

PSYPIONEER

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THE CRISIS AND AFTER: SPIRIT PROPHECIES

“Treat Russia with Caution” urged guide four months ago

As prophesied by the spirit guides, the world is in the throes of another crisis. And, as prophesied by the spirit guides, England will not be involved in war.

For almost two years *Psychic News* has printed, again and again, their "No War" spirit predictions. Last September, they gave assurance to thousands.

Nothing has since arisen, declares the spirit world, which in any way affects these prophecies. This is borne out by a message given on Friday of last week by a spirit speaking through Silver Birch's medium.

Hannen Swaffer's home circle has not yet resumed its sittings because Silver Birch had asked for a break of two months. But, through his medium, a spirit known as "Mr. Jackson" declared last week:

" I am asked to stress all that had been said before. There is no need for fear, only for perfect calm. War does not come to your world. Be calm, confident and resolute, for all that has been prophesied from our side of life will be fulfilled. You are approaching the stage where you begin to see the fruition of those many predictions based on laws that cannot be set aside."

Then he repeated what has been said so many times: *"Tell them all to have no fear"*.

"The darkness deepens," he went on, "but soon the light of peace begins to radiate. All that is necessary to say has already been said. Nothing has arisen that warrants any new message or any new declaration. Nothing has transpired in your material world that is outside the scope of our vision,"

He once again stressed: *"There is no need for any fear. We are facing the situation with perfect calmness, knowing that good triumphs over evil, justice over injustice, freedom over tyranny."*

On Thursday of last week, we received a spirit message delivered by Earl Haig at a seance, the night before, through the mediumship of Mrs. Louisa Bolt. Haig, who was a Spiritualist on earth, has often communicated at her seances, particularly to his old friend, Lady Caillard.

He came to bring hope, he said. *"I assure you earnestly that peace will be the outcome of it all,"* he went on.

"We are well prepared in every arm - naval, military and air," he said. " We have leaders in the navy;. army and air force equal to any emergency that could possibly arise. The others nations know that only too well, and will think much before throwing down the gauntlet."

Then, at the end, there came these words: *" The present crisis will be over within 14 days-that is, the mental danger. - The physical danger is over now."*

Many readers have written to remind us of the remarkable prophecy made through Kathleen Barkel at the Queen's Hall, and printed in *Psychic News* on May 6th of this year. Her spirit guide then declared:

" I have told you many times to treat Russia with caution. You will see the reason for my words in a few months' time. Next September you will be feeling as though I may have misled you, for war will seem to come very close to you. September is the time of crisis, a time when it seems that nothing can save you from plunging into the horrors of war. In 1940 and 1941 you will begin to see the downfall of Hitler and the withdrawal of Mussolini:"

Then, on August 12th this year, we quoted the words that came in automatic writing through the hand of Geraldine Cummins, the famous medium:

"Hitler and Mussolini have been making very complete preparations for war in connection with the Mediterranean and Danzig. But it is the greatest bluff of all. They won't fight. Remember, no war."

Through Estelle Roberts, Grace Cooke, at Hannen Swaffer's home circle, and, indeed, at hundreds of home circles throughout the land; these prophecies declaring that England would not be involved in war have been constantly received.

Here is a typical one from Silver Birch, printed by us on March 25, 1939:

"Germany is not a proud empire that endures for long. Soon it will crumble, and he who sprawls part of your world will no longer be there. We are determined that there shall not be another war. Crises will come and go. War will not follow. Peace does come to your world. Dictatorships pass away, and freedom comes to those who are subjugated."

Here is another from Red Cloud, printed by us on October 8 1938:

"There will be no war in your time. There will be clashes during 1939 and 1940, but they will be clashes of men not war. There will be rumours of war because men live in fear. You will have peace in your time."

Frank T. Blake, the medium who is president of the Spiritualists' National Union, has put on record his prediction:

"The next ten years will be devoted to much talk of war, but no major nation will go to war with another great nation. There will be no war for the next decade at least "

This statement we printed on April 15, 1939.

Long before the present crisis arose, the spirit world prophesied it and the guides have foretold the fate of Europe. Just as past events have proved their predictions to be correct so, too will the future vindicate what they have foretold

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This article appeared on the front page of Psychic News for the week ending 2 September 1939, although it had been printed earlier in the week. Early on 1 September the Germans attacked Poland, having reached an agreement with Russia some days before to dismember it. The failure of the No War prophecies of 1939 seriously affected the Spiritualist movement, though it may be noted that there were elements of truth in the prophecies. Russia was not to be trusted, and the German empire did not endure for long.
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THE MOST FATEFUL AND DIFFICULT MEETING OF MY LIFE

We print below two of the most detailed discussions of the prophecies known to us, though we hope to publish more later. We include first this account of Shaw Desmond because he lived through the 1938 and 1939 crises, was already a prominent figure in Spiritualism, and clearly reflected deeply on the implications. It is taken from his book "Psychic Pitfalls" (1948; 4th impression, 1954 p.212-20.)

I have been present at hundreds of seances in which what purported to be the spirit guides have foretold all sorts of things none of which ever came to pass - and as for time forecasts, I will content myself with saying that almost always, whenever a Guide, or what more often purports to be a Guide, says that such and such a thing will happen on such and such a date, it is nearly always a safe bet that it will never happen on that date, if at all! And how many reading these words will exclaim "How true!" as there comes to them that old sickening feeling at the solar plexus, or "inferior brain", of unfulfilled expectations. For frustrated fulfilment, like hope deferred, makes the heart, and even the stomach, sick.

The supreme example of unfulfilled or wrongly prognosticated prophecies are those known now as "The War Prophecies", a term with a faintly ironic tinge. The story of these prophecies may serve as a warning of prophetic pitfall for all time!

Briefly, when all the world was prepared for the breaking out of a Second World War in 1938, practically every medium in the country insisted that no war would come, stating that the Spirit Guides were unanimous about this. Lecturers like myself at our meetings and lectures in the Albert Hall and the Queen's Hall, in London, as elsewhere, following the assurance of the mediums and what they believed to be the Guides, told our fear-crazed audiences that there would be no war.

There was no war.

I have vivid memory of the night I spent in my native town of Dungarvan, in the County Waterford, Ireland, the year being 1938, when all Europe once more perched perilously upon the razor-edge of world-war, and almost everyone, including almost every newspaper and political leader, were quietly, deeply, convinced that war was only a question of hours.

I went to sleep listening to the rushing of the green tides beneath the old sandstone bridge which with the Creugh Horn above it had been the first sight on this earth on which my infant eyes had looked, thinking of my wife and family in Leicester House, Twickenham, whom I had left for this visit to my island, and wondering if I should ever see them again, or the house I loved. It was a haunted and haunting night which stands alone in my memories.

I was awakened in the dawn of the morning by hearing a boy in the street call out: "There will be no war!" It was unmistakable even though I was still mazy from sleep, for I could always sleep even through calamity and foreboding - a gracious gift to a man doing my particular world-work, which had "stood to me", as we say in Ireland, in my travels over the earth amongst rude and savage men and savager women.

I should have felt that strange deep feeling of relief which comes to so many over whom the sword of Damocles has been suspended through long days and nights, but I felt nothing of the kind. The only feeling I should have felt that strange deep feeling of relief which comes to so many over I had was one of quiet indifference, and it was then I think I fully learned a lesson which had been coming to me throughout my present incarnation, that circumstance and condition have very little to do with happiness or misery.

Whatever happens, we are held in the hands of God, and whether the news be boding or beautiful, what matters it? What we expect rarely happens, and when it does happen it does not influence or affect us as we believed it would. Our successes are often our failures and our failures, our successes.

A training in occultism is an essential to practical politics. If the diplomatists were only trained in the facts of reincarnation and occultism generally, they would understand karmic law and would not, like the spiritual babies they are, put their faith in "scraps of paper" and the newspapers would be saved from the silly "leaders" which I, an old international journalist, know do not lead, and to which the writers sometimes themselves do not subscribe as they often "write to order" and policy. Also, in the more garish, they write only in the moment, finding in the "topical" the "largest circulations" for which they almost uniquely strive, some of them, but not all, alternately raising and depressing their often fatuous and ill-informed readers who are so often nurtured on sensation.

The average politician forgets two saliences: (1) that no agreement is worth the paper on which it is written unless and until the hearts of those who sign it change; and (2) that this earth is a school and therefore that whatever happens, good or evil, "God's in His heaven and all's right with the world", disaster rather than happiness still being the teacher of our planet, which is known Over There as "The Sorrowful Planet". The things we fear rarely mature and our successes often turn to ashes in our mouths, whilst our seeming failures invariably in the long run prove to be our victories. Of this last there is no doubt to any reasonable and reasoning human, and we have all checked it dozens of times, but because we are babies, forget the checking - and so start our useless worrying all over again.

This fulfilment in 1938 of the Guides' persistent prophecy that world-war would not then break out was greeted throughout the ranks of Spiritualism and elsewhere as proof positive that the Guides had the power of clear-seeing into the future and that for them, time and space were non-existent.

Then came 1939.

Once more the Guides seemed equally certain that, despite the almost universal belief that this time it was the real thing and that a world-war would break out at any moment, there would be no war.

The six-year struggle, however, came to Britain, but not Eireann, on that fateful September the 3rd, and in thousands of British homes British families heard the deeply moved Neville Chamberlain as he said that we were at war with Germany in the voice of a man who has made the great mistake and who has seen his hopes and plans "gang agley", like the best-laid schemes of mice and men and ministers will sometimes do.

It is generally assumed in Spiritualist and psychic circles, as outside, that not a single Spirit Guide declared before its outbreak that war was inevitable in this year of 1939. That is not so.

At least three such Guides declared through their mediums that a world-war this time was inevitable, including the greatest of them all - the Guide who has scarcely ever made a mistake either in or outside of prophecy - the Lady Nona, through whose communication, already referred to in these pages, the famous Egyptian phrases and words have been sent over a period of fifteen years through her gifted medium, Rosemary, with Dr. Frederic H. Wood, Mus.Doc., as recorder.

This warning was shortly before the outbreak of war and the surging across the Polish frontier by the German hordes, and from that moment I told people that war was inevitable.

What was the explanation of these false "prophecies" coming through men and women mediums who were nearly always above reproach and who were not parties to fraud of any kind - who had everything to lose and nothing to gain if their prophecies went astray?

Some of us will never forget that terrible Sunday night of September the 3rd, and the declaration that England was in grips with the German Colossus. On that night it was my work to go to the Queen's Hall, in London, and to face the great audience which filled it, to give these men and women hope and comfort if I might, and to "explain" the inexplicable - the coming of war after the persistent forecasts of the Guides of the spirit world that it would not come.

Here are some extracts out of the War Diary which I began on that Sunday of the 3rd of September, 1939, and of the declaration of war:

"Neville Chamberlain broadcasts at about 11.25 a.m. that 'no answer has been received from Germany' to Britain's warning that if she didn't at once withdraw her troops from Poland, Britain would carry out her guarantees to Poland. Within a few minutes came the first Air-Raid warning - a moaning warble. Terrifying. I recovered instantly, and G. and I carry Karen down to the basement which we have made into a refuge. Deirdre behaves finely as always. Then the 'All-Clear' note, long, sustained,

within half an hour or so. The horror of this first warning was peculiar. I spend day making basement gas-proof.

Quite washed out but still unbroken, I go to the most fateful and difficult meeting of my life - I who have spoken to thousands of audiences all over the world. This is at the Queen's Hall at 7 p.m. First I sit in Leicester Square garden and hear the whistles of the starlings and the other birds on this lovely Sunday eventide. People without gas-masks and quite unconcerned; for Mass never foresees and never thinks. Sandbags outside the Coventry Street Lyons - also on pavement and up Regent Street. The BBC quite undefended to my surprise.

The great audience cheer me before I begin to speak, to my astonishment. I speak as I have never spoken and under some 'control' I feel I tell them of my extreme confidence in the things of the spirit, 'never more so than now', attest my faith in our guides, and do actually avoid the direct issue (of the failure of the war prophecies) with which I am not able to deal. I say we have to love all - even Hitler-not hate him or anyone. *I make a series of forecasts* : that Hitler is doomed and he knows it; that other men will (ultimately) take his place; that a Conference of the Nations will one day come to settle the affairs of the world and for a fairer distribution of the earth. (All this, as we know, came true.)

I meet a long pale spectre of a man I know, Cecil Booty, as with Kathleen I come out into the darkened streets and we walk down Piccadilly. The streets are black - the tiny crosses of the signal lamps eerie - the lights coming up from the tubes also sepulchral. But the people are splendid. They are quite cool but serious - very serious for the English. But I don't like this lull and absence of air-raids. Why? Germany is a terrible enemy cunning, astral-led, dark."

Well, there we have the story of the opening day of the most freighted day of our lives, part of it my complete inability to explain the failure of the prophecies of the Spirit Guides that there would be no war.

And the explanation?

If I had then known what I now know, and if I could have read these pages of Psychic Pitfalls, I could have given the explanation from that Queen's Hall platform.

It is simple as are so often the explanations of the seemingly inexplicable. It is that the supposed prophecies of the Spirit Guides were not their forecasts at all but those of their mediums or instruments, who had unconsciously interfered with the true message or, at times, refused to let that true message and warning through, not because their conscious minds would not have done so, but because their unconscious minds refused to carry the message. What babies in communication we were, and still are!

Probably nearly every guide knew that war was coming, and as probably, tried to send through the warning, but failed through the fallibility of the earthly instrument, as they have sometimes confessed to me through these very instruments. That some of these Guides did actually forecast war and did get their true messages through is of this some indirect proof, although it is also only fair to admit that in any case it would be only a fifty-fifty chance for or against.

For some years I gave a certain amount of study and research into the cause of this vital failure of war prophecy. I did so because I knew that for the lifetimes of all those living, this failure would overshadow all successes in forecasting, would throw sickening doubt upon the bona fides of the mediums and of the spirit worlds and their inhabitants, and would deal a death-stroke at the Spiritualist movements or perhaps affect them for some generations. Something I now think might not have been a bad thing, as they need cleansing.

I was immensely, intensely puzzled. Despite all my previous study, reading and even experimental knowledge, I found myself helpless before this demoniacal puzzle - a combination safe which refused to yield the secret of its number. My 'mazement was heightened rather than lessened by the explanations, some of them silly, others of them brazen, and others, still, so devilishly though often sincerely ingenious that I had little doubt of their unconsciously demoniacal origin.

This was especially true of the explanations of two or three mediums in particular, men and women of probity as I knew, and genuine mediums. Their attempts to convince and pacify their followers were ingenuous and ingenious - but at times apparently so disingenuously naive as to make one wonder again at the cunning as well as the credulity of medium and of public. For some years, in other fields than that of prophecy, I had been on the trail of much that had amazed and, as we say in Ireland, "moidered" me; the guides had repeatedly warned their publics and had also asked me to warn my own about the menace of the phenomena-hunting which so far had been the piece de resistance of the Spiritualist and occult platform, had even given me reasons for the failure to fulfil their forecasts, and had laid down solid safe advice as to the future of the Spiritualist movement. But so peculiar and obtuse is this movement that, although often accepting this advice, it was never followed, or the advocates were at times grossly insulted by pen and tongue, and, still with that peculiarity of the psychic, approached afterwards privately and in public by the insulters in friendly casual fashion, as though nothing had happened. Rum beasties!

On all this I drew for my present researches on the war prophecies. We had even remarkable explanations of the type of that which insisted that the particular Guide of the particular medium had all along known that war would come, but that the guides were afraid the public could not bear it and so they had been informed that war would not come! This, of course, banged Banagher ! If this were true, and it was of course not true, even though the dispensers of explanation might believe their own explanations, it meant that one could never be sure that the spirit guides were speaking the truth at any time and that they were therefore liable to play a game of make-believe. (And, dreadful thought! why did not this particular Guide afterwards come through and compel his medium, a lady of good intent, to disown such disingenuousness?)

But hardly any explanations came through from the Other Side, either because the mediums would not or could not pass them. In a long experience, I have not known half a dozen Guides either to apologize or correct false prophecies or mis-statements and no medium will tell you why. Perhaps the Guide is often really the medium, who may or may not know it!

Now, if some of these last ingenuities had been given by dishonest or doubtful mediums, one could have borne them and then with a shrug of the shoulders, dismissed them. But some of the more ingenious and seemingly disingenuous were given by men and women whom I knew to be perfectly good people and good mediums, who had at times shown much self-sacrifice in their work of mediumship to help their fellows in the mazes of life and death.

After close and varied thought and investigation, I reached the following conclusions about prophecy as a whole and war-prophecies in particular, conclusions which I venture to commend to all serious students of the occult worlds so that they may avoid at least the more serious and unexpected pitfalls

- (a) That on the Other Side of life there is always proceeding a battle between Light and Darkness for the soul of our world and that the Dark Forces of the Shadow Brethren are always watching for a chance to break through the aura of earth and of its terrestrials in order to deceive and especially to dishearten the student and those bereaved people who wish to speak with their dead, and that forecasting or prophecy peculiarly lends itself to such attempts;
- (b) That, as stated in the chapter titled "Impersonation", the White Brethren or White Guides, as opposed to these Black Guides, either do not always know of such breaks in or, in some instances at least, are powerless to prevent them, and that this last may or may not account for the strange dismaying fact;
- (c) That scarce any Spirit Guide came through after the failure of the war-prophecies to tell us the reason of that failure, to warn us about future attempts upon our sanity and belief, and, as a matter of honour, to rectify the mistakes of their own mediums;
- (d) That in all prophecies and at any time, the mind of the medium and even of the sitters enters into the forecast as given, either partly falsifying it or, at times, as in the war case, vitiating it so that it is valueless;
- (e) That although the power to see into the future by the spirit world is, on the whole, greater than our own on earth, owing to the sensitive tenuousness of the etheric world, only a very few of them have astrological or other power enormously in excess of that bestowed upon terrestrials;
- (f) That all such forecasts need the closest scrutiny and even doubt until they are finally proved accurate and that without such scrutiny the investigator would be wise to give up all investigation into or even belief in prophecy as a workable proposition for the average man and woman;
- (g) That the mere passing out of the physical shell of the etheric shell on death does not necessarily confer prophetic or forecasting powers upon the individual, but that many "ghosts" believe it does as do the more credulous of their earthly followers, many of

whom are Spiritualist "Nazis" ready to believe anything they are told by Guides who, though good, are frequently almost shockingly orthodox, with orthodox ideas of God and religion;

(h) That "interference" and "impersonation" account for a formidable percentage of the supposed messages from the Spirit Guides, and that it must and indeed, as we know from experience, it is a comparatively rare occurrence for the time, date, and detail of any forecast to be fulfilled to the letter;

(i) That it is only human blindness and credulity and the natural human desire to have the wishes of the heart fulfilled which brings back "the moth to the candle" time on time after the non-fulfilment of forecasts, only once more to be singed;

(j) That it is through ordinary science as much as through the unorthodox although not by any means casual sciences of the occult that we are likely one day to learn the sources and possibilities of seeing into the future and of the persistent statement of the astral world that we all live in the Eternal Now (see the amazing "precognition" card results set out in that illuminating and sincere book of the President of the Society for Psychical Research, G. N. M. Tyrrell, a society to which "psychics" owes so much, *The Personality of Man*)

(k) That forecasting is the stock-in-trade of the charlatans and fortune-tellers who now swarm the streets of our cities and towns, and that, of all forms of the psychic, it offers the greatest and easiest possibilities of deceit and gain.

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THE "NO WAR" PROPHECIES

We print below another view of this problem which appeared in Grace Cooke's book "Plumed Serpent (1942)

Since the outbreak of war the question we have often asked ourselves and been asked by many others is, "Why did the 'No War' Prophecies fail?" At the time the answer was not apparent. Some were content to believe that Spirits are not infallible, and that in giving the "No War" predictions they had been mistaken. I never accepted this, but thought that some deeper truth waited to be revealed.

Now has come an answer that to me rings true. That answer says that war came because humanity failed to grasp its opportunity and demand the establishment of justice. Concerning the prophecies, however, I have been taught that a spiritual Master will never add to the gathering powers of evil by allowing negative or pessimistic thoughts in himself. He consistently trains his thought to follow the positive or constructive line of Good.

Nevertheless, we have had pointers to the fact that the Spiritual Intelligences expected disaster in some form. The many references to the "Years of Fire" (in the Conan Doyle messages) through which mankind was expected to pass indicate this fact. Despite this, there seems to have been a mighty effort put forth by the Spiritual Forces to counteract the approaching catastrophe.

White Eagle was once asked for the explanation, and the following was given:

"There has been a great question as to why the message that there will be no war was given through so many mediums, through so many occult channels. The message was decreed by the Great Lords Who are watching and working, in a way not yet understood by men, for the salvation of souls. All agents received this message, and passed it through. We in the beyond do not question those in a higher position; they speak with greater authority than we. This was their instruction, their broadcast to men. This we want you to realize, firstly, because it is a test of your faith and your courage. Secondly, we want you to get some idea of the enormous conflict there has been, and still is, between the Light and the Dark Angels. And thirdly, man's criticism and condemnation, if our work proved an apparent failure, was not our concern. Our one aim was to keep hope alive in as many hearts as possible for as long as possible, for, once hope had died, the channel for spiritual light and power became closed.

"Fear is the weak spot in us all, and this fear abiding in the hearts of humanity had to be counteracted, even to the last possible moment. Thus it became necessary to use every channel available to inspire confidence, for without confidence and hope the Forces of Light could no longer hold the fort against the enemy. We have fought long, and we still fight. Ally yourselves with us. Do not allow yourselves to be overcome by fear, because we keep our contact with the earth-plane through the positive thoughts of God's love in men's minds. If you lose your contact with God's love, it makes the future difficult. Although you may find your faith shaken for a little while, nevertheless we say again: God is omnipotent. So far and no farther can man go. Man's free will is encompassed by the will of God, and God's hand will be stretched forth at the appointed hour, when lessons have been learnt, and 'halt' will be called.

"We bring a great and human love for you all with understanding of the sorrow and suffering and testing that is yours. But we see joy and rejoicing, we see a glorious peace as the outcome, a rapid growth of brotherhood on earth. Already the brotherhood is being born. Birth pangs must always be painful, God will not test you beyond your strength and even through these troublous days you will find compensation. If things are taken from you on the one hand, other things of greater value will be given to you on the other.

"And so we pray that the power of God will enable you all to keep your faith, and to continue your work to restore peace on earth and to spread the gospel of brotherhood."

Constructive thought is ever hopeful, steadfast, resilient even if seemingly defeated; destructive thought is depressing, lowering, pessimistic. Masters of the Ancient Wisdom

tell us that a collective stream of constructive thought atoms is essential. It can build a stronghold to meet the attacks of destructive or evil thought. By concentrating constructive thought around certain groups of humanity immediately preceding the war, focal points were established on earth where the powers of the light could gather. From such points a sustaining spiritual power went forth to uphold humanity during the early days of war. May not the extraordinary reluctance of the peoples of Europe to proceed to extremes in 1939 and the first months of 1940 be indicative of this restraining spiritual power? Almost, it would seem, the worst might have been averted.

To sum up then: I believe that a Spirit Guide, if faithful to his trust, will never predict evil or disaster. To do so is to hasten its coming. His mission is to withstand evil to the last by sending forth and inspiring positive or good thought, and refusing to admit defeat. He obeys without flinching the spiritual law to which he is dedicated. This, I believe, is the explanation of the "No War" prophecies.

The question arises, however, as to what would have happened had so many pinned their faith to these prophecies as to neglect warlike preparations. The answer is that only the smallest minority steadfastly retain such a faith - but that that minority is vastly important in the scheme of things. White Eagle was once asked of what use was it to project constructive thought when so great a number expected the worst? He replied that the mind and heart of one man strong in godlike faith outweighed -at a moderate estimate-the effect of ten thousand negative minds.

One is reminded of that Biblical city which might have been saved had ten just men been found within its walls-a number subsequently reduced to two just men. Because no such men could be found the city fell. Because of its lack of men and women of spiritual power disaster has come upon Europe.

Nevertheless, I am convinced that the aftermath of war will surely demonstrate God's power to bring forth lasting good and blessing out of the wilfulness and perversity of man.

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IN THE HISTORIAN'S CHAIR

This month we welcome to this occasional series, Dr John Buescher, who conducts the web site www.spirithistory.com.

How did you get into the study of early American Spiritualism?

I was studying Tibetan Buddhism in graduate school and became intrigued by the question of why Americans had become interested in Buddhism. It seemed to be such an odd fit in some ways—America does not even have a history of colonial expansion into traditionally Buddhist countries. So I worked my way back to the better known beginnings of that interest, among the Transcendentalists of New England, to try to

understand it. I was surprised, however, in reading about the Transcendentalists to discover their close kinship to Spiritualists, about whom I then knew nothing more than the fact that they were rubbing shoulders with Emerson, Parker, Alcott, and Fuller. Reading more, I became convinced that the Spiritualists had led much more interesting lives than their fellow Transcendentalists, radical Freethinkers, and assorted progressive reformers, and so I stuck with them. I've been most interested in those early Spiritualists' adventures, the narratives of their lives, and not so much in theories of Spiritualism, pro and con. The fact that I eventually left academic teaching and that I cultivated my interest in this as more or less a hobby rather than an academic subfield, meant for better or worse that I could take up what would have been considered by the academy at the time as a marginal research area and study it from a rather less academic angle, according to some views of academic research—that of biography, rather than of theory.

WWW.spirithistory.com is a major resource - what is its future?

I had first thought about putting together a printed resource, a sort of 19th century Spiritualist almanac with the idea of publishing it. But I decided that the market for such a thing would be vanishingly small, at least from a publisher's point of view, even though the few people who would find it useful would probably find it very useful indeed, so I thought that creating a web site, rather than trying to publish a printed version, would be the way to go. Also, putting it on the web would help my own research because I could create a searchable archive of primary documents that would allow me to track individuals during the early history of Spiritualism. I believed that other researchers would find it useful in the same way, and that this would stimulate serious historical research. In addition, it might help somehow draw together historians and genealogists, whose investigations often run in something like parallel tracks. All these expectations have been met, judging by the email I get through the site, as well as by the steady increase of visitors to it—especially during the academic year, when the site gets about five hundred visits and fifteen hundred hits per day. For a solitary, rather static and academic web site without pornographic content, that seems like a lot to me.

As for its future, its content will probably not change dramatically although it will expand along the lines already plotted out there—more primary documents, lists, convention reports, and so on, as well as more, sometimes quirky, essays and images. The web site is not the only thing I am working on, even in my perhaps idiosyncratic research on this subject. I'm writing and publishing other things, and I have a family and a "real" job, too, so, realistically, the growth of the content on the site will continue to be sporadic, and determined mostly by when I can find the time to do it. And, one thing about running it as a service, rather than as a profit center is that I get no money from it, of course, and instead have to pay just to share the information with the rest of the world. If the traffic to the site ever drops off considerably, I will probably begin to wonder whether I should continue writing checks to my ISP. If that happens, I would look for an academic or non-profit sponsor rather than letting the information simply disappear from the web.

You've been working on a biography of John Spear, who might be regarded as an eccentric even by Spiritualists - what's significant about him?

The sheer oddity and fantastic drama of many of his adventures make him a wonderful subject for a biography. When I first read about him, in the account of his “New Motor” project in Emma Hardinge Britten’s “Modern American Spiritualism,” I was astounded. My reaction to reading it was that the 19th century must have been far stranger than anything I had read about it up till that point. My research into his life has only confirmed that impression. Nevertheless, the depth and extent of his “normal” reformist activities and leadership, his contact with other reformers in areas such as the abolition of slavery and of the death penalty and in the establishment of women’s rights, and the way in which he and his associates connected the Spiritualism with their radical progressivism in other areas, also demonstrate how deeply the socialists and progressive reformers of the time were involved in Spiritualism. This is something that many historians of these radical movements have been neglectful of, either out of ignorance or out of an apparently studied disinclination to pursue. In this respect, John Spear was like a nineteenth century Forrest Gump, who somehow appeared among the more well-known reformers of the time, doing the oddest things in the background, and until now, somehow just out of sight. The University of Notre Dame Press will be publishing the biography this year, so people will be able to judge all that for themselves.

American Spiritualism has been partly followed by the New Age movement which uses channeling? Can you throw any light on this transition?

Once you turn the corner into the twentieth century, you’re a little out of my range of research, but my impression is that, until recently, much of the information about the history of occultism in all its allied forms, including Spiritualism, accepted, by default, an historical narrative that had been formulated, largely after the fact, by Theosophists, and which has, until recently, minimized what was in fact a substantial continuity between Spiritualism and other movements. Reading the Spiritualist newspapers and journals from the early 1870s through the turn of the century and beyond makes you realize that many, if not most, of the people who were active or interested in Spiritualism also became active or interested in movements such as Theosophy, Astrology, New Thought, and other alternatives to mainstream religion, such as Christian Science. The leaders of these movements understandably made a vigorous effort to distance each of their own systems from all the others they were akin to, and this can obscure the fact that these things grew up together and shared many of the same believers.

A good example of this intermingling of beliefs at the turn of the century is in the life of Levi Dowling, who moved from being a Church of Christ Sunday School teacher and preacher, to being a student of the “higher criticism” of the Bible, then of comparative religion, and Theosophy and New Thought. Then—like other spirit mediums of the time—he received in trance a new revelation from heavenly sources, this one being a new gospel—the Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ. If you look at the people who he involved in his “Aquarian Commonwealth” in Los Angeles, where he was

living in the first decade of the twentieth century, you find a mix of people, each of whom are usually thought of as leaders of other movements—spiritualists James M. Peebles, Nellie Beighle, and William Colville, for example, who had all ventured into Theosophy, astrology, and psychic healing as well, and New Thought leader Harry Gaze, who, like Colville, published “occult fiction.” All of this went into the “Age of Aquarius,” in the way that Dowling’s revelations and teachings put it together. I have written a biographical essay on Levi Dowling which the journal *Theosophical History* intends to publish as an occasional paper, and in that essay, I have tried to pick apart some of the various sources and influences on Dowling’s “Aquarian Age,” which is easy to see was a direct inspiration of the current New Age movement. But I think it is also important to see how porous the boundaries were between the various groups back then, despite the sometimes heated rhetoric they exchanged among themselves. I think this is especially a useful point to make to Theosophists and to Christian Scientists, in order to have them consider more carefully the involvement of their early leaders in Spiritualism, despite those leaders’ protestations to the contrary.

Is there a single book of most use for students of the psychic pioneers? (You may recall that Paul Gaunt opted for EHB "Nineteenth Century Miracles" - others might go for Podmore "Modern Spiritualism"!)

If I had to pick a single book on the subject, my own interests would force me to select Emma Hardinge Britten’s “Modern American Spiritualism.” Her narrative history quite clearly left out a lot that, it seems, she did not wish to dignify by mentioning, meaning many of the people and much of the history that she judged to be unsavory and, therefore, not a true part of the uplifting saga of Spiritualism. It took me quite a lot of other reading in original sources to understand vividly how much she shaped her narrative. Nevertheless, she included so much detail, and so many long passages from old Spiritualist newspapers and other accounts that it is undoubtedly the most valuable single book for studying the early history of spiritualism. Others, who are more theoretically inclined, or who are interested primarily in the larger history of occultism, might choose some other book, but for my purposes, it has been the most useful.

When I went through the graduate program in religious studies at the University of Virginia, I was shown the virtue of expending most of my energies on reading primary sources in their original languages, and devoting much less time to reading theoretical interpretations and modern secondary literature on Buddhism. I brought this orientation to the study of Spiritualism and have spent most of my time just reading the primary sources on the movement—most particularly the Spiritualists’ newspapers, journals, memoirs, and letters, and bringing to others, through what I am writing, some of these same original sources. It seems natural to me, therefore, that I would be drawn to Emma Britten’s tome for that reason.

However, if I could really choose any one thing on American Spiritualism, it would be what only exists in my mind’s eye at present—a CD collection of the most important, and now rare, early Spiritualist newspapers. It would include the complete runs of *The Banner of Light*, *The Religio-Philosophical Journal*, *The Spiritual Telegraph*, *The New-*

England Spiritualist, The New Era, The Carrier Dove, The Herald of Progress, The Age of Progress, The Spirit Messenger, and The Univercoelum. If that is not enough, maybe throw in *Buchanan's Journal of Man* and Frances Brown's *The Agitator*. Such copies of these individual papers that still exist are all cracking and crumbling away in archives. Putting them all together and making them available in a digital format for historical researchers would be a tremendous help.

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A TALK OVER THE TEA TABLE.

In the formation of CFPS in 1953-4, it is clear that Reginald Lester, the first chairman, had a central role. But bereavement had earlier brought him close to suicide, as he described in his first psychic book "In search of the Hereafter"(1952), p.26-7.

A task that I had been putting off was that of going through my wife's wardrobe. That evening I brought myself to carry the job through. One by one I took out all the frocks and undergarments, and finally the shoes that had graced her tiny feet - and it was the sight of these that finished me. I could go on no longer. Something seemed to snap inside me. How often one heard the common phrase 'broken heart!' Now I seemed to be able to feel the break literally.

At that moment the telephone rang. At the other end I heard the voice of a very old friend of my wife's. She sounded slightly agitated, and, after a little preliminary normal conversation, she asked me if - just as a special favour to her-I would get into touch with Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding. "What on earth for?" I asked. "I've never met him in my life." She urged me to drop him a line, briefly telling him of my loss, and asking him to advise me as to which of his books I should read touching on that matter. After some argument, I agreed to humour her. Accordingly, I wrote to Dowding that night. By return of post I received from him a most kindly reply, inviting me to meet him at his club, and have a talk over the tea-table.

The result of that meeting changed the whole course of my actions. For two hours I listened while he told me of his own remarkable investigations into the science of psychics, interspersed with many searching questions on my part. At the end of that afternoon I was in no way convinced of the truth of personal survival or the possibility of communication between the two worlds, but I was sufficiently interested to discard action on the first alternative, and to operate instead the second one - namely, the launching of a complete and intensive investigation into every aspect of psychics, and the analysis of every item of evidence. Dowding remarked that it was much better that I should approach it with an open, and even a doubting, mind, because when the evidence did come it would be all the more convincing. "No single incident will convince you," he said, "but only the accumulation of a mass of irrefutable evidence in due course."

Many months later, when I had established communication with my wife, I asked her why she picked out Lord Dowding of all people for me to make this initial contact with, and she

replied that it was because she knew that I would never listen to any of the recognized people in the Spiritualist movement, but would only be sufficiently impressed by the views of a great Service chief whose record in the Battle of Britain I had so much admired, and that he was the only man who would be able to dissuade me from taking the desperate step I was then contemplating.

He did, indeed, succeed in instilling into my mind some idea of the risk I should run if I took matters into my own hands, and the truth of this was later confirmed to me. It is a truth that should be made known to the world, for it would undoubtedly rule out suicide for ever. If a man takes his own life, in the belief that this will reunite him with a loved one immediately, he is defeating his own purpose. Instead of the anticipated reunion, he has to serve a long term of probation, completing the work which he left unfinished on earth, and the reunion is delayed very much longer than if he had allowed life to take its allotted course. Some Spiritualists who believe in reincarnation maintain that suicides have to return to earth to serve another life in the physical body, perhaps for some seventy or eighty years, before that desired reunion can take place.

Col. Lester's investigations were published in the above mentioned book; and letters in response to the book led to the forming of CFPS.

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How to obtain this Newsletter

The Pyspioneer newsletter is at present available on the web site www.woodlandway.org and we are greatly indebted to our Australian friends. You can obtain it free and direct by sending an e-mail entitled "Subscribe" to psypioneersub@aol.com or "Unsubscribe" to discontinue. Assistant editor- Paul J. Gaunt.

NOTES BY THE WAY – Our anniversary

With this issue, the newsletter starts its second year. As readers will recall, it is made possible by a team of workers scattered in three continents, co-ordinated from London and backed by several psychic institutions. Currently we aim to produce more than 10,000 words a month of hard facts on the pioneers, not easily available elsewhere.

Our attention has centered on major figures like Andrew Jackson Davis, Stainton Moses, and Emma Hardinge Britten, and on the complications of Spiritualist history. This is less intellectually respectable than mainstream parapsychological history, but all the more in need of light. While starting the newsletter, several of us found that the psychic press had become less hospitable than formerly to our historical articles – a re-examination of the Hydesville events, or a review of the new edition of the Conan Doyle return, a historical assessment of a past presidency, even articles by non- members of a small group, were caught by such barriers.

Undoubtedly it is useful to have a purely historical and independent channel for interested students of varying beliefs, and we may hope that gradually even the readers of organisations where free historical discussion is not so encouraged, will become aware of the trends of historical enquiry.

The information landscape within which Psypioneer operates has already changed significantly. The situation is well brought in a third anniversary report from the International Survivalist Society, whose web site www.survivalafterdeath.org has a wealth of material from the pioneers of survival research, including over a dozen full-length books. ISS is also a significant reporter of psychic news, and its weekly e-mails are often well ahead of the print media in revealing international developments. ISS now gets 800,000 page hits a year. Bearing in mind this is good quality information, mostly written by well informed investigators, and reaching all parts of the world, it is apparent that some of the traditional ways of making people think about the paranormal (such as seeing a copy of a psychic paper while travelling, as happened to Stella C.) are being overtaken by electronic communication.

Another development, rightly highlighted by ISS in its report, is the expansion of www.lexscien.org, the on-line Library of Exploratory Science, which offers subscribers access to the hundreds of volumes of such publications as the Proceedings and Journal of the SPR, and the Journal of Parapsychology (JP) Terms are particularly advantageous for members of one of the participating organisations, such as the SPR.

We can illustrate the new possibilities by taking a remarkable case, Eleanore Zugun, the Romanian poltergeist medium (born 1913). For some time, it has been possible to pursue this case through the web sites of ISS and of the Austrian parapsychologist Peter Mulacz. Now there is a new site www.harryprice.co.uk which naturally features the case. (She was investigated in London by Price). Moreover, the JP is available on line with Peter Mulacz's paper "Eleonore Zugun – the Re-evaluation of a historic RSPK case" JP 63 /1 (March 1999) 15-45.

All those involved in the educational side of psychic studies are affected by these changes, though electronic information can still be wrong information. (The medium Stainton Moses, for example, is still married in the eyes of the on-line New Dictionary of National Biography published in 2004, and the first batch of corrections in Spring 2005 has not got round to checking this new assertion!) But in general, to keep up with the Net, higher standards are now needed by all those with teaching roles that have historical content, such as psychic colleges, the Lyceums, and educational schemes.

Two decades of Theosophical History

In 2005, the quarterly journal "Theosophical History" (www.theohistory.org) celebrates its twentieth anniversary, and the January 2005 issue carries a retrospective which underlines the wide range of discoveries and documents it has published. Whatever our views of Theosophy, it is clear that psychical and Theosophical pioneers were often

linked, and, especially at first, one and the same. Enquiring into the phenomena of Madame Blavatsky or the clairvoyant visions of C.W. Leadbeater should always interest mainstream psychical researchers. In addition, TH has carried papers about numerous personalities who appear in the history of both streams of enquiry, such as Alexander Wilder, G.R. Mead and Lady Caithness.

One of its most influential initiatives has been its Occasional Papers, of which there have been ten so far. One of them “Joan Grant: Winged Pharaoh” by Jean Overton Fuller is important for reincarnation research. Pat Deveney’s “Astral Projection” describes early experiments in that phenomenon that predate the SPR. Robert Mathiesen’s “The Unseen Worlds of Emma Hardinge Britten” revealed the identity of her occult teachers which had been kept secret for a century.

Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the TH saga is that there are only around 200 subscribers. The journal receives no financial support from the official theosophical movement. Most theosophical bodies see no need to subscribe, although Madame Blavatsky herself was keenly interested in history. But for the international network of scholars active in theosophical history and related subjects, TH is a central focus, and its editor Dr James Santucci has earned the deep gratitude of all.

Pioneer scholars gather

The 2005 Theosophical History conference in London on 2-3 July offers an unusual opportunity to meet some of the leading historians of psychic pioneers. (The programme will appear on the web site www.theosophical-society.org.uk)

John Patrick Deveney of New York discovered that Emma Hardinge Britten had given different accounts of her early life to various Spiritualist newspapers. He also wrote a full-length biography of P.B. Randolph, an early American medium of colour who made a major impact on both sides of the Atlantic.

Michael Gomes, also of New York, is the author of “Dawning of the Theosophical Movement” the most reliable account of how Madame Blavatsky first appeared in Spiritualism and then moved beyond it.

Dr Christine Garwood was formerly a research fellow for the Wallace Project at the Open University and has special knowledge of the psychic correspondence of Alfred Russel Wallace, the greatest Spiritualist scientist of his time.

Stephen Butt conducts the web site www.rjlees.co.uk about Robert James Lees, the Victorian healer and medium.

Kim Farnell has been uncovering the occult activities of Bulwer Lytton. Her biography of Mabel Collins, once a private medium of note who impressed Florence Marryat, is published just before the conference.

Dr John Algeo leads the team which is editing the letters of Madame Blavatsky. Her correspondents included Aksakof and Stainton Moses.

At the most recent 2003 TH conference the food was considered even better than the papers. Not to be missed!

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Springtime

When I joined the CPS staff as librarian in June 1968, it was springtime for the College, which had recently been (in effect) bought by Paul Beard who had become very much an executive president. Cumulative losses could otherwise have forced its closure, like the old British College of Psychic Science in 1947. In 1960, even LIGHT had narrowly escaped death, with a helping financial hand from the Parapsychology Foundation.

Paul was very well qualified, first to provide the capital. He was assisted in this by Mr. X, a property developer called Instone Bloomfield who had already been instrumental in saving the two main Spiritualist newspapers through the creation of Spiritual Truth Foundation. New offices were carved out of the main ground floor library. William Rauscher had once photographed the principal, Ruby Yeatman at her desk there, with the wooden shelf mark "Demonology" visible behind her. (The photo was donated to the CPS archives in 2004). New seats for the lecture room were to follow, replacing some collapsed armchairs.

The new president had numerous creative ideas. He invited Geoffrey Keyte, a dynamic young Spiritualist, for example, to form a Psychic Youth Group which met chiefly at the College from 1967-69. This brought in new junior members for the College, and generated many stories in "Psychic News". In 1967, there was a one-day seminar on the work of Raynor Johnson, the Yorkshire born psychical researcher and metaphysician who was the favourite reading of a whole generation of psychic students.

The College had good relations with CFPSS, with whom joint lectures were arranged, and the Churches Fellowship was allowed to have its own youth conference here. One of the speakers was a young doctor, Martin Israel. In 1968, he presented at CPS a series of addresses "An approach to mysticism", later published. Edwin Butler, an old friend of Paul, gave courses on the wider implications of psychism. A European Sufi teacher presented several series of lectures that ended in controversy about possibly dangerous exercises that might raise kundalini!

Paul was a dedicated worker for the New Age, part of the network around Sir George Trevelyan, though his own psychic roots were in a long experience of spirit teachers such

as Red Cloud and White Eagle. By his book "Survival of Death" he had achieved a respected place in psychical research, and was an active member of the Survival Joint Research Committee. He was to emerge as the most acute thinker of his time about what used to be called "Spiritualism".

Paul did not fully inherit the College until Ruby retired in 1968. Here began difficulties, which persisted for years. Rare and special qualities are needed to administer a body like CPS, especially with an executive president. Notwithstanding promising spirit messages, as the 1970s wore on, a half dozen secretaries came and went, until Anita and Barbara Somers brought stability.

Compared with today, the College was much quieter in 1970. The numbers of those who did not work during the day had much diminished. Afternoon lectures were dying out. The public had much less time or money for transpersonal courses. Meditation was firmly on the agenda however, and the first meditation room was created at the College. Never to be forgotten was the buzz of conversation in the library which preceded the Helen Greaves meditation class.

Among mediums, Mrs Bedford, perhaps the last of the old-style deep trance mediums, still sat in the ground floor séance room. The genial Douglas Johnson had achieved great respect from parapsychologists. But the queen of College mediums, though by then she normally worked from home, was Ena Twigg. A public lecture from her often started a season. But being queen complicated her mediumship.

One of the rare sights at the College- perhaps it still happens- was to see one medium sit with another. There was recognition that communicators might not be able to reach one medium on their wavelength, but could reach another, and that mediums might need personal evidence too. I have always counted it a great privilege to have worked at the College, and especially to have known, off duty, the mediums who served there.

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Pagination problem.

A West Country reader has pointed out that the page numbers of issue 11 repeat those of PP10. Apologies for this error. Please cite the month of issue also when referring to material. The need for an index to the Newsletter is becoming pressing, and we are considering how best to do this..

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CENSUS OF AUSTRALIAN PSYCHIC PERIODICALS

We are compiling a list of Australian psychic periodicals, their years of publication, place of issue, editors and place of preservation, and we invite readers to contribute data. This material is not found only in Australia. Here for example, is an entry from the catalogue of the British Library in London.

Brisbane; Queensland; Australia
The Australian Spiritualist
Vol. 1 no 1-4
19 March – 9 April 1881

The information we collect will be preserved in electronic form, and the stories behind the publications will be shared with our readers.

Some readers perhaps think exclusively of “ Harbinger of Light” when Australian journals are mentioned. This was founded by William Terry in September 1870 and edited by him until 1905. But Dr Al Gabay points out in his book “ Messages from beyond: Spiritualism and Spiritualists in Melbourne’s Golden Age” (2001, MUP:

“ In 1869 B.S. Naylor had published the first Spiritualist journal in the colony, the short-lived Gloworm. “ . (p.94)

Beyond Victoria, however, there is another contender. The Library of the College of Psychic Studies in London hold two imperfect issues of another small publication, also called “ The Australian Spiritualist”. This appears to have been published at Wollongong in 1863. More information on that soon.