

# *PSYPIONEER*

An Electronic Newsletter from London

Volume 1 No 2 June 2004

## **Highlights of this issue**

Justice for the Fox Sisters	9
The Prime Minister was a Lyceumist	11
Funeral of Stainton Moses	12
Madame Blavatsky a Spiritualist up to a point	13
The Eddys and the Holmeses	14
A.J. Davis in Germany	16

## **JUSTICE FOR THE FOX SISTERS**

After 150 years a new biography attempts to put a balanced case.

**Paul Gaunt** reports.

There are today, a variety of books and articles on the rise of Modern Spiritualism, especially the events of March 31st 1848. This story has over the years however, become distorted from the known facts as recorded by the early historians of the Movement. The story of its beginnings, and the involvement of the Fox family are of course open to individual interpretation, including the records of 'on the spot' historians.

One of the many confusing issues is inconsistency on the ages of the key characters, Kate and Maggie Fox. These vary from record to record, between 6 and 12 for Kate and 8 and 15 for Maggie.

This new account by Barbara Weisberg - 'TALKING TO THE DEAD: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism', ( HarperSanFrancisco, 2004) addresses such confusions and brings them into some perspective , as well as giving a detailed overview of the Fox family in general; The author retraces the family's background, including the mediumship of the eldest sister Anne Leah. The story of the often tragic denouement is told in relationship to the political situation of the American Civil War, linking the social, religious and economic climate to the growth of Spiritualism.

In her book, Barbara traces the rise of Spiritualism and the important part played by Leah, Kate and Maggie from original materials, She gives the reader numerous source references as she uncovers the deepening plight of these remarkable mediums. The author presented the passive mediumship that is displayed by each of the sisters throughout the book in a non-biased way, largely relying upon researched material and documented information from those present at the time.

The book is a good summary of the Fox story, putting the events into perspective and giving a clearer insight into the young girls who brought about Modern Spiritualism, and how Maggie Fox eventually tried to destroy it.

The book is very well balanced with many thought-provoking points; for example Barbara traces Maggie's tragic adult life from when she meets explorer Elisha Kent Kane, his great disapproval of her work as a medium and what it stands for; their marriage, his death, her alcoholism and conversion to Catholicism. Her growing disapproval of Spiritualism resulted in her exposure, often referred to as the "Death-Blow to Spiritualism" in 1888, followed by her recantation in 1889. Similarly, Kate's story line is again much more detailed than other accounts of her life.

I find it interesting to note that Barbara points to Eliab W. Capron and Henry D. Barron as being major contributors to the early rise of Modern Spiritualism. In "Singular Revelations: Explanation and History of the Mysterious Communion with Spirits." they drew primarily upon the works of Andrew Jackson Davis (p.93 ) to explain spirit communication and the spirit world. Another important collection of material was. Dellon Marcus Dewey's "History of the Strange Sounds" (1850). But it was Horace Greeley who first employed the term "Modern Spiritualism" and called its followers "Spiritualists" in 1852.

Davis had written of the recently deceased often failing to recognise their own death. As these early historians recorded the phenomena of the Fox sisters, the philosophy of Davis was being made familiar; for example Heaven and Hell were replaced by Higher and Lower Spheres

In my opinion, Barbara has done an excellent job in piecing together the relevant information. She keeps closely to the early historians who recorded these events. As early as 1850 there were conflicting versions distorting the basic story of the Fox sisters. She is refreshingly impartial, but in the 'Afterword' section of the book she does express herself in part.

I would fully recommend this book as a well-researched and informative guide to the beginnings of early Modern Spiritualism.

#### ORDER DETAILS:

The book is available direct from the publishers, ([order@harpercollins.com](mailto:order@harpercollins.com)) priced at \$24.95 for a cloth hard-backed copy. Also available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

ISBN 0-06-056667-1

Paul J. Gaunt, Barnstaple, UK.

.....  
**Cambridge Scholars News**

We reported in PP1, page 1 on conflicting claims about the origins of the SPR. In her new book, Barbara Weisberg says on p.232 "the Society for Psychical Research, known as the SPR, was started in Cambridge University in England. " She includes among the founders the Sidgwick's, Arthur Balfour and William Barrett, but not Dawson Rogers.

## **THE PRIME MINISTER WAS A LYCEUMIST**

Although some distinguished people have been associated with Lyceums, few rival Alfred Deakin (1856-1919) of Melbourne, Australia. He was Prime Minister of his country three times between 1903-1910, and played an important part in the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, which brought together the Australian states.

Deakin whose parents had come from England, moved from Anglicanism to investigation of Spiritualism about 1872, and in 1873 formed a circle at his home. He was soon invited to the more successful circle of Dr Motherwell, where, aged only 17 he was the medium for trance communications. especially " A New Pilgrim's Progress, purporting to be given by John Bunyan through an impressional writing medium" which was published in Melbourne in 1877; two copies are in CPS, London.

" Spirit Teachings " (not to be confused with the famous book by Stainton Moses) and sub-titled "Oral, Impressional and Automatic" edited by W.H. Terry, also included several addresses through Deakin. By the time it was published in Melbourne in 1908, Deakin was Prime Minister and he was not named in the book.

A Progressive Lyceum was founded in Melbourne in 1872, and Deakin was conductor after Terry, and co-editor of the Lyceum Leader while training as a barrister. As his political career developed (he was elected to the state parliament in Victoria in 1879) Deakin gave up his active Spiritualist role, but his sympathy always remained.

Dr Al Gabay's book " The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin " (Cambridge University Press, 1992) tells his story using many private manuscripts. It is still in print at about £55 (very expensive!) but local libraries can get it from the British Library for UK readers.

...

### **The Psychic Pioneer Project Stirs**

On 4 May 2004, the first copies of PP1 were e mailed to stakeholders (mainly persons and institutions who had previously supported the project.) The first individual subscribers came from an announcement on the web site of the International Survivalist Society on 29 April. As readership reached double figures, we became the Spiritualist newspaper with the world's smallest circulation. Until we have a much better product, we expect to remain that way, with very limited promotion. We are grateful to Andreas Sommer (Germany) who volunteered to PDF the newsletter, and to Woodland Way Sanctuary in Australia, who have given us a temporary home on their web site [www.woodlandway.org](http://www.woodlandway.org)

The newsletter should appear at least monthly. If you want to be on the mailing list, just send a message headed "Subscribe" to [leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk)

## STANTON MOSES FUNERAL

Stainton Moses (1)

*The following, slightly modified, is from the "Bedfordshire Independent," of September 17<sup>th</sup>:-*

*The remains of the late Mr William Stainton Moses, who died on the 5<sup>th</sup> inst., at the residence of his mother in St. Peter's Bedford, were interred at the Bedford cemetery, on Friday, the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. The Rev. W. Hart Smith, rector of St Peter's conducted the funeral service, and there was a large attendance of sympathising friends, among whom were Colonel Cragg, Mr F. Percival. Mr A. A. Watts, Mrs Street, Mrs Mason, Mr Ireland, Mr W.G. Johnson, Mr C.E. Cassal, Mr H Withall, the Rev. J.H. Edwards, Mrs Edwards, Mr Boulton, Mr B.D. Godfrey, and Mr South.*

*The undertaking arrangements were most satisfactorily carried out by Mr Delafield and his son, of 63 Harpur street. Beautiful floral tributes to the memory of the deceased were received from Mr Charlton T. Speer, Mrs C.T. Speer, Miss Speer, Mrs Stanhope Speer, Miss Eves, Mr F. Everard Colt, Mrs Street, F.W. and S.S. Levander, the Campbell Lodge of Freemasons, the London Spiritualist Alliance, "In affectionate remembrance" from his mother, and one "To the memory of a noble soul, a pure life, a lofty purpose, a self-sacrificing, untiring devotion to a great work, from his attached friends, Charles and Cecilia Macrae."*

*The late Mr Moses was well known in the literary world of London, and moved in a circle of men eminent for their genius, attainments, and authorship. Personally he had charming presence, and excelled in the conversational art. By these gifts and his unvarying geniality he made many lasting friendships, and his death has created a deep sense of loss among his acquaintances. In literature he was known as "M.A. (Oxon.)," and he began contributing to Spiritualist periodicals as far back as 1873, but took over the entire Editorship of "LIGHT" in 1887.*

*His best known work was "Spirit Teachings," but he also gave to the world "The Higher Aspects of Spiritualism": "Spirit Identity"; "Psychography, or Direct Spirit Writing," all of which, with the exception of the last, are practically out of print; and several pamphlets on kindred subjects have also proceeded from his pen. "*

We copy this report from "Light" of 1 October 1892, though by the kindness of Dr M. Coleman of Bedford, we have also seen the original obituary, which goes on to quote from "Light". In the months ahead we hope to make available many items of information about S. Moses.

It will be noticed that he had a conventional Church of England funeral, in the parish where he died, as was (and still is) the legal right of any person in England.

.....

**Biographical numbering.** In this and later issues of the newsletter, readers may see items prefixed (e.g. Stainton Moses (1).) This is to make easy, reference over many months to items about major pioneers.

## BLAVATSKY A SPIRITUALIST UP TO A POINT

Madame Blavatsky, co-founder of the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, identified herself with the Spiritualist Movement, but had private reservations. A new collection of her correspondence shows significant differences in her statements to various recipients.

The Theosophical Publishing House at Wheaton, Illinois, has issued the first volume of “ The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky” (ISBN 0-8356-0836-0) which covers the years 1861-1879. She came to America in 1873, and met Henry Olcott, an experienced Spiritualist, at Chittenden (Vermont). Olcott was investigating the Eddy brothers, physical mediums. (see also later in this issue). Blavatsky soon published articles about her experiences with them and other mediums.

It appears that she claimed to be an enthusiastic Spiritualist in letters to Olcott and to Alexander Aksakoff, (though the latter originals have not been seen, and they may have been changed by a hostile Russian editor Solovyov.) But in writing to her family she expressed alarm about the dangers of Spiritualism. In her analysis of the Eddy materialisations, for example (p.57) she recalled “ It was horrid, ghastly, to watch the process! It made me often sick and giddy, but I had to look at it, and the most I could do was to hold the disgusting creatures at arm’s length.” The entities, she asserted, were not the real loved ones.

To H.P. Corson she wrote (p.87) “ I am here, in this country sent by my Lodge, on behalf of Truth in modern Spiritualism, and it is my most sacred duty to unveil what is, and expose what is not.” In the same letter of February 1875, she attributed her beliefs (using for the first time the word “theosophy”) to western occultism. “ In my eyes, Allan Kardec and Flammarion, And. Jack. Davis and Judge Edmonds are but school boys just trying to spell their A.B.C. and sorely blundering sometimes. “

A few weeks later she still writes, though critically, of “ We Spiritualists” (p.101 and again p.111) and “ At least I am a Spiritualist” (p.234) in January 1876. But with the rise of the T.S. and her work on “ Isis Unveiled” such language disappeared. Spiritualists recognised her as an enemy, though she remained on friendly terms with Stainton Moses and other individual Spiritualists. LP.

A.J.Davis (2)

### Davis and “ The Other Side of Salvation”

For serious students of Spiritualist history, John B. Buescher’s “ The Other Side of Salvation - Spiritualism and the Nineteenth Century Religious Experience” (Boston, Skinner House Books, 2004) is a gold mine of material. Despite the publisher’s sub-title, it is primarily a study of Universalist and Unitarian connections with the Movement. Since Davis was involved with a number of U/U persons, Buescher in effect offers the most significant recent account of Davis. Buescher is the first historian to quote from the Davis papers now held by the Edgar Cayce Foundation at Virginia Beach.

To take but one person, Gibson Smith published the first collection of Davis lectures, which were still somewhat Christian in tone, under the title “ Lectures on Clairmativeness” in New York, 1845. Buescher gives a biographical account of Smith, at that time, a Universalist minister, and notes that Smith (like Davis) later became a clairvoyant medical diagnoser, who travelled astrally to other planets. LP

## THE EDDYS AND THE HOLMESES

*One of the most serious obstacles impeding the advance of genuine scientific Spiritualism has been the persistent “vindication” of fraudulent mediums (?) by well-meaning but uncritical Spiritualists.*

*No matter how patent and glaring the trickery, or how thorough and complete the exposure of the pretended mediums, there have been always plenty of honest, worthy people, credulous, devoid of the faculty of rational discrimination, who rush to the defence of the exposed cheats, and solemnly aver that they are true mediums, sadly abused by the ungodly exposers.*

*Despite many exposures of the wholesale trickery of the Eddys and the Holmeses, published in years ago in the various Spiritualistic journals in America, our good brother Robert Cooper (“LIGHT,” October 28<sup>th</sup>) is moved to deny the truth of the facts recently published by me anent these alleged mediums and thoroughly exposed tricksters.*

*As stated in “LIGHT,” I have full proof of every statement made in my paper at the Psychic Science Congress, and these evidences will be embodied in my forthcoming work on Theosophy. In that work will be given the overwhelming evidence of fraud by these mediums.*

*In the case of the Eddys, among those testifying whom I shall quote are these:*

*Algernon Joy, secretary British National Association of Spiritualists;*

*the editor of the “Banner of Light”;*

*the editor of “The Olive Branch,” a Spiritual journal;*

*Newman Weeks, President Vermont State Association of Spiritualists, a neighbour of the Eddys for years:*

*Horatio Eddy, one of the two mediums, who declared repeatedly that all the manifestations of his brother, William Eddy, were fraudulent;*

*Webster Eddy, who also acknowledged that the materialisations of William were fraudulent;*

*Mrs Ada S. Eddy, wife of William Eddy who discovered the frauds of her husband, and gave me full details of the whole matter*

*Mrs Eva Eddy, wife of Webster Eddy, who discovered the entire fraud while living for months in the house in which the manifestations reported by Colonel Olcott took place, and who was there during Olcott’s stay;*

*Dr Geo. M. Beard, a trained scientific expert, who plainly saw Horatio producing the phenomena himself, and published a thorough expose of the shallow trickery of both the Eddys;*

*Mrs Sophia Chase, sister of the Eddys; and others.*

*Misled by Olcott’s and Blavatsky’s sensational “yarns” about the Eddys, I and my wife strongly believed in the genuineness of the phenomena they presented. My wife, shortly after Olcott’s visit, spent a week at the Eddys homestead, investigating the phenomena. She went there without a doubt of their genuineness: but she discovered that the whole of the performance was spurious. Details of her proofs of this were*

*published by me many years ago in various American papers, and will be embodied in my book.*

*In the case of the Holmes, I give the evidence of Robert Dale Owen: Dr H.T. Child, the manager of the Holmes's séances: the confederate who personated Katie King; and others.*

*In addition, I know from personal experience that their manifestations were personal trickery. I attended their séances in Philadelphia, and saw the spirits (!) of John And Katie King, George Washington, Bishop Polk, and others. The whole performances was a very weak, transparent fraud, from first to last, and that such manifest trickery should be accepted as the work of spirits is a sad commentary upon the weakness and pitiable credulity of human nature.*

*Thus through my own experience with the Holmeses and my wife's with the Eddys, I am enabled to give positive personal evidence of the true nature of the alleged mediumship of these parties. Granting that there was a modicum of genuine phenomena attending them, which I do not believe, this would not affect the conclusions based upon the general fraudulent character of their performances.*

(A further section of this letter, not reproduced in PP, deals with Madame Blavatsky.)

*WILLIAM EMMETTE COLEMAN*

The above letter was published in Light December 9, 1893, and is primarily part of a continuing argument about Theosophy. If it could be shown that Blavatsky had endorsed fake mediums, that would help discredit her. It should not be assumed, of course, that the witnesses cited by Coleman would be content to be quoted in the terms he suggests; and his "book" never appeared. But I would draw attention to what Emma Hardinge Britten says about the Eddys in "Nineteenth Century Miracles". Normally effusive in her praise, she says nothing. Though well acquainted with Col. Olcott, whom she cites in other contexts, she ignores his sophisticated tests of the Eddys, reported in his 1875 book "People from the Other "World". Does she do this because, by the time of writing NCM, she knows more, not least the way Eddy family members had later incriminated each other? In contrast, she does have a flattering portrait of Coleman.

Few Theosophists give much thought to the Eddys. They are just part of the prehistory of Theosophy, a sub-chapter leading to the founding of the T.S. And a good part of the Spiritualist establishment- including the Religio-Philosophical Journal of Chicago, had written the Eddy family off. N. Riley Heagerty recently presented a detailed case for their genuineness in Noah's Ark Journal (which can be found on line.) But the case against was not presented. LP.

.....

### **The woman of Endor to have home page?**

After 3000(?) years, the medium consulted by the first Israelite King Saul still stirs argument. Leslie Price has re-examined the case in an article for the web site of the International Survivalist Society, which publishes evidence for and against survival. [www.survivalafterdeath.org/articles/leslieprice/saul.htm](http://www.survivalafterdeath.org/articles/leslieprice/saul.htm) . Future issues of this newsletter will carry regular updates on the continuing debate about the case.

(A.J. Davis – 3)

## **A.J. Davis and Germany**

At the end of A.J. Davis's "Event in the Life of a Seer" cited in our first issue, there is an appendix compiled by Mary Davis, second wife of the seer. Entitled "History of the Introduction of The Harmonial Philosophy into Germany" it is basically a series of letters by Gregor Constantin Wittig (a Breslau admirer of Davis); Heinrich Schlarbaum, a German resident in New York, also an admirer; Dr Philip Schulhof, a second NY admirer; Hudson Tuttle a supporter of the European Publishing Fund and (most interesting perhaps) three letters from Alexander Aksakof, the Russian who eventually financed publications in German by Davis and others, such as "The Reformer" "The Magic Staff" and "Nature's Divine Revelations.". What was the long-term fruit? Corinna Treitel writes in a new book "A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern" ( John Hopkins Press 2004 ISBN 0-8018-7812-8 )

*"As spiritualism spread across Leipzig, two factions with two different interpretations of the phenomena under investigation emerged. Enthusiasts of Davis in the 1860s and 1870s, Wittig and his circle began to embrace a novel interpretation of the phenomena in the early 1880s. Whereas Davis adhered to the so-called spiritualist interpretation, which held that spirits caused occult phenomena, Wittig and his circle now began to investigate what they called the "animist" view, which postulated an as yet undetected psychological force as the causal agent.*

*"This interpretive difference became the basis of an ideological and institutional rift by the mid-1880s. Wittig and his colleagues at Psychische Studien became the proponents of what now became known as "psychical research," which sought a psychological explanation for séance phenomena." (p.39)*

Regardless of whether we accept precisely these statements (Davis by no means attributed all phenomena to spirits, nor did psychical researchers always deny them) this does at least suggest that psychical research emerged from an occult, or even a Spiritualist, environment. LP.

.....  
**MISS CORDELIA GRYLLES** passed to the higher life on Wednesday, November 16th, at Newton Abbot, after a long and trying illness. Miss Grylls was perhaps the staunchest of all the many admirers of Stainton Moses, and will be remembered for many acts of generosity committed in his memory to the Spiritualist Movement in general and to the London Spiritualist Alliance in particular. She was the compiler, and sponsored the publication of More Spirit Teachings, that admirable supplement to Stainton Moses' major work, Spirit Teachings. Miss Grylls also published Pearls of Great Price, a handy little booklet of selected passages from Spirit Teachings. It was a great grief to her when the existing stocks of these publications were destroyed at the printers by enemy action. Fortunately, as regards More Spirit Teachings at any rate, Mr. Ernest Oaten came to the rescue and a new edition was issued under the imprint The 'Two Worlds' Publishing Co., Ltd. Miss Grylls will therefore have, as long as this book is extant, the memorial she would most have desired. (Light 26 November 1942)