

PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

Founded by Leslie Price

Edited by
Paul J. Gaunt

Archived by
Garth Willey



Established 2004

Volume 12, No. 5: September – October 2016

—~\$~—

- 152 – Two Interesting Experiences in London – R. Fielding-Ould, M.A., M.D., M.R.C.P
- 155 – Book Review: Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture – Sharon DeBartolo Carmack
- 157 – Stewart Edward White: An Obituary – William Oliver Stevens
- 160 – Voices at Surgical Operations – Helen Duncan & Eileen Garrett
- 163 – Book Review: Llewellyn's Complete Book of Chakras: Your Definitive Source of Energy Center Knowledge for Health, Happiness, and Spiritual Evolution, by Cyndi Dale – Kurt Leland
- 166 – 2017 Dates – Britten Memorial Study Weeks at the Arthur Findlay College
- 167 – Dion Fortune – Bernard Bromage
- 177 – How to obtain this Journal by email

=====

Introductory Note by LP: *Direct Voice* was a short-lived high quality American Spiritualist journal, which can be consulted on the I.A.P.S.O.P. web site.¹

Dr Fielding-Ould, a Harley Street doctor, later president of the London Spiritualist Alliance, is best known as the senior investigator for the LSA of Mrs Duncan. This article shows he was not without experience of physical mediumship.²

TWO INTERESTING EXPERIENCES IN LONDON

BY R. FIELDING-OULD, M.A., M.D., M.R.C.P

WE held a hundred seances in all. We were about fifteen in number, a simple group of friends banded together with the common idea of elucidating, if permitted, some of the elusive problems of Psychic Science.

Fortunately we had at our disposal an excellent “materializing” medium, whom we engaged to sit for us exclusively for the modest payment of \$15 a week. He was a miner by occupation, of humble origin and little education. The séances were held on Wednesday evenings in a flat we had leased for the purpose in Buckingham Gate in the City of Westminster. The flat we furnished to suit the needs of our projected research, a few chairs—a table or two and a small organ was all we thought necessary. It will be noticed that, for all ordinary residential purposes, the flat was really unfurnished.

Our group was made up entirely of friends, all well known to one another and it was ruled by a committee gradually of five. Every member of this committee was in one way or another technically expert; one well known in the world of psychic research (Dr. Ellis Powell) was a barrister-at-law, well versed in physical science and Editor of the *Financial Times*,³ another was an expert electrician, and a third a doctor of medicine given to psychology and a barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple. As a rule we did not admit more than nine sitters to any one meeting, and strangers, *i. e.*, persons not belonging to the group, were rigidly excluded.

On two occasions only, did we make exceptions to this rule, and what transpired on those evenings shall now be briefly recounted.

Inasmuch as the flat was untenanted and locked up between the evenings of our meetings, and as the medium arrived unaccompanied, we did not resort to the familiar bands and restrictions which are in some quarters regarded as a guarantee against fraudulent practices. The medium was always searched as a preliminary and it was held, after careful consideration, that fraud was impossible under the conditions prevailing.

It should be remembered, that the medium was introduced into a room entirely strange to him and to which in the intervals of sitting he had no access. Moreover, at every seance he was surrounded by people of experience in psychic research, and whose one determination was that whatever phenomena occurred fraud should be impossible. We were in fact always watchful and wary. In one corner of the seance room we constructed a “cabinet” of black

¹ http://www.iapsop.com/archive/materials/direct_voice/

² *The Direct-Voice: A Magazine Devoted to the Direct Voice and Other Phases of Psychic Phenomena* No. 4 August 1930 (New York) pages 102-105.

³ That should be *Financial News* – Note that Powell died in 1922.

hanging curtains. In this the medium sat and on each side of the entrance to the cabinet it was the invariable rule for a member of the committee to sit. The phenomena which occurred varied, as might be expected, from week to week—some evenings were almost blank, but this experience happily was rare. It was observed that the variety and intensity of the phenomena were affected chiefly by the atmospheric conditions, but sometimes by the physical condition of the medium.

When the nights were dry and frosty, phenomena were interesting and often startling, but when the weather was damp or foggy the results, on the other hand, were sometimes negligible. In the United States many of the brilliant results obtained may be ascribed to the dry and electric character of the climate. We invariably commenced our sittings at seven o'clock in the evening.

One night we were about to begin the seance when there came, all unexpectedly, a knocking at the outer door. Investigation showed that a strange lady was waiting outside, asking permission to enter and sit with us. She said she came from Edinburgh and had been sent by a Scotch medium to visit us. She added that she had been told that at our circle she would receive an answer to some question which was troubling her. Gently but firmly we pointed out that we never admitted strangers; our visitor, however, pathetically pressed us to allow her to join our circle just for one sitting only. After a hurried consultation the committee gave its consent. We were reluctant, but largely influenced by the fact that the lady had traveled a long way, with a definite and important object in view, and under the precise instructions of a medium in her own town. Moreover, we calculated that we might experience something of the nature of a test. The writer of these notes was deputed to sit next the newcomer, and advised to be specially watchful that none of our precise and well thought out rules was transgressed.

I should have said that we always sat in a fairly strong red light, whereby it was just possible to see dimly the faces of the sitters in the circle. Luminous slates were also provided, which as a rule lay face downward on the floor, but which could be raised at any moment for special illumination. All being arranged, the sitting began, and in a few moments the medium went into the trance condition. After a few preliminary remarks by the controls there appeared in front of our lady visitor, at a distance of about two feet, the most beautiful head and shoulders of a female figure. This form was draped in some sort of white material which partially enveloped the head and flowed down on to the shoulders. It was lighted up and made clearly visible by a luminous slate, which was picked up off the floor for the purpose, by some unknown invisible agency.

Seated where he was, the writer was able to see the figure quite clearly at about two feet distance, and he particularly noted the eyes, eyelashes and eyebrows which were perfectly defined, and also noted the glistening of the coating of the eyeball—the conjunctiva. No word was uttered at first, but the figure and face were kept under close observation until a minute perhaps had passed. Then a curious change was noticed; very gradually the color left the face and eyes, the definition of the features became blurred, and finally all resemblance to a human face was lost; there remained only a uniformly brown mass, resembling an oval football. It was impossible to estimate the time occupied in the transformation, but after perhaps ten seconds a further change took place; gradually, just as they had previously dissolved, the features, details and color of the original beautiful face reappeared and once more one found oneself gazing into a countenance marked not only by its beauty but also by the vital and natural appearance of the manifestation.

We were subsequently informed by the Controls that the changes described were due to the ebb and flow of the Power at work on the materialization.

The figure now drew nearer to our visitor and conversed with her in an undertone, which was not audible to the other sitters in the circle. Finally, after about two minutes, the slate dropped to the floor and the figure vanished.

At the end of the sitting our visitor was asked if she had received the information for which she had been sent. She replied, "Yes, everything I wanted; I return to Edinburgh perfectly happy." This incident is interesting and remarkable; in the first place, because of the clearly visible changes that took place in the materialized form as the Power waxed and waned, and secondly, because of the fact that the visitor had traveled from Edinburgh by the direction of a medium unknown to all of us, for a specific object which was fully attained as she had been promised.

Readers of *The Direct-Voice* will appreciate the significance of the facts related and those now about to be described and not less interesting.

Only twice during our long series of sittings did strangers apply to us for admission to our circle. One occasion has been already described and it remains to relate what happened on the second occasion which took place exactly a week later. Once more we were just about to begin the seance when a knocking was heard at the locked door of the flat. On opening we descried a thick-set man, about forty-five years of age, of humble appearance as that of a manual worker. In a gruff voice, with a marked North country accent, he informed us that he had come from Hull, at the behest of a medium (unknown to us) in order to get some information which would be for his good.

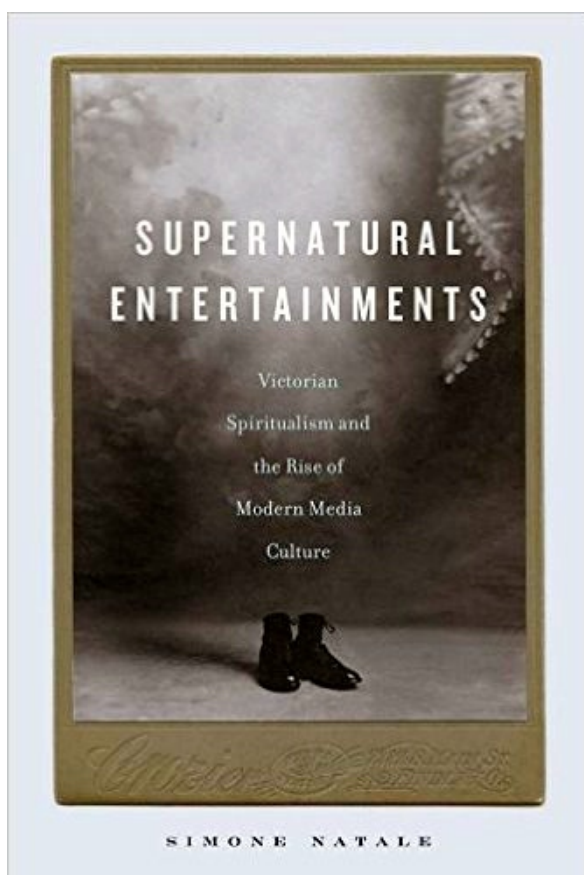
As before, with the same considerations in our minds, he was permitted to join the circle, and having a lively remembrance of the previous week's experience we awaited watchfully for what might occur. After about twenty minutes the luminous slate was raised from the floor and those sitting near our visitor saw the form of a man fully and perfectly materialized to the waist. The writer of this account, who was sitting next the man from Hull and holding his right hand, felt a shuddering movement pervade the whole body of our visitor. Not a word was said, but the materialized form slowly nodded his head and exhibited a cold, sneering sort of grin. The face of the figure was remarkably handsome, with an aquiline nose and dark colored eyes, but his expression, grinning or in repose, was evil and sinister to a degree difficult to describe. Suddenly the materialized figure gave vent to a loud, hollow, mocking laugh and the slate was dropped and we saw no more.

But again and again, during the evening, that mocking laugh rang out; all those present heard it, and will never forget the impression of horror it made upon them. A few other materializations occurred, but throughout the remainder of the sitting that evil laugh could be heard, at one time near the sitters and at another as if it were forty or fifty yards or more away. One of the Controls dryly commented: "We get strange people in here sometimes." When we broke up the circle, no questions were asked of the man from Hull and he himself made no remark, but his livid face was eloquent of the emotion he was suffering. After gazing, as if dazed, into space for a minute or two, he shrugged his shoulders, shook himself, quietly took his hat and with a quiet "good-night gentlemen" left us.

Who was this ghostly visitor? That we shall never know: but those who saw that sneering evil face and heard that hard, cruel laugh felt convinced that they had been, for once at least, face to face with a veritable devil. It was horrid.



Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture



Simone Natale, a Lecturer in Communication and Media Studies at Loughborough University in the U.K., has done extensive and exhaustive research to bring a new understanding and awareness to the history and pioneers of Spiritualism. In *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture*, Natale documents the rise of Spiritualism as a religious and cultural movement, demonstrating its strong affiliation with the emerging media and entertainment industry of the nineteenth century.⁴

The book is divided into three parts: Part I: Configurations of Séances, which covers séances performed on stage and those held in private homes; Part II: How to Sell a Spirit, which explores how Spiritualism spread through the news media and in the process, developed its own celebrity culture; and Part III: Spirit and Matter, which delves into print media (books and periodicals, including automatic writings) and spirit photography.

Natale takes the reader from the story of the Fox sisters in 1848 and follows the movement in both the United States and Great Britain through the early twentieth century. In his Introduction, rather than focusing on the Hydesville rappings, however, as many histories of Spiritualism so often do, Natale begins with the earliest public appearance by the Fox sisters on 14 November 1849, when they demonstrated spirit communication in the largest theater in Rochester, New York, Corinthian Hall. Some four hundred people attended, paying twenty-five cents a person.

Natale consulted an abundant array of modern-day Spiritualist scholarship and, more importantly, historical publications, both secular and Spiritualist, including *Medium and Daybreak*, as well as a trove of books on mediumship and spirit communication. In doing so, he reveals how Spiritualist mediums and pioneers embraced many of the same promotional strategies and spectacular techniques common to the evolving entertainment trade. Like other performers of their day, Spiritualist mediums had managers and agents, advertised in the press, and even welcomed controversy and sensationalism in order to draw audiences and spread the word of the movement. And spread it they did! Natale posits that if not for the rise in public entertainment and print consumerism, Spiritualism might have never taken flight.

⁴ *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture*, by Simone Natale (University Park, Penn.: Penn State University, 2016; \$79.95, £56.95 hardcover; \$39.99, £32.29, Kindle; 248 pp., 31 illus., index)

Natale covers his subjects with sensitivity and balance. At no time did the author mock Spiritualism, the movement's religious beliefs, or the hundreds of thousands of followers. It's no secret that fraud is part of Spiritualist history, but in presenting cases of fraudulent activity, Natale never condemns or dismisses the entire movement out of hand because of the few who took advantage of their audiences and consumers. On the contrary, he treats the movement with objectivity and respect.

The amount and depth of his research is impressive; the bibliography alone is thirty pages with two columns per page of entries. He likewise exhibits a thorough knowledge and understanding of Spiritualist phenomena, from physical and trance mediumship to automatic and direct writing. For a scholarly treatment, Natale's writing is refreshingly clear and engaging, and he meticulously details, analyzes, and supports each of his chapter arguments, all of which are solidly supported but easily followed by the average reader.

The only real disappointment with this book is the price the publisher set. The cost definitely exceeds what the average consumer can pay, and it's not likely many university courses would use such a specialized text. Even the Kindle price is steep. It's unfortunate that such a worthwhile study that contributes so much to not only Spiritualist history, but to the field of media and entertainment studies, is out of financial reach for most readers. In this regard, the publisher did a disservice to the enormous amount of work this author put into this book. Unlike the popularity and wide reach Spiritualist literature had, and still has, sadly, the pricing of this book may limit its reach.

Those readers who can afford this book, however, or who can find it in a library or through interlibrary loan, will not be disappointed. It is an engaging and enlightening history of Spiritualism's growth from a unique perspective.

—Sharon DeBartolo Carmack, MFA, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA
Spiritualists' National Union International, USA Representative



Introductory Note by LP: Several of the books of S.E. White were well known to UK readers a generation ago. Copies were imported by bodies like the MSA, and the Psychic Book Club reprinted *The Betty Book* for example. The books continue to be of value to serious students.

Below is taken from the Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research (JASPR) Vol. XLI January 1947 No. 1:

Stewart Edward White: An Obituary

On September 18th last, the novelist Stewart Edward White died at the University of California hospital after undergoing an operation. He was seventy-three years old. The newspaper obituaries spoke at length about his two-score books on outdoor life, ranging in scene from Alaska to Africa, books of wide popularity, and described his adventurous career as a hunter, explorer, and soldier in the first World War. His contribution to the realm of psychic literature, however, was dismissed by a line or two, such as “he embraced spiritualism,” in *The New York Times*, and in the *Herald Tribune* the titles of only two of his books in this field. This notice, therefore, will concern itself with only this aspect of his writing.

“Before March 17, 1919,” Mr. White says at the opening of *The Betty Book*, “my own ‘occult’ background might have been called average for a man who had lived an active life . . . I suppose I would have taken my stand on the side of skepticism . . . Spiritualism meant to me either hysteria or clever conjuring or a blend of both.” In his explorations he had come upon the phenomenon of telepathy among primitive peoples, but had not been interested enough to try to explain it to himself.

On the date given above, some friends brought a ouija board as a toy to try out. It soon appeared that Mrs. White (Betty) had the best success with it. She was told on the board to “get a pencil.” This message was repeated over and over. Later she obeyed and sat with a pencil poised over a sheet of paper. It began to move slowly and formed a long continuous script in which the words had to be deciphered and divided. When the sitting was repeated, in order to make sure that she was not consciously manipulating the writing, she blindfolded her eyes or looked away while her hand moved over the paper. Her husband sat in as the “observer.” The phenomenon so excited the curiosity of both Mr. and Mrs. White that they continued experimenting.

In this way began a long series of alleged communications. From writing, “Betty” changed to the method described in *Our Unseen Guest*, of relaxing into a species of “double consciousness,” or trance, from which she dictated words which came to her, and which her husband took down.



Stewart Edward White, 1912

About a year and a half after this experimenting began, the Whites had assembled over 400 typed pages of MS. Some of this script was personal, such as instruction in technique, but the rest of it expressed a philosophy which, says Mr. White, "had given us a new outlook and a fresh grip on life." But he waited seventeen years before any of this was offered for publication.

Meanwhile, however, he issued two books that were a departure from the outdoor scene that had made him famous: *Credo* (1925), a book designed to help the man with a scientific background to define his beliefs, and in 1928 a discussion of the problems of everyday living with the singularly unhappy title, *Why be a Mud Turtle?* But neither of these referred to psychic experiences.

In 1937 the accumulated mass of scripts bore fruit in the *Betty Book*. This was followed two years later by *Across the Unknown*. These contained a digest of the purported messages from spirit-communicators called by the Whites "The Invisibles." A third volume, *The Unobstructed Universe*, appeared in 1940 after the death of "Betty," and is a record of her communications received through their friend "Joan," the sensitive who had been the channel for the text of *Our Unseen Guest*, which she and her husband published anonymously a score of years earlier. *The Betty Book*, *Across the Unknown*, and *The Unobstructed Universe* comprise a trilogy which forms perhaps the most important landmark in communication literature since Stainton Moses' *Spirit Teachings*. These books had a mounting sale; while *The Betty Book* sold over 9,000 copies, *The Unobstructed Universe* topped the score of 32,000.

Subsequently, Mr. White issued *The Road I Know*, further notes on Mrs. White's messages; *Anchors To Windward*, a restatement of the philosophy or religion that the communications had revealed; and finally, *The Stars Are Still There*, in January, 1946. This, his last book, was inspired by the many letters that had flooded upon him in consequence of the "Betty Books," especially *The Unobstructed Universe*. He scrupulously answered every letter that bore a home address. These letters averaged 100 a month over the years. So many of them asked the same questions that Mr. White selected a number of the most typical ones and gave his replies.

As to their significance in psychical research there will always be a difference of opinion. Although Mr. White's character and reputation leave no room for doubting his integrity or intelligence, the habitually skeptical mind will not have the patience to examine the evidence that convinced the Whites, but will shrug these books off as the product of honest but credulous minds. It need hardly be repeated, however, that no one could have started off with an attitude less favorable to "divulgences" than this practical, out-door man, who had the typical agnostic mind of his time.

Finally a word should be added about Mr. White's charm of personality, his talent for friendship, his generous praise for the books of others, and his patience and tact in answering all the thousands of appealing letters that were inspired by the "Betty Books." It is a matter of deep regret that the distance between his California home and New York deprived our Society of his counsel and inspiration.

In the year 1919, when the Whites began their psychic experiments, as recorded in the *Betty Book*, Mr. White made a trip East from California. He took advantage of the opportunity that journey offered by arranging a consultation with Dr. J. H. Hyslop. Mr. White was not then, apparently, a member of our Society. He was troubled and uncertain about the strange experiences that he and his wife had been having, and wondered whether they had

enough validity to justify going on with the experiments. Dr. Hyslop reassured him and encouraged him to continue. According to the records it was not until 1925 that Mr. White actually joined the Society. He became a Voting Member in 1941, a position that he held until his death.

It may be of interest, in concluding this sketch, to tell again a story which is significant of Mr. White's profound belief in survival and of the deference paid to that belief by the editors of *Who's Who in America*. After Mrs. White's death her husband made no alteration of his biographical sketch in the line "m. Elizabeth Grant, of Newport, R. I., April 28, 1904" to indicate that she was no longer living. The editors were about to make the usual notations as to her death, when one of them, to quote *Who's Who in America's* Reference Service, "recalled that he had only a few days previously received a copy of *Across the Unknown* as a gift from a friend. He glanced through it. His eye was caught by the final chapter—'I Bear Witness.' Before he had finished the four pages of the chapter he understood why Mr. White had not himself altered the reference to Betty. And he had reached a decision—he would suggest that the usual notation be not made . . . There results a 'first' among the 433,050 sketches published in *Who's Who in America* since Mr. White's sketch first appeared nearly four decades ago—a waiving of accuracy to make possible a gesture recognizing the beautiful chapter in an unusual book . . ."

WILLIAM OLIVER STEVENS.



VOICES AT SURGICAL OPERATIONS

Introductory Note by LP: The two incidents below happened to two mediums at about the same time- around 1930. The first concerns Helen Duncan, who was primarily a physical medium, though accounts of her mental mediumship are not rare. Is it possible that the first incident described below was a case of independent voice?⁵

The second experience befell Eileen Garrett, and is referred to in more than one of her autobiographies. Recently a letter was discovered in the archives of the College of Psychic Studies (transcribed here by permission of the archivist of the College of Psychic Studies.) Again, there is a possibility that this was independent voice. Mrs Garrett was known to have physical mediumship capacity; indeed this was causing some conflict in her life at that time. Her mentor Hewat McKenzie had been against such a development.



When Helen herself became ill and required a hysterectomy, she pleaded with Doctor Harrison to be present at the operation himself. It proceeded as scheduled at 10.00 a.m. one morning. To all present it seemed to be going well and everything appeared normal, when a voice was heard to say, "I think you have gone deep enough."

Quickly swabbing the wound, the surgeon saw that indeed he had. Another fraction and Helen would have been in serious danger. After the operation was completed and Helen had been removed to the recovery room, the doctors and the surgeon remained in the theatre, discussing the remark about the cut being deep enough. Nobody seemed to know who said it; everybody present denied having made the comment.

"I didn't say it," said the surgeon. "I thought it was you, Harrison."

⁵ *The Two Worlds of Helen Duncan* by Gena Brealey with Kay Hunter published by Regency Press 1985 pages 65-66. Later re-published by Saturday Night Press Publications 2008:
<http://www.snppbooks.com/two-worlds-of-helen-duncan.html>

“No sir,” replied Doctor Harrison. “I thought the voice came from above us.”

“Nonsense, man. Impossible!” snapped the surgeon.

Yet Doctor Harrison thought he looked oddly puzzled as he walked away.

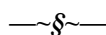
Doctor Harrison told this to Henry as they talked later of Helen’s operation. Henry asked the doctor if he could describe the voice, and was told it had sounded well educated, with a sort of “Oxford accent”.

“Oh, I think that could have been Albert,” said Henry, looking at the doctor to see his reaction. Seeing the surprised look, he continued before the doctor had a chance to ask, to explain about Helen’s remarkable gifts.

Far from being sceptical, Doctor Harrison said, “That explains how she always knows when I am worried about a patient, and how she will tell me when things are all right, or when they are going wrong. She is certainly a remarkable woman.”

From then until he went into the army at the beginning of the Second World War, the Doctor and the Duncans remained great friends. Before joining the army, he brought the new doctor to meet the family. This man, Doctor Burnett, was also to be a tower of strength to Helen and a true friend to the family during the war years.

Sadly, Doctor Harrison was killed in action very early in the war.



2, Charles Street,
Knightsbridge,
S.W.7.

9/6/31

Tele. Kensington 3190.

Dear Mr. Saunders,

Respecting the incident of a voice being heard during the operation on Mrs. Garrett – naturally one is interested in everything these days, and certain phenomena occur to me personally almost every day which are difficult to explain.

During the operation for removal of the Tonsils she was taking the Anaesthetic, and after some “excitement” stage, movements ceased, but when she was no longer conscious began to talk, first in English, then in a language none of us present, including Surgeon, Anaesthetist, Sister, a nurse or two and myself understood.

I have been surgeon for a short time on the P.& O, and knew a few words of Hindustani but can’t say for certain I recognised any, nor was it like any European language. We all commented on the strangeness of it all, the more remarkable when I discovered the patient knew no foreign tongue.

I have given over 1,000 anaesthetics myself, and assisted at hundreds of operations, but never heard anything like it, as before this “speech”, one might call it, she was talking in English.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Frederick Stuart.

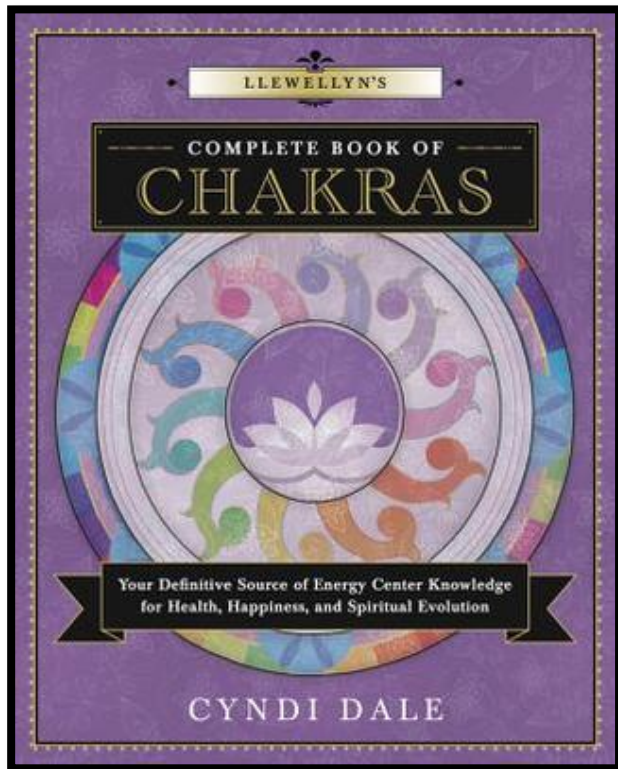
Note. The patient was gagged and unconscious all this time!!

R.H.S.



EILEEN J. GARRETT (1893-1970)

Book Review by Kurt Leland



Ever since its introduction to the West by the Theosophical Society in 1880, the South Asian notion of *cakra* (“wheels”) has exerted an enduring fascination. In their original context in Hindu Tantra, *cakras* were focal points for meditation located along the spine of a seated yogi, sometimes portrayed as lotus-like mandalas. However, in the West, the *cakras* came to be associated with energetic “centers” within one or more subtle bodies that appeared to clairvoyant vision as whirling wheels of light. Hindu Tantra saw meditation on the *cakras* as a means of achieving not only liberation from endless rounds of rebirth but also an adept’s omnipotence and immortality. In the West, the *cakras* gradually evolved into a recipe for “health, happiness, and spiritual evolution,” as in the subtitle of Cyndi Dale’s new book.⁶

Dale begins her introduction by stating that

To explore the chakras is one of the truly great tales of the universe. I have spent years uncovering its many twists and turns, an array of stories enfolded within the larger tale. I wrote this book to present a compendium of these stories pulled together into a single source, a definitive storybook about the chakras. (xlv)

The result is indeed an intertwining of many tales, ranging from the Hindu Vedas to the Huichols of Mexico, the leading lights of the early years of the Theosophical Society (including one of its founders, Madame H. P. Blavatsky, and one of its most prominent clairvoyants, Charles W. Leadbeater) to the latest New Age pundits (including Caroline Myss and Barbara Brennan). Weaving the narrative together is Dale’s attempt to make sense of and coordinate information from such disparate sources while undertaking a personal quest for the roots and developmental sidelines of what she calls chakra medicine, of which she is a noted practitioner.

Compendious the book most certainly is; whether it is definitive depends on one’s definition of the term. A definitive storybook may have a different epistemological status than a definitive history. Each is by nature a narrative—one more personal and folkloric, perhaps; the other more objective and factual.

The history of the notion of *cakras* in the West has known a number of definitive presentations, which seem to appear every ten to twenty years. In these cases, *definitive* means “defining.” Thus there was the American, Ella Adelia Fletcher, whose *The Law of the Rhythmic Breath* of 1908 assembled the known *cakra* lore of her time, primarily from

⁶ Llewellyn’s *Complete Book of Chakras: Your Definitive Source of Energy Center Knowledge for Health, Happiness, and Spiritual Evolution*, by Cyndi Dale. Llewellyn, 2016. 1056 pages.

Blavatsky and Swami Vivekananda. In 1927, Leadbeater, a British subject who spent years living in India, produced his classic, *The Chakras*, coordinating ancient Hindu scriptures, teachings of Blavatsky, and his own clairvoyant observations. In 1951, a British occultist by the name of S. G. J. Ouseley compiled all that was then known about the connection of *cakras*, colors, and metaphysical cosmic rays in connection with color healing in *The Power of the Rays*, which remained in print for nearly forty years. And so it went until the 1987 publication of Anodea Judith's highly influential *Wheels of Life*, which did for the 1980s what Dale has done for the teen years of the twenty-first century—sorting and consolidating all that was/is currently known about the *cakras*, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, factual and speculative, scientific and metaphysical, into a user-friendly system for personal healing and evolution.

In Dale's book there are sections on what the *cakras* are said to be; what *cakra* medicine is and how to practice it; how the *cakras* show up historically and cross-culturally; the scientific basis of the subtle energy that runs through the *cakras*; in-depth looks at how the *cakra* system (or something like it) was/is taught in Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and the modern West. There are yoga poses, meditation and healing exercises, diagrams galore, and color plates.

Perhaps as a result of the deluge of books on the *cakras* that followed *Wheels of Life*, the only way now available to create a definitive compendium of *cakra* lore is to expand not only the number of *cakras* (Dale uses a twelve-*cakra* system rather than the seven-*cakra* system that is seen as traditional in many New Age books) but also the number of locations in the world where the *cakras* are said to appear. Having once quipped that “if there are seven of anything, they must be related to the *cakras*,” I was startled and chagrined to find pages linking the ancient Zoroastrian notion of the seven creator spirits (the Amesha Spentas) with the seven *cakras*. I doubt that original Zoroastrian sources would corroborate such a correspondence.

Although the book contains a helpful glossary and over a hundred pages of endnotes, there is no bibliography. This lapse is perhaps understandable given the book's six centimeter thickness. However, a quick browse of the endnotes reveals that a large number of sources are websites rather than books, a nightmare to arrange in bibliographic form. Further examination indicates that these sources may not have been chosen for scholarly reliability, but because they supported the storybook's premises or perhaps because they seemed like the simplest way to make a point.

An example of the first problem appears in Dale's use of the dates 400 BCE to 400 CE for the composition of the Upanishads. Though many scholars would concur with these dates, Dale associates a number of the Yoga Upanishads with them, whereas they are usually dated to the 1300s to 1400s. Many New Age books make similar assumptions that all Hindu scriptures called Upanishads are equally ancient, hence equally authoritative.

Examples of the second problem occur on page 413. A chart attributed to Alice Bailey, channel for a Tibetan Master named Djwal Khul, shows colors associated with the seven cosmic rays whose various combinations determine our personality and evolutionary path. The endnote points to an online article by Zachary Lansdowne (described by Dale as “a former president of the Theosophical Society”—which is misleading in terms of his authority, since he was neither the international president, nor president of any national subsection, but only of the Boston branch). Close study of Bailey's works indicates that rays and colors may be lined up in various ways depending on the level of personal, soul, or human evolution under discussion. Thus this listing could not be called definitive, but only an interpretation by Lansdowne of one way of describing such a correlation.

A second list on the same page correlates *cakras* and rays. It is called “one of the more commonly accepted renderings,” and is attributed to an article by Rowan Emrys, “The Seven Rays Made Practical.” Though the article is based on Bailey’s teachings, the true source of this correlation is a 1975 publication by British occultist Douglas Baker, *Esoteric Psychology: The Seven Rays* (based on Bailey’s teachings, yet not mentioned in the bibliography of Emrys’s article). And so it goes with page after page, reference after reference.

Such quibbles may not matter to readers who share the beliefs touted in Dale’s book. But what is a scholar to do with such a farrago? I suggest treating it as a time capsule. The book is a goldmine of information about how *cakra* lore has been influenced by the spread of information (and misinformation) on the Internet, and by what Olav Hammer calls source amnesia, in which the original sources of spiritual beliefs are erased, stripped of cultural context, and repurposed within an entirely different cultural context—such that, within a generation or two (fifteen to thirty years), they are called traditional and often perceived as ancient. For example, the “Hindu Chakras” section, comprising 130 pages, makes no differentiation between genuinely traditional Hindu material on the *cakras*, such as the number of lotus petals and the Sanskrit letters assigned to each, and correspondences added hundreds of years later by Western occultists, such as glands and planets, which are now considered traditional.

Severe as these criticisms may seem, we must recall that we are dealing with an evolving body of metaphysical speculation within a quasi-religious, or at least “spiritual” (in the New Age sense of the word) context. This context includes “health, happiness, and spiritual evolution,” hallmarks of what Catherine L. Albanese has called “American metaphysical religion.” Whatever may be the use of the book for spiritual seekers and practitioners of *cakra* medicine, scholars of religious history might come to view it as the *Wheels of Life* of 2016—definitive indeed in its comprehensive survey of contemporary New Age thought and belief about the *cakras*.

—Kurt Leland





Britten Memorial Museum & Library

RESEARCH – STUDY WEEKS at the Arthur Findlay College

A Unique Opportunity Exploring Spiritualist History

Studying for an S.N.U. Course, a degree, writing a paper or
furthering your general knowledge of Spiritualism and our history,
etc.

2017 RESEARCH - STUDY DATES

February 11th – 17th

July 22nd – 29th

November 11th – 17th

£25.00 per day 09.30 – 20.30

Your Research – study visit will be supported under
the guidance of the Museum Curator and Librarian,
Paul Gaunt. Students will have access to the
important major Spiritualistic journals of the day,
books and the Museum, where you can
study and research the many aspects of our history.



Scans/photocopies will be available on some material.

**All those intending to book should contact Paul first
to make sure any specialised subject material is available**
curator@snu.org.uk

MEALS & ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE IF REQUIRED

Lunch £10, Dinner £12.50.

Bed & Full English breakfast is £90.00 per room per night for an ensuite room.

Bed & Full English breakfast is £70.00 per room per night.

Alternatively, accommodation is available in the village, a list is available on request



Introductory Note by LP: We have featured before in *Psypioneer*, the mediumship of Dion Fortune, for example, *Dion Fortune Magical Medium* June 2011. Biographers of Dion have used the account of Dion given by Bernard Bromage in *Light*.⁷ Since he wrote, much more information about Dion's work has been revealed, but it remains a valuable portrait.

DION FORTUNE

BY BERNARD BROMAGE

I FIRST met Dion Fortune in rather unusual circumstances. At least they were unusual enough for me to visualize her as she was first presented to me with a singular clarity and definiteness, over twenty-four years ago.

The scene: the big class-room of a school under the aegis of the L.C.C. and the main figure of attraction: myself! In a small way I was making history. I had been engaged by the University of London to give a series of lectures on "The Literature of the Occult". These "extension" lectures were the first (and up to the present, the last) lectures impinging on such a recondite and deadly subject as occultism to be given with the sanction and under the management of a university body in this country. Were the august authorities becoming "broadminded?" I do not know. Perhaps I shall never know. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; and there was I, as large as life if not half as natural, standing on the rostrum prepared to hold forth on a multitude of speculations contained in a library of books.



A veritable crowd of students had enrolled for the Course; many more than I had anticipated. I had not imagined that there could be found in London so many persons alive to the implications of the theme. It was gratifying! One wondered what was going to happen next. I had evolved a phrase "The Extension of Consciousness" to designate the close parallelism between the theories put forward by writers on occultism past and present and the observations of the scientists with regard to the expanding telepathic, clairvoyant and telekinetic powers of the twentieth century man. Had I underestimated the prevalence of this "extension?" There seemed to be a respectable cross-section of average humanity assembled here this January night in 1936.

It is always my habit to gauge the temper and type of my listeners. This helps to put one *en rapport* with them and so avoid remarks which may give offence. In the midst of some reflections about the foundations of my subject I did my best to sum up the perceptiveness and intelligence of some fifty students.

⁷ *Light* Spring 1960 Vol. LXXX No. 3442 pages 5-12

There was the usual complement of “earnest seekers after truth” whom one finds in almost any university extension lecture. There were a few less earnest, but no doubt attracted by the slightly sensational appeal of a subject decidedly out of the ordinary in these circles. A few Communists. A few diploma-hunters, A few fortune-tellers, crystal-gazers, astrologers, no doubt anxious to pick up tips.

But, without in any way disparaging the personalities of these individuals who constituted this mixed bag, my attention was concentrated on two figures who sat right at the back; who took no notes; but who carried around them that curious and practically unanalysable aura which goes with practice and expertise in the occult and “magical” field. I did not know who they were; but I was certain that they were, in *my* sense of the word, professionals!

Now, it is always nice to meet professionals. They give a fillip to what might otherwise be conventional or even disheartening proceedings. They put one on one’s mettle. Their presence inspires to speculation which might otherwise have lain dormant. The “feel” of them about the place communicates itself to the less electrically-driven students and brings out the best in their receptiveness and capacity. I thanked whatever gods may be, occult and otherwise, for the presence of this pair.

A lady and a gentleman. The latter obviously some kind of professional man: he had the air of competence; and the personality struck me as that of the medical man. My estimate was correct.

It is the custom in these Courses for the lecturer to include in his syllabus a number of questions to be attempted by the students, and for them to submit these to be marked in earnest of their attentiveness and to import some proof of “educational value” into the Course.

At the end of the second lecture, the interesting lady came up to my desk and handed me an essay on the subject of “The Beginnings of Occult Literature”. I glanced at it. I could see at once that it had the feel of competence about it. Then I looked at the lady. She was a striking figure. She bore a remarkable resemblance to the well-known advertisement for Sandeman’s Port. Her rather plump figure was swathed in a crimson gown of hieratic cut: on her head she wore a black flapping hat. There was an odd atmosphere about her of the sibyl, the prophetess, the diver into deep occult seas.

She told me that although she had signed the essay Violet Firth she was best known as “Dion Fortune”. Of course I recognised the name. I had read with much interest her *Mystical Kabbalah*; and there had been a novel *The Goat-Foot God* which had intrigued me. I said that I was very glad to make her acquaintance.

The lectures continued. After each one, Dion Fortune brought me an essay to correct and assess. Although she expressed a great many opinions with which I found myself quite unable to agree, her work revealed an intelligence of a high order and a very wide knowledge of the entire occult field. In particular she had an obviously more than nodding acquaintance with magical techniques, and was no amateur in the strange and rather sinister world of contemporary Kabbalistic speculation.

I can still see these essays. Some of them had been typed with more vigour than correctness on an ancient “portable” (the letter “q” always jumped out of its place!) in the course of train journeys; and they were all written with enthusiasm and penetration. They were, no doubt, lacking in that kind of correct academic sentiment which is dear to the hearts

of University examiners; but the intelligence and thoughtfulness which inspired them was indubitable. Dion Fortune was my “star student!”

One thing led to another. I was invited along to tea at Queensborough Terrace in the Bayswater district of Hyde Park, and discovered, not entirely to my surprise, that Dion Fortune (née Violet Firth) had already established herself as the leader and organiser of an “Occult” Fraternity, that of the “Inner Light” with its own officers, helpers and followers.

I found the establishment at first a little mysterious. There was an air about it of silent and stealthy forces; of “study” controlled and supported by the importation of emanations from other planes; of a slight mixing of the drinks! (This impression was reinforced later when I discovered that the house consisted of a number of storeys, each of which was devoted to one aspect of the Search for the Inexpressible. There was even a department for the study of Christianity; of the “Arthurian”, “Holy Grail” variety.)

I was at this time engaged in the translation of some of the Hindu “Tantric Texts”, and I found Dion Fortune an enthusiastic listener. She herself, she said, had come to the same conclusions as had the Tantrists with regard to the interpenetration of the powers of mind and body. She was kind enough to say that she thought my work significant and important in the highest degree. I had, she averred, much to teach her and the world. I returned the compliment by saying that I was sure she had much to teach *me!*

She invited me to give a series of lectures at her house. After some thought, it was agreed that I should concentrate on the exposition of works of fiction, mainly of this century which had modes of the “extra-sensory faculty” (clairvoyance, telepathy, telekinesis, magical operations) for their bases. After I had given my talk, she would “take over” and animadvert on the purely “occult” significance arising out of the themes.

There was much advertising, scouting, whisperings from mouth to mouth. The clans and covens were convened (Dion always referred to my University of London “extension” group as a “coven” and informed me, on evidence best known to herself, that I was a reincarnation of a mediaeval German witch!) I myself solicited a few of my friends to act as “Chairman” on these occasions.

These “Chairmen” surely acted as part of the draw. They included that almost incredibly prolific literary genius, Majorie Bowen, now alas, gone to her rest; Claude Houghton, most loyal and generous of supporters; Berta Ruck, the celebrated novelist (both she and her gifted husband, Oliver Onions, had been friends of mine for some time past); Christina Foyle of the world-famous, book-emporium; Elliot O’Donnell the expert on haunted houses; Lt.- Col. C. R. F. Seymour and several more.

I think these lectures were a success. They attracted large audiences from the most varied ranks of the intelligentsia; and between us, Dion Fortune and myself threshed out many of the problems which have preoccupied distinguished minds in the field of occult speculation. Whatever else we did we certainly made people think. And they came back for more!

I had become interested in the “Inner Light” Foundation. It intrigued me as a manifestation of a certain type of modern consciousness trying to find its way back to God. It sought to explore not only the “religious” aspects of man’s equipment, but also those reactions which can be more or less adequately measured by the yard-stick of the psychologist and the psychiatrist. (Dion Fortune’s husband was, and, as far as I know still is, a highly qualified medical practitioner. It was apparently the combination of their knowledge

which resulted in the quintessential “message” which the “Inner Light” had to give to the world.)

Psychology

Dion Fortune never ceased to impress on me that she considered psychology to be the operative word. She herself, she said, had attained the greater part of her knowledge of magical techniques solely by a study of psychological principles. I, as it happened, was well acquainted with the training of the Jesuits regarding fundamental psychological precepts; and she was enormously interested to hear my account of this highly-skilled and severely disciplined school of investigation.

She had attended many Courses at that highly “liberal” Institution, the University of London, in such related subjects as psychology, psycho-analysis, mental therapy and the like and she tended to use the terminology employed in these circles in what seemed to me a rather over-facile and slightly too credulous manner. She was full of “ab-reactions”, “compulsive neuroses”, “psychosomatic conditions” and the like. I saw her as essentially an epigone of the Central European School which owed its main allegiance to Freud and which dominated the minds, not to mention the morals (or lack of them) of so many of the young and eager intellectual spirits of the twenties. She had fallen for a time under the influence of the doctrines of the psychologist Aveling; but it was the triumvirate Freud, Jung, Adler, who had awakened her extraordinarily intelligent interest in psychological principles and orientated her towards a position in which she saw quite exceptionally clearly, the close connection between modern empiricism and tried and tested tenets of the great Tantric and Kabbalistic ritualists.

I recall many discussions with her on these and kindred topics: on the nature of the love technique and how it is the woman, the positive dynamism, who awakens the energy in the male and so makes him positive; of the part played by the ancestral subconscious in the formation of character and personality; of the tremendous and sometimes terrifying power of suggestion and its use in propaganda; of the nature of the child and the perceptions of animals.

At this time I read all she had written and admired the courage and the insight with which she probed depths and stressed parallels which had not been sensed previously. A very active, ceaselessly speculating mind, with touches of genius. I put at her disposal much material I had collected on the subject of Eastern Religions: she, in her turn, opened my mind to much that was going on in the “occult” world of London.

More specific still, she soon introduced me to the more “arcane” side of 3 Queensborough Terrace! There were secrets within secrets in this Institution, as in many others. I was given an opportunity to meet several of the students; and to learn how their individual needs were catered for by special “courses”, *adapted* to what Dion Fortune regarded as their “grade” of spiritual development. There was the “Grail” Chapel for comparative novices in matters occult; there was, I think, a kind of “intermediate” department for the kabbalistically inclined; there was a department for “initiates” given over, I understood, to research into the higher regions of occultism.

I was invited, one Saturday evening, to a function which will always remain in my memory as one of the best attempts I have ever witnessed to stimulate the subconscious by means of “pantomime” drawn from the more ancient records of the hierophant’s art.

One was ushered very secretly into the house and then conducted up flights of stairs to the topmost floor where everything was bathed in deep sepulchral gloom.

One was given a seat with a few carefully handpicked “others” in a room at one end of which was erected a platform before which hung a curtain.

After a period of meditation and speculation, the space behind the curtain became illuminated and a “Rite of Isis” began. I am conversant with the celebrated Mysteries which were held in ancient days at Eleusis in Greece; and happen to know by heart the equally celebrated “Orphic Poem” which was recited by the Initiates of old. Dion Fortune had written round the central episode of Initiation a “play”, mostly in dumb-show, in which she, her husband and one or two friends enacted the principal parts.

It was a carefully-studied, conscientiously ritualised performance with excellent regard paid to *tempo*, alteration of currents of energy and correct intonation of the sacred words. But the costumes worn were much more Egyptian than Greek; and I had the feeling that it was Egypt which Dion Fortune was seeking to explore and probe: not the more recent occultism of Greece.

I was right. When, later, I discussed the performance with her she admitted that it was the Ancient Egyptian overtones in the Greek symbolism which had always attracted her, and that my own account of a period I had spent investigating the ancient cities of the Nile had thrilled her imagination. For reasons best known to herself she said she was convinced that I had some kind of occult affiliation with the great Cat-Goddess who sits enthroned in her “altar” in the gardens of the Temple of Karnak; and, furthermore, she “accused” me of casting the image of this dread Being athwart the calculated rhythms of her “*Rite of Isis*”. (I must say, in defence, that if this “overcasting” had indeed taken place, it was without my conscious knowledge or intent. But then, in the realm of occult conflicts, one just never exactly knows!)

External Rites

The whole matter of external “rites” is, of course, closely bound up with the projection into the exterior world of forces endemic to various layers of the racial, national and personal subconscious. To externalise these forces; to bring them out, as it were, into the open, is, if the procedure is correctly gauged and apperceived, to effect a radical improvement in the balance of the psyche and to readjust whole tracts which have been subjected to the destructive chaos of modern life, with its idiotic insistence on continued movement, its dislike of and contempt for repose; its huge and dangerous bluff of “material progress” divorced from spiritual reality.

I met at different times a number of the faithful who had been put through various forms of the mill at Queensborough Terrace; and one and all testified to the benefit to body and mind which they had received therefrom. They came from different strata of society; and I had no reason to doubt their *bona fide*.

It was indeed, the *curative* aspect of the world of the Fraternity which principally interested me, convinced as I am that occult tenets are of little avail if they cannot raise the physical and spiritual nature of man to a higher degree of functional activity than is manifested by those unresponsive to the “occult” appeal.

I had read with interest the *Secrets of Dr. Taverner*, a collection of short stories in which Dion Fortune had expressed in fictional form the knowledge at her disposal concerning these subtle interrelations of mind and body which can effect both breakdown and revival. It was

clear that these readable, well-told stories embodied an extremely shrewd perception of some of the most complicated activities of the forces of the subconscious and the unconscious and that the authoress had much more than a layman's acquaintance with the darker aspects of obsession and possession as with their more constructive potentialities.

Highly intrigued, I had long discussions with her on the subject, discovering that she, working in collaboration with her husband, had handled and cured some very severe cases of collapse caused by what used to be commonly known as "diabolical agencies". Serious obsessions, admitted by all competent authorities to be the most difficult things in the world to treat, she had, by the application of her own techniques, banished to where they belong. She was remarkably alive to the importance of heredity; "work on their grandmother" was a favourite maxim of hers!

There was also a "ray" ostensibly connected with interplanetary forces under which the lame and halt could bask and so dispel their megrims, vapours and other disabilities. But I never had an opportunity of seeing this phenomenon in motion and had to content myself with conjecture. I gathered that this therapy was compounded of medical and "occult" elements and that certain spiritual entities were contacted who had singular efficacy in healing.

Dion Fortune had, very strongly-marked, one quality which goes to the making of the successful healer. This was a superb and unflagging self-confidence! If people can because they *think* they can, then she was undoubtedly an adept. She not only thought she could: she was convinced of the fact!

Watching her in contact with other people, particularly with those who needed some kind of support from outside themselves, one was continually being struck by the power she had to quieten agitation and still fears by her very presence. She had a kind of "maternal" strength of receptiveness which led the most timid to confide in her and (a most important advantage in an Institution such as hers) to put themselves at her disposal and execute her behests.

This was probably, to some extent at least, a gift of nature. She had a powerful natural intelligence, and an apparently vigorous and resilient physical constitution. These things go a long way towards making self-possession easy for their possessor. Superior mental and physical endowment constitutes a good start for the battle of life.

But, to the gifts of nature had been added an indubitable self-imposed system of training. She had taught herself to manage her body with a maximum of economy and an avoidance of all unnecessary movement. She was one of the most unflustered people I have ever met. Nothing seemed to put her out: neither the stupidity of fools nor the thoughtlessness of the thoughtless nor the advent of hostility put her off her stride nor did she ever lower the flag of her endeavour.

I had noticed her physical control when she sat by my side on the lecture-platform and delivered herself of her "occult" interpretations of the books I had expounded. She had the posture of some elected oracle proclaiming the Unescapable Law. I have rarely heard a speaker less nervous, with a firmer grip on the reins of her audience, more in control of the situation. (It was plain that she had assimilated some of the principles of the Yogic method: her breathing was very correctly regulated too.)

What is more, she had her own sense of dedication. Within her own limits she looked upon herself as sent in to this world to give to her own followers a heightened sense of existence; an insight into occult and even spiritual truths which otherwise they may never have contacted.

She always referred to herself as “a hermit”; and, although I took this with a grain of salt. I could see that she apportioned out her routine with the idea of avoiding that inevitable waste of time and energy which is the lot of most in this feverish, unbalanced civilisation in which we have our being.

There was her afternoon walk in the near-by park. Enwrapped in the extraordinary garment so reminiscent of Sandeman’s Port, and with the huge black hat resting witch-fashion on her still sun-glinting hair, she took her pensive stroll, fondly imagining that she was unobserved! (To run a movement successfully, one needs a touch of exhibitionism. Dion Fortune had her touch!)

I think she went out otherwise very little. Occasionally she called on me. She liked my Buddhist and Egyptian “collections” and was never tired of listening to what I had to say on the subject of the *Tantras*. I once ran into her at a performance of that shattering occult play, “The Golem”, by the unsurpassed Habima Players at the Savoy Theatre. We were both jubilant about the same things: the display of “significant gesture”; the tremendous command of suggestion displayed by the troupe; the beautifully timed “team-work”.

In a word, she undoubtedly understood the virtues of silence and recollection. These admirable disciplines she enjoined too on her more knowledgeable disciples. There had to be no hanging-about in cafés after the lectures; no empty and frivolous conversation; no scandalmongering; no waste of nervous energy.

All this pleased me. It was in an old and tested tradition. It was approximating to the roots of the matter. It partook of the quality of decorum, of “one-pointedness”, of relation to a centre.

Spiritualism

Came the Second World War. My own life was radically altered. From the leisure which permitted me to devote much of my time to the study of Sanscrit and Tibetan I was plunged into a host of new activities. I had to instruct a dozen or more Army Regiments in Russian, German and French. I visited a number of Ambassadors on behalf of the British Council. I took many courses at the Admiralty and for the London County Council. I had a taste of work for Military Intelligence.

There was little time for visiting friends; nor, for that matter, for pursuing my own studies in the world of “extended consciousness” which has always been so near to my heart. But I *did* manage to fit in some “talks” to various bodies concerning themselves with this and cognate subjects.

These included the Spiritualists. I was not entirely surprised to find that Dion Fortune had entered this field as lecturer and demonstrator. Previously I had gathered that her attitude to the orthodox techniques of spiritualism was sceptical, if not a little contemptuous.

But times had changed; and she was spreading her gospel, it seemed, in any quarter in which the seed might fall on fruitful ground. (I regarded this as a sign of the way the wind was blowing. Spiritualism which had tended to fight shy of the “scientific” approach to what

it calls its Reality has, in recent years, tended to look kindly on psychic research in its pure sense; that is a factual investigation divorced from “other worldly” implications and foregone conclusions This explained the presence of Dion Fortune in the ranks! I cannot imagine her without her “psychological” background; her insistence on tangible validity and proof.)

I heard that she was giving “sittings” that she, like other mediums, had found her “guide”. In her case I understood this entity to have been a Scots nobleman of a bygone century.

A few more years passed. I visited her once, during the period of the heaviest bombing of London (the then Argentine Ambassador drove me round in his car) and found her ensconced in the basement of another house further down the terrace. With typical optimism she informed me that the place was a “fortress” and that we could talk undisturbed by the attentions of the Nazis. The “Fraternity” she said had grown. She had extended her premises.

She had changed. In some curious way a change had come over her entire personality. As far as I could analyse the transformation, she had surrendered some of her seclusion and had taken a header into the world. She was meeting a more varied assortment of people: she was trying out aspects of herself which had formerly lain dormant. In a word she was trying to move with the times!

Her “reception-room” was now an exotic apartment rich in coloured silks and elaborate hangings. A small girl, of indeterminate nationality, ran in and out with the tea-things. Dion wore, for her, a considerable amount of jewellery; and the “Sandeman’s Port” gown of hieratic cut had yielded to a more mundane (and highly becoming) toilette of black satin.

She had asked me to call because she had a project in mind. It would be an excellent thing, she said, if the leading occultists in London (or, for that matter, in Europe) could “get together”; that is, pool their knowledge and resources to enrich the common stock. What did I think of the idea? Would I be willing to play my part?

A number of prominent names were mentioned, Alchemists, astrologers, sorcerers, ritualists, writers of learned books and advocates of weird theories. But I have met a great many occultists in my time; and I have never noticed that the capacity or the willingness to “get together” is one of their characteristics. I remember telling her that I thought the project *might* be tried, but that I thought it not particularly practicable and that one of the best ways of impregnating the air with undying hatred and venom is to allow one occultist to glimpse another.

She said she would notify me of the success or otherwise of her enterprise, I parted from her at the door of her basement fortress with the thud of Nazi bombs falling in the distance. (Some time previously she herself had a nasty shock when she had narrowly missed being knocked flat by a boulder when the enemy had scored a direct hit on one of the floors of 3 Queensborough Terrace. But she stood there dauntless and unbowed, like some Brunnhilde or Freya out of remote Northern legend; and I later became convinced that she owed much of her undoubted psychic energy to some Viking strain in the blood.) This was the last time I saw Dion Fortune alive on this earth!

It was my friend the late Mrs. Tranchell-Hayes who told me of her passing. I had become acquainted with this lady through a mutual friend some time previously. She is an important link in the present story; for she was able to fill up gaps in the knowledge I had gathered concerning Dion Fortune’s pilgrimage, and she was herself a walking encyclopaedia of occult knowledge; she possessed a remarkable collection of books and manuscripts on sorcery, necromancy and all ungodliness, and exercised, as well, a benevolent sway over a flat, first in

Kingston House and later in the privacy of Kensington Square, bedecked with witches' rosaries, a fine array of occult amulets and charms and some very effective representations of power-charged ancient imagery. (Later still she was to become the presiding hostess of a small "group", of which I was a member, for the weekly discussion of subjects of a supernatural character. Dr. Sherwood Taylor, Director of the Science Museum, my friends Marjorie Bowen and Charles Richard Cammell added their weight, among others, to the elucidation of occult and magical problems.)

Mrs. Tranchell-Hayes had known Dion Fortune intimately since the latter was a girl. She had detected in her from the start an individual of strong and talented personality, a poetess of great charm and distinction and a potential occultist of discernment and cultivation in her chosen province.

Dion Fortune (who had embodied the intriguing personality of Mrs. Tranchell-Hayes in one the most powerful of her novels, *The Sea Priestess*) hailed originally from Llandudno where her parents, I believe managed a high-class hotel. Mrs. Hayes spoke with great admiration of Dion's mother, who, she said, had been a most cultivated and religious woman and had implanted in her daughter the principles of the Christian Science Creed (Dion Fortune had often confessed to me that she owed her own life-long interest in regenerative powers of the mind to an early absorption in the teachings of Mrs. Baker Eddy).

The elder woman had become the younger's guide, philosopher and friend in the affairs of the spirit. Equipped with wider experience and a more extensive knowledge, she had, by her advice and stimulus, encouraged Dion to bring out the best that was in her as regards occult prowess. Mrs. Hayes, among her other qualifications, was the widow of an eminent psychiatrist; and, while residing with her husband in a big mental home near Northampton, of which he was the director, she had availed herself of the opportunity of studying the various forms of derangement which came under her husband's care, and had built up therefrom a very respectable acquaintance with the body-mind relationship with all its psychological and pathological complications.

One of her convictions concerning her protégé was that Dion Fortune had made a grave mistake in adopting the role of spiritualist medium. The "Magic Mirror" technique, the drawing unto herself a "guide"; the lecturing to all and sundry, were, she thought, a forsaking of her true path for that which far less distinguished people could have done on their heads. Mrs. Hayes had a very exalted notion of occultism and its secrets, holding, rightly or wrongly, that certain of these should be preserved like dear life and that the divulging of them in any shape or form was to invite disaster.

The Golden Dawn

I should point out here that both Mrs. Tranchell-Hayes and Dion Fortune had been members of the celebrated arcane society *The Golden Dawn* and that both had emerged from it with their own individual ideas of what is valuable and what inessential in the vast province of occult rites and influences.

Who was right? They are both gone now; and I do not know. It is pleasant to preserve the memory of both these ladies in the corner of one's mind which one reserves for the incalculable, the bizarre, the eternal feminine.

But to me Dion Fortune will always represent one of the most interesting occult personalities of this century if only because of her versatility, her impressive vitality, the surging dynamic curiosity which she manifested towards all forms of psychic and occult reality.

Her literary output, considering all the other activities which filled her life, was large. Among her novels *The Winged Bull* and *The Demon Lover* will live as virtuoso pieces of the occult “macabre”. Her “magnum opus” *The Mystical Qabalah* is surely one of the most intelligent works in English on this intricate and highly controversial subject. And here are a few titles selected at random, which illustrate a passionately intense interest and competence in her chosen subject: *Sane Occultism*, *Practical Occultism in Daily Life*, *Spiritualism in the Light of Occult Science*, *The Esoteric Philosophy of Love and Marriage*, *Esoteric Orders and their Work*, *The Training and Work of an Initiate*, *Mystical Meditations on the Collects*; these are all immensely readable and deserve a permanent niche in the Temple of Occult Remembrance! (And to prove that she could turn her hand to anything, she once showed me a cleverly constructed “thriller” which she had written under a pseudonym!)

She knew the “darker” side of her calling and was ready to warn the unwary of pitfalls. One of her best works is, I think, the excellently-named *Psychic Self-Defence*, in which she reveals a quite astonishing acquaintance with the occult wiles of the “black magician” and the power-besotted, and provides appropriate prophylactics for the Pandora’s box of emanations which they let loose on the universe.

Her sociological significance? I would not care to assess it with any over-dogmatism. All I will say is that she was yet another symbol of something new in the way of integration struggling to break out of the clutches of an unimaginative materialism into a realm in which spirit can interpenetrate matter to a fresh issue. In so far as she can be proved to have done this, her work and personality will live.



How to obtain this free Journal

The Psypioneer journal is at present available, complete with all back issues on the web site <http://www.woodlandway.org> and we are greatly indebted to our Australian friends for hosting and posting this Journal. You can obtain it free and direct by sending an e-mail entitled "Subscribe" or "Unsubscribe" to discontinue, or to contact Psypioneer please e-mail: psypioneersub@icloud.com

Paul J. Gaunt

