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Fox News



Mrs. Margaret Fox

1796 – 1865

Introductory Note by Psypioneer- In the reflections below the Editor calls attention to old and new evidence - and unsolved problems - in the case of the Fox sisters.

1) The consistency of Mrs Fox

Psypioneer has previously published in full the first Hydesville report, “Mysterious Noises” April 1848 by E. E. Lewis.¹ This contains Mrs. Fox’s signed statement on the Hydesville hauntings.

But Stanley Grimes,² in his 1857 *The Mysteries of Human Nature...*³ provided me with a second interview given by Mrs. Fox, on the 1st May, 1851: -

¹ Vol. 1.12: - http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP12.pdf

² See: - Volume 3.12 page 267 – “*Origin of Modern Spiritualism*”
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.12December07..pdf> also Volume 5.4 page 119 – “*James Stanley Grimes: – Fox séance*” <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09..pdf>

³ “*The Mysteries of Human Nature Explained by a New System of Nervous Physiology: to which is added A Review of the Errors of Spiritualism.....*” By J. Stanley Grimes, R.M. Wanzer 1857 pages 364 - 365

The following is Mrs. Fox's account, as published by *Mr. Ch. W. Elliott*:

“ ‘Twas in December of the year 1847, that she moved from Rochester into this hired house. Very soon, they were disturbed, after going to bed, by various noises, which, however, did not attract much attention, as they supposed them to be made by the rats, which do sometimes, of themselves, have strange doings. It is a pity, that the age and condition of the house are not stated in either account. They were, however, disturbed, and, indeed, kept awake some, until they began to suspect, that mischievous persons might be playing tricks. Examination, however, did not show any such explanation, and they were obliged to content themselves with the rats, until, after a space of nearly four months, when, on the last day of March, year 1848, they determined to go to bed early, so as to get a good night's rest, in spite of all noise; but this was not permitted. The thought *then* struck *Mrs. Fox*, whose bed was in the same room with that of her two daughters, *Margaretta*, aged fifteen, and *Katy*, aged twelve, that she would question the noise.

“ ‘Who makes the noise?’

“ ‘Is it made by any person living?’

“ ‘Is it made by any one dead ?’ Rap.

“ ‘If by an injured spirit?’ Rap.

“ ‘If injured by her or her family?’

“ ‘If by various other names?’

“ ‘Getting no further reply, she arose, somewhat excited, and called her husband, and some of the neighbors, who were yet up.

“The two girls, so *Mrs. Fox* states, were not apparently as much excited as she was, but entered, with some spirit, into the doings of the other spirit, one of them snapping her fingers, and asking the spirit to do as they did, which it did do.

“One of the neighbors followed up the injured spirit, asking, when the injury was done? Five raps, indicating, as they supposed, five years.

“What name did the injury?’ Rap, at the name mentioned of a man who lived there some five years before.

“Is the body here, then, in the cellar?’ A rap was heard, and they determined to dig, but somehow learned that they must delay it some four months, and, of course, did so.

“*Mrs. F.* stated, that, upon digging at the time mentioned, her son, and two others, found some pieces of bone, but whether or not those of a man, does not seem to have been ascertained. The person accused by the spirit, she said, was much outraged, but took no very efficient steps to remove so questionable an accusation. *Mrs. Fox* stated, that she left the house, and lived with some friends, as the excitement for, or against them, was so considerable; but, strange to say, the

sounds followed her two girls, and, in the course of the summer, the alphabet was revealed to the son, when alone, in the wonderful house.

“The son’s wife, also, for a time, she stated, was a ‘medium,’ for such is the title now used, but has, somehow, lost the gift.”

“Mr. Ch. W. Elliott”, refers to Charles Wyllys Elliott, and the above account was taken originally from his book: - ‘*Mysteries; or, Glimpses of the Supernatural Containing Accounts...*’ published by Harper Brothers, New York, 1852 pages 117 - 119. This is now available as a free download.⁴

[Incidentally, Elliott refers to the “*Authorized Edition*” of the Hydesville story as told by D. M. Dewey in his “*History of the strange sounds or rappings, Heard in Rochester and Western New York, and usually called the Mysterious Noises...*”⁵. He makes no independent mention of the Lewis report!]

Writers do not generally draw attention to this Mrs Fox interview, probably because it appears on the surface to bring in no new material; however it is, if authentic, quite important to the historian because it shows consistency in her story for the first three years; also it shows the early consistency of her daughters’ ages,⁶ and it updates her first hand account with the events that followed shortly after her Lewis statement.⁷

⁴ <http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=RvCPTLehbdYC&ie=ISO-8859-1&output=html> Also re-published by BiblioLife, H.B., ISBN: 0559619960

⁵ Full Title: - “History of the strange sounds or rappings, heard in Rochester and western New-York, and usually called the mysterious noises! Which are supposed by many to be communications from the spirit world, together with all the explanation that can as yet be given of the matter.” Rochester, D.M. Dewey, 1850.

⁶ See recently Vol. 4, 9, page 186: - *The Fox Sisters: Riddle of the records* by Lis J. Warwood. <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.9September08..pdf>

⁷ Robert Dale Owen, informs us in his first book “*Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*”, that as early as 1859 the original Lewis report was then very scarce, see page 208

2) The ‘Embellishments’ by Leah Fox-Underhill

In 1885 Ann Leah Underhill,⁸ the eldest Fox sister published⁹ “*The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*”¹⁰ This publication is available as a free download.¹¹ Chapter One of this book starts with the 1848 Lewis report: - *The following statements were made by the different persons whose names are signed to them, and taken down in writing as they made them: after which they were carefully read to them, and signed by them. They comprise but a small number of those who heard these noises, or have been knowing to these transactions; but they are deemed sufficient to satisfy the public mind in regard to their truthfulness.*

The first statement is her mother’s “*Certificate of Mrs. Margaret Fox, wife of John D. Fox, the present occupant of the house*”.

Leah claimed that the Lewis certificate of her mother’s testimony as published in her book is authentic; so it remained since 1885 as a point of reference. No doubt due to the rarity of the Lewis report, it was unchallenged as no comparison report was readily available, until the original Lewis report was published in Psypioneer (April 2005).

However the reader of this statement published in full in Leah’s book, which is signed April 11th 1848 by Margaret Fox, was *not* informed that the original statement of her mother had been *substantially changed*. Many writers and Spiritualist organisations are still, to-day, using the Ann Leah Underhill statement as to the early beginnings of Modern Spiritualism at Hydesville, believing that it is the authentic version as produced by Mr. E. E. Lewis in 1848.

Much of the wording has been changed and exaggerated by Leah throughout the Lewis report extracts, although Mrs Fox’s question and answers session with the alleged spirit do generally remain the same as the original.

Also, Leah’s account substantially sensationalised e.g. from a singular phenomena to a collective. Mrs. Fox stated in the original Lewis report: *it sounded if the chair moved on the floor....* Leah’s version read: *it sounded as if the furniture was moved....*

Below is more of what Leah has added to Mrs. Fox’s original signed statement as recorded in the Lewis report: -

My husband stationed himself outside of the door while I stood inside, and the knocks came on the door between us. We heard footsteps in the pantry, and walking downstairs; we could not rest, and I then concluded that the house must be haunted by some unhappy, restless spirit. I had

⁸ Leah, then Mrs. Fish, did not attend the Hydesville hauntings, and knew nothing of them until the whole family had moved away from the house.

⁹ This was “Revised and arranged by a literary friend” person unknown.

¹⁰ Thomas R. Knox & Co, New York.

¹¹ <http://openlibrary.org/details/missinglinkinmod00underich>

often heard of such things, but never witnessed anything of the kind that I could not account for before.

“My youngest child (Cathie) said: “Mr Splitfoot, do as I do,”

....Then Cathie said, in her childish simplicity: ‘O mother, I know what it is: tomorrow is April-fool day, and it’s somebody trying to fool us’

I then said: ‘If it was an injured spirit, make two raps,’ which were instantly made, causing the house to tremble....

[We may also note that the two girls’ names have been added to the statement; they were not named in the original report. In contrast, we find the ages of the two girls:*The youngest girl is about 12 years old;The other girl, who is in her 15th year...*have been removed! The three sisters continually lied about their ages, [*The Fox Sisters: Riddle of the records*, by Lis J. Warwood.¹²]

3) Some early errors.

There is sometimes confusion in references to various early Hydesville booklets. E.E. Lewis 1848, D.M. Dewey 1850, Henry D. Baron and Eliab W. Capron 1850. All had long titles but collectively were often referred to in short as “*Mysterious Noises*”.

One further error was pointed out by Barbara Weisberg. Dewey in his 1850 booklet wrongly stated that Maggie, not Kate, had originally accompanied Leah to Rochester, an assertion that was often repeated.¹³

Another error appeared in the Baron and Capron booklet 1850¹⁴ on page 12,¹⁵ “... *At the time these occurrences first took place in the family, there were living with the parents three daughters, the youngest about twelve years of age.*”

This error may have come into being as Mrs. Fox stated in her original Lewis statement: - “*There was four of our family, and sometimes five*” - it is likely that Mrs. Fox was referring to Leah’s daughter Lizzie.

Robert Dale Owen published in 1860 “*Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World*”, While referring to the Hydesville events as recorded by Lewis, Capron etc, Owen also adds his own *new*

¹² Vol. 4. 9, page 186: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.9September08..pdf>

¹³ *Talking to the Dead* Harper SanFrancisco, 2004, page 95

¹⁴ 1850 second edition, revised and enlarged, with additional proof

¹⁵ Kessinger Publishing, facsimile: - www.kessinger.net – See: - <http://www.kessinger.net/searchresults-orderthebook.php?ISBN=1432667696>

narrative bringing in a different verbal version of the evening of March 31st 1848. It is at this point for example we now have added to the story “Here old Splitfoot, do as I do”.¹⁶

It is noteworthy that Leah also republishes other statements in her book which were taken by Lewis and included in his original 1848 report. Her father’s statement (April 11th 1848) remains basically the same, but edited without notation. However in the important William Duesler statement (April 12th 1848) Underhill slightly modifies or makes an error by involving Mr. Fox more. In the questioning of the alleged peddler spirit she changes Mrs. to Mr. She again makes no notation for the changes in Duesler’s statement. Finally, she curtails the statement, explaining:-

NOTE.-The remainder of Mr. Duesler’s statement does not vary from that of my mother and others, and, for want of room, is omitted.

I consider William Duesler’s statement *important* because we have here the first use of the alphabet / code that would later (via David Fox) make the Fox daughters famous in Rochester; contrary to what Leah states, it is not in any other statement taken. Duesler recalled: -

I then tried to ascertain the first letters of its name [the peddler], by calling, over the different letters of the alphabet. I commenced with A, and asked if that was the initial of its first name? there was no rapping. When I came to C, the rapping was heard, and at no other letter in the alphabet. I then asked in the same way, in regard to the initial of its sir-name; and when I asked if it was B? the rapping commenced. We then tried all the other letters, but could get no answer by the usual rapping. I then asked if we could find out the whole name by reading over all the letters of the alphabet? and there was no rapping.

4) Charles B. Rosma, or Charles Rayn?

In my earlier enquiry “What is known of the Hydesville Peddler?”¹⁷ my intention was chiefly to record how the peddler’s name came to be. It was early claimed by Capron and by later reports that the peddler’s name was given to David Fox who called the alphabet at the Fox house in Hydesville sometime during the summer (or later) of 1848.

Charles B. Rosma or Rosna¹⁸ is synonymous with the Hydesville hauntings, in fact he is the central pivot of the whole story, and this name is considered, in most literature and major Spiritualist organisations, as the first spirit to communicate through a code, resulting in the beginnings of what became known as Modern Spiritualism.

¹⁶ See: - Vol. 5.6., page 187 - *How Old Splitfoot Infiltrated Spiritualism*, by Garth Willey: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

¹⁷ Volume 1.9 page 82: - http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP9.pdf

¹⁸ The name Rosna came in after Rosma. It may seem that the name Charles B Rosna came into being in 1870 by Emma Hardinge in her *Modern American Spiritualism* pages 36 & 39. It would appear that this is possibly a spelling / publishers error, I would doubt that Hardinge would bring in another name for the peddler without some explanation in contradicting Owen’s Rosma?

For example in the Spiritualists' National Union (SNU) basic education course (B1) Introduction to Spiritualism,¹⁹ we find ".....they realised that the noises were created by the spirit of a man whose name was Charles B. Rosna."²⁰

The Center for Spiritualist Studies in America²¹ supports Spiritualist scholars in research. We find "....."The advent of Modern Spiritualism dates back to March 31, 1848 when the Spirit of a deceased peddler, Charles B. Rosna (aka Mr Splitfoot), communicated..."

Although the peddler's name is regarded generally as a *fact* in Spiritualism there is no actual evidence to substantiate this.²² His name was not communicated at the time of the Hydesville hauntings as claimed by the various authors and by major Spiritualist organisations worldwide. Spiritualists and their originations generally assert that Margaret (Maggie) and Catherine (Kate) devised a code, but this is an error.

It may seem, as in the case of the term *Old Splitfoot*, that the name *Charles B. Rosma* also came from Robert Dale Owen's verbal exchanges with the Fox family whom he met at the house of David Fox in August 1859. The earliest works that use the name Charles B. Rosma are referenced directly or indirectly to Owen's *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* 1860 rather than 1848! E.g., William Howitt,²³ Epes Sargent,²⁴ Fritz...²⁵

But the earliest recorders of the Hydesville manifestations, included E.E. Lewis, 1848, D.M. Dewey, 1850, Henry Baron and E. W. Capron 1850, Capron's "Modern Spiritualism" 1855, and Stanley Grimes 1857. All these early original reports did not give the name Charles B. Rosma (or similar); in fact they did not give any name.²⁶

¹⁹ <http://www.snu.org.uk/Education/b1.htm>

²⁰ See reference note 18

²¹ <http://www.centerforspiritualiststudies.org/spiritualism.htm> - The Center for Spiritualist Studies (Spiritualist Seminary) was established with the belief that: the science, philosophy and religion of Modern Spiritualism and the National Spiritualist Association of Churches (NSAC) depend upon the continuity and transmission of principles and beliefs to the future leadership, lay personnel and membership; and that the evolution and deepening of Spiritualist insights to benefit humanity depend upon supporting Spiritualist scholars in research, publication and seminars for the public.

²² Volume 1.9 page 92, *Did the peddler exist?*: - http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP9.pdf

²³ Howitt's account of Hydesville is based on Owen's narrative: - *The History of the Supernatural*, William Howitt. J. B. Lippincott & Co 1863.

²⁴ *Planchette the Despair of Science*, Roberts Brothers Boston 1869 (author was anonymous)

²⁵ Uses reference to Owen wholly, and refers the reader to *Footfalls: Where are the Dead? Or Spiritualism Explained*, Simpkin, Marshal & Co., London 1875 (3rd edition). Fritz's real name was F (Fred). A. Binney, he was an active committee member of the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS.)

²⁶ Its interesting to also note that Leah did not give the peddler's name either

5) Was Henry Spicer right after all?

In my original article²⁷ I suggested that Capron, [Eliab Wilkinson] made an error while reprinting²⁸ an extract from William Duesler's statement contained within the E.E. Lewis report. In that statement (April 12th 1848) the initials of the communicator, the alleged peddler, were given as C.B. Capron recorded these as C.R. I claimed this as perhaps the first historical error in the Hydesville case!

Now, as previously stated, early authors did not give the peddler's name, that is except Henry Spicer and later works become confused with variations of Rosma (e.g. Rosna, as referred to in the 2005 article, which was popularised by Robert Dale Owen.)

Henry Spicer's peddler's name has been overlooked by historians as recorded in his pre-Capron book 'Sights and Sounds: The Mystery of the Day'²⁹ published in 1853: -

Noted Media pages 59 – 60

Hence it appears that up to this time,³⁰ sounds were only made when either an affirmative reply was intended, or numbers were designated. Subsequently, however, a more general attention having been awakened, and various means canvassed, with a view to improve the mode of communication, a person present conceived the idea of interrogating the sound-maker by means of the alphabet. Accordingly, the spirit was asked whether, if the alphabet were called over, it would rap for the letters composing its name. The reply was in the affirmative, and the name of "Charles Rayn," was spelled out.

A series of five raps, in quick succession, having been frequently noticed, it was ascertained, by question and experiment, that this was a signal for the alphabet.

Thus we arrive at the conclusion that, in this spirit-language, an affirmative is conveyed by a single rap (though, perhaps, emphasized by more), a negative by silence. Five raps demand the alphabet, and that may be called over, vivâ voce, or else, in a printed form, laid upon a table, and the finger, or a pencil, slowly passed along it when, on arriving at the required letter, a rap is heard; the querist then recommences, until and sentences are spelled out, upon the accuracy or intelligence displayed in which, depends, in a great degree, the amount of faith popularly accorded to these manifestations.

²⁷ Volume 1.9 page 82: - http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP9.pdf

²⁸ Modern Spiritualism 1855

²⁹ *Sight and Sounds: The Mystery of the Day Comprising an Entire History of the America "Spirit" Manifestations* by Henry Spicer, Esq Thomas Bosworth, London 1853: -

³⁰ Spicer is refering to Mrs. Fox's statement (April 11th 1848)

It is quite astonishing that no serious attention has ever been given to this statement. I recall no reference in *any* other work to the name Charles Rayn. Yet the name Rayn is so different to the other names given, it cannot be put down to spelling error: -

What if Capron did not actually make an error as I previously suggested? And that the initials of the communicator, the alleged peddler, were in fact C.R as stated by Capron? Perhaps Lewis had misprinted the initials as C.B.; **R & B** could be very easily mistaken by writer or printer?

We are told that the peddler was never traced; but we have always assumed the name was, is or similar to, Charles B. Rosma.

WHAT IF the Peddlers full name was in fact, that which was first recorded: - **Charles Rayn**? Has anyone ever checked?

6) Modern books on Hydesville

Below I have looked at some recent books dealing in part with Hydesville. Today with so much available information and original documentation on line, e.g., the Lewis report, *Kessinger Publishing Legacy Reprints*,³¹ Google books, etc, authors can obtain almost the entire original documentation of the Hydesville hauntings. However the authors below appear at times to have copied from other works with the kind of errors we have discussed.

Robert S. Cox: - *Body and Soul*, University of Virginia Press. 2003.

David Fontana:³² - *Is there an afterlife*, O Books. 2005

Todd Jay Leonard, PH.D: - *Talking to the Other Side.....* Universe, Inc 2005

Stephen Chism: - *The Afterlife of Leslie Stringfellow*, Fullcourte Press. 2005

Maurice Leonard: - *People from the Other side The Enigmatic Fox Sisters.....* The History Press 2008

Deborah Blum: - *Ghost Hunters*, Arrow Books. 2007

Although Arthur Conan Doyle's "*History of Spiritualism*" is not a recent book, it is still regarded by many as a standard text book; for example it is used by some of the authors cited above. It is also used in the S.N.U.'s, education courses, but Doyle republished the Mrs. Margaret Fox *signed* statement (April 11th 1848) as altered by Anne Leah in 1885 as previously detailed, complete with *Splitfoot* as outlined by Garth Willey. Doyle informed the reader that he had been

³¹ <http://www.kessinger.net>

³² Fontana brings in another name for the Peddler: - Charles Rosa page 95

presented ³³ with a facsimile of the original 1848 Lewis report, *but apparently did not note* that Anne Leah had substantially altered this! These alterations need to be pointed out to the student, but it is feared that some of the Course Tutors themselves are unaware of the important historical inaccuracies.

Paul J. Gaunt.

The Marriage of Miss Kate Fox

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Article taken from: - *The Spiritualist* Jan, 1st 1873 page 57: -

ON Saturday, December 14th, 1872, Miss Kate Fox, so well known as the medium through whom modern ritual manifestations first began in America (about twenty years ago, when she was a mere child), was married to Mr. Henry Diedrich Jencken, barrister-at-law, etc., etc., at the old parish church, Saint Marylebone. The marriage ceremony was performed in the presence of a few personal friends only; had the approach of the happy event been generally known beforehand, there is no doubt that there would have been a very large attendance of Spiritualists on the occasion.

The bride was dressed simply in white and lace, with a half wreath of white flowers in her hair. Miss Ogden, her companion, who was richly dressed in black silk and point lace, carried her veil; at the altar Dr. Bird, who gave away the bride; a few other intimate friends were likewise present. The marriage service was conducted by the Rev. Mr. Braithwaite. At its conclusion the bridal party drove to 45, York place. The guests present at the breakfast were Miss Ogden, an American lady, who came to England in company with her intimate friend, Miss Fox; Dr. Fred. Tomkins, an old and dear friend of Mr. Jencken, author of several works on Roman Law, and a gentleman well known in America; Dr. George Bird, and Miss Bird, of 49, Welbeck-street; Mr. Henry Cholmondeley-Pennell, the poet, and Mrs. Pennell; Mr. James Wason, of Liverpool; and Mr. William H. Harrison.

In the course of the few speeches which were made at the breakfast, most heartfelt good wishes for the happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Jencken were expressed. The spirits, also, took part in the proceedings by means of loud raps emanating from various parts of the room; they also

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<sup>33</sup> Page 20 Vol. 1., *The History of Spiritualism* Published Psychic Press, London 1989 (orig 1926) still available at: - [www.psychicnewsbookshop.co.uk](http://www.psychicnewsbookshop.co.uk)

manifested their presence by repeated movements of the breakfast table, which, despite of its burden, including the huge wedding-cake, was tilted several times bodily off the ground.

There was nothing to mar the pleasure of the party, except a toast which was given by Mr. Jencken, in which he alluded to some trials which his bride had passed through since her arrival in England; a tinge of sadness then passed momentarily over her face. Messages of a private nature, for Mr. Jencken, from Miss Fox's departed mother, were spelt out. Mr. Harrison asked whether the spirits could carry a message that morning to any friends in America. The raps said, "Yes; to Maggie" (Miss Fox's sister). He then asked them to say, "Your sister Katie was married to-day in the presence of nine loving friends." He asked if they could also give the message to Mr. Mansfield in New York, as so many different spirits were able to communicate through him. The spirits replied that they would try. This was at three o'clock; so that the time in America was then about ten in the morning. Some jocular remarks were also made by the spirits, and one of them of the name of Taylor signalled out- "Jencken is his own master no longer"-a message created much merriment. The same spirit added, "Meet again on Tuesday week."

Later in the day Mr. and Mrs. Jencken left London for Tunbridge Wells. We are sure that all Spiritualists will join with us in wishing them every happiness. Mr. Jencken is one of the few professional gentlemen who years ago was not afraid to publish what he knew about Spiritual phenomena at a time when the promulgation of such truths produced more ridicule and required more moral courage than at present.

Mr and Mrs. Jencken returned to London yesterday, and will probably visit Paris soon.

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[Henry and Kate Jencken bore two sons, Ferdinand Dietrich Lowenstein Jencken, born 19th September 1873 at Brompton, England. Henry Jr was born at the home of Leah and Daniel Underhill, in New York around, January 1875, in the absence of his father.]

Henry Diedrich Jencken



Barrister, Psychical Researcher and a Spiritualist

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Mr. Henry Diedrich Jencken was born in Peckham, Surrey, England. Most independent references give his birth year as 1828 and he died on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1881, three days after suffering a stroke. This date is according to the British journal, *The Herald of Progress*.<sup>34</sup> Some web pages give the actual date of death as November 26<sup>th</sup>. It is interesting to note Jencken's suggested age as researched in a previous Psypioneer article, *The Fox Sisters: Riddle of the records* by Lis J. Warwood; that he was born around 1824.<sup>35</sup>

Jencken often witnessed and examined the mediumship of D.D. Home and reported some of his investigations in *Human Nature*.<sup>36</sup> It seems that Jencken also helped to support Home: - "*Jencken was an ardent spiritualist who had bankrolled Home during a period of financial trouble.*" (William Brock.)<sup>37</sup> He also served on the committee for the London Dialectical Society whose

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<sup>34</sup> December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1881 page 264

<sup>35</sup> Volume 4.9 page 194: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.9September08..pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Some reports are published in *Nineteenth Century Miracles* by Emma Hardinge Britten, William Britten, Manchester December 1883 pages 144 – 146.

<sup>37</sup> *William Crookes (1832-1919) and the Commercialization of Science*, by William Hodson Brock, Ashgate, 2008 page 196. See Psypioneer book reviews page 176: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.7July08..pdf> also, Comments by Barry Wiley author of Annie Fay, page 39: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09..pdf>

report was published in 1871;<sup>38</sup> he read a paper on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1869 as found within the 1873 (edition) report, in support of Spiritualism entitled “Spiritualism, its Phenomena, and the Laws that Regulate its Origin”<sup>39</sup>. Jencken was a founder member of the British National Association of Spiritualists<sup>40</sup> (BNAS) established 1873; Jencken was one of the first Vice-Presidents.

It seems that his business interests also included fellow Vice-President Edmund Dawson Rogers, as recorded in the *London Gazette* December 3, 1880. The business address given for Rogers, was 13 Whitefriars Street E.C. This was the temporary office for the Eclectic Publishing Company, Limited see: - *The Origins of Light*<sup>41</sup>

In Fournier D’Albe’s – *The Life of Sir William Crookes*, D Appleton and Company New York, D’Albe, on page 225 we find another link: -

*“From details supplied by a member of the Crookes family, I learn that Mr. Jencken, who married Kate Fox, was a former employee of Crookes’s and a very honest man, who hoped to rescue Kate from her tendency towards alcoholism”*

Presumably if this statement is correct Crookes used Jencken in business avenues, or in his legal capacity.

[I found all the above mentioned books, with the exception of Fournier D’Albe, available to read online,<sup>42</sup> see: - [http://books.google.com/advanced\\_book\\_search](http://books.google.com/advanced_book_search)]

We have previously published in *Psypioneer* an extract of Jencken addressing the National Association of Spiritualists on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1875.<sup>43</sup> Below is a short address from a meeting held at the Marylebone Society. In *Psypioneer* December 2006 we published *The story of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association 1872-1928*;<sup>44</sup> this society is still with us today.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This was published by the society in 1871, and subsequently reprinted with additional material by James Burns (London) in 1873. I have not seen the original 1871 so all references are directed to the later 1873 edition.

<sup>39</sup> Pages 115 – 127 J. Burns, London

<sup>40</sup> Use *Psypioneer* search engine for: - *British National Association of Spiritualists* - [www.woodlandway.org](http://www.woodlandway.org)

<sup>41</sup> Volume 4.11 page 276: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.11November08..pdf>

<sup>42</sup> Limited preview, but all appropriate pages were accessible

<sup>43</sup> Volume 3.4 page 77: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.4April07..pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Volume 2.12 page 260: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.12December06..pdf>

<sup>45</sup> *Spiritualist Association of Great Britain* (S.A.G.B.) see: - <http://www.sagb.org.uk/>  
<http://www.sagb.org.uk/> .

Below is taken from *The Spiritualist*, April, 1873 page 169.

### **SPIRITUALISM IN MARLEBONE**

*ON Monday, April 6th, at the quarterly meeting of the Marylebone Society for the Investigation of Spiritualism, held at 90, Church-street, Paddington, Mr. H. D. Jencken, H.R.I., Barrister-at-Law, presided, and there was a large attendance of members and their friends.*

*The Chairman said that the report of the secretary set forth that the society was formed a year ago, with only six members, the number of whom had since increased to fifty-two. He was informed that the society desired to increase the number of its members, and to raise money enough to obtain the use of a hall, in which the researches might be prosecuted. It was proposed that the members should follow the example of the Dialectical Society, by forming themselves into committees, in order that in their own homes they might learn more about the wonderful phenomena of Spiritualism, and to what extent they were true. When he (Mr. Jencken) began to investigate, he was not convinced at once; on the contrary, he attended dozens of seances. and witnessed very many hard, stern facts, to make sure that he was standing on firm ground, and that his spiritual friends were not mad. It was hard to believe that spirits were near to us, or to accept the facts before seeing many positive proofs, the result of hard real investigation, such as was necessary in making all advances in scientific knowledge, and of all the sciences Spiritualism, with its mighty array of magnificent phenomena, was eminently worthy of examination. (Applause.)*

*The members would first have to obtain and observe the phenomena, then to discuss them, thereby gradually clearing their brains of cobwebs, as he had had to do himself at the outset. The treasurer's report was not prepared, but every member probably knew its leading features; if not, they could pass it without understanding anything of its contents, as was customary at the majority of general meetings, where far greater interests were involved. (Laughter.) They might as well, therefore, go at once to the subject of music.*

*A library in connection with the society would be formed soon. (Applause.)*

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## Henry Diedrich Jencken the Barrister:-

Louisa and George Lowe, the vicar of a small Devonshire parish of Upottery, were married in 1842. In the summer of 1869 Louisa and her sister visited the London professional medium Mrs. Mary Marshall where her sister received a message from their dead brother. Moved by this experience Louisa later discovered that she was able to produce passive writing:<sup>46</sup>-

*Therefore I tried to develop in myself the passive-writing power, and after some weeks of daily, short, solitary seances, unintelligible strokes gave way to letters, and passive writing recorded the names of all I loved best in Spirit-land, with many sweet words of affection and comfort. Soon, very soon, after this I became a fully-developed writing medium, of unusual power I believe; for we - that is, Passive Writing and I - dialogued together for hours at a time. I was very lonely, and this intercourse so fascinated me that for several days I did little else than enjoy it.*

In November 1872, Henry Jencken, led the legal team representing Mrs. Louisa Lowe who had been incarcerated in a lunatic asylum. The legal team had to show that the Lunacy Commissioners kept Louisa Lowe in unlawful imprisonment on the grounds of insanity, knowing her to be sane. A difficult task no doubt, for a Spiritualist plaintiff and Spiritualist barrister in 1872!

The Louisa Lowe story is told in *The Darkened Room*, by Alex Owen.<sup>47</sup> There is limited preview to this book at Google books.<sup>48</sup> Owen mentions Jencken just once: “*Mr Henry Jencken, who was to marry the American medium, Kate Fox, mishandled the case and committed the dreadful error of trying to turn it into a spiritualist showpiece.*”<sup>49</sup> This statement is without any comment or detail of his errors of mishandling the case!

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<sup>46</sup> Page 171, *The Darkened Room*, by Alex Owen Virago Press Limited, 1989. Originally taken from: - Louisa Lowe, No.3, ‘How an old Woman Obtained Passive Writing and the Outcome Thereof, James Burns London 1873

<sup>47</sup> *The Darkened Room*, by Alex Owen Virago Press Limited, 1989

<sup>48</sup> Chapter 7 pages 168 – 201: -

[http://books.google.com/books?id=vlwIUA4Re24C&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:alex+inauthor:owen&lr=&as\\_drrb\\_is=q&as\\_minm\\_is=0&as\\_miny\\_is=&as\\_maxm\\_is=0&as\\_maxy\\_is=&as\\_brr=0&ei=lk3HSun1O5CCyQTdoSiBA&ie=ISO-8859-1&output=html](http://books.google.com/books?id=vlwIUA4Re24C&printsec=frontcover&dq=inauthor:alex+inauthor:owen&lr=&as_drrb_is=q&as_minm_is=0&as_miny_is=&as_maxm_is=0&as_maxy_is=&as_brr=0&ei=lk3HSun1O5CCyQTdoSiBA&ie=ISO-8859-1&output=html)

<sup>49</sup> *The Darkened Room* page 196



Below is taken from *The Spiritualist* December 1, 1872 pages 22 -23: -

# LAW INTELLIGENCE

## COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH, Nov. 22.

(Sittings in Banco, before the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE, and Justices BLACKBURN and MELLOR.)

### EX PARTE LOUIS LOWE v. THE COMMISSIONERS OF LUNACY CRIMINAL INFORMATION.

Mr. H. D. Jencken (with whom was Mr. J. Ignatius Williams), moved on behalf of Mrs. Louisa Lowe, late of Upton Vicarage, Devon, but now residing at Bedford-place, Russell-square, for a rule calling on the five gentlemen who hold the office of Lunacy Commissioners, to show cause why a criminal information should not issue against them, on the grounds set forth in Mrs. Lowe's affidavit. The lady on whose behalf he applied was the wife of the Rev. Geo. Lowe, vicar of Upton, and she entertained opinions which were held by some of those who were known as Spiritualists. Shortly stated, the grounds on which the criminal information was asked for, was that the Commissioners refused to release Mrs. Lowe from a lunatic asylum, and, on the contrary, kept her incarcerated because of what might be termed her religious opinions.

The Lord Chief Justice- Was that all? Religious opinions, however extravagant they might be, are no ground for imprisoning those who hold them as lunatics.

Mr. Jencken would show, from the affidavit of Mrs. Lowe, that such was the reason of the detention of which he complained. He contended that theological belief, however grotesque, was no ground of insanity.

Mr. Justice Blackburn-True; no one would think that religious belief, however absurd, should be taken as proof of insanity; but it is an element with others which ought to be, or might well be, considered in coming to a conclusion whether that particular person is or is not insane.

Mr. Jencken said that what was complained of was that a great wrong had been done solely on the ground of spiritual belief.

The Lord Chief Justice- A mistake in judgment is no ground for a criminal information.

Mr. Jencken- There is more than a mistake in judgment here - there was gross neglect.

The Lord Chief Justice- You must show that the Commissioners kept this lady in unlawful imprisonment on the ground of her insanity, well knowing that she was not insane. What evidence was there that they had done so? If it could be shown that the Commissioners acted

maliciously, and that against their better knowledge they detained her in custody, the Court would doubtless interfere.

Mr. Jencken submitted that the Commissioners ought to have instituted full inquiry, and that gross negligence would be evidence of malice.

The Lord Chief Justice- Let us hear the facts.

Mr. Jencken said the facts were set forth in a very long affidavit made by Mrs. Lowe, the principal portions of which he would refer to. She stated that in September, 1870, she was incarcerated in the asylum for lunatics called Brislington House, near Bristol, on an order for the reception of female patients, signed by her husband, and on certificates of Dr. Shapter, and of Mr. Kempe, surgeon, both of Exeter. She was married to the Rev. George Lowe in September, 1842, and had several children, of whom six are now living. For many years she lived with her husband, but owing to grave dissensions she was at different times compelled to leave home, almost invariably accompanied by some of her children, with whose care and education she was entrusted by her husband. In September, 1870, she had serious differences with him, and went to reside at Exeter, where he visited her, and apologised for his conduct, and requested her to return, which she declined to do. She then set forth the visit of the doctor and surgeon, and her removal to the asylum.

On the 1st of October, 1870, she wrote to Dr. Fox, the proprietor of the establishment, a letter, in which she said, "Until it shall please God to raise me up a deliverer, I hope obediently and quietly to follow the rules of your house.... The pacing about under a servant's orders is, of course, a great trial to me, but would be more endurable if, in the intervals, I might sit in my own room and seek peace and strength where alone they are to be found, in communion with my own heart and my God. As to spirit writing, no amount of suffering shall ever make me deny my convictions that God is at this time visiting His people, and if He wishes to promulgate truths through a weak, imperfect woman, who shall gainsay Him? but this is certainly not the place for intellectual excitement of any kind, and I last night burned every scrap here, and do not intend again cultivating the gift of mediumship while I am in your house." She stated in her affidavit that while staying at the asylum her sufferings were greatly intensified by the fact that she was constantly placed in contact with incurable maniacs, one of whom repeatedly threatened to take her life. In November she was removed to an outlying villa called Heath House, and in February to Dr. Hy. Maudsley's Asylum, Lawn House, Hanwell.

In January, 1871, the asylum was visited by the Gloucestershire magistrates and visiting physician, Dr. Budd, by whom she was informed that she might expect speedy liberation. Mr. Lutridge visited her in the following March, and asked her but one question, and that in reference to Spiritualism- "Do you still believe your hand was guided?" and she replied, "I do." "He then said he should prefer leaving the question to colleagues better acquainted with metaphysics than himself; and to this remark I replied that it was cruel and monstrous I should be incarcerated on account of my metaphysical or religious opinions, and that no account should be taken of the perfect and uninterrupted propriety of my conduct through the six months of my incarceration; and I asked whether it would not be possible for me to have a jury; to which he replied, 'It is

possible, but very undesirable. We always advise ladies under these circumstances to keep quiet.’  
” (Laughter.)

On several occasions subsequently she wrote to the Commissioners complaining of her detention, and requesting inquiry by a jury or otherwise, but without effect. In a letter dated May, 1872, she said that early in January, on occasion of her sister desiring her removal to Hanwell, Dr. Fox said he would not certify her insane for that purpose; and the magistrates again saw her at that period, and professed themselves satisfied that she was fit for immediate discharge. She added, “Dr. Maudsley told my family there was no just cause for detention. I entreat that I may be allowed a jury, should you still shrink from setting me free. The income I bring my husband of £1,000 to £1,200 a year, entitles me, I conceive, to the expense.” She represented to Dr. Maudsley the impropriety of detaining her, as the commissioners must have known that she was not insane; to which he replied, “Oh, do you think they would let out a firebrand like yourself?”(Laughter.)

In the following June she was again visited by two of the commissioners, Messrs. Wilkes and Lutridge. Mr. Wilkes asked her whether all Spiritualists acted as she had done; to which she replied, “I believe so, for it is generally admitted that all mediums are deceived and do foolish things at first at the bidding of passive writing.” Mr. Wilkes said, “If the writing told you, would you separate from Mr. Lowe?” She replied, “I certainly would not on that ground.” . . . “I told him they must, in judging my Spiritualism, bear in mind I had all my life been called a religious person, and considered approach to God the main end of life.” Mr. Lutridge said, “Yes, believe the Bible and all that sort of thing,” or words to that effect, and they then retired. In a letter to the Commissioners, dated the 13th of June, 1871, she stated she had seen Mr. Lowe, who cast the whole responsibility of her detention on the Commissioners, without whose sanction Dr. Maudsley could not act. She added, “I am utterly at a loss to know why you condemn me. All you have been told of my antecedents is either utterly false or grossly exaggerated. The attempted suicide, on which you lay so much stress, occurred, in the first place, sixteen years ago, and was, moreover, merely the carrying out of principles I was known to hold, and which I openly advocated, viz., that under certain circumstances suicide was right. I have changed my mind on this head within the last two years, but, at any rate, it seems strange that I should be imprisoned now for things done many years ago. As to my belief that some unknown motive force is occasionally brought to bear on material objects, by intelligence or intelligences extraneous to men, I share it with thousands in all countries. Certainly, an indiscriminate compliance with all commands so given would be insanity, but I deny having ever complied with any that were not wise or perfectly trivial. I think I told you that some months ago, finding my sister apprehensive on this subject, I pledged myself to her not to act on so-called spirit writing for a considerable time after my liberation, without her knowledge and approval. “She again requested an opportunity of proving to the world the triviality of the grounds on which she was incarcerated, and the perfect rationality of her conduct and conversation from first to last. Several other letters were written by her to the Commissioners, to some of which no reply was made.

In September, 1871, two of the Commissioners, Messrs. Forster and Cleaton, “interviewed” her in private. She then handed to them “a bundle of papers containing dialogues with passive writing,” which she had written while incarcerated at the Lawn. On the same day she wrote to the Commissioners a letter, in which she said, “As you have my medium writings for inspection,

I think it fair to express unequivocally my conviction that no so-called spirit writings have any weight or value any more than human communications. You will observe my addresses are to the great Father of All, and may therefore gather I consider the replies as certainly divine. I emphatically deny that I ever but once acted on medium communications to the possible detriment of any one, and that I most bitterly regretted at the time. Granting the reality of medium writing, I see not how I am responsible for what is written.”

On the 2nd of October she again wrote: “You did on Thursday last pronounce me mad on account of inconsistency of mind in thinking Mr. Lowe, though naturally a good and noble character, by my own admission, to be now detaining me in a madhouse for his own ends. Will you, in the presence of my solicitor, interrogate two eminent practitioners as to whether they did not so advise me in 1868 and 1870 as to account for the apparent inconsistency of my views? On the 3rd of June Mr. Wince condemned me because all Spiritualists are mad, *de facto*, irrespective of their conduct in life, and now I am indefinitely re-consigned to this hideous doom, this lingering death in life, this moral torture of incarceration, on pretexts that would not become a child. As to Spiritualism, I have once again expressed to you the extreme moderation of my views, and put on record months ago that the only authority of medium writing lies in its agreement with conscience, thus putting it exactly on a par with human counsel.”

The Lord Chief Justice: Up to this moment we do not see a shadow of ground for supposing that the Commissioners did not fairly and honestly exercise their judgment. They may have been mistaken. As to that we are not called upon to form an opinion. But where is there a shadow; of proof of any intentional misconduct?

Mr. Jencken: If the Commissioners so negligently—

The Lord Chief Justice: We cannot grant a criminal information on that ground. There are other forms of redress for negligence.

Mr. Justice Mellor: I understand that she is now released from the asylum.

Mr. Jencken said she was. She had first to sign a paper undertaking to reside for three months at a specified place, and under the control of a keeper. It was not until the last day of March in this year that she was finally liberated from the keeper’s control.

After some further argument, The Court refused the rule.

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[Louisa Lowe for many years worked towards Lunacy Law Reform. She also became an active member of the British National Association of Spiritualists serving on the General Purposes Committee, but in June 1879 she resigned from the BNAS.]

Paul J. Gaunt

Alec Harris

NEW BOOK

A new biography of physical medium Alec Harris has recently been published by Saturday Night Press (Tom and Ann Harrison) *Alec Harris – The full story of his remarkable physical mediumship*, by Louie Harris. An abridged version had been previously published “They Walked Among Us”⁵⁰ Psychic Press Ltd, 1980 containing 121 pages.

Now after 30 years in the waiting the complete manuscript of the full story is available. It is nicely illustrated and contains 253 pages. The preface is by Professor David Fontana with further contributions from former SNU president Eric Hatton; Harris’ son Bradley; and Christopher Watkins whose parents formed part of Harris’ circle in which he himself sat as a youth. The book also contains the original Introduction from the 1980 abridged version by Rev. George May.

Psypioneer will be commenting on the book in a later issue.

Available at £9.99 plus pp from Psychic News online Bookshop.⁵¹

The Spiritual Telegraph

THE TELEGRAPH PAPERS

Samuel Byron Brittan (1815c–1883) and his publishing partner Charles Partridge edited and published numerous newspapers/journals, and periodicals etc, in the early days of American Spiritualism.⁵² S. B. Brittan also contributed to the earliest records of British Spiritualism in *The Spiritual Telegraph*. We owe much to Brittan and Partridge for preserving our early history prior to the British establishing their own literature.

“The Spiritual Telegraph was most widely disseminated during its six years of existence, from 1852 to 1857, and was the most popular spiritualist newspaper during the first decade of the

⁵⁰ <http://www.mediums-spiritguides.com/Mediums/Alex%20Harris.pdf>

⁵¹ <http://www.psychicnewsbookshop.co.uk/product/652>

⁵² Partridge & Brittan's Spiritual Library (1855): - <http://www.spiritwritings.com/PartridgeBrittonCatalog1855.htm>

movement. When the other main spiritualist newspaper of the era, *The Banner of Light*, began in Boston in 1860,⁵³ Brittan was its regional New York editor.” (Buescher)⁵⁴

In 1853 Brittan and Partridge introduced “The TELEGRAPH PAPERS” which was edited by S. B. Brittan: -

TO THE READER

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THE PUBLISHERS, believing that the preservation of a large portion of the contents of the SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH, in a more durable and convenient form, is highly important, as affording a reliable record of the interesting phenomena which characterize the present age, have compiled this volume, and they will hereafter make a similar compilation Quarterly, which will be found to embrace all the more interesting articles which appear in the columns of their weekly journal.

The present publication is the first of the proposed series, and contains the selections from May to August, 1853. The Editor's Review of Rev. Charles Beecher's Report respecting the Spiritual Manifestations, which appeared in chapters, in successive numbers of the TELEGRAPH, will be found together in the last part of the book.

Each succeeding volume of the TELEGRAPH PAPERS, like the present one, will be furnished with an index, which will render it convenient as a book of reference; and it is confidently believed that the whole will constitute a series of interesting miscellaneous volumes, which may merit a place in the library of every Spiritualist.

PARTRIDGE & BRITTAN

300 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, 1853.

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Psypioneer has previously published some of these early reports e.g., Mr. William Hayden's letters giving first hand accounts of this wife Maria's physical mediumship; she is credited with bringing the American-style Spiritualism to England in 1852, attracting the likes of Robert Owen, see: - *Mrs. Hayden's visit to England in 1852-3*.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> The Banner actually began in 1857, not 1860 as stated. See *Luther Colby and the Banner*, page 108: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09..pdf>

<sup>54</sup> *The Other Side of Salvation*, by John B. Buescher, Skinner House Books, Boston 2004

<sup>55</sup> See Volume 2.10 page 212: - <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.10October06.pdf>

[Previously I published the above reference (Mrs. Hayden's visit to England in 1852-3) "..... 'Spiritual Telegraph' was founded by S.B. Brittan and ran from 1852 until it merged in 1860 into the 'Herald of Progress' founded by Andrew Jackson Davis". In the above Buescher Quote: - "The Spiritual Telegraph ..... six years of existence, from 1852 to 1857 ..." we note a discrepancy I will return to this in the next issue.]

Below is published another letter from The Telegraph Papers, probably one of the very first detailed accounts of Table Turning in England. This account is concluded with remarks by Samuel Byron Brittan.<sup>56</sup>

PJG

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## TURNING THE TABLES IN LIVERPOOL

WE are indebted to some friend in England, probably to W. R. Hayden, Esq., for the Liverpool Albion of the 6th inst., in which we find an interesting account of the proceedings of a great meeting convened in that city, for the purpose of experiments in table moving. The power that turns the tables, and also threatens to "turn the world upside down," probably with a view of having it right side up, was there, and managed things very skillfully, so as to extend the interest and to puzzle the philosophers.

The extracts from the Paris correspondence of the Literary Gazette and Times will, we are sure, be regarded with interest by all our American readers, and, accordingly, we transfer the entire article to our columns:

### FROM THE ALBION

*The Manchester Guardian*, of Saturday, says, "On Thursday evening a *conversazione*, having for its object the arriving at some safe conclusion concerning 'table moving' and its causes, was held in the library-hall of the Athenaeum, which had been engaged by a committee of gentlemen for that purpose. The audience, which was numerous, was accommodated with seats around the room, the central portion being occupied by seven tables, of various forms and sizes, all of which were, during the evening, experimented upon.

"The Rev. H. H. Jones, F.R.A.S., was called to the chair, and in opening the proceedings said, that it appeared to him that the phenomenon of table turning must necessarily be the result either of collusion, illusion, or of the action of some mysterious and hitherto almost unknown and

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<sup>56</sup> Vol. 1. Partridge & Brittan 800 Broadway, New York. 1853, pages 280-291

unrecognized force. That it was not the result of collusion was, he thought, proved by the number of intelligent and respectable persons who were ready to vouch for the reality of the facts. That it might be the result of illusion or self-delusion on the part of the experimenters, was just possible, but, perhaps, not very probable. It was just possible that there might be such an adhesion between the fingers of the experimenters and the table, such a power of friction as, gradually accumulating, should be sufficient to overcome the inertia of the matter contained in the table, and cause it to move. Some might think that there could not be this amount of friction or adhesiveness without the experimenters being conscious of it. He was not so sure of that. When persons had held their fingers in a certain position for a considerable length of time, their fingers became comparatively benumbed, and it was just possible that they might unconsciously exercise such an amount of force as might move the table.

“Then came the third and last question: supposing the phenomenon not to be the result of either of these causes, could it be that it was produced by the action of some mysterious and unknown force, hitherto unrecognized? If so, we must suppose that this force issued from the hands and fingers of the experimenters, and that it flowed to the right or left in obedience to their will. Mr. W. G. Ginty moved the appointment of a committee, to have the direction of the experiments, and report upon them. The motion was seconded and unanimously agreed to. The chairman then invited ladies and gentlemen who were willing to experiment upon tables to take their places and in a few minutes all the tables but one were surrounded by experimenters, including persons of various ages, and both sexes.

“The experiments commenced at eight o’clock. The first table which moved was a round one, about three feet in diameter, standing upon three legs, without castors, and having a leather top. At this table four ladies took their places, and in five minutes it began to turn rapidly, the ladies running round with it. After several stoppages, for which the experimenters could not account, the table moved round so rapidly that several of the ladies appeared to be getting giddy, and two of them became so much alarmed that they discontinued the experiment. These ladies had simply placed their hands upon the table, without touching those of each other. After this experiment, the chairman suggested that it should be repeated, the ladies having tissue paper placed between their hands and the table to prevent the effects of friction. This was tried for fourteen minutes, with three ladies only (the other two being too much alarmed to take part), and failed. The other two ladies were then induced to join the circle, and in three minutes the table moved. Upon examination, it was found that the tissue paper had been wetted by perspiration, and had adhered to the table. It had, therefore, failed to counteract the probable effects of friction and proved nothing.

“The second table which moved was a large and heavy round one, of polished wood, about four feet six inches in diameter, and weighing about one hundred pounds, having a pillar and three claws, to each of which there was a castor. Round it sat eight gentlemen, who formed the circle in the usual manner, touching each other's little fingers, but not bringing the thumbs of their own hands into contact. At twenty-five minutes past eight o’clock (when the experiment had been conducted for twenty-five minutes), this table began to move slowly from right to left; and, with some stoppages, it performed about two revolutions in that direction. It then stopped, and after waiting some minutes, the experimenters, who had previously willed that it should move from right to left, willed that it should move in a contrary direction. In a minute or two



motion recommenced, and the table moved so rapidly in the direction intended, that the gentlemen who had previously risen from their seats, were obliged to run round with it; and its revolutions did not cease until one person, feeling giddy, withdrew his hands and broke the circle. It was observed that this table turned upon one of the three claws as an axis; this claw, however, did not remain perfectly stationary, and the circumference of the table described a series of eccentric circles.

“After the performance of these experiments, Dr. Braid said there had been some most unexceptionable experiments. They had seen two tables turn, and his conviction was that the motion arose from what Dr. Carpenter called the ideo-motor power. The mind being concentrated for a length of time upon an idea, it at last began to act upon the muscular system. This was not a voluntary act, and might even be in opposition to volition. He was satisfied, so far as he had seen, that this was the true solution of the matter; that the ladies and gentlemen were not conscious that they exercised any effort, and that the effect arose from this unconscious muscular action. In order to test whether or not the motion was caused by electricity, he suggested that a wire should be laid upon the tables, and that instead of touching the table the experimenters should hold this wire. If the motion arose from electricity, it would take place under these circumstances; if it was the result of muscular action the effect of that action would be on the wire, and not on the table. The experiment was accordingly tried. A piece of thin wire was laid around the ladies’ table; it was twisted into a loop between each of the operators, and was then held by the ladies who had previously operated so successfully. The hands of the ladies did not touch the table.

“They maintained their positions for half an hour without success, and then abandoned the attempt. They then placed their fingers upon the table, and in about a minute it turned rapidly. The third table which moved was a similar one to that which was moved by the ladies. Five persons sat at it, and at thirty-seven minutes after eight it turned rapidly from right to left. These persons had formed the circle in the ordinary manner, with only the little fingers touching. When the table began to move, some of the bystanders thought that some of the experimenters were exercising pressure, and therefore suggested that they should cross their hands, as it was thought that in this position they would be unable to exercise any force upon the table. This was done, and the table afterward moved rapidly from right to left, and left to right.

“The last table to turn was a square one of mahogany, about six feet long by four wide, standing upon four legs. At eight o’clock eight gentlemen and two ladies sat down to this table, and continued the experiment without success until thirty-five minutes past nine, when they discontinued it. Seven gentlemen and five ladies, including three of those who had previously been so successful, then sat down, and in about a quarter of an hour they moved the table a short distance. The circle was then broken by one of the party, and the table stopped. At nine o’clock, the gentlemen who had previously moved the large round table formed the circle as before, but without allowing their fingers to touch the table. They tried this experiment for ten minutes, but without success.

“The chairman suggested that, in order to prevent the effects of friction, a table should be smeared with olive oil, upon which the experimenters should place their fingers. In accordance with this suggestion, a belt of oil about five inches wide from the edge was made upon the round

tables. Six gentlemen then sat down, and in about twenty minutes the table moved. The large round table, which had been the second to move, was then smeared with oil upon the wooden rim, and the same eight gentlemen, who had previously experimented, again sat down to it. In this instance they formed a circle as before, but only the tips of their fingers touched the table. They began their experiment at a quarter past nine, and, at one minute before ten o'clock, the table made part of a revolution from right to left. It afterward moved in different directions, according to the will of the gentlemen experimenting upon it, up to a quarter-past ten o'clock, when they desisted. In the course of this experiment these gentlemen were much disturbed by the pressure of the audience upon them; and by other proceedings. Whenever their attention was thus distracted the table stopped. The chairman said that no importance could be attached to the result of this experiment, as he saw the thumb of one of the operators upon the edge of the table. All the gentlemen engaged in the experiment denied that they had placed their thumbs in this position; and a bystander assured us that, though the thumb of one gentleman was very near the edge of the table, yet it did not actually touch it. This gentleman was in a better position for observing than the chairman, who was on the platform, and he was paying great attention to the experiment. Several requests were made to the chairman to point out the gentleman whose thumb was upon the edge of the table, but the chairman only replied that he had no doubt the gentlemen believed that they were acting fairly, and that he had not thought of charging them with doing otherwise.

“We have hitherto spoken only of successful experiments, but there were three tables which were in vain attempted to be turned. One of these was a mahogany Pembroke table, and the party who experimented upon it consisted of five gentlemen. Another table (resembling that with which the ladies were so successful), which was at first unoccupied, was afterward taken possession of by a party of seven gentlemen. In forming the circle, they not only touched the little fingers of each other, but brought their own thumbs into contact. The result of this was that their hands were placed in a circle very near the centre of the table top, and not, as in the other cases, round its circumference. These gentlemen continued their experiment for some time, but the table did not move. The third unsuccessful experiment was with a small round table, at which five gentlemen remained seated for an hour and thirty-five minutes without producing any effect. In the top of this table there was a crack, and some of the experimenters seemed to think that this had prevented the success of the attempt. The chairman, upon being appealed to, said that he did not imagine that it would have any effect.

“The chairman, before leaving the chair, said that he had come into that room without any prejudice; but that, from what he had seen and heard, he believed that the phenomena resulted entirely from muscular action, by the power of friction. He could not for a moment believe in the emanation of any occult principle in Nature, which could produce such decided effect upon a mass of brute matter as had that night been manifested. Dr. Braid, in moving a vote of thanks to the chairman, said, that if we considered the reciprocal action of the mind upon matter, we had a key to the whole mystery. It was a certain law that the mind, being concentrated for any length of time upon any part of the body, changed the physical action of that part. If there was an idea that the table should move in a given direction, that idea would, without a conscious effort of volition, without the person believing that he was exercising any effort at all, produce the effect. The vote of thanks was unanimously adopted, and the proceedings terminated about half-past ten, having lasted nearly three hours.

“We have not space in which to notice any of the statements we heard as to the sensations of the experimenters, but may state generally, that, as they were described to us, they resembled those before detailed by correspondents. We could not discover that in any case the table moved toward the north, or any other definite point; and we doubt whether a lecture-room, occupied by an eager and inquisitive audience, is the best place for attempting to discover the laws or causes, whatever they may be, connected with the much-talked of and tried ‘table moving.’ After each successful experiment, a member of the committee, or the chairman, inquired of each of the operators whether he or she had abstained from muscular action upon the table, and in every instance a decided assurance was given in the affirmative.”

The Paris correspondent of the *Literary Gazette*, writing on this subject, says, “The great table-moving question, which has excited such an extraordinary degree of interest in this city as to be the universal topic of conversation for a period much longer than the nine days’ life generally enjoyed by a wonder, has at length forced itself on the attention of the Academy of Sciences. Among the vast mass of letters and reports detailing experiments, which have been sent to the Academy, the presiding authorities selected one by M. Seguin, a distinguished savant, to be read at its last public sitting. The statements made in this document were of the most extraordinary kind, one of them being, that a table when acted on was made *to move to the notes of a piano*. M. Arago was so astounded at them, and, it must be added, so incredulous with respect to them, that, before he would allow the paper to be read, he sent to M. Seguin, to entreat him to reflect seriously on the responsibility he would incur, in the presence of the scientific world, in letting them go forth to the public under the sanction of his name. But M. Seguin, who, from being a stubborn skeptic, has become a devout believer in the tables, answered that he was ready to indorse a good deal more than he had said, and so his paper was read. M. Arago, after the reading, intimated, brief but somewhat vague terms, that his belief is, that the movement of the tables is caused by muscular action. And he proceeded to say, ‘What is most extraordinary and most difficult to explain in the phenomenon is, the circumstance that, with impulsions, so to speak, infinitely small, imprinted on the table with the fingers, we in time can communicate to it active movements (*des mouvemens considérables*).’ This, however, he alleged, is no novelty, as ‘Mr. Elliot, a watchmaker, relates in the *Philosophical Transactions* of some years ago, that two clocks, having been hung to a wall, a foot apart, one of which was going, the other standing, the latter after a while began going too, being set in motion by the imperceptible vibrations transmitted from the other through the solid body between them—and it even continued going after the first one was stopped.’ Thus, then, with such authority as that of M. Arago, and, as you announced last week, of Sir David Brewster also, the phenomenon of table-turning must, for those who seek for a scientific elucidation, be considered as, for the present, explained; and the animal magnetism, or human electricity, which was at first assumed to be the motive power of the rotation, must, by them, be now set down as non-existent, or at least non-acting.

“Our French friends, not content with the large share they possess in the great discoveries and productions of human intelligence, lay claim to every thing:-to hear them talk, they had discovered every thing, originated every thing, given perfection to every thing. They assert, among other things, that it was they who enriched the universe with steam navigation, who first planned railways and locomotives, who first used lighting with gas. They are now laying claim to the invention of the electric telegraph. A Dr. Napoleon Henry, of Metz, has written to the newspapers to say that he is the inventor, as in 1836 he proposed to the French government to

establish lines of such telegraphs, but that his plan was considered impracticable, and was rejected. An advocate, named Amyot, has also written to the journals, to say that three years before he proposed the establishment of electric telegraphs to the government, and to the English ambassador in Paris, but that both refused, the latter even declining to forward any notice of it to London. No doubt, now that the question has been started, we shall see a host of other inventors spring up; and after they have made a certain degree of clamor, the Academy of Sciences will probably order a committee to examine into their rival claims.' That committee will make a report, in which it will, we may be certain, award 'the glory' of the discovery to one of them, or to some other Frenchman; and thenceforward and forever it will be a given article of national belief that it was *la belle France*, and *la belle France* alone, who enriched the world with that astonishing invention. This is precisely what was done with respect to the discovery of steam navigation, and the plan is too convenient for national vanity not to be followed on all occasions. Now, if it be right to render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, Caesar must be justified in looking a little after his own, and in this case he must do so at once to avoid being completely despoiled. Who the Caesar is I pretend not to say: it may be France with Lavoisier, who, as Arthur Young, if I remember rightly, tells us, was able, in 1787, or thereabout, to correspond with his wife in another room; or it may be America with Franklin; or Germany with Rieser; or Spain with Dr. Salva; or England with more than one. But certainly it was not modern France with the Henries and the Amyots; for Scemmering and Ørsted in Germany, Schilling in Russia, and Wheatstone in England, undoubtedly preceded them."

*Apostate*, writing to the *Times* on the same subject says: "England, France, and America are mad about turning tables. There are more believers than skeptics. I am, unfortunately, an apostate. I was a believer, and this was the manner of my falling away: I tried, with others of my own family, of whose honesty of purpose I could not doubt, and we turned hats, tables on castors, and tables without castors, and, among the latter, one very obstinate oak table, with a solid heavy stem, on a tripod; all these tables turned round on the carpet, toppled over, or glided along, and even out of the room, in a most miraculous manner. I trusted to my own eyes and believed. I asked for an explanation, and was told it was either electricity, or magnetism, or a little of both. This was not satisfactory, so I endeavored to find out a less mysterious and more intelligible explanation. I placed three persons round a table which five or six others had turned by the alleged electric process, and directed them to give a slight pressure, with the points of their fingers to the left; they did so, and the table turned as it had done before. This experiment was tried on all the tables previously operated on, varying the number of persons according to the size of the table; where eight or ten persons had electrified the mahogany, five or six would produce precisely the same effects by the slightest possible united pressure in the same direction, so slight, indeed, as to be quite imperceptible to the bystanders, and admitted even by the firmest believers who were engaged in the experiment, to be literally 'next to nothing.' My unscientific theory was, however, to be upset at once. Gold chains were linked together and placed round a table, the fingers touched the chain only, and not the table, and it turned. I was challenged to test my theory by the same ordeal; we did so, and the table turned precisely as it had done under the manipulation of the magnetizers. This proves that the pressure by the fingers must have been very slight, other-wise the chain would have turned, and not the table. I have certainly not been fortunate enough to see tables dance polkas, or to go up and down stairs with the hands placed on the surface; but my solution of the ordinary 'Jim Crow' gyrations is simply this, that when eight or ten persons are placed round a table, and all told to wish it to turn in the same direction, and

when they have sat in that constrained position for twenty minutes, their fingers begin to tingle, just as a cramped position of the feet will cause 'pins and needles' in the toes. They begin to feel tired, and are told to wish more powerfully; then, if at any time five or six out of the ten or twelve happen to second their wishes by the slightest tendency of pressure in the required direction, the table begins to move, all are required to go round with it the momentum is increased, and the feat is accomplished. Each person is satisfied that the pressure of his ten fingers did not, and could not, move the table, and he is right; but multiply ten by six and it becomes sixty. It is the last straw which breaks the camel's back. But I am told that one person of strong powers of volition can alter the course of the table: this is so according to my theory. Assume sixty to be the moving power, and deduct ten, or, rather, if the man of strong volition has also strong fingers, deduct twenty, and the table is stopped. If it should happen, as is often the case, that the table is recusant, and objects to be made a spinning-top of, the reason, I submit, is, that there are not a sufficient number of fingers at one and the same moment pressed in the same direction. This is the great disadvantage of the electric theory; mine never fails. I am, however, still open to conviction, and if any scientific person will condescend to explain how electricity or magnetism operates to produce the described effects, all I can say is, 'Candidus imperti, si non his utere mecum.' "

To *Apostate's* letter a *Proselyte* replies: "The letter of your correspondent *Apostate* will no doubt be regarded by every rational person as another very satisfactory proof of the existence of a somewhat new and mysterious agent hitherto not generally known. He says, and very truly, that when a large table is touched by the fingers of some half dozen persons, and pressed very slightly in a particular direction, it will revolve, and then draws a most erroneous conclusion that it is done by a mechanical effort, which, however, it is scarcely necessary to say, would be wholly inadequate for such a purpose, because, by his own statement, such pressure was so slight as to be scarcely perceptible. Besides, the whole of your correspondent's argument is based on an assumption which is not essential to the success of the experiment, for although I have no doubt the table will move by the will of the parties when it is so pressed, it will also do so equally as well without. Neither is it always necessary to wait twenty minutes, which is implied might induce an involuntary pressure, for though it is true that on one occasion I have had to wait for even a longer time than this, yet on another I, with three others, succeeded in moving a large mahogany dining-table in less than half a minute, and with such force as to frighten some of the operators, and it nearly knocked one of them down. It was the first attempt of all the parties excepting myself, and, as might be expected, they were all more or less skeptical, and placed their hands lightly on the table by my directions. I may add that I have discovered that it is not necessary to make use of a table, or, indeed, of any thing except the bodies of the experimentalists; for if the hands be placed in contact, and in the same position as when a hat is employed, they will soon be found to move, the parties being obliged to follow to maintain their position."

**REMARKS.**- The exhibition in the Athenaeum, at Liverpool, did not, it is true, produce a unanimity of opinion respecting the cause of the phenomena witnessed, but the results were quite sufficient to rebuke a whole army of scribblers in this country, who pander to popular prejudice and libel the innocent, all for the love of gain, and because they seek

### **“The bubble reputation.”**

In the facts and details of the meeting, as given in the English journals, we find nothing to warrant the hypothesis which ascribes the motions of the tables to muscular action, either consciously or unconsciously applied. “The first table which moved” was surrounded by four ladies, and the motion commenced in “five minutes.” The second table, which “weighed about one hundred pounds,” moved in “twenty-five minutes.” Also, seven gentlemen were seated at a table resembling the one which was moved by four ladies; the sitting was protracted, but no motion occurred. Again, we are told that the “the third unsuccessful experiment was with a small round table, at which *five gentlemen remained seated for one hour and thirty-five minutes, without producing any effect.*” But why was there no motion in either of the last-mentioned cases? Is it because a dozen gentlemen have less muscular power than *four ladies*? If four ladies, without any conscious effort, could, almost in a moment, move a table *with such velocity as to make them giddy*, why did *five gentlemen*, sitting around “a small round table,” for *an hour and a half*, totally fail? These are questions to be answered by those who incline to the muscular hypothesis. Moreover, those who were successful in the experiment testified that they did not exert any such force, while those who did not engage in the experiments thought otherwise. Persons of ordinary candor and intelligence will readily decide which had the better opportunity of knowing.

A great point was gained at the meeting in Liverpool. The results demonstrate to the satisfaction of the civilized world that the phenomena of table moving is not a *mere trick*. And where now are the arrogant scribes attached to the American newspaper press, who, from the beginning, have charged the poor mediums with “deliberate imposture?” When will they repent of their folly and wickedness, and make honorable reparation? Especially, when will such papers as the *Express, Courier and Inquirer, Times, Herald*, and other journals, secular and religious, cease their vituperation, and retract the slanders they have published? So long as public journalists merely echo the stereotyped opinions of their fathers, and use their influence to foster the vulgar prejudices of the ignorant, they are wholly unfit for the highly responsible duty of molding public sentiment. Unfortunately the reputation of the American press is materially injured by an indefinite number of persons of this class. The ideas of such men are contracted by false education, rather than enlarged by free and natural discipline and liberal culture. For this reason they are but poorly qualified to entertain enlightened and rational views of their own. Superficial minds always require the authority of great names to sanctify the truth; and now that the attention of the whole civilized world is secured—the philosophers of all Europe, the nobility and royalty, being ready to listen—they may possibly conclude that it is not so contemptible as to be altogether beneath their notice.

This is an encouraging phase in the present aspect of affairs for no one fact is more evident than that several hundred public journals in the United States stand in great need of a common-sense opinion of the general subject, and we shall be happy to learn that they have obtained one, though it be imported.

S. B. B.

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