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WHEN THE DEVIL WENT DOWN TO DUBLIN:

ANNIE BESANT IN IRELAND

Wendy E. Cousins

In her autobiography, Annie Besant, President of the Theosophical Society from 1907 until 1933, lamented the fact that she had been born in London when “three-quarters of my blood and all my heart are Irish” and if Mrs Besant had a fascination for Ireland, likewise Theosophy held a fascination for the Irish.

The charter for the first Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society was obtained by Charles Johnston in April 1886. A student at the High School Dublin¹ at the same time as his friend W.B Yeats, Johnston was the son of a staunch Orangeman, the Conservative-Unionist MP for South Belfast. The other original members of the Irish Theosophical Society were also decidedly protestant and numbered several other High School old boys including Charles' brother Lewis Johnston (also an Orangeman) the poet W.B. Yeats, F.T. Gregg [sic], H.M. Magee, E.A. Seale, W. F. Smeeth, and R. A. Potterton (Foster, 1997: p 552). It has been suggested that the presence of so many members from a protestant evangelical background in the Dublin Lodge can be read

¹ Still in existence today, the High School Dublin, was founded in 1870, by the Governors of The Erasmus Smith Schools, as a school to prepare boys for business and the professions. In the main, students were Anglicans from the Church of Ireland but other denominations were represented.

as an expression of dissent from the sectarian identities on offer during the 1880s to the 1890s. The Irish Theosophist magazine claimed in 1893 that, “the Theosophical Society is non-sectarian and has in its ranks members of every denomination. Its one binding rule is Universal Brotherhood. It is the friend of every religion and endeavours to show the truth underlying each”. Theosophy may thus have offered protestants a new liberty of conscience, and a new way of breaking free from an intellectual climate constrained by sectarian bigotry (Guinness, 2003).

Another young man from an Irish protestant background who became deeply involved with the Theosophical Society was the Belfast born playwright and poet, James Cousins. He travelled to India in 1915, to work for Mrs Besant at the Theosophical Society in Adyar but from 1905-1913 he was school-master at the High School Dublin, responsible for teaching English and geography. On his first day at the school, in a fore-shadowing of his Theosophical future, James had particularly noticed that the name Charles Johnston appeared 4 years in a row heading the lists of school exam successes. Remarking on this fact, he was told in no uncertain terms by the Headmaster that “Charlie Johnston...was an Olympian. He might have gone to the very top, but he made a fool of himself by marrying the niece of that charlatan Madame Blavatsky²” (Cousins & Cousins, 1950, p 98). James Cousins’ own life-course was equally unexpected and by the start of the 20th century he might be said to have made a much longer journey metaphorically than the 100 or so physical miles which separate Belfast from Dublin. His early instruction from his Methodist parents was “that a woman called Besant was an agent of the Devil, and doubly dangerous by her immoral associations with the atheist Bradlaugh.” The first time he caught sight of that “bad woman” in the flesh was on October 1st 1902 (her birthday) as she gave a lecture in a small Irish hall. This event proved a memorable one which he later recorded in his autobiography:

“Mrs. Besant’s lecture was on “Theosophy and Ireland”. I gathered that clairvoyance, or revelation, or both, declared a long process of racial and cultural evolution out of which Ireland was ultimately to emerge as the spiritual mentor of Europe, even as India long ago had been to Asia. Mrs Besant, then fifty-five, short, grey-haired, pleasant yet serious, and intelligent of countenance, spoke with facility in plain language without notes in an attractive full-toned voice. I learned from her lecture that Theosophy was a much bigger matter than what I had derived from small manuals- and so was Ireland; which was quite a lot to learn in one afternoon...”

(Cousins & Cousins, 1950: p 75)

Some years later in July 1907 on a visit to London, James and his wife Margaret, a militant suffragette and musician who was already well-read in the works of Madame Blavatsky and Anna Bonus Kingsford, were invited to attend a Convention of the Theosophical Society at the British headquarters in Albermarle Street. This led to an unexpected meeting with Mrs Besant who had recently become President of the Society, the successor to Henry Steel Olcott. James records that Mrs Besant:

² Charles Johnston was indeed married to Madame Blavatsky’s niece.

“...expressed pleasure at having someone from Ireland at the Convention...She loved Ireland and was thrilled by its future as the spiritual leader of Europe. She concluded the ten-minute interview by ignoring me, putting her hand on Gretta’s shoulder and saying “Go back to Ireland, my dear and form a Lodge of the Theosophical Society, and when it is formed I will come and lecture for you”.

(Cousins & Cousins, 1950: p 126)

James Cousins was later to be one of the founders of the third Theosophical lodge in Dublin, but Mrs. Besant’s offer to visit Dublin did not wait on the formation of this lodge. A letter came sometime after the Cousins’ London introduction indicating that Mrs Besant would break a return journey from the United States at the Irish port of Queenstown (now Cobh) to come to Dublin and requesting James to organise an afternoon reception and an evening lecture in the city. Although he felt some misgivings about what his employers at the High School, with its management of Anglican clergymen might make of this endeavour, he felt that “there was nothing to be done but to do it” and the event was duly organised.

On October 10th 1909 in the Contemporary Club in Dublin, Annie Besant gave a lecture on *The Meaning and Value of Theosophy* to 300 hand-picked invitees. It promised to be a stimulating event, and that evening James noted with a touch of wryness that the hall was “full of the most intelligent people in Dublin, with some exceptions”. He moved unobtrusively on the margins of the meeting with as unconcerned an air as he could manage. He was well aware that to his Episcopal employers at the High School “the name of Annie Besant called up odours of fire and brimstone” and the discovery that he “was the devil in disguise” who had organised the lecture could end his career as a teacher. Complicating matters, he had also written a confidential invitation to Sir William Fletcher Barrett, at that time Professor of Physics at the Royal College of Science for Ireland, and asked him if he would take a seat on the platform along with a few others in compliment to the eminent visitor. Sir William knew James and Margaret Cousins from academic circles and through joint experiments in psychical research, but he still replied to the effect that he would have nothing to do with the eminent visitor - or any of her works. Nevertheless, among the audience at the back of the hall James saw a figure “that suggested the psychical scientist, but apparently veiling his identity.” He made no sign of recognition and the lecture proceeded (Cousins & Cousins, 1950 p 127).

Mrs Besant spoke for an hour, the audience was appropriately fascinated and the applause at the end was reportedly cordial and long but as she turned to leave the platform, a familiar voice called out from the back of the hall, “Ladies and Gentlemen!” It was none other than Sir William Barrett. James “got cold shivers at the dread possibility of some controversy” into which he might be disastrously drawn but the crisis passed. Over the suppressed hubbub of the crowd’s departure and surprise at the intrusion, Sir William made an announcement:

“I was invited to take a seat on the platform tonight. I declined the invitation, as I did not wish to be identified with the ideas held by the lecturer. But I wish to say that, in my long life, in which I have heard the greatest speakers of English in the world, I have never listened to anything finer in substance and

delivery than what has been given to us tonight, and I wish to express my personal thanks to Mrs Besant and to the organiser of the meeting.”

(Cousins & Cousins, 1950: p128)

James felt some relief that no names were mentioned as to who that organiser might actually be and records that at home the next morning he received a letter from Sir William. It asked him to convey to Mrs Besant, who had stayed overnight with James and Margaret, his deep regret that an unbreakable engagement prevented him from going to the steamer at Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire) to bid her farewell in person. It was noticed that “She read it with a pleased smile”. James stops short of claiming a Theosophical conversion for one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research but records that some years, later in a chance meeting in a Dublin tramcar, Sir William told him that he considered the Hodgson Report on Madame Blavatsky a black item on the Records of the Society for Psychical Research, and that he hoped to see it expunged before the end of his life. He didn't (The Theosophist, 1925; Cousins & Cousins, 1950: p128).

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The Irish Theosophist (1893) July, p.120.

The Theosophist (1925) October, p 5.

Wendy E. Cousins is an Irish university lecturer and SPR member, currently carrying out some personal research into the paranormal experiences and experiments of the writers, artists and mediums of the Irish revival, with a particular reference to the practice of automatic writing. She would be very interested in hearing from anyone with information about the Irish medium Geraldine Cummins. Her email address is dalriada3@gmail.com

Enrico Morselli's Forgotten Bibliography

Carlos S. Alvarado and Massimo Biondi (1)

[**Note by PsyPioneer:** - Dr. Carlos S. Alvarado is affiliated with the Division of Perceptual Studies, Department of Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences, at the University of Virginia. Dr. Massimo Biondi is a science writer and author, member of the Italian Society for the Advancement of Science]

Enrico Morselli (1852-1929) was a well-known Italian psychiatrist who was interested and involved in psychical research. (2) A hundred years ago he published a classic of Italian psychical research, his two volume work *Psicologia e "Spiritismo"* (Morselli, 1908) (3). The book was concerned mainly with the mediumship of Eusapia Palladino, presenting many séance reports, as well as psychiatric and psychological analyses and speculations about "bio-psychic" forces. Some aspects of the book that are generally forgotten are the bibliographies presented by Morselli in the book. Because we believe this is a useful resource for those interested in the past literatures of spiritualism and psychical research, we will briefly summarize Morselli's compilations in this note.

In a section of his book entitled "The Bibliography of Spiritism" (Vol. 1, pp. xiii-xvi) Morselli stated that to understand spiritistic phenomena "I think it is necessary to know . . . the literature of Spiritism" (p. xiii). He referred to the existence of thousands of books and hundreds of journals, of which he presented a selection of the most important ones. Most of these publications, Morselli believed, were about polemical and theoretical issues that presented a "great similarity with the religious dogmatic and ritual" literature (Vol. 1, p. xiv).

The introduction was followed by a section with the title of "Bibliography of (Modern) Spiritism until June 1907" (Vol. 1, pp. xvii-xlvi). This was an international bibliography of spiritualism, spiritism and psychical research that was divided as follows: I. History of Spiritism (apologias, critiques); II. Spiritist Doctrine (dogmatists and adepts, polemicists, defenders, and theoreticians, skeptics and opposers); III. Descriptions and Autobiographies of Mediumship (fideistic accounts, accounts using research methodology); IV. Fluidism and Neo-dynamism ["Animism"] in Relation to "Animal Magnetism" (ideas of vital forces to account for phenomena); V. Metapsychic Studies and the Psychogenesis of Mediumship (psychology of mediums and dissociation); and VI. Periodicals (magazines and journals, list of publishers).

While some of the authors represented were Italians such as Cesare Baudi di Vesme, Ernesto Bozzano, Vincenzo Cavalli, Marco T. Falcomer, Giuseppe Lapponi, and Paolo Visani-Scozzi, there were many others from other countries. Examples of this include: Alexandre Aksakof, Hippolyte Baraduc, Alexander Butlerow, William Crookes, Louis Figuier, Camille Flammarion, Theodore Flournoy, Robert Hare, Lazar Hellenbach, James H. Hyslop, Jules Eudes de Mirville, Allan Kardec, Frederic W.H. Myers, Julian Ochorowicz, Frank Podmore, Albert de Rochas, Eduard von Hartmann, Alfred Russel Wallace, and Johann K.F. Zöllner, among many others.

Some examples of works about historical topics included Cesare Baudi di Vesme's *Storia dello Spiritismo* (1896), Louis Figuier's *Histoire du merveilleux dans les temps modernes* (Vol 4, 1881), Emma Hardinge's *Modern American Spiritualism* (1870),

William Howitt's *The History of the Supernatural* (1863), Louis Jacolliot's *Le spiritisme dans le monde* (1875), and Frank Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism* (1902). The work is full of rare publications, some of which include: Giovanni Battista Ermacora's *La Telepatia* (1898), Samuel Guppy's *Mary Jane* (1863), Víctor Melcior y Farré's *Los Estados Subconscientes y las Aberraciones de la Personalidad* (1904), and Albert de Rochas' *Le fluide des magnétiseurs* (1891).

It may be of interest to note that the bibliography includes authors that were not spiritualists or psychical researchers. Some of them are Etienne Eugène Azam, Alfred Binet, Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer, Ernest Haeckel, Pierre Janet, Carl G. Jung, Alfred Maury, and Boris Sidis. Furthermore, Morselli presented the identity of some authors known by pseudonyms. An example is "Gley" or "Gyel," who was Gustave Geley. Others are "Philyps," or Louis Jacolliot; "Hermes," or Camille Flammarion; and "Eliphas Levi," or Alphonse Louise Constant.

Some names, as was all too common at the time, were spelled wrong. Home was named "David" instead of Daniel, Carmelo Samonà was said to be "Samara," Leadbeater became "Leadbreater," and Cesare Baudi di Vesme was sometimes mentioned as "de Vesme."

Among the magazines and journals mentioned were *Annales des sciences psychiques*, *Annali dello Spiritismo in Italia*, *Banner of Light*, *Light*, *Luce e Ombra*, *Occult Review*, *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, *Psychische Studien*, *Religio-philosophical Journal*, and the *Rivista di Studi Psiclici*.

Morselli was aware he was presenting only a segment of the relevant literature. This is clear in a supplement he published in the second volume of *Psicologia e "Spiritismo"* entitled "The Bibliography of Spiritism" (Vol. 2, pp. v-xv).

In addition, and because the book was largely devoted to Palladino's mediumship, Morselli presented what he called his "Paladinian Bibliography,"⁴ which represented the "scientific history of the mediumship of the famous Neapolitan during the last eighteen years" (Vol. 1, pp. 122-124). Furthermore, Morselli presented a "Supplement to the Bibliography of Eusapia Paladino" (Vol. 2, pp. xvii-xviii). His compilation of articles and books included those written by authors such as Ercole Chiaia, Xavier Dariex, Cesare Lombroso, Julian Ochorowicz, Charles Richet, and Arnaldo Vassallo. In addition to the inclusion of authors positive to Palladino's phenomena Morselli presents writings by skeptics such as Richard Hodgson, and the Italian journalists Eugenio Torelli Violler and Leo Pavoni. We may also mention that there is an almost complete bibliography about the observations of Palladino performed by SPR and ASPR psychical researchers such as Frederic W.H. Myers, Henry Sidgwick, Frank Podmore, Oliver J. Lodge, Richard Hodgson, and Hereward Carrington. To this day this work is a useful resource to gather information about Palladino. The annotations presented by Morselli make this bibliography particularly valuable.

Regardless of the passage of time, and of later bibliographies (e.g., Crabtree, 1988), Morselli's work is still useful to current scholars. In fact the variety of sources, languages, and types of materials included make it a unique resource. This is particularly the case regarding the materials about Palladino. Many of them are from difficult to obtain Italian sources that are not easily found in conventional indexes.

Notes

1. We wish to thank Nancy L. Zingrone for useful editorial suggestions.
2. Morselli's medical career is discussed by Guarnieri (1986). His psychical research is discussed in the third chapter of Pesoli's (1998-1999) thesis. More information about Morselli's interest in mediumship and other psychic phenomena appears in the works of Biondi (1988, 1994) and Iannuzzo (1986).
3. The volumes can be found in Google Book Search, a virtual library with many other relevant books and articles about the topics discussed in *Psypioneer* (Alvarado, 2007a, 2007b). See the links for both volumes: Vol 1:
[http://books.google.com/books?id=bNc0AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=morselli+psicologia+e+Spiritismo&as_brr=1](http://books.google.com/books?id=bNc0AAAAMAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=morselli+psicologia+e+Spiritismo&as_brr=1;);

Vol. 2:
http://books.google.com/books?id=ldg0AAAAMAAJ&printsec=titlepage&dq=morselli+psicologia+e+Spiritismo&as_brr=1&source=gbs_summary_r&cad=0
4. This title does not appear in the text, but appears in the table of contents (Vol. 1, p. 456) and in the headers (e.g., Vol. 1, pp. 133, 135).

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ARE THE AGES OF THE FOX SISTERS IMPORTANT?

In last month's article, *Modern American Spiritualism*, 1870 "Leaves of Retrospection and Acknowledgment" by Emma Hardinge³ a notation was made as to the actual ages of the two youngest Fox Sisters: -

The mother of the ladies, Mrs. Fox, addressed a letter to the President of the anniversary meeting held in New York City in 1868,⁴ in which she stated that, at the time of the first "Rochester knockings," her daughter Kate was seven years old, and Margaretta ten. The ages of the children being as the family allege, "incorrectly rendered in the first printed report,⁵ have been erroneously represented in all subsequent accounts."

I have printed below a statement by Titus Merritt⁶ which holds some historical importance as he gives the birth dates of Margaretta and Catherine Fox which are inscribed on their graves. His given dates also correspond generally to the ages that were originally given by their mother in her first sworn statement on April 11th 1848 to E.E. Lewis⁷ to which she alludes to the above as incorrect!

Below is taken from '*Rappings That Startled the World - Facts About the Fox Sisters*', compiled by R.G. Pressing⁸, Published by Dale News., Lily Dale, New York 1947c

³ Modern American Spiritualism 1870: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.7July08..pdf>

⁴ Mrs. Margaret Fox died in 1865.

⁵ Kate "about twelve" and Maggie as "in her fifteenth year"

⁶ Titus Merritt was an old friend of the Fox family since the 1860s; Merritt was with Maggie when she died at 4.30 am on March 8th 1893. See 'Talking to the Dead' Barbara Weisberg. Harper, San Francisco 2004

⁷ The full report on the Hydesville phenomena: - http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP12.pdf

⁸ At this time Ralph and Juliette Pressing were the editors of '*The Psychic Observer*'

Rappings That Startled the World - Facts About the Fox Sisters

THE FOX SISTERS

Their Age and Date of Birth

Encyclopedias and writers differ somewhat in respect to the age of the justly celebrated *Fox sisters*. While administering to their physical needs, during the last few years of their earthly existence, I did succeed in getting it correctly, although they were very cautious not to divulge their age.

A statement was made at *Hydesville*, April 11, 1848, by the mother, *Mrs. Margaret Fox*, and the neighbors who first witnessed the phenomena of *Modern Spiritualism*.

This statement was so correct that the eldest sister, *Mrs. Ann Leah Fox Underhill*, embraced it all in her book entitled the "*Missing Link*," except that information relating to, or which would give, any clue to their ages.

I am well aware of the fact that their age is of minor importance as compared with the phenomena produced through their instrumentality, and the deductions therefrom.

However, as *Modern Spiritualism*, in its efforts to enlighten the people of earth, is comparatively young and destined to attain a great age, it would be well to have the record correct. The correct data according to my records:

Margaretta Fox Kane, born Oct. 7, 1833.
Catherine Fox Jencken, born March 27, 1837.
Mrs. A. Leah Fox Underhill, 34 years.

The statement did not give any clue to *Mrs. Underhill's* age, but *Mrs. Kane* informed me that her sister was 20 years older than herself and this statement was subsequently corroborated by *Mrs. Underhill*.

Date of Their Departure To the Higher Life

PARENTS - *John D. Fox*, Jan. 10, 1865; *Margaret Fox* Aug. 3, 1865.
Ann Leah Underhill, November 1, 1890.
Daniel Underhill, September 1891⁹.
Katie Fox Jencken, July 2. 1892.
Margaretta Fox Kane. March 8. 1893.

TITUS MERRITT,
Editor of Light and Truth

YONKERS, N. Y., May 7th, 1896.

⁹ A letter by Merritt is published in '*Hydesville in History*' by M.E. Cadwallader, The Progressive Thinker Publishing House 1922 (1st edition 1917). Merritt states that Daniel Underhill died August 15th 1891?

The sister's ages have always been a contentious point of discussion. Did they manipulate their ages to suit any given agenda? For example did they in later years, make themselves appear younger than they actually were at the beginning of the Hydesville events in an effort to show that they were too young and innocent to manipulate a fraud; or to use the cover of being young to, in fact, manipulate a fraud? At the height of the Fox confessions of 1888 they give their ages in a sworn statement as young as six and eight! Or was it all a case of simply misreporting and historical errors, Titus Merritt commented that their ages are of *minor importance*?

Psypioneer prints this Merritt statement as a prelude to an investigation into the various ages that are given to all three Fox Sisters this is currently ongoing with a new subscriber to Psypioneer. Readers of *Psychic News*¹⁰ will recall the name of L. J. Warwood who writes the series: - *AUSTRALIA IN FOCUS*.

L. J. Warwood's findings will be published in the next issue Psypioneer.

Paul J. Gaunt

THE FIRST DUNCAN TRIAL

Relatively little attention has been paid to Mrs Duncan's appearance in court in 1933. However, Robert Hartley has suggested (in "Helen Duncan the Mystery Show Trial") that there was a conspiracy between the leading sitter Miss Maule and Harry Price to entrap Mrs Duncan. As we shall see this was suspected at the time. Some Spiritualists first heard of the matter from *LIGHT* February 3 1933, p.76.

MRS. DUNCAN'S MEDIUMSHIP ALLEGATIONS OF FRAUD DENIED

SERIOUS allegations of fraud against Mrs. Victoria Duncan, the Scottish Medium, are contained in sworn statements made by Miss Esson Maule, of Stafford Street, Edinburgh, and others who took part in a seance at Miss Maule's house some weeks ago.

These allegations were published in the Daily Express on Friday last. They are to the effect that, when a figure, supposed to be that of "Peggy," a child "control," appeared between the parted curtains of the cabinet, it was seized by Miss Maule, who found it to be "a soft and stretching material," which was wrenched from her grasp by "a vigorous upwards and backwards movement within the cabinet," causing the middle finger of her right hand to go through a portion of the material. Light was

¹⁰ For *Psychic News* Subscription see: - <http://www.psychicnewsbookshop.co.uk/catalogue/12>
You can now also subscribe to an online version of *Psychic News* see: -
<http://www.psychicnewsbookshop.co.uk/onlinenews.php>

switched on and Miss Maule accused Mrs. Duncan of "taking money for producing fraudulent materialisations, purporting to be deceased friends of the sitters." "There was an angry" scene," and it is stated that the police were called in.

Afterwards, Mrs. Duncan stripped in the presence of the women sitters, and a white stockinette undervest was found with a tear corresponding to that made by Miss Maule. It is alleged that Mrs. Duncan admitted that the undervest had not been "on her body," but had been pinned to part of her underwear.

The suggestion is that it was this undervest which was made to appear as "Peggy." It was left in the possession of Miss Maule, and is now, we understand, in the custody of Mr. Harry Price at the National Laboratory of Psychological Research, South Kensington.

Interviewed by a representative of the Daily Express, Mrs. Duncan denied the allegations of fraud. "I ask anyone who has attended a sitting with me," she said, "do they think I can create the likeness of a child with an undervest? Do they believe that I produce images of people who have passed on, and whom I have not even heard of, and yet they are recognised, and they talk of things of which I know nothing."

As to the alleged incidents during the seance, she said "What happens once I go into a trance I do not know, for I am then under a control, but I do know that I was suddenly conscious of being attacked during the seance."

Perhaps the most angry person about these charges was J.P. McIndoe the SNU president¹¹. This was apparent from a report in LIGHT.

Taken from *LIGHT* February 10, 1933 page 90:

Mrs. DUNCAN'S MATERIALISING MEDIUMSHIP

**STATEMENT BY MR. J. B. M'INDOE,
PRESIDENT, S.N.U.**

REFERENCE has already been made in these columns to the "exposure" of Mrs. Duncan by Miss Maule at Edinburgh on January 5, as reported in the Daily Express of January 27th.

For some fifteen months I have either actually arranged Mrs. Duncan's bookings or acted on the understanding that she gave no sittings without my cognisance. This arrangement she has plainly violated.

¹¹ John B. McIndoe Spiritualists' National Union (S.N.U.) president 1930 - 1938

As I have previously defended Mrs. Duncan when I thought she was unjustly attacked, I think it desirable to make my position now quite clear.

Miss Maule's first appearance is as the advertiser for sitters "with a well-known materialising Medium" in the Edinburgh newspapers. Both she and Mrs. Duncan were well aware that I totally disapproved of these sittings. Ultimately, I agreed to two or three being given, as Mrs. Duncan was under obligations to Miss Maule. In a recent letter to me, Mrs. Duncan insists she gave four only. Miss Maule has records of twenty-five to thirty, and there is evidence of numerous such sittings. In fact, it now seems clear that in the intervals between her tours, when supposed to be more or less resting, Mrs. Duncan was in reality grossly over-sitting.

I had no knowledge of the sitting on January 5 until a report of it reached me from London some days later. I had no communication of any kind on the subject from Mrs. Duncan until nearly a fortnight after the seance.

Mrs. Duncan had given a very successful and evidential sitting in Glasgow on the afternoon of January 5th. She missed her train to Edinburgh and arrived there about 9.30, with a sitting arranged for 8 p.m. She was excited and perspiring, and obviously no sitting should have been given. She has been repeatedly warned against over-sitting, and must have known she could not expect good results after a sitting a few hours earlier.

I am writing only after having made careful inquiries on the spot and endeavouring to sift both sides of the story.

I have found nothing to raise any doubts as to the sincerity or general accuracy of the allegations of fraud made in the Express.

Some of Mrs. Duncan's statements both to the Express and in letters to me, in support of the "frame-up" allegation, seem to me definitely untrue.

I have found no evidence of the "frame-up," but there is evidence of a very careful and thorough setting of the stage for the scene in which Mrs. Duncan acted the part expected of her – if not, in fact, desired of her – by some of the sitters. Other sitters, I am satisfied, were quite unaware of any expected exposure and resented the manner in which they were involved in it.

Had Mrs. Duncan been honest, she would have emerged scatheless and perhaps triumphant, with probably a burn or a bleeding as a result of the sudden flash of light and the grabbing. Neither burn nor bleeding is mentioned. Now these have been noted not infrequently when forms have been touched or lights flashed.

I see no escape from the conclusion that Mrs. Duncan was detected in a crude and clumsy fraud – a pitiable travesty of the phenomena she has so frequently displayed. I have no doubt that the fraud was deliberate, conscious and premeditated, and I think it very probable that it was neither the first act of fraud at that sitting nor the first sitting at which it occurred.

I am quite satisfied that Mrs. Duncan behaved after the exposure in a disgraceful and discreditable way, and was herself alone responsible for the calling of the police. The exposure seems thoroughly deserved. Had it been made primarily in the interests of Spiritualism, it would not have been in the daily Press.

I retract nothing from what I have previously written in defence of Mrs. Duncan's mediumship. I have not the slightest doubt that she has wonderful powers as a materialising Medium. The pity is she has abused these gifts, simulated them, and descended to vulgar, detestable trickery.

I can no longer take any part in booking Mrs. Duncan's engagements for her. As quickly as possible I will put the numerous applicants for sittings directly in touch with her, so that they may correspond direct if they wish.

May I earnestly suggest to all who may contemplate sittings with her to insist on such conditions as will rule out the possibility of fraud. Among these should be sufficient light to ensure that there is no doubt in the mind of any normal-sighted sitter as to the reality of the phenomena occurring.

J. B. M'INDOE.
Glasgow, 4th, February

Scotland has a separate legal system to England, and interestingly we hear nothing about vagrants, let alone witchcraft in this case.

As *LIGHT* reported on March 24 1933, p182

FRAUD CHARGE AGAINST MRS. DUNCAN

A CHARGE of fraud against Mrs. Victoria Helen Duncan, arising out of a seance held at the house of Miss Maule, Edinburgh, was discussed in Edinburgh Sheriff Court on Thursday last week (16th March).

It was submitted on Mrs. Duncan's behalf that seances were not recognised by law and that therefore there could be no charge in connection with a seance, real or unreal.

Sheriff-Substitute Macdonald, K.C., gave it as his opinion that the charge was one of fraud, and repelled the objections.

Mrs. Duncan thereupon made a plea of not guilty and trial was fixed for May 3rd.

Mrs. Duncan was charged with having, on January 4 or 5, at her home at 1, Wauchope Place, and at 24, Stafford Street, Edinburgh, pretended to eight persons – four men and four women – all residing in Edinburgh, that she was a Medium through

whom the spirits of deceased persons were openly and regularly materialised in such a manner as to become visible to, and to speak to, and to converse with, those present in a room with her, that she held seances where such materialisations took place, and that if they would attend such a seance on said January 5 at 24, Stafford Street, and pay to her a fee of 10s. each, or a cumulo fee at £3 3s., she would attend and would materialise and render visible and audible to them deceased persons, and said eight persons having attended at said place on said date and having each paid to her the sum of 10s. of money, she did pretend to hold a seance there and to materialise the spirits of certain deceased persons, including that of a deceased child named Peggy, and did pretend that what was then visible and audible in the said room was the spirit and voice of said deceased child, the truth, as she well knew, being that what she did pretend to be said materialised spirit of said child was in fact a woman's stockinet undervest, held and manipulated by her, to simulate the said pretended spirit, and that the said audible voice was the sound of her own voice, and she did appropriate to her own uses said sums amounting in cumulo to £4, and did defraud the eight persons each of 10s. sterling.

Mr. Dickson, who appeared for Mrs. Duncan, said that in the first place he wished to submit that the law of Scotland, so far as he could find, did not recognise the return after death of any person who had died, and, accordingly, if the law was incapable of recognising such materialised spirits, then it also fell that the pretence of producing spirits could not be recognised by the law of Scotland – that was to say that there was no offence in pretending to be a Medium or to produce materialised spirits. Even if the people in the complaint discovered how the alleged materialisations took place, which was a matter he would not concur in and would not go into at present, he thought it was a recognised thing universally that a Medium was incapable of recalling what took place during the seance, and that being the case, whether they found out how it was done or not, there was no fraud on the part of the Medium. So far as the statute crime was concerned, there was no offence at all.

Sheriff MacDonald:- The charge here is simply one of fraud.

Mr. Dickson: - Yes, my Lord, but my submission is that as spirits are things outwith the cognisance of the law, either pretending to produce them, or producing them, is not a fraud at the present time.

The Sheriff: - Is it not a question of obtaining money by false pretences?

Mr. Dickson: - I do not see how, when the subject is one which the law cannot recognise, that there can be any crime libelled.

The Sheriff: - The law protects people against fraud.

Mr. Dickson: - Quite, my Lord, but on the other hand it is impossible to prove by the law of Scotland whether there are, or are not, such things as spirits. To put it crudely, suppose it was a conjurer, it does not matter whether it is discovered how it is done or not.

The Sheriff: - But the people go to see a conjurer.

Mr. Dickson: - The moment these people thought they knew how it was done, they charged my client with fraud, but it is impossible in the whole psychic movement to find out how psychic phenomena are produced.

The Sheriff: - Do you suggest that there is nothing in this complaint which is not quite legitimate?

Mr. Dickson: - Certainly. Treat this for a moment as an entertainment. It does not matter how it was done.

The Sheriff: - But it is alleged that it is not a genuine seance.

Mr. Dickson said his final submission was that there could be no offence in connection with seances, and he asked that the charge be dismissed.

Depute Procurator: - Fiscal M'Kechnie moved that the objection be repelled.

The Sheriff said he repelled the objection, and on a plea of not guilty being tendered, trial was fixed.

Mr. Dickson added that he understood that some of those who were present at the seance and were mentioned in the complaint were undertaking articles for certain publications and also undertaking to give lectures. He suggested that this should not be allowed.

The Sheriff said he thought that no publication would give articles on this case at the present stage, and the Fiscal pointed out that the accused had recourse to stop these by interdict in the English Courts.

Mrs. Duncan then left the Court in the company of a number of friends.

There was now nothing to prevent the case proceeding in the usual way. It is the evidence which followed that Hartley thinks was in part not truthful.

Taken from *LIGHT* MAY 12, 1933 page 292:

FRAUD CHARGE AGAINST MRS. DUNCAN

TRIAL IN EDINBURGH SHERIFF COURT

THE trial of Mrs. Victoria Duncan on a charge of fraudulently pretending that she was a Medium through whom the spirits of deceased persons were "openly and regularly materialised in such a way as to become visible to and to speak to, and to converse with, those present in a room with her," at 24, Stafford Street, Edinburgh, on January 4 or 5, 1933, took place on Wednesday and Thursday last week (May 3 and

4) before Sheriff Macdonald, K.C., in Edinburgh Sheriff Court. The prosecution was conducted by the Procurator-Fiscal (public prosecutor) of Edinburgh (Mr. James Adair), and Mr. Ian A. Dickson, W.S. (Writer to the Signet) appeared for the defence.

The "fraudulent pretence," it was stated in the charge, was that for a fee of 10/- from each of eight persons, Mrs. Duncan did pretend to hold a seance and to materialise the spirits of certain deceased persons, including that of a deceased child named Peggy, and did pretend that what was then visible and audible in the said room was the spirit and voice of said deceased child, the truth, as she well knew, being that what she did pretend to be said materialised spirit of said child was in fact a woman's stockinette undervest held and manipulated by her, to simulate the said pretended spirit, and that the said audible voice was the sound of her own voice, and she did appropriate to her own uses said sums amounting in cumulo to £4, and did defraud the eight persons of 10s. sterling."

The chief Witness for the prosecution was Miss Maule, at whose house the seance was held. For the lighting arrangements in the room she said there was a 40-watt red electric bulb with some turkey-red cotton round it, and a 120-watt clear bulb on a hand lamp. When the accused was taken into the room the light was provided by the red lamp and a candle. There was a small part of the room partitioned off by a curtain to be used as the cabinet. Accused took her place in the cabinet and the others were seated in a semi-circle around it.

Miss Maule said there just came the voice purporting to be that of "Albert," the "control," followed by a number of figures and voices. Ultimately "Peggy" came and spoke to her. Witness took hold of "Peggy" and said, "Come here and let me see what you are made of." It had a sort of stretchy feeling. It was instantly drawn upwards and out of her grasp. Witness felt it slipping, and her middle finger caught in a hole and it ripped. Witness felt and heard the rip.

Mr. Adair:- You are quite satisfied whatever it was you had caused quite a marked tear? - Beyond any doubt.

Witness said she drew the curtains apart and said "Mrs. Duncan, I have caught you in fraud," or words to that effect. The lamp was switched on and the room was flooded with light. Accused was sitting in the chair, and was endeavouring to put the article up her dress, and the sleeve part was hanging down several inches below the knees. The dress was dark brown and the article was soiled white.

Miss Maule said that, following the accusation, Mrs. Duncan "cursed and swore." Ultimately, the male sitters left the room and Mrs. Duncan undressed and a white undervest fell on the floor. On seeing it, she (Miss Maule) said "That is 'Peggy.' You can't deny it. That is the hole I made." Accused replied: "It might have been," and then denied it.

An undervest with a tear in it was produced in Court and identified by witness as the one she had seized. Miss Elizabeth McKay, Mrs. H. M. Sowden, Wm. J. Corrie and Conrad Hill Scott gave corroborative evidence - only the last-named saying he was a Spiritualist. All the witnesses were cross-examined by Mr. Dickson.

For the defence, Mrs. O'Hara (who said she was Mrs. Duncan's housekeeper) said a woman who said she was Mrs. Soles called at Mrs. Duncan's house and arranged for a seance to be held at the rooms of the Psychological Society. She identified "Mrs. Soles" as Mrs. Sowden. Witness said that on the morning of the seance she laid out an undervest for Mrs. Duncan. It was old and in holes. It was the garment now produced in court.

Marguerite Linck Hutchison, a qualified medical practitioner, residing at 44, Carmunnock Road, King's Park, Glasgow, said her uncle, Mr. Graham Moffat, the theatrical producer, was very much interested in the subject, and while she was staying with him the summer before last he was invited to take part in some test sittings in Glasgow concerning Mrs. Duncan's mediumship.

Witness then described tests in Glasgow. Mrs. Duncan stripped and then wore specially provided clothes. It was impossible she had anything concealed. The voice that spoke was cultured, fluent and had an extensive vocabulary, quite different from Mrs. Duncan. She believed Mrs. Duncan was possessed of some power which she could not explain. She could produce phenomena which witness was quite sure it would be impossible to produce by fraud.

On one occasion when Albert appeared on the left of the Medium the chair moved away from under Mrs. Duncan. It rose up in the air and came round to the front and remained there suspended in space in front of Mrs. Duncan. She was asked by someone to raise her hands, which she did, and the chair remained in the air. It was quite light enough to see what the other sitters were doing.

Witness gave it as her opinion that, if Mrs. Duncan could produce what she did by fraud with nothing to help her, with properties she could make a fortune on the stage.

Mr. Dickson:- Can you see any possible inducement for Mrs. Duncan to commit such a fraud as alleged when she has such powers as you speak of? -I cannot. This concluded the first day's hearing.

The first witness on the second day of the trial was Mr. E. W. Oaten, president of the Spiritualists' International Federation and Editor of *The Two Worlds*. He said he was recognised as an authority on most aspects of Spiritualism. He had attended something like 4,000 seances, and had had eighteen sittings with Mrs. Duncan. In all of these sittings he had some phenomena, decidedly psychic. He had seen the form purporting to be Mrs. Duncan's control, Albert, and the spirit child called Peggy.

Mr. Dickson:- In your opinion, as someone well versed in Spiritualism, were these spirits fraudulent? I arranged most of the seances, and had the whole of the circumstances under my control and I laid down conditions which made fraud utterly impossible without easy detection. These spirits, said witness, were of intelligences separate and different from Mrs. Duncan, and were decidedly different in form and location.

Answering questions, Mr. Oaten said induced fraud was very easily produced. He knew enough of the subject to be able to induce fraud under hypnotic control. There was a certain section of sitters who did it wilfully. He had done it experimentally

scores of times. He had induced a young lady, quite an amateur, by mental suggestion without any word being expressed, to leave the cabinet and walk round the room. Every experimenter was familiar with the fact. If ectoplasm was grabbed by a sitter, it had the effect of giving a shock to the Medium. Ectoplasm, he said, exuded from mouth, nostrils and ears. He had touched it and it sometimes felt like a textile fabric, at other times it was slimy.

The Fiscal produced a photograph of something "obviously like cheese cloth," with tears and selvage. "Does ectoplasm," he asked, "have tears and selvage?" Mr. Oaten: There is no reason why it should not.

The Fiscal-Persons who have psychic powers may descend to trickery? - Unfortunately, there are many such cases on record. At the same time, when trickery is indulged in it is generally easy to detect. A child could detect it. There are cases of wilful fraud, many of which I have exposed.

Witness later said that whether it was possible for a woman to take off an undergarment without removing the top garments was an experiment he had not made.

The Fiscal:- Are you suggesting that a sitter by the mere thinking of the idea that this woman should take off her undergarment and put on her dress again and stuff the undergarment up under her dress could make her do that? -I don't suggest that every sitter could do that, but I could.

Dr. Montague Rust, of Newport, Fife, said he had examined Mrs. Duncan most carefully, and had spent "hours and hours on tests." The phenomena that come from that woman, he said, are perfectly marvellous, and cannot be produced by anyone else in Europe.

Dr. Rust added: - To manipulate a vest is a deplorably stupid thing, because she can produce such wonderful phenomena.

Witness said the accused once produced something like a big snake, which clung round witness's shoulders and nearly lifted him off his feet, and then it flung off and struck against the wall with great force. It looked like cloth sometimes and sometimes like parchment. No Medium would guarantee materialisation, but with Mrs. Duncan he had never experienced a failure. Some of the sittings had been bad, but never complete failures.

Describing some of his experiences with Mrs. Duncan, Dr. Rust said she was the most remarkable woman in Europe. He said he had seen Mrs. Duncan on the floor with no body from the shoulders downwards, and he had seen her sitting in her chair with no body from the hips downwards.

Mr. J. B. M'Indoe, President of the Spiritualists' National Union, said that some weeks after January 5 last he wrote an article for psychic papers and gave his opinion that Mrs. Duncan had been detected in an act of fraud.

Mr. Dickson-Do you hold that view to-day?-No, my view to-day is considerably modified by the evidence of the Crown witnesses.

Witness said that his views in the newspaper article were given on the strength of statements which appeared in newspapers and statements made by witnesses not called by the Court – statements which had not been made in Court. Miss Maule had told him that Mrs. Duncan had confessed to a deception.

Mrs. Duncan, giving evidence, said she had no idea what happened when she was in a trance. She had never at any time guaranteed that certain things would happen. It would be folly to guarantee anything that she knew nothing about. She denied the allegation of fraudulent pretence. Referring to the allegations of scenes of violence, she said:- "I am twenty stone, Miss Maule is about eighteen stone. If the vest had been torn between us it would not have been torn in that way."

Mr. Dickson, for the defence, said he did not attribute malice to any of the witnesses for the prosecution, but there was evidence that gave colour to the idea that this was a plot, definitely arranged with the goal to be won, if the plot succeeded, of getting a little free publicity and a good deal of credit from certain branches of the Psychic Research movement.

Sheriff Macdonald said he would consider the case and give his decision on Thursday, May 11.

The decision had not been announced when this issue went to press. It will be published in next week's issue.

This undertaking was honoured, but the news was bad.

Taken from *LIGHT* May 19, 1933 page 314

Mrs. V. DUNCAN CONVICTED

FINE OF £10 ON CHARGE OF FRAUD AT AN EDINBURGH SEANCE

JUDGMENT was given at Edinburgh Sheriff Court on Thursday last week (May 11) in the case in which Mrs. Victoria Duncan was charged with having conducted a fraudulent seance in a house at Stafford Street, Edinburgh, and having defrauded four men and four women of 10s. each, which they had paid to her. Mrs. Duncan was found guilty of fraud and fined £10 or one month's imprisonment. It was alleged that Mrs. Duncan pretended to materialise the spirit of a dead child named Peggy, whereas, according to the evidence for the prosecution, the "materialisation" was, in fact, a woman's stockinette undervest held and manipulated by defendant, the voice that was heard being her own.

Sheriff Macdonald said Mrs. Duncan might have psychic powers and might demonstrate them in genuine fashion. Upon these matters he expressed no opinion. All that he was called upon to decide was whether or not it had been proved that on this occasion she perpetrated a fraud. The evidence of five witnesses who had been sitters at the seance had been tested by skilful cross-examination. That evidence remained unshaken, and appeared to him to be honest and reliable. The only other evidence regarding this seance was that of accused herself, and he had not been impressed by her appearance in the witness box. She did not appear to be telling the truth. It seemed to him incredible that five witnesses should have been so mistaken.

Mrs. Duncan's solicitor said this had been a single and unfortunate lapse on the part of one who had remarkable powers. She was 34 and had a family of eight. On this one occasion she had stooped to the manipulation - (Mrs. Duncan: "I never") - of a garment to simulate a manifestation which ordinarily she produced at sittings. He hoped the Sheriff would bear in mind the tremendous faith which thousands of people had in Mrs. Duncan, and impose a penalty upon her which would shake the faith of these people as little as possible.

Not everybody, however, was convinced by the prosecution case, as was clear at the SNU conference¹².

Taken from *LIGHT* July 7, 1933 page 421

MR. M'INDOE ON THE DUNCAN PROSECUTION

Later in the proceedings, when a report from a subcommittee, appointed to consider the situation arising from the prosecution and conviction of Mrs. Duncan, was before the meeting, it was reported that the subcommittee were unanimously of the opinion, after hearing the facts bearing on the case, that the charges made against Mrs. Duncan were not supported by the weight of evidence at the trial.

Mr. M'Indoe stated that all of them knew that he had published a statement in *LIGHT* as to his opinion of the charges made against Mrs. Duncan early in February. When the trial came on, he went into the witness-box, after that statement had been read in court with, he thought, very damaging effect on Mrs. Duncan, and he then said witnesses for the prosecution, which on material points was much at variance with what the same witnesses had told him. He felt that he had acted in the only way he could. All the evidence he could find in three days when he first made enquiries resulted in nothing being found in Mrs. Duncan's favour. He felt that, as many people were booking sittings with Mrs. Duncan largely on the strength of his

¹² This was the 31st annual conference of the S.N.U., which met at Doncaster on Saturdays 1st July 1933. The conference was attended by 114 delegates.

recommendations, it was incumbent on him to make his position clear. A month had passed and he had exhausted all the sources of information available to him and he had come to a decision. So far as that decision contributed to Mrs. Duncan's conviction he sincerely regretted it, and he hoped this public statement would go far to mitigate the effect of his previous statement. He agreed with the findings of the Committee submitted to the Conference.

After a lengthy discussion a resolution was passed approving the report of the Committee by 57 votes to two.

What conclusions can we draw from this case?

- 1) as Bob Hartley has shown, (and Spiritualists like McIndoe came to realise) there is reason to think that the prosecution evidence was not as above board as claimed.
- 2) but Mrs Duncan, not for the first time, was a trial to Spiritualists who had attempted to manage her.
- 3) it is instructive to compare the witnesses in the 1933 trial with those in 1944. Oaten and McIndoe did not appear in 1944, even though by then their experience of her must have had to parallel..
- 4) if we are to understand the evidence presented in 1944, we ought to give more attention to the 1933 case. The best starting point is Bob Hartley's book¹³, this is now available through Psypioneer see 'Books for Sale' page 214.

LP...

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¹³ See: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

Sir Oliver Joseph Lodge

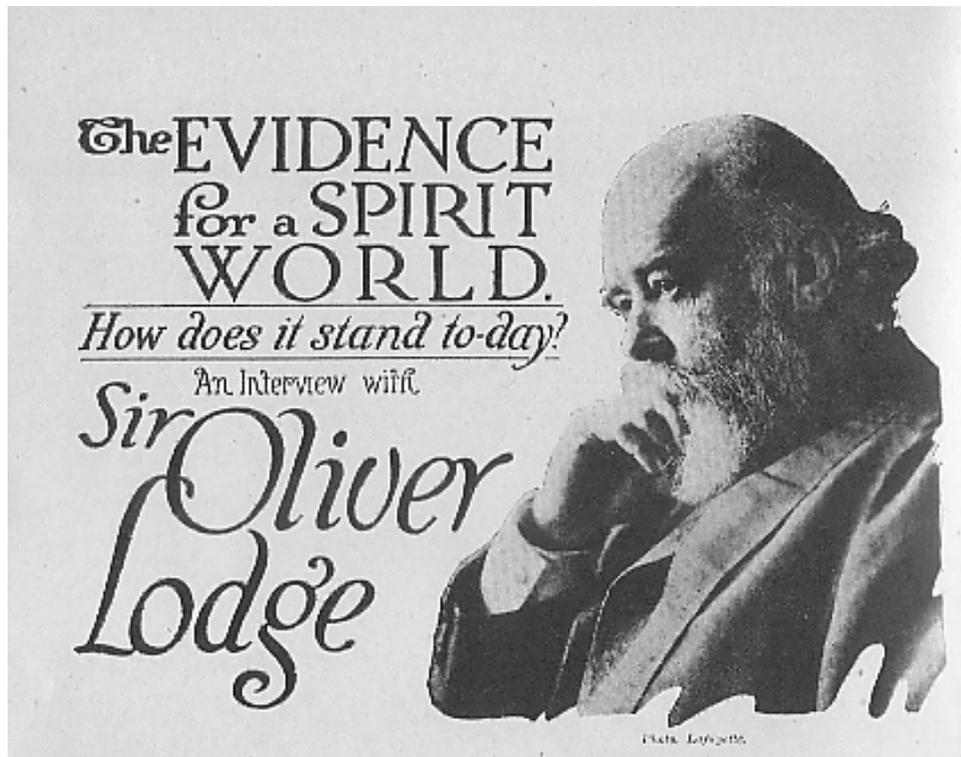
June 12th 1851 – August 22nd 1940

Was Sir Oliver a Spiritualist?

Many Spiritualists and, indeed, Spiritualist organisations claim Sir Oliver Lodge as one of their own – one of the great pioneers of Modern Spiritualism – but this was far from the truth: A psychical researcher, yes (and President of the Society for Psychical Research 1901-1903 and again jointly with Eleanor Sidgwick in 1932), but a Spiritualist? No way! When it came to religion, this highly regarded physicist and mathematician remained an Anglican – but with a well founded belief in the afterlife based on evidences received via mediumship.

His views on man's survival of physical death were well detailed in his own many books on the subject (the most famous being *Raymond, or Life and Death*, 1916) and in publications such as *Where Are The Dead?* (a compilation of a series of articles written by prominent philosophers and men of religion for the *Daily News*), 1928. An interesting and concise presentation is also to be found in a transcript of an interview he gave to *The Strand Magazine*, Vol. LVI, July-Dec, 1918 – presented below.

Garth Willey



“WELL, Sir Oliver,” began the interviewer, “I have been instructed to ask you how Spiritualism stands to-day?”

“I can't answer for Spiritualism,” Sir Oliver replied. “I don't much like the word myself, except as a term in Philosophy. In so far as Spiritualists constitute a sect, and hold religious services, I don't belong to it and have no sort of connection with it; though doubtless it attracts many good people.”

“But surely the subject has a scientific as well as an emotional and religious side?”

“Yes, like everything else; and on its scientific side it is at present commonly known as Psychical Research. The research began as an inquiry into unrecognized or partially recognized human faculty, and still continues on those lines; but incidentally the discovery of telepathy rendered probable the deduction that the body and the mind were not inseparable, and hence that one might survive the other. And further experience has led some of us to regard the fact of survival also as now at length scientifically demonstrated.”

“That is surely a matter of the first importance?”

“Yes, I agree; it is so important that great care and caution are necessary before it can be regarded as fully and finally established. In fact, I doubt if ever the proof will be so clinching as to overpower the hostility of those determined to think otherwise: with some of whom I cannot but sympathize since I realize their difficulties. I don't pretend that it is an easy matter to conceive of the personality and the memory surviving the destruction of the brain. All I claim is that if they are as a matter of fact found to be so surviving, it will amount to a demonstration that the brain is only an instrument or organ, made use of by something not material at all something which exists in the psychical, not the physical region, something which was only developed or trained in association with matter.

“The brain will then be relegated to its proper position as one of the organs of the body – an instrument for communicating, not an originating and thinking entity. Discarnate mind may still require some vehicle for manifestation, but it need not be a vehicle formed of the ordinary matter to which we are accustomed. Or if a brain is still necessary in order to communicate with us here and now, some portion of another person's brain may conceivably be occasionally utilized for that temporary purpose. Such a person would be what is called a medium: a medium of communication.”

“In your view, I take it, the independence of mind and matter is proven?”

“In popular terms, yes. The mind is more permanent than its bodily instrument: it certainly survives the present body, and remains completely itself.”

“Can you give me an idea of how this has been established?”

“Popularly speaking, by the experience of a multitude of bereaved persons. Scientifically speaking, by the system of cross-correspondence and other rather complicated kinds of evidence of continued identity.”

“Why do you distinguish between the two methods of proof, the scientific and the popular?”

“Because the possibility of telepathy from the sitter, or from the unconscious minds of other living persons, necessarily complicates what appears on the surface to be good evidence for a telepathic or other mental influence from the dead. To eliminate this bugbear of telepathy from the living, and establish the fact that the dead are just as vivid and active as those still in the body, has been the special effort of some leading members of the S.P.R. who have already gone over to the other side, and have there continued their work. And in my view – by classical and other literary ingenuities, and by the system of cross-correspondence whereby one mind was proved to be purposely and systematically acting on a number of independent mediums unknown to each other – they have been successful. But it is a matter of opinion on which students who devote sufficient time and attention to the documents may perhaps legitimately differ; though I am not aware that any such students, after all the experience they have now gained, actually do differ. The opinion of those who either have not the facts before them, or who do not think them worthy of study, is of course valueless.”

“Leaving those more recondite matters, can you give me an idea of what you call the popular proofs of survival?”

“Certainly. A fairly large number of bereaved people go anonymously, by arrangement made for them, to some reputable and trustworthy medium. No normal information is desired by such mediums, and none is given; they prefer to be in complete ignorance regarding their clients.

“Sometimes such a bereaved person is accompanied by an experienced note-taker, who records all that is said throughout. In many cases – I should say in the majority of cases dealt with by aid of a strong medium in good form – the evidence for the identity of a deceased communicator, who is represented as anxious to get into touch and to send messages – messages of affection and messages of identification – is felt to be strong; and occasionally it has been overwhelming.”

“In spite of the risk of possible mind-reading?”

“Well, that is a point that can hardly be settled on one case, or a few cases; its discussion involves a good deal of experience. The body of evidence which has now accumulated is very great, and the hypothesis of mind-reading from the sitter has to be stretched to near breaking-point in order to counteract the dramatic semblance of the whole, and reduce it, not indeed to normality, but to something less important than actual conversation with the intelligence and personality of the departed.”

“Can you remember a few instances?”

“I can remember in general terms a great many, but to make any real use of them the records in each case would have to be studied.”

“Yes; but let me give our readers some notion of the sort of thing that is felt to be satisfactory by those who go in distress and come away comforted. Some general idea of the kind of evidence that is got.”

“Well, I'm not sure that I ought to talk in general terms, and a great many of your readers already know of cases which might be given in illustration. But, inasmuch as a large number of men at the present time are facing death for our sake, it is perhaps only fair that the fact, as I consider it, that death is but an episode in continued existence, and that the interest and enjoyment of life after death exceed what has been experienced here, should be made more_widely known; and on that ground I may be excused for giving a rough summary of the popular evidence.”

“I wish you would.”

“Take, then, a young fellow killed in the war, and suppose his parents succeed in getting into touch with him. He will greet them in his accustomed manner, calling them by the name they are used to, from him. In some cases ‘Pater,’ in others ‘Dad,’ sometimes by an unusual nickname such as ‘Erb,’ sometimes simply ‘Father.’ Whatever had been customary, that is employed, in the most natural manner by the dead son. He may ask after his brothers and sisters by name, or at least by initial, for names are sometimes troublesome things to get through. He may give characteristic touches or comments about each, sometimes thereby showing that he knows in a general way what they are now doing. His own appearance can be described by the medium, and little trivial peculiarities or blemishes are often noted, such as scars or marks of an identifying character.

“As to incidents – I remember one case where a young deceased communicator said to his parents that he had made an appointment to meet his brother in France at a certain bridge, but that when they got to the rendezvous the bridge was no longer there, it had been blown up. A subsequent letter from the surviving brother in France completely confirmed this statement. The parents had known nothing about these facts at the time of the sitting.

“Here is another case : Three brothers were all killed; the medium gave the names of all three, to mother and sister who were present ; and one of them, the youngest, was represented as the spokesman, ultimately sending a message to his father – ‘Tell him that I have not been talking *all* the time.’ The verbal exuberance of this particular member of the family had often been humorously suppressed by the father.

“In another instance a boy spoke of something in a waistcoat-pocket which he wanted given to his young brother. His clothes had been folded and put away, but on examination a coin was found in the place described.

“A frequent test given is a description of the old house where the family had lived, small details and peculiarities being emphasized, arrangements of furniture, pattern on wall, and sometimes even the books in a bookcase being remembered.”

“It seems odd for trivial details to be remembered. Can they answer specific questions?”

“They do not always remember what the inquirer expects them to remember; and if they do, it is liable to be put down to mind-reading.

“To challenge a communicator suddenly to bethink himself of some forgotten incident, and to recall it to the sifter's memory, is to set a difficult problem; but occasionally even that can be responded to – as when an old fishing expedition was recalled wherein two boats were employed, and on the capture of an unwieldy fish by one, a native in the other boat had called out, 'Eh! look at yon fish, it's got a face like a mon.' But I am hardly justified in mentioning this case; for the facts have not been published, and I am insufficiently acquainted with them.

“Another incident, of a very different kind, concerns two boy-friends who died of illness within ten days of each other but separated by a considerable distance. The death of the first boy, named Herbert, was kept from the knowledge of the second; yet, when he too died, his friends report that he smiled and said, ‘Why, Herbert, I *am* glad to see you !’”

“Have you read Mr. E. F. Benson's recent book called 'Up and Down'?”

“Yes, I have; someone sent it me. He makes there a careful study of a character called Francis, which is the special feature of the book, and at the end he gives an example of an identifying message of a very strong and complete character.

“But the worst of it is, I don't know what is the precise foundation for this incident. A writer of fiction is not trammelled by fact, and though I presume the incident is based upon something definite, it may have been improved upon.”

“Does it seem to you unlikely?”

“The only unlikely thing about it is that so good a piece of evidence should have been got by a novice at his first sitting. That is unlikely; but as to the incident itself I don't see any reason for disbelieving it, if it were properly and responsibly and fully authenticated.”

“Do you know if Mr. Benson has done this?”

“I do not. Nor need he be challenged to produce his authority for what may be an imaginary episode; only people should remember to treat it as imaginary until claimed as authentic. I have no fault to find with it, as an imaginary episode, except that it is almost too thorough and complete. It does not, however, eliminate the possibility of telepathy from the living, as the writer evidently thinks it does. It could be regarded as an example of a deferred or stored telepathic impression, unconsciously produced on his friend during the secreting of objects in the box. I admit that the hypothesis is rather forced.”

“Tell me of some other incidents.”

“Some good ones were published by Mr. Wilkinson in the *London Magazine* for October, 1917. They are rather typical instances of the kind of thing that occurs. The name 'Poger,' for instance, and reference to a bronze thing like a coin, in his satchel. A similar case is related by Sir William Barrett in his book, 'On the Threshold of the Unseen,' page 184. A young officer who had been killed said he wanted a pearl tie-pin, which would be found in his kit, sent to a lady whom he named at a certain

address, saying that he had been secretly engaged to her. Nothing of all this was known by the family; but the communication was so clear that they wrote a letter of inquiry to the address given. The letter came back marked 'Unknown,' and the whole thing was thought to be imaginary or a meaningless fabrication.

“When his kit came back, however, a pearl tie-pin was found in it; and when later on his will was discovered, the young lady's name, just as it had been given at the sitting, was mentioned as his residuary legatee, and his engagement to her was admitted. Everything was correct, therefore, except the address. Why the address was wrong I don't know. The fact that it was wrong perhaps allowed the other portions of the communication to be verified in a more gradual manner. But usually in cases of this kind there is some little part of the communication which is wrong; and it is most charitable to attribute the error to difficulties in communication, or to unsuspected lapse of the medium into normality; like a sort of momentary waking up in the middle of a dream, and then continuing it again after an interval of imaginative inventiveness not justified by anything in the main dream, nor by anything for which the main communicator was responsible; indeed, he might not know that it had been interpolated.”

“Mistakes of that kind must increase the difficulty of satisfactory proof?”

“Undoubtedly. Human instruments, however honest and painstaking, are necessarily defective at times, and these little uprushes or lapses into normality – often called 'padding ' or by other severer names – can, perhaps, hardly be avoided. An experienced investigator generally tries to allow for and understand and discount them; though, of course, he records them all, and rather emphasizes them than otherwise. They often puzzle and disconcert a novice; and indeed in a bad sitting, when the medium is out of order, they may be sufficient to disconcert anybody.

“But the difference between a good sitting and a bad one is very great; and though a bad sitting may be misinterpreted or thought too well of, it is barely possible to mistake a really good one. Also, of course, it is during the good periods that the best proofs are obtained.”

“A good medium, I presume, is one with whom the good periods predominate?”

“Exactly. There is no such thing as infallibility.”

“Are things not sometimes thought wrong which really turn out right?”

“Yes; some striking examples of messages at first thought wrong or meaningless, but subsequently found justified by rather laborious inquiry among comparative strangers, are given in the books of Mr. J. Arthur Hill - 'Psychical Investigations' and 'Man is a Spirit' (Cassell). I have come across singular cases of this kind myself. In such cases telepathy from the sitter, as an explanation, is absurdly impossible. The survival hypothesis, in practice, *works*: all others require straining, and supplementing, and using alternatively on different occasions.”

“You are, then, satisfied that existence is not limited to this present life on earth?”

“I am, absolutely. And death now seems to me something rather to look forward to than to dread. Clearly it is an interesting adventure; and usually I don't really think that the episode itself is a painful one. Recovery from an accident or from unconsciousness – the coming to – may be painful, but the passing away usually is not.”

“Would it not be well that this knowledge should be more widely disseminated?”

“If people have a reasonable knowledge of what to expect when they find themselves suddenly transferred to other conditions, the transition is hardly even a shock. It is surely desirable that people who face great dangers should be prepared for what may happen to them, and take it as a part of life's experience. It is certainly wrong, and desperately misguided, to seek that experience prematurely; but sooner or later it is bound to come, and if it come in the course of duty and in a struggle for a noble cause, they may be happier to whom it thus comes than we who will soon encounter it in a more prosaic way. They may be happy in the opportunity. The readiness is all.”

ELIZABETH PRETTY

ADDS TO 'AN AUSTRALIAN PIONEER'

In last month's issue we brought attention to a somewhat unknown Australian pioneer Mr. J. T. McLeod Craig in an article by Horace Leaf¹⁴ 'An Australian Pioneer' *MR. J. T. McLeod Craig and his Work*.

Elizabeth Pretty who is president of The Spiritualist Alliance (Auckland) Inc¹⁵ adds to the story of this pioneering Spiritualist.

Elizabeth writes: -

The brief record of Mr J.T. McLeod Craig was very interesting. I have a August 2005 copy of a newsletter issued by an Auckland church now known as West Lynn Spiritualist Church. The following short extract comes from a brief history of that church and reads:

'It appears that the church was founded as 'The Spiritual Scientist Church' in 1913 by Mr. J. T. McLeod Craig. It was then sited in Karangahape Road. Mr J.T. McLeod Craig was a herbalist and had a shop in Newton Arcade, later shifting to Dominion Road. He was a magnetic healer and was said to have medical clairvoyance. he gave lantern lectures and talks on healing and spiritual matters. He apparently commuted

¹⁴ An Australian Pioneer: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.7July08..pdf>

¹⁵ Meeting places around New Zealand – The Spiritualist Alliance (Auckland) Inc. President Elizabeth Pretty see: - <http://www.lighthousespiritualcentre.ca/Churches/churchnewzealand.html> also see Spiritualist Churches in New Zealand: - <http://www.wisdomseekers.co.nz/spmtglist06.html>

between here and Australia forming four churches which he visited regularly. Mrs. McLeod Craig also assisted in the church work and attended to the herbal shop.'

So far I haven't come across any other Spiritualist church in Auckland with connections to Mr. J.T. McLeod Craig. Our church, The Spiritualist Alliance [Auckland] Inc. was founded in 1911 so the West Lynn and the Alliance are two oldest churches still extant in Auckland.

Trust you will find this of interest.

With best wishes,

Elizabeth Pretty

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See Psypioneer 3.6 issue: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.6June07..pdf>

*'Magical Spiritualism a warning address given in 1878 to mark thirty years of Modern Spiritualism'*, Andrew Jackson Davis. Published May 2000 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 7pp £2.00 incl. U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

*'The Mystery of Stainton Moses an address given in 1992 on the centenary of his death'* Leslie Price Published December 1999 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 8pp £2.50 Inc U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

*'Occultism and Spiritualism – a book review by, Stainton Moses originally published under the pseudonym M.A. (Oxon). Published 1999 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 10pp £2.50 Inc U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).*

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Paul J. Gaunt