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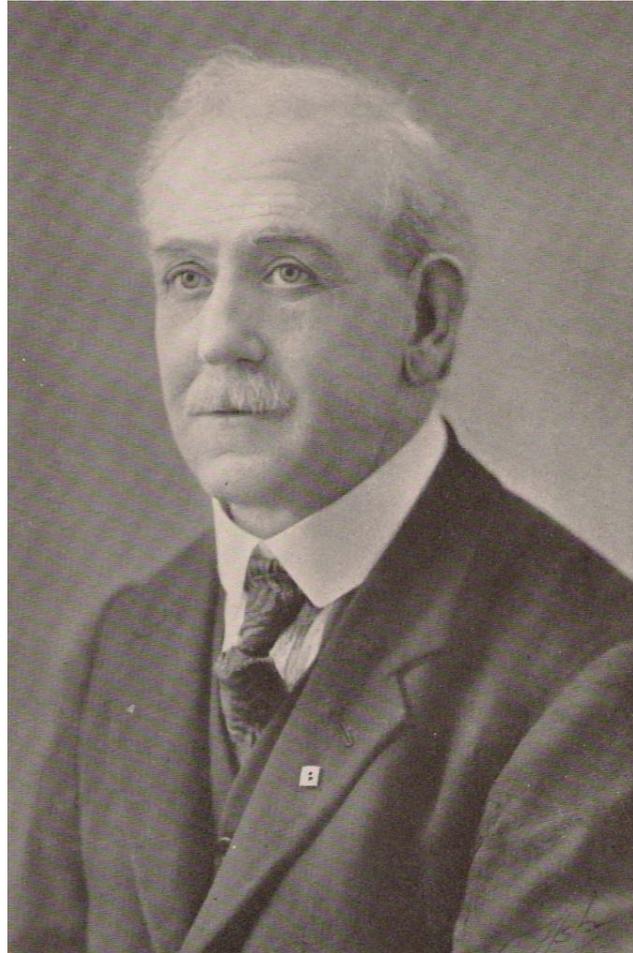
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FORGOTTEN PIONEERS OF THE S.N.U.:

Ernest Walter Oaten (1875-1952) gives an excellent well balanced overview in his 1919 S.N.U. presidential Conference address¹, of the Spiritualists' National Union's hard struggles during the war years, with the added hindrance of the police prosecutions under the 1824 Vagrancy Act.

Oaten had already addressed this issue at the fourteenth S.N.U., agm, held at Glasgow on Saturday July 1st, 1916.² The Spiritualist movement had been plagued by this unfair Act, which showed no distinction between the genuine and fraudulent medium. From 1876 to 1950, Spiritualist mediums were prosecuted and sometimes jailed. An archive edition of *Psypioneer* is being prepared giving the history of:—
“THE LAW AGAINST MEDIUMSHIP:—Vagrancy Act, 1824 – Witchcraft Act, 1735”.

Paul J. Gaunt



¹ Ernest Oaten, S.N.U., president 1915-1920 and 1922-1923. For more, use *Psypioneer* search engine: key word Oaten at:—www.woodlandway.org. The photograph is taken from Vol. VIII, No.1 April, 1929 *Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science*. See Volume 7, No.2:—*Whatever happened to the British College?*, pages 35-46:— <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.2February2010.pdf>

² Legal protection of mediums: The President [Oaten] outlined the story of recent prosecutions and persecution of mediums in Great Britain. Opinion was expressed re the unwisdom of appealing for repeal of the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts, and the general desire shown was for the amendment of these acts, in order that the legitimate exercise of mediumship might be conducted in accordance with well-established facts of spirit communion. After a free and representative expression of views upon this important matter, chiefly drawing attention to the injustice and indignity suffered by mediums at the hands of the common law, due to the application of all but obsolete Acts of Parliament, the following resolution was carried: “That the E.C. be instructed to open a fund (amount named, £1,000) for the purpose of securing the amendment of the Witchcraft Acts and the Vagrancy Act, the adequate protection of mediums, and the creation of all necessary machinery.” Moved by Mr. Keeling [S.N.U., President 1928-1930], seconded by Mr. F. T. Blake [S.N.U., President 1938-1941]. Mr. Morse [S.N.U., Vice President] promised to help in this matter by utilising space in the columns of *THE TWO WORLDS* for the furtherance of the object. It was agreed, of course, that all contributions towards this effort be sent to the Union Secretary, and be deposited in a separate fund. Thanks were accorded to the Editor [Morse] of *THE TWO WORLDS* for his kindly offer. Taken from the agm report *The Two Worlds*, July 21 1916, page 333.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*The Two Worlds:—*³

DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD AT THE MECHANICS' HALL, NOTTINGHAM, ON July 5th, 1919,

BY ERNEST W. OATEN.

FELLOW MEMBERS AND FRIENDS,—

Four years have been completed since you honoured me by electing me to the highest position in the Spiritualistic movement—the Presidency of the National organisation. Four years of strife and difficulty, with a world full of sorrow and all the psychic conditions upset by the horror of a world war. It has been a time of anxiety and hard work in an atmosphere of discomfort, and I stand before you to-day to give an account of my stewardship. When I took this office I did so at the call of the spirit world. Months before my election two of our old pioneers had come to me from behind the veil, and requested me to take the position. I would not have done so but for their request and promise of support, and my first duty to-day is to render publicly my deep and affectionate thanks to them for the light and leading it has been my privilege to receive from them. One name I must mention—that of Mrs. Emma Harding Britten. On innumerable occasions through mediums in many towns and at most unexpected times I have had messages couched in identical language from her which have been just as reliable as the dawn.

Four years ago this Union was in a parlous condition—how parlous few but the auditors knew. Funds were dwindling and work was increasing. The European war was making a call upon the services of some of our best men. Expenses began to rise, and income remained stationary, and at a critical moment railway fares increased and weekend tickets were abolished, thus increasing by 120 per cent the expenses of a quarterly meeting. Our general fund became exhausted, and we had to call upon the funds which had been set aside for publishing, in order to meet expenses. The war was upon us in all its ferocity—the spirit of inquiry was abroad, and we Spiritualists were the only people who could comfort breaking hearts.

Many of our friends wrote nice letters urging us to cut down expenses and restrict our activities, but this would have been a policy of cowardice. The position was carefully and prayerfully discussed by your Council. We did what we ought to do: appealed to the spirit world in the matter, and finally resolved that it was our duty to INCREASE RATHER THAN DECREASE OUR ACTIVITIES, and to show our faith in those whose work we are striving to do. It would have been easy to be crushed, but your Council is made of sterner stuff. The policy of restriction meant inefficiency. One result of the war was an awakened

³ *The Two Worlds*, Friday, July 25, 1919. Front page; and pages 298, 299 (price 2.d.).

interest in our movement, and in consequence the police became active. There was no discrimination—the vulgar fortune-teller and the genuine medium were classed as one, and some of our Societies were definitely threatened. It was time to do something, for we were convinced that there was a hidden hand underneath.

I spent days on this matter, making long journeys and interviewing many people. I found—and I now publicly assert it—that those prosecutions were largely engineered by religious bigots. In many cases I found the police were loath to take action, but strings were pulled on Watch Committees and by anonymous letters to the police, which letters were part of a plan, and the hands of the police were thereby forced.

I interviewed the Chief Constables of many of our largest towns and cities, and spent dozens of hours trying to gain access to others who have been so tied up with red tape that they were unapproachable. Your Council determined to get to headquarters, and subsequently Dr. Ellis T. Powell (who is our guest to-day, and who has rendered us invaluable aid in this matter), Messrs. Yates, Boddington, and myself interviewed the Executive Committee of the Chief Constables' Association at their annual conference. We endeavoured to persuade them to discriminate between genuine mediumship and fortune-tellers. We offered to help them to crash the pretender and charlatan, and all abuses connected therewith, if they would assist us to protect genuine mediumship. We got little sympathy, but the prosecutions died down. I want to be quite candid—I fear no man. Whilst there are honourable men amongst our Chief Constables (it has been a pleasure to meet some of them) who would not willingly allow themselves to be used by religious bigots to persecute those they differ from, there nevertheless exists another class who have no desire to stop fortune-telling; their only object is to obtain money by fines. In some towns the fortune-teller is like the bookmaker—a valuable source of income, and the police would be sorry to lose him. I want this movement to realise what it is up against, and I am telling you what my experience has taught me.

Opposition, however, took another form. At one of our Conference meetings all arrangements had been made for Sir A. Conan Doyle to address a mass meeting in the Empire. Everything was in order. We had spent about £40 on the meeting, when on the Friday I had an ultimatum from the police that the meeting must not be held. I interviewed the police, and defied them. Told them the meeting would be held, whatever the consequences. I was quite prepared to suffer imprisonment, but the meeting could not be cancelled. The local friends moved the civic authorities, and the meeting was a huge success. Why all this trouble? Anonymous letters and wire-pulling were at work, and I named to the police the source of all the trouble—ecclesiastical, of course. How did I know? Well, what are psychic gifts for? The people we work for are more faithful to us than we to them.

In another large city, too, the Corporation definitely refused the Union the use of the Town Hall, despite the fact that it is habitually let to other religious bodies—the only reason given being that we “Were Spiritualists, and they could not allow the Town Hall to be used for such purposes.” We resolved to fight the Corporation, on the ground that the Spiritualists of the city were ratepayers, and as such had equal rights with others. I went

over there on three occasions, and spent in all four days there interviewing various members of the Watch Committee and the police. The local friends did good work in backing up my efforts, and gaining interviews. After much trouble I gained permission to appear before the Watch Committee, and for an hour fought our case. Of course, we won, and the meetings were a huge success. I am quite sure that the concentration of spirit power had much to do with our obtaining of the necessary permission and our victory.

During the four years the success of our movement has prompted many clerical attacks. In most of the cases they have afforded us an opportunity to take a large hall and reply to those attacks. I have replied to some 20, and other members of my Council have also worked hard. On every hand we have had opposition from without, and I am glad of it—I like it, but though it has eaten into a lot of time, the loyalty of my Council has been the rock of encouragement.

Under all these circumstances do you wonder that I was prepared to contest in the courts the right of our movement to equality of treatment with other bodies under the Military Service Act. Personally, I had no desire to thus throw myself open to misunderstanding and sneers, but my Council and the Conference asked me to make the stand. It was but part of the same fight, and was probably engineered by the same wirepullers. You who trusted me with these responsibilities have known little of all this work, but now that I meet you face to face it is but fair that I should lay the facts before you. I want you to realise that there is a “hidden hand” working against us, and I want you each and all to shoulder the burden. I tell you frankly that it is not uncommon to send out 250 letters to Societies asking for information and, at the end of a month, to receive 40 replies. That is the support we have sometimes had. I know it is not wilful—it is negligence, and needs only to be mentioned in order to be remedied. All these matters have entailed hard work, and much time. In going through my diary I find that during my presidency I have devoted 200 full days to the work of the Union, and I think you ought to know it. The work done on the platform or in taking the chair at meetings is the one part of the President’s duty which is of little importance. The best work done for our movement is NOT that which puts a man before the crowd. Friends, the wood has been thick, but we are seeing daylight, and of one thing I am sure—THE HEART OF OUR MOVEMENT IS SOUND. All this activity entailed expense, and at one time we were well in debt. Accordingly we made an appeal for funds, without which we should have been in a serious position. As a result your special donations realised over £160. This was more than we had hoped, and it saved the situation financially. It showed your loyalty to principles and your confidence in your Council. I am here to-day for myself, for my Council, and for the spirit world, to thank you for that mark of confidence. I venture to say there is no body of people in this country doing so much work with so little money as the Spiritualists’ National Union.

To-day we meet under the ægis of what the world calls peace—I wish it were peace—but then perhaps I see with the spiritual eye. I hope and believe that we shall have a little more peace in our own movement. Reconstruction is in the air, and we need breathing time to reconstruct our machinery. Our Union has grown out of its clothes, and must be reconstructed on a solid and more substantial basis. Make no mistake about it—we are the most important movement in the religious world to-day. The future of religion rests with

us, for we have tapped the power of the spirit world, and we must be prepared for responsibilities which are concomitant with our privileges. We must prepare to-day for a greater future. Last year our esteemed Secretary, Mr. H. G. Hey,⁴ who for years has been the hub of our activity, broke down in health. Mrs. Hey was appointed assistant secretary, and has worked well. Mrs. Greenwood,⁵ Messrs. Yates and Wright, with others of the Council, have shared with myself such work as was necessary to assist it. This has often meant inevitable delay and overlapping, and we have done what we could, but the work of the Council increases by leaps and bounds, and we need centralisation and a higher standard of efficiency. Since this year dawned we have lost the physical presence of our valued Vice-President (J. J. Morse),⁶ and also of Council for J. T. Ward. What an inspiration it is to know of a certainty that they can probably do more to aid us now than when they were in the flesh. Get hold of that truth. Everyone who passes to the Higher Life is a source of strength to us. With larger vision, clearer understanding, and greater power they will still be members of our Council.

What of the future? We have a great future, but the lack of organisation in our ranks is appalling. How few Societies there are which have a proper system of book-keeping, a full record of members, and how few could produce their books for the last 12 or 15 years? The Union itself, in some respects, is lacking on these lines, owing to the scattered nature of its activities. We possess to-day valuable assets of historical value and interest, and there are many people who are anxious to place valuable records of spirit activity, books, slates, apports, photographs, signed affidavits, etc., etc., in the Union's custody if only suitable provision were made to keep and exhibit them. I have just had some 40 volumes handed me for the Union. I do not know where to put them, without making them inaccessible. There is the valuable library of Mrs. Britten lying idle.

The letters arriving at and despatched from the Union must now approach 10,000 per year. These are numbers to conjure with, and if we are to continue our growth the time has arrived when we must have central administrative offices, centrally situated and properly equipped. Complete records and registers must be prepared for the whole movement, so that we know our true strength and position. Times without number we have asked Societies to send us yearly a copy of their balance sheet for confidential purposes—there are not 25 Societies who reply.

⁴ *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No.10:—*Hanson Gledhill Hey – Paul J. Gaunt—The Passing of Mr. Hanson G. Hey – The Two Worlds*, pages 263-271:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.10October2010.pdf>

⁵ *Jessy Greenwood* became a Spiritualist as a young girl, and a clairvoyant medium. She died in early February 1958 at the age of 97. See *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No.12:—*Mrs. Jessy Greenwood*, pages 348-351:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.12December2010.pdf>

⁶ For 29 years James J. Morse held many positions in the National Federation of Spiritualists / Spiritualists' National Union. He was buried on Monday, the 24th, February 1919, at the Southern Cemetery, Manchester. If he had lived until the October he would have celebrated 50 years as medium and trance speaker, Ernest Oaten was the principal speaker at the funeral. Morse will appear later in this series:—*Forgotten Pioneers of the S.N.U.*

Our publishing department ought to have been extended, but, alas! we had to use the money of that department for general purposes. When we paid it back, paper could not be obtained. In the interval, scores of new books had been published, chiefly at prices which seem specially designed to keep them from democracy. I had one in my hand this week published at half a sovereign, which I could produce and see a profit on at 3s. 6d. Our Publishing Committee was formed in order to bring the price of standard books within the reach of the worker. There is a big field here. There are other schemes I could refer to, but time presses. I know it will cost money to become efficient, but it must be done or the spirit people will find someone else to do it.

We want central offices, where the activities of the movement can be properly directed, and we must have them. The spirit people want then as a storehouse of psychic power. The world needs them. We want, further, a church in every town, with its own staff of mediums, working on the premises, under decent conditions. Each church should have its own library and seance rooms, so that the investigator can be provided for whenever he comes along.

We want, too, a proper training home where young mediums can be developed under expert guidance by scientific methods, under spirit direction. The Britten Memorial was promoted for this very purpose and in 18 years has got a miserable £600. We want to enlarge the idea. The London Spiritualist Alliance⁷ has gathered some £4,000 to help establish itself in London. I am glad to hear it. I congratulate them on their success, but what are we going to do? We are thousands, where they are scores. Let us THINK big things, dream big things, and we shall soon learn to Do big things.

Wanted, a Pioneers' Memorial, with a Britten Library, a Wallis Publishing Department, a Fox Sisters suite of seance rooms, an Andrew Jackson Davis Lyceum office, a Morse Lecture hall, a Stainton Moses editorial room, a D. D. Home drawing room and Crookes psychical laboratory. Do not tell me "it can't be done." I am sick, tired and weary of hearing the words. They generally only mean it is too much trouble. "It can't be done" is a splendid cry for lazy men and "won't work". It, CAN be done if we want it done. We have the greatest cause on earth. The grandest truth that men have heard for 2,000 years. The spirit people are behind us. They have not given us this cause merely to enable us to get a description of our grandfathers. There is behind it all a Divine purpose. The Spirit of Truth—the Holy Spirit of God—is calling to us to hold up the torch of freedom. Freedom from creedal conventions and mental fetters, and to shed the light of a larger, fuller life upon the dark ways of men. Believe me. I do not want these things as ornaments, but as an active centre of spiritual force, whose rays shall give new life to mankind. We have been holding huge meetings. We have proved that, properly organised, there is no hall in any town too large for us. We can fill them. 3,500 people at Sheffield, 3,000 at Leeds and Manchester, 5,800 at Glasgow, 6,000 in London during the worst snowstorm for years, 1,500 at Nottingham, 2,000 at Swansea, where there is not even a society. Why, we have the world at our feet if we only can trust ourselves. Rise and labour. Show your faith in the

⁷ The LSA was founded 1883-84. Today it is known as 'The College of Psychic Studies' (CPS). See:—<http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/college/history.html> . Not to be confused with the BCPS of note 1 above.

power of the spirit world. I have no use for the man who talks of the beautiful spirit people, but would not trust them for twopence. Ours is the great future—let us rise to it.

I have finished. Let me close with thanks to those past and present members of my Council who, through these years, have aided and sustained me in all difficulties, and who have been patient and kindly with my weaknesses. I have received nothing but kindness and loyalty at their hands. I have never asked for any service which was not freely given. No man, no leader, ever had amore faithful band of workers than you have been and in the years that are to be, my thanks and affection will go out to you.

Friends, when I picked up these reins at Hull four years ago I promised you that I would be guided by the spirit world, that I would do my best, and that I would know no favourites.

God knows how often I have felt my weakness, and even my unworthiness. Let me assure you I have just done my little best, and I have relied upon the invisible band to pull me through. If any of my efforts have been of value to the cause, let your thanks go out to them—theirs be the thanks—theirs the power—theirs the victory.



DION FORTUNE: MAGICAL MEDIUM

[**Note by LP:**—*This article was originally published in Psychic News 20 February 2010. It appears here with a new Afterword, but without some of the points (in the PN article) which have already appeared in Psypioneer May 2006.*⁸]

Who was the most influential British medium? We could argue that over several cups of tea. Likewise occultists debate who was the leading magician of the past century. One magical name, Dion Fortune is of particular psychic interest. It has become increasingly clear that she was also an outstanding medium.

Mediumship was also significant as background to the post-1945 development of a new religion in Britain. The most reliable history of Modern Pagan Witchcraft was completed with the author suspecting that the role of Spiritualism in the growth of the new religion might be greater than supposed.

Professor Ronald Hutton of the Department of Historical Studies, Bristol University, England, in “Triumph of the Moon” (Oxford University Press 1999) traced the development of Wicca through the occult influences of nineteenth century England, such as the Theosophical Society, to the present day. After reassessments of such seminal figures

⁸ Volume 2, No.5:—*Dion Fortune biography to be revised Leslie Price*, page 110:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.5%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

as Dion Fortune, he gave special attention to evidence for the Wicca religion before Gerald Gardner, who is sometimes identified as its founder.

In his preface he observed:

“... My own suspicion is that the greatest invisible player in the story is spiritualism. (he uses the lower case!—LP) This is credited with importance at moments—and the evidence which I uncovered suggested that this treatment was enough—but it may well turn out that an extended examination of it, on the lines of those provided (for example) for cunning craft and woodcraft movements, would have been more appropriate. Such a treatment is only just becoming possible because of the growing quantity of detailed research, and it should be relatively easy to make a study of its relationship with witchcraft and ritual magic in the future.” (p.xi)

Professor Hutton summarised also recent research into the European witch trials. He showed that the numbers were relatively small compared with executions for other crimes (p.379) and he claimed

“... not a single person tried for witchcraft in Europe between 1400 and 1800 has been demonstrated to have adhered to a pagan religion.” (p380.)

Although Hutton’s views on this are at odds with those of some lady American writers, they also present a challenge to those Orthodox Spiritualists who believe that witch persecutions were directed wholesale by the Church against mediums.

But to return to Dion Fortune. The London occult scene was quite small in her day, and she was bound to encounter Spiritualists regularly. When her fraternity was based in Bayswater, it was near the Friendship Centre,⁹ a prominent centre of mediumship at Lancaster Gate, where it was possible to run into Maurice Barbanell or Arthur Findlay, as did a youthful Edwin Butler,¹⁰ the Centre’s book stall assistant.

The two organisations (FC and Inner Light) were friends. Dion’s books were in the FC library, and also in that of the London Spiritualist Alliance across the park. I believe she much influenced Edwin’s thought. His near namesake and friend, Ernest Butler,¹¹ a pupil of Dion Fortune, was also very sympathetic to Spiritualism.

Yet it is clear that Dion Fortune was offering something more than personal messages. Perhaps her teaching—to the nation and to western culture—was best expressed not in her

⁹ See :—PsyPioneer Archives - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:—<http://woodlandway.org>

¹⁰ Edwin Butler was an early financier of PsyPioneer publications, use our search engine at:—<http://woodlandway.org> key word:—Edwin Butler.

¹¹ PsyPioneer volume 2, No.3:—*Magical Writer Censored – Leslie Price*, pages 69-70:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/2.3%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

classic expositions like “Psychic Self-Defence” but in her novels, such as “The Sea Priestess”.

The narrator of the novel, Wilfred Maxwell, is transformed after an encounter with an adept Vivien Le Fay Morgan. It is noticeable that the adept uses psychic means to receive teachings, including the planchette and the crystal.

Wilfred and his wife Molly are figures representative of the stunted life of the time, who are brought to fuller life as if by magic.

Though Dion Fortune followed what she termed the Master Jesus, and lived a strenuous and abstemious life, she rejected the Little Bethels which preached half a god to half a man, as the narrator put it. She rejected Orthodoxy.

She still has much to teach Spiritualists who are looking for an incisive analysis of the psychic realm, by someone who knew it from within, and transcended it.

LP...

Afterword: (April 2011)

The encounter between Dion Fortune and LIGHT has been chiefly told from the Inner Light side. The most detailed documentation is in Gareth Knight “Spiritualism and Occultism” (1999) which also reprinted DF’s short books about Spiritualism.

On 3 September 1942, LIGHT carried a note.

Mr. C. R. CAMMELL has come to an arrangement with the Board of Directors, which will enable him to take a much-needed rest from Editorial work, and devote himself, for some months, exclusively to literature.

On 10 September LIGHT clarified this:

Mr. C. R. CAMMELL

As the form of the notice relating to the termination of his editorship, published by Mr. C. R. Cammell in the issue of LIGHT of September 3rd, has caused some misunderstanding, the Board of Directors wish to state that Mr. Cammell’s editorship will not be resumed.

A rather stern editorial explained.

THE POLICY OF LIGHT

A LITTLE less than a year ago it was announced that LIGHT would follow a “broader policy,” by adopting a more liberal interpretation of its title as *A Journal of Spiritualism: Psychical, Occult and Mystical Research*. Since then we have published many scholarly articles, on a variety of topics, by authors eminent in their special fields. We have received

letters in praise of these articles, and, as might be expected in respect of any innovation, we have had adverse criticism.

The governing body of LIGHT has, however, become increasingly aware of, and is in sympathy with, a feeling that in the case of a journal such as LIGHT the pursuit of a wider appeal must be bounded by the limitations of its special sphere. Periodicals of a more general nature can, and do change their character entirely, and as circulation is their main object, the justification, or otherwise, lies in the result. But the same latitude cannot logically exist in a journal whose primary reason for existence is the dissemination of a special line of belief, experimental research and philosophy.

The Directors of LIGHT therefore feel that the time has come to reaffirm that, in publishing LIGHT, their object is to promote Spiritualism, in the widest sense of the term, while continuing to provide a platform for the exposition and discussion of those other subjects having a bearing upon the one which, in a Spiritualist journal, must clearly be the major theme.

In war-time, more than ever, it is of particular importance that LIGHT should give adequate space to those questions of survival and of purpose in life which are now, to a heightened degree, active in the minds of the public.

Spiritualism, as proclaimed by LIGHT, means belief that the basis of Life is spiritual; that the spirit has an existence independent of the material body and does therefore survive the body; and that, given certain conditions, intelligent communication can, and does occur between embodied spirits and spirits discarnate. Spiritualism also includes the acceptance of a fundamental spiritual principle underlying the whole of creation and of a Law of Spiritual Consequence which operates continuously and progressively throughout this life and the next.

However, tribute was paid to the editor.

L.S.A. NOTES AND COMMENTS THE DEPARTURE OF Mr. C. R. CAMMELL

FOR one year LIGHT has been edited by a man of great knowledge in certain special phases of study and speculation that come under the wide and somewhat ambiguous term, the occult. Mr. Charles R. Cammell is by temperament aligned to the side of the poets, and all that is beautiful in art and literature make first appeal to him. This we have plainly seen in his editorship, and many of our readers have been grateful to him for the touch of his mind which has stirred responsive chords.

Often the first steps of Spiritualism in the seance room are homely to a degree, and appear to lack that quality of sacredness and dignity for which vague expectancy, coloured by old habits of thought, has encouraged one to look.

It is often asked, where does Spiritualism lead; what does it teach? Many who have asked this question of themselves without finding a definite answer have felt that Mr. Cammell had come to lead them into the greater profundities of teaching and exploration. Thus it is that in some quarters regret is being expressed at his resignation.

His appointment as editor was, to some extent, experimental. We accept his resignation and wish him success in his future career as a writer.

At this moment it is desirable to review the fundamental policy of LIGHT. Various definitions and explanations have been employed from time to time to convey the policy which has been pursued since the birth of the paper in 1881. It is, in brief, to present information of fact, theory and implication of all phases of psychic phenomena, from the crudest physical types to the higher ranges of inspiration.

The aim is two-fold; to supply evidence of individual survival as a demonstrated fact, to discover and teach the principles of Nature operating in humanity and the physical universe, and to prove that the basis of everything in life here on earth and in the beyond is intelligent and benevolently spiritual. Furthermore, that the progress of the soul, which we witness here on earth, is a process which is continued after death.

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Is there any possibility of additional understanding of this unfortunate collision between Spiritualism and Occultism? The LSA council minutes, not available in early 2011, may in particular identify a woman who was much opposed to Cammell. Incidentally, Cammell went on to publish in 1951 a study of Crowley.

Finally, a word about Dion Fortune's criticism of little Bethels (that is probably, Protestant chapels). At the same time as she was engaged in her pioneering work on one side of the Bristol Channel, on the other side of the Channel, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones was in a remarkable ministry at Aberavon, South Wales (1927-1939) after which he came to Westminster Chapel, London. What a pity these two Welsh persons never met!

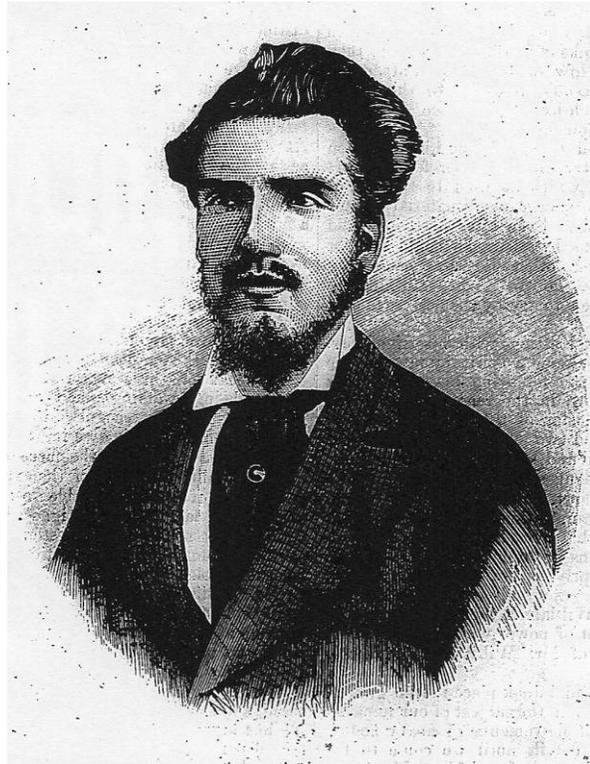
LP



# The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England

## Herne and Williams:—Professional Partnership:

In the previous articles on the Herne and Williams Professional Partnership, much of Frank Herne's contribution has been covered. Unfortunately less is known of Charles Edward Williams. But in the *Medium and Daybreak* for July 17, 1874 an article was published by Henry E. Russell entitled "Mr. Williams and his Mediumship" which included this rare image of Williams.



Since the article is lengthy and holds some information already covered in this series, I will quote Williams' early experiences from this article, and his introduction to Spiritualism and to the King dynasty. Any reader interested in the full article please contact me for a copy.

I quote:—<sup>12</sup>

"Like most of those who have become remarkable for spiritual gifts, or for the faculties their peculiar organisms afford to the spirit-world as means for communicating to humanity at large the fact and wondrous experiences of immortality, the childhood of Mr. Williams was not devoid of, to him and his relatives, strange and unaccountable occurrences in his presence. We hear of nothing however, happening that may attract our special notice until comparatively a few, years since. A strong desire for a sea-faring life, evinced in boyhood, was for years most strenuously opposed by his mother. Finding, perhaps, that the desire was so pertinacious entertained that he would never settle down to any regular employment onshore, Mrs. Williams at length consented to his making a trial trip abroad. Accordingly, in the month of August, 1868, he was appointed midshipman on board a large East Indiaman, and made two voyages from London to Calcutta. On the last of these voyages, either on the outward or homeward passage, about 1869, occurred the first manifestation of any note, such as raps, and movements of objects. On one of these occasions referred to he was standing near the capstan, on which were placed

<sup>12</sup> *The Medium and Daybreak*, July 17, 1874, pages 450- 452. (Vol. V, No. 224, Double Sheet, Price 1½d.)

some tin pannikins and other things, from which a group of sailors were refreshing themselves, when suddenly, to the amazement of Mr. Williams as well as the seamen, the whole of these articles were lifted up by unseen agency and floated overboard. Of course in such a position of affairs the presence of such an uncanny person on board was looked upon with grave suspicion by the superstitious minds of his shipmates, and his no doubt unenviable feelings tended greatly to wean his inclinations from pursuing further a sea-faring life.

“This change of ideas was in a great measure strengthened by a renewal of his acquaintance with his friend, since passed away, Joseph Adcock, to whom on his return home he mentioned the extraordinary things which had occurred; and asked his friend’s advice. Mr. Adcock had, during his friend’s absence from England, become acquainted with Spiritualism through visiting the Spiritual Institution,<sup>13</sup> and no doubt hailed this newly-discovered power in his friend as an acquisition to the ranks of Mediums, who were then comparatively few in number. How little perhaps did Joseph Adcock then know to what great results he would be the means of aiding the incipient marvels which his friend related to him in their persistent struggles for development!

“Mr. Williams at this time agreed to accompany his friend on a few days’ excursion into the country, and was then for the first time told of Spiritualism, a subject which he used to ridicule, or at least, to disbelieve that spirits had power over material matter and could communicate with mortals. Even after his friend had told him of physical manifestations by spirits, he could not for a long time believe that drew were otherwise than caused by electricity or animal magnetism. However, on returning to London, he and Mr. Adcock agreed to try by themselves a few experiments together.

“On the first of these experimental sittings with his friend Mr. Adcock, Mr. Williams was entranced, and a spirit by raps on the table spelt out the substance of the following message:—“My name is James Achanna. I was born in the reign of James the Second of Scotland. I became master of the king’s household. My title was Lord of Glamis, and two of the most prominent names of that period were Crichton and Douglas.” Although Mr. Williams at this time did not sit regularly for development, yet he became convinced, through the instrumentality of his friend Adcock, who wrote down the communications which took place at these early and desultory sittings, that what had so puzzled himself and others were really the actions of disembodied intelligences. After a few of these meetings in private, Mr. Adcock introduced his friend to Mr. Alsop, to whom we not only owe much for our gleanings of the history of Mr. Williams’s mediumship, but in reality for much of the development of power which has gradually progressed to the present stage of Mr. William’s remarkable success as a medium.

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<sup>13</sup> *Psypioneer* Volume, 6 No.1:—*Spiritual origin of The Spiritual Institution & The Medium and Daybreak*, pages 3-12:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.1January2010.pdf>

“In reviewing the rapid changes which took place in the gradual yet astonishing development of power in the subject of our remarks, from mere entrancement, raps, and movements of heavy bodies, we pass over many of the incipient details until we come to the month of November, 1870, when his newly-found friend, Mr. Alsop, proposed for the first time a dark seance. This suggestion was at once acted on, and on the first evening the tubes were thrown about the room in all directions, and brought back again to the table by the manifesting spirits. Each sitting from that time continued to show a marked increase in power. Spirit hands and spirit-forms were seen and felt; lights were also visible, direct spirit-writing given spirit voices were also heard most distinctly, so as to be recognised by the members of the circle; then succeeded, in addition to these, in the initiatory stage of the well-known manifestations which are now commonly taking place in the presence of Mr. Williams.

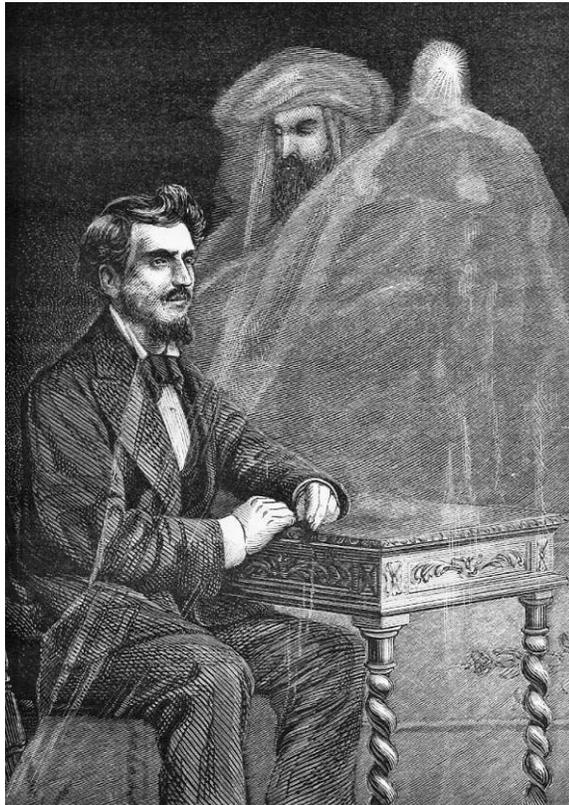
“Mr. Joseph Adcock, the medium’s closest friend, had passed away, and again and again had repeatedly returned in materialised form, sitting again in his old-accustomed place at Mr. Alsop’s meetings greeting his old friends with well-remembered voice, and giving many tests of his identity; “James Achanna” also continued to attend these gatherings of Mr. Alsop’s family with Mr. Williams almost uninterruptedly until the 25th February, 1871, when we find the now renowned; world-wide known “John King,” putting in an appearance through the mediumship of our friend. The first notice given of his presence was the tearing up of the tubes which the other manifesting spirits had been in the habit of using, and speaking in a loud, gruff voice, unaided by such extraneous assistance, he announced his presence in the characteristic manner peculiar to his early manifestations. In answer to the first question put to him by Mr. Alsop, Why did he come? his reply was just as those who knew this spirit might expect his answer to be,—“To get good, of course, and to do good.” On a subsequent occasion, when asked why he was so rough in his manifestations, he gave the pithy rejoinder, which our *cui bono* inquirers would do well to ponder on, “I love God as well as any of you, and wish to do all the good I can; but some people will only believe by rough handling.”

“ “Katie King,” “John King’s wife and “Katie,” “John’s” daughter, soon followed in the many beautiful and varied manifestations which have characterised the career of Mr. Williams’s mediumship. To “Katie King” the elder, as the leader of a band of scientific disembodied minds, we say, most heartily, God bless her! It was she who discovered the mode of concentrating the spirit-light which is now so well known as “John King’s” spirit-lamp.” It was she who taught “John King,” in part in the presence of the writer of this article, how to materialise his spirit-form so as to manifest in open daylight. It was she who taught the now well-known spirit “Peter” how to gather up the power at sittings, and therefrom to collect the peculiar spirit-light for the use of herself and “John King.” It was through her untiring agency that the manifestations taking place through the mediumship of the subject of our remarks have attained to their present standard of comparative perfection.”



In the April issue<sup>14</sup> I commented that we would:—“... look at the famous “spirit-light or lamp with which “John and Katey King” showed themselves.”

We can note that the above article mentions the “John King’s spirit-lamp”. The most detailed descriptions I have found were recorded by Stainton Moses then more commonly known as M.A. Oxon. As stated in the March issue, Moses recorded some thirty sittings with Charles Williams during the period 1872-1876.<sup>15</sup> Some of the earlier recorded sittings with Williams were joint séances with Frank Herne; some of these séances were published and referenced in the March issue.<sup>16</sup>



Below are quoted a couple of descriptions of the spirit-lamp as observed and described by Stainton Moses.

As published in *Light*:—<sup>17</sup>

“A great development in this special manifestation has taken place during the past 18 months. When first I saw spirit-lights they were of a smoky, phosphoric nature. In the presence of Herne and Williams Katie would endeavour to illumine her face with light which streamed from her fingers. The result was very much what I could obtain by daubing a plate over with phosphorized oil and rubbing my fingers over it. The features were purely imaginary, and the odour of phosphorus which pervaded the room most real. By degrees this mode of

illumination viz by sheaves of phosphoric light emanating from fingers of a hand gave way to something more refined. I remember well being present on

<sup>14</sup> Volume 7, No.4:—*Portrait of the Spirit “John King” – The Medium and Daybreak*, pages 123-130:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.4.April2011.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Stainton Moses’ private séance records began on April 2nd, 1872. Séances held by Dr. Stanhope T. Speer, M.D., (Dr.S) and Stainton Moses with Charles Williams, commenced on May 30th, 1872.

<sup>16</sup> Volume 7, No.3:—*The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England Herne’s and Williams Continued – Paul J. Gaunt - Stainton Moses on Herne and Williams – Light*, pages 89-100:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.3March2011.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> See the March issue for reference details etc, pages 95-100:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.3March2011.pdf>

the evening (Sep. 22 1872) when the new lamp was first produced. It gave a dull reddish-yellow light, very evanescent and very poor, as we think now, but it was then a great triumph. The crystal was apparently an oblong of about 6 in x 3 in and varying in thickness. This form of light has been gradually improved by John King who now uses it until it presents now the appearance of a globe of soft yellow light surrounded by drapery, and varying in size from that of a large turnip down to that of a hen's egg. I have seen it as John King passed it over his face as large as a turnip, and giving out light which filled the Cabinet and was reflected from the mirror at the back of the Cabinet. I have seen it too when apparently no hand held it, hovering about 8 feet from the floor whilst Mrs. Wm. Crookes held Williams in his chair. This séance was in Mr. Crookes' own house. The light on that occasion ascended 6 feet from where the Medium sat, and rapped quite plainly on the table 3 feet from the hand which was held by Mrs. Crookes. This was crucial evidence of the independent action and existence of the light.

“This light varies, as I have said, from a vapoury large phosphorescent light to a clear luminous crystal. The appearance can in some degree be counterfeited by a phial of phosphorized oil enclosed in a handkerchief, but the light so made is of a greyer tint, more ashen in hue, and is not nearly so permanent. Moreover the experience just detailed is crucial as to the independent existence of the light.

“In presence of Mr. Williams are seen also little round flashing lights purporting to be made by the spirit Katie. They are of a totally different character. Instead of the bottled moonlight appearance, they are brilliant, radiant, like the flashing of a gem in bright light. They are not larger than a walnut and dart about rapidly in mid-air giving one the idea of a large diamond scintillating in a ray of light. I have once observed a similar light on the mantel shelf in the study at Dglas House,<sup>18</sup> but it was quite stationary and remained for half an hour or more like a large gem lit up by a ray of light.

“Katie's little gem-lights are not unlike the little points of light which dart about with Mrs Everitt,<sup>19</sup> and answer questions by their flashes.

“Spirit-lights of great brilliancy are seen with Mrs Jencken. They are not unlike the light shewn by John King. Mr. Crookes has tested the independent existence of these lights very satisfactorily.”



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<sup>18</sup> Stanhope T. Speer, M.D., (Dr. S) had rented a furnished house for the summer months (1872) at Douglas, in the Isle of Man - Douglas House.

<sup>19</sup> *Psypioneer* Volume 3, No.3:—*Mediumship of Mrs. Everitt - The Year-Book of Spiritualism for 1871*, pages 61-64:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.3March07.pdf>



**July 10, 1874:**

When the Materialization part began Williams was put within a curtain which separated the two rooms. He lay on a couch, and tho' I did not see him during John King's presence, still we could hear him breathing deeply, and he was in deep trance when all was over. I sat in the centre of the Circle. Before me was a table which filled up the centre of the circle, and thro' which any figure must pass in reaching me. Soon John King appeared, the familiar face and beard. He carried his light in his hand. The principal points which I have to record are these.

I had the lamp placed in my hand, and retained it for more than a minute. It was surrounded by fine drapery like gauze. The light may best be described as a circular cake about 2 inches in diameter and one inch thick, bevelled at the edges: not unlike a circular cake of soap. It glowed with a pale light like moonlight:

and was exactly like Mentor's<sup>20</sup> in all but shape. I was struck with the comparative lightness in weight in proportion to size.

The figure of John King approached me several times quite close. In order to do that it was necessary for the form to pass thro' the table in front of me: or to float over it. I remarked on this and asked that the figure should go as high as possible. In answer to my request it floated up gradually to a distance above my head which must have very nearly reached the ceiling. It then descended and sank down further and further until it seemed to sink into the floor. At my request he passed the lamp over his eyes, but they were upturned and hardly anything but the whites were visible.

At one time the face assumed a look like that in M. Buguet's photo engraved in the Medium, and the beard was pointed.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Mentor (Algazzali or Ghazali) became a member of Stainton Moses Band of spirit controls / guides in May 1873, but was firstly mistaken for "Rector" in a spirit extra taken by Hudson on May 24<sup>th</sup>. Later, on May 30<sup>th</sup>, SM was informed by "Doctor" that the figure in the spirit extra was actually Mentor, a new member of the Band. Information sourced from *The "Controls" of Stainton Moses* by A.W. Trethewy, B.A, London, (1923). See *Psypioneer* Volume 3, No.4:—*A Study of Stainton Moses – An address by A.W. Trethewy*, pages 85-88:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.4April07.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> This would be the photograph that Moses is referring to, published in *The Medium and Daybreak* front page and 402 on June 26, 1874. The article heading is titled "The Photograph of a Spirit." At this time the professional French (Paris) spirit-photographer Mr. Buguet had taken rooms at 33, Baker Street, corner of

Stainton Moses was very supportive of Williams' mediumship, and the King materialisations produced. This was despite his spirit controls' warnings about false and deceiving spirits within the William's séances, e.g.:—

Q. [Moses] But I want to ask further. Are my senses good for nothing, or am I so easily deceived?

A. [Imperator] No, no, neither. But you know nothing of occult influence when deceiving spirits are present. The mixture of the true and false would make it impossible for you to arrive at fact. Hence have we warned you so urgently to beware of the introduction of such. They are fatal to our work. Cease now.

Numerous warnings were conveyed to Moses by automatic writing in dialogues with his controls at Bedford<sup>22</sup> and recorded on August 9th, 1874, primarily by Imperator, the band's leader.<sup>23</sup>

Four years later, following the Williams-Rita alleged exposure at The Hague on September 10th, 1878. Moses re-affirmed his belief in Williams' mediumship:—<sup>24</sup>

“Over and over again, in houses where he was a stranger, held hand and foot, or so placed as to render fraud impossible, Williams has demonstrated to minds the most sceptical the fact of his mediumship.”

Charles Williams' and Mr. Rita's alleged exposure at The Hague was the most serious allegation made against Charles Williams over his three decades as a public professional

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Dorset Street, London. This engraving is taken from a photograph taken by Buguet in Paris during Williams' visit there. Jas Burns's states:—“The sitter is Mr. Williams, whose likeness has not been very well preserved in the engraving. The spirit is “John King,” and the engraving is a careful *fac-simile* of the photograph. [...] Many will at once recognise the likeness of “John King” as he is in the habit of materialising himself; only that his head-gear is not in turban form.”

The photograph that heads this section appears to be taken at the same studio, although no information is given except “Mr. C. E. Williams and a Materialised Spirit”. It shows the same figure as published in the *Medium and Daybreak*; note the turban and the spirit-lamp. This photograph was published in *The Spiritualist*, May 3rd, 1878.

Éduard Isidore Buguet see:—*Spirit Photographers - William Stainton Moses collection*, at the College of Psychic Studies (CPS) archives:—<http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/archives/examples.html>

<sup>22</sup> Moses held strong links with Bedford; he died there, and is buried at Bedford cemetery. See *Psypioneer* Volume 4, No.10:—*The Grave of William Stainton Moses 1839-1892 - Paul J. Gaunt*, pages 231-233:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.10October08.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> “Imperator” who was often referred to as “The Chief” came to Moses in the summer of 1872, and first signed as Imperator on December 3. Later on the 12th he was seen clairvoyantly by Moses. It would not be until July 6th the following year that Imperator would disclose his earth life to Moses. [Information sourced from *The “Controls” of Stainton Moses* by A.W. Trethewy, B.A, London, nd. (1923)]

<sup>24</sup> *The Spiritualist*, November 15, 1878, p. 239

medium. The Dutch Spiritualists who unmasked the fraud were well respected Spiritualists / researchers and their statement of the alleged fraud would carry international weight.

William Harrison published a report in *The Spiritualist* entitled “An Exposure of Imposture” on Friday 20 September 1878; we reprint an account from *Spiritual Notes*:—<sup>25</sup>

## ALLEGED EXPOSURE OF PUBLIC MEDIUMS

We make the following extracts from a communication addressed to the Spiritualistic journals by Mr. A. J. Riko,<sup>26</sup> of The Hague—a gentleman who has been known for many years as one of the most trustworthy, earnest, and generous friends of the movement on the Continent:—

In Spiritualism, as in all sciences and religions, impostors and quacks are to be found, but they do not injure the system itself. It is human depravity abusing good things; and here is a new and startling example.

You know that Williams and Rita came to The Hague and gave some sittings here, after which they went to the friends at Amsterdam. In the night of the 10th-11th September last, I was disturbed in my rest by receiving a telegram from Amsterdam, which I here translate:—

Mediums Rita and Williams both unmasked. Have all proofs against both in our hands. Come and we will show you John King and apparel.

(Signed)

KRABBE.

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<sup>25</sup> *Spiritual Notes*, October, 1878 pages 45-46. *Spiritual Notes* was the official monthly journal of the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS). However, the journal was short lived and was in production only from 1878-81.

<sup>26</sup> Williams first demonstrated at The Hague with his first partner Frank Herne, in October 1872. Mr. Riko (71, Molenstraat, The Hague) kept the British Spiritualist press updated with reports of the “remarkable manifestations” that were produced by Herne and Williams in the Netherlands.

A. J. Riko was later to contribute greatly to Emma Hardinge Britten’s *Nineteenth Centaury Miracles*, 1883 (U.K). Riko’s historic narratives are used in Chapter XI:—Spiritualism in France, Chapter XXXIX:—Spiritualism in Holland, and Chapter XLII:—Spiritualism in The Dutch Indies. Riko can also be picked up on H. P. Blavatsky Collected Writings Online:—[http://www.katinkahesselink.net/blavatsky/articles/v3/y1881\\_069.htm](http://www.katinkahesselink.net/blavatsky/articles/v3/y1881_069.htm)

Early next day came another telegram from Mr. Van Maurik with details; then a postal card from the same, and a letter from Mr. Krabbé, giving further information. As I expected, Rita and Williams returned to The Hague on the morning of the 11th, and when I came home at twelve o'clock I found them in my drawing-room.

As soon as I entered Williams said to me, "What do you think about the roughs at Amsterdam, Mr. Riko?" I answered, "I have not yet any opinion. I want to speak to the friends there, whom I expect here to-day or to-morrow." Then he made a feeble effort to excuse himself by saying, "I really don't know how it came about." I stopped this at once, by telling him very calmly that I knew spirits sometimes made mediums do certain things in trance; but I advised him to never try to convince any person or Spiritualist who possessed a grain of common sense that the spirits provided mediums with muslin, beards, &c., to play tricks with occasionally, and that I myself could never be made to believe such things. Williams remained silent, and so did Rita, and I proceeded to give them a lesson out of my heart, telling them that their conduct was a shame; that I did not understand how men, having a grain of honesty and human feeling in their souls, could cheat true friends in such a base manner: those friends had done all they had in their power to please them, receiving them as friends under their own roofs, &c. I further gave them my advice to take the steamer at five o'clock, and go back to England at once. I assure you it was a heavy task to me to remain calm.

They remained silent. Rita seemed to repent, and to be very much struck; he was the first to offer test sittings after calm should be restored, for which purpose he said he would come back to the Hague. I told them that I had to consult the friends, and that we should decide together in our line of conduct in this matter. Rita said that this was right, and he restored to me out of his own money the cost of one night's lodging at a friend's house at Amsterdam. Whereupon they went away, as I heard later, left The Hague at three o'clock for Rotterdam. Of course I did not pay them the rest of the amount they would have got if all had finished honourably. The contributors can now divide this amongst themselves. They had other engagements, but, you understand, I would not allow them to accept them, nor let them go to other places.

Mr. Van Maurik visited me on Thursday evening, and in the presence of some friends he related the history of the exposure with all details, and showed the dirty John King apparel and other things found on the mediums. He told me the Amsterdam friends wished an exposure in the English spiritual papers, and so did all who heard Mr. V. Maurik's relation at my house.

This is his version of the affair, and perhaps you may receive their own report soon:—

On Tuesday evening, the 10th of September, some good investigators held a séance with Messrs. Williams and Rita at the rooms of one of the sitters. Two days before the mediums had given another sitting, and suspicions were aroused by some of the manifestations; therefore some of the sitters made up their minds to obtain security on that point, convinced as they were that both mediums cheated in the most impudent manner. On the said evening, at first the usual physical manifestations at the table occurred, but were very weak. After

that the cabinet was made, and Messrs. Williams and Rita placed behind the screen. After some singing and the playing of the musical box, the materialisation began. "Charlie," one of Rita's spirits, showed his face, lighted by his spirit-lamp.

At once one of the sitters near the cabinet made a leap, grasped Charlie, and caught the collar of Mr. Rita's coat. A struggle ensued in perfect darkness. The gentleman cried out, "I hold the medium," and others entered the cabinet to assist in catching the two struggling mediums. Heavy blows were given and received, and furniture was broken. As at last a light was struck, the two mediums tried to escape out of the room, but luckily the lady of the house had shut the front door, so that they were again seized, and brought into the room and searched, notwithstanding their courageous powers of defence, for some of the gentlemen who held them can give proof of their muscular force. Williams, chiefly, was foaming with rage. Rita resisted less. The following objects were found on the mediums, but hidden between their clothes, shirts, pockets, &c.

On Rita, a reddish-grey, nearly new beard (Charlie's); three large handkerchiefs, one of them of muslin; a very small ditto—he kept in addition two for his own use; a bottle of phosphoric oil: the bottle is of the size of an ordinary flat-round scent bottle, convincing us that the light of Charlie was nothing else.

On Williams, a black beard (very old, dirty, and used) sewed on brown silk ribbons (John King's); several yards of dirty, soiled, and very frequently used muslin; some muslin handkerchiefs, which served without doubt as John's turban, &c.; a bottle of phosphoric oil; a small bottle of scent (for the perfume), in which particles of phosphorus were found, which made us draw the conclusion I that they used it for cleaning their fingers after showing spirit lights in the cabinet. Mind this, the beard and all the muslin very, old, dirty, and been long used. This is an important point to the English. Afterwards, on searching Mr. Williams's hand-bag, a small tube filled with very minute pieces of slate-pencil was found. These points fitted into a flat, thin fishbone or spring, serving probably to produce the phenomenon of writing between sealed slates, if room enough is left to introduce the instrument. Williams had the most complete apparel. After the finding of the above-mentioned objects, the two mediums looked perplexed. It was about twelve o'clock; they were then turned out of doors, without trying to gain a better opinion for themselves by accepting the offer of some gentlemen to give a test *séance* to prove that they were mediums. In fact, they ran away to The Hague next morning as early as possible.

## FURTHER DETAILS

The following additional particulars have since come to hand:—

On the 10th September a *séance* took place at the house of one of the undersigned. After the usual table manifestations, the cabinet was made, and Messrs. Rita and Williams placed in it. Some minutes elapsed, and all sat waiting patiently. The musical box played very loudly, and made it impossible to hear any noise in the cabinet. The spirit form of John King showed himself, lighted by his lamp; then came the form of Charlie, also with his light. The gentleman next to the cabinet, Mr. C. Ferpstra, jumped up and made a grasp at

the spirit (?) and seized the medium, A. Rita, by the collar of his coat. A struggle in the dark ensued; blows were given and received; some pieces of furniture were broken, a lady fainted, and the musical box continued to play its merry tunes; it was a scene of indescribable confusion. At length a light was struck, and we saw Mr. Ferpstra rising from the ground, and the mediums (who in the struggle had found time to hide their apparatus) sitting on the sofa with faces deadly pale, and much disturbed. They pretended not to know at all what was the matter, and refused to give any explanation; neither did they accept the offer of Mr. Ferpstra to give a new sitting after being searched. On the contrary, they tried to escape through the front door, but were brought back into the room by some of the gentlemen. In short, after some fruitless defence on their part, their persons and clothes were searched (*ad forcem majorum*), and the following objects were found hidden between their dresses and in their pockets.

On Mr. Rita: A reddish grey *postiche* beard; a large cotton handkerchief; a ditto of muslin; a smaller ditto; a flat round bottle of phosphoric oil (he kept two ordinary handkerchiefs for his private use with him.) In his hand-bag: A large bottle of phosphoric oil; a bottle of scent; and a tube containing small pieces of slate pencil (for the purpose of procuring direct writing between two sealed slate).

On Mr. Williams: A very dirty worn-out (?)black *postiche* beard; about six or seven yards of very thin and worn-out, dirty, and soiled muslin, in three pieces; and a round flat bottle of phosphoric oil. All these objects to be seen and examined at the house of the first undersigned.

We only give facts, and our opinion that genuine mediums do not carry such apparatus with them. Every sane man will conceive the fraudulent purpose of the described objects, and no longer believe that Mr. Williams and Mr. Rita are mediums, but come to the conclusion that a lot of people have been already too long the victims of their imposture.

(Signed) C. FERPSTRA, M. KRABBE, JUSTUS VAN MAURIK, A. J.  
DANIELS, C. ADMIRAAL, T. F. ROOSFINCK, H.  
DRAIJER, J. J. ZAALBERG v. ZELST.

Williams wrote a letter in self defence (dated Sep 24., 1878) which was published in *Spiritual Notes*,<sup>27</sup> denying any wrong doings but did not directly address the full issues of the spirit regalia such as the beards, muslin, etc. retrieved, I quote:—

“It is evident from subsequent circumstances that a plan was made out, whereby the members of that séance endeavoured to lay a trap for our destruction.”

... “I may here state that on entering the room I felt very unwell, and Mr. Rita remarked that he did also. We sat under ordinary test conditions during the first part of the séance; we then retired behind a three-fold screen, which, placed

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<sup>27</sup> Issue:—October, 1878 pages 46 -47.

before a couch, formed the cabinet. After we had been sitting for a few minutes I was aroused from a semi-entranced state by a loud outcry and the screen falling in upon us. Then I felt myself roughly handled, a light was struck, and a general tumult ensued. I was then dragged into the midst about a dozen apparently infuriated men, and as near as I could judge from their imperfect ejaculations (only one or two of them speaking English, and that imperfectly), we were accused of cheating. I was in a state of the greatest amazement, and naturally very indignant.”

... “For some reason the room door was opened, and I made my way to the hall followed by half-a-dozen men. I found the street door locked, and was told I should not leave until I was searched. I was seized by several men, one of whom searched my dress and all my pockets. At length, putting his hand behind me, he produced what appeared to be a roll of white stuff, apparently taken from my tail coat pocket. This I was not allowed to examine. We then left the house, and the next morning we proceeded to The Hague. I saw Mr. Riko, who advised us to return to England, which we did accordingly.”

“I must admit that appearances assume a strange aspect, but that I am innocent of the charges brought against me I declare most solemnly. The people at Amsterdam have mis-stated, in a great measure, what took place on that occasion. The hand-bag they spoke of remained at my hotel, and was not interfered with, as the hotel-keeper can prove. ...”

The British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS)<sup>28</sup> of which Charles Williams was a member undertook to act as judges or mediators between Williams and his accusers however, Mr. Rita was little known to BNAS and not a professional medium. A special meeting of the Council was held on Tuesday evening, October 8th to consider what steps should be taken in the charge of fraud brought against Williams by Mr. A. J. Riko and the Amsterdam Spiritualists.<sup>29</sup> This resulted in the setting up of a special committee.

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<sup>28</sup> BNAS would evolve into The London Spiritualist Alliance (LSA), later The College of Psychic Studies (CPS), as it is today:—<http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/college/history.html> The BNAS members would help substantially in the formation and foundation of the *Society for Psychical Research* (SPR). See:—Volume 4, No.10:—*The Society for Psychical Research, Officers and Council for 1882*, pages 231-238:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.10October08..pdf>

<sup>29</sup> (Riko’s Testimony) “The party who exposed Williams and Rita are respectable, trustworthy men, who only wished to security against the mixing up of cheating with genuine phenomena by the mediums in question. The seance was held at the house of Mr. Daniels, who has been for some time convinced of the truth of Spiritualism, and who witnessed Slade’s phenomena and others. Mr. Ferpstra, who caught the mediums, is a gentleman who has also for years been acquainted with the subject, and has witnessed many interesting phenomena in the home circle. Mr. Krabbé is an upright truth seeker in Spiritualism. I know him personally, and answer for him as for myself; his wife is highly mediumistic, and through her phenomena are very often obtained. Old Mr. Van Maurik is convinced of the phenomena fully, and his son, Justus, is also a Spiritualist. In short, all the persons connected with the matter are trustworthy and respectable folks, who would not be found ready to undersign falsehoods on any account.”

The following report was presented by the special committee on the case of Mr. C. E. Williams:—<sup>30</sup>

*To the Council of the British National Association of Spiritualists.*

The committee appointed to consider the charges brought against Mr. C. E. Williams by friends in Amsterdam, and to report the result of their deliberations to the Council, have the honour to report as under:—

The committee have no reason whatever to doubt the genuineness of Mr. Williams's mediumship,<sup>31</sup> which they regard as conclusively established by the irrefragable evidence of competent witnesses. They desire, however, to suggest to inexperienced observers, that while on the one hand discovery of trickery is no proof that the deceiver is not really a medium, so on the other hand the existence of genuine mediumistic powers is no guarantee that the medium will never resort to the practice of deception. A public physical medium—when not placed under stringent test-conditions—has many temptations to simulate phenomena. Genuine manifestations are often obtainable only by a great expenditure of vital energy; they are always more or less uncertain; and they frequently fail altogether to satisfy the sitters—so that, by simulating certain manifestations, the dishonest medium avoids the expenditure of strength and vitality, affords in most cases greater satisfaction to inexperienced observers, and thus is able to give more *séances* and to earn more money than by acting conscientiously; while, if his character as a genuine medium should be impugned, he has generally the resource of offering to obtain indubitable phenomena under rigid test-conditions. All these considerations are, however, no justification of fraud, and the attempt to deceive by pretended manifestations is deserving of the gravest possible censure. The case of Mr. Williams has occupied the careful and very anxious attention of your committee, and, after an interview with Mr. Williams and a careful investigation of the evidence, they regret to have to report that the charges brought against him by the friends in Amsterdam have, in the opinion of your committee, been sustained. Your committee therefore recommend the Council to direct that Mr. Williams shall not be again employed for the purposes of the Séance Committee, and that the same rule shall also in future apply to every medium whom the Council shall believe to have in any instance resorted to deception.

(Signed) E. DAWSON ROGERS, Chairman.  
C. PEARSON. DESMOND G. FITZ-GERALD. W. MIALL. R. A. MARCH.  
MORELL THEOBALD. H. WITHALL. RICHARD PEARCE.

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<sup>30</sup> *Spiritual Notes*, December 1878, pages 75-76.

<sup>31</sup> This comment does carry some weight. In the March prior to the alleged fraud allegations Williams was engaged by the BNAS 'Research Committee' under the chairmanship of Desmond Fitz-Gerald. The committee included Varley, Massey, Moses, Rogers, Barrett, and Charles Blackburn, who helped substantially to finance a new project—"Weighing a Medium During the Production of Spiritual Manifestations". Favourable results were achieved with Williams's mediumship; this original research will be published at a later date.

Mr. DAWSON ROGERS moved and Mr. MARCH seconded the adoption of the report.

Mr. C. C. MASSEY moved, as an amendment, that the report be received but not adopted, which was seconded by Mr. STANTON-MOSES, but was lost on a division, five votes being recorded for it and eleven against.

Mrs. LOWE<sup>32</sup> then moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Mr. C. C. MASSEY:—

That the Council of the British National Association of Spiritualists, having through a committee investigated the charges against Mr. Williams, recognises the difficulty of arriving at truth without personal examination of witnesses and judicial machinery, therefore abstains from pronouncing a judicial opinion on the subject.

This amendment was rejected by eleven votes to six; and Mr. Dawson Rogers's motion, "That the report be received *and adopted*," was then put and carried, eleven votes being recorded in its favour and five against.

Mr. STANTON-MOSES then moved "That it is inexpedient to publish the Report of the Special Committee, or the discussion upon it"; but this motion was rejected by a large majority, only three votes being given in its favour.



Shortly afterwards, Charles Williams resigned his membership of BNAS, which was accepted by the Council and published in *Spiritual Notes* January 1879.

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<sup>32</sup> This is Louisa Lowe, she resigned from BNAS in June 1879, see the legal case against her. *Psypioneer* Volume 5, No.9:—Henry Diedrich Jencken the Barrister, pages 297-301:—  
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.9September09.pdf>

I should add, William Harrison's reaction to the BNAS Special Committee's conclusions:

## THE WILLIAMS-RITA CASE.

*The Spiritualist*:—<sup>33</sup>

SEVERAL London mediums, including Messrs. Williams, Rita, and Eglinton, have almost nightly for some years obtained powerful manifestations off their own premises, at dark *séances* while they have been held the whole time by both hands by responsible and critical witnesses. Under these conditions, which they submitted themselves to nearly every night of their lives, solid objects, such as arm chairs, were moved about the room, floated over the heads of sitters, and piled one above the other on the table. Sometimes living spirit heads and shoulders have been seen floating over and near the sitters, while the mediums were so held. The forms were robed in white drapery, and lit themselves up with a phosphorescent-like light. Whenever pieces of the drapery covering the floating forms have been cut off, they have been of common fabric, machine made, consequently brought in from some place or places as yet unknown, just as fruit and flowers are commonly brought to spirit circles. Therefore, while a medium is held from first to last, if one of these forms were seized at a distance from him, it is probable that there would be a violent union of the living organisms, by either the dragging of the medium from those holding him, or the dragging of the form to the medium. The drapery brought in would probably remain, and, as in every previous instance, prove to be of mortal manufacture.

The forms themselves, whenever they have had life in them, have, so far as our experience has gone, always been the duplicates of the forms and features of the medium, covered with the masquerading gear already mentioned. The things carried in cannot all be numbered among the necessities of dress. A false beard is not an indispensable article of costume. It would be useful to learn where the things come from, and whether the medium, when in a state of normal consciousness, knows their whereabouts. If a form were to be seized as described, and the stated results obtained, the medium could not be charged with imposture with certainty that the charge was a just one, though the false beard on a form apart from the medium would be evidence of intention, on the part of somebody unknown, to mislead observers to a certain extent. But if the medium were so unwise as to give one of those cabinet sittings which have of late been so condemned by thinking people, because of their inconclusive nature and the suspicions they arouse, then when drapery is seized under the phenomena conditions already stated, the medium is liable to be charged with imposture.

Thus, for the same manifestation, the medium would be charged with imposture in the one case, and be held guiltless by the same people in the other.

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<sup>33</sup> *The Spiritualist*, Friday November 15, 1878, front page.

Without the clearing up of this vital point, how could the Special Committee of the National Association of Spiritualists come to an unquestionable decision in the Williams—Rita case? If those two mediums choose to announce that henceforth they will professionally give none but *séances* in which their hands will be held all the time, and if the spirits commonly amuse themselves in future at such *séances* by bringing in and leaving on the table a heap of drapery, which they can easily do, the knowledge will grow in the public mind that another solution of the Dutch charge than the one given by the committee is possible; also that eight years of good character entitled Mr. Williams to the benefit of the doubt. The general dissatisfaction of the public with cabinet *séances* had been published by Mr. Stainton Moses and others long before the *fracas* in Holland, and until mediums with the kind of power possessed by Mr. Williams announce that they will give no more dark *séances* unless they are held by both hands all the time, they will be a source of uneasiness to their friends, and keep the movement in constant danger.

If, at Amsterdam, the two mediums obtained strong manifestations the first part of the evening while their hands were held, it is proof that they were so far under spirit control that very night that the spirits about them must have known of the intended use, later on, of masquerading gear by spirits or mediums.

It is not a fact, as some assert, that bad results are always caused by the bad spiritual state of the sitters. The Davenports always had bad, ignorant, and uproarious sitters, yet regularly obtained unquestionable manifestations. Mr. Jencken has numbers of private *séances* with nobody but himself and Mrs. Jencken present, or a few selected sitters, and testifies that the spirits tell quantities of “objectless lies.” We have known spirits to wilfully deceive when none but truthful and friendly elements were present in the circle. This is part of the dark side of Spiritualism, amid much that is bright. It is true that unpleasant sitters sometimes exercise a marked influence over the manifestations but those who say that bad spirits will never attempt to deceive a good circle are in error. Several truthful people have had to give up writing mediumship because of malicious untruths written through their own hands while they were alone. The experience of some other writing mediums, on the contrary, has been all good. Spiritualism opens the gates of anew world, in which good and evil are intermixed.

The outside public, and most of those who have had limited experience in psychic phenomena, will largely endorse the action of the Special Committee; but those privileged Spiritualists who have constantly had strong phenomena in their own families in their own homes—such as Mrs. Showers, Mr. Jencken, and Mr. and Mrs. Cook—and who know the annoying pranks which some of the spirits who produce physical manifestations are constantly playing, are exactly the persons who would not be so sure about the accuracy of the committee’s decision. As the medium is almost always in a dead trance when materialisation manifestations are at their height, it is little use asking him about the characteristics of the phenomena; in fact, Spiritualists have all along gained more information about the phenomena by careful personal observation than they have obtained by questioning spirits or the majority of mediums.

If the spirits henceforth take to bringing drapery to Mr. Williams in private houses while his hands are held, this fact, coupled with his eight years' good character, amid all the trials, and troubles, and severe persecution in past years incidental to professional mediumship, will do much to show that the view of the case here brought forward deserves weighing. It is a painful case, and the divisions of opinion on the Council as to the best course to pursue under the circumstances, faithfully represent the equally conscientious divisions of opinion out of doors.

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Web-site information on Frank Herne and Charles Williams is very limited. During the "Herne and Williams:—Professional Partnership" series, around 50 A.4 pages of referenced material on these two mediums has been covered. It has added considerably to what is *factually* known, referenced and has corrected³⁴ some website information.

A large amount of this material was accessed and researched courtesy of the Spiritualists' National Union on my invitation in January this year from the S.N.U. President David Bruton and the then Chairman of the Arthur Findlay College, Duncan Gascoyne.

To conclude on a positive note, in May 1873, Emma Hardinge Britten³⁵ attended a private sitting at Charles Williams's rooms under the pseudonym of "One Who Knows."³⁶

“JOHN KING” FELT, SEEN, AND HEARD.

TO THE EDITOR.—Dear Sir,—On Thursday afternoon, May 29, I had a private seance with Mr. Williams, at his rooms, Lamb's Conduit-street. Besides the medium: there were present Mr. C., Mr. A., and myself. I sat on the medium's left, and Mr. C. on his right, and we grasped hands firmly during the whole of the seance. First, I had the ring test. To prevent the possibility of trickery I got hold of the medium's hand before the room was darkened, holding in my left hand the ring, which I placed on the table as soon as we were in the dark. Presently the ring was passed upon my arm, without my relaxing my hold of the medium's hand for a single moment. The voice of "John King" was then heard, and he gave each a hearty shake of the hand. Retaining my hold of the medium with my right

³⁴ An example:—"Williams often sat with W. Stainton Moses, but the results were always very meager. Moses was in doubt about the authenticity of Williams mediumship ..." See:—http://psychictruth.info/Medium_Charles_Williams.htm The Psypioneer series has shown that in the earlier séances attended by Moses he had expressed doubt about the authenticity. But this was not the case as the séances continued; quite the opposite.

³⁵ I cannot be 100% sure that this is EHB, but a visit to England at this time was very possible. Marc Demarest—www.ehbritten.org chronology:—"could include time in the UK between May of 1873 and November of 1874"

³⁶ Volume 6, No.12:—*What we don't know about One Who Knows – Leslie Price*, pages 326-332:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.12December2010.pdf>

hand, I offered “John King” my left hand, which he seized with a firm grip, and I, standing up, felt the spirit-hand as high as I could reach; at the same time, with my right hand I held the medium’s hand down upon the table. Afterwards “Peter” shook hands with us, but his hand was not so well formed as “John’s.” The most wonderful and gratifying manifestation, however, was the distinct appearance of “John King” in our midst, while the medium was being securely held at the table by myself and Mr. C. First, a light was seen hovering over the table, and then the light developed into a face, so like other manifestations of “John King” that it was instantly recognised.

The face was visible to each, and it came and went several times. “John King” seemed highly pleased with his success, and so were we all. The appearance of a spirit under stricter test conditions could hardly be wished for. At one time the luminosity in the room was so bright that I could see my *vis-à-vis* quite plainly. Conspicuous objects in the room were also rendered visible by the mysterious light. “Katie” attempted to show herself, but her features were not discernible by me. A strange voice was heard speaking to Mr. A., and I asked “Katie” if any of my spirit-friends were present. She said, “Yes; the one who is always with you.” “Can he speak to me?” “I don’t know; he will try to touch you.” Shortly afterwards I felt a hand patting me on the head, then there was a sound near my ear, as if some one was trying to speak, and soon words were uttered. On my expressing surprise that my spirit-friend should be able to speak with the direct voice, “John King” promptly remarked. “We did what we could to help him, you know.”

I must not omit to mention that frequently during the seance a large musical-box, weighing, I guess, some ten pounds, was taken from the table and floated about the room, the motion usually corresponding to the tune. Once in making the circuit the musical-box touched each on the head, and at another time I was gently struck with it on the back between the shoulders, and I suppose the other sitters were treated in a similar manner. Again, while the musical-box was playing on the table, the invisibles beat time to the tune with a chair upon my head. The beating was very light, of course. In conclusion, I would repeat that from first to last the mediums hands, were securely held by myself on one side and by Mr. C. on the other; and that there could not possibly have been any trickery or delusion is hereby affirmed by

ONE WHO KNOWS

June 6, 1873.

[Our correspondent is the editor of an influential provincial paper.³⁷ ED. M.]

In the next issue we start with - Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Wood 1854-1884:



³⁷ Burns would be referring to, *The Western Star*, published at Boston July-December 1872. The Western Star was suspended primarily due to the Boston Fires, but never re-started. These journals are all available on Marc Demarest’s excellent, E.H. Britten site:—<http://ehbritten.org/bibliography.html>

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An Extraordinary Journey:—The Memoirs of a Physical Medium by Stewart Alexander, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England, 2010. Paperback: ISBN:—978-0-9557050-6-9. Now available:—<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Extraordinary-Journey-Memoirs-Physical-Medium/dp/0955705061>

See:—Stewart Alexander's book review, *Stewart Alexander's Journey* by Leslie Price Psypioneer Volume 6, No.11 pages 294-296:—
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

Mrs Miller's Gift CD: Written and produced by Gerald O'Hara B.Sc. @ £9.99 +Pp £2.00.

'*Helen Duncan - The Mystery Show Trial*' By Robert Hartley @ £12.50 + Pp ISBN: 978-0-9553420-8-0. See Psypioneer 3.11:—
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

'*The Cathars and Arthur Guirdham*' **Published by Psypioneer** @ £4.50 Inc U.K., postage, elsewhere (airmail) £4.95 Inc postage. ISBN: 978 0 9536719 3 9.
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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. *

'*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.*

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