

# PSYPIONEER

Founded by Leslie Price

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## Highlights of this issue:

<b>We shall fight them on the web sites? – Leslie Price.</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Spiritualism newly introduced ( book review)</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>In memoriam – Margaret Fox-Kane. – James Burns</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Margaret Fox’s Poverty.</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Woman who was a medium for fifty-two years.</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Farewell to Mr J.J. Morse and Tien</b>	<b>131</b>
<b>Australian Letters from J.J. Morse.</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>How to obtain this Newsletter by email.</b>	<b>138</b>

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## WE SHALL FIGHT THEM ON THE WEB SITES?

A shocking example of unsubstantiated assertion appeared on the BBC website  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/modern/oddties\\_modern.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/modern/oddties_modern.shtml)

(This is current as we go to press; though, as some errors on the page were pointed out to the BBC site on 9 June, we hope for changes.)

It was claimed that Winston Churchill visited Helen Duncan in prison in 1944, and that “one of his first acts when he was re-elected to power in 1951 was to repeal the Witchcraft Act.” The same BBC site revealed “A formal act of Parliament three years later officially recognised spiritualism as a religion” – what act would that be?

There is no published evidence that Churchill visited Mrs Duncan in prison, and she made no such claim herself, though such a visit is claimed on  
<http://www.helenduncan.org>

*During her time in prison, according to several witnesses including some former guards, Winston Churchill and the Queen Mother visited her.*

If such testimony existed, it would be of great interest, though the guards (female prison warders) would now be very old. It is hard to believe however that such visits could happen without Maurice Barbanell and Percy Wilson being aware of it. By the Queen Mother, presumably the then Queen, wife of the King, is meant; though she

would be sympathetic to the paranormal, for either of them to visit a convicted person in prison would be highly unlikely. **Let those who assert it produce their evidence.**

The same web site asks us:

*And is it also significant that on his return to power following the immediate post-war Labour Government the ONLY tranche of legislation he permitted to be carried over from the previous administration was the private Parliamentary Bill replacing the archaic 1735 Witchcraft Act under which Mrs Duncan was 'convicted' by the Fraudulent Mediums Act ? (<http://www.helenduncan.org>.)*

Well no, it isn't significant. The Fraudulent Mediums Act 1951, easily available on the Web is dated 22 June 1951. The general election which returned Churchill to power was 26 October 1951. Whatever his views, it was too late for him to influence it - the bill was law and the celebrations had already been held. It seems rather hard that after the Labour government gave support to a private member's bill to legalise mediumship, the credit should be transferred to a Conservative premier, but it is an example of how famous names attract apocryphal stories. Most people, even Americans, have heard of Churchill, but not of Chuter Ede, the Labour Home secretary, who facilitated the legal change.

As Jean Bassett records about 1951 in the official SNU history "One Hundred Years of National Spiritualism." (1990, p.55)

*"A victory dinner was held in the Houses of Parliament on Monday July 16<sup>th</sup> .... The first toast of the evening was to Parliament coupled with the name of the Right Honourable J. Chuter Ede, the Home Secretary."* (warning-a misplaced full stop in the book gives the impression that Clement Davies, leader of the Liberal Party, was Home Secretary. ). Ede was present.

The Duncan web site calls her *confidante of wartime premier Winston Churchill and his colleagues*. It is known that some wartime leaders were involved in Spiritualism, such as Mackenzie King, premier of Canada, but there is no published evidence that Mrs Duncan was the confidante of any of them. But the purveyor of this claim has perhaps not realised the logic of the boast. If she was the confidante of anyone in government, what is the value of the claim to *paranormal* information about such matters as the sinking of the Barham?

While we are considering Helen Duncan, it may be worth recalling a note from the previous Psypioneer web site.

### ***HELEN DUNCAN WAS FIRST.***

*"She was the first medium to be charged under the Witchcraft Act.". This was claimed of Helen Duncan by Maurice Barbanell in his book "The Case of Helen Duncan" (Psychic Press 1945) p.143.*

*Barbanell had available historical research that had been done not only for the Duncan trial but also for her appeal. He stated "This statute has very rarely been used. I have managed to trace three prosecutions in the present century - in 1904, 1935 and 1939. The last two were for fortune telling."*

*However the publicity given to the Duncan case encouraged the police to use the Witchcraft Act 1735, and a 72 year old woman was a few months later brought before the Old Bailey, and was bound over.*

*A Spiritualist meeting scheduled to be held on 8 October 1944 in Altrincham near Manchester to hear a trance address "The Science of Spiritual Healing" was declared illegal under the Act by a police superintendent in Altrincham. The meeting had to be held outside the district.. Printers also became worried about printing material about this case, and two refused to print. Other cases followed.*

*Popular writers on the paranormal sometimes describe Helen Duncan as the last medium prosecuted under the Witchcraft Act - the reverse is the truth. The Act continued to be used throughout the Labour Government of 1945-50. More evidence will be presented soon.*

*In his 1944 booklet "Rogues and Vagabonds" Barbanell had written "We do not fear the operations of the Witchcraft Act of 1735, for it is very rarely invoked" but this proved over-confident.*

The Pioneer web site gave information about later cases in another new item:

#### *1950 WITCHHUNT*

*Even in 1950, six years after the Duncan case, British police were still ready to prosecute mediums for conjuration, a contemporary journalist recorded.*

*In his book "Matters of Life and Death" (1953) Geoffrey Murray noted (p.102) the case of Charles Botham who was convicted on 20 June 1950 on three counts of false pretences. "There were also two counts of conjuration under the Witchcraft Act, but these two counts were never presented to the court and the jury were discharged from returning a verdict upon them.". (Possibly these two charges were used for some secondary purpose, connected with bail for example).*

*Unusually this case appears to have been raised in Parliament. The Home Secretary Chuter Ede is quoted as saying that Botham had persuaded a widow to place sums of money, amounting to £1000 and £500, on a chair so that the spirit of her late husband could dematerialise them and apply them to medical charities. "The notes were not dematerialised but in a very material form reached Mr Botham's wallet." Ede said.*

*Did the 1951 Act result in a rash of prosecutions of fraudulent mediums? Murray added that "a medium has been prosecuted under its provisions. The London magistrate who heard the charge declined to send the case for trial and discharged the medium after hearing the defence."*

As the Pioneer web site elsewhere noted, the history of the laws against mediumship and other unorthodox practices is quite complex, with pitfalls into which we all fall at different times. Geoffrey Murray " Matter of Life and Death, an Inquiry into Spiritualism, Faith Healing, and Psychic Research Today " (London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1953) derived from articles in 1951 in the News Chronicle, a Liberal daily newspaper (whose later passing I recall), and is valuable for giving a portrait of the psychic scene of the era - which was also the time, incidentally, when NFSH and CFPSS were formed

Murray says (p.13)

*"On June 22, 1951, the Fraudulent Mediums Act became law and a long-standing stigma was removed from the people called Spiritualists by taking them out of the legal categories of witches and vagrants. The Act, so drafted that it had none of the jargon that usually makes the will of Parliament incomprehensible to laymen, is commendably short, for it is contained on single octavo sheet, of which a copy can be bought from His Majesty's Stationery Office for twopence. But it marks, as most of those stressed who took part in the House of Commons debate that preceded its passing, the completion of the movement for religious toleration that began, in 1689, with the Toleration Act and was progressively extended by the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, the admission of Jews to Parliament in 1858, and the abolition of Church rates in 1868. From that slow movement toward religious freedom, Spiritualists were excluded primarily because of the late origin of their beliefs."*

An alternative view, which has been expressed in print, is that the 1951 Act was part of the rise of the permissive society which arose mainly in the 1960s, with various legal and social changes. But that was not how it was seen at the time.

Another claim often made is that the case of Mrs Duncan in 1944 led to the legalisation of mediumship in 1951. No such connection has been shown, and it is even possible that the case was counter-productive in official quarters. Perhaps it contributed to the lack of sympathy to Spiritualists of wartime Home Secretary Herbert Morrison.

The legalisation of mediumship in 1951 was the culmination of a long campaign, which was well established even when Conan Doyle took part in 1930. An important step in the Second World War was the creation of the SNU Freedom Fund. Again we call up an item from the defunct Psychic pioneer web site

#### *POLICE ACTION BEFORE DUNCAN CASE*

*More information about police harassment of Spiritualists during the Second World War is contained in the book by Dr G.K. Nelson " Spiritualism and Society " (1969). Speaking of 1942, the author noted;*

*" . in that year a new campaign of police prosecutions started. On 27<sup>th</sup> September two police officers, disguised as sick soldiers in hospital blue, attended a séance conducted by Austin Hatcher and Emily Little. As a result Hatcher and Little were charged with 'pretending to hold communication with the spirits of deceased persons*

*and deceive the public'. They appeared at Cardiff Magistrates Court and Hatcher was sentenced to three months' and Emily Little to one month's imprisonment; their appeal against convictions was dismissed by Cardiff Quarter Sessions. "*

*In another case Mrs A Townsend of South Harrow escaped with a £2 fine for fortune telling. Such events led the Spiritualists National Union to set up a freedom fund. Soon, Florence Camper of Southend was fined for claiming to tell fortunes and Rhoda Wardle a healer claiming to be a minister of religion, was fined £5 for failing to comply with directions as to employment.*

*Assessing what really happened in such cases would be difficult without much more detail. In some cases police may have acted after complaints from the public. Some of those convicted may have been fraudulent. But it all added to a general feeling of religious insecurity. On 6 January 1941, President Roosevelt had defined the Four Freedoms, one of which was freedom of worship. Similar declarations were made as the war progressed, even in former Axis territories, and Spiritualists felt that they should be included in such freedom.*

It should be noted that Helen Duncan was not regarded by the Spiritualist Movement of her time as an unmixed blessing. LIGHT in 1944 was ambivalent about the conviction, and the LSA was I believe consulted by the police. Although £3000 (an enormous sum in those days) was diverted from the SNU Freedom Fund to help in her defence, she refused to allow the SNU to manage her sittings after her release from prison. The SNU subsequently withdrew her certificate as a physical medium. Barbanell himself was at times exasperated by what he regarded as her reckless behaviour. The prosecution in 1944 undoubtedly hoped that quoting the large weekly income of the medium they would prejudice the jury against her.

A few words about the ship HMS Barham with whose sinking the Helen Duncan case is involved. The BBC History web site confidently declares "*In 1943 the spirit of a sailor appeared, announcing that he had just gone down on a vessel called the Barham.*" The site <http://www.helenduncan.org> . puts it more forcefully,

*When she materialized the full form of a sailor with the name **H.M.S. BARHAM** on his cap, a ship, which the English government denied had been sunk; she was arrested and jailed as a spy and then a witch.*

Let's take dates first. The Barham was sunk on 25 November 1941, not 1943.. Mrs Duncan was arrested in January 1944, though of course she had been investigated by the authorities for much longer. In his book "Spiritualism a critical survey" (1966) Simeon Edmunds claimed

*In fact the sitter concerned was the widow, not the mother, of a petty officer who was lost in Barham, and Mrs Duncan did not give the name of the ship, but extracted it from the sitter.*

He adds:

*The story of the ship's name on the capband also seems dubious when it is remembered that during the war, for security reasons, naval capbands bore only the letters HMS.*

Alan Jeffreys of the Department of Exhibits and Firearms of the Imperial War Museum puts the latter point even more precisely in an e mail response of 20 June 2006 to a query.

*As you correctly mention sailors' cap tallies did not have the ship's name on during the Second World War. They just had HMS on.*

It looks like the Barham story has been exaggerated. Moreover, for security reasons a public announcement of the sinking of a ship in wartime might be delayed, but that does not mean it was not known in the locality, not least from the survivors.

Finally let us return to Mrs Duncan in Holloway. In his biography of her “Hellish Nell” (2001) Dr Malcolm Gaskill presents a good deal of evidence about the legal climate before and after the 1944 trial. Despite its sometimes hostile tone, the book is essential reading for psychic historians. He sardonically observes:

*“The story that Churchill was a regular séance-goer who visited Helen Duncan in Holloway, had a private sitting in her cell and promised to make it up to her, was an inevitable fantasy. Needless to say, suggestions that her other sitters included Mackenzie King, General De Gaulle, the Queen Mother and Chief Sitting Bull should be treated with caution, although ironically the fact that Sitting Bull died in 1890 made him the most likely candidate if any one of these ever did pay her a visit.” (p.299).*

As Dr Gaskill is director of studies in history at Churchill College, Cambridge, where the Churchill Archives are housed, all of these parties – and we ourselves- would be interested to learn more of Churchill’s alleged contacts with Mrs Duncan. We might otherwise be tempted to suspect that someone has been indulging in what Churchill himself called terminological inexactitudes.

Fantastic misinformation about Helen Duncan is widespread across the Internet. Capbands with HMS Barham on them are mentioned on a number of sites devoted to the paranormal and to social history in general. Wikipedia claims that Mrs Duncan’s 1944 trial “almost certainly contributed to Churchill's decision to eliminate the Witchcraft Act in 1951.” when as recalled above, he was not even in power; and perhaps inevitably she is said by Wikipedia to be the last person convicted under the Witchcraft Act, when as noted above, her conviction actually caused the police to bring the Act back into regular use. Other sites speak of a mysterious Act three years after 1951 which is supposed to have recognised Spiritualism.

None of this bodyguard of lies is helpful to any reputable cause. LP.

## **SPIRITUALISM NEWLY INTRODUCED**

There is a shortage of recent introductions to Spiritualism, apart from Lyn de Swarte's useful "Principles of Spiritualism" (1999). Roy Stemman's instant classic "Spirit Communication" (2005) which we welcomed in our June 2005 issue, does not cover organisational Spiritualism. So there is a gap in the market.

A new book "An Introduction to Spiritualism" by S. Jeffery and D. Underdown has appeared from Amherst Publishing in Sevenoaks Kent (£9.99 ISBN 1 903637 40 6- e mail [psy-aid@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:psy-aid@hotmail.co.uk)) It takes an unusual approach. The authors, who do not disclose in the book their full names or where they are (Folkestone) , call their philosophy ETVOSISM (etvos = enlightenment: the voice of spirit). They cover much of the usual ground in such matters as survival and mediumship.

But they too have little to say about organisations, and even mis-spell the SNU name when they twice mention it. (In this they are however in good company because the official history of the SNU calls it throughout "Spiritualist National Union", though using the correct "Spiritualists National Union" "on the title page. )

There is a good deal of argument with Christianity, including 20 biblical quotations between p33-46. This is a bit risky - it is not without reason that many Spiritualist churches ban Bibles from their rostrums.

But it is with the treatment of the pioneers that our readers will be concerned. There is a substantial historical section (p.48-89) but many pioneers, such as A.J. Davis and Stainton Moses do not feature, and others like the great biblical translator William Tyndale (p.74) had no sympathy with the paranormal. (He condemned the Holy Maid of Kent.)

The authors seem to have written their book mainly from web sites. Readers of this newsletter will need no reminder that some of the information which appears on sites and in books about pioneers is unreliable. (See the note in this issue of Pyspioneer about Churchill, who features in this book.)

Another focus of myth is the secret Anglican report on Spiritualism. (Newsletter January 2005). The authors claim it was leaked to the media in 1979 (p.116). Actually its majority conclusions were leaked in 1947; in 1979 there was even an official press release from the Church Information Office to mark formal publication of the full text, including the minority report, in "The Christian Parapsychologist." March 1979.

A strange paragraph appears on p.25

*“An unpublicised, little known fact, is that following the repeal of the Witchcraft Act and the subsequent introduction of Fraudulent Mediums Act in 1951, Spiritualism gained recognition from the Government in 1954. As such Spiritualism became one of the only two officially recognised religions in the UK. Incidentally, the other recognised religion is the Church of England.....”*

What is meant here is not explained. There are at least two legally established religions in the UK- the Church of Scotland is one. Several other churches feature in legislation (e.g. the various Methodist Church Acts.). Christian and Jewish communities are members of the Churches Main Committee which negotiates with the government on church related matters like the application of Value Added Tax. The Department of Communities and Local Government based in London which seeks to influence religion in the interests of government policy has a substantial database of religious bodies, which may well include Spiritualist ones. “Legal recognition 1954” is again a heading on p.89, but the mystery remains.

Finally two further signs of modernity in the book, apart from the use of web sites. Arthur Findlay is scarcely mentioned - the authors do not, like some, recycle what Findlay wrote in the 1930s. They state correctly that Maurice Barbanell founded Psychic News (see Pspioneer January 2005) and are not among those who follow the SNU in claiming that Arthur Findlay founded it. (No such claim was made by Findlay himself of course.) .

The authors also draw attention to the Human Rights Act 1998, which extended the freedom given to Spiritualism (for example in broadcasting.). LP. .

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## IN MEMORIAM

### **MARGARET FOX-KANE.**

#### THE LAST OF THE CELEBRATED "FOX GIRLS."

*Reception address by J. Burns, at the Spiritual Institution, 15, Southampton Row,  
London, April 24, 1893.*

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In the Anniversary Address which appeared in the MEDIUM, April 7, allusion was made to the fact that Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane had died, - a word indicating, in the shortest and most expressive way, that her spiritual part had left the body. I have ever since been desirous of giving a Memorial Address on this eminent medium, and beautiful but unfortunate woman. Time passes on, and I embrace the present opportunity.

Before us stands a crayon portrait of her, taken when she was in her prime. It is the work of the late Mr. Hedley, an old artist and enthusiastic Spiritualist of Halifax, whose acquaintance I made nearly thirty years ago.

Margaret Fox was somewhat clandestinely married to Dr. Kane, the famous Arctic explorer. After his death his family repudiated the marriage, and in self-defence Mrs. Fox-Kane published a volume of correspondence between her and Dr. Kane: the title of the volume was "The Love Life of Dr. Kane." In that volume appeared a finely engraved portrait of Margaret Fox, then in all her beauty. It was from this source that my old friend Mr. Hedley derived copy from which the drawing before us was executed. All can see that it is the portrait of a very graceful young woman.

Dr. Kane, it would appear, had a very sincere and honourable attachment to the pretty young woman. He felt a genuine concern for her welfare. He begged of her to give up those sittings, which so seriously imperilled her moral welfare, go to school and receive education, and be prepared to take her place by his side as his well-beloved wife. His untimely end frustrated her efforts in that direction. We know what her end was!

No doubt Dr. Kane's excellent advice and motives were stoutly opposed by the so-called Spiritualists of those days. The pretty Maggie, with her wonderful manifestations, was too pleasing a toy for them to relinquish. They wrung the life-force, the psychoplasm, from her by sittings, some dozing her and her sister with alcoholics, till all moral sense and self-control were eradicated. What a damnable crime! Her blood cries from the ground for vengeance. What permanent solidity, dignity, or good can our movement effect while it systematically participates in sins so dark and murderous as our "Fox girls" fell victims to; and their sad career is almost universally repeated in the case of those who follow the same course to the bitter end.

Dr. Kane proved himself a more enlightened and generous Spiritualist than the so-called Spiritualists who, no doubt, thought themselves justified in denouncing his tender, wise, and loving care for the young woman of his choice.

These historical women have always occupied a warm place in the heart of the Spiritualist. They were welcomed to London with ardent expectations. I remember going with the good James Wason, of Liverpool, to have my first interview with Miss Kate Fox, at Paddington. It was an interesting sight to see the sisters together on the platform at Langham Hall, at a spring meeting convened by Mr. Enmore Jones. The raps were loud and abundant. The mediumistic power seemed to attend them very generally.

Strange and imaginative stories were got up at an early period to explain away their mediumship. It was said that their knee-joints and their toe-joints cracked, and thus the rapping sounds, attributed to spirits, were produced. No one could hear these "rappings" without being at once convinced that the "joint" theory was absurd. Yet it still finds great acceptance amongst "scientific" people, such as young doctors and their ignorant adherents. A thing has only to be monstrously untrue, and unsupported by evidence of any kind, to be very warmly believed by a certain class of people. The truth, most abundantly testified to, is to them quite unbelievable. Are these people sane? Is there not something exceedingly wrong in their mental constitution?

I remember once meeting Mrs. Kane at Mrs Nokes's, Kensington. I sat near to the piano, which stood in the corner of the room, Mrs. Kane and Mrs. Nokes sat much farther from it. Loud sounds were heard inside of the piano, which could not be mistaken for the cracking of joints, and Mrs. Kane had no means of making these sounds; she sat quite motionless. Then she took a piece of paper, and with her left hand wrote rapidly from right to left of the paper, so that it had to be reversed in a looking-glass before it could be read. These messages were recognised as Indicative of spirits they purport to come from.

Mrs. Kane, it has been made to appear, had intercourse with the Romanists, who prevailed on her to state that her mediumship was false, and that Spiritualism had been her ruin. No denial or repudiation on her part could undo the facts of her mediumship, as the records thereof were the work of independent observers. She might just as well have tried to make people believe that she was a negro or an Indian; people could see for themselves that she was not; they could also see that her manifestations were not produced by her will, or trick of any sort.

Her sad condition near the end was described in the MEDIUM of April 7 (1). We see in such a career matter which must give us pause, if we have the head and the heart of humanity appertaining to us. Here we have a wonderful two-fold spiritual spectacle: we have a woman giving spiritual manifestations to others, while within herself she is spiritually lost and misdirected. All moral sense, and control of mind and desire were gone.

The case illustrates the two phases of Spiritualism: the outer and the inner; man has an outer body of function, and an inner mind of truth-thought, and moral sense. In these physical mediums, the organic fluids, used for external function, are employed by spirits to produce phenomena. This is done to such a great extent that the lamp

which gives the light of truth and spiritual direction in the soul is drained of its oil, and mental disintegration and moral degradation inevitably follow. These outside mediumistic influences tend to break down or scatter a man or woman, but the interior spiritual influences pull a man together, centre him in the divine interior; he feels himself, can take his part as a man, and the spirit world works through his interior, building him up, rather than robbing him of his exterior powers and breaking him down.

This is a problem I have studied very seriously for thirty years. For a short time I thought that mankind could be enlightened by the unlimited exhibition of mediumistic manifestations. I soon got corrected on that point. I found that few people were disposed to accept the phenomena as spiritual, however much they saw of them. There were others who recognised them as spiritual, but at once sought how to turn them to improper and selfish uses. Others looked on them as an irresistible show, or had a weakness to have their spirit friends always materialising to them. I found few who could enter upon the subject from a pure and disinterested love of truth, and a desire to understand those laws by which the spiritual gravitates into material form. Later I found that mediums suffer most seriously from excess of sitting, and with people who make an improper use of the opportunity, as detailed above.

I have therefore felt it to be my duty to enlighten public opinion on these points, and for doing so I have been very grossly attacked by the parties in whose interests I more particularly laboured in this special direction.

Some people seem to have no idea that there is a moral law attending on the use of mediumship; they have the idea that it is "spiritual," therefore it must be good, and they cannot have too much of it. But it is the proper use of anything that constitutes its goodness or its evil. We have seen that the phenomena are related to the physical or sensuous plane of life; and over-indulgence in the exercise of mediumship is just as inimical to human welfare as any other form of inordinate sensuality.

Therefore I have long contended that the instruction and interior development of the mind should precede phenomenal experiences. These interior and exterior processes would harmonise better if all mediums worked only occasionally in private, and with no other end in view than the elicitation of truth. But when the medium makes a trade of it, and puffs the thing up as a commodity for sale, then farewell to all that might elevate or instruct in the subject. One man's money is reckoned as good as another's, and each Shylock sinner demands his pound of materialised flesh for the sum he has paid. Under such circumstances, and with drunkenness, sensuality and moral abasement of all kinds added, is it any wonder that this kind of thing has covered the cause with scandals, left a track of festering corpses along the course of these forty-five years, and helped to people the spirit world with darkened, unredeemed, and unhappy souls! Is this what those, who trade on puffing this sort of thing, call a "new dispensation?" If so, who dispensed it? Where did it come from?

Thus the grandest gift of heaven may be frustrated in its intention by man's misconduct. Spiritualism is just what we make it; mediums are just what we make of them. They being negative are emphatically "creatures of circumstances." Many of our fellow-men are "mediums" though they know it not. Our duty to them is

illustrated in the care we should bestow on mediums, to protect them from evil conditions, and use them aright.

And so, having used up all the celebrated Fox girls, let us turn over a new leaf, and build up a Spiritualism in which such destruction and shame shall find no place. How shall we do it?

First, let us sign that pledge I have spoken of: Not to use mediums in improper conditions or for improper purposes; not to trade in their powers, but sustain and protect them generously when necessary; not to have anything to do with individuals or societies who disregard this pledge.

These principles, spoken openly before the spirit-world and the Spiritualists alike, - how will they be received? How many will rush forward to sign that pledge? Who will rally round a spiritual standard thus emblazoned? Ah! few indeed. The fact is, the general state of society is so unspiritual that they do not see the enormity of their conduct; and many are so callous that even if they knew such a course to be evil, few would be able to deny themselves for the sake of principle, though souls should be degraded as the price of their indulgence! It is impossible that a clear-head and honest souled community can be thus reared on the husks of misapplied phenomena.

Possibly the statement will be made that I am "an enemy of mediums." Could any statement be more false? Look at my pledge, and see if I am not a true friend of mediums. They have scarcely any friends, even amongst Spiritualists, who seem to think that the poor medium has no rights which they are bound to respect, if they want a little fun with some Indian or negro spirit.

As I stand here face to face with the soul of Margaret Fox, my indignation, and regret, and regards, and prayers so strive to find expression in the poor apparel of words, that my feelings are unspeakable. What would any man with a human heart have wished to say, had she been *his* Maggie? Thus should all true men treat every woman.

I cast no reproach at her: she was the victim of an evil system of abusing mediums. She has suffered much: let us hope there is compensation for her and for us all. None of us have clean garments. Her life has not been in vain. Her mediumship has been of unspeakable advantage, but not anything like what it would have been had it been properly used and protected. We have seen that the reversion of abuse was arrived at when she boldly repudiated the truth, and blamed her mission for being the cause of her ruin. So it is in all forms of vicious excess. So it is even to-day in the terrible lengths to which other forms of mediumship are being carried in the fortune-telling direction. An awful revulsion is hanging over the movement, compared to which the disasters wrought by the Fox girls will be but a speck. This I have felt for a long time, and, in duty bound, have dared to speak of it, but the trafficking committee, the mercenary medium, the medium-hunting sensationalist are deaf and blind as they were while destroying our beautiful and gifted sister Margaret Fox.

When the day of retribution comes, who shall bear the stripes for the wrong so ruthlessly inflicted?

Let us have a true Spiritualism, and honest representatives, who will dare to speak the truth, but, if they know it not, keep silent. The abuses that exist in Spiritualism must be laid largely at the door of speakers and committees, who trade upon one side of the subject, and dishonestly withhold the other side of the picture to protect their personal interests.

**[This was published in The Medium and Daybreak. Vol. XXIV No. 1204. April 28<sup>th</sup> 1893. Page 257. A weekly Journal Devoted to the History, Phenomena, Philosophy, and Teachings of Spiritualism. Established: As a Monthly-June 1868; as a Weekly-April 8, 1870. The cost in 1893 was one and half pence.]**

(1) Below is the referenced article printed on the April 7<sup>th</sup>, also taken from the above journal page 212.

## **MARGARET FOX'S POVERTY**

### **DESTITUTION OF A ONCE FAMOUS AND BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.**

The tenement house of No. 456, West 57th Street, New York, is deserted now, except one room, from cellar to roof. That room is occupied by a woman nearly sixty years old, an object of charity, a mental and physical wreck, whose appetite is only for intoxicating liquors. The face, though marked by age and dissipation, shows unmistakably that the woman was once beautiful.

This wreck of womankind has been a guest in palaces and courts. The powers of mind, now almost imbecile, were the wonder and study of scientific men in America, Europe and Australia. Her name was eulogised, sung, and ridiculed in a dozen languages. The lips that utter little else now than profanity once promulgated the doctrines of a new religion, which still numbers the tens of thousands of enthusiastic believers.

Yesterday afternoon there was a meeting of the First Society of Spiritualists of New York. One man arose and stated in the course of the exercises that this woman was about to be turned out of her lodgings. The landlord had ordered the house vacated preparatory to leasing it exclusively to negroes. That something must be done before Tuesday, on which day the room would be ready for its new tenants.

"I thought the best thing we could do, "continued the speaker" was to have her committed to some hospital-----."

"Never," interrupted a richly dressed young woman in the audience, "not while I have a dollar left that I can call my own."

A storm of applause greeted these remarks.

A dozen men and women, all speaking excitedly at once, re-echoed the sentiment.

Somebody suggested a collection, not the first for that purpose, and everybody there contributed willingly and generously.

Mrs. Emily B. Ruggles, of 492, State Street, Brooklyn, said: "I shall carry her to my own home. There she will be cared for and want for nothing. She must not be removed to a hospital."

The object of all this discussion, the invalid in the 57th Street tenement house, is Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane, widow of Dr. Elisha Kent Kane, the Arctic explorer, last of the three Fox sisters, who founded modern "Spiritualism."

Communications from the spirit world were alleged to be transmitted by rappings, and seances given in New York before the war, were attended by the most prominent men of learning in the country. The fame of the sisters spread. They found devoted believers in all the large cities of the United States, and later in Europe. Their seances were attended by nobility. Books, almost without number, were written about them. Societies were organised, disciples and imitators came forward everywhere. The eldest sister died in November, 1890. The second died in June, 1892. All had married.

Explorer Kane and Margaret Fox, her friends say, were married in the Quaker faith a few months before his death in 1857. The marriage after Kane's death was denied by his brothers. They finally offered her an interest in his estate upon the condition that she would stop giving seances. She continued her exhibitions as a medium, and the conditional payments were stopped.

In September, 1888, Mrs. Fox-Kane published an exposure of Spiritualism, explaining that the rappings were produced by dislocating the big toe on one foot. She had practised this, as had her sisters, until an audible noise, like a tapping upon a slate, could be produced at will. The alleged communications with the spirit world she acknowledged were fraudulent. The exposure created a great sensation, and subsequently she retracted it. Since then she has lived in comparative obscurity. Mrs. Fox-Kane will be removed to-day if she is well enough to be carried to the home of Mrs. Ruggles, in Brooklyn.

*Washington Daily Star, March 7.*

**[Margaret (Maggie) Fox-Kane died peacefully under Emily Ruggles' care at 4.30am March 8<sup>th</sup> 1893. ED Pspioneer]**

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# WOMAN WHO WAS A MEDIUM FOR FIFTY-TWO YEARS

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## HAD TO BE PROTECTED FROM CROWDS

By A. W. Austen

*(Note by Psypioneer. The interview that follows was published in Psychic News on 23 July 1932. The reporter, A.W. Austen was to be editor of the newspaper after the war, and at the time of the famous 1947 leak of the majority conclusions of the secret Anglican report. Mr and Mrs Wallis are excellent examples of the pioneer workers, now almost totally forgotten, who were making history a century ago. )*

**( The Liverpool story that follows from the same PN page has no connection – it is included as a typical example of PN’s assiduous use of press cuttings to make propaganda points, and to call up Father Knapp, who often appeared in the psychic papers of the era, but is now also forgotten. )**

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"Mrs. Wallis of Everywhere" was the appropriate name by which Mrs. M. H. Wallis was frequently known during her fifty years of practising mediumship. She was known all over Great Britain and in America.

She is one of the oldest mediums, if not the oldest, in England - she is in her seventy-eighth year - and, though she has ceased to practise her mediumship, she still receives messages from her spirit guides. Veina Goree, a young Spanish-Indian girl who first controlled, often comes to her now, announcing her presence by suggesting a few words of her own language in Mrs. Wallis's mind.

**This medium has never been in deep trance and was always conscious of what was being said through her. She could hear the words, but could not prevent herself from saying them.**

Her mediumship started when she was eighteen years old and - unlike many psychics - she had had no previous intimation of her powers. She was not, knowingly, visited by spirits when she was a child and she had no early visions.

### **SPIRIT GIRL LEARNS ENGLISH**

She was a native of London, being born at Stoke Newington, and when she was seventeen, she and her mother went to live with some Spiritualists. They sat at an experimental circle and at the second sitting Mrs. Wallis, who was then just eighteen, was made aware of some invisible force, but she did not understand it.

At a subsequent sitting a medium named Robert Cogman was present and his control brought to Mrs. Wallis the girl Veina Goree. She could not speak English, but

spoke in a mixture of French, Italian, Spanish and Indian. Eventually, she learned English and then she said that she was a descendant of Spanish-Indians and was born near Cuba. She passed over when she was quite young.

On one occasion Veina conversed in her own tongue with a sitter who had met some later descendants of the same race. She became very indignant when the sitter suggested that her people were not highly-developed.

## **A NEW CONTROL**

Mrs. Wallis's gifts were gradually developed and she was given the choice by her guides of being trained by them for private work or for public speaking. She chose speaking and was trained accordingly.

She started to give five-minute addresses under control and in 1875 she went to the Spiritual Institution in Southampton Row, where she met E. W. Wallis, whom she later married.

While she was speaking at the Spiritual Institution she was suddenly controlled by an entity giving his name as Morambo, who was very antagonistic. He wanted Mrs. Wallis to discontinue her work there, as he thought it might interfere with the physical phenomena with which he was associated.

He was persuaded by James Burns, the editor of "The Medium and Daybreak," that Mrs. Wallis's work would not affect his and he became much more reasonable, later taking control of Mrs. Wallis for the purpose of answering questions on Spiritualism. He continued this work throughout her public life, which included twenty-one years with the London Spiritualist Alliance; he never gave addresses or helped her with her clairvoyance.

Morambo was a negro slave who had been transported to South America. He passed over when still in South America.

Mr. and Mrs. Wallis were married in 1876 and they then took over the work of Robert Cogman, the medium through whose presence Mrs. Wallis was first controlled by Veina. They took over his house and carried on the East End Spiritual Institution, which he had started.

They both practised their mediumship and they often occupied the same platforms together.

**They travelled all over the country, often taking their children with them, and more than once the babies were carried across the room and back by materialized spirits.**

E. W. Wallis was a fine healer and trance speaker and also had good powers of psychometry and occasional clairvoyance, his controls being Standard Bearer, Leader, Lightheart and Tom Joyce.

## A NINE-MONTHS TOUR

Many people were interested in Spiritualism in those days, but apart from Spiritualists, there was little enthusiasm. Later, when Mrs. Wallis and her husband were working in Yorkshire and Lancashire, there was increased enthusiasm on the one hand and decided antagonism on the other. Sometimes they were called after in the street and occasionally they had to be protected on their way to and from meetings, though they were never actually attacked.

Mrs. Wallis was at one -time the ministering medium of a Nottingham church and while her husband was engaged on a nine-months' tour in America she was asked to conduct the services at a Liverpool church. It was while there that she realized her voice was weak and she prayed for additional power. The result was surprising and Mrs. Wallis attributed it to Morambo and other spirit-workers who were associated with her. After her inspirational addresses, Mrs. Wallis used to give clairvoyance with the help of Veina.

After working in Walsall and Glasgow as resident speakers, Mr. and Mrs. Wallis went in 1886 to Manchester, where they were largely instrumental in the publishing of the "Two Worlds." Mr. Wallis was at first associate-editor and he assumed full editorship in 1892, a position he held until he came to London in 1899 to work with another Spiritualist paper, "Light."

They were pioneers in connection with the formation of the Spiritualists' Union, then known as the National Spiritualists' Federation, and Mr. Wallis was at one time the president. Mrs. Wallis and others founded the Order of Progressive Spiritualists' Sick Benefit and Pension Fund and four years later, in 1898, this fund was handed over to the S.N.U. and became the Fund of Benevolence.

## POEMS FROM SPIRIT-LAND

Mrs. Wallis and her husband went on a speaking tour in America in 1898. The tour lasted about five months, and after they had visited one of the Spiritualist camps together they set out on separate journeys, speaking at different towns on the same route.

They carried on their work in London together until Mr. Wallis passed over in 1914 and Mrs. Wallis then continued until 1924, when she completed fifty years of public work and fifty-two years of mediumship. She now lives very quietly at Finchley with her youngest son and his family.

**Even after she retired from public work however, her friends in the spirit work would not let her rest entirely. For a period of about nine months she was continuously, given poems by inspiration These were published under the title, "As They Came Thro'."**

Mrs. Wallis collaborated with her husband in writing several Spiritualist books, the best known being "Guide to Mediumship" and "Spiritualism ' in the Bible."

## **NEWS FROM THE OTHER WORLD**

The clairvoyance given by Mrs. Wallis was usually suggested to her by Veina, but occasionally she had visions and on one occasion for a few fleeting moments she was clairaudient, though the gift was not continued.

When seeing clairvoyantly, sometimes she saw from the side of her head and if she turned her head round, to see better, the vision would disappear.

She frequently received messages and advice by an inner voice suggesting things to her. She knew the exact hour at which her mother-in-law passed and she frequently had instructions when her children were ill. Evidences of spirit return were given through her almost daily.

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## **CHRISTIANITY, 1932**

Father Knapp, the conjurer who happens to be a priest, finds a mention now in the "Liverpool Evening Express." "I note that the Countess Cadogan, Lady Howard of Penrith, and Lady Lovat," says their gossip writer, "have been relying on Father Knapp to give some of his Spiritualistic seances where guests see ghosts." They give it the heading, "Society Spook Shows," and also say, "Society folk get tired of humdrum recreations, and, especially in the summer, look out for something more entertaining."

It is hard lines on Father Knapp that he is treated like this in a newspaper which circulates in a Catholic area.

A few days later the new Liverpool Cathedral, the Anglican one, was attacked by an angry crowd of several hundred Catholics, who throws volleys of stones, and broke four valuable stained glass windows.

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## **CONVERSAZIONE OF THE LONDON SPIRITUALIST ALLIANCE.**

FAREWELL TO MR. J. J. MORSE AND 'TIEN.'

A Conversazione of the London Spiritualist Alliance, being the last gathering of the Members and Associates for the session of 1901-2, was held on Thursday evening, 29th ult., in the Banqueting Room, St. James's Hall, the meeting being made the occasion for bidding a public farewell to Mr. J. J. Morse, and 'Tien Sien Tie,' the control with whom his mediumship has so long been associated. There was a very large and representative assembly.

Mr. E. DAWSON ROGERS the President, in opening the more formal portion of the proceedings, said the occasion was one on which he could not do otherwise than express his deep regret that it was necessary to say farewell for a season to their friend, Mr. Morse. He thought the best compliment that had been paid to British Spiritualism lay in the fact that their brethren on the other side of the world were anxious to secure the services of a medium from the old country. If British Spiritualism possessed none but men of moderate talent and mediocre mediumship it would not have been favoured by such an invitation.

Continuing, the President said: I have been acquainted with Mr. Morse for a good many years - sometimes it occurs to me it is more years than I like to think about. I have known him thirty-three years - a very large portion of a man's lifetime - and I should like to allude to what Mr. Morse was when I first know him, and what he is now. I was one of two or three persons, including Dr. Peebles, who were invited to meet Mr. Morse and his control one evening in order to form a judgment on the question whether there was any difference between the two - that is, between Mr. Morse and his supposed control. Some people, even now, affect to believe that Mr. Morse and 'Tien' are very much the same people. If they had known Mr. Morse thirty-three years ago they would not have thought so. Mr. Morse at that time - I ask his pardon for the remark - was an untutored young man, all uncultured young man, always gentle and respectable, but still without the advantages of education. When I talked with Mr. Morse then, that was the estimate I formed of him; and other people who met him formed a similar estimate. On that particular evening he was under control, and we put questions of an abstruse character, deep metaphysical questions, and they were answered in a way absolutely beyond Mr. Morse's normal capacity. Since then we have witnessed the fact that Mr. Morse has become very like 'Tien,' or 'Tien' very like Mr. Morse. The truth is that Mr. Morse, like a wise man, knowing his need of training, devoted himself to self-culture, and if our mediums generally would do that and endeavour to rise in the intellectual and educational scale, they would do much more credit to our movement. (Hear, hear.) Mr. Morse fortunately did that, and now it is a fact, as many who meet him know, that Mr. Morse and 'Tien' are very much alike. And now, as I have said, he is about to leave us, and will be away perhaps

for two or three years, taking his wife and daughter with him. You may have all opportunity of knowing something of his movements while he is away from an excellent, well conducted paper published in Melbourne, which you, can obtain without difficulty. I remember with gratitude that Mr. Stead once spoke of 'LIGHT' as 'the best, far and away the best,' of any of the psychical papers published in the English language. I suspect that when he said that he did not know much of 'the Harbinger of Light,' because it would be dishonest on my part not to admit that, while I naturally think Mr. Stead's appreciation was right upon the whole, the 'Harbinger of Light' runs 'LIGHT' very closely. It is an extremely well-conducted paper, and will give us from time to time a report of Mr. Morse's doings. In addition to that I may tell you that the proprietors of 'LIGHT' have made arrangements with Mr. Morse for a special monthly letter during his absence,, and you will thus have an opportunity of learning from time to time what he is doing. (Applause.)

And now as to Mr. Morse as a member of society, as a member of *our* society, as one of the Council of the London Spiritualist Alliance. I may say at once that, through he and I have been acquainted for over thirty years and have often been brought into close relationship, we have never had a quarrel or a dispute of any kind, or even a cross word. (Applause.) You know that there are people whose unhappy faculty it is to get very angry if you do not agree with them in every minute particular. If you do not see exactly as they do on every possible question, they indulge the unhappy delusion that it is meant as a reflection upon their character or their intellectual capacities-a reflection which they can never forgive. Mr. Morse, on the other hand, will not quarrel with anybody. He has brought peace, and harmony, and goodwill, and gentleness wherever he has gone. That is Mr. Morse as I know him, and as others know him. Now, we have recognised these admirable qualities in Mr. Morse, and regretting, as we do, his departure to the other side of the world, the Council of the Alliance have prepared a short address to him, beautifully inscribed on vellum, testifying to their appreciation of him and their wishes for his future welfare.

The President then called upon Mr. E. W. Wallis, the secretary of the Alliance, to read the address, which is as follows: -

'London Spiritualist Alliance, Limited,  
'110, St. Martin's-lane, Charing Cross, London, W.C.  
'May 29th, 1902.

'To Mr. J. J. Morse.

'DEAR FRIEND,-The Council of the London Spiritualist Alliance, Limited, of which you are an honoured Member, desire to offer you their sincere congratulations on your engagement by the Victorian Association of Spiritualists of Melbourne, to lecture upon Spiritualism in Australia and New Zealand under the influence and inspiration of your wise and eloquent spirit friend 'Tien,' whose name and abilities are known in all parts of the world.

'The Council wish to express their cordial appreciation of the splendid services that you have rendered to the cause of Spiritualism, to which you have devoted your energies for upwards of thirty years. They know your work and worth, and realise that by your fidelity, ardour, and manly example - and by your untiring services to the children's cause through the Progressive Lyceum Union and your own paper, the

'Lyceum Banner' - you have laid the whole movement under a deep debt of gratitude; while in your private, life, by your urbanity, tact, and kindness you have endeared yourself to all who have had the privilege of your friendship.

'The Council confidently believe that during your absence you will well and worthily represent the Spiritualists of the Mother Land, and they therefore heartily and unreservedly commend you to their brethren in Australia and New Zealand, trusting that your labours in their midst will prove as helpful, and as fruitful in good results, as they have been in past years in Great Britain and America. They wish you and your family a pleasant, prosperous, and happy voyage. May God and the angels speed you, bless your labours, and send you and your loved ones safely home once more !

'Signed and sealed on behalf of the Council of the  
London Spiritualist Alliance,  
'E. DAWSON ROGERS, President.  
'E. W. WALLIS, Secretary.'

This report is taken from 'LIGHT' Volume. XXII. June 7<sup>th</sup> 1902, page 271-72.

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*[James Johnson Morse's, actual stay on his Australian trip covered the period between September 4<sup>th</sup> 1902 - June 15<sup>th</sup> 1903. Four months of this time was devoted to New Zealand. As Edmund Dawson Rogers mentions in his address, monthly reports were to be printed in 'LIGHT' penned by Morse on his travels and experience. These will be reprinted each month starting in this issue. ED.]*

First letter.

## **FROM MR. J. J. MORSE**

### **SPECIAL TO 'LIGHT'**

With lowering clouds, rain squalls, and a touch, more of than of midsummer, in the air, we bade adieu to a host of friends upon the landing-stage at Liverpool, stepped on board the tender, and in due course found our way to the decks of the good ship 'Suevic,' which was destined to be our home for nearly seven weeks. Two delightful days been spent with Councillor Venables at his home in Walsall, and the last night and day ashore found us the guests of our ever dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Chiswell, of Liverpool, both of whom accompanied us on to the steamer. Among those to see us off were representatives of Liverpool societies, the national bodies, and a number of important societies in towns near about. Partings are not exhilarating experiences; yet in this case warm handclasps and fervent good wishes, even when spoken with a quiver on the lips, made us feel the sincerity of the adieux our many loved friends came to offer us.

A rousing cheer was given, and amid a waving of hands, off went the tender, and the faces of our friends gradually became indistinct, fading from us ere we reached the vessel lying in the stream. At last the inexorable order, 'All for the shore, this way!' sounded on our ears, and clasping the hands of our late host and hostess as they went down the side, we parted for a time with our friends at home, and in a few hours lost sight of the land we love.

Long sea trips have a strong family likeness, and the voyage of the 'Suevic' was, from a nautical point of view, the least eventful of any I have made. Our route was *via* the Cape; thence to Albany, West Australia; thence to Adelaide, South Australia, and from there to this city of Melbourne, the capital of the State of Victoria. An exceptionally fine trip the Bay of Biscay, a comparatively quiet and cool passage through the Tropics, and a pleasant run thence to Table Bay, consumed three weeks and a day. The customary concerts, to which Miss Morse frequently contributed, together with sports and dances, enabled the passengers to beguile the tedium of the voyage.

At the Cape we embarked nearly one hundred officers of the Australian (Volunteer) Field Forces, returning home from their service in South Africa. These were a fine body of men, two of whom had won the Victoria Cross, and one of those two, in addition, had gained one of the silken scarves, specially woven by our late Queen, as an additional honour for service in South Africa. Among us was a Church of England clergyman, the Rev. F. C. Lees, M.A. (Oxon.), F.R.G.S., who conducted service each Sunday morning; a cultured, liberal, and broad-minded man. The general service at night was conducted by Mr. H. H. Barraclough, of Bradford, *en route* to Tasmania; a Wesleyan, whose belief was evidently too small for him. We had several interesting conversations, and incidentally it came out that he knew me well by reputation and had read some of my books, and that his mother had heard me lecture a number of times in Bradford, in my early days of work!

Among the military contingent was another interesting man, the Rev. James Green, of the Methodist Church Australia, chaplain to the First Australian 'C' Contingent, who also preached on Sunday evenings. His last sermon was in every thing but words just the same kind of Spiritualism as 'Tien' discourses, and contained a virtual admission of the central propositions which Spiritualism advances. Several times a request was made for me to lecture, and finally I assented, giving a short talk upon 'Hypnotism,' with Major Umphleby in the chair. The lecture was well received, and led to considerable discussion upon kindred topics. Eventually the voyage, which lasted seven weeks less two days, came to an end, and on Thursday morning, September 4th, we moored at the jetty here, and a few minutes later had been welcomed to Australia by Mr. W. H. Terry and his private secretary, Miss Hinge, who had come down to meet us. We were more than glad that the trip was over, for we were weary of its continued monotony.

When the ship reached Adelaide a letter was brought me from Terry, in the course of which he stated that, as the New Zealand friends were most anxious to secure a visit from Mrs. Nellie Brigham prior to her return to the States, it had been arranged for her to leave Australia the day on which the 'Suevic' was due, and for me to commence my work on the Sunday after my arrival, September 7th, instead of the 21st, as originally planned. The consequence was that we missed seeing our old and

dear friend, and Miss Cushman, for they had departed when we arrived. We were fortunate, through the kindness of Miss Hinge, in finding pleasant location in the pretty suburb of Hawksburn, quite close to Toorak, and here we expect to remain while in Australia.

In accordance with the arrangements above referred to, my first appearance on the platform here took place on Sunday, the 7th inst., in the large and handsome Masonic hall, Collins-street, right under the shadow of the State Parliament buildings. My chairman was Mr. Terry, the president of the Victorian Association of Spiritualists, who, in a kindly and complimentary speech, introduced me to the Spiritualists and others present. My audience consisted of nearly six hundred persons, eminently respectable in appearance, and most intelligently appreciative. Since then the numbers attending have considerably increased, and we anticipate quite filling the hall, which holds eleven hundred persons. The 'Melbourne Age' gave a nice report of 'Tien's' opening lecture, the first time for a number of years that the city Press has taken any notice of the spiritual meetings here. The following night the association tendered a public welcome to myself and Mrs. and Miss Morse, many nice things being said by the various speakers. I responded as well as I was able to speak, with a serious sore throat and a heavy cold hampering brain and voice. But a full account of all these matters will appear in the 'Harbinger of Light' for October, so there is no need to enlarge upon them here.

In my next letter I will give some idea of the status of the cause in this city, by which time I shall be in a better position to speak on that matter than at present. On Sunday last I visited the Melbourne Children's Progressive Lyceum and found a very fine and vigorous Lyceum at work. The appended address will find me until the end of March next year, but, will my correspondents kindly note that letters are 2 ½ d. per ½ oz., and printed papers ½ d. for every 2oz.? I have already paid sundry fines upon understamped letters and papers.

36, Surrey-terrace, Surrey-road,  
Hawksburn, Melbourne, Australia.  
September 23rd, 1902.

'LIGHT' Volume. XXII. Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 1902, page 519.

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Second letter.

## **A LETTER FROM MR. J. J. MORSE.**

Travelling is the best corrective for insularity and the surest method of teaching us that there are more countries than one-even if that one be our own! To grasp the significance of fresh environments it is often wisest to abandon familiar points of view and to endeavour to become an observer who is at once a participator in, and spectator of, the new conditions in which one finds oneself. The necessity of such a course of proceeding becomes increasingly obvious to me if a clear understanding of the condition of Australia is to be reached, for much of the political and industrial life

here is viewed from quite other points than those we are familiar with at home. But my task is not a disquisition upon political economy, nor are the pages of 'LIGHT' suited to such work, even if it were my intention to engage in it. Later, and in another form, it is my intention to narrate the results of my inquiries and observations regarding the present position and future prospects of Australia and New Zealand, and the inducements to settle out here, with the advantages to be secured by doing so. For the present my desire is to fulfil my promise in the previous letter and say something concerning our cause on this vast continent.

The facts must be stated under three heads - Australia at large, the State of Victoria generally, and this city (Melbourne) particularly. The population of the continent is some six millions; the leading cities are Freemantle, Perth, and Albany in the State of West Australia; Adelaide, in South Australia; Melbourne, in Victoria ; Sydney, in New South Wales, and Brisbane, in Queensland. But at the time of writing, so far as I am able to ascertain, the only active society in operation in Victoria is in Melbourne! There are two small bodies in Perth, but only one of these appears to be alive-the West Australian Spiritualists' Society, whose president, Mr. R. M. M. Hamilton, sent me a letter of welcome when the steamer reached Albany. Mr. Hamilton said: 'We are only a small and struggling society here, but we could get an audience for you if you could manage to come back via Freemantle. We are a feeble folk, and need a good speaker to stir up the dry bones here.' As my route home is via San Francisco and New York, it will not be possible, I fear, for me to visit the friends, as Freemantle is some two thousand miles from Melbourne, and in the opposite direction to my intended route home. The work in Adelaide, which place is called 'the Holy City,' has again collapsed, the society is disbanded, and the members are scattered. In Sydney, N.S.W., I am told, there is one society, with a Mr. Bradley as the regular speaker; a Lyceum in good order, and several small meetings held by mediums on their own account; also an organisation called 'The Church of the Seers,' presided over by Madame Pattey. I believe there was lately another society, but am told it recently disbanded. In Brisbane there is no organisation, but there are a goodly number of Spiritualists, I am told. I simply state the facts as they stand; while I have my opinions as to the causes of these facts, I prefer at present to inquire further before expressing them.

As regards this State, Victoria, the position is not inspiring. What efforts were made in 'former days appear to be dead, and beyond resurrection. Societies formerly existed at Castlemaine, Ballarat, Bendigo, and Geelong, all of which are within one hundred miles of Melbourne. Now so utterly indifferent seem the people that it was almost impossible to arouse enough interest to arrange a meeting for me in Geelong. Roughly speaking, the dimensions of this State are, east to west four hundred and fifty miles, north to south two hundred and fifty miles, with a superficial area of nearly 60,000,000 acres, while the population is more than one fourth of the whole continent, with the islands of Tasmania and New Zealand included; yet while this area approximates to what would be included in a district bounded by Hull and Liverpool, and Dover and Glasgow, yet, so far as I can ascertain, Melbourne is the only city in which an organised society is to be found! I am told there are numbers of Spiritualists in the city and State; - it may be so, but their public support of the work is not strikingly conspicuous.

Take the case of my people, the Victorian Association of Spiritualists. Nothing is lacking to ensure the most successful working of the present special meetings. The trustees of the Thousand Pounds Fund - under which the meetings are held - have provided a beautiful hall in one of the very best localities. There is an excellent choir, capably directed by an efficient organist. Old and tried workers such as Dr. Peebles, Mrs. Nellie J. T. Brigham, and myself, have been retained, and yet the audiences seldom exceed six hundred, and average, say, three hundred and fifty people. The admission is free, with a collection, so there is no difficulty on that score. Yet at one time it was easy to fill a theatre on Sunday evening. True, there are a few mediums who hold circles upon Sunday evenings, but their number is not sufficient to create any serious counter attraction. The Lyceum also conducts an evening meeting on Sundays, which, doubtless, draws some from the Masonic Hall meetings, but in a city of 500,000 there should be room enough for two gatherings of our people.

The tone of the Victorian Association of Spiritualists' meetings is all that can be desired; it is dignified, refined, and attractive; stands for all that is best in the work; is lofty and spiritual in aim and tendency. Mr. W. H. Terry, the president, strives indefatigably to secure success, is most faithful and devoted to his work, and is deserving of all praise for his long self-sacrificing labours, for he spares neither time, toil, nor purse in all he does for the cause. The committee is, also, constant in aiding the work, yet the response is not of the nature, or extent, which the efforts put forth deserve. I am told that, there are many causes to account for the above facts; that times are bad, very bad indeed, which is doubtless the case; that there is a lack of unity, and some things in the nature of 'family jars'; that some former wealthy supporters have 'passed away'; that others still remaining in the flesh have, from various causes, withdrawn their support in person and in purse; and that there have been some events which have caused discouragement. But to my mind none of these go to the root of the matter, though they are each undoubtedly contributory in degree, especially the hard times now prevailing, for a condition of severe financial depression certainly exists.

In the past certain adventurers have exploited the city, who, with the pretensions of propounding something 'higher' (?) than mere Spiritualism, led many astray with assumptions which they labelled as 'occult truth,' metaphysics,' pretended 'Theosophy,' and imitation 'Rosicrucianism,' with rueful results to many a life and pocket. Only last week one of these human vultures was sentenced to seven years' hard labour for fleecing a simple-minded woman out of £1,000. Quite unjustly, these matters are piled upon our cause; the victims become disgusted, retire to private life, and the public cry, 'That's what your Spiritualism leads to!' The Press refuse us notice, and discord and disgust ensue as a natural consequence.

I know of members of the Government, and of Parliament, men of high commercial position also, who are Spiritualists, but they tell me they dare not let it become known. The reasons they allege include what I have already stated. One cannot help thinking that if such people had a little more backbone, and would publicly identify themselves now as formerly with the work, the Press and the public would soon realise that Spiritualism was in no wise responsible for the swindles perpetrated in its name; while, if a certain class of alleged Spiritualists were less willing to run after every 'teacher' who comes without any credentials from some

recognised body of our people, our numbers would increase, and our position rapidly improve all round.

All this is written in no spirit of complaint, but merely as a temperate statement of facts that cannot be ignored with honour or safety. On all sides I am told of the disunion, discord, and difficulty connected with the work here, and, coupled with these statements, are earnest requests for me to help to create improved conditions. But to do so would mean a far longer stay than I can arrange for, and a free hand in many directions.

The 'Melbourne Spiritualistic Progressive Lyceum,' to give it its full title, meets in a comfortable building, the Odd Fellows' Hall, and its regular sessions are well attended each Sunday morning. The officers appear energetic and progressive. I have attended several times and have been and enthusiastic soirée was held. Every alternate Sunday afternoon they hold a mediums' meeting, and at night a public lecture. What those meetings are like I do not know, as it is not practicable for me to be present; but I am told they are well attended.

So far as Australian mediumship is concerned I am not yet in a position to write. But I recently attended one of Mrs. Risings' meetings and found her mediumship truly remarkable and convincing. But as this letter is already over long I must reserve a detailed account of a most note worthy séance until my next communication. My aim is to present a faithful account of the state of affairs here, though it is not always the lot of the careful chronicler to please; but nothing set out herein can reasonably offend any who know the truth as I have endeavoured to state it in this letter.

Melbourne, November 4th, 1902.

To be continued.....

'LIGHT' Volume. XXII. December 13<sup>th</sup> 1902, page 593.

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