

PSYPIONEER

Founded by Leslie Price

Edited by Paul Gaunt

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DR. ROBIN JOHN TILLYARD 1881-1937- a forgotten Australian psychical researcher.

Introduction

Robin Tillyard was born in Norwich, England on January 31 1881, and educated at Dover College, and Queens College Cambridge. From 1904-13 he was Mathematics and Science Master at Sydney Grammar School, Australia. From 1914-17 he was a fellow in Zoology at Sydney University, becoming lecturer in Zoology in 1917. He served as chief of the Biological Department, Cawthorn Institute, New Zealand from 1921-28. In 1928 Tillyard became the Chief Entomologist to the Commonwealth of Australia.

Tillyard became interested in psychical research and worked closely with Harry Price on his visits to England, in 1926 becoming a Vice-President of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (NLPR). Tillyard became convinced of survival of the human personality after death through his experiences with "Margery" (Mrs Mina Stinson Crandon 1888-1941) in a solus sitting with Margery on August 10th 1928. In its August 18 1928 edition the scientific journal *Nature* published his findings. Then a tragic prediction through another medium was fulfilled on January 13 1937, when Dr Tillyard was killed in a car crash.

Working with Harry Price.

In 1926 Tillyard co-operated with Price and conducted a special test séance with a young medium found by Harry Price in 1923, who became widely known as Stella C. (Stella Cranshaw was a London nurse, who in 1928 married Leslie Deacon). The test séance was attended only by Tillyard, his wife and Stella. During the séance, raps and telekinetic movements were observed together with a lowering of temperature. This resulted in Tillyard endorsing Stella as a genuine medium deserving careful scientific investigation; Dr. Tillyard compiled a long article, which he contributed to the scientific journal *Nature*. Tillyard was also involved with Harry Price in the 1926 Eleonore Zugun experiments. Tillyard, with his contacts opened numerous doors of communication for Harry Price, such as enabling Price to introduce psychical research into the sceptical scientific journal, *Nature*. Also through Tillyard, Price obtained many of his Dominion associates.

Tillyard in a long review of Arthur Conan Doyle's '*History of Spiritualism*' for *Nature* emphasised the need for scientists in the investigation of occult phenomena. He voiced Price's views and hopes when he wrote:

Many years ago, when this question of psychical research was brought to his notice, Huxley replied, "Supposing these phenomena to be genuine, they do not interest me." We are sorry to be obliged to have to record so unscientific a remark from so great a man, and even sorrier to have to admit that Huxley's attitude is still that of the great majority of biologists at the present day . . . It is a sad commentary on human nature that, even at the present day, when the reality of some at least of these phenomena; has surely been put beyond the shadow of a doubt by the work of such men as Lodge and Richet, no scientific man can take up the study of psychical research without "losing caste" and undergoing either secret or more or less open persecution from his fellows.

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We attach below some original reports of Tillyard's views, the first from LIGHT October 9. 1926.

DR. TILLYARD'S FAREWELL TO ENGLAND
INTERESTING DISCUSSION AT THE NATIONAL LABORATORY.

The farewell meeting held by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, to mark the forthcoming departure for New Zealand of Dr. R. J. TILLYARD, F.R.S., took place on September 28th at 16, Queensberry Place, London, S.W. Dr. Tillyard, who gave an informal address upon "The Interpretation of Psychic Phenomena," expressed his cordial thanks for the generous treatment which he had received from the members of the National Laboratory, and added that he was only a beginner in psychical research, and had no desire to pose as an authority. He proposed to base his remarks upon the idea of psychic phenomena being taken for granted, and not enter into any discussion of their validity, which he regarded as beyond question. He briefly recalled the circumstances of

his entry into this field of inquiry, which arose out of a world tour that he had undertaken in the interests of biological research; in the course of his scientific tour of various countries he had looked into psychic phenomena and had made certain discoveries, which gave him pause. He was not prepared, as a scientist, to give a scientific explanation of psychic phenomena, at the present stage of his inquiry; he was satisfied, however, that they constituted a very important field of examination to which Science must give attention. The aim of the scientist was to establish Truth, but we are faced with complexity if we try to answer Pilate's question: "What is truth?"

He suggested that the title of his address might be stated as "Psychic Phenomena, as they present themselves to a biologist," and he desired that his remarks might be taken in that light, and in no sense regarded as an attempt on his part to explain the matter. He touched upon some of the phenomena which he himself had encountered, including a curious case vouched for by Professor Christian Winther in Copenhagen, in which two heavy pendulums, untouched by any human agency, executed various movements at the request of the Professor, these movements being automatically recorded upon a roll of photographic film. When the film was developed it was found that out of 48 requests for certain movements of the pendulum to be carried out, 42 had been faithfully executed, the remaining six partially so. The medium in this case, Anna Rasmussen, was on another occasion seen to undergo what he (Dr. Tillyard) called "transfiguration."

The séance was held in broad daylight, and the medium did not go into a proper trance, but only in a kind of brown study . . . Her nose altered in shape and all her facial characteristics became completely masculine, while out of her mouth came the deep voice of a man.

The lecturer hinted that the scientists who witnessed this phenomenon were endeavouring to account for the transformation by some normal explanation. In endeavouring to find a proved explanation for physical phenomena (continued Dr. Tillyard) the scientific examiner was faced with certain admissible hypotheses. He himself, at the present stage of his inquiry declined to indicate any preference for one or another. The theory of the Spiritualists certainly covered the facts, but he felt that it behoved him to keep an open mind upon the possible explanations pending further examination. He submitted four "view-points" which a scientific mind would consider as possible explanations; the physical, the biological, the psychological, and the mathematical.

On the physical grounds a scientist has to ask himself whether the phenomena are in accordance with the laws of physics, or whether, on the other hand, they transcend the known laws of physics.

Personally, he felt sure they did transcend those laws in certain cases. Dealing with the subject of ectoplasm, or, as he prefers to call it, teleplasm, Dr. Tillyard said:

“As a biologist, teleplasm baffles me. There must be a mind working behind the production of teleplasm. The Spiritualist says: “Yes, there are discarnate minds behind it,” but as a biologist I must, at present, regard that explanation as neither proved nor disproved.”

One scientific theory which might conceivably explain physical phenomena was connected with Einstein's doctrine of relativity, which might be stated in popular language as “The doctrine that our ideas of space and time must depend upon what part of the universe we dwell in.” We have no right to speak of space and time as two entirely separate things. He suggested, indirectly, that it was quite an admissible concept to suppose that “Walter,” the brother of Mrs. Crandon, and who died in 1916, was speaking in the year 1916, but owing to unknown actions of space and time, was in touch with the year 1926. Dr. Tillyard laid no stress upon this, but rather indicated that as a theory it was scientifically tenable.

Following the address, a discussion took place at which:

***MR. E. P. HEWITT, K.C.,** submitted that the Spiritualistic hypothesis is a reasonable one and covers all the facts, and that Spiritualists, the vast bulk of whom had not been bred up in that belief had been forced to accept Spiritualism through experiencing things which carried overwhelming evidence.*

***MR. W. R. BOUSFIELD, K.C., F.R.S.,** stated that he had been impressed by the similarity of accounts, all agreeing upon vital points, in which mothers had received communications from departed sons, who in most instances had been killed in the war. The consistency and mutual corroboration of these formed a mass of evidence, which he could not ignore.*

***SIR EDWARD MARSHALL HALL, K.C.,** the Chairman, spoke humorously of his feeling of intense ignorance in the presence of learned scientists. “I am,” he said, “an inquirer, with a strong bias towards belief.” He urged the importance of never rejecting any evidence merely because it seemed improbable, and pointed to the immense advance in knowledge of the past few years, which a century ago would have been regarded as impossible. “If you had told your grandfather about wireless, you would have probably been regarded as a lunatic.”*

D. N. G. [David Gow editor of Light 1914-1930]

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Another farewell luncheon on the 30th November 1926 at the Piccadilly Hotel, London was given to Dr and Mrs Tillyard, by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research on the eve to his return to New Zealand to take up a government post. The guests included, the editor of *Nature* Sir Richard Gregory, Harry Price, Prof. Julian Huxley, Mrs F.E. Leaning editor of *British Journal of Psychical Research*, Miss Mercy Phillimore, Secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, David Gow, editor of *Light* and Mr J. Arthur Findlay.

Tillyard had spent most of his life in a remote portion of the British Empire; he stated that many people supposed him to be either an Australian or a New Zealander, were mistaken. He was a simple Englishman, educated in England and graduated from Cambridge. In 1920 he was elected Honorary Fellow of Queens College, Cambridge.

Sir Richard Gregory was editor of '*Nature*', a flagship journal, which has been an influential force in scientific publishing for more than 130 years. Today it is still fresh, arresting and innovative and aims to communicate the latest ground-breaking and original scientific discoveries across all disciplines of science. It is published weekly (see also www.nature.com). Since 1869, *Nature's* mission has been to place before the general public the grand results of scientific work and scientific discovery.

Sir Richard Gregory Bt., FRS, FRAS, FR Met.Soc, F.Inst.P. (1864–1952), edited *Nature* for 20 years (1919–39) and had earlier been professor of astronomy at Queens College, London. He wrote textbooks on astronomy, chemistry, hygiene, physics and other scientific subjects. Lady Gregory gave an archive of his papers to the University of Sussex in April 1970- one wonders what it may say of psychical research in that era.

Nature's editor had opened its doors to Psychical Research. Gregory as one of the hosts of Dr. Tillyard's departure luncheon, in the course of some highly appreciative references to Dr. Tillyard, spoke of him as having *lighted a candle which had not yet been put out. That candle might seem to flicker, but he thought that was all to the good. Science had for centuries fought for freedom of thought, and in this subject he considered there should be the same freedom of thought and expression of the results of observation and experience. He felt sure that whatever the results of the correspondence in "Nature" might be that Dr. Tillyard's observations had made a permanent impression on the minds of the scientific world. He had known Dr. Tillyard many years ago, and was glad to renew his acquaintance during his recent visit. He regretted the fact that the Doctor was returning to the other side of the globe, but he knew that although he would not be here, they would not be separated- there were all the modern methods of communication between them, and he thought that it was this idea of the abolition of the limits of time and space that was at the bottom of Psychic Science.*

It was an idea to be cultivated. He had the highest regard for Dr. Tillyard's work. He felt it a privilege to be associated with him in regard to raising the important question of the attitude of Science to Psychical Research. Personally he felt the greatest gratification at the presence of Dr. Tillyard amongst them.

The Margery Mediumship

At another Farewell lunch, given by the NLPR, also at the Piccadilly Hotel Restaurant, Dr Tillyard gave an account of his experience with the medium Margery, This was on July 12 1928, and was reported in LIGHT July 28 1928.

AN EMINENT SCIENTIST ON THE "MARGERY" PHENOMENA.

"SCIENTIFIC PROOF OF SURVIVAL AT LAST OBTAINED" THE TESTIMONY OF DR R. J. TILLYARD.

When that dignified, cautious, and conservative journal, Nature, condescends to print an article from a writer claiming that a deceased man has proved his survival of bodily death, we may feel that our subject has made another, and a somewhat long stride in a forward direction. The writer who boldly puts forward this claim is DR. R. J. TILLYARD, M.A., Sc.D., F.R.S., etc., whose name is familiar with readers of LIGHT as a man of considerable eminence in biology, as well as a careful, critical investigator into the subject of psychic enquiry. In Nature of August 18th, Dr. R. J. Tillyard sets out, with illustrations, certain of his experiences with the medium known as "Margery" Mrs. Crandon, wife of Dr. L. R. G. Crandon, of Boston; the conclusion arrived at can be quoted in Dr. Tillyard's own words: "I feel that a scientific proof of survival has at last been obtained."

It is hardly necessary to describe here the phenomena which Dr. Tillyard observed, and which he gives in detail; they are, generally, of the kind set out in the current records of the latest development of the "Margery" manifestations; but what is of peculiar interest is the attitude of the distinguished scientist who states the case in an eight-column article, entitled "Evidence of Survival of a Human Personality". Says Dr. Tillyard:

"Before giving a condensed account of these phenomena it will be necessary for me to outline briefly the history of the mediumship which is now known widely in psychic circles as the 'Margery' mediumship. Margery's maiden name was Mina Stinson. She is now the wife of Dr. L. R. G. Crandon, a well-known Boston surgeon. She was born in Canada and had a brother named Walter Steward Stinson who was killed on August 8th, 1912, in a railway accident. There was a great affection between the brother and sister. The mediumship began in May, 1923, with table rapping and such-like phenomena, but developed later into trance form, with a very striking characteristic, namely, the formation of an independent voice, not proceeding from the lips or throat of the medium, and claiming to be the voice of her dead brother Walter. This voice was quite strongly developed two years ago, and was tested very fully by me in two séances at the end of April 1926. The voice does not utter inanities or banalities, but shows a fully-developed human personality, very masculine, forceful, and humorous, so that it tends to dominate the whole proceedings and clearly exercises an independent will of its own in relation to the other sitters. Many

remarkable experiments have been performed through the agency of this control, which anyone may call `Walter' without thereby committing himself to the belief that it is truly the surviving voice of Margery's dead brother.

“Coming to Boston, after an absence of more than two years, I had the privilege of attending and controlling four remarkable séances. The first two of these contain all that is requisite for a strict proof of the survival of the human personality of Walter Stinson. Even more remarkable were the results obtained in the third and fourth séances; but these logically form a portion of a series of experiments not yet completed, and therefore the account will be both simpler and clearer if I keep mainly to the first two.

“The proof of survival lies along two well-marked lines, one of the mental type, namely, supernormal cognition of unknown objects, and one of the physical type, namely, production of supernormal thumb-prints. The former type clearly belongs to the category of normal impossibilities, while the latter is probably of the same type, and should appeal more especially to biologists.”

Dr. Tillyard then gives a detailed report of his experiments, which included supernormal cognition of various unknown objects by “Walter”, in which the experimenter was assisted by Mr. J. W. Evans, B.A. (Cantab.), a young entomologist, who had never before been to a séance, and had no interest, or belief, in psychic phenomena; successful production of thumbprints took place at the home of Dr. Mark Richardson, Boston, and this experiment is dealt with by Dr. Tillyard, who concludes with a summary of the séances in the following words:

“The personality of `Walter' is shown to be independent of that of the medium by the possession of a distinct masculine voice and strong whistling powers, these never proceeding from the mouth or larynx of the medium; by his alert mental powers, tendency to impatience and the use of swear words by a marked sense of humour, a Canadian accent, and many other qualities which cannot fail to produce in a sitter the definite feeling that he is dealing with an independent personality. Besides this, `Walter' shows that he has the power of smell, can see in the dark, can handle delicate objects and place them accurately in the dark without doing any damage. He can select and cognise objects not known to any living person in the world, thus proving that he does not depend on telepathy or knowledge stored up in any person's subconscious mind. He can hypnotically influence the medium to write down his selected results, and can also influence mediums sitting at a great distance to do the same. Finally, he can produce his thumbprints in dental wax in the dark more quickly than an ordinary man can do them in the light.

“Experiments closely similar to the above are now being done twice a week regularly by `Walter', and it is therefore within the power of any man who wishes to do so to verify the phenomena stated in this article. My own conclusion is that Walter Stinson, who died in 1912, has fully proved in a scientific manner his claim that his personality has survived physical death.”

The Editor of Nature, in the course of a long editorial dealing entirely with this article, is unable to share Dr. Tillyard's conclusions; he preserves an open mind on the matter and calls for more conclusive evidence. Says the Editor: "We believe that Dr. Tillyard will have to bring much more convincing evidence of the actual existence of Walter's spiritual personality than that presented by him in his article before it can pass the critical bar of science. The existence alone of a spiritual voice capable of producing compressional waves in air, having a characteristic quality and capable of being recorded and analysed by suitable instrumental means, requires so many physical assumptions that only by demonstration under the most precise conditions could such a spiritual means of producing sound be established. We suggest that any further inquiries should be concentrated upon this point. Once it is proved that a spirit can mould a larynx and mouth cavity out of ectoplasm, and can force air through them so as to make sound and speech by such means, it would be easy to accept most of the other supernormal phenomena to which Dr. Tillyard has given attention.

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More information appeared in LIGHT May 2 1931.

DR. TILLYARD'S DECLARATION

In the April number of Psychic Research, the organ of the American Society for Psychical Research, Dr. R. J. Tillyard tells the story of his "solus" sitting with the Medium, Margery (Mrs. Crandon) at which three normal negative thumb-prints were made on wax by Walter, who is described by the Doctor as "the finest ghost I know of." The sitting was held at the rooms of Dr. J. J. Skirball, a Boston (U.S.A.) eye specialist, not associated in any way with the Crandon group, and precautions were taken which completely ruled out any suggestion of collusion with the Medium or any possibility of conscious or unconscious deception either on the part of the Medium or the sitter.

SIR OLIVER LODGE'S LETTER

It is interesting to note how this sitting was brought about. Dr. Tillyard, who is Chief Entomologist to the Commonwealth of Australia, had been on a visit to this country, and, just prior to his departure for New Zealand by way of Boston (U.S.A.), Sir Oliver Lodge wrote the following letter to Dr. Crandon, dated July 13th, 1928: -

Dear Dr. Crandon-I hear from Tillyard that he is returning to Australia via America. He is, I believe, writing about his experiences with "Margery" in Nature. If his article is admitted, it will be an important step towards challenging the attention of the scientific world.

He has an idea that it would diminish the opportunities for accusation of collusion if he were allowed a solitary sitting with "Margery" in a room arranged by himself, of course with your approval; and thinks that if he got results under those conditions, the sceptics would be reduced to accuse him of collusion- which, considering his position as a

scientific man, would be too absurd. I know that he is much impressed with "Margery," appreciating her highly from every point of view, and you might have confidence that he would treat her fairly.

More than that I cannot say, since you know what is reasonable and permissible far better than I do. It is not a privilege that I would recommend you to grant to many people, though if it were feasible I should value it myself.

Dr. Tillyard arrived in Boston about August 1st and was present at several of the Crandon sittings, and it was on August 10th, 1928, that he had "his long-desired sitting alone with the Medium in a place strange to them both."

The story of the sitting, as told by Dr. Tillyard and corroborated by Dr. Skirball, places the reality of the much discussed Walter thumb prints beyond reasonable dispute, since a denial would involve a charge of collusion against Dr. Tillyard-which, as Sir Oliver Lodge says, "would be too absurd."

During the sitting, Walter "whistled a great deal, talked more or less" with Dr. Tillyard and made jokes about Dr. Skirball and his assistants who were guarding the door of the séance-room. "Hello, Eyeball," he called out, "who's the blonde?" (The "blonde" was a nurse who had taken charge of Margery).

Writing to Sir Oliver Lodge after the sitting, Dr. Tillyard said: "It was by far the most wonderful séance I have attended and, as far as I am concerned now I should not worry if I never had another sitting in my life."

"Dr. Crandon made no conditions and placed Margery unreservedly in my hands. I think the arrangements which we made were scientifically severe and at the same time put on record the most marvellous result in the whole history of psychical research . . .

"It seems to me quite impossible to find a single flaw in this wonderful result."

DR. TILLYARD'S LETTER

Quite as interesting as the record of the results achieved at the sitting is the impression made upon the mind of Dr. Tillyard, whose letter to Sir Oliver Lodge is continued as follows:

Whether Science, under its present limitations, can ever hope to offer any explanation, philosophic or otherwise, of these extraordinary phenomena, I very much doubt myself. But my object is to record scientifically that they do occur, that they are part of the phenomena of Nature, and that Science, which is the search for Truth and for Knowledge, can only ignore them at the deadly peril of its own future existence as a guiding force for the world.

This séance is, for me, the culminating point of all my psychical research; I can now say, if I so desire, *nunc dimittis*, and go on with my own legitimate entomological work. For you, my very dear friend, who have never seen anything like this, I can only ask that you and your whole family will accept my statement as absolute truth, knowing me as you do, and that it may bring added comfort and certainty to you all, if such are needed to you who already believe with your whole hearts.

As for Margery and her husband, not one man in ten thousand could have handed over his wife trustingly to a comparative stranger as Dr. Crandon did last night, and not one woman in ten thousand could have faced such a situation bravely, as Margery did. The privilege granted me by them I shall always hold to be one of the greatest events in my

life, and they are now bound closely to me by spiritual bonds which can never be broken, and which, I am fully persuaded, will last over into that wonderful life of which Death is only the Entrance Gate.

In his "Editorial Notes," the Editor of *Psychic Research* (Mr. Frederick Bligh Bond) says: "The report of the Tillyard solus sitting for the production of thumb prints by Walter Stinson calls for special attention from all readers of *Psychic Research*, as it constitutes a powerful endorsement of the validity of the claims of the Margery mediumship which will go far to render it unnecessary to take any serious note of those who would play the part of detractor."

ANOTHER SOLUS SITTING.

At a solus sitting held on March 11th this year, Mr. William H. Button, President of the American Society for Psychical Research, a thumb print was made in prepared wax which is described as "one of the best Walter prints yet obtained." This print, which is reproduced in *Psychic Research*, is vouched for by Mr. Button and four other members of the American Society who assisted in the experiment. In his description of the sitting, Mr. Button says:

I cannot refrain from commenting upon the sagacity and efficiency of Walter in the . . . occurrences. He devised every precaution and directed it to be carried out. I might have thought of locking the door but I probably would not have thought of posting Richardson outside it as a guard nor having the room searched, as I was so confident no unexpected person was there. Walter directed what should be done with the print and ordered the entire sequence of events. I have concluded that Walter himself is the one to answer any criticisms that are made of him or his methods.

This testimony should have great weight with those who seek for "evidence of design or purpose on the part of the Communicator" in such messages. Perhaps Mr. Besterman will take special note.

G.H.L. [George H. Lethem. Editor of Light]

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But Tillyard was himself to become evidence of precognition in tragic circumstances, as related in *LIGHT*, January 21 1937

TRAGIC PREDICTION FULFILLED

DR. R. J. TILLYARD FATALLY INJURED IN MOTOR ACCIDENT

DR. ROBIN JOHN TILLYARD, F.R.S., died on Wednesday last week (January 13th), after a motor-car accident in New South Wales, Australia, at the age of 55. His home was at Canberra.

How Dr. Tillyard's death was predicted so long ago as 1928 is told, in the article that follows, by Mr. Harry Price.

Dr. Tillyard was an entomologist of world-wide repute; and (although this was not mentioned in his obituary notices in The Times and other newspapers) he was deeply interested in Psychical Research and became a convinced believer in Survival as a result of his inquiries.

In London, he took part in a number of psychic investigations; and Mr. Harry Price has put it on record that the first account of a séance ever printed in Nature was a record by Dr. Tillyard of some experiments with the Medium Stella C.

In the April, 1931, number of Psychic Research, the organ of the American Society for Psychical Research, Dr. Tillyard told the story of a solus sitting with "Margery" (Mrs. Crandon).

He had been in England, and was returning to New Zealand via the United States, and Sir Oliver Lodge had been the means of procuring from Dr. Crandon permission for him to sit in some of the "Margery" circles. On August 10th, 1928, he had, what he had specially desired, a sitting alone with the Medium, "in a place strange to them both."

Writing to Sir Oliver Lodge after the sitting Dr. Tillyard said: "It was by far the most wonderful séance I have attended, and, as far as I am concerned now, I should not worry if I never had another sitting in my life . . . It is for me the culminating point of all my Psychical Research; I can now say, if I so desire, nunc dimittis, and go on with my own legitimate entomological work . . ."

"The privilege granted me (by Dr. and Mrs. Crandon) I shall always hold to be one of the greatest events in my life, and they are now bound closely to me by spiritual bonds which can never be broken, and which. I am fully persuaded, will last over into that wonderful life of which Death is only the Entrance Gate."

Whilst in London, Dr. Tillyard made frequent visits to the L.S.A.

DR. TILLYARD'S DEATH FORETOLD

By HARRY PRICE

ON July 7th, 1928, I had a sitting with the well-known French clairvoyante, Mlle. Jeanne Laplace. I happened to be in Paris and arrangements were made for my meeting her.

When I first met her, Mlle. Laplace was an attractive young lady in the early twenties. Of course, we were known to each other by repute.

Upon being ushered into the room at the house where she was staying, my host informed me that it was advisable that some belonging of mine, of a personal nature, should be handed to the Medium in order that she should become en rapport with me. Someone went into the hall and fetched one of my gloves, which Mlle. Laplace handled for, perhaps, half a minute.

I had purposely prepared no tests for Mlle. Laplace. In the first place, I was uncertain whether the experiments would take the form of psychometric readings or whether she would describe the scenes she clairvoyantly visualised. Secondly, I did not want to load my mind with any pre-arranged ideas as to how we should conduct the séance in order to lessen, if possible, the part that telepathy might play in the experiments.

After a number of successful tests, I was asked to hand the Psychic one more objects, and she said she would describe the mental impressions and scenes that the article inspired.

In the right inside breast pocket of my coat were a number of letters, documents, etc., and at random I plunged my hand in the pocket and drew forth the first paper with which it came in contact. It was a letter from Dr. R. J. Tillyard, F.R.S. The letter was sent from Canada; it

was dated June 6th, 1928; and was typewritten upon the embossed notepaper of the hotel "Chateau Frontenac," Quebec. It was of an azure blue colour, and, folded, measured five inches by three and one-quarter inches. It was written on the front inside surface only, and folded with the blank sheet outwards.

I removed the letter from the envelope, being very careful that the Psychic did not get a glimpse of the letter. I handed her the letter, on which nothing was visible to show whether it was written, typewritten, or printed. Mlle. Laplace could get no clues from the letter unless she opened it.

She proceeded to give me fifty-three "impressions" which her handling of the letter had induced. A few of these statements I could verify from my own knowledge of Dr. Tillyard. But many of the others I could not, so I sent a translation of the notes (which had been taken down by a French stenographer; I said nothing) to Dr. Tillyard himself. He was delighted with the result of the experiment, and informed me that he considered it highly successful.

Actually, out of the fifty-three impressions, about thirty were correct, or reasonably correct. For example, Mlle. Laplace said that the writer of the letter was in ill-health; that the letter was type-written; that a secretary helped to prepare it; that it was written in a hotel; that Dr. Tillyard was occupied with Spiritualism; that he was a doctor and a scientist; that he had arterio-sclerosis; that he wrote for journals; that he wore spectacles; that he was in London, etc. All of these statements-and some others-were absolutely correct. Mlle. Laplace's impressions were numbered and tabulated by me in the order in which I received them.

On Wednesday last week (January 13th, 1937) when reading the Evening Standard on my way home, I saw the melancholy announcement that my friend had that day been killed in a motor accident, when driving his car between Canberra (where he lived) and Sydney. Immediately it occurred to me that Mlle. Laplace had predicted a tragic end for Dr. Tillyard, but I could not recall the details.

When I arrived home, and before I removed my outdoor clothes, I went over to the bookcase and took down a copy of my last book, *Confessions of a Ghost-Hunter*, published by Putnam's in March 1936. Turning to the chapter "Convincing Experiments with a French Clairvoyante," I found, on pp. 219-225, the account of my experiments with Mlle. Laplace. I have already stated that her "impressions" are numbered in my report. On pp. 221-2 of my book I found the following:

23. -The writer will die through a railroad or automobile accident; wheels or rails are bad for him.

24. -He will be in a country where there are a lot of insects and will be stung.

30. -He has not long to live-not very many years. (He was then aged 47)

49. -Will have a tragic death-congestion of the brain and will fall on railway or under car.

After I had read the above extraordinarily accurate prediction of Dr. Tillyard's sad end, I stood with the book in my hand for some minutes wondering what could be the secret of the strange powers which certain gifted persons possess, and whether we should ever discover the laws, which must govern these powers. Of course, I know that Spiritualists have an answer to my queries, and it may be the true one.

Mlle. Laplace's remark about "insects" is interesting, because Dr. Tillyard afterwards went to Canberra for the sole purpose of studying insects-especially those pests, which were ruining the apple crops. It is common knowledge that he introduced

into New Zealand a small wasp, which attacked the woolly aphis, thus reducing their number, and in consequence the apple crop increased enormously.

The reader will probably want to know what Dr. Tillyard thought of Mlle. Laplace's predictions concerning his death. Well, he merely laughed at the whole affair, remarking that this type of prognostication is so seldom verified.

The Medium's statement that "wheels or rails are bad for him" is very curious, because in July 1914, Dr. Tillyard was in a big railway accident and at least one paper reported him killed.

In conclusion, I can only say that it is very fortunate for *Psychical Research* that I took such pains with the experiment I have just described, and that the results were published. It is one of the best-authenticated cases of a verified prediction.

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Dr Robin John Tillyard is scarcely mentioned when one flicks through the index pages of books relating to psychical research. We hope that this collection of some of his reported views and experiences will go some way to recognise his valuable contribution, his scientific approach and his impartiality in his years of psychical research.

.....
DR. ROBIN JOHN TILLYARD 1881-1937

I am deliberately staying outside the spiritualistic movement because I want to examine these psychic phenomena purely in the light of biology. They hang together with the processes of embryology and creative evolution and must be studied as an unknown portion of biological science. Probably when the truth is known we shall find that spiritualism correctly expresses the religious as contrasted with the scientific aspect of the phenomena.

A.S.R.P. Proceeding.

Paul J. Gaunt
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.....

Leslie Price adds:

More information about Dr. Tillyard's life and work, and about an archive of his letters can be found on:

http://www.ento.org.nz/nzentomologist/free_issues/Volume%206-3-305-308.pdf

Trevor Crosby, the author of that article, and curator of the N.Z. Arthropod Collection at Tamaki Campus, University of Auckland, has kindly confirmed that Tillyard's correspondence is still preserved there- also there is some material in the Harry Price Library in London

We hope at a later time to give some attention to a biography by his son-in-law John William Evans "Life and work of Robin John Tillyard 1881-1937" (1963, University of Queensland Press) and the autobiography by Evans called "Insect delight" (1989, Brolga

Press) illustrated by his wife Faith, daughter of Dr Tillyard. Faith Evans (born 1912) died on 22 March 2003, after being struck by a car at a pedestrian crossing.

The reputation of Stella C, into whose phenomena Tillyard enquired, remains high, but given the controversy about Margery it has naturally been suggested that Tillyard was deceived by her. (See Thomas Tietze's biography "Margery" 1973 p.133 ff for a critical account of his sitting with her). Certainly the thumb print of Walter was not that of a spirit, but of Margery's dentist, Dr Frederick Caldwell of Boston, who is given the pseudonym Kerwin in the literature.. E.D. Dudley, previously a strong supporter of Margery, discovered this, but was accused of malpractice by other supporters. A fingerprint expert called in by the ASPR, Dr Harold Cummins, then confirmed that the Walter fingerprints were those of Caldwell, but was accused of bias against the paranormal. However Dr Cummins was later able to examine a number of prints held in London, including one which had been preserved in a locked box for five years. All were of Caldwell. (Dr Harold Cummins "Notes on 'Walter' thumbprints of the 'Margery' séances" Proceedings SPR 43 1935 p.14-23.). As Dr Michael Coleman has pointed out, this is one of the most remarkable papers in the history of psychical research.

LP.

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Psypioneer will next year be looking into the mediumship of Mary Hollis Billing, and her friendship with Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. Below is an article printed in '*Spiritual Notes*' Vol. 1. 1878-80. '*Mrs. Billing's Mediumship*'. December 1879 Page 236.

Spiritual Notes was the official monthly journal of the British National Association of Spiritualists. However the journal was short lived and was in production from 1878-81.

MRS. BILLING'S MEDIUMSHIP

To the Editor.

SIR, -Such of your readers as have not yet lead the pleasure of a sitting with Mrs. Hollis Billing, and an interview with "Ski," can have little idea of the gratification which awaits them. Mrs. Billing is a lady of such innate refinement that one is quite prepared for the absence of all coarseness in her manifestations; and, in truth, expectations are fully justified by results when one is admitted to conversation with "James Nolan" and "Ski." Both voices are full, resonant, and melodious, with a somewhat feminine softness; but by every word, and more especially by the wonderful tests they give, these spirits prove unmistakably their independent individuality.

There is no need at these séances to think of test conditions. Although the visitor may be an utter stranger to the medium he will find that no veils hang between him and the piercing eye of the Spirit. "Ski" will tell him of his past, present, and future, displaying a rare delicacy and wonderful discrimination in speaking upon private matters or touching upon sore points. When necessary—that is, if it be desired that the medium should not hear what is being said—her ears are pervaded by a buzzing noise which renders her deaf for the time being to all other sounds. It would be impossible for any being in the flesh to know the biographical facts revealed to strangers by "Ski," impossible to tell them oftentimes what they have been doing in the course of the day, and even what they have been thinking about, which has frequently happened in my experience, and in that of many of my friends. It is "Ski's" place also to induct the spirit friends of visitors into the *modus operandi* of speaking for themselves; and extraordinary tests, or proofs of identity, are this frequently given in uncommon names, sentences in foreign languages, and incidents of a private and domestic nature.

I have dwelt thus at length upon the characteristics of "Ski" because he is Mrs. Billing's principal "working spirit." It is but seldom that the refined, melodious, and rather plaintive voice of "James Nolan" is heard, who appears to confine himself to teachings in esoteric spiritism.

It would not be easy to give an idea of the high spiritual tone of "James Nolan." He certainly stands at the head of all the spirits I have ever heard speak in the materialised voice for eloquence, spirituality, and information upon all subjects; knowledge of a high character, such things as a spirit might be supposed to know, but ranging far above and beyond what the ordinary sitter seeks.

The members of a private circle, sitting once a week with Mrs. Billing, would fully bear me out in all I say relative to the high qualifications, mental and spiritual, of "James Nolan." We have the privilege of his unequalled teachings in the direct voice uninterruptedly for a period of nearly an hour at a stretch, and go away with our minds filled with subject for thought, refreshed and strengthened.

The possession of such controls as "James Nolan" and "Ski" would imply upon the part of the medium a nature of great purity and harmony, and a well-balanced and able intellect, even if it does not display its powers in this life in any other way.

I have extreme pleasure, and take a certain pride in stating all these facts concerning a sister-medium, one who is an honour and grace to our profession, not only from her own superior and highly estimable characteristics as a lady, but also from her almost unsurpassed powers of a high, pure, and perfect mediumship.

CATHERINE WOODFORDE.

90, Great Russell-Street, Nov. 20th, 1870.

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Also taken from 'Spiritual Notes' March 1880. Page 263.

FAREWELL ADDRESS To MRS. HOLLIS-BILLING

On Thursday evening, February 12th, a large and representative body of Spiritualists assembled at Neumeyer Hall, Bloomsbury, to bid farewell to Mrs. Hollis-Billing, who is returning to America. The chair was taken by Mr. Stainton-Moses, M.A., and the speakers included Mr. C. C. Massey, Mr. Burns, Mr. Peterson, Mrs. Hallock, Dr. Wyld, and Mr. Slater. A hearty congratulatory telegram was received from Mr. Morse, who was unable to be present, and excuses were read from Mr. Oxley, of Manchester, Mr. F. W. Percival, Mrs. Makdougall Gregory, Sir C. Isham, and more than twenty other friends. Among those present we noticed Mr. and Mrs. Duncan, Mrs. Wiseman, Mr. Annesley Mayne, Mrs. and Mr. D. G. Fitz-Gerald, Mrs. Going, Mrs. Slater, Miss Houghton, Mrs. and Miss Burke, Colonel Chamberlain, Mr. Thos. Shorter, Mrs. Tebb, Mr. Collingwood, Mr. Ivimey, Mrs. Maltby, Mrs. Woodforde, Mr. Ward, Miss Lennon, who contributed largely to the harmony of the meeting by some excellent vocal music, and many others well-known in connection with the movement. The hall was well filled, and the proceedings were characterised throughout with much heartiness and unanimity.

A handsomely illuminated address was presented to Mrs. Billing in the course of the evening; and subsequently a purse of money, which had been subscribed by her friends as a spontaneous mark of their appreciation of her services as a medium, and her worth as a woman, was privately handed to her. Mrs. Billing leaves us with the kindest wishes for her safe journey and speedy return from a large circle of friends. The address is as follows: -

To MRS. MARY J. HOLLIS-BILLING.

DEAR MADAM, - On the eve of your departure from amongst us, we, Spiritualists of London, desire to express to you our sense of the services that you have rendered to the cause of Spiritualism during your residence in this country. The uniform courtesy and kindness of your manner have endeared you to a large circle of friends whose good wishes will follow you to your native country . . . The readiness with which you have placed your mediumistic gifts at the disposal of Spiritualists in general has laid them under a deep debt of obligation, and has been of material service to the movement. Though the ties of personal association must now be severed, we trust that the day is not far distant when they may be re-united. In the meantime we beg to assure you that we shall ever entertain a feeling of friendship for you, and of interest in your work, and that we very cordially wish you every temporal and spiritual blessing. -We are, Dear Madam, with much respect, yours in the cause of Truth.

(SIGNED BY TWENTY
REPRESENTATIVE SPIRITUALISTS).

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NOTES BY THE WAY

Meals for hungry ghosts?

If someone wanted to investigate Spiritualism, should they be urged to read Joe Fisher's book "Hungry Ghosts" (1990) first, before they meet any séance room entities? Fisher's investigations showed that the detailed accounts given by his communicators to prove their identity could be fictitious, though real personalities appeared to be expressed. It is worth obtaining the later edition, retitled "The Siren Call of Hungry Ghosts", New York, Paraview Press, 2001, in which Fisher in an Epilogue described further disturbing experiences. Finally, on May 9 2001 the Anglo-Canadian author committed suicide by jumping off a cliff in Ontario (www.anomalist.com/milestones/fisher.html). It is possible that he had been driven mad by the impact of his search.

Electronic resurrection; its dangers

The dangers of Spiritualism are well covered in a somewhat neglected area of psychic literature, but we need to be wary of what we read, especially on line. People change their views. Take Dr Forbes Winslow of London for example who claimed that many patients in lunatic asylums had been made insane by Spiritualism. Eugene Crowell, an American Spiritualist thereupon circularised insane institutions and found a much larger number of ministers of religion than mediums.

During Victorian times, when the property rights of women were not well protected, males interested in seizing an estate would sometimes get women beneficiaries committed to an asylum. An interest in Spiritualism was helpful in this. Forbes Winslow was a principal in a famous court case that damaged his reputation (see Alex Owen "The Darkened Room" reprinted University of Chicago Press, 2004).

But later in life, the attitude of Winslow to Spiritualism changed sharply and he became much more positive. Molly Whittington-Egan documented this in her biography "Doctor Forbes Winslow, Defender of the Insane" (Great Malvern, Capella Archive – www.cappella.demon.co.uk/cappubs.html). We hope to reprint some of the contemporary reports of this conversion.

However, on the Net, there are numerous reprints of the original Winslow charges, and rather fewer of Crowell's amusing response. Of Winslow's later opinions, there is almost total ignorance. His views have been electronically resurrected, but in part only.

Spurred on by bereavement

Another case which illustrates the same problem comes from Melbourne, Australia around 1915. A Baptist minister, Frederic C. Spurr warned against Spiritualism from the

pulpit there, and his warning has been resurrected on the Net in several places. But later, being in England, Spurr became more positive about the phenomena while remaining opposed to Spiritualism as a religion. This happened because in 1923 his eight year old son was tragically drowned, and the psychic experiences which followed convinced him of communication.

He therefore published anonymously "The Heart of a Father" by a Well-known Public Man (1924), and publicly modified his opinions in "The Life Hereafter" (1934). Paul Gaunt has drawn my attention to this book, and the discussion about it in LIGHT, 1934. Clearly any rounded account of Spurr as a precursor of CFPS would need to take account of both his early and later views, not just what has been electronically resurrected.

Guirdham defended

David Fontana's new book "Is there an afterlife?" (O Books 2005) is a weighty contribution to survival research, with much material about pioneers. We may hope that it goes through many editions, and if so, that some minor corrections are made. Our contributors will probably return to the book on a number of occasions.

Fontana writes appreciatively of Arthur Guirdham's Cathar reincarnation evidence "For many years "he testifies "I have had an interest in the Cathars, and over a number of summers visited all the historical sites associated with them in the Languedoc area of France. Thus I can vouch for Arthur Guirdham's extensive and scholarly knowledge of all things associated with them. One thing was clear. He was not given to fantasy or deception. And he was not likely to be deceived by others."

Fontana met Guirdham "He impressed me as a man of penetrating intellect and of complete integrity. " (p.436).

One cannot help wondering what Fontana made of art historian Lynda Harris's investigation into the case. She presented her findings in the magazine "Reincarnation International", now "Life and Soul" .She lectured on them to the SPR on November 16 2000. They were expanded and became a booklet "The Cathars and Arthur Guirdham" from Psychic Pioneer Publications in 2000, which was reviewed in JSPR. Ian Wilson commented on Lynda's booklet "The warmest congratulations to Lynda Harris for a most thorough, perceptive and fair-minded approach to the mystery that was Arthur Guirdham and his fellow 'Cathar revenants'." Lynda Harris was less impressed by this case, and suggested that Dr Guirdham might have been imposed upon by one of his patients in particular. Her work is not mentioned in the Fontana book.

SPR Council attacked again

Another omission is in the discussion of the voice medium John Sloan. In Psypioneer Newsletter, January 2005 ("SPR declined invitation to investigate medium") we drew attention to David Fontana's remarks on this in his October 2004 JSPR paper "Survival Research". Essentially Fontana accused the SPR council of negligently failing to investigate Sloan's mediumship when given the opportunity to do so. In fact, the circumstances were rather different from those reported by Arthur Findlay, as had been

made clear by W.H. Salter when he reviewed a Findlay book on the case “ Where Two Worlds Meet” in JSPR 1952.

The injustice of Fontana’s charge against his SPR Council colleagues of yesteryear was drawn to the attention of the SPR office, before the January Newsletter was published, and referred to the SPR editor, but nothing more was heard by us. (We perhaps discern here the feathers of that oft encountered spirit guide “Passing Buck”.)

Two points arise from this. So far as the mediumship of Sloan is concerned, the student should certainly read Salter’s review which begins by asking “Do Spiritualists realise how much harm is done to their cause by a claim, such as that made by the author on the cover of this book, that ‘No more conclusive evidence of survival is available.’ than the reports of the sittings he has printed.” Salter goes on to make some critical points about the Sloan mediumship. But his review is not mentioned in Fontana.

One can sympathise with the author here, because in a century of more of psychical research, there are always papers that will be missed, though those published by the SPR Journals and Proceedings are now available in the SPR web site for members. A search under the name “John Sloan” for example is worth doing before writing on the case.

But a second point can also be made. For a former SPR president to make a charge of negligence against his colleagues on the SPR Council is a serious matter. It is likely, for example, to increase prejudice against the SPR among Spiritualists. For the SPR, an educational charity whose purpose is investigation, an accusation of failing to investigate is a grave one. So some checks needed to be made. What, for example, did the SPR council minutes say? Was there indeed any mention of the matter in the Journal, or even in the annual reports of the SPR? These questions should have occurred successively to the author, to the referees and to the editor of any learned paper which made such a charge, especially if it is the SPR which was to publish it in its own journal.

Leslie Flint

Among the mediums discussed, previously somewhat neglected by survival researchers, is the voice medium Leslie Flint. When I was associated with the SPR library enquiries were regularly received seeking guidance about his work, often from readers of his autobiography “Voices in the dark” (1971), and I wish I could have just referred them to Fontana’s assessment, though (p.235) he does conflate the research of Firebrace (circa 1950) with that of Bennett (circa 1970). As a student I was able to visit George Woods and Betty Greene in Worthing, and met Bernard Hutton who was hoping to verify some of the famous taped voices by comparison with recordings made in their lifetimes. Fontana points out that it is unfortunate that more efforts were not made to follow up some of the non-famous drop communicators who might have given evidence of identity.

Finally, a small point. All authors are beset by misprints of the kind mentioned in “Spelling pitfalls” (June 2005 newsletter). Fontana’s weakness is for Myers, whom he

calls "Frederick" rather than "Frederic". Though he must have read this name a thousand times, he seeks a "k" which is not there, and for a séance room investigator to see things which are not there is worrying!

LESLIE PRICE

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In the last issue of Psypioneer we printed an article on Australian spiritualism '*The Cause In Other Lands*' We now reprint from the same issue of 'The Spiritual Review' founded and edited by J.J. Morse. '*A Life-size Portrait of "Katie King"*'.....

THE
SPIRITUAL REVIEW
**A Monthly Magazine for
Spiritualists**

VOL. III. MAY 1901. No. 7.
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A Life-size Portrait of "Katie King."

PAINTED BY J. HAWKINS SIMPSON, IN 1874.

IN his as yet unpublished work entitled-" Whence these Voices? Whence these Fleeting Forms? And, Trance in the New Testament "-Mr. Hawkins Simpson gives the following account-after describing and commenting upon the Materialised form of "Katie."

" In a case which is unique of its kind, the reader may perhaps like to know the way in which I, having photographs of "Katie" in different positions, sought to produce a faithful portrait of the mysterious visitor. Being pleased with, but somewhat puzzled by, the management of light, I asked how this had been effected. Sir W. Crookes replied, `knowing from experience how dreadfully hard photos taken by electric light were, I tried all ways of softening and illuminating the shadows. I had electric light on one side and magnesium on the other, moving. White sheets were also hung about the room to reflect the light. The exposure was about three seconds."

" *In July, 1874*, the then not fully shaded life size monochrome portrait was sent to him, with request that he, and any chrome portrait was sent to him, with request that he, and any others who had seen 'Katie' would kindly point out defects. [Katie is standing with closed eyes, in white robe, cut low, and short sleeves, a thin white head-dress falls over the shoulders without concealing the loose ringlets of amber coloured hair. The arms are crossed below the bare bosom, in which is a bouquet of lilies and maiden hair fern.]

" *July 9th*, he wrote- 'It is most beautiful, and strikingly recalls the fair original. I never expected you would have been so successful in hitting the likeness. It is now stretched against the wall in the library, close to the spot where Katie used to stand. I ask for criticism and get it from all who knew Katie. I will carefully note what is said, and let you have an analysis of it in the course of a week. I hope Miss Cook will see it in a day or two.'

" *July 20th*, Sir William wrote- 'The criticisms have been very numerous, but they all resolve themselves into this- The mouth is not at all like Katie's, and the shading of the forehead and face is not quite definite enough. Perhaps you have not quite finished the shading. The fault of the mouth seems to be that the curve- the line of beauty- is too decided. Katie's mouth was rather straight across, and a little drawn down at the corners. The expression you have given is rather too self-satisfied, and that was quite foreign to Katie. In all other respects the likeness is perfect, and every one who has seen it is charmed with your success.'

"The portrait corrected and completed was sent for further criticism, and I asked Sir W. Crookes acceptance of a copy, if he cared to have one. *Nov. 21st*, returning the picture he wrote " Many thanks for Katie- She is perfectly charming, and I should value a copy very highly indeed. Mrs. Corner, " nee Cook, " to whom I have just shown it, is also very pleased with it. Was it your intention to reproduce Katie as an oil painting? "

" As I was too busy to make a copy at once, I gave him the monochrome [reserving copyright] and from this, I, some years afterwards, made an exact replica in water colours. *April 10th, 1875*, he wrote- ' I value your present of Katie more than I can express to you. The picture does indeed recall her vividly to me, and I shall treasure it as I should the portrait of a very dear relation."

Since *May 21st, 1874*, as Mrs. Corner informed Mr. Simpson (in 1896), " nothing has been heard of Katie, though I have had many materialisations even lately." The artist in his article gives his reasons for thinking that " Katie " was not (as is: generally supposed) the materialised figure of a disincarnate spirit; and he propounds an entirely new theory for consideration.

The artist regrets that he himself never saw "Katie." Of Home's face he made careful studies, when he was talking, or in almost death like trance-with a view to producing a life size water colour portrait: but he could not conveniently spare time for the task, although he can always recall the features as distinctly as if he had seen them yesterday, together with the tones of his voice. Not having seen "Katie," and she no longer appearing, he felt the need of going to work at once, in order that he might be guided by others whilst they retained a vivid recollection of her mobile features.

In Mr. Home's case there was no similar urgency, or question of equal interest to men of science, and during the eighteen following years, Mr. H. Simpson always hoped that Home would be painted by some one better qualified than himself-which may possibly have been done here or on the continent.

Editors Note: The above text has been, in part cited in the S.P.R. proceedings in 1964, by R.G. Medhurst and K.M. Goldney. An interesting appendix to this can be found in the S.P.R., proceedings. The reference is PSPR54 1963-6 p148ff.

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In the next issue, December, we will be featuring a major new book:

Andrew Jackson Davis - The First American Prophet and Clairvoyant

By
John DeSalvo

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Paul J. Gaunt.