

PSYPIONEER

An Electronic Newsletter from London

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Is Germany now the main centre for the study of psychic pioneers in the world? Beginning this issue, we report on some remarkable developments at the University of Freiburg. See page 31.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN, SPIRITUALISM AND EMANCIPATION

In February 1872 a "Mrs Linder" stayed in Boston for ten days, making frequent visits to the medium Margaret Fox. She believed she was in touch with her husband, Abraham Lincoln, who had been assassinated as American president in 1865.

Lincoln's political career coincided with the rise of American Spiritualism and his interest was the subject of newspaper stories at the time. They continue today - thus on 31 January 1998, *Psychic News* (the Spiritualist weekly newspaper published in England) reported "Mediumship promoted the abolition of slavery" and gave an account of Col. Kase's activities, of whom more below. In contrast, the founder editor of the newspaper Maurice Barbanell had been personally interested in the Nettie Maynard testimony, and republished her book in England.

Dr Walter Franklin Prince (1863-1934) worked with the American SPR (1917-1920) and later with the Boston SPR, becoming president of the SPR in London for 1930-1. His great strength was in the analysis of documents. Typical of his work on a small scale was a paper "The Aetiology of a "Psychical" Legend" in *JSPR* December 1930 p. 148-57. Members of the SPR today can read the paper through the Society's database. (Aetiology is the study of causes.)

Prince examined the story told by Col. Kase that a medium had inspired Lincoln to free the slaves, a story which appeared in the newspaper "Spiritual Scientist" and was also quoted by Emma Hardinge Britten in "Nineteenth Century Miracles." (1884 p.484- 7) . Prince was able to show that at the date in question, Lincoln was already well advanced in emancipation, and that Kase's knowledge of the military situation was nil. Best of all he was able to quote the testimony of the medium herself, Nettie Colburn (later Nettie Maynard) **who claimed no more than to have encouraged Lincoln in what he was already doing.**

It may be doubted however if Prince's paper had much impact. In those days the SPR Journal was a private publication, and his paper would not have been seen by the British public. Later generations of researchers rarely know of the paper. Fornell's biography of Margaret Fox does not mention it nor does Martin Ebon.

Prince's paper is also significant in that material used by the historian Emma Hardinge Britten was found to be deficient. It was noted by Slater Brown " (" The Heyday of Spiritualism" New York, Hawthorn Books, 1970 p.249-250) that in " Modern American Spiritualism" she did not always quote from other accounts with the accuracy that might be desired, but here the problem is the employment of unreliable testimony.

Prince comments:

" Nineteenth Century Miracles " was regarded as a spiritualist masterpiece; it was in print seven years before Mrs Maynard printed her book, and it is impossible that she was not familiar with the Kase story. Her account of what really happened must be regarded as a conscious and deliberate contradiction of the tale credited by the " Spiritual Scientist" and by Mrs Britten."

The student may wonder what Mrs Britten thought of Nettie Maynard. In her short lived English magazine " Unseen Universe" (1892 p.304-307) she printed an obituary which said in part:

" In her recently published work " Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?" the readers will find a most interesting autobiography of the mediumship and work of Mrs Maynard, and they will gather from its pages a correct idea of the influence brought to bear upon the Chief Magistrate of the Nation and his closest friends during the trying period of the rebellion, by such lofty souls in spirit-life as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and others, through the mediumship of Nettie Colburn." (p. 304-5)

On the wider question of Lincoln's psychic involvement, the time has surely come for the integration of data from students of Lincoln and of psychical research to give a balanced picture of the President's interest.

For further reading

Earl Wesley Fornell " The Unhappy Medium, Spiritualism and the life of Margaret Fox" (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1964) devoted a short chapter to " Lincoln and the Spirits" (p.118-123. He used biographies of Lincoln and (apparently) contemporary newspapers, alluded to Mrs Maynard, and also discussed the mediums Charles Shockle and Charles Colchester.

Martin Ebon " They Knew the Unknown" (New York, World Publishing, 1971), in his chapter " Lincoln, Mediums and Foreboding" (p.30- 45) had the assistance of Dr. R Gerald McMurty director of the Lincoln National Life Foundation, and was able to cite material from the serial " Lincoln Lore" and from the Lincoln papers in the Library of Congress. He also quoted both Mrs Maynard; and Emma Hardinge Britten." Nineteenth Century Miracles" about the medium J.B. Conkling. NCM is

currently out of print, but there were hopes that the SNU would soon republish it as part of their programme of Britten reprints. Nettie Maynard's book was reissued in London in a revised edition by Spiritualist Press (1956).

Ebon concluded (p.44)

" There were many faces to Abraham Lincoln, and it is perfectly possible that his attitude toward mediumistic claims ranged from courteous interest and open-minded fascination to taunts and clowning." LP

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Notes by the Way

If you are reading this in summer 2004, you are one of small number of people who are sharing in the birth of a Spiritualist journal, though limited in scope.

The first such newspaper in England lasted only one issue, " The Spirit World" launched by the husband of Mrs Hayden. The longest surviving psychic journal is LIGHT, founded in 1881 as a weekly, but now appearing twice a year. " Notes by the Way" was a column written by Stainton Moses in each issue of what was " The Times" of Spiritualism, and we adopt it in homage. (For details of LIGHT go to www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk)

We continue to keep a low profile, publicising the newsletter only slightly, until it becomes a more professional product. But every brick of factual information published about a pioneer helps. There is no shortage of material. We are grateful for the help given by many individuals and institutions in this attempt to keep the memory of the pioneers alive.

Psychic birds (or what?)

Under this title, New Scientist of 26 June 2004 carried an article by Gail Vines about Edward Selous, author of " Thought-Transference (or What?) in Birds " (1931). It seems that the distinguished ornithologist had read the published evidence of the SPR (" founded in 1882 by a group of Cambridge-led academics " according to the article – but see PP1) His observations of bird movements are now generally accepted as scientifically important, but his suggestion of birds moving as one through thought transference remains taboo.

Before the Fellowship (1)

(In 2003 was celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (originally the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical Study). Previous attempts to form such bodies floundered, and it is an important historical question why the others failed, and this one succeeded. To help answer it, we are beginning a regular series of reports on the prehistory of the Fellowship.)

WORK OF THE "CONFRATERNITY"

Mrs St. Clair Stobart made a long and interesting report on the work of the "Confraternity" of Clergy and Spiritualists, at a largely attended meeting held at the Grottrian Hall, London, on Monday evening. Supporting her on the platform were the Rev. A.F. Sharp and the Rev. Maurice Elliott (vice-chairman), about a dozen other Clergymen and a number of representative Spiritualists.

Mrs Stobart recalled the origin of the movement, which aimed at proving that co-operation between the Churches and Spiritualism is not only possible, but desirable.

In addition to meetings held in London (at the Fortune Theatre and Caxton Hall) meetings had been held in some forty different towns, chiefly in the south and west of England. At some of these local clergymen had presided; at one a police officer had presided. Addresses had been given by herself as representing Spiritualism, and by the Rev. Maurice Elliott (and occasionally the Rev. A. F. Sharp) as representing the Clergy.

An anonymous supporter had provided a finely fitted-up caravan, which Mrs Stobart used as a resting place during her journeys.

The Rev. Maurice Elliott said Mrs Stobart made light of her caravan experiences, but they were not altogether restful, chiefly owing to the difficulty of finding quiet parking-places. He spoke hopefully about the impression made amongst his brother clerics.

Other clergymen who spoke in support of the movement were the Rev. A. F. Sharp, Rev. R.W. Groom. and the Rev. A. H. Lee. For Spiritualists, short addresses were delivered by Mr H. Ernest Hunt, Mr Maurice Barbanell, and Mr George Lethem.

Reference was made to the fact that the late Rev. Dr. Dearmer, of Westminster Abbey, had promised to attend the meeting, and the audience stood for a moment in silence as a tribute to his memory.

As illustrating the work of Healing associated with Spiritualism (as it was with the early Christians), Mr Matthews described how, through the mediumship of Mrs Bird, he had been cured of long-standing diseases contracted during residence in India. He had been described by doctors as incurable; yet his cure was so complete that, on making application for insurance, he had been passed as "A.1." by the company's medical examiner.

(LIGHT July 9 1936)

A.J. Davis editor and bookseller

From 1860-4, Andrew Jackson Davis was editor in chief and an associate publisher of "Herald of Progress". His object was to "establish a catholic, freespoken, independent paper" as he recalled in ch. XIV of his second volume of autobiography "Beyond the Valley" (1885). The scope was wider than just Spiritualism, but to advocate also freedom, the rights of women and children, and political questions like the structure of nations and the uses of governments.

Davis refused quack medical advertisements, but eventually had to allow some medical ads. He could not afford to pay contributors, and had to rely on material of indifferent quality from friends.

"A very large proportion of our subscribers said: "You don't publish enough of the phenomena of Spiritualism." Over and over again I was informed that our paper could not succeed unless we published every week "communications from the spirits" Not knowing of authentic facts enough for every week, we did not meet this wide want."

In the background was the American Civil War of 1861-65 which it could be argued was the most disruptive event in the history of American Spiritualism. To keep the paper going Davis borrowed \$2000 from friends, which was not repaid until 1870. But in the end the venture floundered. Davis concluded that Spiritualists were not ready to sacrificially support high-toned journalism. They were too much interested in messages, even of doubtful validity.

The new paper had been assisted by the closure of the "Spiritual Telegraph", recorded in ch XIV of "Modern American Spiritualism" by Emma Hardinge. In its farewell letter of February 25 1860, it was explained that the ST had been transferred to the new "Herald of Progress" as from 3 March. So Davis had started with a nucleus of subscribers

In 1873 Davis opened at 24 East Fourth St, New York a Progressive Publishing House. "I am not inspired now to write anything" Davis explained to his concerned friends "there is no place in this vast city where our Spiritualist, Liberal and Harmonial literature can be obtained - and not wishing to be idle, I embark on this active, ordinary service." Davis then spent three years in growing financial difficulty, as the United States passed through a slump.

He was rescued from this in 1876 by a testimonial publicised in "Banner of Light", a newspaper which ironically was not high-toned. Moreover, the Banner also purchased all the book stock, which included reprints of Davis books. These events are described in ch. XVII of "Beyond the Valley". In a letter to the Testimonial Committee printed there, Davis recalled that he had inherited some money about 1865.

"With these funds I at once proceeded to purchase and gather together all the stereotype plates of my volumes then owned by some three or four different publishers. Some of these plates (in the possession of Mr Charles Partridge) I found that I could not obtain without legal efforts. The copyright to every volume was my

property. These books therefore, I carefully revised and enlarged, and then restereotyped, and thus gradually developed a uniform list. These large expenses, and the payment of debts contracted during our efforts with the Herald of Progress, and yet other enterprises in New York, entirely absorbed all the funds received...."

I should like to call attention to these words. Many old volumes by Davis sit on library shelves. Some will be from before the uniform editions created by Davis, some will be uniform, and some will be reprints from one or the other. It is hard to say which is the more authentic, and it would be worth comparing, say, his remarks on the Fox sisters, as they appear in different editions. Beware, incidentally, of title change. "Memoranda of persons, places and events" (1868) is the same book as "Events in the life of a seer" (1873).

After his adventures in editing and bookselling, Davis may have felt that a more remunerative occupation would be welcome. This could have played a part in his decision to train as a medical doctor, about which more next month.

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PSYCHICS PUT TO DEATH ON WEB SITE

Hundreds of thousands of psychics were put to death by organised ' witch-hunters' during the Christian centuries, according to the official web site of the Spiritualists National Union, www.snu.org.uk/snu.htm.

But the assertion is false. As already reported in PP1, total witchcraft trial deaths were around 60,000. Undoubtedly a few mediums or healers were among the victims, but they were not especially targeted. The Christian authorities were, as often as not, restraining influences.

Pagan scholars, who have an obvious interest today in the term "witch", now accept that pagans were not the target of the witch hunts. A watershed here was the publication of Professor Ronald Hutton's history of Wicca, " The Triumph of the Moon" in 1999. But even before, Jenny Gibbons had alerted the pagan community to the new discoveries in a 1998 paper " Recent developments in the study of the Great European witch hunt." (www.cog.org/witch_hunt.html)

Why have Spiritualists not got the same message? A major factor is the influence of Arthur Findlay's books, many still in print, which perpetuate incorrect stereotypes on this and other historical questions.

Witch persecutions are an appalling aspect to human behaviour, found in many cultures and ironically, sometimes assisted by psychics working as witch-finders. A careful examination of those cases that appear to show evidence of the paranormal would be useful. LP

(See also " The dark side of India, where a witch-doctor's word means death" The Independent, London 5 July 2004. Reports 1403 witches killed on tea plantations 1992-8)

GERMAN PIONEER RESEARCH

A new publication details growing German research into psychic pioneers. The biennial report of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene at the University of Freiburg. (2002/3) has been published on the Net in a parallel German/English edition. (www.igpp.de)

Dr Hans Bender established the institute in 1950; after his death in 1991, Johannes Mischo was elected director. He died in 2001 and Professor Dieter Vaitl is now director. The institute has five departments.

Theory and data analysis
Empirical and analytical psychophysics
Empirical cultural and social research
Historical studies, archives and library
Counseling, information and public relations.

Dr Eberhard Bauer is departmental head of Historical Studies Archives and Library. “The department is dealing with investigations into the cultural and reception history of parapsychological research and other ‘unorthodox’ fields (Historical Parapsychology’). The focus is laid upon the ‘internal’ history of spiritism, occultism and parapsychology in Germany from the 19th century until today. Of special interest is the reception of paranormal phenomena with regard to established disciplines like psychology, medicine, literary studies or history of art. Special topics are:

- 1) historical investigations into biographies of psi researchers and psychics or mediums;
- 2) the history of organizations and societies in this field;
- 3) the role of photography in the history of parapsychological research;
- 4) the relationship between occultism and fine arts;
- 5) The history of the Freiburg Institute itself. “

We hope to publish more details of this research later.

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A PREACHER RETURNS?

Gerald O’Hara, the York historian is seeking further details of the unusual mediumship of Miss F.E. Cotterill, who was the subject of a long obituary in Two Worlds September 12 1924, having been promoted on September 1. She was born on 11 September 1857.

As a young woman she had moved on from distributing tracts in the Church of England to the Salvation Army, where she became an officer. The intensification of childhood sensitivity led to psychic development and a change of theological outlook, and some friction with former colleagues in the S.A. She became a Spiritualist platform worker in 1890, and travelled the kingdom. She was ostensibly entranced by C.H. Spurgeon the preacher.

Spurgeon, the subject of recent studies by A. Dallimore and I Murray, was perhaps the most influential Christian of Victorian London. Thousands owed their conversion to his sermons.

He would be a suitable guide for an evangelical lady, except that he would not have approved of mediumship. Does anyone know of more detailed accounts of this case?

(reprinted from the former web site www.psypioneer.com)

AUSTRALIAN APPORTS

For fifty years, Australian Spiritualists enjoyed the mediumship of Charles Bailey (1870? - 1947), who had first joined a circle in 1888. There are few detailed accounts of Australian mediums, but fortunately Dr Harvey Irwin contributed a long paper “ Charles Bailey : a biographical study of the Australian apport medium “ to the SPR Journal; **54** 97-118. This is available in full to SPR members on their web site www.spr.ac.uk

Bailey’s chief claim to fame is the objects, sometimes live creatures like birds, which appeared at his seances. Sceptics believed that he imported these into the séance room beforehand. But his institutional impact was also considerable. Because of his publicity, many individual Australians were led to investigate mediumship. For years sales of the Australian newspaper “ Harbinger of Light” were sustained by such marvels. In 1902, Bailey secured the patronage of Thomas Welton Stanford, the American born businessman, whose brother founded Stanford University. It is possible that the university would have treated psychical research (and money given to promote the subject) more sympathetically if it had not been for the collection of Bailey apports sent to it, and which were not so ancient or valuable as claimed. Dr Irwin suggests that the Bailey case may also have depressed psychical research in Australia. (The Margery case perhaps had similar impact in the States.- LP)

Bailey was tested in both Australia and Europe, and sometimes emerged tarnished. But is not easy to explain how some of the apports came. Regardless of your view, Dr Irwin’s paper is essential reading for students of Australian psychic history. There is even a small part for Arthur Conan Doyle, who was led to endorse Bailey; and a final mystery- did the medium work in England under an assumed name at one stage?

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And finally

In rescuing SPR pioneer E. Dawson Rogers from obscurity in PP1, we may also note he called himself a Swedenborgian. In his autobiography “ Life and experiences “ he paid tribute to a Swedenborgian writer (Noble “Appeal”), who had helped him in his theological difficulties as a young Wesleyan. It was Isaac Pitman who had referred him to Noble’s work. This path - Wesleyan, Swedenborgian, Spiritualist, was also take by William Oxley, and doubtless by many more