

PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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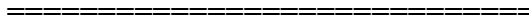


Established 2004

Volume 11, No. 08/9: August – September 2015



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William Eglinton

VISIT TO INDIA.¹

Note by LP: Eglinton was a leading medium of the 1880s, now largely forgotten. He enjoyed the support of the London Spiritualist Alliance and other eminent persons, but psychical researchers came to believe he was fraudulent. This led to a split in the infant SPR, not repaired for a century. The chapter below is taken from his “official” biography. He was not the first Western Spiritualist to visit India – Olcott was living there from 1879, and James Peebles had included India in his travels.

—§—



IT had long been a cherished desire on Mr. Eglinton's part to visit India—the reputed home and birthplace of the occult sciences. Theosophy and its alleged marvels were then just coming to the front, and, in common with many others, he wished, if possible, to come to some definite conclusion with regard to the subject. The general verdict was then, and for the matter of that is still, the old Scotch one of “Not Proven,” but the glamour of mystery thrown around the phenomena, and the unbounded promises which had drawn many into Theosophist circles, did not escape Mr. Eglinton, and he was naturally anxious to find out all he could. His desire for investigation on the spot seemed likely to be granted when he accepted a pressing invitation from Mr. J. G. Meugens, a wealthy Indian merchant and Spiritualist, to go to Calcutta as his guest.²

¹ *Twixt Two Worlds: a narrative of The Life and Work of William Eglinton*, by John S. Farmer: Published by The Psychological Press, London 1886 – taken from Chapter XII pages 89-97. There is an online copy at www.iapsop.com as part of the Standard Spiritualist and Occult Corpus (SSOC).

² See also *Origins of Light*: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.11November08.pdf> – “In consequence of the dissatisfaction about the reports given in the ‘Spiritualist,’ a gentleman temporarily in London, Mr. J. G. Meugens, of Calcutta, whose name will be remembered in connection with his very wonderful experiences with Mr. Eglinton, suggested to me that a new paper should be started, to be the organ of the British National Association. I at once communicated with a number of friends throughout the country, and with their assistance ‘Light’ was started on January 8th, 1881. The ‘Spiritualist’ soon afterwards disappeared.” – Meugens was a member of the Research Committee of the B.N.A.S.: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.10October08.pdf>

Although, however, he took with him several warm letters of introduction to Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky, they never extended any invitation to him to meet them; and it was not until the summer of 1884, three years after his return from India, that he met the latter, who, attended by Babu Mohini Chatterjee and Miss Arundale, had a most wonderful *séance* with him.³

With Colonel Olcott he has never come in contact.

Several noteworthy private farewell *séances* were given prior to sailing from England on the 12th October, 1881. At some of these, incidents occurred which conclusively proved the separate individuality of his controls.

Leaving London on the 12th October, 1881, he proceeded to Liverpool to spend a few days with relatives residing in that city. The voyage to India turned out an extremely pleasant one, and the calls made at Port Said, Suez, and Colombo, allowed him to see a little of those places. Calcutta was reached at noon on the 17th November, when Colonel and Mrs. Gordon, and Mr. Meugens met Mr. Eglinton at the steamer. Little time was lost in getting to work, for on the succeeding evening his first *séance* in India was held at the residence of Mr. Cheetham. At no time during his sojourn in this country was he idle; the interest was too great to allow of this.

Successful sittings were held at the residence of the Maharajah Sir Jotendro Mohun Tagore, K.C.S.I., most of which were reported in the *Indian Mirror*, a daily newspaper, published in the interests of the native classes, owned and edited by Babu Norendro Nath Sen, a Spiritualist of some standing, and cousin of the well-known Keshub-Chunder Sen, the founder of the Brahmo-Somaj. The following extract from a mass of editorial reports is characteristic, and must serve to illustrate the general quality of the testimony thus rendered. It occurs in that journal for January 4th, 1882, and is written by the editor:—

“Two slates were put together with a crumb of pencil between them under the table, and holding them, we heard the writing going on within the slates. After the writing had continued for some time, three raps were heard on the slates, which signified that the message was finished. On opening them, we found the following long message written upon one of them:—*‘Bless you, my son. I am glad I am enabled to communicate. I am your father H—, and I come with many of your ancestors. Your uncle B—is present, and rejoices that he can assure so worthy a nephew of his increasing regard. You will remember how I prophesied to you, through Mr. Mansfield [i.e., Mr. Mansfield of New York, a well-known test medium], of the continued prosperity of the undertaking you have in hand; and I can only tell you again that you have a great work to do still. The varying fortunes of your undertaking since you have been engaged in it, may now be said to have ended in a prosperous voyage. I can never be too glad that Captain P—[our private tutor, now deceased] took you in hand, for you owe everything to him, and to A—[an old European attorney of the late Supreme Court, now no more.] My good friend the Maharajah R— S— is present with me, as is your grandfather R—. We all rejoice that this truth has been brought home to you, and I want you to remember that “dunya akhirat ke kheti hai” [written in Bengali], and that the knowledge you now possess*

³ Farmer is stating that Blavatsky when in London in 1884 sat with Eglinton. We hope to publish more about this. LP

will fit you for the next world. We are all very happy, and give you our benediction. I shall come again some day, and talk more fully to you. Good-bye, my son.'

The handwriting of the message was as fine as copper-plate; the personal allusions in it were correct to the letter, and the Urdu quotation at the end, marked a peculiar trait in the character of the present writer's father, who was an accomplished Urdu scholar, and in the habit of interlarding his conversation now and then with Urdu quotations—facts of which Mr. Eglinton was entirely ignorant. The message was remarkable for the explicitness with which it served to identify the deceased party in his communications with his living son. All the names appearing in the message were given in full. The Urdu quotation means, that what we sow in this world, we shall reap in the next. The Maharajah referred to in the message is a well-known native prince, whose loss has been universally mourned of late, both in India and England."

About this time he met the veteran Hindoo Spiritualist, Peary Chand Mittra, with whom he enjoyed many quiet hours in discussing the mysteries of spiritual phenomena. Since then Death has solved these problems of the grave for this kind friend.

The *séances*, invariably held in private houses, were largely and continuously attended by the *elite* of Indian civil and military society; and, to meet the demand for full reports and information, a fortnightly journal, similar in style to *Light*, was started. This venture met with considerable success, and continued to be published during the whole of Mr. Eglinton's sojourn in India.⁴

I do not propose to narrate at length the *séances* given by Mr. Eglinton during this period. I must perforce confine myself to matters of special value—such for example as the following incidents, related by Mrs. R. H. Cheetham in *Psychic Notes* for January 16th, 1881. The first is a singularly curious case:—"Two slates were carefully washed and a piece of pencil was laid between them. I was asked to grasp them at the corners of the wooden frame and press them tightly together with one hand, Mr. Eglinton holding the slates in the same way at the opposite cross corner. Thus held we stretched out our arms as far as we could, holding the slate in the full light *away* from the table. My right hand and Mr. Eglinton's left still touched the hands of our respective neighbours. At once, *within* the slates, the sound of rapid writing was heard, and in a very short time, the usual three small raps were given as a signal for us to look at the result. On the slate were twenty-two lines containing one hundred and forty-two words signed by the name of a near relative of mine who left this world some years ago. Before I glanced at the signature the strong resemblance of the small, close writing to that of my friend amazed me, and when I came to read the written lines my astonishment increased. I found in them a verbatim quotation from a letter written by me and posted to New Zealand the week before, and also a remark relating to my private affairs which seemed to me to point conclusively to the identity of the writer whose signature was appended. I had spoken to no one of what I had said in the letter sent many days before, and I am not conscious that it was in my thoughts as I held the slates. Below the letter to me, in a large and quite different handwriting, was a message to my husband, who was not present."

⁴ This appears in the 1927 catalogue of the SPR library as "Psychic Notes. A Record of Spiritual and Occult Research, and of the Seances held in Calcutta by Mr Eglinton, during March 1881 to March 1882. Folio, Nos. 1-10. Calcutta, 2 January-27 April 1882 [no more published]."

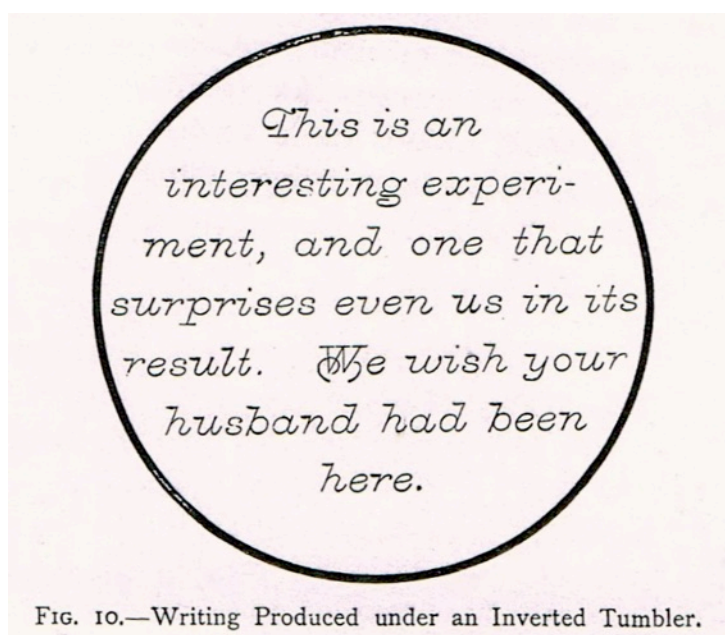


FIG. 10.—Writing Produced under an Inverted Tumbler.

handwriting of the letter addressed to me.” (Fig. 10.)

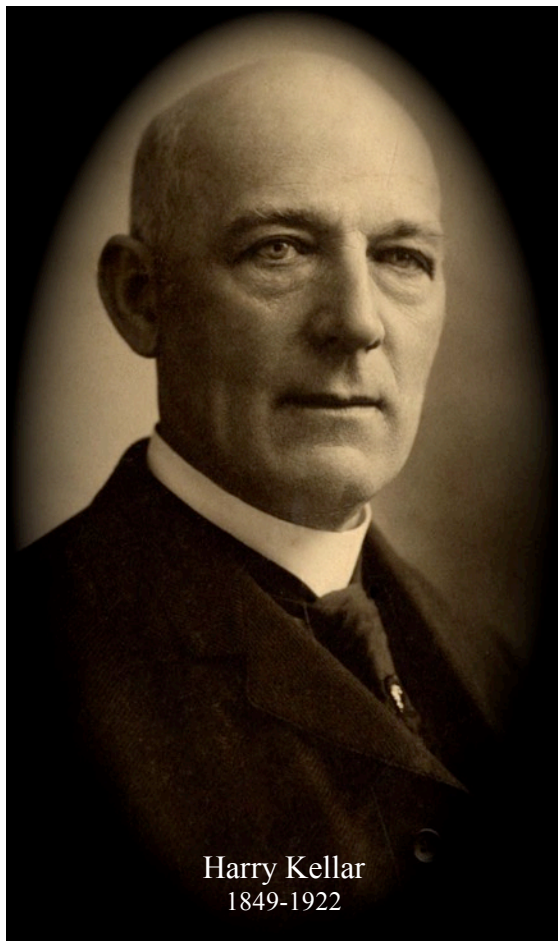
It was during this period that a startling phenomenon occurred—no less than the instantaneous transmission of letters between London and Calcutta. I say “startling” advisedly. It is assuredly so for the world at large, but Spiritualists, who alone can form any idea of the power of spirits over matter, will readily understand the phenomenon. This carrying of letters took place on several occasions, but a description of the circumstances attending one case must suffice. Mr. Meugens, the narrator, is well known in London and Calcutta mercantile circles as a man of high intelligence and integrity.⁵

“Mr. Eglinton and I had been to dine with some friends at the Bengal Club, and returned home at about eleven p.m. My guest asked me to sit with him before retiring to bed, and we sat together in the light. He took a sheet of paper (which I had just previously marked in one corner with my initials and private mark for the purpose of identification), placed it in a book, held the book under the table for a few seconds, and then put the book into my hands. I examined it very carefully, but the sheet of paper had disappeared. I retained possession of the book, while Mr. Eglinton (in his normal state) informed me that he saw his spirit leave his body and travel over land and sea until it entered the room of a friend of mine in London, and he minutely described my friend and the surroundings in the room, which he asserted was flooded with light. He saw ‘Ernest’ standing by my friend while the letter was being written, and his taking the letter when ready. In a few seconds after this he begged me to open the book (of which I had retained possession the whole time), and there sure enough inside the

⁵ Lis Warwood reports: he was known as Julius Gerard Meugens, but birth was registered Sep Q 1839 Newington Vol. 4 Page 285 as Gerard Julia (sic) Hubert Meugens. He was born 24 June 1839, the son of Peter Joseph Meugens (born 6 Jan 1808 Antwerp, Belgium, died 3 Nov 1886 Nottinghamshire) and his wife Elizabeth Caroline Bennett (d. 22 April 1845 when J G was 5). His parents married 7 Sep 1833 Kennington. J. G. Meugens had four brothers and four sisters – some produced children in India but the rest in UK and died in UK. Those born after 1845 were actually half-brothers and sisters as Peter Joseph Meugens remarried. Julius Gerard Meugens shows up in the India records as father of bride Emily Florence Meugens who married Edward Henry King-Harman on 14 Oct 1896 in Ootacamund, Madras. So far I have not found a marriage for J. G. or a death in India or elsewhere, nor a death of a wife or daughter in the UK. All his siblings made Wills but if J. G. did it was not probated, etc., in the UK.

cover of the book was the self-same sheet of paper, with my initials and private mark upon it, completely filled with a letter in my friend's handwriting, dated that same evening in London, and commencing with an account of how the room had been suddenly filled with light, how 'Ernest' had brought the sheet of paper marked by me, and how he stood waiting to bear the letter back."

So rich were the numerous *séances* in phenomena, and so lively was the sensation caused by the publication of details, that Mr. Eglinton began to be looked upon by the native community as a *Yogi* of the first water, by the Spiritualists as a wonder, and by a sceptical world as a mystery. The press, both native and English, was, on the whole, favourably inclined, though a certain amount of antagonism on the part of individuals was naturally to be expected. One wail which arose from the sceptical ranks, when regarded in the light of subsequent events, is not to be surpassed as showing the irony of fate. Its keynote was that "a conjurer would do just the same manifestations in the clearest daylight and with double the number of sitters. . . . Convert one, and then," the writer grandiloquently adds, "*the world is at your feet.*" The Whirligig of time was soon to bring its own revenge, and the chosen champion of the shrieking sceptic was destined not to lay the world at the feet of Spiritualism, but simply to exemplify the fact that a prophet is not without honour save in his own country. "An average prestidigitateur" (I quote the qualification as enunciated in the challenge in question) was convinced of the truth of Spiritualism, and of the genuineness of its manifestations, but, contrary to the somewhat rash prediction indulged in, he did *not* become "the St. Paul of the new dispensation," as the sequel will show.



Harry Kellar
1849-1922

Mr. Harry Kellar, the well-known conjurer, was then on a visit to Calcutta, and a portion of his entertainment was devoted to an "exposure" of Spiritualism. Urged by some opponents of Spiritualism—clericals, of course—he seized the opportunity, Conjurer-like, to make as much capital out of the fact of the sensation caused by Mr. Eglinton's mediumship as he could, and his (Kellar's) performances were given nightly to crowded houses. At that time, however, Kellar was evidently an honest inquirer, if I may judge from a letter published by him on the subject in the *Indian Daily News* for January 13th. He there confesses that he had followed with much interest a correspondence regarding Spiritualism, and more particularly "the accounts of manifestations said to have taken place in the presence of Mr. Eglinton. He continues:—"I am far from wishing to sneer or throw discredit on what is said to have taken place, and which has only reached me on hearsay. At the same time I should be glad of an opportunity of participating in a *séance*, with a view of giving an unbiassed opinion as to whether, in my capacity of a professional *prestidigitateur*, I can give a natural explanation of effects said to be produced by spiritual aid. I trust that my character as a man is

a sufficient guarantee that I would take no unfair advantage, or violate any of the conditions imposed at a *séance* to which I was invited.”

After such a letter, Mr. Eglinton had what the Yankees call “a bad time.” The public were loud in their demands for an answer, and the Spiritualists begged him to give Kellar a *séance*. For a long time no response to these calls was made, and Mr. Eglinton at first was obdurate and refused point blank to comply with either request. Experience had taught him that conjurers were, as a rule, animated in all they did, as regards Spiritualism, solely by a desire to make capital out of it, and he naturally regarded this letter as a clever *ruse* on Kellar’s part to advertise himself at another’s expense. Ultimately, however, Mrs. Gordon prevailed on him to meet Kellar, and confident in his own integrity, and the reality of his mediumistic gifts, he did so. With what result, the following extracts from some of the conjurer’s letters to the *Indian Daily News* will show:—“In your issue of the 13th January I stated that I should be glad of an opportunity of participating in a *séance* with a view of giving an unbiased opinion as to whether, in my capacity of a professional *prestidigitateur*, I could give a natural explanation of effects said to be produced by spiritual aid. I am indebted to the courtesy of Mr. Eglinton, the Spiritualistic medium now in Calcutta, and of his host, Mr. J. Meugens, for affording me the opportunity I craved. It is needless to say I went as a sceptic, but I must own that I came away utterly unable to explain, by any natural means, the phenomena that I witnessed on Tuesday evening. I will give a brief description of what took place.”

After describing several successful experiments, Mr. Kellar proceeds:—In respect to the above manifestations, I can only say that I do not expect my account of them to gain general credence. Forty-eight hours before I should not have believed anyone who described such manifestations under similar circumstances. I still remain a sceptic as regards Spiritualism, but I repeat my inability to explain or account for what must have been an intelligent force that produced the writing on the slate, which, if my senses are to be relied on, was in no way the result of trickery or sleight of hand.”

On the 30th of the same month Mr. Kellar addressed another letter to the *Indian Daily News*, reporting some experiences of another kind with Mr. Eglinton, one of the witnesses being Lord William Beresford, V.C., and regarding which the clever conjurer said:—“In conclusion, let me state that after a most stringent trial and strict scrutiny of these wonderful experiences I can arrive at no other conclusion than that there was no trace of trickery in any form, nor was there in the room any mechanism or machinery by which could be produced the phenomena which had taken place. The ordinary mode by which Maskelyne and other conjurers imitate levitation or the floating test could not possibly be done in the room in which we were assembled.”

Thus once more was a professional conjurer nonplussed when brought face to face with spiritual phenomena. The call for testing by *prestidigitateurs* is, after all, only a parrot’s cry on the part of those who, driven from pillar to post to find an excuse for shutting their eyes to facts, refer to conjurers as the Alpha or Omega court of appeal, forgetting that they have, over and over again, tried “to find out the trick,” and failed.

Mediums, who are the instruments of an external agency, have, as I have stated, more than once been confronted with conjurers who deceive by sleight of hand; but in the same manner as no man of science who has thoroughly and fairly investigated the phenomena of Spiritualism has failed to become convinced of their reality, so no conjurer who has been confronted with the same facts has been able to explain their occurrence by prestidigitation.

The sensation caused by Kellar's conversion was indescribable. Some suggested that the conjurer had been "squared" by the medium, because both were brother Masons; others began to think there was "something in it;" while the poor sceptic who wanted a convert of a conjurer, never opened his lips again! It may be interesting to note that Kellar made an offer on the spot of a very lucrative engagement for six months if Mr. Eglinton would produce the same results on the stage, an offer, it is perhaps unnecessary for me to say, never accepted.

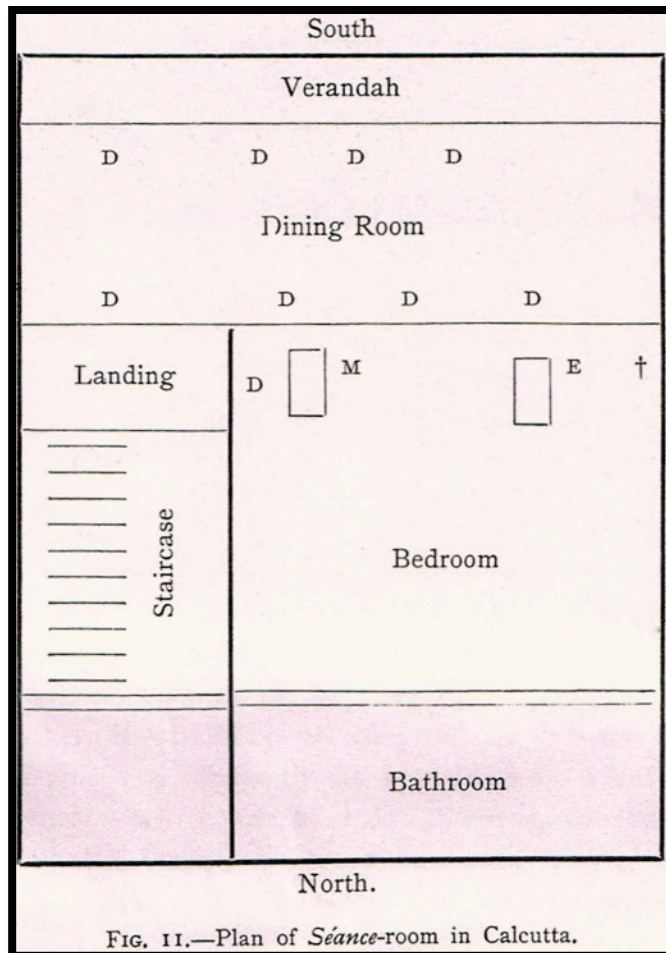
I see from the American papers (1885) that Kellar has since "ratted." Probably he found out that it pays better to abuse Spiritualism than to endorse it. I fail, however, to see how he can possibly explain away the very explicit statements he made in India, although, as "a matter of business," it may suit him to thus gull a very gullible public.

The discussion about the instantaneous transmission of letters from London to Calcutta, and *vice versa*, outshining as they did the alleged phenomena of theosophy, waxed warm and furious, and Mr. Meugens determined, if possible, to put the matter to a decisive test at the first opportunity, although as a matter of fact the evidence for the spiritual facts was then, and has ever been, incomparably superior to that adduced for so-called occult phenomena, both in quality and quantity. At no time have the former been so stringently tested, nor have they been examined with such scientific acumen. Returning from Colonel Gordon's late one evening, Mr. Meugens and Mr. Eglinton were sitting, as was their wont, on the verandah, when the latter felt a strong influence come over him, and inquired of his companion whether he would like a manifestation. "Yes," he replied, nothing unwilling. "What shall it be?" asked Mr. Eglinton. Remembering what he had previously determined upon, Mr. Meugens replied, "Bring me Mrs. Fletcher's Wedding ring."

Mrs. Fletcher was then in Tothill Fields Prison, and Mr. Meugens was a warm sympathiser, believing that she had been most unjustly convicted. Knowing that she would be stripped of everything else belonging to her, he thought if the wedding ring were brought from England to Calcutta, some six thousand miles away, the test would be decisive. Mr. Eglinton, under control, asked for a tumbler to be held high above his head. The lamps were burning brightly all the time, and Mr. Eglinton was now reclining on a couch a little distance off. Suddenly a chink was heard in the glass, and on lowering it for examination a wedding ring was found in it. It was old and worn, and although Mr. Meugens was of course unable to identify it, yet he was naturally immensely pleased at a wedding ring having been brought to him at all under such conditions. There could have been no preparation, as the particular object chosen had been asked for spontaneously, and the chances were many against such an object being in Mr. Eglinton's possession. A few days afterwards a letter, carried by spirit agency (only one of many which came to hand in like manner), was received by Mr. Meugens from Mrs. Fletcher in her own handwriting, telling him she had sent the ring in obedience to his request, and hoping he received it safely. He returned to England in time to meet her at the prison gates when she was released, and his first question was, "Where is your wedding ring?" She held up her hand, upon which were the other rings which had been restored to her by the prison authorities, but no *wedding* ring was there, and she explained that she thought he had received it months before!

This fact may be beyond the comprehension of many, of all indeed, perhaps, who have not had practical personal experience of similar marvels. I cannot, however, emphasise too strongly the fact that Mr. Meugens is a man whose reputation is beyond the shadow of reproach, respected and esteemed in commercial circles in England and India, for his sound business qualities. He is, moreover, an experienced investigator, accustomed to weigh

evidence; in short, he is not a man likely to be mistaken or deceived, and his testimony I need hardly say will be accepted by all who know him, as accurate and unvarnished. His opportunities for investigation, too, living as he did in daily contact with Mr. Eglinton, were practically unlimited, and I find it a somewhat onerous task to select isolated cases—and I can do no more—out of the multitude which he and others in India put on record.



Another satisfactory experience was the following. After relating the circumstances of Mr. Eglinton's arrival in India as his guest, he proceeds:—"I had taken the top floor of a house for the season, into which I had put my own furniture, and as the rest of the house was entirely let out in offices, there was no one residing there except ourselves. Fig. II is a sketch showing the situation of the rooms, from which it will be seen that when our doors were locked it was quite impossible for anyone to get into our rooms. As is usual in India the rooms were very large, roomy, and lofty, and what is not so usual, the floors were laid in Portland cement, so there could be no possibility of any communication through the floors. The verandah faced south, looking into the road. D is the doorways, from which it will be seen that one door led into the dining-room from the landing, and another into the bedroom. Both these doors were always barred before we retired to bed.

The signs M and E represent the relative positions of our respective beds, M being mine, E Eglinton's, and they were a good many feet apart. Each bed is near one of the doorways looking into the dining-room, and I would add that the head of each bed was towards the north. I had not personally known anything whatever of Mr. Eglinton prior to his arrival in India, but we speedily became great friends, and I had many wonderful manifestations with him in if private. One night we had gone to bed (I would add that each bed was furnished with a mosquito curtain which tucked in under the mattress, so that one had to disturb it if one wanted to get out of bed). We always kept a light in the room, a small hanging kerosene lamp, which was turned down, but gave sufficient light to enable me to see anything in the room. As it was rather warm we were both lying in our sleeping suits *on* the beds (I mean outside the bedclothes), and although the light was dim, and the mosquito curtains made things hazy, we could either of us see distinctly any movement made by the other.

We had bid each other good-night, when 'Daisy' suddenly controlled Eglinton, and said, 'Mr. Meugens, don't go to sleep yet; watch.' Accordingly, I kept my eyes open, watching Eglinton's bed. After watching for some time I fancied I saw something in the corner marked (cross (crucifix)), and I sat up in bed to have a better look. I saw what appeared to be a small

cloud of something like muslin. This gradually developed until I could make out what appeared to be a human form draped in white. A little after, this form began to move, and then glided through the doorway at the foot of my bed, and then seemed to lack strength, for it glided back to the original corner. After a few seconds of interval, the form passed through the doorway again as before, and this time came right up to my bed, and seemed to be gazing at me through the mosquito curtains. I could see that it was the figure of a woman, tall and graceful, but although I tried hard I could not distinguish the features. The feet were bare, and so were the hands and arms beyond the elbows, but there was a veil or what appeared to be such over the figure's face, and, moreover, the mosquito curtains added to the difficulty of my seeing distinctly. The figure rested her hand on the tester of the bed, and when I asked if she knew me, she rapped three times with her hand. I then asked if it was my mother, and again three raps. The figure then seemed to try to come closer, and as though she wished to touch me through the curtains; this, however, she did not manage to do, but she bent her head still lower, and I heard distinctly the whisper, 'God bless you.' She then glided back to the corner she had started from, and gradually dissolved or faded out of view. All this time Eglinton lay perfectly still on the bed, and so far as I could see, for I kept on glancing towards him, remained exactly as I have described when 'Daisy' first controlled him.

As soon as the form had quite faded away 'Daisy' called out 'Well, Mr. Meugens, what do you think of that for a real old-fashioned ghost?' 'Who was it, "Daisy"?' I asked. 'Your mother, of course,' she answered, 'who else could it be?' I may add that my mother died when I was a child of five or six, and having no portrait of her beyond a photograph taken from an old oil painting belonging to my father, it would be no easy matter for me to identify her, even had I succeeded in seeing her features as distinctly as I could have wished. As bearing on this manifestation, I may remark that when I was at Lake Pleasant, in 1882, my mother gave me messages through several mediums there, who were strangers to me, to the effect that she had shown herself to me in Calcutta, and would yet find opportunity of doing so again, still more successfully."

When Mr. Meugens returned to England, Mr. Eglinton went to Howrah as the guest of Colonel and Mrs. Gordon, remaining with them during the rest of his stay in India. It was just before this period that Lord William Beresford became interested in, and converted to Spiritualism. Mrs. Gordon thus relates what took place on one occasion:—"A pair of folding slates were brought by Lord William, who obtained answers to questions on their inner sides. A name he asked for was also written. Two slates were then taken and washed by the sitters and a bit of pencil put between them. Lord William held the slates at one side, while Mr. Eglinton held them on the other. Writing was distinctly heard, and in a few seconds three raps denoted the completion of the message, and one slate was found full of an admirably written, carefully punctuated communication, which would have taken any one several minutes to write."

Among other persons who visited Mr. Eglinton, may be mentioned Dr. Warden, the Rajah Kumar Singh, Mr. Justice Cunningham, Mr. Justice Tottenham, Mr. Reily, Captain Andrews, Lord and Lady Lawrence, Sir Donald Stewart (commander-in-chief of Her Majesty's forces in India), and Captain and Lady Elizabeth Clough Taylor.

While staying at Howrah Mr. Eglinton received an invitation to proceed to Madras as the guest of General Morgan, after which it was his intention to go on to Simla, with a view to entering upon the duties of private secretary to a gentleman resident there, who had offered

him that position; but urgent domestic affairs at home decreed otherwise, and he sailed for England in April, 1882.

It was during the voyage home that a letter was carried from Mr. Eglinton while at sea to Mrs. Gordon at Howrah. For a full account of this incident, which has, erroneously I believe, been claimed by Theosophists as confirming their views, I must refer my readers to "The Occult World," by Mr. A. P. Sinnett. I must here simply content myself with putting on record the maturer conclusions of Mr. Eglinton with regard to the "appearance" on board the *Vega*. He now believes the apparition to have been a spontaneous materialisation, of a somewhat unusual order, of some one who called himself "Koot Hoomi."

While in India he had not an opportunity of witnessing any genuine mediumship amongst the natives except in two cases; in one of which self-inflicted wounds were rapidly healed, and another in which lost property was recovered through the agency of a fakir. The growing of palms, the well-known basket trick, the throwing of a ring into a pond and its reproduction, are all feats which no second-rate conjurer would care to introduce in London. He saw one of the best men in India, and although he studied several of his performances, they were all of a similar character and explainable by natural means.



How I came to believe in Materialisations

By Mrs. Mary S. G. Nichols.⁶

Below is taken from *The Spiritual Record* (Glasgow) Vol.1 May 1884 pages 663/5:

IN 1876 I first saw WILLIE EGLINTON. He was the invited guest of a lady residing with us at Aldwyn Tower, Malvern. I went into his room and introduced myself to him. Soon after I was seated raps came on a small table placed between him and me. I said, "Those are raps." "I think not," he replied; "it is some noise outdoors." I asked him to lay his hands on the table with me. He did so, and the raps spelt out this message: "J. B. Ferguson wishes W. Eglinton to have a séance with Mrs. Nichols, and he will materialise."

I was very sceptical as to materialisations. It seemed to me the one impossible thing in Spiritualism.

Mr. Eglinton said, in answer to the message, "I cannot have a séance with Mrs. Nichols, as all my time is engaged till I leave town. Just then the door bell rang, and a letter was brought to Mr. Eglinton from a person who was obliged to give up a séance he had engaged, and Mr. Eglinton at once said, "You can have the time;" and I also promised to attend a séance given to the lady whom Mr. Eglinton was visiting, and then came my first sight of materialised forms. To partially isolate the medium, he was placed behind a shawl, and just after he was seated, a child, seemingly about two years old, appeared before the shawl. It is not my purpose to give a full account of this séance, but only its prominent incidents. First came this baby, then the husband of the lady. He came in a good light, and moved a heavy table. Then the light was put out, and he brought his own light and illumined his face and head very vividly. He came close to me and looked into my eyes. I begged him to go to his wife, which he did, and was fully recognised.

After this we had a good light again from the gas, and a little Indian girl, called "Daisy," came, looking as natural to me as possible, I having seen much of the North American Indians in my childhood. She came to me, took my hand, kissed it, and said, "I love you. I love your hand that gives."

At the séance Mr. Ferguson's spirit had asked for, we had a most harmonious circle. It was in the day time. We shut out some of the light, and hung two shawls before the medium, with an opening in the centre. "Joey," Mr. Eglinton's familiar control, came to us visibly materialised.⁷ He said he wanted to increase the power, and asked for some pins to better fasten the shawls together. He was told that he would find pins on the mantelpiece. He got them, and pinned the shawls together in front, and then replaced the pins where he had found

⁶ Mrs Nichols and her husband were active in various progressive causes in America and Britain. Unfortunately "Shameless" the 2002 biography of her by Jean L. Silver-Isenstadt has little information about her UK Spiritualist activities. LP

⁷ For further information on William Eglinton and "A Sketch of the Life of Joey Sandy" see Psypioneer:
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.11November2012.pdf>

them, saying, "A place for everything, everything in its place, is my motto." On my speaking to him he came over to me, and kissed the top of my head. He was dressed in white, and bore some resemblance to Mr. Eglinton, but was taller, less stout, and he had a moustache, which the medium had not.

When all was prepared, there came a tall man, some inches over six feet high. A lady present said, "I think that is my husband, but the light is not good enough for me to be certain." The form went over to the window and raised the curtains, letting the full light of day fall on him. When he had been perfectly recognised, he gradually dematerialised, growing shorter, till a small globe, about six inches across, remained near the floor. Then this snapped out—suddenly collapsed, leaving nothing visible. Again he grew up from the floor to his full height, and again shortened, and went out. This he did several times, and finally disappeared.

Then my friend, Mr. Ferguson, came—*his very self*—a tall, broad chested man, of great strength and most decided energetic movements. He wound up a heavy musical box and laid it on the table with a bang. He then moved a very heavy table, and took a large easy chair, drew it in front of me, and sat down, and took my hand. He was as much his own self as ever I saw him in his earthly life.

All this time he had not spoken. I think he could not have had power to speak and also to do all he had done. I asked him, as he held my hand, if my daughter were present. She had been a great favourite of his in this life. He rose, and went back to where Mr. Eglinton was sitting behind the two shawls, and we heard three loud raps. Almost instantly, my daughter appeared, dressed in white, just her own slight form and graceful movements. She came and knelt before me, took my hand and kissed it. I was so overcome by this manifestation that I am unable to give any farther account of the séance.



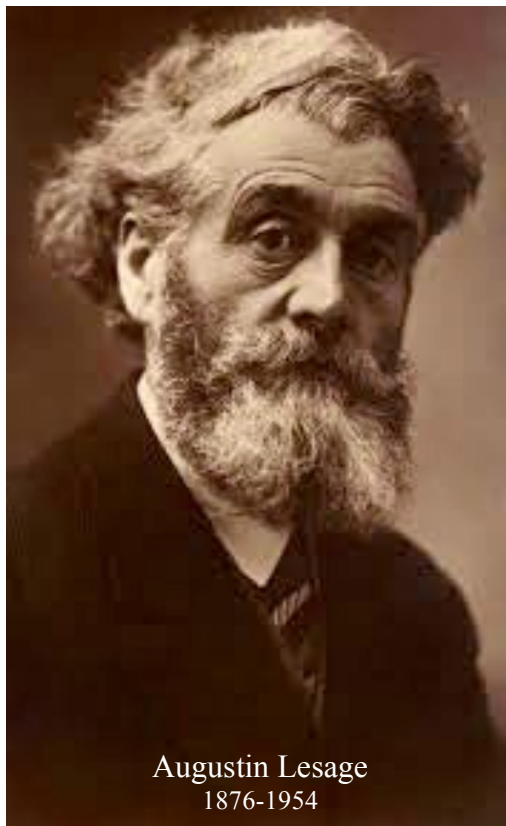
THE WORK OF THE PAINTER-MEDIUMS

MARJAN GRUZEWSKI AND AUGUSTIN LESAGE

BY DOCTOR EUGENE OSTY

Taken from the British Journal of Psychical Research (Official Organ of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, London): Volume 2. No. 13. May-June 1928 pages 1/7:

At a meeting held at the Queen's Gate Hall, South Kensington, on Tuesday, March 27th, under the auspices of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, Doctor EUGENE OSTY (Director, Institut Métapsychique International, Paris, and Vice-President of the National Laboratory) delivered a lantern lecture on the work of two trance painters who have been under observation at the Institut Métapsychique. The lecture was delivered in French, but Doctor Osty and the audience were very fortunate in that the Honourable Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton volunteered to interpret, and did so with great skill. Lord Charles Hope was in the Chair.



Augustin Lesage
1876-1954

DR. OSTY began by remarking that his audience were the unfortunate victims that evening of a lecture delivered in French, but it was better so than that they should be the victims of his English! He had to say various things which it was better he should say in his own language. He had to tell the story of two persons whose extraordinary work had been under observation at the Institute in Paris with which he was connected. The first of these was a person, named Augustin Lesage, whose portrait he showed on the screen. This man was a working miner of Pas de Calais, was utterly ignorant of painting or design, and was born in circumstances far removed from all artistic influences. At the age of thirty-five, having read several works on spiritualism, his thoughts turned somewhat in that direction. He attended séances and from the very first his hand appeared to be seized by an occult power and wrote, "Take a pencil and draw." He accordingly took in his hand some coloured chalks, and at the very first attempt, this man, who had had no artistic training whatever, produced a picture which the lecturer exhibited on the lantern screen.

Some days after he produced under similar circumstances a second design which was also shown, and his third and fourth design came a few days later. He was evidently endowed when in trance with a rare faculty for ornamental painting. The lecturer regretted that the necessity of reproduction of these works in the small compass of a lantern slide and in monochrome made it impossible for the audience to appreciate other than vaguely their design and colouring.

After a time the invisible agency again seized hold of the hand of Lesage and bade him take a brush and attempt more ambitious work. Accordingly he took a brush and a piece of paper and made two drawings, which the lecturer also exhibited. Then another instruction came in the form of writing—writing so minute that one had to take a magnifying glass to read it—that he must work on canvas and with a finer brush. Accordingly Lesage ordered a canvas without giving any dimensions and was sent a canvas three metres square. When this canvas was placed on the walls of his room he once more took up his brush and covered it with paint, with the result that a beautiful piece of work appeared, although the reproduction of it, in black and white, gave only a vague notion of its excellence. This first canvas of his was adjudged by numerous painters to be a work of exceptional merit, considering its *genre* and the ignorance of the author. It was suggestive of ancient art, with types of decorated effect peculiar to old oriental civilisations, such as China, Tibet, India, and Egypt. Each portion of the canvas had a personality of its own, and if only it were possible for the audience to study the original they would find the subject coordinated and with a regular sequence. It was not imitative of any work already in existence, but it expressed the genius of the East. The lecturer added that if any of those present were likely to be in Paris he would have much pleasure in showing them this and other originals.

Altogether, in the ten years from 1918 to 1928 this man, until lately a working miner, had produced fifty-seven canvases. All of them suggested an innate genius for colour, and the conceptions were harmonious throughout. With a great deal of audacity he would even leave certain portions of the canvas quite empty. He never reproduced in detail what he had done before, but all his work was different, though it had the same ornamental character, and the same perfect symmetry. Lesage in painting always began at the top of the canvas and worked as if it were storey by storey, maintaining the symmetry complete. The design on one side appeared as though it had been mechanically duplicated from the other. The lecturer showed various works by this medium, including one which was exhibited in 1926 to the Society of French Artists, and he also showed photographs of Lesage actually painting a canvas in Paris, where he spent a month last year. It was Lesage's opinion that he was the reincarnation of an old Egyptian painter. He had thought so for some time. Such designs as the pyramids of Egypt and the Sphinx appeared frequently in his work.





It might be said that, whatever was the case when he began, having now produced more than fifty canvases he could no longer be said to be entirely ignorant of painting. Lesage himself, however, declared that today as in the past he was still totally ignorant of painting craft. His hand, he said, was not directed by his will. When he painted, his hand passed out of his control and was moved by some direction from without. There was certainly abundant evidence

that in 1918, when Lesage produced his first work, he knew absolutely nothing about painting, and yet that first picture was as good as any of his later works. His work had shown no progress, and his present productions were on the same level of excellence as his very first efforts. Here, therefore, was a man who had never learned to paint—a fact well attested by his schoolfellows and by the director of his school, a man with no hereditary skill, one who had never had the opportunity of seeing any great works of art, and all at once he was revealed as a painter of considerable talent in a sphere of painting which was very rarely practised. The psychological aspect of Lesage's mediumship presented a rare example of the problem of the origin of certain forms of human knowledge and faculty.

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The lecturer then passed to the work of the other painter-medium Marjan Gruzewski. This was a Polish gentleman of fortune who was born in 1898. His family were landed proprietors in comfortable circumstances. He had had a peculiar history, and it was necessary to tell in a few words what his childhood was like because it formed the psychological background of his later achievements. When he was a child what was called the conscious exercise of thought was of very little value to him, but, on the contrary, his subconscious had a very considerable preponderance. The importance of the subconscious in his life showed itself in many ways, first by hallucinations and phantoms—phantoms which no one saw but himself—and his childhood was dominated by fear.

When he went to school a very curious thing happened. On using his hands to write he found that he could not set down what he was told to write or what he wished to write. His hand wrote something quite different, and quite foreign to what would be expected of a child of his years. If he tried to write what he wished to write the pen would drop out of his hand. It was, therefore, not possible to educate him in the ordinary way. One could say of his childhood that his conscious thought was very weak and, on the other hand, his subconscious activity very vigorous. Until he was seventeen he had never heard of spiritualism. The subject had been concealed from him on account of his singular nervousness. He first heard of the existence of spiritualism from one of his cousins. He was at first sceptical and, when the subject was pressed upon him, he was angry. But he had a brother and sister who believed in it, and they persuaded him to have a sitting.

In the very first sitting, as frequently happened with people whose subconscious was anxious to express itself, there were manifestations; a table moved at the touch of his hand. He was discovered to be a medium for telekinesis and teleplastics, as well as a poetic improviser and an actor when in the somnambulist state. After a very few sittings, on the evidence of people who knew him at this time, he gave marked evidence of supernormal knowledge. At the séances in which he was a medium there occurred movements of objects and also, it appeared, materialisations. The lecturer, however, said that he could not vouch for these things; this was only what he had been told. But he did undoubtedly produce in the trance state poetry, of the character of improvisation, and theatrical scenes. He also in such a state appeared to be a remarkable actor.

It was only when he was nineteen or twenty that people began to observe in his subconscious activity very striking gifts as a painter. Up to that time he knew nothing whatever about designing or painting. Wishing to find a means of proving that he himself was not the author of the things which he produced in the somnambulist state, a friend asked him to do something that he had never done before, namely, to paint or draw. He was provided with sheets of paper on a table, and it was suggested to him that he should draw some of the happenings in the astral world. The lecturer showed one of the drawings he thus produced, with his eyes closed, in the space of four minutes. It was followed by other drawings made in the same way and with equal quickness. In some of the paintings which followed, historical subjects and phantasies were strangely interwoven. For example, he had drawn a representation of the death of the lover of Mary Stuart, and this was surrounded by grinning faces and other spectral forms. In the space of eight years Gruzewski had produced some hundreds of pictures. The use of the brush on canvas followed the use of the pencil on paper, and all the work was stamped with the same character. All of it was done also in a state of trance and in full daylight. Among the examples of his work shown by the lecturer were portraits of people (whom the medium had not known) who were dead, and the portraits were said to be a remarkable likeness. The lecturer also drew attention to the fact that this man who had never learned anatomy was able to render in an extraordinary way the modelling of the human form. To him the revelation of the medium's skill in anatomical representation was as remarkable as his facility for painting and drawing. One portrait, done from memory, was of the celebrated Polish poet Mickiewicz, who died in 1855.

In 1919 Gruzewski was obliged to leave the town of Vilna, where he lived, because of the Russian invasion, and he took refuge in Warsaw with an old dependent of the family, and there the experiments were continued under sympathetic supervision, Gruzewski being set to work under all manner of difficult conditions. Portraits and scenes were produced without number. One remarkable picture which was shown followed a suggestion to Gruzewski that he should endeavour to represent in a composition the two movements of the world, its movement in space, and its movement on its own axis. Again he drew attention to the extraordinary knowledge of anatomy shown in the rendering of the figure in this composition. Another work was the representation of the Sphinx with other faces around it.

It was then desired to test Gruzewski further, to make him paint the living model, and the picture in oil, executed in trance, showed the person he was asked to paint, but in addition the shadowy heads of certain other painters who, he claimed, had had relations of some sort with the principal figure in another existence. Demon faces and other weird forms appeared in some of the compositions. Most of the pictures appeared to have been very rapidly executed, in a matter of a few minutes. In one case the friend who had taken Gruzewski in hand told him that he had dreamed that he was assisting in the Roman games in the days of Nero and

that he saw a superb athlete throwing the disc; he suggested to him that at a certain hour on the next day he should reproduce the picture. Surely enough, on the next day, without being reminded, the medium fell into a trance and produced a picture which was exhibited. Another picture was an incident from one of the dramas of Mickiewicz, and yet another was an oil painting reproducing the idea of Chopin's Funeral March. He was also asked to paint the beasts of the Apocalypse. All these pictures were done very quickly, although some extraordinary symbolism was shown in the background, and the fancy and imagination of the whole work was manifest. Even the most elaborate works never took him more than two hours altogether. For some of the works he required more than one sitting.

As soon as a séance had lasted for forty minutes Gruzewski was exhausted and said that he could not go on. In the action of painting his whole body appeared to contract, he lost consciousness, his hand worked with exceeding quickness, and his breathing became rapid and audible. Each stroke he placed on canvas was quite definite, and needed no subsequent correction. In his figures and scenes he represented things which he stated to belong to a former existence. That being so, of course, it was impossible to test their truth or untruth. He gave his delineations the name of psychic portraits. He declared that in his trance he saw people with an appearance different from their normal one. He saw around them an aura of "atmospheric fluid," and sometimes he saw very strange materialisations, which he duly represented.

Last July Gruzewski went to Paris and carried out certain work at the Institut Métapsychique. This work consisted of designs made in complete darkness and portraits painted in the somnambulistic state. He was made to work under conditions in which the normal person could not work; this was done in order to make sure that his productions were not due to some unsuspected talent in himself. The lecturer tried to get the other medium, Lesage, also to work in the dark, but under those conditions Lesage could not produce anything which was of any value. When Gruzewski was set to the task of drawing in the dark his productions were certainly inferior to those he made in good light and with his eyes open, but he proved that he could work even in the dark, and the results of three sittings so made were shown on the lantern screen. They were sketches, not finished drawings, and each of them was made in two or three minutes. In spite of these difficulties he produced pictures which were truthful in their detail and also well balanced in their general scheme. At one stage in this experiment a red light was let into the ceiling, and when this was done, although it cast no illumination whatever on the table on which the medium was working, there was a decided improvement in the drawing. He apparently drew better under red light even though the red light never reached the table where he was working; in full daylight he did better still.

The brother of Gruzewski said that he could execute a portrait of some unknown person if he had some possession of that person near him. Accordingly the lecturer went to a friend of his, who was unknown to Gruzewski, and borrowed an article of his clothing, which he put into the hands of the medium. Under the red light Gruzewski in four minutes produced a portrait, but it was not the portrait of the person from whom the garment had been borrowed nor was it the portrait of anyone known to him. In that experiment, therefore, the result was not good. Other portraits were shown of people who had visited the medium, and he declared that these were faithful likenesses. Here again many of these had sketches in the background which might be supposed to indicate scenes from the past life of the subject or associations with him.

In conclusion the lecturer said that in the case of both these mediums there was a kind of gift which made its appearance all at once, and although, in the case of Gruzewski, there had certainly been progress, yet the achievement at the very beginning was remarkable. Here was a man manifesting not only a disposition towards art but also diverse technical knowledge, including a knowledge of anatomy, which he had not learned, and of which his conscious intelligence showed no trace. All the work was done in a state of unconsciousness. Gruzewski never drew except in a trance. It was not rare to see drawings which were done subconsciously, but certainly it was rare to see subconscious drawings and paintings which had reached the level of artistic achievement of those shown in these cases. These men had no hesitation in believing that their hands were the instruments of spirits. It was certainly true that, in this region as in others, if one sought for trickery one would find it, but he submitted that that was not the way in which truth was to be approached. Here were men undoubtedly who were capable of far higher levels of production subconsciously than consciously. That might be true of very many people, and those who assigned limits to human achievement without taking into account the subconscious were guilty of what would be called in France presumption. He added that next year a book would be published in France containing a full account of this and other work, and he hoped that it might find English readers.

The Chairman moved a hearty vote of thanks to Dr. Osty for his enthralling lecture and to the Hon. Mrs. Alfred Lyttelton for her skilful and sympathetic interpretation. The hour was too advanced to permit of discussion, but the large audience evidently greatly appreciated all that had been said and shown.



HOW I BECAME A THEOSOPHIST

No. I

By E. L. GARDNER, *General Secretary of the T.S. in England*.⁸

Introductory Note by LP: Edward Gardner (1869-1969) is chiefly known in the psychic field for his involvement with the Cottingley fairies. To Theosophists, he was the author of many penetrating studies of *The Secret Doctrine* and a leader of the Theosophical Research Centre. The article below shows that he had some psychic sensitivity, but this did not cause him to see that the fairy photos were not genuine.

THE first four or five years of this century were spent by me mentally in a crumbling ruin of orthodoxy. For most people who have pulled through such a period it comes, perhaps fortunately, at an earlier stage, and is probably easier to meet. At least one may hope so for, though the experience may afterwards be regarded as an escape from a prison-house, it is painful in the extreme to resign from bible-class leadership, the members' roll of a church, and the fold of the "faithful," and go out into the wilderness of agnosticism with the sense of having lost everything hitherto valued.

For about four years this experience lasted, relieved in a great measure by a very active business life and an intensely interesting hobby—microscopy. Then it occurred to me that possibly biographies of men and women, who had had experiences akin, might give a lead, or at least would prove to be sympathetic company. Science had been almost exclusively my interest and biographies promised a useful if not an agreeable change. My list of selected books began with Cardinal Newman's *Apologia*, and the next was Annie Besant's *Autobiography*. There were quite a number more, but after the second I branched off! Newman's interested, but left me cold. Mrs. Besant's biography appealed to me because of the similarity of the break with orthodox Christianity. Then at the very end of the book a reference was made to Theosophy—simply a brief note of having found the light.



⁸ Taken from the *Theosophical Review*, (London) Vol. 1 No.1 January 1925 pages 20/23. Mr. E. L. Gardner was indeed well-known in connection with the "Cottingley fairies" see *Psypioneer: The Yorkshire Fairies (The Coming of the Fairies – Lantern Lecture by Mr. E. L. Gardner)*:
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

With a certain interest as to what this Theosophy could possibly be I wrote a postcard to an address found in the *Telephone Directory*. A kindly letter and a few leaflets arrived, and from a list of books given, the greater part published in America, I chose *The Doctrine of the Heart* (anonymous)—recommended as an exposition of Theosophy. I read this, and for halfway through was rather taken by its urge of idealism and service and, especially perhaps, by its tone of impersonality. Then a paragraph appeared of harsh criticism of one Annie Besant. The spirit shown was so much at variance with the profession and teaching preceding this passage that I stopped, somewhat shocked. I think the effect would have been as strong had the name been Smith or Robinson, for it was the personal venom that revolted. I looked over the rest of the book rather sadly, turned back to the beginning and cut out an exquisite plate entitled “A Helper of Humanity,” and deposited the rest, not very gently, in the wastepaper basket, thinking “exit Theosophy!” I framed the plate and hung it over my table.

But it was not “exit.” By some coincidence, if such an explanation ever explains, on looking for some telephone number in the directory shortly after, my eye caught the address of a second Theosophical Society—this time in Albemarle Street.⁹ I had not noticed before that there were two addresses. I felt impelled to try again, so sent a similar line of inquiry.¹⁰

The letter that came in reply, I noticed, was not so cordial, so solicitously kindly and personal as the first. With it came a list of books, containing some mentioned in the list received before, and others. Being unwilling to spend another ten shillings or more with the risk of being again disappointed, I took the list to the local public library and found, of the two or three there in the catalogue, that *Esoteric Buddhism*, by A. P. Sinnett, was “in.” I borrowed it, with little hopes from the title—and that’s “how I became a Theosophist!” For that book first took my breath away and then buried me up to the neck—and over, occasionally. With coins of different values spread out on the table I worried through the Schemes and Chains, Rounds and Races, the Pitris and classes of Monads, the Constitution of Man, Reincarnation and Karma, frequently nonplussed, and then at it again, every evening for weeks, for I had long since bought a copy of the book. That which drove me was the conviction that the Plan unfolded was true, brilliantly true. However much the detail might be modified, on broad lines, here was the Plan!

Other books, of course, followed, though I attended no lectures nor thought of joining the Society. The fact was that I believed that members of such a Society must all be versed deeply in Theosophy and so advanced that, until two or three years had been spent in study, one could hardly expect to be admitted to membership. I wonder whether anybody ever thinks that now! In all this time I had not met a single F.T.S., and there were no meetings nearer than Albemarle Street, an hour and a half away from me.

Two years later I applied for admission to the Society and joined the Blavatsky Lodge (Mr. G. R. S. Mead, President), the General Secretary kindly admitting me, after correspondence, as I knew no Fellows. At first I thought the members of the Society, whom I met on my weekly visit to the library and lecture, were rather cold and distant—until I found the fault was much more mine than theirs. Warm and cordial friendships were made when I discovered that it takes two to make a friendship as well as a quarrel.

⁹ See The Theosophical Headquarters in London, 1883-1940: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP10.7July2014.pdf>

¹⁰ Mr Gardner had inadvertently come across the results of the Judge Affair in 1895, which left several competing Theosophical societies in many places. LP.

Certain experiences that I had had as a child, and occasionally since, connected with etheric sight, which had at times been very disquieting, not to say alarming, became understood and commonplace. The best of the Christian beliefs of my earlier manhood were restored to me and became rational and beautiful from the new angle of vision. My interest in the examination of the organic beginnings of plant and animal life was doubled on finding much of the instruction given in *The Secret Doctrine* corroborated by my own observation through simple lens and powerful microscope. The trend of scientific research seems still to be approaching, ever nearer, to the teachings of the Wisdom of the East.

The points that stand out in this experience of my life are—the reading of Annie Besant's *Autobiography*, the study of *Esoteric Buddhism* that followed, and the frequent meeting with corroborations of Theosophical teachings as given in *The Secret Doctrine* in regard to the beginnings and development of organised bodies, the successive appearance of the senses, the Group-Soul theory of animal life, the analysis of man's constitution, etc. Above all, perhaps, there grew in me an appreciation of the superb and satisfying *common sense* of Theosophy, to say nothing of its spiritual concepts, grand beyond measure! So I became a member of the Theosophical Society, and aspired to become a Theosophist.



UNPUBLISHED RECORDS OF STANTON MOSES

BY CONSTANCE SITWELL

(From a talk given by Mrs. Sitwell at the College of Psychic Science)¹¹

Taken from *LIGHT*, December 1957 pages 105/109:



I CANNOT very well talk about Stanton Moses without giving his background and what his contemporaries thought of him. He was not a professional medium; there was no question of money; he did not wish to be a medium and was repelled, rather than drawn, to spiritualism; it seems to have been forced upon him.

Having a great love of scents and perfumes, perhaps because of a childhood spent in Ceylon, when I heard of the wonderful phenomena of flower and other scents in the old Stanton Moses sittings, I was very anxious to learn more about them.

After reading his published works and not finding what I was looking for in the way of perfumes, I found that there were eight or more large volumes of records in typescript taken from the MSS. notes put down at the time, and which he did not want published in full during his lifetime for various reasons. I rather doubt if he would like them to be

¹¹ Mrs Sitwell had been president of the London Spiritualist Alliance, 1943-7. During the war, the College book treasures were taken to her castle in Northumberland for safekeeping.

published now, or made known, for he was a remarkably conscientious and serious man and was very doubtful as to the good that spiritualism could do for most people; very doubtful, too, of the communications he received, and indeed of some of the philosophy preached to him.¹²

I borrowed these volumes, and have been absorbed in them, for I do feel that they are among the most remarkable things I ever came across. These records seem to me to be an encyclopaedia of spiritualism, almost the classics of the subject. For they contain everything, both mental and physical, and a great deal of advice as to how to proceed. I think that not enough has been made to-day of these outstanding experiences—partly, I suppose, because he shrank so much from notoriety.

In studying these extraordinary records we have to choose between his own belief, arrived at after long cogitations, that discarnate beings were manifesting—a contention he was in the end driven to accept, or, alternatively, in thinking in the more popular (and I think mistaken), fashion of our own period, that all was the outcome of the subconscious or unconscious mind and being of Stainton Moses himself. The other alternative, that of fraud, can be ruled out; that hypothesis, given all that happened and was witnessed to, would be sheer escapism or dishonesty.

Professor de Morgan, a well-known mathematician wrote, “I am perfectly convinced that I have both seen and heard, in a matter that makes unbelief impossible, things called spiritual that cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation” and this opinion was, if these things happened, difficult as they are to credit, and were self-produced, with no help from the discarnate, one must also accept that a man living an active, useful, and outwardly normal life could, when sitting in a chair in various rooms, and various places, and surrounded by others, produce luminous figures standing near, materialized arms and hands, moving lights of all descriptions and magnitude, hands that wrote messages, direct writing at a distance from himself, writing so minute that it needs a magnifying glass to read it, mirror writing, only legible when held up to a mirror, drawing done at lightning speed, writing in red pencil and blue pencil when there were no such pencils in the room, spirit drapery that was tangible, Greek lettering, Old English Black Letter Script, musical sounds of all descriptions, the sound of harps, bells, violins, piano, clashes so loud that they frightened and startled people, movements of heavy furniture (impossible for a man to move normally) apports of flowers, of gems, of rings and, to return to where I began, perfumes of all kinds; roses, violets, heliotrope, sandal wood, musk, peppermint, verbena and all manner of delectable scents unknown to us here: liquid scents, also, which rained down from the ceiling and stained paper and handkerchiefs, and remained for days: he would also have not only to have known all he himself had ever heard or read, but, apparently, all history, all books, Greek and Latin by heart, the details of obscure musical history, the teaching of various musical schools, (though he himself was completely devoid of the musical sense); he would have to be familiar with the details of little-known happenings through the centuries in various countries, the names and minute circumstances of them; he would have to be able to write, in the dark, signatures of famous men, which on investigation turned out to be facsimiles of their signatures in the British Museum; he would have to reproduce writings of the recondite

¹² These typescripts were made about 1920 at the instigation of Mr Trethewy, who was studying the Moses mediumship. We are very fortunate they were made, since the original ink has now faded on some of the hand written notebooks. See “A Study of Stainton Moses” <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.4April07.pdf>

medieval alchemical schools in old medieval English with the medieval wording and spelling (which were also found to be correct when compared with the valuable old documents locked up in the cupboards of the British Museum). He would have to be able to produce direct writing at a distance from himself in the dark, and so on, and so on.

If, as I said, a man can do all this of himself with *no* aid from without then we must indeed revise all our ideas as to what man is.

Most mediums, as we well know, have gifts in one direction or another but seldom in all directions. Stainton Moses was used by what we, and he, believed to be spirits in every possible way. I know all this sounds almost unbelievable and one may well ask why it is not more generally known. The reason is that he himself was adamant over most of the physical phenomena that happened; the things his communicators told him very often ran counter to all he had been taught to believe and had acted upon as a clergyman. He thought, and the beings who spoke through him said, that the time is not ripe for such disclosures. Seeing that spiritualism was only just beginning in England, perhaps he was right: the spiritualists were mostly looked on as gullible creatures, as indeed they still are in most quarters. Neither did Stainton Moses ever make public the names of his communicators though he himself knew who they claimed to be: he called them by names such as Imperator, Teacher, Prudens, Rector, and so on. He affirms that he saw those who were dictating to him or guiding his pen; he saw them as luminous figures, or as pillars of misty light standing near him.

What he wanted published, and what he himself put together in the books which were published, were mostly teachings, but in these he did cite some of the objective phenomena as proofs.

No one could have been more puzzled than the medium himself; he had been brought up in a strictly orthodox way; his father was the headmaster of a grammar school in Lincolnshire; and he himself entered the Church of England. So he argued with his unseen communicators and he disbelieved as long as he reasonably could. There were visions which, of course, were more difficult to verify; there were out-of-the-body experiences and many other things which it is impossible to go into but, in the end he was absolutely convinced of the genuineness of it all. As a rule a Doctor and Mrs. Speer sat with him and took notes; sometimes he was alone, sometimes at the beginning of his mediumship, he sat with other mediums. Sometimes others were added to the regular circle, but his teachers were extremely particular as to who came and with whom he sat. (I should like to emphasize that many of his friends were eminent and learned people, not likely to be taken in, or unduly impressed or dazzled in any way.)

Phenomena of Scent

I will begin with the phenomena of scent and quote the record made at the time by Mrs. Speer, one of the most intimate of the circle.

Scents of various kinds were always brought to the circle—the most common being musk, verbenas, new mown hay and one unfamiliar odour which we were told was spirit scent. Sometimes breezes heavy with perfume swept round the circle: at other times quantities of liquid musk would be poured into the hands of the sitters, and also by request on our handkerchiefs. At the close of the seance scent was nearly always found

on the medium's head and the more frequently it was wiped away the stronger and more plentiful it became.

Again:

September 7th, 1873. On returning to the seance room, Mentor, one of the communicators, sprinkled us with the most delicious perfume and soon after spirit lights appeared. One sailed backwards and forwards, another was round, something in the shape of an upright cup. . . . By request Mentor touched our hands with it several times. It felt hard and cold. Dr. Speer asked if he, Mentor, could touch me, with the spirit drapery that surrounded the light, this he did several times, brushing it across my hands and once by request over my face. It felt very tangible; more like flax than cambric muslin. The drapery also passed over Dr. Speer's hands. Mentor then deluged the circle with scent, throwing some, in gaslight, on a sheet of paper on which spirits had written. This retained the perfume until the next day, and the paper was found stained in places a deep yellow colour (this paper had been marked).

On *September 11th* abundant and beautiful scent was wafted over the circle, and cool air, fragrant with delicious perfume, came to each sitter in turn. The medium, Stainton Moses, became entranced and during this time Mentor showed us several beautiful spirit lights. Three were very large and one was so bright that we saw not only Mentor's hand holding the light but the whole of his arm, bare to the elbow. It was a long, thin, hairy arm, not at all like the medium's. We were then told to put our hands together quickly. Mentor said that it greatly helped the manifestations. He said that in time he might materialize the whole of his body.

On *September 14th* (three days later), on sitting down I saw a bright figure standing behind Stainton Moses. We were told it was Mentor. He then came between us bringing cool air full of the scent of roses, which he wafted over our hands and faces.

On *December 31st*, Much sandalwood scent was freely thrown all over the table.

On *January 3rd*, Great quantities of lovely scent both dry and liquid, came to us, smelling of verbenas; we were fanned by perfumed air, and wet scent rained on us. Our seance room at this time was scented like a lovely garden and it was to remain so for days. Musk was smelling so strongly at my left side that I felt sure some had been brought. I moved my hand over the table and felt a quantity of dry musk, which, when the seance was over, I saw and collected as much as would cover a sixpence. It was very sweet and retained its perfume as long as it lasted.

Musical Sounds

Now as to *musical sounds*.

These were many and varied, and played an important part in the list of extraordinary things that took place in the presence of witnesses in this circle. They could be roughly divided into two classes; those that proceeded from an instrument in the room, which was a harmonium, while all the hands of the sitters were joined round the table, and those which were produced in a room in which there was no instrument of any kind whatever. These, naturally, were the most surprising by far. First there were what they called, "Fairy Bells". These resembled the tones made by striking glasses with a small hammer; the sounds given forth were clear, crisp, and melodious. We are told that no special tune was played, but the

bells were always harmonious, and at the request of any member of the circle, the bells would always run up and down a scale in perfect tune.

(I might perhaps say here that there is a tradition of Fairy Bells in Ireland and other places. On one of his books A.E. says he heard them. James Stephens, too, makes one of his characters exclaim “The bells— the bells”—heard before death.) There was also the sound of a stringed instrument, more like a 'cello, we are told, than anything else, but more powerful and sonorous. Then they had a sound it was exceedingly difficult to describe; Mrs. Speer, who took the notes, said of it, that if the soft tone of a clarinet could be imagined, and then increased in intensity and volume until it was loud as a trumpet. Another thing constantly heard seemed an exact imitation of an ordinary hand-bell, which would be rung sharply by way of indicating the presence of the particular spirit with whom it was associated. “Naturally” adds Mrs. Speer “we took care to ascertain that no bell of any kind was in the room, and even if there had been, it would have been a matter of great difficulty to ring it all round the walls and up to the ceiling”.

I will now pass on to what, after all, was the major interest of the sitters and of us to-day, the evidence of individuality perpetuated after death. Stainton Moses writes, "Repeated evidence was brought home to me. Some were written communications in which peculiarities of handwriting, spelling, and diction were accurately reproduced. Some were verbal communications. Some were laboriously rapped out in the circle. Some were corroborated by my clairvoyant vision. The ways used to convey the information were various, but all agreed on one particular. The facts given were invariably, literally, and exactly true. In most cases they related to friends and acquaintances. This source of evidence continued for a long time; and at the same time I developed a power of clairvoyant vision which rapidly increased until I was able to see and converse at length with my invisible friends. (This point should be noted when the telepathic theory is invoked, but no doubt some researchers would be able to explain it away).

“The inner faculties seemed to be opened”, he goes on, “so that the information given received new confirmation from my clairvoyant sight. This power eventually developed to a high degree.” He then goes on to tell of visions seen by him when apparently out-of-the-body. “These visions were extremely vivid, and my spirit appeared to act independently of my body. During some of them I was conscious of living and acting among scenes not of this earth; in other dramatic tableaux were enacted before me, the object evidently being to represent some spiritual truth. In two cases only was I able to satisfy myself by outside evidence of the reality of my vision. I was in deep trance during each occasion, I could not distinguish between the subjective impressions of a dream, and the real occurrence of what I saw so vividly before me, save in these two cases when, as I said, I could confirm what I saw and heard in vision by what I afterwards discovered from external sources. The scene in these two cases was real, and I do not doubt that it was so in all.” (You will note how careful and exact Stainton Moses was in all he either writes or says.) He goes on: “I do but note these visions as a phase of the development of my spiritual education. It was always represented to me they had a real existence and that my inner senses were opened for the purpose of confirming my faith in things unseen by the natural eye.”

These extraordinary happenings were not brought about without cost to the medium. Speaking of the automatic writing, he says, “The intensity of some writing was something quite new to me. The hand traversed sheet after sheet of my book, tracing the most minute characters; paragraphing and keeping a margin, so that the writing struck the eye as a

beautiful piece of calligraphy. He goes on “my hand tingled, my arm throbbed and I was conscious of waves of force surging through me. When the message was done I was prostrate with exhaustion and suffered from a violent headache at the base of the brain.”

He then says that he pondered a great deal as to whether his own thoughts entered into the subject matter of the communications. He says, “I took extraordinary pains to prevent any such admixture. At first the writing was slow and it was necessary for me to follow it with my eye, but, even then, the thoughts were not my thoughts. Very soon the messages assumed a character of which I had no doubt whatever that the thought was opposed to my own. But I cultivated the power of occupying my mind with other things during the time the writing was going on and was able to read an abstruse book, and follow out a line of close reasoning while the message was written with unbroken regularity. Messages so written extended over pages in the course of which there is no correction, no fault in composition, and often a sustained and vigorous beauty of style.”

A Remarkable Apport

I will now tell about an apport: a description of Stainton Moses being given a topaz.

At a sitting early in *February*, 1876, the communicator wrote:

Our friend Magus desires to say that he was correctly described by the medium. Rector, he, and Mentor are with you. He had with him a spiritual jewel which the clairvoyant saw, though to his imperfect vision it was multiplied. He wishes to say that the material counterpart of the jewel will be given to you and he wishes to warn you to guard it with all care.

Stainton Moses asks: What does he mean by the material counterpart?

Answer: It will be necessary to form a representation of it.

S.M.: To materialize it?

Answer: As you would say.

S.M.: What is the stone?

Answer: The nearest approach to the stone will be a topaz. It is not exact. You will have it made as a ring for the finger of the right hand. You will have it set at once.

S.M.: A topaz is yellow. What does it mean?

Answer: No. No—of a delicate pink hue. The symbolism will come in due time. It will be a powerful amulet and you will know by the source from which it comes that it is given to you in connection with the new phase of your life which is now about to come.

S.M.: A pink topaz. I know that stone. Is it in connection with magic or masonry?

Answer: With both.

S.M.: And who is to set it?

Answer: You will be guided. On no account neglect your impressions. They will be implanted there for the purpose of guiding you.

S.M.: How will the stone come?

Answer: As occasion enables Magus to produce it.

S.M.: Can we have a sitting for it?

Answer: On no account, it will come in another way altogether. When it comes, cause it to be set at once. Cease now.

February 5th. Another sitting.

S.M.: I want distinctly to understand whether you mean that the stone which you are to give me is a stone already existent in the world, or is it to be created—materialized—for the purpose?

Answer: Our friend will judge. He is not here. We do not know whether he can obtain such a crystal as he wishes without making it.

S.M.: Do you seriously mean that he can *create* such a gem?

Answer: Surely: You have not yet understood that? He has power either to create under certain circumstances or to procure such things as are necessary for his wish. The power entrusted to such spirits as he is very great indeed but they exercise it with care, being responsible for its use. It is necessary in this case to provide you with an amulet. . . . You will have full directions. See that you obey, for, trust us, the agencies at work are very potent.

S.M.: I don't like having anything to do with these hidden powers without knowledge.

Answer: You need faith. Cease, we may not say more.

February 6th

S.M.: Is Magus here now?

Answer: Yes, he is with you.

S.M.: Will he tell me what the virtue is that is supposed to reside in that topaz?

Answer: The stone is a pure and powerful crystal selected by us because it is easily charged with the particular influence we wish to put in it.

S.M.: Then you will put a special virtue in it? You can answer my question as to whether it will be a stone already existent or not? Rector did not know.

Answer: We cannot say now.

S.M.: You have the power of creation?

Answer: Under certain circumstances that we are not allowed to reveal.

A fortnight passes concerned with other matters: direct writing, clairvoyance, and so on. There was quite a long sitting on *February 27th* but nothing more said about the topaz.

Then comes this entry by Stainton Moses.

On waking this morning, February 28th, I found in the place where I usually put my watch, a ring which I had not seen before. It was a large pink topaz, set as a ring for the little finger. I have no sort of knowledge as to how it got there. I went to bed about twelve o'clock and did not remember anything until I woke.¹³

He writes at the end of 1872 “Thus the year closed—the most remarkable year of my life. In it I have learnt that the so-called dead are more really living than ourselves, and that under certain conditions, they can return to earth. And this was the blessing given by Imperator, the chief control, to us: ‘May you live now so that hereafter you may pass easily through the intermediate spheres without pain—to the realms of joy.’”



¹³ It goes without saying that this incident of SM being given an amulet raises serious questions; for his later view of Magus, see *Psypioneer* November 2014 “Occultism and Spiritualism.” LP

BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

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

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