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HANSON GLEDHILL HEY

1866 - 1921

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Pioneer of the Spiritualists' National Union

Psypioneer has already published biographical information on Spiritualists' National Union (S.N.U.) pioneers:—e.g. S.N.U. presidents: William Johnson,¹ Ernest W. Oaten,² W. Lorraine Haig,³ and Percy Wilson.⁴ Hanson Gledhill Hey was not destined to become an S.N.U., president but played a substantial part in the latter years of the Spiritualists' National Federation (S.N.F.) until

*“in October 1901 the Spiritualists' National Union Limited was incorporated under the Companies Acts as a company not for profit and limited by guarantee, and in July 1902 it succeeded to and took over the property, rights and obligations of the Spiritualists' National Federation.”*⁵

We note from the referenced article on Percy Wilson, that he and Hey were related by marriage. Wilson's involvement in Spiritualism spanned many decades; what may not be as well known is that he was also an historian, showing errors and contradictions both within the S.N.U. and in Modern Spiritualism generally. We will soon be publishing Wilson's observations on the Fox sisters' ages.



¹ Vol. 6, No.5:—*Another pioneer promoted - William Johnson - The Two Worlds, 1914.* Pages 130 – 135, Johnson was a former S.N.F., president and S.N.U., president 1901-1903:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.5.May2010..pdf>

² S.N.U., president 1915-1920 and 1922-1923, use Psypioneer search engine at:— www.woodlandway.org

³ Vol. 2, No.5:—*W. Lorraine Haig - The Two Worlds.* Pages 101 – 102, Haig was S.N.U., president 1948-1950:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.5%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

⁴ Vol. 6, No.1:—*Our new president, Percy Wilson - The Two Worlds.* Pages 17 – 22, Wilson was S.N.U., president 1950-1953:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.1January2010..pdf>

⁵ *Spiritualists' National Union Yearbook 2010*, page 4.

Former S.N.U. president (2000-2010) Duncan Gascoyne ⁶ is also a historian. Psypioneer has previously published part of his research into the family of Emma Hardinge Britten.⁷ Earlier this year Duncan put together a booklet:—“*Historical aspects and personalities attached to the early years of Sowerby Bridge Church*” and he has kindly given his permission for us to use his research.

The relationship between Wilson and Hey:—

“It was sometime in the 1860’s that an Abbey Durio Wilson became interested in Spiritualism. He was the son of a Joseph and Ann Wilson who lived in Freedom Street, Halifax; they were devout Unitarians. Joseph Wilson originated from Suffolk and worked as a stenciller in a carpet mill. During the early 1860’s Abbey Wilson followed in his father’s footsteps as a stenciller and eventually became a Unitarian minister.

However things changed dramatically in 1871 when Abbey aged 25 was elected as the Secretary of the Halifax Spiritualist Society.

In order to serve the ‘cause’ he had to give up his ministership, thus sacrificing his income and condemning himself and his family to poverty for many years.

He is listed on the 1871 Census as living at Northowram and his occupation is shown as a woollorter and stenciller.

Later on in 1871 he married a Mary Ellen Wilson and they had a son Thomas William Wilson born about June 1872. It was this Thomas William who became the father of Percy Wilson, whom we will learn more about later. In early 1873 Mary Ellen died aged 20 and Abbey was left to cope the best way he could.

Abbey then met and married in March 1874 his second wife Ann Hey. Ann already had a son named Hanson Gledhill Hey of whom too we shall learn more later.”

Gascoyne continues:—

“Although Abbey’s eldest son Thomas William was born and brought up in the Sowerby Bridge Spiritualist Lyceum and accompanied his father on many of his Spiritualist journeys he did not take on his father’s mantle within the Movement.

⁶ The photograph of Hanson Hey and his shop were supplied by Duncan Gascoyne, and are included in his booklet. See also:—*Duncan Gascoyne & the Spiritualists’ National Union* page 2:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.1January2010..pdf> This article is a prime example of the great value of the old Spiritualists journals; this article could not have been written without access to them.

⁷ Vol.3, No.4:—*Emma Hardinge Britten:—Further Information collated by Duncan Gascoyne (as at February 2007)*. Pages 24 – 26:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.2February07..pdf>

This was taken up by his step-brother Hanson Hey, who had also been brought up in the Sowerby Bridge Lyceum. In his younger days Hanson divided his time between Spiritualism and Socialism, learning the art of public speaking by street corner oratory. He was a great friend of Keir Hardie and a founder of the I.L.P. (Independent Labour Party.)”

I noted this little piece in *The Two Worlds* (TW) under the section “Platform Record,”⁸ as published below:—

“HALIFAX.—Monday, December 15: Mr. A. D. Wilson gave a few reminiscences of his first investigation, which proved very interesting. December 21: A very pleasant and enjoyable day with Mrs. Green. Evening subject, “Shall we know our loved ones in spirit life?” was dealt with in good manner. Her clairvoyance was remarkably good. Dec. 27, the annual Christmas tea was a complete success. 171 sat down to a splendid tea, presided over by the following gentlemen: Messrs. Jagger, Lee, Marshall, Sutcliffe, Cordingley, Greenwood, and Bailey. The room had been beautifully decorated with evergreens, and over the platform the following inscription was pinned to the wall: “A Most Hearty Welcome.” After tea a grand miscellaneous entertainment. Mr. Jagger, presiding, made a few very appropriate remarks. Glee by the choir. Songs by Mrs. Bott, Misses Greenwood, Kitchen, and Horsfall, and Messrs. Smith and Butler. A duet by Mrs. Bott and Miss Greenwood was encored. Mr. Whitely, from Huddersfield gave us comic recitations in good style, amidst bursts of applause. Mr., Mrs., and Miss Kitchen gave a trio remarkably well. Piano and violin duet by Mr. F. A. Moore and Master F. Marshall. Mr. Hanson Hey gave two comic sketches. Miss Jackson, accompanist, gave every satisfaction.

The hall was packed in the evening.—B. Downsborough.”

It is a shame that Wilson’s reminiscences were not published. Abbey Durio Wilson was a highly respected trance medium and was in demand as the speakers lists etc of the time well demonstrate during his active, but relatively short,⁹ Spiritualist life. Abbey D. Wilson died on August 24th 1891. Sowerby Bridge offered this tribute:—¹⁰

⁸ *The Two Worlds*, Friday January 2, 1891 - No.164.—Vol. IV, Platform Record page 89.

⁹ Gascoyne: — “In late August 1891 Abbey D Wilson died aged 45 and his funeral service was attended by a very large number of his friends and outsiders from other organisations. On Friday 28th August Abbey’s service was taken by Mr J J Morse, firstly in the home and then at the Wesleyan Chapel, Kings Cross, Halifax with musical items by the choir he had trained. Many sincere and glowing tributes to his work appeared not only in Spiritualist newspapers, but also in the local press, by which he was held in high esteem. (Full details and tributes can be found in the *Two Worlds* edition for 4th September 1891.)”

¹⁰ *The Two Worlds*, Friday September 4, 1891 - No.199.—Vol. IV, Platform Record page 510.

“Another of our friends and co-workers crossed the border on Monday, August 24—Mr. A. D. Wilson; he has been connected with this society for many years, and a prominent worker in many ways, although he has not been able to do as much as in previous years. We regret his decease at so early an age. He was always quiet and unassuming, but thoroughly genuine and honest to his convictions, in short “a true man.” Much practical sympathy is required for those he has left, and we do feel sincerely sorry for Mrs. Wilson and family.”

Amongst the various tributes to Wilson, we can note that he also wrote a hymn. Newcastle-On-Tyne reported:—¹¹

“We closed by singing, in memory of Mr. Wilson, his beautiful hymn, “Forward press to conquer.” The conductor made some remarks of appreciation of Mr. Wilson’s good work for the cause. We feel grateful to him for his beautiful hymn, it has cheered our hearts many times.”

Hanson Hey at this period was not a Spiritualist household name like his step-father Abbey Wilson, but we can safely assume the young Hanson at around 25 years old would have been well acquainted with his step-father’s colleagues and friends. It would be some of these people with whom he would later work. Note in the above (TW) quote names like: Lee, Sutcliffe, and Greenwood. Other articles associate Wilson with the likes of Hepworth, Wallis, and Morse.

From 1865 to 1890 there were many attempts to establish a “National Organisation” which were to eventually result in the S.N.U. I am at present compiling a large two volume reference book:—“*THE CAUSE. The Formation of the Spiritualists’ National Union 1865-1902.*” It was here in the late nineteenth century that Hanson Gledhill Hey would start to make his indelible mark upon the S.N.U.

Hey’s public involvement began at the “Tenth Annual Conference of the National Federation of Spiritualists (N.F.S) of Great Britain, held at Blackpool on Saturday and Sunday, July 1st and 2nd 1899.”

Gascoyne continues:

“By 1900 Hanson had decided to devote his life to Spiritualism and gave up the prospect of a sure seat in Parliament to do so. He also rejected an offer of a guaranteed salary for life of £500 a year from



¹¹ *The Two Worlds*, Friday September 4, 1891 - No.199.—Vol. IV, The Children’s Progressive Lyceum page 511.

the Imperial Tobacco Company, who wanted to take him over when he was the Hon. Sec. of the Tobacconists' Retailers Federation, but he wanted to be free to devote all his time to the Movement. When the SNU was founded in 1901 he became Vice President, but within three months took over the job of General Secretary, which he retained until his death in 1921. His tobacconist's shop at 68, Crown Street, Halifax,¹² was the first registered office of the Union and soon became a Mecca for both Socialists and Spiritualists alike."

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This photograph is of the first council of the Spiritualists' National Union. Hanson Hey is surrounded by many of the colleagues and friends of his step-father whom Hey would have met as a young man, it was published in *The Two Worlds* July 24, 1903 page 375.

More S.N.U. history in the next issue.

Paul J. Gaunt

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<sup>12</sup> See original photograph page 266.

Below is published *The Two Worlds*<sup>13</sup> obituary notice, presumably by Hanson Hey's former colleague Ernest W. Oaten, who at this time was editor<sup>14</sup> and secretary of the Two Worlds Publishing Company Limited, Manchester:

## The Passing of Mr. Hanson G. Hey.

As briefly announced last week, we have to record the passing of one of the most popular figures in the Spiritualistic Cause; which occurred at his residence, 30, Glen Terrace, Halifax, on February 28th.

For twenty-five years or more, the voice of Mr. Hanson Gledhill Hey has been heard from probably more platforms than that of any other speaker in the Spiritualistic Movement. His bluff and breezy personality won the friendship of all classes of men; his directness and contempt for dissimulation was the admiration of all who knew him. Despite the terrible handicap entailed by an amputated leg, his wonderful vitality enabled him to get around the country with all agility that few could excel; whilst his infectious enthusiasm was a continuous stimulus to the many thousands with whom his public work brought him into contact. As an organiser he had few rivals, and his fertile mind was the womb of large ideals which his untiring energy often enabled him to bring to fruition.

Born at Skircoat Green; Halifax, on August 30th, 1866, he was left at an early age without the guiding hand of a father. His mother was, however, a most affectionate woman, and showered upon the boy a tender devotion which had much to do with the formation of his character. When he was about 5 years of age, however, his mother was united in matrimony to Mr. Abbey Durio Wilson, a Unitarian by conviction, who fulfilled all the duties of a loving parent to the growing boy. The writer has seen the tears of affection in Mr. Hey's eyes as he spoke of the tender solicitude of one who was, to him, a father indeed. It was in London, when he was little more than seven years of age that Hanson Hey fell from the step of a tramcar, and so injured his right knee that, after nearly five years of medical treatment, the limb was eventually amputated, making it necessary for him to have the assistance of a crutch. Before this event transpired, however, the family had been brought into contact with the Sowerby Bridge Spiritualist Church and Lyceum, and Lyceum training appealed to the inquiring mind of the boy. Spiritualism is indebted to Sowerby Bridge for many useful pioneers and Hanson Hey is not the least amongst them.

Mr. Hey was married at Sowerby Bridge Lyceum to another Lyceumist, Miss Olive Haigh, and then ensued ten years of true happiness in which close study and

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<sup>13</sup> *The Two Worlds* Friday, March 11, 1921 pages 114-115.

<sup>14</sup> Editor of *The Two Worlds*:—1919-1945

wide reading alternated with an active interest in social and municipal work. Sorrow came into his life when his partner was called "behind the veil," and he threw himself into the then growing Socialist movement, and had much to do with its local organisation and strength.

After some years of strenuous work he again entered the married state, and found in Miss Ruth Holder, of Darwen, a loving and watchful partner, whose self-sacrifice and devotion enabled him to take up the wider field of labour entailed by National work. A large measure of his success and faithful service is undoubtedly due to the sweet, moulding influence of Mrs. Ruth Hey. The rough corners of his nature were smoothed down, and the vigorous iconoclast became the visioned thinker. His character matured in the genial warmth of her calm and quiet presence, and he became as capable of intense thought as he had always been of deep feeling.

In his early years Mr. Hey learned his trade as a bookbinder. Later, for seven years he was a tobacconist in his native town, and helped to organise the Halifax Tobacconists' Association. In 1912, however, he abandoned business in order to devote himself exclusively to the work of the Spiritualists' National Union and the Movement generally.

In the closing years of last century Mr. Hey was active in the re-organisation scheme and re-registration of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, in which Society he had held many important offices, and gained a sound knowledge of parliamentary procedure, which served him in good stead when he became one of the little band of workers who struggled to obtain a National and legal status for Spiritualism in this country. After many disputations, committees and consultations with legal advisers, the registration of the S.N.U. under the Companies Acts was resolved at a special Conference held at Blackpool in February, 1901. This was but the accomplishment of an idea which had occupied his time and attention since he was first elected to the Committee of the old Spiritualists' National Federation in 1890. Mr. Hey sat on the first Committee of the newly-formed S.N.U., Ltd., was elected Vice-President in 1903, and became Hon. Secretary in 1904 at the conference held at Laisterdyke. From that time, until his unfortunate breakdown two years ago he was untiring in his efforts to build the Union into a really National body.

He was one of the first to note the tendency of buildings and churches erected for the Movement to drift into the hands of individuals and become lost to the Cause. He laboured unceasingly to draft the present model trust deeds which are as yet the only means devised by which buildings are permanently secured to the church which builds them. As a result, over 20 churches are secured to the Movement for ever, whilst previously nearly 30 had been lost by being insecurely vested in individuals.

Mr. Hey was responsible, too, for the formation of the Publishing Department of the S.N.U. He was sure that the published prices of Spiritualistic Literature could be reduced by increasing the number of the reading public on the subject. A series of cheap pamphlets at 2d. and 3d. each was issued, and Societies urged to keep a book-



stall. In this way over 250,000 cheap publications have been circulated, and until the European war complicated matters, there was a decided fall in the price of Spiritualistic works.

The increasing growth of the Union encroached upon Mr. Hey's time more and more each year, and various small honorariums were voted to him from time to time, but not until 1914 did he accept the salaried post of General Secretary, and even then refused to accept the meagre sum offered him, because he was of the opinion that "the Union could not afford it."

In 1911 he compiled for the Union the Spiritualists' National Diary containing a mass of information concerning the organisation of the Movement, but here again the European War prevented its issue after 1915. This effort was too good to be lost, and we hope to see it revived.

Mr. Hey, with his large vision, was ever looking for something wider than even National influence, and he was one of the persons who helped in the establishment of the Bureau Internationale du Spiritisme, which came into being in 1910 at Brussels, he becoming the British representative on its Executive Council. In pursuit of his ideal he successfully organised an International Congress which was held at Liverpool in 1912, and whilst the foreign delegates were not numerous, few will forget making the acquaintance of Chev. Le Clement de St. Marcq, Secretary of the International Bureau, and others.

Mr. Hey was one of the British delegates to the Second World's Congress of Spiritualists held at Geneva in 1913, and only the war stopped his enthusiasm for the proposed congress in Paris in 1916, which had to be abandoned.

As the Secretary of the S.N.U., he worked under nine presidents, and the very best of relations ever existed between them. It is sad to think that just as all his hopes are likely to be realised his work is transferred to another plane of manifestation, yet, perhaps, there may be wisdom even in this. "New times demand new men." We cannot hope to find a man who will put MORE of his life into National organisation than friend Hey.

He was remarkably well read, not merely on special subjects, but on general topics, and the conclusions he formed he expressed with force and enthusiasm. A cutting critic and a keen debater, he revelled in debate whether in private or public, yet he ever endeavoured to avoid personalities, and successfully made friends of those whose opinions he opposed. On National and municipal politics he held very advanced views, and was a remarkably keen heckler, whilst the local newspapers found him a frequent contributor to their correspondence columns. Personally he was the most genial of men, the life of a social party, and an endless conversationalist with a keen sense of humour and an inexhaustible fund of stories, whilst he possessed the most tenacious memory for events that the writer has ever met. A never failing optimist, who in the hour of deepest gloom could always point to the "good time coming," and this was clearly seen in the hour of his infinity. A keen Lyceumist, as befitted his training, he was always welcome in a Liberty Group, where

his study of the deeper problems of the occult world made him a great favourite, whilst his love of children ever won their confidence. It was with pride that he alluded to himself as one of the oldest Lyceumists in the country.

Some three years ago a few of his Spiritualistic friends subscribed for an artificial leg for his use. The nature of his disability was such that only the improvements due to the war made it possible to fit him with such. He had but just mastered this, however, when the first of a series of paralytic strokes seized his left side, and from this moment he had to relinquish his work for the Cause he loved. By slow degrees he sunk into helplessness, until the "death angel" became a welcome deliverer.

With voice and pen he laboured strenuously. A born fighter, a natural sponsor of unpopular causes, one who strove for freedom from oppression and manfully fought for the bottom dog, this world is better for his life, and the spirit world will be brighter for his transition. He feared nothing but falsehood, and hated nothing but hypocrisy.

In the hour of his transition 'tis a joy to know that he is not lost to us. He has but joined the growing band of faithful Spiritualists who are guiding this Movement to the central position amongst religion, whence it shall direct the upward growth of humanity.

"Peace! He is not dead, he doth not sleep;  
He has awakened from the dream of life."

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# Mrs. Mary J. Hollis

1837 - ?

Mary Hollis was an early American physical medium:<sup>15</sup> one of the first, if not *the* first medium to produce slate-writing. She also produced direct-voice and materialisations.

The most detailed account of the early physical mediumship of Mrs. Mary J. (née Kerns) Hollis,<sup>16</sup> dark circles, was by N. B. Wolfe M.D. in his book *Startling Facts in Modern Spiritualism*.<sup>17</sup>

On 5<sup>th</sup> February 1871 Dr. Wolfe received a letter from Mrs. Annie Wood, who lived in Louisville, Kentucky, informing the doctor that she and a friend were in Cincinnati where Wolfe resided and intended a visit to him as guests. The postscript to the letter relating to her friend read:

“P. S.—Mrs. Hollis is a trumpet-medium. I presume you have heard of her through the spiritual papers, as her manifestations have been reported quite frequently in the *Banner of Light* and *Religio-Philosophical Journal*.”

Annie Wood had presumed wrong, Wolfe had never heard of Mary Hollis. On the second evening of their visit Mrs Wood spoke of holding “a dark circle” Wolfe had a prejudice against “dark circles”; he had previously attended two involving the Davenport brothers which failed to strengthen his belief in spirit communication. To some extent, Wolfe stated “I share Mr. Davis’s [Andrew Jackson Davis] opinions of dark circles ...”<sup>18</sup>



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<sup>15</sup> Another medium of the period was Mrs. Andrews of Moravia, New York, Like Hollis she remained conscious during the phenomena. Andrews is credited (by Harrison in *The Spiritualist*) as being the first medium with whom spirit faces began to appear regularly. Soon afterwards the spotlight was pointed to London. January 1872, Mrs. Guppy became the first British medium to materialise spirit hands and faces (Oxford DNB: — <http://www.oup.com/oxforddnb/info/>) followed by Herne and Williams, and the introduction of Florence Cook. Psypioneer will be publishing reports on the Andrews mediumship in the next issue.

<sup>16</sup> This is on the assumption that Mrs. Hollis’ mother had not re-married. Her father had been murdered for a large sum of money he was carrying near Seymour, Indiana, prior to 1873.

<sup>17</sup> *Startling Facts in Modern Spiritualism* - by N.B. Wolfe, M.D., Cincinnati, 1874.

<sup>18</sup> Page 122 *Startling Facts in Modern Spiritualism* “Except for scientific investigation—that is, to test the delicacy and wondrous power of spirits over natural things—it will be found that ‘dark circles’ are valueless and injurious. As means of carrying conviction to the skeptical mind, the lightless sessions amount simply to this: persons by such evidences usually require periodical repetitions of ‘facts’ to keep their night-encompassed faith from languishing,”

It was this chance meeting that instigated his detailed investigation into Mary Hollis covering almost three years of séances, at his residence in Cincinnati. Hollis's engagements lasted 2-7 weeks at a time; the experiments totaling 30 weeks occurred from September 15<sup>th</sup> 1871—May 1<sup>st</sup> 1873. The original text of the 1874: *Startling Facts in Modern Spiritualism* is available to read on line,<sup>19</sup> so I will add no more as to his research that covers around 400 pages.

Mrs. Hollis was born on April 24<sup>th</sup> 1837 at Jeffersonville, Indiana. According to Wolfe, she was married in her seventeenth year. She herself was a mother of four by the time Dr. Wolfe started investigating her. Mary was born to wealthy and educated parents, although she was slow to receive a school education. She was a member of the Episcopal Church, until she began to see spirits and communicate with them.

Little more is known about Mary Hollis. She had married a Captain E.J. Hollis, of Louisville, Kentucky.<sup>20</sup> At some time it appears post 1873, and before circa 1879 she became Mrs. Billing, often then referred to as Hollis-Billing. She seems to have no serious allegations of fraud made against her, but as we drift towards the mid 1880s we lose track of her. The article that follows, “*Skiwaukie*,” *the Indian spirit-guide*, gives us a little more information about her life.

It can be noted that Dr. Wolfe spells one of Hollis' principal controls/guides as “Skiwaukee”. In the following article it is spelt “Skiwaukie;” generally a simple abbreviation is used—“Ski.”

In November 2005 *Psypioneer* published a short report on “Mrs. Billing's Mediumship,” and her visit to London “Farewell Address to Mrs. Hollis-Billing.”<sup>21</sup>

### **Additional note by LP:**

Under her later married name, Mrs Hollis-Billing appeared in theosophical history. She was a correspondent of Madame Blavatsky, though how they first met is not clear. She was an early teacher of reincarnation, but why her guide should do this is not known. Some of her London sitters joined the Theosophical Society; see *Psypioneer* March 2006 “From Spiritualism to Theosophy—Francesca Arundale.”<sup>22</sup> In the SPR 1885 report on the

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<sup>19</sup> See:— <http://www.archive.org/details/startlingfactsi01wolfgoog> (numerous writers state that the first edition was 1875, this is incorrect. Some claim it was 1873 which may be correct, *Psypioneer* copy is 1874.).

<sup>20</sup> This information is taken from an article on Hollis's mediumship see:—*Nineteenth Century Miracles* by Emma Hardinge Britten 1883 (UK) 1884 (USA).

<sup>21</sup> Volume 1, No.19 November 2005 pages 246-248:—“Mrs. Billing's Mediumship”—“Farewell Address to Mrs. Hollis-Billing”:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/19.PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf> We can note In “Mrs. Billing's Mediumship” on pages 247-247; Catherine Woodforde dates her article Nov. 20th, 1870. At this time Mary was married to Captain E.J. Hollis, so she was—Mary Hollis not Mrs. Billing, as Woodforde refers to her.

<sup>22</sup> Volume 2, No.3 pages 56-59:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.3%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf> We do come across a possible contradiction as the Arundale article (p58) states:—“In the beginning of 1881,

Theosophical phenomena, she was implicated in creating mystification about a letter received by C.C. Massey. (See Theosophical History Vol. 1 No 3. S.P.R. Archives: “The British Letter” this issue of TH is on line <sup>23</sup> under “Full Text Articles”). The New York Theosophist William Judge was less impressed by mediumship, and more than once for example commented critically on her other main guide James Nolan.<sup>24</sup>

## “SKIWAUKIE,” THE INDIAN SPIRIT-GUIDE.

*The Medium and Daybreak:—*<sup>25</sup>



The objects sought in presenting this narrative of facts to the reader are various:—First, to show that spiritual phenomena and manifestations existed long before the era of Modern Spiritualism, thirty years ago. Secondly, that these phenomena and visions of the spirit-world or its inhabitants are neither delusions nor tricks, but a department of the great system of nature. Thirdly, that the ability to see spirits and enable them to manifest is a distinct faculty or property of persons of a certain temperament, and that it is as natural for such persons to be spirit-mediums as it is for others with special endowments to be inventors, poets, painters, orators, musicians, or warriors. Fourthly, that the gift of mediumship, like other endowments, is often hereditary, and, instead of being capricious in its development and uncontrolled by law, it is most orderly in its manifestation, and presents the elements of a new science; and fifthly, that the medium for the

manifestation of truthful and beneficent spirits is invariably a person of excellent personal qualities, and not infrequently is descended from eminent and illustrious stock. “Spiritual gifts” are indeed the highest endowments of mankind, and have been enjoyed by all distinguished individuals in some form or other.

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*there was a very remarkable medium who was then holding private seances in London.”* We find in *Psypioneer* page 248:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/19.PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf> the “*Farewell address to Mrs. Hollis-Billing*” and we note she returned to America early 1880, and find no record of her returning again in 1881. Ed

<sup>23</sup> [www.theohistory.org](http://www.theohistory.org)

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.blavatsky.net/theosophy/judge/articles/aspirit-material.htm>

<sup>25</sup> *The Medium and Daybreak* December 19, 1879 (front page) 789-792

MRS. MARY J. HOLLIS-BILLING is the medium through whose instrumentality the facts embraced in this narrative have been derived. Her great-grandfather on the paternal side was a Von Kearns, of Heidelberg, Germany, a branch of one of the most illustrious European houses. Her ancestors on both sides have been, as far as history can show, people of independent means, local influence, and high moral integrity. The paternal ancestor just named emigrated with his family to America, and acquired much land in Westmoreland Co., Pennsylvania. Spiritual phenomena appear to have been frequent in the family from generation to generation. More than 100 years ago an interesting example of physical manifestation and seership occurred in the house of a neighbour the cradle in which an infant lay was in the habit of rocking, apparently of its own accord, at 6 o'clock every evening. This was a mystery which no one could unravel.

Our Medium's grandmother, like others, went to see the wonder, and at once perceived a hand, which was invisible to all others, moving the cradle, and then there appeared to her the full form of the deceased mother of the babe, who was the unseen cause of the manifestation. These gifts were inherited by our Medium's father. After the dispersion of the family to estates of their own the mother still occupied the old homestead, and her necessities were provided for by the sons, who in rotation sent her a sack of flour when their crops were ground at the mill. It was brother George's turn to supply his mother with the produce of his farm, but the night before he was to go with it our Medium's father dreamed three times that his father came to him in the morning, and told him that, as George could not go with the bag of meal, he (the dreamer) would have to go instead. Accordingly he dreamed that his horse was saddled, and he went, but as he proceeded on his way he came to a thicket, when a deer sprang out, which frightened his horse, and he was thrown off, and broke his leg. In the morning he thought nothing of his dream, but being told by his father that George could not take the meal to his mother, he started with it himself. As he approached a certain part of the road his dream suddenly occurred to him, and no sooner had he put himself firmly on his guard than a deer did spring up from the underwood and frightened his horse so, that he only saved himself by the most determined effort. The bag was thrown to the ground, but happily the rider kept his seat, and the only part of his dream which remained unfulfilled was that he escaped with sound limbs.

On the mother's side, one branch of Mrs. Billing's ancestors were named Neiswanger, and emigrated from Switzerland, her mother's great grandfather becoming possessed of a large track of land in Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. One rather painful incident which the history of the family furnishes illustrates forcibly the influence of mental impressions on the unborn, and also the high state of nervous susceptibility, and consequent organic refinement of the family. When the original settler died, there was a child yet unborn to him, and the wife deeply grieved at the loss of her husband, never could approach the table at meal-times without being affected to tears, and her appetite left her almost entirely. Strange to say her child, afterwards Jacob Neiswanger, so well known in Lancaster Co., was affected in the same manner. Till he became too much of a man to be ashamed of the practice, he could not restrain himself from falling down under the table at every meal, and crying bitterly; and through he lived to be an old man, he shed tears at every meal during his life, though by habit he was enabled to control any exhibition of the fact.

Our Medium's grandmother, on the mother's side, was a kinswoman of her husband, and manifested still another phase of spiritual impressibility. She would say to her husband in the morning that a certain neighbour had died during the night, the names in all cases being given, a record of upwards of 100 of which had been kept. Not a few of the families thus referred to lived many miles away, and no tidings respecting the health of the deceased members had been received. These are only a few instances derived from the experiences of the family illustrating the peculiar spiritual gifts possessed by both sides of the house. Volumes might be filled with even more extraordinary facts, but space forbids further addition.

**BORN A MEDIUM.**— Like many other children, our medium, when young, was in the habit of hearing and seeing people about the house who were not recognised by the rest of the family. She never went into her room alone but she saw several people in it, and in looking into the mirror several faces would peep over her shoulder. What it all meant she could not understand. She received no enlightenment on the matter when she appealed to her elders. They told her it was "imagination" but she recognised the same individuals amongst her invisible visitors from year to year. One of them, a venerable man, with a long, grey beard, she sees occasionally even to this day. That he was not a creature of her morbid fancy, she had on one occasion ample proof. When a girl, an opportunity presented itself for her to go into town on a special occasion, at which she was much delighted. The vehicle was at the door, but as she eagerly endeavoured to mount it, she suddenly drew back. Three times this reluctance occurred, and though she was in her own mind anxious to get up, it was with the utmost effort that she was at length enabled to mount into her seat. It was the face of this old man which appeared to her on each occasion, as if to deter her from going. Off they went; but when near the city the horses ran away, and it was by a miracle, as the saying is, that her life was preserved. It is much to be regretted that the spiritual faculties are not better understood and cultivated in the young. There are thousands of highly-talented mediums, whose bright gifts are lost to themselves and to the world, through the superstition and ignorance of this so-called enlightened age, which goes on in its materialistic course, oblivious of the grandest attributes of human nature.

This lack of Spiritual knowledge must have occurred in the experience of every one. When about sixteen years of age, our Medium had an instance of it. She was one day reading from a book of ghost stories to an aunt, who notwithstanding being a religious woman and a church member, said suddenly "I wonder if there be indeed a hereafter and if we really do exist after death?" The conversation ended in aunt and niece making an arrangement that the one who died first should return to the other with tidings of the Life Beyond. Two years afterwards our Medium was married, and during the first year of her married life that aunt died at a place nearly 2,000 miles distant. Between twelve and one o'clock in the morning our Medium heard a rapping in her room, and, looking up, saw the apparition of her aunt. She had died quite unexpectedly at the hour, of yellow fever, having been only five or six hours unwell, so that notice of the fact could not have been transmitted a distance of about 2,000 miles.

MODERN SPIRITUALISM. It was not till the year 1861, after all that has been described above had transpired, that our medium first heard of Spiritualism. Three different Spiritualists, with whom she became acquainted, told her she was a medium. Though she had no faith in the pretensions of mediums, and received the opinion pronounced on her, that she would become a public medium, with feelings somewhat mingled with contempt, yet she could not resist the temptation to investigate the subject. She sat with her mother alone, as they were averse to letting anyone know that they were interested in Spiritualism. In this strictly private manner they developed all the phenomena—rappings, by which messages were given, clairvoyance, and writing, the hand being moved by some agency to communicate matter quite foreign to the mind of the medium. It was not till after five years of investigation that she became convinced that spirits occasioned these manifestations. She entertained the prevailing idea that they proceeded from the action of some undiscovered force in nature.

During these investigations the sitters were rather astonished to find that, in passing along any dark passage in the house, they would hear whispers, and ultimately, spoken words. By holding a slate and small piece of pencil under the table the spirits would write messages, amongst other things informing them that if they thoroughly darkened the room in which they held their circles the spirits would be enabled to converse with them in the audible voice. The spirit-voice and the direct writing on the slate were developed simultaneously. This was the first knowledge they had of dark seances.

“SKIWAUKIE” It was at one of these dark sittings in the Medium’s family that a spirit first spoke, but in language which no one understood. From his peculiar exclamations, sometimes very loud and demonstrative, but never violent, it was perceived that he was an Indian. He was persistent in his attendance, and having proved himself a true friend and helper in the work, he was always welcomed. He gradually picked up the language till he was able to express himself in English, so as to be understood. He gave his Indian name, “Skiwaukie,” which he interpreted as meaning “Strength, Swiftness, and Truth,” He had been a Chief of the Hatchee tribe, long since extinct, and his hunting-grounds were in the Southern states, where Mrs. Billing was brought up, and where she still resided. He was seven feet high, he said, when on earth, lived till he was 90 years of age, and died 115 years ago. He said he had followed the Medium from the time of her birth, knowing that he would have to manifest through her, and do a work which the present condition of the world requires.

THE PORTRAIT. During the time he has controlled in Mrs. Billing’s circle, “Ski,” as he is called for brevity, has made many warm friends. One of these, Mr. J. R. Meeker, an eminent landscape painter of St. Louis, without informing the Medium of his intention, was impressed to paint “Ski’s” portrait. He had no means of seeing the spirit, not being clairvoyant, but he was so impressible that his mind could be inspired with the idea to be expressed, and the spirit could influence his hand somewhat even to produce the cured lip, indicative of the loss of teeth which “Ski” sustained before he quitted the earth-form. “Ski” told his Medium that she would have to excuse his absence, as he was having his “likeness



taken"; and when the artist presented it, Mrs. Billing, though the spirit had not acquainted her with the name of the artist, was not surprised at the result. It is a very excellent picture, considering it was the work of an artist who had not given an attention to portraits, and painted it without a model. "Ski" appears in it to wear a red blanket, which colour our photograph cannot reproduce. The original may be seen in Mrs. Billing's rooms.

THE PHOTOGRAPH is remarkably successful, seeing the difficulty with which paintings are reproduced, and it does great credit to the skill and careful work of the Woodbury PHOTO Printing Company.

The face is a remarkable one, and, that it is a true likeness of the spirit, all clairvoyants readily testify, as the spirit is to be seen at every séance by those who have the gift of "second sight." The only difference is that he appears to much better advantage than in the picture. No human are can imitate the delicacy, colour, and brilliant expression of spirit-forms. The face is highly characteristic of the name which the spirit assumes; as "strength" is shown in the jaw, "swiftness" in the flexible nose and mobile lips, and "truth" in the piercing eyes and keen intellect. Those who regard such a character as an "untutored savage," are vastly mistaken. He may not have the knowledge of words and phrases, which is too often the major portion of modern philosophy, but such men as "Ski" have a knowledge of *things*—they understand nature, and can co-operate with her more secret intentions. Phrenologically, the brain reaches well forward over the eyes, the central range of organs, culminating at the turban, being particularly full in development. Such a brain and clear temperament can belong to no other than an intuitive observer of Nature's truths. It is this mental endowment which all the science and philosophy of earth cannot for a moment pretend to grapple with.

"SKI" AS A SPIRIT-WORKER.—The experience of hundreds during Mrs. Billing's previous and present visit to London, would supply thousands of facts, all classes of which have come under our own observation. Of his ability to transport material objects a great distance we have had repeated examples; let it suffice if we quote one thoroughly verified instance, which took place in the United States a few years ago.

Mr. William L. Vance, an influential gentleman, of Memphis, Tenn., and a friend of his, who occupies an equally prominent position in Louisville, Kentucky—but, not having obtained permission to use his name, we withhold it—were in the habit of sitting frequently in Mrs. Billing's circles, and by mutual arrangement made experiments in testing "Ski's" powers as a bearer of light objects to long distances. The crucial case was as follows:—Mr. Vane had in his house at Memphis a desk, made for him in Paris, which contained a secret drawer, of which no one knew the existence but himself. Without communicating the fact to anyone, he deposited in that drawer an earring that had belonged to his mother and one of his own shirt-studs, wrapped in a piece of paper bearing his name and the date of the experiment. He opened the drawer twice a day to see if they had been taken away. One morning at eleven o'clock he examined it, and found the contents as usual. He returned at twelve o'clock, and again looked into the drawer, but observed that the articles were gone. He went immediately to the telegraph office, and telegraphed to his friend in Louisville that the articles had disappeared from the place in which he had secreted them.

His friend was standing in the doorway of his house about to enter the carriage which was awaiting him, when the telegram was handed to him. He drove straight to the residence of Mrs. Billing, merely saying that he desired a communication from a spirit-friend. They sat down at the table in the light, and Mrs. Billing, putting a slate under the table, to receive a written message from the gentleman's mother, as she thought most probable, received instead this communication from "Ski"—"Me got 'em"—and the articles were at the same time placed upon the slate. All this occurred before three o'clock in the afternoon, so that these articles were transported a distance of about 700 miles in less than four hours. The fastest railway train takes over twenty hours to run from Memphis to Louisville, the points, 100 miles apart, between which these objects were carried in that incredibly short space of time. On hearing the result from his friend, Mr. Vance sent him the duplicates, and, to the satisfaction of all parties, it was proved that the spirit had indeed performed a task which all will agree is quite beyond the resources of man's material means.

"SKI'S" WORK IN ENGLAND.—We cannot serve the present purpose better than introduce here a valuable communication from the pen of Mr. A. J. Smart, of Cardiff, a gentleman of unusual experience as an observer of spirit phenomena, and whose records of seances taken a foremost place in the literature of the Movement. He is recorder of a private circle held at the house of Mr. Lewis, Cardiff, and accompanied by the Medium of that circle, we introduced Mr. Smart to Mrs. Billing's seances last summer. The conversations with spirits "Ski" and James Nolan," which then took place, are reported in the MEDIUM of that time. "Ski" proposed to manifest at the Cardiff circle, and with what result the following communication shows:—

### **THE TESTIMONY OF MR. A. J. SMART, CARDIFF.**

The presentation to the readers of the MEDIUM of a portrait of "Skiwaukie" will be a favourable occasion on which to express a few ideas which have occurred to me in reference to the particular phase of work so successfully carried out by that faithful and indefatigable labourer in the Cause he has so much at heart, with no pretension to being exhaustive of the subject, but rather as a grateful and well earned tribute, which cannot be more suitably rendered than in the present issue of that journal.

My first acquaintance with our mutual friend, except by repute, was made during visits to certain of Mrs. Billing's seances, at which I was present by kind invitation, when the extraordinary power which he possesses of enquiring an unmistakable knowledge of the private concerns of the sitters,—whether strangers or not, seemed to make little difference—together with his great commend of the "direct voice" were alike strikingly manifested.

Entirely without solicitation he promised to visit the circles at Cardiff, and help in the development there of that class of phenomena with which he has most faithfully performed, and in a way which proves him to be thoroughly master of his task.

The mellow-toned voice, which I recognised immediately at the first sitting held after my return to Cardiff, the characteristic affirmative expression “soh!” the speech studded with appellations peculiarly Indian, the habit of finding expressive names of his own for people, his execution of the very same work in the very same style, the thorough manner of accomplishing what he undertakes, and his masterly method of setting about it, which shows no “prentice hand,” his earnestness, friendliness and sincerity,—all these, combined with frequent references to mutual friends meeting in Mrs. Billing’s more private circle (where also he has spoken of his visits to us), as perfectly stamp and identify the same individuality as anything, short of actual sight, could possibly do in the case of any person whom we meet in two different places.

As in London, so here, he is remarkable for his power of discerning and relating to the astonished inquirer, occurrences which have transpired in the life of the latter, in the more or less remote past; for naming and correctly describing deceased friends or relatives; for proving himself acquainted for the time with matters affecting the sitter, both of a private and business character, and other things of a simile, kind. I have already spoken of the thoroughness with which all this is accomplished. There are no “leading” questions; or, indeed, questions of any kind; no beating about the bush, as if to gain information. On the contrary, he constantly silences those who are prone to be communicative upon matters connected with themselves which he has brought to their mind, preferring to tell the whole story himself, without any hint from them. He takes the initiative himself, and goes to the point with startling directness. This, as a matter of course, increases the satisfaction of the inquirer immensely.

A striking instance of his ability occurred in the case of a young lady a perfect stranger to the town, as well as to medium and sitters, who, being desirous of attending a seance, had looked in quite unexpectedly, was invited to join the rest, who were at that moment about holding a sitting. Without any preface “Ski” told her the nature of her occupation, described the character of the inmates of her distant home, arrangement of the interior of the house, and other particulars, with quite a staggering degree of accuracy, as she acknowledged. She was charmed, but confused, being unfamiliar with Spiritualistic phenomena, and evidently not anticipating such very prompt treatment, and naively remarked that it was a very “pleasing *entertainment*.” She has since recovered her equanimity, and drawn a more serious conclusion from her short experience.

Another point of great excellence about his method is that he never attempts too much. When the power wanes so as to seriously affect the correctness of his results, he says so, and frankly warns us to receive his statements, at such times, with more caution.

With us already he has been the means of bringing home to many minds with greater force the conviction of that truth which they already held and to strangers he has demonstrated conclusively the possibility of cultivating a power which enables the possessor to peer into their past and present surroundings, with which no one present but themselves could be acquainted, and which had, in many cases, vanished for the time, even from their own conscious memory until recalled thereto, at the same moment demonstrating by the independency of voice the independency of his individuality. His

“clear-seeing” powers appear also to extend into futurity, but so far as the experience of our circle is concerned, of which alone I am now writing, sufficient time has not yet elapsed to enable me just now to speak as to this with that certainty upon which results so extraordinary should rest. This would seem to be a far more marvellous faculty than the former. He has also proved himself able to discover from “impressions in the aura,” events which have taken place in rooms. He gives ample evidence not only that man carries about with him a mysterious tablet upon which are indelibly engraved “all things that ever he did,” a record that can be read with more or less of precision, but that even inanimate objects catch and retain the impression of fleeting scenes and occurrences. This may well be with the more subtle and plastic modes of nature, since a wafer laid for a short time upon the finely tempered blade of a razor will leave upon the bright surface a clear impression of its outline that may be rendered visible for months afterwards by the simple process of breathing upon the steel.

What these facts imply the mind would do well to ponder. One thing that may be gathered is the possibility of bringing to light with accuracy the deeds of right or wrong committed by humanity, individually or collectively, in the past. That which is done in secret, may indeed be “proclaimed from the housetops” I should not, however, do “Ski” full justice did I not, refer to the fact that he is ever truly considerate in dealing with these matters which might give rise to unpleasant feeling on the part of the victim of his keen scrutiny, but it might be well for these who have secrets to preserve to give him a wide berth.

I may mention that, amongst his other accomplishments, he has evinced considerable ability in diagnosing disease, and the prescribing of remedies for the same.

The form of manifestation of spirit-personality, which “Ski” so well exemplifies has been aptly described as “the perfection of spirit-communication. With most other phases of advanced phenomenal manifestation, the consciousness of the medium is for the time suspended, and cannot therefore, be contrasted *simultaneously* with the intelligence of the control, and while they are such as to induce in the mind a train of reasoning *which* leads, ultimately, to the irresistible conclusion that they have spirit intelligence as their source, the fact that, in this phenomenon of the direct voice, the medium is perfectly conscious the whole time, converses with the sitters, and also with the control, tends apart from the striking tests, to a forcible realisation of the presence of other intelligences than those in the flesh, and of the independency of medium and control, with a directness and instantaneousness which I regard as a most valuable feature. This is still more true of that other branch of “Ski’s” work, the “setting-up” of spirit-friends of the Sitters to speak for themselves, in which he is very successful. More especially is this bringing home to the mind of the reality of spirit-presence effective, when, as occasionally happens, we are favoured with hearing two or three conversing together in the direct voice, in tones of varying character, pitch, and modulation. It is, if possible, still more pleasing to hear the wee voice of children, talking in their artless way, seeking that knowledge of earth-life which their sojourn here was too brief to enable them to gain, and explaining their

occupations and recreations in spirit-life, the lessons they learn, their hopes and joys, their beautiful surroundings, their yearnings towards their earthly relatives, the kindness of their friends and instructors in spirit-life, and many other points of interest.

I may briefly refer to the sensations of the medium, which should be observed and chronicled in connection with all classes of phenomena, as a necessary element in the arriving at a sound philosophy of the methods of spirit- manifestation. The temperature of the body is greatly increased at the time—so much so as to induce considerable perspiration. A numbness and loss of use in the region of the throat and vocal organs is experienced, as if vital force were withdrawn, for the purpose, I presume, of materialising to a sufficient extent the corresponding organ, in the Control. The State induced in the medium is so sensitive that the mind is highly excitable, and hence it become, necessary that the most tranquil and harmonious conditions should be secured in the circle if satisfactory results are to be obtained.

“Ski” dose not confine himself to the domain of phenomenal manifestations, but is always ready to render his reasonable advice to these who seek it, and his willingness and sincerity invariably win esteem. In closing these remarks, I can only wish him a wider sphere of usefulness, and consequent happiness, and hope that the example which he gives of unflagging industry in the cause of truth may be imitated by those here, upon whom has been laid the solemn duty of carrying forward the work initiated by the wise and beneficent intelligences of spirit-life, and of handing on the torch of knowledge and progress which has been placed in their hands.

A. J. SMART.

From what “Ski” said at the circle in London, we heard frequently of the work being accomplished at Cardiff; but as our spirit-friend is not a talker but a worker, and anything but a boaster, we had no idea that he had been so successful. He is a most truthful and reliable spirit. He has much knowledge and great force, and being wholly trustworthy, he can be of considerable service to those who desire his help. All who sit in the circles and make his acquaintance regard him with feelings of respect and affection. His musical voice rippling forth the salutation “Soh!” (he never uses the word yes), is always the signal for friendly congratulations. He uses the word “soh,” in so many different pitches and lengths, that it is made to express the affirmative with an infinite number of extended meanings.

In the course of a letter just received, Mr. James Smyth, Angerville, France, says:—

The stranger who goes to Mrs. Billing’s seances, will find no “test” necessary, for the piercing eye of “Ski” can read him like a book, and can tell him of his past, present, and future, and with great discretion and discrimination in speaking of private matters. “Ski” also assists the spirits to consult with their friends, “sets them up” as he calls it. “Ski” has contrived to amass a wonderful deal of knowledge, and to all your questions you can, have satisfactory answers. He is a very good and truthful spirit. He takes his place as one of the

chiefs of those bands of spirits who are doing all in their power to dispel and disperse the darkness of materialism and orthodoxy, the two great pests of this world.

But that "Ski" may be enabled to do this more effectually, Mrs. Billing's seances must be select, that is to say, must consist of thoughtful, earnest, true, men and women. All those who go there to pass an idle hour to amuse themselves, or for mockery, should be put aside. If we would profit, if we would have communications with pure and good spirits, we must prepare ourselves, and hold communion with ourselves, and then, with the assistance of such as "Ski," there is no end to the good we can do, and the comforts and consolation that we can bring to thousands of homes. Let all who attend Mrs. Billing's circles prove that they are not ungrateful for the privileges conferred on them, but, in return for the benefit they receive, may they be impelled to take up this work of Human Progress in their turn, and help to bring spiritual light and joy to their fellow-creatures.

*Angerville, Dec. 12, 1879.*

Happily, Mrs. Billing is, for the present, in London, and an introduction may be obtained by suitable sitters. No more need be said. This portrait is presented to the reader by a few friends of "Ski," as a slight testimonial to his worth and the respect which they bear him. In this sentiment they include all the Indian tribes, who, now nearly extinct on earth, return to us from the spirit-world to operate upon us for our good in many ways. Spiritualism thus throws new and reliable light on the brotherhood of man, shows that life in this world and the inner state, is so interlinked that even in death we cannot rid ourselves either of friends or foes. Our manifest duty, then, is to be at peace with all in the spirit-world as well as on earth, bearing in mind the truth contained in a poem, written and dedicated to "Ski," by Mrs. Jacob Martin, Gairo, Ill., U.S.A., with an extract from which we will conclude:—

"Life would be yet greater failure,  
Were it not that loving angels  
Often give us good impressions,  
Gleams of hope and inspiration,  
Sending sometimes rays of knowledge—  
Rays which cheer us and assist us.  
And among the watchful spirits,  
Few have done such faithful service  
To earth's troubled, weary children,  
As our noble Indian-spirit;  
As our patient friend and worker;  
As our hero chief, 'Skiwaukie!'"

# GORDON HIGGINSON AT THE COLLEGE OF PSYCHIC SCIENCE

In *Psypioneer* May 2010,<sup>26</sup> we reprinted Philip Paul's account of the Gordon Higginson case, including his attendance at a Gordon Higginson (GH) demonstration at CPS on April 22, 1956.<sup>27</sup>

We suspect that several readers have preserved old programmes of GH events. *Psypioneer* has recently acquired the CPS programme for the Spring Session of 1956.

This shows that a special meeting was held on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> January at 6.30pm for a demonstration of clairaudience by Mr Gordon Higginson for members only at 2 shillings admission. Mr Higginson returned the following afternoon at 3pm for a Sunday "At Home", including tea. The speaker was Mrs Hankey, then principal, and GH was the clairaudient. Tickets, available in advance, were members 2s 6d and members' friends 4s.

The reason for the saving of this programme was that it included a Wednesday afternoon lecture by Miss Ruby Yeatman on "The Phenomenon of Patience Worth".

Miss Yeatman, who was principal of CPS when I went to work there in 1968, was an authority on the Patience Worth case and collected material about her.

This folder was inherited by our colleague Don Galloway, and then through the kindness of Don's nephew, by us.

LP

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<sup>26</sup> Vol.6, No.5 pages 136-142:—The Curious Case of Gordon Higginson, by Philip Paul – *The Two Worlds*. Also see pages 143-146:—"No further action" in his mystery messages, by Philip Paul – *The Two Worlds*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.5.May2010..pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Page 137

# WILLIAM STANTON MOSES.

[**Note by Psypioneer:**—The tribute which follows was published as a supplement to Proceedings Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in, Vol. 8, 1892. In the printed version, the names Stainton and Moses were wrongly hyphenated. The tribute is important for its testimony to the influence exercised by SM on Gurney and Myers. It is also more candid than many obituaries. Myers did indeed make a more detailed study of the mediumship of Stainton Moses, which also was published in two parts in SPR Proceedings. **Myers, Frederic. THE EXPERIENCES OF W. STANTON MOSES 1 & 2, Proceedings 9, 1893-4, pp. 245-353.** Also *Proceedings* 11, 1895, pp. 24-113. We are grateful to the SPR for providing a photocopy of this tribute.]

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In here commemorating the decease, on September 5th, at the age of fifty-three, of my old friend, William Stainton Moses, it would have been more congenial to my feelings to have confined myself to a brief but sincere expression of personal respect and regard. But I should not thus do justice to the deep significance of certain events in his career. I personally regard his life as one of the most noteworthy lives of our generation; and from few men have I heard at first hand facts comparable in importance for me with those which I heard from him. Statements like these need serious justification; nor can they be justified without a perfectly frank discussion both of his gifts and of his limitations. What I shall now say I have said in effect to himself, without offence; and his other friends, I trust, will feel that it is only by recognising his points of deficiency—unimportant in themselves, but widely observable and observed—that we can effectively claim recognition for his substantial worth, or attention for the weighty message which his personal experiences hold for mankind.

It was on May 9th, 1874, that Edmund Gurney and I met Stainton Moses for the first time, through the kindness of Mrs. Cowper-Temple (now Lady Mount-Temple), who knew that we had become interested in “psychical” problems, and wished to introduce us to a man of honour who had recently experienced phenomena, due wholly to some gift of his own, which had profoundly changed his conception of life.

That evening was epoch-making in Gurney’s life and mine. Standing as we were in the attitude natural at the commencement of such inquiries, under such conditions as were then attainable—an attitude of curiosity tempered by a vivid, perception of difficulty and drawback—we now met a man of University education, of manifest sanity and probity, who vouched to us for a series of phenomena—occurring to himself, and with no doubtful or venal aid—which seemed at least to prove, in confusedly intermingled form, three main theses unknown to Science. These were (1) the existence in the human spirit of hidden powers of insight and of communication; (2) the personal survival and near presence of the departed; and (3) interference, due to unknown agencies, with the ponderable world. He spoke frankly and fully; he showed his notebooks; he referred us to his friends; he inspired a belief which was at once sufficient; and which is still sufficient, to prompt to action.

The facts which thus impressed us found printed record mainly in a small book called *Spirit Identity*, now out of print. Some were described in articles in *Human Nature*, a magazine since defunct. We obtained verbal corroboration from Mr. F. W. Percival, Fellow of Queen's College, Oxford, and from the late Serjeant Cox. And quite recently the contemporaneous notes of Mrs. Speer, fully corroborating Stainton Moses' own account, have been appearing in the pages of *Light*.

This certainly is not a very complete or satisfactory manner of setting forth a message of great import to mankind. But both the virtues and the defects of the recipient of that message were such as to render him ill-suited to obtain for it the serious attention of the scientific world.

The experiences which Stainton Moses had undergone had changed his views but not his character. He was already set in the mould of the hardworking, conscientious, dogmatic clergyman, with a strong desire to do good, and a strong belief in preaching as the best way to do it. For himself the essential part of what I have called his "message" lay in the actual words automatically uttered or written—not in the accompanying phenomena which really gave their uniqueness and importance to the automatic processes now so familiar. In a book called *Spirit Teachings* he collected what he regarded as the real fruits of those years of mysterious listening in the vestibule of a world unknown.

And much as we may regret this too exclusive ethical preoccupation in a region where the establishment of actual fact is still the one thing needful; it must be admitted that twenty years ago the scientific importance of these phenomena had hardly dawned on any mind. Among all the witnesses of D. D. Home's marvels Mr. Crookes was almost the only man who made any attempt to treat them as reasonable men treat all the facts of nature. Most of the witnesses, though fully believing in the genuineness of the wonders, appear to have regarded them as a kind of uncanny diversion. The more serious sought for assurance that their beloved dead were still near them, and straitly charged Mr. Home to tell no man of the proofs which they said had brought to themselves unspeakable joy. An attempt made, in 1875, by Serjeant Cox and a few others (among whom were Stainton Moses and myself), to get these phenomena more seriously discussed in a "Psychological Society" languished for want of suitable coadjutors, and on the death of Serjeant Cox (in 1879) the Society was dissolved. During these important years, therefore, while his experiences were fresh in Stainton Moses' mind, and while they were to some extent still recurring, he had little encouragement to deal with them from a scientific point of view.

When, however, in 1882, Professor Barrett consulted him as to the possibility of founding a new society, under better auspices, he warmly welcomed the plan. Edmund Gurney and I were asked to join; but made it a condition that the consent of Professor Sidgwick (with whom we had already been working) to act as our President should first be obtained. Under his guidance the Society for Psychological Research assumed a more cautious and critical attitude than was congenial to Stainton Moses' warm heart, strong convictions, and impulsive temper, and in 1886 he left the Society, in consequence of the publication in the *Proceedings* of certain comments on phenomena occurring through the agency, of the so-called "medium" Eglinton.

From this time he frankly confessed himself disgusted with our attempts at scientific method, and as main contributor to *Light* and afterwards editor until his death, he practically reverted to "Spiritualism as a religion"—as opposed to psychical research as a scientific duty. And assuredly the religious implications of all these phenomena are worthy of any man's most serious thought. But those who most feel the importance of the ethical superstructure are at the same time most plainly bound to treat the establishment of the facts at the foundation as no mere personal search for a faith, to be dropped when private conviction has been attained, but as a serious, a continuous, a public duty. And the more convinced they are that their faith is sound, the more ready should they be to face distrust and aversion,—to lay their account for a long struggle with the *vis inertiae* of the human spirit.

Stainton Moses was ill-fitted for this patient, uphill toil. In the first place he lacked—and he readily and repeatedly admitted to me, that he lacked—all vestige of scientific, or even of legal instinct. The very words "first-hand evidence," "contemporary record," corroborative testimony," were to him as a weariness to the flesh. His attitude was that of the preacher who is already so thoroughly persuaded in his own mind that he treats any alleged fact which falls in with his views as the uncriticised text for fresh exhortation. And in the second place—though this was a minor matter—his natural sensitiveness was sometimes exaggerated by gout and other wearing ailments into an irritability which he scarcely felt compelled to conceal in a journal circulating mainly among attached disciples.

The reason for noticing these defects is that they constitute the only ground on which Stainton Moses' trustworthiness as a witness to his own phenomena could possibly be impugned. I mention them in order that I may say that, having read, I think, all that he has printed, and having watched his conduct at critical moments, I see much ground for impugning his judgment, but no ground whatever for doubting that he has narrated with absolute good faith the story of his own experience. He allowed me, before he left the Society, to examine almost the whole series of his automatic writings; those especially which contain the evidence on which *Spirit Identity* is based; and in no instance did I find that the printed statement of any case went beyond the warrant of the manuscript. On the contrary, although that book contains much careless writing and many general phrases of a loose rhetorical kind, I believe that the cases themselves, if stated with proper completeness, would often be found even stronger evidentially than the book makes out.

Let me go back in memory, then, to 1874, and ask myself how far the impression then made has stood the test of subsequent experience. On the negative side I must place an increased knowledge of the possibility of unconscious fraud in abnormal states, and an increased realisation of what indeed was at once evident—the unscientific cast of Stainton Moses' mind.

On the positive side I place the important corroborative testimony of Mrs. Speer, now first printed. And I must bear in mind also the significant fact that new and independent evidence has reached us from many quarters of phenomena closely parallel to much though not to all, which seemed isolated and exceptional in Stainton Moses' earlier-accounts. On the positive side, too, I must reckon the way in which his character has worn on the whole during these eighteen years. Those years contained for him much of moral trial, of physical strain and

suffering; but although they brought out errors of judgment and temper, they revealed nothing inconsistent with high aims, intense convictions, a conscience heedful of the end.

If, then, on some future occasion it is permitted to me to analyse the records of those strange experiences, the reader will understand the attitude in which I shall think it right to approach them. We must be on the watch, no doubt, for any indication of self-deception, of misinterpretation, of narrow views. But we ought in justice to feel that we are dealing with the work of a sincere fellow-labourer in our seldom-trodden field.

The gift which Stainton Moses possessed is a strange and perplexing one. We know nothing of the laws which govern its distribution. It is not yet recognised as constituting a claim on the admiration or the gratitude of man kind. Yet if, indeed, through such glimpses, such messages, as came to my *friend*, our *race* is being obscurely guided into an avenue of eternal hope, it matters little whether we talk of chance or of merit. For who of mortals need ask for better than to be made, whether by chance or merit, a landmark on such a way?

FREDERIC W H. MYERS.

DECEASE OF MRS. MOSES.

LIGHT:—²⁸

[**Note by LP**:—In *Psypioneer* November 2004,²⁹ we reported “Stainton Moses accused of Matrimony”. The offender was the *New Dictionary of National Biography* which had wrongly assumed that the Mary Moses who survived him was a spouse and not a mother. However mother and son were shortly reunited. LP.]

Intelligence has reached us of the departure of Mrs. Moses, but we have no particulars as to the immediate cause of death, though we presume it was simply a case of senile decay. Her medical attendant has kindly sent us the following communication:—

68, High-street, Bedford.
December 14th, 1896.

DEAR SIR,—The funeral of the late Mrs. Moses took place at the cemetery, Bedford, this day. Mrs. Moses was the aged mother of the late William Stainton Moses, and has survived her son four years.

²⁸ *LIGHT* December 19, 1896 page 602.

²⁹ *Psypioneer* Vol.1, No.7 pages 53-54:—*Stainton Moses accused of matrimony*:—http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP7.pdf

Her faculties were clear to the last, and her memory perfectly marvellous. She took an interest in all the passing events, and, although she had lost her sight, she insisted on all matters of interest in the daily papers being read to her. She would have reached the great age of ninety-five had she lived until her next birthday in March. Mr. F. Percival was one of the mourners who followed her to the grave.

I think it may possibly interest you to have the inscription placed on the monument of the late Stainton Moses.—Yours truly,

W. G. JOHNSON.

In loving memory of the Rev. William Stainton Moses, only son of William and Mary Moses. Born at Donington, Lincolnshire, November 5th, 1839; died at Bedford, September 5th, 1892. Known as ‘M.A. (Oxon).’ Founder and President of the London Spiritualist Alliance; a joint founder of the Society for Psychical Research; Editor of ‘LIGHT’; and for eighteen years English Master at University College School, London.

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‘Out of darkness into his marvellous light.’  
‘He being dead yet speaketh.’

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## MAURICE ELLIOTT AND THE CHALLENGE OF SPIRITUALISM

In early issues of *Psypioneer*, we often reported on the work of Rev. Maurice Elliott, a clergyman who was partly identified with the Spiritualist movement between the wars, but became hon. secretary of CFPS on its foundation in 1953/4, and a critic of developments in the Spiritualist movement.

The delicacy of his position can be seen from his forgotten early work “The Challenge of Spiritualism” (Redditch, George W. Jelfs, 1920.), written in the form of a dialogue between a parson and a layman. [Jelfs had also published his booklet “Why not face the facts?—a plea for open mindedness and broad mindedness in view of the amazingly wonderful discoveries that have been, and are being, made in both the material and the spiritual world.” Price 3d, jointly with Hallam Elliott, Honiley, Kenilworth.]

Elliott described himself on the title page of “The Challenge” as “of Christchurch Priory, Rector Designate of Homiley, Kenilworth, chaplain of Wroxall Abbey. Joint author of “Angels Seen Today”.”

His problem was that he wanted to secure a sympathetic hearing for the phenomena of Spiritualism, while not accepting the teachings of the movement. Sometimes he became quite indignant.

*“You will scarcely believe it, but in a booklet published by the Spiritualists’ National Union entitled “A Course of Theology”, the name of Jesus is not mentioned from beginning to end, nor is he even referred to.” (p.138-9.)*

*“.. let me bring to your notice the fact that Mr Gambier Bolton, who is a well-known advocate of Spiritualism and the author of “ Startling Facts about our Bible” is also the secretary of “ The Society for the Conversion of the Christians” (p.44 )*

*“The refrain of that hymn in the Christian hymn-books is “Angels of Jesus, Angels of Light” but in the Spiritualists’ [SNU] hymn-book it is, “Angels of Wisdom, Angels of Light”. (p.127)*

*“Outlines of Spiritualism for the Young” by Alfred Kitson was “a deliberate attempt to poison the minds of our children against the Christian’s Christ and the Christian Church.” ( p.15)*

Richard Bush, author of “The Place of Jesus Christ in Spiritualism” was especially reprobated because he took a Unitarian view, that Jesus was only “among the first under God”. ( p.122)

In response to Spiritualist teachings, Elliott defended the divinity of Christ, and the Atonement. He was also to write apologetically, at much greater length, in his post-war book “In Search of Faith”.<sup>30</sup>

The recent conversion of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to Spiritualism posed an especial problem to Elliott in 1920, because ACD was so hostile to orthodoxy. Optimistically, Elliott predicted *“Wherever Sir Arthur goes he destroys the spirit of materialism, and, if I am not mistaken, the modern church will be instrumental in leading his converts into the fuller light of the Christian revelation.” (p.38)* With a few exceptions, like Edwin Butler, Elliott was mistaken.

The positive side of Elliott’s challenge was what he called psychic science. This accounted for the supernormal element in the Bible. Spirit intercourse was an established fact, and may be justifiable. But the Church’s message to the bereaved was unsatisfactory. These themes were to persist in Elliott’s writing over the decades.

But in reading this dialogue, one cannot help wondering what became of Elliott in the 1930s? There is little trace of his critique of Spiritualism in his best known books about Jesus and the Old Testament, though as they started life as articles in “ Psychic News” that is not surprising. Perhaps he was ground down by poverty and by the Bishop of London. At

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<sup>30</sup> Vol.1, No.10 pages 125-126:— *Maurice Elliott and the search for faith:—*  
[http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP10.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP10.pdf)

the end of the war, when he resurfaced in the diocese of Chichester, Elliott had got back to his 1920 perspective as an apologist for both psychic science and mainstream Anglicanism.

LP.

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*'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). \*

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