: “Matthew Douglas”. That Donald followed Dr. Williams is stated by: Crossley, Brealey, Shandler, Gaskill states: Dr. Williams recalled Donald and replaced him with Albert Stewart. Hartley further adds (p.30), “He [Stewart] organised the séances from the spirit side of life initially along with another spirit control Dr. Henry James Williamson, another Scot, purported to be a former Unitarian Minister from Mint Street, Dundee. Henry claimed to have verified these details.” It can be noted in the previous issue of *Psypioneer* “Seven Sitzings with Mrs Duncan L.S.A. – 1930-1” at the fifth sitting, on 28th November 1930:

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.

The development of full form materialisation is again uncertain, for example, Crossley states on p. 27 after Albert and Peggy had arrived:

The materialisations had by now developed from small, jelly-like forms to full human figures capable of independent thought and speech

Hartley states on page 30:

Fully formed human figures that could speak and think independently were produced at her séances. This coincided with the appearance of a control named Albert Stewart in 1929

Brealey gives a vivid account of full materialisation when the circle was under the control of Donald page 53:

He [Donald] would begin by opening the curtains of the cabinet, standing at one side while the entranced Helen sat in her upright chair. He would then ask the sitters if they could see them both, after which Helen would be asked to stand up, sit down, walk around the room, then return to sit again on her chair in the cabinet while Donald remained beside her chair ...”

The circle members around this period were asked by Donald to invite two or three visitors to the weekly circle so evidence could be given to a wider audience:

“By this time materialisation was a regular occurrence. As each materialised spirit appeared, Donald could give full name, cause of so-called death, and date of passing.”



In *Two Worlds*, September 30th 1932, James Leigh interviewed the alleged materialised form of Albert (published in *Psypioneer* February 2010<sup>75</sup>); it is worthy of a short quote here as Albert refers to “Matthew Douglas” as “Marklew Douglas”:

“When were you first brought into contact with the medium, and what attracted you?” was the first question submitted him. His voice, coming from the head of the form—personally, I was unable to distinguish the features—was both clear and pronounced.

“It is a most difficult question to answer briefly,” he said. “When I had resided on this side a number of years, I was approached by a person interested in establishing communication with earth, and I was asked whether I would like to participate in a series of experiments. The man who addressed me was called Marklew Douglas. ‘You seem to be very clever in making things,’ he said. ‘Probably you would be useful,’ I was shown the process of building materialised spirit forms so that they become visible to people in the material world. Douglas suggested that I might possibly have the gift of moulding the substance—which I call psychoplasm—into recognisable forms, and at his invitation I consented to conduct some experiments.



“I made many attempts, with varying success. Sometimes I was more successful than at others, but I persevered with the work. Later I discovered that I was not to make the semblance of a human form at all. I had only to clothe the thoughts of the people who presented themselves for materialisation. My task was simply to clothe the thought-form with psychoplasm so that it should become, for a short period, tangible and visible and ‘real’ to your senses.

“It was this work which brought me into contact with Mrs. Duncan. For her I have the highest regard; and I am grateful to the Higher Powers that this channel has been opened out to me, so that I can occasionally render strength and comfort to those who suffer the temporary loss of loved companions.”

Apart from the Duncan in-house source of material there, are no known independent reports of these early years, Henry recorded Helen’s development but after Henry’s death circa 1967 much of the documented material was lost in a fire.<sup>76</sup> What remained was used by Gena Brealey for her mother’s biography along with other family sources. Apart from the weekly visitors to the Duncan home circle alluded to above, published below is the first report introducing Helen Duncan as a physical medium, taken from *Light* October 19th 1929 page 459:

<sup>75</sup> *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No 2: February 2010: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.2February2010.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Gaskill page 44: “Harry, [eldest son] who had emigrated to Australia to lay telephone cables, took his father’s papers back home but lost most of them in a house fire.”

## A SCOTTISH MEDIUM.

By James Souter.

In June of this year I was brought into touch with Mrs. Duncan who is possessed of marked mediumistic powers. Mrs. Duncan commenced sitting in private circles some six or seven years ago and has developed almost every phase of mediumship and each in turn to a very high degree. Clairvoyance and clairsaudience are second nature to her. She has not been known to give a psychometrical reading that was not absolutely correct. Written questions put in sealed envelopes she can at once decipher and give the valid answers to them. Other phenomena, including slate writing, levitations and apports would require pages of this journal if properly described. Incidentally she is a remarkable trumpet Medium, but what is more important is the materialisations which have taken place since she developed this type of phenomenon in March of this year.

The forms build up clearly and distinctly (as many as fourteen have manifested at one sitting); they speak clearly, giving their names and other convincing particulars, answer satisfactorily all questions put to them, they handle objects both light and heavy play musical instruments. They have brought articles from other rooms and other houses at a distance apart. The Guides, three in number, are good hard-headed, canny Scotsmen who know what they are about, carry out their part with precision and dignity and have a right sense of their responsibility. Mr. J. B. McIndoe, of Glasgow, and Mr. Herbert Hill,<sup>77</sup> president of the Bon Accord Spiritualist Church witnessed these materialisations and were so impressed that they have invited Mrs. Duncan to give a series of séances in Glasgow.

We can note in this independent report, materialisation is stated as starting in March 1929. The reports I have referred to state that the control Donald was brief, and some of the writers do not mention him. Hartley states Albert's appearance was in 1929. Souter refers to the "Guides, three in number, are good hard-headed, canny Scotsmen ..." It may appear that Albert's strong authoritative personality was not yet present and in full control? We have previously mentioned the part played by Spiritualists' National Union president John McIndoe, but this report precedes his presidency by over a year. James Souter further notes in *Light* November 9th 1929 page 533:

Sir,—Since my article appeared in *LIGHT* there have been many inquiries from all parts of the country regarding Mrs. Duncan's mediumship.

I have replied to most of these direct. I would, however, like to inform all interested that Mrs. Duncan has at present no intention of travelling. Sittings for materialisations are to be held in the Masonic Temple, Dundee, every Sunday for the next few months. These séances are to be restricted to one per week and strictly limited to twelve sitters. We find that in these conditions the phenomena continue to improve, and several ladies and gentlemen of wide experience have considered they have been amply repaid for making the journey north.—Your

JAMES SOUTAR. [*Sic*]

26. Ellengowan Drive, Dundee.

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<sup>77</sup> Scottish District Council: Aberdeen Bon-Accord National Spiritualist Church, Room No. 2, Shepherd's Hall, Union Terrace, Aberdeen. President: Herbert Hill. Hon. Secretary and Treasurer: Mrs Bowman, 4 Claremont Place, Aberdeen.



With the appearance of Albert Stewart (spelt Steward by Cassirer), came the child guide/control “Peggy” some reports suggest at the same time, others a little later. Cassirer publishes a photograph of Peggy in his book *Medium on Trial* as shown: “Peggy” Helen Duncan’s child control, materialises.” See *Psypioneer* May 2013.<sup>78</sup>

In Crossley’s book reference is made (also mentioned by Gaskill), to Harvey Metcalfe who took the first flashlight photographs around 1928. It clearly states (Crossley) that the materialisations were experimental and were not intended to resemble deceased persons. These photographs would later cause considerable controversy; numerous publications would associate the rather grotesque images as that of Peggy as did Cassirer, as is indeed the case today, on some of the web sites.<sup>79</sup>

So how do these dates fit in?

Alan Crossley page 33: Mr Metcalfe supplied me with the following statement:

“I screened about fifty glass positives for Mrs Duncan showing physical phenomena while she was in the trance state. These were in the early stages of her development.

“It was obvious that she had God-given gifts in this direction and I had many sittings with her solely to help her develop the mediumship from about 1928. Latterly, she gave semi-public séances to many groups of people, particularly during the Second World War. I knew her spirit guide, Albert, and the child guide, Peggy. I had many conversations with them. All the séances were conducted under test conditions.

“My wife and mother-in-law also had sittings with Mrs Duncan. At these sittings I saw both Albert and Peggy separate from the medium. Peggy as a materialized form, was seen to dance, romp, laugh and sing. From my experience, I feel that Mrs Duncan was one of the greatest and most sincere mediums of the twentieth century.”

(signed) HARVEY METCALFE, F. C. I. S.”

<sup>78</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 9, No 05: May 2013

<sup>79</sup> This site is a good example, claiming this image to be Peggy. The séance date of 1933 which is incorrect, as is the birth date: <http://www.spiritarchive.org/helen-duncan--full-materializations.html>

Or Michael Prescott’s Blog: Scottish materialization medium Helen Duncan extrudes her ectoplasmic spirit guide, “Peggy.” [http://michaelprescott.typepad.com/michael\\_prescotts\\_blog/2007/06/not-so-great-mo.html](http://michaelprescott.typepad.com/michael_prescotts_blog/2007/06/not-so-great-mo.html)



It is apparent this statement was written some years later. Below is an interesting article that appeared in the *Two Worlds* September 5th 1930 page 570:

## **THE MEDIUMSHIP OF MRS. DUNCAN**

By HARVEY METCALFE, Dipl. S.N.U.

ON August 20th I was present at a, materialization séance in Dundee with Mrs. H. Duncan as the medium. There were 12 sitters—8 gentlemen and 4 ladies—and, in addition, the medium and her husband.

The room and furniture were examined by some of the men present; a coil of light rope was put near the cabinet, and the medium was seated there in a small armchair, and was seen to go into a trance before the curtain of the cabinet was lowered. An oil lamp, shaded by red and orange coloured sheets of glass, was lighted, and the gas light extinguished. The light was the brightest I have seen used at a physical séance. Standing about five feet from the cabinet throughout the séance, I could see some of the sitters quite distinctly.

On occasions the medium groaned involuntarily, and a guide, named Albert Stewart, materialized, slapped his chest with his right hand, and snapped his thumbs. This form was about 5ft. 10ins. in height, but the face looked smashed, and was less visible than the rest of the body. The voice was a cultured one, and the form spoke in great anger to a critic who was present. The materialized guide brought out the medium from the cabinet, and stood by her side, an ectoplasmic cord being seen to come from the mouth of the medium, and was attached to the form. The medium was brought out from the cabinet twice during the séance by the same guide, there being an interval of 45 minutes between the occasions. As I stood just by the lamp I could see the hands of my watch quite plainly. After the medium had been put back into her chair by the guide, the curtains closed, after which the form of a child appeared, waving its hand, and carrying a ball under the other arm. This was followed by the materialization of a lady, who did not succeed in establishing definite communication with any sitter. A psychic rod, which I judged to be 4ft. long and 3 to 4ins. wide, exuded from the cabinet and moved about, but this was only visible for about a minute.

The materialized form of Albert Stewart came again and asked a gentleman sitter to stretch out his leg, and, having done so, he very quickly unlaced the sitter's boot, and put it upon his own materialized right foot, returning to the cabinet, then walking two short paces from it, tapping the floor with the boot. The form quickly lifted his right leg in the air, and the boot was flung across the room at the same time, at which the medium groaned heavily. The guide said that he would tie up the medium, and I estimate that the tying-up process would take about eight minutes. The medium, who was unbound when the sitting commenced, was found to have her wrists tied behind her with a light rope; arms and legs were also bound to the chair, and the rope had been passed between her knees and under the chair, all of which had been very skilfully done, for she was literally trussed up at the end of the sitting.

The observations and examination of the medium were so good that there was no doubt about the phenomena being absolutely genuine. The medium was in trance for about ten minutes after the séance, and during this time the medium was untied. She was in a very exhausted state, and blood was smeared over her chin.

One regular attender at the séance told me the phenomena were not so strong as usual, but, from my own experience—and I have sat with most physical mediums in the country—I must say that I have never seen so much ectoplasm. I would go so far as to suggest that, from accounts given to me by a relation of Sir William Crookes, there is probably a similarity between the phenomena produced in the presence of Mrs. Duncan and the “Katie King” phenomena produced with Florrie Cook, and I consider that photographs and evidence of equal value might possibly be obtained. A sitter told me that the ectoplasm exuding from Mrs. Duncan did not recoil from light, but I have no means of testing this.

My reason for dictating these incidents of the sitting while they are fresh in my mind, and forwarding them for publication, is to appeal to sympathetic groups of people or churches in the movement itself to study this lady’s mediumship more closely, and, while publicity is sometimes detrimental to the materializing medium, it is essential in this case that the medium should receive sympathetic encouragement, protection from investigators who may attend a séance for the first time, and from any circumstances that may result in her mediumship being lost to the movement or to scientific investigation.

Great credit is undoubtedly due to those who have assisted Mrs. Duncan in her mediumistic development, but there is a vital need for some advisory committee with funds at their disposal to assist and encourage psychics, without interfering too much with personal liberty. No doubt a live committee of this kind will come with the consolidation of the movement. At the present there is an unfortunate need for it.

This is clearly an observation from an experienced sitter; we can note he was a diploma holder of the Spiritualists’ National Union. This is the earliest published detailed report I have seen which mentions Albert Stewart, and it pre-dates the London Spiritualist Alliance reports later in the same year. The question is – is this gentleman the same Harvey Metcalfe who took the 1928 circa photographs etc! If so, given the context of the article, it strongly suggests that up until this séance dated August 20th 1930, Metcalfe had not carried out his photographic experiments etc., with Duncan!

## **Peggy Hazzeldine**

Information on Peggy can be traced more easily but it is easy to jump to conclusions in her early introduction into the Duncan séance room, as other young children appeared quite often. For example, in the above Metcalfe article we can note:

After the medium had been put back into her chair by the guide, the curtains closed, after which the form of a child appeared, waving its hand, and carrying a ball under the other arm.

We can further note at the fourth sitting in November 1930 LSA series of séances featured in the previous issue of *Psypioneer*:

Later a little figure, about three feet high, appeared in the centre and curtsied 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!”

One is tempted to say this is Peggy, I have noted Hartley gives 1929 for the introduction of Albert. Hartley continued:

Later, Albert was to run the séances with a young girl form named ‘Peggy’ Hazzeldine. She had died a few weeks’ earlier aged three years, and she claim to know Dr. Rust, a family friend who had attended her. It was claimed that Peggy’s mother and father, a market gardener from Kirkton Mains, Dundee were quite satisfied as to the identity of the child. Peggy’s mother Lena Hazzeldine, of Dundee confirmed that Peggy was indeed her daughter who appeared in Mrs. Duncan’s séances to her knowledge up to 1941, when Mrs. Hazzeldine stopped sitting.

Cassirer makes a similar statement on page 166-167:

The obscurity of her life on earth is commensurate with its brevity. On the first appearance of the chief control, or shortly afterwards, Helen’s ectoplasm is said to have taken on the final form of a young girl who “said that her name was Peggy Hazzeldine and that she knew Dr Rust”. It then transpired that a small female child by that name had died a few weeks earlier at Dundee. Rust, to whom she now sent a message, had been her doctor. Her parents were contacted and often communicated with her. Confirmation of this point is contained in a letter from Lena, who wrote to *Two Worlds* from an address in William Street, Dundee, in 1956 after Helen’s own death. In her letter, Mrs Hazzeldine categorically states that her daughter had been Mrs Duncan’s control *up to 1941* but had ceased to make her appearance after that date by which time she herself had stopped sitting. She describes her own séances prior to 1941 as “most evidential and beautiful”. On receiving a communication to the effect that her daughter was being “withdrawn”—of which she had been previously warned—she straightaway informed Mrs Duncan. Of this she had ample proof. Special messages were often sent to her; they were “always most evidential” as well as “beautiful”. After the crucial deadline she continued to receive some supposedly from “Peggy”. However, they were now “very far from being the truth”. She complained to the medium, but got no reply, and the letters ceased.

Graham Moffat mentions Peggy at the 1931 LSA series of experimental séances. He may possibly be referring to his sitting on March 17th 1931.<sup>80</sup> Below is taken from the *Two Worlds* September 18th 1931 page 598:

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<sup>80</sup> The CPS archivist reports “The LSA verbatim séance records list the Moffats at the sitting, of 17th March 1931: the sitters were Mrs. Addie, Dr. Margaret Vivian, Mr. Graham Moffat, Mrs. Moffat, Miss Moffat, Major R.C. Firebrace, Dr E.S. Reid, Baron K-de Trairup, Mr. Frank H. Nimmo, Mr. Staveley Bulford, Mrs. Clifton Allen, Mrs. Lean, Mr. Miller and Miss Phillimore. To illustrate the scope for numbering confusion, this is there described on the typescript as the Third Series and these are called Tuesday sittings. This was the first of that Series, though as there was more than one series running at once, it is possible that in another sense it was the second sitting! In his letter to LIGHT, Moffat calls it the first. I have not noticed that from verbatim records that Moffat was present at another sitting. Incidentally, there was discussion of chocolate on 17 March, though Moffat’s recollection does not entirely agree with the verbatim record. As promised apparently, Major Firebrace

## THE DUNCAN MEDIUMSHIP.

### GRAHAM MOFFAT'S TESTIMONY.

WRITING in "Light" of the 4th inst., Mr. Graham Moffat, the distinguished playwright, says:—

There was at least one very successful public sitting with Mrs. Duncan at the London Spiritualist Alliance rooms —the first. I was seated in the best position for seeing and hearing, not four feet from the centre opening of the cabinet curtain.

The supposed "cheese cloth" on that occasion took the form of a long kimono-like dress that looked as though it had just come from the laundry, and the supposed "rubber glove" had a daintily tucked sleevelet between it and the medium's mouth. This had all the appearance of having been ironed and dressed for the occasion. Should it ever be proved that these things were swallowed and regurgitated I am prepared to believe that when the whale regurgitated Jonah, the prophet found himself ready to go on to Ninevah dressed in spotless linen.

One wonders if the investigators ever saw and conversed with clever little "Peggy," mentioned by Dr. Margaret Vivian in her letter to you. This materialised child had a spirited and amusing conversation with my daughter, and she finished her diverting performance by asking for and taking a drink of water from the hand of Miss Phillimore. If dancing, singing, reciting and talking little "Peggy" was a regurgitation, then Mrs. Duncan should be on the halls swallowing rubbish and disgorging it as apparently live children for the amusement of the public.

There were two other materialisations at the sitting, both of young girls of about ten and thirteen respectively. Both shook hands with the sitters they had come for, and these hands were reported to be warm and life-like. I saw the bare arm and delicate little fingers of the younger girl, and can vouch for the fact that they looked just like those of a young girl. Mrs. Duncan is about sixteen stone weight, so that personation is out of the question. The movements of their fingers were very graceful, and carried the conviction that living bodies moved beneath the swaying skirts.

It is obvious from the published official report that at this sitting open to members of the L.S.A. and their friends, phenomena were obtained which were denied to the committee of investigators. Why? I wonder! If we can find the answer to that query we shall know how best to obtain and foster physical mediumship in the future.

GRAHAM MOFFAT.

The Warren, Sandhurst, Berks.

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brought a chocolate biscuit for Peggy at a séance on 24 March, But Albert said she was not present. It is clearly desirable to publish these verbatim records."

On the front page of the *Two Worlds* November 27th 1931, Graham Moffat further reports on his experiences with “The Duncan Mediumship”. It can be noted that he first sat with Duncan in around mid-1929. Below are two quotes from his article:

I FIRST sat with Mrs. Duncan in Perth over two years ago. The light was too dim for proper observation, and I cannot say that I was satisfied with the sitting. The figures did not seem sufficiently three dimensional; that is, they had width, but not enough. The voices we heard might, or might not, have come from them. The only materialisation that fairly satisfied me as an observer was that of a child of about two years of age who came slowly towards me. As the lamp was placed just to my left, and nearer the cabinet than I was, I had as good a view as was possible under the circumstances. I held out my hands to the figure, saying, “Come away.” At that the little spirit seemed to take fright, and turning, hurried back to the cabinet. Just before she disappeared someone asked her name, and a childish voice answered, “Peggy.”

Dr. Rust informed Moffat of the London LSA séances and he lost no time in securing a sitting for his wife and daughter at the first public séance. This appears to be the same one as his previous published report above; the second quote from the article shows a more confident Peggy. Moffat noted: “Mrs. Duncan was stripped, searched, put into a one-piece garment, and led straight to the cabinet on all occasions. The light was good, so that all could see”:

Then came “Peggy,” but not the same Peggy. She seemed to have grown in spirit land, and now looked to be about five years old. She came to the centre opening for a moment or two, and I had a good look at her. She next appeared at our right, where she pushed back the curtain. My daughter, Winifred sat on the end seat, and had the best view of her. Some of the sitters left their seats and gathered near the little spirit visitor. Conversation took place as follows:—

Q: What is your name?

Spirit: Peggy.

Q: Why did you not stay at the centre?

Spirit: The light burns me.

Compare this with what Florence Marryat says about the Katie King incident when they turned up the gas, and the spirit shrivelled up like a wax doll in a powerful heat. Asked at a later sitting what it felt like, Katie replied that it was like being burned alive.

Mrs. Moffat: Will you sit on my knee?

Peggy: I’ll no’ get.

As this puzzled some of the sitters, I explained that it was Scotch for “I won’t be permitted.”

Miss Moffat: Are you the little girl who spoke to my cousin in Dundee?

Peggy: What’s her name?

Miss Moffat: Nell.

Peggy: Nell what?

Miss Moffat: Moffat.

Peggy: Oh, big little Miss Moffat. “ Little Miss Muffet, she sat on a tuffet,” etc., etc. She makes hats and bonnets. I told her I would go home with her, and I did.

This proved to be correct. My niece had had a sitting with Mrs. Duncan in Dundee, at which Peggy had stated that she would go home with her. That night, as soon as my niece got into bed, the bed was violently shaken. Being scared, she mentally ordered her spirit visitor away, and the shaking ceased. At Mrs. Duncan's next séance, at which my niece was not present, Peggy asked, "Where is Miss Moffat?" and was informed that she was at home. "Well," said Peggy, "I went home with her that night, but she wouldn't let me get into bed with her." My niece had not mentioned the incident to anyone.

Peggy: I can dance and say nursery rhymes.

A Male Sitter: Will you shake hands with me?

Peggy: If you give me your hand, I'll do "This Little Pig Went to Market" on it.

Peggy got a round of applause for this performance, the final "Wee, Wee, Wee," in her childish treble being very effective. The gentleman on being asked what Peggy's hand felt like, reported that she only touched his fingers with one of hers, but that it felt quite natural.

Peggy: I like chocolate biscuits.

Miss Phillimore: I'm sorry I haven't got a chocolate biscuit. Would you like a drink of water?

Peggy: Yes.

Miss Phillimore then put some water in a glass. Peggy took it from her hand, and those of us who were not in a position to see for ourselves were assured by Miss Phillimore that she saw her drink it.

In a letter from one of my nieces, who is a doctor in Glasgow, I am informed that Peggy in her presence ate a chocolate biscuit. The old-time materialised spirits could eat and drink. So can Peggy.

I have reported enough to show that Peggy is a real personality. Her body seems as solid as that of any living girl of her age; her movements are natural and unconstrained; her features, however, are ill-defined, as if seen through a veil; but her mouth is mobile and natural in expression, as reported recently by Mr. Ernest Oaten.

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Reported in the *Two Worlds* September 25th 1936 page 618 "Spirit Eats an Apple", by Mary Winifride Slater. Below is a quote from the article:

Near the conclusion of the séance, Peggy, Mrs. Duncan's child control, appeared. She chatted happily with everyone and asked for an apple, which she ate with great enjoyment; after this she demanded a second, which she also munched audibly and with evident appreciation. The remains of these apples were shown to us afterwards; *they bore the distinct marks of a child's teeth.*

Before a recent séance I took the sketch of Peggy, which is reproduced above, and showed it to Mrs. Duncan. "Oh no," she said, "that is not like Peggy; you have made her face look much too old!"





When Peggy materialised during the séance, I said to her, “Do you like the picture I have drawn of you, Peggy?” “Yes, it is very good indeed,” she replied emphatically.

“Mummie Duncan doesn’t ken a bit what I look like *now*. She thinks I am still like that photograph of me when I was *three*.” She drew herself up to her full height, and slapped her chest proudly. “I am not *three*,” she cried disdainfully. “I am *ten*!”

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Unlike most child guides/controls it can be noted, looking through various reports over the years, that Peggy does actually age relatively, a good example is in Charles Loseby’s cross-examination of the prosecution witness Elijah Fowler in the 1944 Duncan trial:<sup>81</sup>

Q. Evidence has been given that this figure, purporting to be the child Peggy, came out from the cabinet. Did you yourself see everything fairly clearly?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What size figure did it appear to you to be; Peggy, I am referring to?

A. In height, about the average height of, say a girl of sixteen or seventeen.

But yet it is stated in some reports the real Peggy Hazzeldine only appeared in Duncan’s séances up to 1941 as noted by Hartley in this article. Cassirer expands on this (p. 166-167):

In her letter,<sup>82</sup> Mrs Hazzeldine categorically states that her daughter had been Mrs Duncan’s control *up to 1941* but had ceased to make her appearance after that date by which time she herself had stopped sitting.

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<sup>81</sup> Taken from pages 72-73: “The Trial of Mrs Duncan”, by C. E. Bechhofer Roberts published 1945 by Jarrolds, London.

<sup>82</sup> Cassirer’s only reference is: “to *Two Worlds* from an address in William Street, Dundee, in 1956” (after Duncan’s death). He further adds: “Controls have a strange habit of fading out suddenly, not incompatible with Mrs Hazzeldine’s, for the latter merely asserts that the “true” Peggy was no longer in evidence after 1941. She does not deny that an entity still *claiming* to be her had appeared. On the contrary, there were continued messages from daughter to mother, only their quality had deteriorated to a point where they had ceased to be viable as emanating from an authentic source. The whole matter is certainly curious and largely unresolved with its apparent or real contradictions.”

This presumably at this time was not public knowledge and not published in the Spiritualist press, as no doubt the prosecution would have used this against Duncan in her trial. It can be confirmed that apart from the 1941 date, Peggy's mother Lena Hazzeldine made this claim in a letter dated July 26th 1945 to the editor (Barbanell) of *Psychic News*, but am unable to confirm if or not this was published.<sup>83</sup> Peggy would continue to allegedly appear after this date at the Duncan séances well into the 1950's.

To: The Editor.  
Psychic News Ltd.

Dear Sir,

I have been informed that Mrs. Duncan is once again holding materialization séances, and that my daughter "Peggy" is supposedly appearing.

I am in constant touch with my daughter "Peggy" who speaks to me directly through a medium of unblemished character, and she tells me that she never appears to Mrs. Duncan's séances now.

This fact I was aware of prior to Mrs. Duncan's trial and conviction, but remembering the many beautiful séances I attended when Mrs. Duncan conducted herself differently, I have not let this fact be known.

Now, however, in view of existing circumstances, I wish it to be known and I am therefore writing to ask you to insert the following notice in *Psychic News*:

"Mrs. Hazzeldine wishes it to be known that if a child purporting to be Peggy Hazzeldine appears at Mrs. Duncan's séances now, it is not her daughter, but an impersonation"

I have been deeply hurt and annoyed on many occasions when I have heard that a child purporting to be mine had been saying rude things and always when I questioned Peggy I was told it was not her but Mrs. Duncan.

As I refuse to have any correspondence on this matter, please on no account give my address to anyone. I let you have it as a guarantee of good faith.

Yours truly,

(Sgd) H. J. Hazzeldine.

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<sup>83</sup> The letter is archived at the "Britten Memorial Museum", The Arthur Findlay College, Stansted Hall, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex: <http://www.arthurfindlaycollege.org/>



Lis Warwood has kindly searched for the date of Peggy's death; the above letter (carbon copy) is typed and the letter H was not one hundred percent clear:

I believe the first initial in the letter is an "H" and the second is clearly "J" – this would tend to confirm the only death of a child with the surname Hazzeldine in Dundee (or elsewhere in Scotland) in the relevant period – the child, recorded as Margaret Mabel Hazzeldine, died 1929 aged 3 years, father William Sydney Hazzeldine, mother Helen Jane Hazzeldine (maiden surname White). I have attached an image of the death record.

Hartley stated: "It was claimed that Peggy's mother and father, a market gardener from Kirkton Mains, Dundee ..." We can note on the death certificate shown below William Hazzeldine was a market gardener from Kirkton Mains, Dundee which confirms Hartley's statement. I believe there is little doubt this is the death certificate for Margaret known as Peggy Hazzeldine.<sup>84</sup>

Mary Winifride Slater's inspirational sketch of Peggy as shown dated 1936: "I am not *three*," she cried disdainfully. "I am *ten*!" would be correct. The other example given in the courtroom in 1944: "A. In height, about the average height of, say a girl of sixteen or seventeen." Peggy would have been around 17/18 depending when her birthday fell.

**1929 HAZZELDINE, MARGARET M (Statutory Deaths 282/02 0386)**  
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—Page 129.—

1929. DEATHS in the District of St. Clement in the Burgh of Dundee

No.	Name and Surname. Rank or Profession, and whether Single, Married, or Widowed.	When and Where Died.	Sex.	Age.	Name, Surname, & Rank or Profession of Father. Name, and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Cause of Death, Duration of Disease, and Medical Attendance by whom certified.	Signature & Qualification of Informant, and Residence, if not of the House in which the Death occurred.	When and where Registered, and Signature of Registrar.
385	Alexis Gibson Henderson	1929. March Twenty-second 8 <sup>th</sup> 25 <sup>th</sup> PM Kings Cross Hospital (at 139a Great Street) Dundee	F	5 years	Charles Albert Henderson Farm Worker Doris Ann Henderson MRS. Reid	Septicæmia Infantaria as cert. by J. Macleod M.B., Ch.B.	Charles R. Henderson Father 1 Gray Street Locks Dundee	1929. March 23 <sup>rd</sup> At Dundee W.H. Philip Registrar.
386	Margaret Mabel Hazzeldine	1929. March Twenty-third 7 <sup>th</sup> 5 <sup>th</sup> AM Royal Infirmary (at Kirkton Mains) Dundee	F	3 years	William Sydney Hazzeldine Market Gardener Helen Jane Hazzeldine MRS. White	Parvotuberculosis Pneumonia Alimentary Claude (Laparotomy) Subcutaneous Pyæmia as cert. by A. Scott M.B., Ch.B.	William Sydney Hazzeldine Father Kirkton Mains Dundee	1929. March 25 <sup>th</sup> At Dundee W.H. Philip Registrar.
387	Hugh Gorland	1929. March Twenty-third 10 <sup>th</sup> 40 <sup>th</sup> PM 22 Elatherson Labourer Employed to Ann Russell Street Dundee	M	76 years	Hugh Gorland Margaret Weaver (deceased) Ann Gorland MRS. H. Leane (deceased)	Senility Myocarditis as cert. by J. Freeman Black M.B., Ch.B.	James Gorland Son Dundee	1929. March 25 <sup>th</sup> At Dundee W.H. Philip Registrar.

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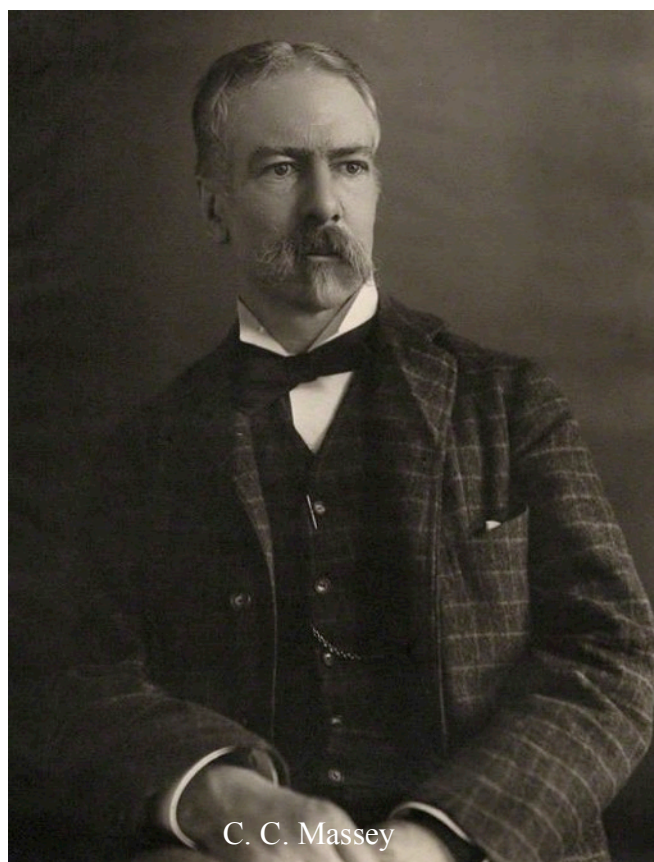
W.H. Philip Registrar.

—~S~—

<sup>84</sup> The name Margaret has a variety of different nicknames. Some are obvious, as in Meg, Mog and Maggie, while others are downright strange, like Daisy. But it's the Mog/Meg we want to concentrate on here as those nicknames later morphed into the rhymed forms Pog(gy) and Peg(gy). Other examples see:

[https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=peggy+nickname&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&gws\\_rd=cr&ei=5XP5ViveMcqd7Abr-4EY](https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=peggy+nickname&ie=utf-8&oe=utf-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=5XP5ViveMcqd7Abr-4EY)

# MOSES, MASSEY AND THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY<sup>85</sup>



It is well known that when the Theosophical Society was formed in New York in 1875, prominent Spiritualists, such as Alfred Russel Wallace, became members, though some (like Wallace) did not stay long. These Spiritualists were often mentioned critically in the Mahatma Letters, especially C. C. Massey, who had been in New York when the T.S. started, and Stainton Moses. (The Mahatma Letters were received chiefly from 1880-5 and are seminal sources for early Theosophical teaching.<sup>86</sup>)

In a recent commentary on the Mahatma Letters, *Reflections on an Ageless Wisdom* (Quest, T.P.H. Wheaton, 2010), Joy Mills states “Both Moses and Massey resigned their membership of the Society after the infamous Hodgson Report was published.” (p.61) Reference to pioneer Theosophical literature shows, however, that this is not correct.

Let us first trace the link between the founders of the T.S. and Stainton Moses through the “Short History” compiled by Josephine Ransom beginning in 1875(p.80):

The first meeting under the name “The Theosophical Society” was called by Henry S. Olcott, President *pro tem.*, for 16 Oct. in the spacious drawing-rooms of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, the widely known Spiritualist. It was announced that the Bye-laws were ready, and that Mr. Felt, if in town, would continue his Egyptological lectures, also that the officers would be elected. Col. Olcott was in the Chair and J. S. Cobb acted as Secretary. After discussion and various alterations, the Bye-laws were adopted.

After this meeting H. P. B. left for Ithaca to stay with her friends Prof. and Mrs. Corson. Here she went on with her incessant writing—articles for the press, for the *Spiritual Scientist* and especially for the Russian papers, by means of which she earned her living. She was as well preparing the material for the book called *Isis Unveiled*. Added to all this

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<sup>85</sup> Much of the material below is taken from *A Short History of The Theosophical Society* compiled by Josephine Ransom. Preface by G. S. Arundale published by The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, 1938. Original footnotes have been retained, with those added by Psypioneer specified.

<sup>86</sup> The best way to study these letters is the chronological edition: <http://www.adyarbooks.com/books/mahatma-letters-a-p-sinnet-hard-cover> Earlier editions tried to arrange the letters by theme, and could be confusing. LP

was her immense correspondence. To each correspondent she wrote at length on questions asked or points raised. One correspondent was a brilliant English writer and well-known medium, the Rev. Wm. Stainton Moseyn (Moses),<sup>87</sup> who developed remarkable psychic gifts. He wrote under the pen-name of “M. A. (Oxon.).” His “spirit guide” he knew as “Imperator,” and there seems little doubt that the real Imperator was the great Elder Brother, the Master Jesus, for whom Moses had the profoundest devotion, but whose identity as “Guide” he doubted, because of the likelihood of impersonation, and his own tendency to confuse Imperator with the vision of his own higher Self.<sup>88</sup>

The training of Stainton Moses was part of a larger plan for “the manifestation of occult philosophy to the world.” This training was entrusted to H. P. B., who from time to time appeared to him in London, while she was living in the United States.<sup>89</sup> He joined the young Society, and though he resigned later on, he remained a friend of the Founders.

Mrs Ransom later discusses how in 1877 the British Theosophical Society was foreshadowed. (p.98ff.)

In September Stainton Moses (M. A., Oxon.) wrote to H. P. B. saying that Capt. F. G. Irwin, who had been made a corresponding member during the previous month, wanted to form a Branch of The Theosophical Society in England, with elaborate ritual, music, aromatic gums and the rest. (This was apparently the idea of using the Sat Bhai Order in connection with The Society, and the fact that John Yarker was already in correspondence with H. P. B. about it confirms this.)

She adds:

As early as January 1877, C. C. Massey and others who were members of The Society were meeting occasionally in London. There was a Secretary of the group and they read and discussed papers. Several of them felt that the aggressive policy towards established religions was injurious within and fruitless without, and that slowly building up by self-culture and self-discipline was the real thing needed to which they could uncompromisingly pledge themselves.<sup>90</sup> C. C. Massey wrote to H. P. B. in the same strain—they felt they could not pledge themselves to active opposition to any form of religion, and asked, “Could not our Society confine itself to study and obligatory self-discipline in life and mind?”<sup>91</sup> He said they were quite resolved to form an affiliated Society, if they were allowed more liberty than Col. Olcott contemplated.

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<sup>87</sup> This supposed original surname was mentioned by Olcott in his *Old Diary Leaves*; it may derive from some point made by Moses in their correspondence. LP

<sup>88</sup> It is not clear who thought Imperator was Jesus. Certainly not Moses, who had been told by Imperator that Imperator had been the Old Testament Malachi, and that Malachi worked under the guidance of another biblical prophet Elijah. See for example Pyspioneer July 2012: *The “Controls” of Stainton Moses “Characters of the Bible”* – A. W. Trethewy: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.7July2012.pdf> LP.

<sup>89</sup> Stainton Moses, Letters to H. P. B.

<sup>90</sup> Miss E. Kislingbury to H. P. B., Nov. 1877.

<sup>91</sup> C. C. Massey to H. P. B., Dec. 1877.

Miss Kislingbury was very active in trying to promote the sale of *Isis Unveiled*. She more than once urged H. P. B. to settle in London, where a group of disciples would rally round her. She also intimated quite frankly that neither Stainton Moses nor Massey was prepared to undertake any “propaganda.”

On 11 December, Cobb, Massey, Stainton Moses (Moseyn) and Miss Kislingbury met at 38, Great Russell Street, with Miss Kislingbury as Secretary to the meeting. Cobb read the instructions from Col. Olcott, and both Moses and Massey dissented from that part recommending propaganda; the latter protested against the change in these instructions from the articles of The Theosophical Society as at first established. The Meeting resolved that—

(1) The statement in the Bye-laws expresses substantially the platform which this meeting of London Fellows accepts. *viz.*: “Whatever may be the private opinions of its members, the society has no dogmas to enforce, no creed to disseminate. It is formed neither as Spiritualistic schism, nor to serve as the foe or friend of any sectarian or philosophic body. Its only axiom is the omnipotence of truth, its only creed a profession of unqualified devotion to its discovery and propagation. In considering the qualifications of applicants for membership, it knows neither race, sex, colour, country, nor creed.”<sup>92</sup>

(2) That no religious propaganda of any kind is within their contemplation.

(3) They desire to devote themselves to the ancient philosophies, and to the cultivation of the spiritual life and practice as may conduce to the higher development of the innate powers of the human spirit.

(4) In their opinion, in the formation of a Branch Society in Great Britain, the Fellows should have, so far as is compatible with union with the Parent Society, liberty of action and development.

Massey wrote that he supposed The Society to be designed for “the initiation of its members into the deeper mysteries of life, and for the attainment of spiritual powers and knowledge through study and discipline, and by all the means of experiment and self-culture which might commend themselves to persons prepared to subordinate all the lower propensities and motives of their nature to the pursuit of these sublime ends.’ He was quite prepared to make the effort to subordinate the physical to the spiritual self. But he could not undertake to pledge himself to a religious philosophy which he imperfectly understood; nor did he wish to accept unreservedly to devote himself to the sort of missionary life that might be chosen for him by his Superiors in the Society. . . . He felt there were possible depths in Christianity which he had not yet probed, which might prove to be identical with that of the Eastern religions. He felt The Society would be more worthily exercised in combating the prevalent and encroaching Materialism than in a superfluous assault upon theological errors, however gross and mischievous, which the tendencies of modern thought were fast consigning to ridicule and discredit. The spiritual interests of mankind, at least of Western peoples, were in far more danger from Materialism, enforced by so-called scientific authority, than from enfeebled theologies.

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<sup>92</sup> Scrapbook, I.

He submitted that the public objects of The Society should be: (1) to combat Materialism; (2) to reform and enlighten Spiritualism; (3) to advance the science of psychology. As he recognised in these objects the highest use to which individuals could be subservient, in the present state of the world, he would for their sake be content to surrender his independence to Generals whom he believed to be competent leaders. He further suggested that the formation of a Branch in London should be held over pending the arrival of the President's final decision.<sup>93</sup>

Miss Kislingbury concurred, noting that a platform similar to that originally occupied by The Theosophical Society as set forth in its Preamble and Bye-Laws would be more conformable to the views of the English Fellows and more conducive to the ends they hoped to attain. From such a platform she was prepared to work heartily for the formation and support of a Branch Theosophical Society.

Though Dr. Storer Cobb assisted in the formation of the Branch he did not join it, nor did Mrs. Billings. Both preferred to retain their membership in the "Parent Society," "*the Society*," of which membership was lost upon joining a Branch.<sup>94</sup>

Another account of the formalities in starting the B.T.S. was given by Col. Olcott in his *Old Diary Leaves*. It is in volume one, in the chapter *Last Days in New York*

The formation of the British Theosophical Society, in London (now called the London Lodge, T. S.), occupied a good deal of my attention during the early summer months of 1878. This, our first Branch, was finally organised on June 27, by Dr. J. Storer Cobb, LL.D., Treasurer of the T. S., whose visit to London at the time was availed of to make him my official agent for this purpose. Mr. Sinnett has kindly favoured me with the following copy of the record of the proceedings, from the Minute Book of the Lodge in his official custody; which I publish, because of its historical interest:

#### MEETING OF FELLOWS.

Held at 38 Great Russell Street, London, June 27, 1878.<sup>95</sup> Present: Fellows, J. Storer Cobb, Treasurer (New York Society), C. C. Massey, Dr. C. Carter Blake, Dr. George Wyld, Dr. H. J. Billing, and E. Kislingbury. Fellow J. Storer Cobb in the chair, read letters from Mr. Yarker, Dr. K. Mackenzie, Captain Irwin, and Mr. R. P. Thomas, expressing regret at their unavoidable absence, and sympathy with the objects of the meeting; **also a letter from Rev. W. Stainton Moses, stating that he was unable to take part in the meeting, having resigned his Fellowship in the New York Society.** [My emphasis- LP.]

Mr. Treasurer Cobb having stated President Olcott's instructions as to the basis of an English branch society, as communicated since a former meeting of Fellows in this place, proposed to retire, as it was not his intention to become a member of the new branch. On his being invited to remain as a listener, an informal discussion ensued, and it was finally

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<sup>93</sup> C. C. Massey, Memorandum to Col. Olcott, Dec. 1877.

<sup>94</sup> This most important fact should be kept in mind; it explains so much. The early members constituted *the Society*, in contradistinction to those who joined Branches.

<sup>95</sup> BNAS headquarters- LP.]



Resolved, on the motion of Fellow Massey, seconded by Dr. H. J. Billing, “that, in the opinion of the English Fellows of the Theosophical Society of New York, present at this meeting, it is desirable to form a Society in England, in connection and in sympathy with that body.”

In accordance with the paper of instructions received from the President, the meeting proceeded to discuss the question of a President of the Branch Society, and on the ballot being taken, C. C. Massey was found to be chosen President. Mr. Massey, in accepting the office, made a few remarks and took the chair. It was proposed by him, and seconded by Dr. Carter Blake, that Miss Kislingbury be Secretary to the Branch Society. This was carried and accepted by Miss K., pro tem.

The meeting was adjourned until further advices from New York, and the Secretary was requested to furnish a copy of these minutes to Col. Olcott (President) and a copy of the Resolution, above recorded, to the absent English members.

The following memorandum was then drawn up and signed, and given to the Secretary to forward to Col. Olcott, viz.:

“LONDON, June 27, 1878.

“To

“COL. HENRY S. OLCOTT,

President of the T. S., New York.

“I hereby certify that this day has been held a meeting at which has been formed an English branch of the above Society, of which Branch, Fellow Charles Carleton Massey has been, by ballot of the Fellows present, elected President.

(Signed) “JOHN STORER COBB.

Treasurer N. Y. Society.

(Signed) C. C. MASSEY.”

My official letters recognising the British Theosophical Society and ratifying the proceedings at the above reported meeting, were written July 12, 1878, and sent to Mr. C. C. Massey and Miss E. Kislingbury, the President and the Secretary.<sup>96</sup>

It will thus be seen that Stainton Moses had resigned from the T.S. as early as 1878. Now let us turn to Massey. I discussed the events leading up to his loss in a note “Massey’s Resignation and the S.P.R.” which appeared in *Theosophical History*, January 1986.<sup>97</sup>

We can date the resignation from the book by A.P. Sinnett *The Early Days of Theosophy in Europe* (T.P.H. London, 1922, p.70) as he had the minute book of the B.T.S. before him.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> For more information on the formation of the British T.S. see also: Michael Gomes, “Creating the New Age: Theosophy’s Origins in the British Isles” Blavatsky Lecture 2000 [Theosophical Publishing House, London.]

<sup>97</sup> At present this issue is not available on line, though it is intended by the editor Dr Santucci that all these early issues of TH should be made available digitally in due course. LP

<sup>98</sup> Available on line LP: <http://hpb.narod.ru/EarlyDaysTheosophyAPS.htm>

The resignation was announced at a B.T.S. meeting held in July 1884. Massey therefore could not have been influenced by the Hodgson report, as Hodgson had not even left for India to investigate Theosophical phenomena there. Among Massey's concerns, shown in a letter published in *LIGHT* 26 July 1884, he was evidently upset by what is known as the Kiddle incident, in which part of a published address by a Spiritualist called Kiddle turned up in a Mahatma Letter.

Unfortunately, Theosophical references to Spiritualists of this era can be problematic. Thus the *Readers Guide to the Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett* (T.P.H. 1972) had said of Massey "He was also one of the founders of the Psychical Research Society and after the Hodgson Report was issued, he resigned from the T.S." (p.239). And Josephine Ransom herself had written, "He left the Theosophical Society when the S.P.R. attacked H.P.B." (p.113).

Leslie Price.



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### **Some of the contents of this issue are:**

- Thorns and Roses: Approaching Difficult Theosophical History by Brett Forray
- The Death Mask of H.P.B. by Erica Georgiades
- The Two Helenas: An Unknown Duo Portrait by Elena Alivansteva

LP



## 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](http://www.hermeticpress.com/product_info.php?products_id=45) Psypioneer references by Leslie Price pages 39-42:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

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

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





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Paul J. Gaunt

