

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

Edited by  
Paul J. Gaunt

Founded by Leslie Price

Archived by  
Garth Willey



**Volume 9, No 04: April 2013**

—~\$~—

- 102 – Fraud & Psychical Research – Leslie Price
- 109 – From Home Shores to Far Horizons: Hester Dowden as a Child – Wendy Cousins
- 112 – New biography of Mrs Britten
- 114 – The Cathar View: The Mysterious Legacy of Montsegur (review) – Lynda Harris
- 117 – Henry Slade 1836c – 1905
- 117 – Dr. Slade's Last Illness – *Light*
- 120 – Henry Slade: Spirit-Medium – *Medium and Daybreak*
- 127 – March 1866 – The Beginnings of Independent Slade-Writing – Marc Demarest
- 133 – Slate Written in Presence of Mr Slade – Britten Memorial Museum
- 134 – Some books we have reviewed
- 135 – How to obtain this Journal by email

=====

## **Please Note:**

Leslie Price retired from his previous work on March 25, and began work on April 2 as Archivist at the College of Psychic Studies in London. He will continue to be reachable on [leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk) Please check the e-mail addresses you have for him and delete any others.

# FRAUD AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

**A lecture to Society for Psychical Research, London on Thursday 28  
March 2013.**

*[Note by Leslie Price: As the booked speaker about trickery for 28 March was unable to be present, I was invited to step in, and chose this related subject.]*

An experienced parapsychologist writes: “Fraud is not simply a minor (or major) irritant for researchers. Fraud is one key to understanding the nature of psi — and the nature of the paranormal generally. The connection of psi with deception is pervasive; thus any comprehensive theory of psi must explain its strong association with deception. A broad, encompassing perspective is required. Ah hoc explanations will not suffice.”

This is of course George Hansen, author of “The Trickster and Paranormal”.<sup>1</sup> If he is correct, we have a problem. The cases I discuss today may illustrate this.

Let’s begin with something that never happened. A psychical researcher and a Spiritualist went to a funeral for a survival researcher. They had last met in the dark at a séance. While they were admiring the floral tributes, the researcher said “You know, I thought you would do something about that medium. He was obviously out of his chair. You can’t expect the Movement to be taken seriously if you tolerate such things.”

The Spiritualist bristled “Well he may have been entranced. I have had had excellent evidence from that medium several times. He is very generous to our church. If you weren’t happy, you should have raised it later. You are the supposed researcher.” The researcher shook his head. “I was there as a guest. I’m trying to do a longitudinal study of mediums,” he protested. “If I suggested a medium were not genuine, the mediums in general would not want anything to do with me. It would also reflect badly on the organisation to which I belong; we might all be excluded.”

“What you could have done,” he went on, “is have a word with one of the Spiritualist newspapers.”

“How do you know I didn’t?” replied the Spiritualist.” You have to remember that mediums do have solicitors. I’m old enough to recall what happened when Maurice Barbanell named several fake mediums in *Two Worlds*. One of them, William Roy, sued. Being sued is very unpleasant. And many readers and advertisers don’t like to hear about fraud either.”

By this time, they had got to the tearoom. The Spiritualist paid for the refreshments and the psychical researcher picked up the change. As I said, this is a fictitious account.

When I was a student I thought I was a clever fellow. I got Paul Beard and Simeon Edmunds to sign my nomination for the SPR, even though they were in disagreement about the field. But when I started a student psychical research society, I soon came adrift. One day, in my hall of residence, I was visited by a student who reported that a

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tricksterbook.com> - <http://www.tricksterbook.com> - <https://twitter.com/ParaTrickster>  
<http://paranormaltrickster.blogspot.com/>

wizard was frightening first year girl students in the guest houses with his psychic powers.

I went to the guest house where the girls had been instructed to pick up the house phone at an appointed hour. They did and he was there on the line. He demonstrated his distant powers by identifying a card selected by a male student in the guest house. This performance was repeated at a phone box up on the Sussex Downs. This was a big sensation in the university; the student newspaper editor investigated, and I introduced him to a Rosicrucian Spiritualist for a bit of background on wizards; however, he published the whole interview. Within days, the story unravelled. A group of male students had been hoaxing female students. The card reading was a simple piece of thought reading by code. The phone line was “open” when the girls picked up the phone at the appointed time because there had just been a “wrong number,” a call from a student confederate who then did not put the phone down but kept the line open.

I was interviewed on student television about the affair, and explained optimistically that while I was sure I would have been taken in, the more critical researchers at the SPR would have soon exposed everything.

We might learn three lessons from this affair. First if you are in the psychic field, some people will go out of their way to embroil you in hoaxes. Secondly, apparently irrelevant events may hold the explanation to what really happened. The wrong number just before the appointed time was overlooked by me. Thirdly, always be sure on what terms you share information with the media. The student newspaper editor won an award for his paper by submitting that story about “Black Magic Threats” to the judges.

Meanwhile back home in Lancashire for the vacation, at my local Spiritualist church I heard an awesome account of a materialisation séance the previous weekend. “Twenty came through” the sitter reported. The medium was James Gardner. Spiritualists had been advised in *Psychic News* by editor Maurice Barbanell not to waste their time with him, but I went along anyway to a big room not far from the south pier in Blackpool, and paid three and six. 20 came through all right. All wore a sheet, but some had a ring, or a hairnet; or a ring and a hairnet. After the séance I noticed a loose tile in the cabinet floor.

Gardner had been photographed by my local newspaper, the *Chorley Guardian*, with trouser legs showing under a materialised figure. (This was presumably to spare the blushes of lady sitters.) I met the reporter, Liz Moon, who vividly remembered the medium’s guide whom she called “Smutty Penelope.” In Lancashire we were familiar with men who dressed as women and told off-colour jokes; we called them comedians, but I had not I realised that such impersonation went on in the séance room.

{Strange things still happen. An SPR member attended a séance not long ago. He reported “Particularly disturbing was the supposed voice phenomenon which sounded much louder than expected. My greatest concern was with a female voice like a Monty Python actor mockingly impersonating a female voice, and producing a screech like sound.”}

Mr Gardner was called to higher service some years later. But the church was renamed after him and it is still there today. A picture of him in action was included in a recent scholarly book about a spirit photography exhibition, and lately a Spiritualist journal

devoted to physical mediumship put him on their cover, only to have some readers point out that he wasn't the real thing. Others doubtless disagreed.

Back at the Spiritualist church there was another unusual medium who was giving séances for the lady president and friends. He was young man called Mr Smith, who arrived in a big overcoat and disappeared into the cabinet. A few minutes later he emerged in red light with a large white scarf around his upper body. The president enthused over this; and misunderstanding her, I reached out and held the scarf, only to be reprimanded sharply. The séance continued and at the end Mr Smith re-entered, with his overcoat back on. I was not totally convinced and wrote to the church committee, who invited Mr Smith to give them a test sitting. As they included a retired police inspector, he thought not, and his séances ended. But he did write me a nice letter explaining he was only trying to bring a little comfort. Mediums behaving badly can have good motives.

Years later I was at Stansted Hall, peacefully eating in the dining hall, when a woman recognised me. "You," she cried out, "You are the young man who grabbed the ectoplasm." All eyes turned towards me. At that point I think I realised that I did not have what it took to be a great investigator. I became a librarian instead.

After my final exams, I began work at the College of Psychic Science as a receptionist/clerk, and I had to look after the library. Under a former name, London Spiritualist Alliance, the premises 16 Queensberry Place in South Kensington had once housed the laboratory of Harry Price. Here Helen Duncan had been tested in 1931, first by the LSA itself, and then (in a breach of contract by Mrs Duncan) by Harry Price, who had rushed out a report that she was fraudulent and using regurgitation. The LSA also had second thoughts and pronounced her fraudulent.

At his death in 1948, Harry Price (no relation to me) was the leading ghost hunter in the country, generally treated respectfully by the BBC, newspapers, and libraries. Two groups however regarded him as untrustworthy — the SPR leaders, and the Spiritualists, and his Borley Rectory case had been badly damaged by three re-investigators (Dingwall, Goldney and Hall) in 1956. The lesson here is that you cannot assess a researcher by how he is treated by the press. Price's most recent biographer, Richard Morris, even suspects that Price rigged the evidence against William Hope the spirit photographer.

The College had a good collection of Mrs Duncan documents, which were used by Dr Donald West in his SPR Proceedings account of her 1944 Trial. I don't know whether he had access to the first ever Duncan investigation he mentions — by Major Mowbray of the BCPS, who had also thought her fraudulent. The Duncan Case is a problem for both critics and defenders. If you think regurgitation explained her, then you have to further explain the Spiritualist experiments with dye that followed and produced ectoplasm white enough for a washing powder advert. If you think her genuine, what about the strange doll figures in the Price photos — they look even stranger in the originals! If you think her fraudulent, what about the testimony of SPR members such as Denise Iredell and Lucien Landau? My colleague Paul Gaunt of Psypioneer recently discovered that Mrs Duncan willingly took part in an infra-red test in Belfast in 1932, and this was proudly reported at the time in *Psychic News*. Mrs Duncan is the most famous medium in the world today, far more than when she was alive. She has become mythical, and lazy writers pluck from the Internet inaccurate information about her more than ever.

During the 1930s, British investigators were world leaders in the use of infra-red photography. Pyspioneer has published several accounts of the International Institute in London, with which Arthur Findlay was associated, and which had its own infra-red room and technician. An SPR member, Lew Sutton is building a database of early infra-red studies. But at some point, Spiritualists and their newspapers decided that infra-red photography was dangerous. The full story of this is yet to be told.

When I entered psychical research, there was a war on. Trevor Hall, having cut his teeth on Borley, reinvestigated William Crookes, sometimes SPR president, and accused him of faking séances with the medium Florence Cook to cover up a love affair. There was a strong counter-attack by Dr Medhurst, Mrs Goldney, and Miss Barrington; the College archives provided valuable ammunition. Then in 1964, Hall re-examined the death of Edmund Gurney. His book was savagely reviewed in the *International Journal of Parapsychology* by Fraser Nicol. Hall called in the lawyers. An action was launched. Also dragged in was Mostyn Gilbert, who had recirculated Fraser's review in the United Kingdom. Hall was assisted by Archie Jarman, and by Dr Dingwall. Yet more dusty archives were opened. When the dust settled, the *IJP* was no more.

The SPR was founded in 1882, and Fraud crouched at the doorway. I refer to the thought readers, those who by various means purported to read thoughts, cards etc. That there was a long tradition of mentalism is shown by Queen Victoria's watch presented to Georgiana Eagle and her father in 1846, once on show at the College of Psychic Science. The experimental work by the infant SPR offered a chance for the thought readers, including amateurs like the Creery sisters, to win over a new audience. One of these, Douglas Blackburn later claimed that with his colleague, mesmerist G. A. Smith, he had fooled Gurney and the SPR investigators. It was this case in particular that Hall resurrected. In 2012, Barry Wiley, in his book *The Thought Reader Craze*, again shows the pervasive impact of such performers, which was always felt also in the Spiritualist movement.

Unknown to me and to most SPR members, there was another graver secret at the heart of the SPR, shared only with an elite group. The Cross-Correspondences messages received independently through different mediums, almost all amateurs, were widely presented as the best evidence of survival. What we did not know until recently was that one SPR investigator, Gerald Balfour, had a love affair with one medium, Mrs Willett. This was vividly documented by Archie Roy in his book *The Eager Dead*.

Far worse was the belief expressed by the communicators and accepted by some SPR leaders that the offspring of that affair, Henry, was to be a messiah figure, who would do great things in the world. He never did, though he served his country as a soldier and spy, and his church as a monk.

So not all psychical researchers were heroes. But this had been brought home to me in 1980 when I began to examine the Blavatsky case, the most famous investigation in the history of the SPR. This was commonly presented as an intrepid Anglo-Saxon sleuth Richard Hodgson exposing a cunning foreigner, and as proving that the SPR were critical scholars. Madame Blavatsky was supposedly shown by this to be the centre of a web of deception. Even Conan Doyle, who was very sensitive to injustice, and ended up resigning in anger from the Society, never defended Blavatsky, perhaps because he objected to her views on mediumship. But it did seem incongruous for example, that

Stainton Moses, who had produced paranormal scents and bells in London, had been respected by Myers, but Blavatsky who did the same in America was just a rogue. The SPR bias went to extremes. In 1931, for example, Mr Salter could not even believe that Myers had been a Fellow of the TS; testimony by Theosophists of her time he brushed away. However Myers had kept his membership certificate; it is in Trinity College Cambridge today. About 1960 Walter Carrithers obtained a microfilm of original SPR records of the case, which showed that Blavatsky had produced for them a bell sound. It had been edited out of a published report at proof stage.

About 1982, I suggested to the Theosophical Society in London that they invite Dr Vernon Harrison to lecture in their Sunday evening spot. He chose as subject the Blavatsky investigation. He re-examined the famous Mahatma Letters and argued they were not in her handwriting. These and other findings were published in *JSPR* by the editor Dr John Beloff in April 1986. This defused the anguish surrounding the case, in which Theosophists sometimes felt obliged to over-defend Blavatsky in the face of criticism. Not long afterwards, a Russian archive produced her letter seeking employment as a spy for the Russian government. Apparently she was turned down.

In the late 1990s, a Spiritualist called Paul Gaunt, who had once worked at Stansted Hall, while convalescing from a heart attack, began to study Spiritualist history. Starting with the recommended books, he kept going back into the original sources. His first focus was the Seven Principles supposedly received by the medium Emma Hardinge Britten from the deceased Robert Owen. He found they had gone through several versions, the earliest when Owen was still alive.

Then he turned to the Fox sisters. The official beginning of modern Spiritualism was the disturbances at Hydesville in March 1848. The sisters in the Fox family produced raps. This was often supposed by later psychical researchers to be fraudulent, by toe cracking and so on. Two Fox sisters in later life, when alcoholics, confessed to this.

Paul consulted the first account of the Fox sisters compiled by E. E. Lewis a month later from eye witness testimony, in which the Fox sisters are not even named. Apart from Alan Gauld, very few scholars had ever read it. Even Frank Podmore, who wrote the classic *Modern Spiritualism*, did not use it. Lots of people have been confident that the Hydesville phenomena were frauds without reading the eye-witness testimony collected by Lewis. It is clear incidentally that the Foxes lived by a creek; fishermen are mentioned. But in any case what Lewis describes is a typical poltergeist case.

I have always felt that there was a major problem with the fraud hypothesis for Hydesville, and that is the ease with which many circles get raps. Even SPR council members sitting in circles have been known to hear raps. Whatever the Fox sisters may have eventually descended to, there was nothing rare in how they started. Like Herbert Thurston I feel sorry for Kate and Maggie. Paul found incidentally that there was no reliable account in any part of the Spiritualist movement of how the Fox mediumship developed, of their ages, or the names of the actual girls involved (a niece appears in some accounts, and may be in at least one photo). The supposed peddler they contacted originally had initials only, then a succession of different names; in any case, he does not appear in any other records.

I would like to say a word about the case of fraud which shocked me most over 40 years. I was one of many whose interest in the psychic field was crystallised by the writings of the Australian physicist Raynor Johnson, such as *The Imprisoned Splendour* (1953). He was the favourite author of members of the Churches Fellowship for Psychical Study; he was the most honoured speaker at the College of Psychic Studies; he treated seriously the mediumship of Geraldine Cummins. But we did not know that in 1962 he joined a cult, The Family, which acquired babies and brought them up in cruel conditions, most fully exposed in the book *Unseen Unheard Unknown* by Sarah Hamilton Byrne (1995). He had been led astray by a false teacher.

If I may pull together these cases, and offer a general perspective I would commend first the familiar concept of mixed mediumship, which means that a particular medium may be gifted but indulge in fraud. The case of Arthur Ford illustrates this; William Rauscher, Ford's biographer, later found the obituaries and other records used by Ford to provide Bishop Pike with "evidence," and Canon Rauscher also wrote a monograph to describe how Ford knew the Houdini code word intended for his widow. Yet it would be difficult to explain all Ford's mediumship in this way.

Secondly I would deplore any adversarial relationship between researcher and medium, in which the researcher is seen as trying to trap or confine the medium. All monitoring methods are to protect the medium and to advance knowledge. Nowadays there are unobtrusive ways of tracking the events of a séance.

But I would agree with George Hansen that psychical research and related fields take us into a realm beyond conventional science. Indeed I would add a distinctively Christian interpretation. This is a fallen world, in which what Stainton Moses called "the adversaries" constantly seek to undermine goodness and truth. Thus mediums, researchers, and psychic institutions may enjoy times of glory, but also of decay. They may follow false messiahs as did Mr Salter and Raynor Johnson.

I should like, therefore, to offer ten points to help avoid being a victim of fraud in psychical research. Some of these we have illustrated already.

1. If you are active in the psychic field, there are people who will seek to take you in. Not all of them on this side of life. Beware.

2. Because no one later speaks adversely about a séance does not mean they thought it was above board; nor the reverse of course.

3. Do not accept reputations at face value. You have to make your own assessment. But people of experience are generally worth listening to, regardless of their affiliation.

4. Humans do fall into temptation when they are carry out ESP experiments for example. That appears to have happened to Dr Soal, only the second person in the UK to get a doctorate for work in this field.

5. Sceptical people can be as gullible as anyone. Do not believe a "confession," especially if it does not explain what happened. Do not accept an "exposure" if it does not actually expose the truth.

6. It is all right to be as sceptical as you like, to be convinced of nothing in the field. What is fatal is to have a cold superiority to the psychic realm. The psychic realm will respond accordingly.

7. Always keep your hand near your wallet or purse. They are many people seeking to make a living from the New Age today. A medium who claims only to be a channel for your Auntie Florence is more promising than one who offers angelic or archangelic contacts, and cheaper too.

8. Keep a record of sittings, séances, incidents etc. One day you will not remember the details; and later still you will imagine the details.

9. Study the older investigators. Not only was there a wide range of phenomena then, but they wrote well. That includes mediums. Mrs Leonard, for example, knew more about mediumship than most of us, and she was generally in trance.

10. The safest place to minimise the danger of fraud is in the home.

It would be entirely wrong to suggest that people in psychical research or associated fields like Spiritualism are worse than anyone else. There is much that is inspiring, as F.W. H. Myers, G.N.M. Tyrrell and many others perceived. But in seeking the stars, we must avoid the stones in the path, which I have tried to illustrate.

—~\$~—



# From Home Shores to Far Horizons: Hester Dowden as a Child

By Wendy Cousins

In the March edition of *PsyPioneer* Maxine Meilleur provides an interesting review of *Voices from the Void* a book first written in 1919 and now available for free download.<sup>2</sup> The book is well worth a read. While it may be the case that its author Hester Travers Smith (née Dowden) is at present one of the lesser known mediums of modern spiritualism this was not always the case. In her time she was a well-known and highly accomplished woman, doyenne of a literary salon and the centre of social and cultural circles which continue to exert a fascination for scholars of both Irish history and English literature. In this article, I revisit her early life and formative years in Ireland.

Hester's parents Mary Clerke and Edward Dowden (a man ten years his wife's junior) both had family roots in County Cork but Hester herself was born in the city of Dublin on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1868, a date which also coincided with her father's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. Edward Dowden was widely recognised to be a brilliant literary scholar and critic with a specialist interest in Shakespeare who had been elected Professor of Oratory and English Literature at Trinity College, Dublin at the early age of 24. In the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Dublin was the epicentre of a growing cultural and political revival which was later to end in national independence and Professor Dowden's friends, colleagues and acquaintances were remarkable and varied in their talents: *Dracula* author Bram Stoker, the painter John Butler Yeats (father of W.B Yeats) folklorist Lady Jane Wilde (mother of Oscar) and Physician George Sigerson who had studied with neurologists Jean-Martin Charcot and Guillaume Duchenne in Paris, and who later contributed the first English translation of Charcot's lectures on the diseases of the nervous system (McGilloway, 2011: p.25-27).

Known to her family by the pet name "Essie", Hester recalls herself as a "nervous child" with a "delicate chest which gave all of us a great deal of trouble" but possessing a passionate love of music, practising four to six hours every day. Intellectually precocious, she was a talented linguist. By the age of eleven she already knew French "fairly well" and began the study of German, followed by Italian (Bentley, 1951: p.19). A neighbour, young Louie Bennett (1870 – 1956) later to become a prominent social activist, recalled hearing rapturous reports from relatives on the expertise of Professor Dowden's young daughter in performing Beethoven sonatas and Shakespearean speeches. Louie gritted her teeth and "developed a profound dislike for Shakespeare, Beethoven and Essie Dowden, as well as a conviction that I did not want to go to the parties to which Essie did not invite me" (Cullen-Owens, 2001, p.5). This tendency to inspire resistance, even dislike in other strong-willed women, was to become a recurring feature throughout Hester's life.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Voices from the Void*, Hester Travers Smith:—<http://tinyurl.com/VoicesfromtheVoid>



It was around this time that she sat for her portrait, painted in oils by her father's friend John Butler Yeats.<sup>3</sup> She must have been an exceedingly patient child as she reports the portrait took about forty sittings with J.B. Yeats continuing to paint in details, being never quite satisfied, until her father put a stop to further additions by taking the canvas away (Bentley, 1951: p.17). J.B. Yeats is known for "prettifying" his sitters, yet nevertheless, young Hester appears a remarkably composed child. Her hands clasped in old-fashioned lace-mittens and with a look of some determination. The painting was later exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy where it was "much praised" and now hangs in the Irish National Gallery (Murphy, 1978: p.130).

Hester had originally hoped for a career in music and travelled to London to study piano with the celebrated Clara Schumann (1819-1896) however on the eve of her first public engagement she received sudden news that her mother was critically ill. She departed for Dublin immediately, only to arrive tragically too late. Professor Dowden was reportedly "almost inconsolable from grief" and Hester "realised that she would have to take on the duties of his house as her sister was too young to act in that capacity" (Bentley, 1951: p.21). Professor Dowden had in fact already been amorously linked for several years with a one of his former students, Elizabeth Dickinson West, daughter of the dean of St Patrick's cathedral so the level of this purported grief might be wondered at, especially given that Miss West was later to become his wife (Murphy, 1978: p.60). Nevertheless during the 'respectable' interval between her mother's death and her father's remarriage Hester took on all the duties of her father's housekeeper and literary hostess. She performed the two roles with some brilliance.

Her father enjoyed the company of students whom he invited to his house in large numbers taking pleasure in the company of young intellectuals and eccentrics including W.B. Yeats, Oscar Wilde (along with Wilde's future legal nemesis Edward Carson), W. Macneile Dixon, author of *The Human Situation* and the young man who was later to become Ireland's first president, Douglas Hyde. Given Professor Dowden's academic interests in Shakespeare and oratory it was also natural for celebrated actors to visit the Dowden's when playing Dublin theatres. Hester had a declared interest in drama and it was at this time that she met and entertained Sir Henry Irving and Ellen Terry and later made acquaintance with Beerbohm Tree and others (Bentley, 1951: p22).

---

<sup>3</sup> Hester Dowden as a child, painted by John Butler Yeats:—<http://tinyurl.com/HesterDowden>

While tales of otherworldly things had always been popular in Ireland (Cousins, 2013 forthcoming) with the rise of Spiritualism communication with spirits became a fashionable sensation. The use of Ouija boards along with table turning and automatic writing became extremely popular in Anglo-Irish social circles. In County Cork, where the Dowden family had originated, Spirit communication practices were described as “rife” and “keenly practiced” throughout 1878 (Lewis, 2005: p46). In the Dowden’s Dublin home too, gatherings were regularly turning to talk of Spiritualism. W.B. Yeats’ first experimentations with Spirit contact carried out with his friend George William Russell (1867 -1935) were inspired by Professor Dowden’s account of the poet Shelley trying to evoke the devil while at Eton (Foster, 1998, p.49). Another account traces the foundation of the first Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society to an evening at the Dowden’s house where a lively discussion of A.P. Sinnett’s books *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism* inspired the young W.B Yeats to recommend the books to his school friend Charles Johnson<sup>4</sup> who shortly afterwards formed the first Theosophical Lodge in April 1886 (Small, 1988 p. 200-201). Spiritualist experiments may have been “the rage in Dublin from 1886-1887” (Foster, 1998, p.51) but Hester herself was not yet conscious of possessing any psychic power herself. However in 1873 events were set in motion which would later transform Hester’s life and begin her career as a medium. Professor William Fletcher Barrett (1844-1925), one of the founders of psychical research, took up his chair in Experimental Physics at the Royal College of Science for Ireland.

## References

Bentley, E. (1951) *Far Horizon: a biography of Hester Dowden*. London: Rider and Company.

Cousins, W.E. (forthcoming 2013) Ireland the Anomalous State: Paranormal Culture and the Irish Literary and Political Revival. Chapter in: *Paranormal Cultures*. (Eds: Sally Munt and OluJenzen) Ashgate.

Small, W.E. (1988) HP Blavatsky and Ireland’s literary Renaissance. Chapter in, *H.P. Blavatsky and the Secret Doctrine*. (Virginia Hansen: Ed) Illinois: The Theosophical Publishing House.

Cullen-Owens, R. (2001) *Louie Bennett: A Biography*. Cork: Cork University Press.

Foster, R.F. (1998). *W.B. Yeats: A Life, I The Apprentice Mage, 1865-11)14*. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP.

Lewis, G. (2005). *Edith Somerville: A Biography*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

McGilloway, K. (2011) *George Sigerson: Poet, Patriot, Scientist and Scholar*. Belfast: Stair Uladh.

Murphy, W.M. (1978) *Prodigal Father: the life of John Butler Yeats*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

—~\$~—

---

<sup>4</sup> Charles Johnston later married Madame Blavatsky’s niece



## New biography of Mrs Britten

Psypioneer notes: It is well known that the Autobiography of Emma Hardinge Britten draws a veil over much of her life. But there has been much research in recent years which has clarified some of the mysteries. This has been summarised in a monograph, with valuable illustrations, by Marc Demarest on his web site.<sup>5</sup>

Marc writes on his site:

“The Archive’s biography of Britten is in development. Until the biography is available, the most concise available summary of EHB’s life is available either as static presentation materials in PDF form, or as a series of compressed (ZIP’d) voice-over MP4 videos, as listed below. Download the compressed MP4s to your local system (using right-click or control-click “download” options), and view them locally. If you need a capable MP4 player, consider [Video LAN VLC](#).

“**NB:** There have been a number of requests for a printable, black-and-white version of the slides, and that version is [now available](#).

1. Life and Times of EHB: Module 1 -- Genesis ([MP4](#), 60 MB and [PDF](#)) Life and Times of EHB: Module 2 -- Pre-History: 1819-1823 ([MP4](#), 46 MB and [PDF](#))
2. Life and Times of EHB: Module 3 -- The Dark Period: 1823-1838 ([MP4](#), 46 MB and [PDF](#))
3. Life and Times of EHB: Module 4 -- Emma Floyd & Emma Harding, Performer: 1838-1856 ([MP4](#), 145 MB and [PDF](#))
4. Life and Times of EHB: Module 5 -- Opening America: 1856-1865 ([MP4](#), 96 MB and [PDF](#))
5. Life and Times of EHB: Intermission 1 -- Traveling as Network ([MP4](#), 33 MB and [PDF](#))
6. Life and Times of EHB: Module 6 -- Transatlantic Notoriety: 1865-1872 ([MP4](#), 68 MB and [PDF](#))
7. Life and Times of EHB: Module 7 -- The Electric Physician: 1872-1875 ([MP4](#), 91 MB and [PDF](#))
8. Life and Times of EHB: Module 8 -- Emma Hardinge Britten, Occultist: 1875-1877 ([MP4](#), 56 MB and [PDF](#))
9. Life and Times of EHB: Module 9 -- Itinerant Propagandist: 1878-1881 ([MP4](#), 34 MB and [PDF](#))

---

<sup>5</sup> [www.ehbritten.org](http://www.ehbritten.org)

10. Life and Times of EHB: Intermission 2 -- The Universe as Occult Object ([MP4](#), 29 MB and [PDF](#))
11. Life and Times of EHB: Module 10 -- Queen of the Midlands: 1881-1892 ([MP4](#), 62 MB and [PDF](#))
12. Life and Times of EHB: Module 11 -- Rewriting A Life: 1892-1899 ([MP4](#), 34 MB and [PDF](#))
13. Life and Times of EHB: Module 12 -- What EHB Believed, And What She Left Us ([MP4](#), 31 MB and [PDF](#))

Psypioneer would add that many readers will find the printable black and white version the most practical. The text of all this material has been revised as new findings are made, and it is the best available account for students of what we know about Mrs Britten's work. Tutors should study it carefully.

LP.

—~\$~—

## A REVIEW:

# THE CATHAR VIEW: THE MYSTERIOUS LEGACY OF MONTSEGUR

Articles by twenty five contributors, edited by Dave Patrick  
Polair Publishing, London, 2012.

[Note by LP: Readers of modern reincarnation research will often find reference to the medieval movement known as the Cathars, so the appearance of this anthology is an important development. We are very grateful to the art historian Lynda Harris, author of *The Secret Heresy of Hieronymus Bosch* for accepting an invitation to review this.]

—~\$~—

This book, which contains twenty eight articles, is the third in a series edited by Dave Patrick. In the last article, 'The ABC of Initiation', the editor discusses his two earlier books: *The View, mind over matter, heart over mind* (2009) which has a lot to say about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and *The View Beyond* (2011) which concentrates on Sir Francis Bacon. He tells us that the various articles in both of these books are based on the authors' intuitions, visions, and communications with the dead. With some exceptions, the same is true of Patrick's most recent publication: *The Cathar View*. This book takes an understandably sympathetic view of Cathar history and ideals, but it tends to be romantic rather than objective. The majority of the articles appear to accept any theory without criticism, whether or not it has been disproved by the more recent scholarly research.

The exceptions to this general rule include Dimitar Mulushev's informative summary, 'An Introduction to Bogomilism'. This gives a useful and accurate history of this religion and its close connections with Western European Catharism. Emily McCaffrey gives an overview of Cathar research in her article 'Imagining the Cathars in Late-Twentieth-Century Languedoc', and Jeanne D'Août's historical 'Back to the Source' is also informative. The speculative 'Cathar Joy' by Colum Hayward is also worth reading for its perceptive attempts to understand Catharism as it would have been experienced by the Cathars of the Languedoc. And Nick Lambert's 'The Appeal of the Cathars, Then and Now' has some interesting and original things to say about present day Cathar and Gnostic ways of thinking. Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* is just one of the current 'Gnostic' examples he cites.

In addition to these, there is one contribution which is not just interesting, but also contains some implied criticisms of the overall point of view of *The Cathar View*. This is Walter Birks' 'A Personal Reminiscence', a reproduction of the Epilogue from Birks and R.A. Gilbert's well known book, *The Treasure of Montségur* (pub 1987). In Part I of the book Birks and Gilbert give a critical history of the Neo-Cathars who were active between the 1930s and the 1970s. This group includes people such as Antonin Gadad, Déodat Roché, the Polaires and Arthur Guirdham. In Part II, their Neo-Cathar 'fantasies' are contrasted with the known facts about Catharism, especially in the Languedoc. Finally, in the Epilogue which is reproduced in *The Cathar View*, Birks makes comparisons between the Cathar religion and that of the Nosaris (or Alawites) of Syria. Birks became familiar with the Nosaris during the three years he spent serving in Syria

during World War II, and, after learning something about a genuine esoteric religion through his discussions with their adepts, he tells us that he ‘finally shed the fantasies of occultism’. By this he means that he became disillusioned with the romantic theories of the twentieth century Neo-Cathars.

Although Birks is mentioned with respect on more than one occasion in *The Cathar View*, we can assume that this writer (now deceased) would not have had a very high opinion of much of the book’s content. Many of its articles revolve around sites in the Languedoc whose supposed Cathar significance would not be accepted by today’s scholars. These sites had been explored during the 1930s by the idealistic Antonin Gadal, known as the ‘pope’ of Catharism, and publicised in a more scholarly (but now largely discredited) way in the writings of Déodat Roché. The caves of Ornlac and Ussat were among the most important of these. Gadal was convinced, despite a total lack of evidence, that these caves had been used by the Cathars, and that initiations had frequently been held in one of them, the Bethlehem Cave. On a mission to revive the religion, he held modern initiations there. He also performed ceremonies at the foot of the ‘pog’ of Montségur, where, according to tradition, two hundred initiated Cathar Perfects had been burned in March 1244. There is reliable evidence (see Zoé Oldenbourg’s *Massacre at Montségur*, for example) that a small group of Cathar Perfects escaped from Montségur on the night before the burnings, taking the Cathar treasure with them. The nature of this treasure is unknown, but what it was, and where it was hidden has been a major source of speculation for years. These questions figure large in *The Cathar View*.

The books of Arthur Guirdham, a retired psychiatrist from Bath, are another influence which permeates *The Cathar View*. Guirdham does not ignore the treasure, but thinks that it consisted mainly of esoteric books and precious manuscripts. Above all, however, he concentrates on the lives of the Cathars themselves, describing numerous experiences with people whom he believes to be Cathars reincarnated during the twentieth century in the area around Bath. His three most important publications on the reincarnation circle are *The Cathars and Reincarnation* (1970), *We Are One Another* (1974) and *The Lake and the Castle* (1976). The Cathar memories of Guirdham’s patient ‘Mrs Smith’ are the subject of the first book, and his friend ‘Miss Mills’ is the chief influence on the second and third books. At some point in the proceedings, ‘Mrs Smith’ became an ex-patient, and a good friend of ‘Miss Mills’ and the Guirdham family. (The source of this last information is a personal communication from a relative of Arthur Guirdham’s.)

In *We Are One Another* and *The Lake and the Castle*, the history of Guirdham’s reincarnation circle becomes more and more elaborate, as its ever-increasing members re-experience numerous lives not just as Cathars, but as ‘dualists’ living in various periods. Although ‘Miss Mills’ passed on the information concerning the various members of the circle to Guirdham, he tells us that he was never able to meet any of them apart from ‘Mrs Smith’ and ‘Miss Mills’ herself. He was able to converse with the other members of the circle on the telephone, but he never became suspicious when they all spoke in a similar voice to ‘Miss Mills’. Research also shows that the facts they supposedly recalled through past life memories were available in contemporary books, written in English. As I have described in my Psypioneer booklet *The Cathars and Arthur Guirdham*, one of ‘Miss Mills’ chief sources which went unrecognised by Guirdham was Zoé Oldenbourg’s *Massacre at Montségur*, translated into English in 1961. ‘Mrs. Smith’, too, could have found her ‘childhood memories’ in various works that were available during the time she was recounting her story. For example, her descriptions of Medieval costume can be seen

in a book published in 1952 and accessible at the Victoria and Albert Museum's National Art Library. (For more on this, see *The Cathars and Arthur Guirdham*.)

But, though many people with an interest in the field now consider Guirdham's publications on Catharism as discredited, this is not apparent among the contributors to *The Cathar View*. Unlike the great majority of Cathar scholars, they tend to see Guirdham's book *The Great Heresy* as the best source of factual information on Cathar religion and history. The past life stories in Guirdham's reincarnation books are also highly respected. The Cathar sites and their histories which play a part in Guirdham's stories have personal meanings to a good number of *The Cathar View* contributors, and can be seen as responsible for at least four descriptions of past-life incarnations. Much of their content corresponds with the same Neo-Cathar stories of events at these sites which inspired Guirdham. They include memories of the caves at Ornodac, romanticised by Gadal, for example. Some of the contributors are drawn to the Bethlehem cave, where the Cathars supposedly held their initiations. They recognise the natural pentagon on one wall of this cave, and, like Guirdham, have visions of their own initiations there. Others recall being walled up in the cave of Lombrives, where Cathars may have been left to die by the Inquisition. Visions of past life experiences on the last night at the stronghold of Montségur are also described. Not infrequently, the reborn Cathars writing in *The Cathar View* remember that they were Perfects (initiated Cathar priests). Some, as in Guirdham's stories, have painful memories of the burnings the next day. Others (also perfects) have memories of being among the few who escaped down the slope with the Cathar treasure.

The history of the Cathar treasure had a further boost in 1982, when Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln discussed it in their bestseller *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. The small town of Rennes le Château, also in the Languedoc, was described by Lincoln, et al as a likely hiding place for the Cathar treasure. It has now become almost a place of pilgrimage, discussed frequently in the articles of *The Cathar View*. Henry Lincoln, who is still active in the area, met with some of the writers at various times. Ani Williams describes coming across him at a restaurant in Rennes le Château in 2006 in her article 'A Troubadour's Journey in Cathar Country', for example. They became friends, and in 2012 Lincoln spent time guiding her to various Cathar sites, including the caves and The Déodat Roché Museum in Arques. This museum, recently opened, houses Roché's writings and photographs, as well as many of the 'Cathar' objects discovered by Gadal. While there, Lincoln, in full acceptance of one of Gadal's romantic theories, pointed out some supposed Egyptian hieroglyphs on a possible Cathar tombstone.

The editor's idealistic views of Catharism, along with his uncritical acceptance of Neo-Cathar ideas and all that goes along with them, can be seen in his article, 'The ABC of Initiation'. While I would not disagree that Catharism was and still could be a very positive force in the world, I personally find it difficult to accept the entire 'package' of the book. Nevertheless, though its contents will not appeal to everyone, I would recommend *The Cathar View* to readers who are looking for an optimistic view of Catharism's recent revival, as well as its future influence on what Patrick hopes will be 'a new Golden Age'.

—~\$~—



# HENRY SLADE

1836c - 1905

Slade died on September 8th 1905 in a sanatorium at Belding,<sup>6</sup> Michigan under the care of Dr. Andrew Spinney. Below is published 'Dr. Slade's last illness' taken from *Light* December 16th (p. 596) shortly after his death:

## DR. SLADE'S LAST ILLNESS

Dr. Andrew B. Spinney, who cared for Dr. Slade in his sanitarium at Belding, Mich., during the closing years of his earth life, narrates in 'The Sunflower' (Lily Dale, N.Y.) some interesting phenomena obtained through the great medium, and incidentally we gather that Dr. Spinney is not only a convinced Spiritualist but has generously offered to take anyone whom the National Spiritualist Association is assisting at half the usual price, on which terms he carefully tended Dr. Slade for five or six years previous to the latter's transition.



Dr. Spinney's first meeting with Dr. Slade was singular. Dr. Slade was just going out, and, passing through the room where Dr. Spinney was waiting, was under control of his Indian guide, who said he had lately seen Dr. Spinney prescribing for a patient under circumstances which he correctly described, and invited him to accompany the medium to an entertainment, and pass the night with him. Dr. Spinney then found that the medium was extremely sensitive and easily affected by psychic influences. Dr. Spinney says:—

'After retiring, when he was sound asleep, the chairs and tables and other furniture moved around the room. The covering was repeatedly taken from the bed and tossed upon the floor. Spirit hands touched both of us and loud raps came on the bedstead, walls and furniture. During the night Dr. Slade woke under control and talked to me several times.'

Referring to the slate-writing, Dr. Spinney says that some times:—

'We held the slates high up, nearly level with our shoulders, between Dr. Slade and myself, and secured good results. Sometime after this my son went to him and under test-conditions received a communication from his grandfather, my father, concerning his last gift to him made while on his deathbed. In every case of slate-writing with Dr. Slade that I ever witnessed, the so-called *exposé* of Dr. Lankester would have been impossible, and in every case Slade himself alone, unaided by some force invisible and outside of himself, could not have produced these things.'

---

<sup>6</sup> A photograph of the monumental stone marking his grave, can be seen at:—<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=7111582>

Marc Demarest notes:—Michigan death record (d. 8 Sep 1905) says he is 79 years old, occupation spirit medium, b. a. 1826; this is wrong; it's off by a decade, but a commentary on the state of his health.

About six years ago some friends found Dr. Slade partially paralysed, and a victim to both liquor and morphine, and Dr. Spinney took him and 'built up his poor wrecked nervous system and improved his health greatly.' After resuming work for a time Dr. Slade was again sent, under permanent arrangement with the National Spiritualist Association, to Dr. Spinney, who says of him:—

'He was not insane but as in all paralysed cases his mind and memory were seriously affected, and he gradually sank into a condition of senile dementia. This made him irritable and restless and for the last two years a great care. Finally a second shock to the left side brought the end, and the imprisoned spirit gained the release for which he had so impatiently waited and prayed.

'Now I wish to say that even in his broken condition, his spirit friends did not desert him nor leave him alone to pass the birth to a higher life unattended. Many times he would want me to sit with him but I could rarely spare the time. Whenever I did there would be some results. The last time, about nine months ago, his hands were too feeble to hold the slates, so they were closed, with a small piece of pencil between, and placed under my feet with Dr. Slade some ten feet away. Both slates were covered with long messages to me concerning him, thanking me and the National Association for what we were doing for him, and saying that soon he would be with them and no longer a care to earth friends. Now I know that the slates were clean, were closed, and that the bit of pencil was the ordinary slate pencil, yet the writing, was Slade's own penmanship with all the personal peculiarities of his paralysis. He did not handle the slates and the writing took place under my own feet some distance from him. Last Christmas, after a short address by myself I reached and took his hand in mine and in a moment he was entranced and gave a beautiful invocation and inspirational address, in a natural, full, free voice with no hint of paralysis, dementia or decay. Sure this shows that the spirit never grows old or sick or weary. It is only the house that decays.'

Dr. Spinney concludes by saying that Spiritualists should realise the necessity for the mastery of mind over body and the guarding of the psychic faculties by restraint of self-indulgence; then the body would become holy and healthy and the mind more clear and active down to the sunset.

—~\$~—

Available information on Henry Slade mostly deals with his life as a well-known established spirit medium; details of his early life and development is more difficult to find. The articles which follow will help to fill in his earlier life. Websites gives his birth year at various periods 1825-1840, the monumental stone which marks his grave (see footnote 6) states:

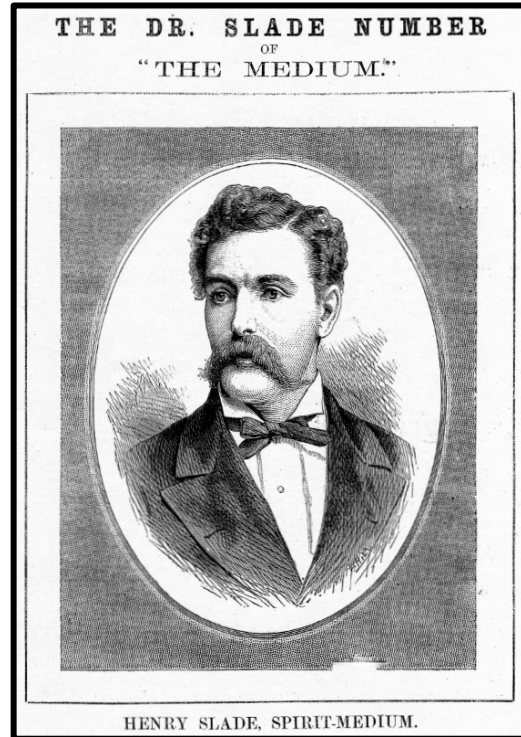
"Henry Slade, renowned throughout the world as the first spiritualist medium for the independent slate writing. Retired to spirit life September 8, 1905 after an earthly visit of 69 years, 5 months and 22 days. With toil now finished, with soul set free, he now enters eternity."<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> The actual wording cannot be read from the image, so the quote is from the person who posted this.

James Burns's founder editor of the *Medium and Daybreak* published on October 6th 1876 a special issue: *The Dr. Slade Number of "The Medium"* which ran into two or possibly more editions; there are some small changes in content between the two first editions. The front page shows an engraving of Henry Slade as shown, with a quote from James Burns:

"The engraving on our front page gives a very truthful representation of Dr. Slade's personal appearance. His hair is dark and closely curled, his eyes are dark and commanding, and his countenance is pale and refined in expression. He is tall and well-proportioned, with indications of great muscular power, but defective vitality. The head is developed more particularly on the central range of organs from the root of the nose to the back of the head. This with his nervous and venous temperament renders him not only mediumistic physiologically speaking, but of the intuitional type mentally. He is not cold and rationalistic in his intellectual peculiarities, but on the contrary, like the feminine mind, he is actuated by direct perception of the nature of those objects presented to his consideration. He sees, feels, and otherwise senses things, rather than reasons on them; he is ardent and, sentimental, and views the relations of life in an appreciative, poetical manner; he writes poetry with great ease, and as he sits in the seance or is engaged elsewhere, it is apparent that the circumstances of life appeal to his soul more directly than to the cold, calculating intellect.



"To him the phenomena and affairs of life are indeed a part of himself, and relate themselves to him agreeably or otherwise. He cannot well stand by as an indifferent spectator,—in other words, the affairs of life are to him subjective, and not objective merely, and altogether external to himself. This constitutional peculiarity accounts for the shuddering and timid sensation with which he encounters the spiritual phenomena, and in that respect he is like most other mediums. The link that connects him with the manifestations taking place in his presence is not simply that of sight, but the nervous system as a whole is thus appealed to, and through that the deeper affections of his nature. He therefore beholds a power which appeals to the most sacred recesses of his soul, and not a more objective phenomenon that reaches no deeper than the external perceptions."

---

Marc Demarest has added some further information: Father Thomas b. 1801, Mother Lucinda b. 1809, Brother James b. 1829, Brother Benjamin b. 1832, Sister Phebe b. 1838, and Henry b. 1836 NY State. 1850 census says he is 16 in 1850, making birth year 1834. 1860 census says he is 26, making birth year 1836. Age 27 when he registers for the draft in June of 1863 (occupation "Indian doctor"), Passport application says "10 March 1839" (completed June 15, 1876).

Below is published the opening article:

## HENRY SLADE: SPIRIT-MEDIUM

*The Medium and Daybreak:—*<sup>8</sup>

There is a power exercised in the presence of spirit-mediums which does not exist in association with human beings generally. The results of this power—spiritual phenomena—are so exceptional, that the majority of people disbelieve in them altogether from their not having had an opportunity of becoming acquainted therewith. Some who have heard of these things from the testimony of reliable friends, believe that the mediums are tricksters and that their friends have been deceived. Spiritualists who have looked into the thing thoroughly and know all that is known about it are well aware that the spiritual phenomena are genuine, and that the medium takes no part therein, but is simply a passive instrument or condition necessary to the production of the manifestations.

Two theories are thus presented as a solution of the problem of mediumship. The first regards the medium as the active producer of the phenomena in the same manner as a conjurer would perform his tricks; the second, on the contrary, insists that the medium is entirely passive and takes no part whatever in the work of evolving the phenomena, but that these are the productions of an unseen intelligence which has the power of operating in the presence of persons called mediums.

A distinct line of demarcation separates the tricks of conjurers from the powers of mediums; the conjurer requires apparatus and conditions of secrecy. The medium can sit down and obtain results anywhere, even on the mountain-top or in the forest, and there the raps will be heard, and conversation with their unseen producers can be carried on. The conjurer acquires his skill by long practice and study, and he can teach the art to others. The medium is born with the power, and it oftentimes comes on him in childhood when it is neither understood by himself nor those around him. The fruits of the conjurers' art are simply objective —being tricks to bewilder the eyes, the means of producing which, great care is taken to conceal. With the medium, the phenomena occur spontaneously when the spectator has the fullest opportunity of observation. The medium instead of exerting himself may be held, bound, or observed with the eyes from head to foot in open daylight. The fruits of mediumship are very different from the trick of the conjurer, which, in being achieved, has no further purpose to serve, whereas the spiritual manifestation is a kind of alphabetical symbol, indicating an intellectual purpose in the mind of its unseen producers.

Be it also remembered that the pretensions of the conjurer are at all times diametrically opposed to his real motives. More than half of his skill is exerted in diverting his beholders from the true line of research. His facile tongue lies in one direction, while his nimble fingers lie in another. His trade is illusion from beginning to end; he is, in short, a professional falsifier; and people pay him, not to be instructed, but to be humbugged. It is morally impossible that the plea of the conjurer in respect to Spiritualism, can be for one moment true. There is indeed no truth in it other than it is the very opposite of truth. He says he imitates the spiritual phenomena, but he does not. He

---

<sup>8</sup> *The Medium and Daybreak*, October 6th 1876.

says he exposes Spiritualism but it is untrue. He says that mediums are cheats, but that is a baseless calumny. The man who believes what a conjurer says or professes, is a fool. All sensible people who attend the show of such professors, go to be amused, but to disbelieve *in toto* the patter of the showman as he goes on with his exhibition. And yet strange to say, the editors of the leading journals, metropolitan and provincial, and thousands of their readers, believe profoundly in the assertion of conjurers in respect to Spiritualism. The Spiritualists alone are sane on this point, and no wonder that the conjurers most virtuously hate them, while they smile good naturedly on the mob of silly dupes who so far forget themselves as to believe in their expositions of spiritual philosophy.

All the facts connected with Spiritualism, as observed by millions of intelligent men, prove the truth of our position; and we challenge the world to disprove it. If the mediums are tricksters, who taught them? Conjurers most certainly did not do so, for they cannot imitate them. Mediums having analogous powers spring up in private families, in distant parts of the globe, who have had no communication with each other nor with professional mediums. Trace back the history of any medium to childhood and parentage, and the wonderful power will be found in every instance to be hereditary and constitutional, and therefore whether Col. Lane Fox will have it or not, the inquiry into its merits is distinctly a department of Anthropology. That Section is sneered at by so-called scientists for introducing the discussion of Spiritualism at the British Association meeting at Glasgow. We venture to say that the introduction of the subject is the best step towards a true system of Anthropology which the Section has ever taken. The subjective phenomena of human life—the stronghold of the Science of Man is as yet an unexplored region, except in so far as Spiritualists have made advances therein. Fashionable Anthropology, as indulged at London meetings, can scarcely be called Anthropoid. It is in no sense a science of men, and fails to do justice to the instincts of the aboriginal monkey.

The phenomena of Spiritualism were first observed in connection with the Modern Movement in March, 1848, in the family of Mr. Fox, in the State of New York. The sounds occurred spontaneously, and the house was said to be haunted. The knocking power was interrogated and made replies by raps according to an arranged code, and thus communication was established. The three daughters were powerful mediums, and one of them—Mrs. Kate-Fox Jencken, the wife of H. D. Jencken, Esq., barrister-at-law, of the Temple, London—is a most powerful medium at the present day. Her infant children are mediums also. The eldest was controlled to write a message when five months old, a *fac-simile* of which is given in No. 214 of the MEDIUM. In our own family we have traced mediumship for three generations, and we have collected a vast number of facts to illustrate the organic law under which these remarkable phenomena occur.

The case of Dr. Slade adds one more to this long list. His mother had mediumistic powers, and he has been attended by manifestations of the faculty from his birth. All his brothers and sisters were endowed in a similar manner. In his early childhood these phenomena had not been studied, as it was before the advent of Modern Spiritualism, so that possibly many indications were overlooked during that period of his history. Rappings had always been heard in the vicinity of the child from his cradle, but these being purely objective had not attracted much attention. The more spiritual form of the power was first observed to manifest itself in dreaming, one instance of which we give as illustrative of a faculty the exercise of which was by no means unfrequent. When quite a

boy, he told the family at the breakfast-table one morning that he had dreamed of the return of a brother who had been absent for several years; that he was already in the village near to which they lived, stopping at the house of a friend. When this brother went away he was only a lad with beardless face, but he was described in the dream as wearing a heavy beard. The dreamer also stated that father and he would walk out that morning and meet an old friend of the family, who would say, "James has come;" that they would call at the house indicated, when this elder brother who had been so long absent would meet them at the door and clasp Henry in his arms. Henry and his father accordingly did walk out towards the village, where they met the friend described, who told them of the return of James. On reaching the house at which he was residing he stood behind the door to give them a pleasant surprise, and as Henry entered a young man, heavily bearded, as seen in the dream, stepped forth and clasped his younger brother in his arms.

This fact, which the family had the best means of knowing to be genuine, impressed them that Henry was possessed of an extraordinary gift, and hearing about that time of spiritual manifestations, then beginning to be talked of, they observed and saw other indications of mediumship developing.

One day, on entering the office of an hotel in the village, Henry, who was then twelve years old, met a traveller who was entertaining the company with conversation on the wonders of mesmerism and Spiritualism, and who proposed that all should join hands in a circle. Upon doing so, the mediumship of the subject of our sketch became strikingly apparent. The stranger accompanied the lad to his father's, and for the first time the family formed a spirit-circle and sat round a table. The usual physical manifestations—rappings, table-tipping, table-lifting, &c.—were plentifully obtained, and for a time interested the family very much. The medium's mother being of a religious turn of mind, became possessed with the idea that possibly the manifestations were due to satanic origin, and for some years the inquiry was completely abandoned.

In another column appears a statement from Dr. Slade's Pen, in which he describes a severe sickness which he had in early life, with its effects upon himself. It was that illness which afforded opportunity for his becoming satisfied that the spiritual agency which sought to control him was of a beneficent kind, and meant not only good to himself, but to others. Consumption had carried off to an early grave all his mother's family, and it was feared that Henry would fall a victim to the same destroyer. The acute symptoms of his illness had passed off, but he was far from being well, and in that weak state which betokens a lurking danger which eludes the skill of the most eminent medical practice. When in that state, a clergyman at Marengo, Michigan, called in and endeavoured to persuade his family that this spirit-agency was of the devil, and that they ought to resist its influence over their son. The reverend gentleman even boasted of being able to stop the manifestations, but on putting his pretended power to the test he signally failed. He promised to preach upon it in his church on the following Sunday. Henry being deeply interested, attended and got as near to the speaker as possible. The clergyman was somewhat astonished to find that some influence which he could not throw off choked his utterance. He made efforts to proceed with his sermon against Spiritualism, but failing after struggling to accomplish his aim, he declared that the devil had come there to impede him. From that time Henry became the subject of a very powerful spirit-control.

His name was “Owosoo,” a Spanish Indian,<sup>9</sup> who now attends him in his mediumship. This spirit gave a diagnosis of his disease, which the doctors had pronounced incurable. The spirit said it was not lung disease at all, but that his medium would soon be well again. In a state of trance, the suffering youth would be controlled by his spirit-guide to wander into the woods, gather herbs, and dig up roots, which he brought home and prepared as a medicine with his own hands under spirit-influence. That the cure thus wrought was complete, Dr. Slade’s existence today is ample testimony.

The healing power did not end with this one solitary case, but the young man, under spirit-influence, began to treat others with complaints similar to that from which he had been rescued by the medical skill of his guide. On his recovery the manifestations returned with increased intensity; whether he slept at home or in others’ houses, loud noises and rappings would be heard, with moving of furniture and other powerful phenomena—facts which can be testified to by hundreds of inhabitants of Ipsilanti, Ann Arbor, Saline, Jackson, Albion, Kalamazoo, and other places in the state of Michigan. At other times the medium would be in a rigid trance and appear as if dead. While in that state he seemed to be in the spirit-world, conversing with the departed relations of the friends by whom he was at the time surrounded, often bringing messages to them from their friends in the spirit-world which proved to be excellent tests of spirit identity, establishing in their minds the truth of immortality and spirit-communion. These abnormal states were however oftentimes the cause of serious alarm to bystanders, who, ignorant of the nature of the phenomena, would employ stimulants and manipulations to bring him round again. In all cases these remedies occasioned the medium much pain and suffering when he regained the normal state. During illness he has been carried up two flights of stairs by spirit-power, and often has been carried bodily from the bed, his attendants being eye-witnesses to the fact.

While suffering from a severe attack of sickness; from which it was feared he would not recover, Dr. Slade visited Saline. His friend Mr. Risdon desiring his portrait to keep in memory of him, Dr. Slade went to a photographer, to have a likeness taken, and as he sat before the camera, a strange sensation crept over him, such as he had never experienced before. When the plate was developed, the body was visible as in ordinary cases, but his head was obscured with a cloud of intense light. This was the first indication of anything like spirit-photography he had met with, as the experiments by Mr. Mumler, the celebrated spirit-photographer, had not at that time been commenced.

Dr. Slade was formerly in the habit of holding large promiscuous seances, as is the practice of many other mediums, not having learned at that time the injury which arises from a want of order and necessary conditions. As a consequence he was very much prostrated after each sitting, not knowing that the circles were the cause. These years of experience have taught him, and also his spirit-friends, that it is highly necessary to have proper conditions and a select number of sitters to preserve the health of the medium, give satisfaction to the sitters, and obtain a higher order of phenomena.

Of the origin of the slate-writing manifestation, which is at present the subject of so much acrimonious discussion, it may interest the reader to say a few words. During his sittings at one period of his mediumship, Dr. Slade’s attention was attracted by a noise of

---

<sup>9</sup> The spirit-control “Owosoo” – in a following article in the Slade Special (not published here) Slade uses the spelling “Owossoo.”

scratching on, in, or under the table, as if writing were being done with some instrument. He was impressed to give the spirits an opportunity that he might discover whether they intended to write. Accordingly, he placed a piece of chalk on a slate and held it under the table, thinking that the chalk would make a mark with the slightest effort. The first letter thus written was "W." The seance was held at the house of Mr. Gardiner Knapp, New Albany, Indiana, with whom Dr. Slade was at that time visiting. During the evening the writing was persevered in, and the spirits gave the name "William Maynard" direct on the slate. This was recognised by persons present as the name of a friend in spirit-life, and thus a test and a manifestation were received at the same time.

One illustration will show that the spirit-writing is not only a phenomenal fact, but may be made a channel for conveying intelligence quite foreign to the knowledge of the medium. On one occasion, Judge Dean, of Pennsylvania, came to New York on business. Just before leaving home, after he had all his things packed and ready to start, he took from the bureau drawer a *carte-de-visite* of his deceased wife, with the object of having an enlargement made, and put it, as he thought, in an old envelope which was convenient to his hand, and deposited it in his travelling bag. On the evening of his arrival in New York he called on Dr. Slade and had a sitting, during which a message was written on the slate from his wife in the spirit-world, commencing thus:—"My dear husband,—I saw you when you put my picture in Neph's letter." The slate was filled with other writing, and signed by the wife's name, and yet the Judge was a stranger to the medium. On returning to his hotel, Judge Dean went straight to his travelling-bag, and taking out the old envelope containing the portrait, was astonished to find that instead of having used an empty envelope, he had put the *carte-de-visite* into an important letter referred to in the message, and which he had kept by him for years.

After the transition to spirit-life of Dr. Slade's wife, the direct spirit-writing improved very much. During her last hours on earth she promised to use all endeavours to perfect the writing when she became accustomed to the conditions of the spiritual state, and right faithfully she has kept her sacred promise, and it is the only form of manifestation in which she takes part. Dr. Slade speaks of this spirit with manifest emotion at all times, and, during the seances he speaks to her as if she were physically present; she is there in spirit, and, to him, as palpable as if in the flesh. He sees her and hears her voice, and she is to him as real and as dear as when they communed together in the body.

From his boyhood Dr. Slade has been a seer, and, as in the case of Andrew Jackson Davis, his mother was a seer also. When a child, he could not understand why other people could not see spirits, or men or women, which he saw so clearly. Experience has taught him why so many are blind to the sublime realities of spiritual existence; and now the wonder is on the other side, and the majority of people are disposed to doubt the fact that spirits are visible to anyone. Truly, it has been said that one part of the human family has no conception of the inner life or individual experiences of the others. The experiences of mediums, though mysterious to the generality of mankind, are yet real and of great importance to the progress of human knowledge, and their claims should be kindly investigated rather than subjected to police persecution. Truly the day will, soon dawn when the bigots of this age will be regarded as a greater impossibility than spiritual phenomena.



Dr. Slade found that the demand upon his time and vitality was such that he had to devote himself entirely to the work of mediumship. Nothing tells so heavily on the vital powers as giving seances, and the sensitive medium suffers a succession of agonies which no other type of organisation can understand. Ill-health and painful experiences are plentiful; these are not the result of mediumship *per se*, but having to come in contact with those of prejudicial temperament. To sit with the enlightened and sympathetic is not only pleasant, but sustaining to the system, and conduces to organic harmony, whereas the contrary is the result of those inharmonious and malevolent influences with which the public medium is so frequently brought in contact.

During his career as a medium Dr. Slade has resided—or had an office, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, about four years. He lived in Jackson, Michigan, five or six years, and in New York five or six years. During his earlier experiences he had appointments in various towns, and would occupy the week by spending a day or two in each place to suit the convenience of the public. He was thus known to a large number of people scattered over a wide expanse of country, and not as a stranger who had come out of obscurity, but as a neighbour who had been known from childhood.

Amongst the many who have known Dr. Slade in years past, and to whom inquiries respecting him may be addressed, we select the following:

- Mr. Thomas Pray, Attorney-at-Law, Marshall, Michigan.
- Mr. J. C. Wood, Jackson, ”
- Mr. L. D. Welling, Jackson, ”
- Dr. Abbott, Kalamazoo, ”
- Mr. George Winslow, Kalamazoo, ”
- Mr. Daniel Bush, Corunna, ”
- Mr. James Wheeler, Corunna, ”
- Judge Lawrence, Ann Arbour, ”
- Mr. L. D. Risdon, Ann Arbour, ”
- Mr. Chester Lewis, Marengo, ”
- Mr. Allan Risdon, Saline, ”
- Mr. Erastus Sampson, Ipsilanti, ”
- Mr. S. Rowley, Ipsilanti, ”
- Mr. Jacob Gordonier, Marshall, ”
- Mr. Isaac Gibbs, Springfield, Mass. ”
- Dr. Crowell, 196, Clinton Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.
- Captain Dey, Geneva, ”
- Mr. Skidmore, Fredonia, ”
- Mr. Bennett, Susquehanna, ”
- Dr. J. B. Newborough, 128, West 34th Street, ”
- Mr. George Reynolds; Utica, ”
- Mr. A. A. Wheelock, Care of Mr. Reynolds, ”
- Mr. T. B. Crane, 18, West 21st Street, ”
- Dr. Gray, 5th Avenue Hotel, ”
- Dr. J. R. Newton, ”
- Col. Olcott, 71, Broadway, ”
- Col. Abbott, Elmira, ”
- Mr. Waterman, Attorney-at-Law, Binghampton, ”
- Judge Stuart, Rochester, ”

Rev. J. M. Peebles, Hammonton, Atlantic Co., New Jersey.  
Mr. Fish Doherty, Crawfordsville, Indiana.  
Mr. Frank Hermance, New Haven, Conn.  
Mr. Whiting, Care of Mr. Hermance.  
Mr. E. Foster, South Bend, Indiana.  
Mr. John Morton, 1,914, Arch Street, Philadelphia, Pa.  
Mr. Henry Seibert, Philadelphia, ”  
Dr. Child, 634, Race Street, Philadelphia, ”  
Mr. John Mayhew, Patent Office, Washington, D. C.  
Mr. Darius Lyman, U. S. Treasury, Washington, D. C.

This list might be very much extended, but the foregoing selection must suffice as indicating a means of tracing the gradual development of Dr. Slade's gift and the various phenomena which occurred at its different stages.

Dr. Slade has been long, well, and favourably known to the spiritualistic editors of America, Mr. Luther Colby, of the *Banner of Light*, 9, Montgomery Place, Boston, Mass.,<sup>10</sup> and Mr. S. S. Jones, of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal*, 394, Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois.<sup>11</sup> He is recognised not merely as a professional medium, but as a Spiritualist in the best sense; he knows that he is a servant of the spirits, and daily feels their presence. Like many other workers in this Cause, he is not his own, and it is possible that he is not at all times answerable for his conduct; but be the anomalies and difficulties what they will, he is in service that he cannot throw off, and his higher pleasure amidst the varied forms of suffering that surround his path is to seek for consolation in the inner realm, and remain faithful to the promise of co-operation which he made to his wife now in the spirit-world.

—~\$~—

---

<sup>10</sup> Luther Colby and the Banner of Light (BofL) see *Psypioneer* Volume 5, No 4 April 2009: *Luther Colby and The Banner* – Paul J. Gaunt:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Mr. S. S. Jones and the Religio-Philosophical Journal see *Psypioneer* Volume 3, No 2 February 2007: *Religio-Philosophical Journal*:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.2February07.pdf>

Marc Demarest continues:

## March 1866 – The Beginnings of Independent Slade-Writing

In late March of 1866, Cora Wilburn, the Spiritualist, poet and novelist, wrote a letter to *The Banner of Light*<sup>12</sup> which published it in the April 7, 1866 issue:

“I greet you again from the Great City of the West [Chicago]. I am happy to say that Spiritualism is flourishing here, despite the sneers of the secular press. Dr. Slade, of Jackson, Michigan, has been here for a few days, giving such overwhelming proofs of spirit-existence and power as to disarm the veriest skeptic. I had the satisfaction of attending one of his seances. In a gas-lighted room, we heard the raps, loud and frequent, under the table and on the back of the medium’s chair. Then, a tiny piece of slate pencil, so small that no mortal writer could make use of it, was placed on a slate, and the medium held it under the table with one hand, his other hand resting on the table, where all our hands were also placed. We heard the scratching of the pencil over the slate, and three little taps announced that the writing was completed. The name of H. Martin was written, son of Mr. Warwick Martin of Waukegan. And the name of S. Whipple, being that of a relative of a gentleman present, was also written. Then Dr. Slade held an accordion under the table with one hand, holding the instrument at the bottom, and our immortal friends discoursed sweetest harmony upon it, playing the tunes of “Home, Sweet Home,” and “Gentle Annie,” with an accuracy and feeling that brought tears to my eyes, and I hope the joyous certainty of eternal life and happiness to other hearts.

“Dr. Slade has in his possession a pastil [sic] painting in colors, a beautiful and lifelike portrait of his departed wife [MD: his first wife, Emily J. Bradley]. It was drawn by his own hand, under the control of a Scotch artist, in the short space of one hour, in the presence of ten to fifteen persons. This labor of love was performed in the evening by gas-light, at his office in Jackson, Mich. Several artists of high standing have pronounced it the best production of art of that kind that they have ever met with.”

I think we see Henry Slade, in this description, in the very earliest days of his mediumship. Slade’s occupation in the 1860 US census is noted as “Indian doctor,” and he has been a professional clairvoyant (magnetic) healer since at least December of 1861, but has remained close to home, in Jackson, for the most part; certainly, from his first newspaper solicitations as a healer in December of 1861, through November of 1862. There’s some evidence to suggest that Slade may have done service in the Union Army; he registered in mid-1863, and that service may explain why we do not find him soliciting for his medical practice in 1863, 1864 or most of 1865. At the end of 1865, Slade is traveling in the midwest, but still as a clairvoyant healer, according to the few, brief stories about him.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Banner of Light* (BofL) see *Psypioneer* Volume 5, No 4: April: *Luther Colby and The Banner* – Paul J. Gaunt:— <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

Moses Hull claims, in an excerpt from his *Monthly Clarion* published in the *BofL* for June of 1866, that Slade was developed, at least in part, by Mrs. H. F. M. Brown:

“Dr. Slade of Jackson, Mich., who spends all of his time in doing good, has lately given us several visits, each of which has resulted in removing skepticism by demonstrating immortality. The spirits long since promised him through the mediumship of Mrs. H. F. M. Brown, that his own hand would be the instrument through which he would catch the shadow of his departed wife. “That promise has recently been fulfilled, and the most perfect work of art that has ever met our eye is the life-size portrait of Mrs. Slade, taken and framed by the doctor in one hour and thirty minutes, while in a trance condition.”

Whether that is the portrait Wilburn saw, is impossible to know.

Knocks and slate-writing are the centerpiece of Slade’s mature practice as a medium, but in Hull’s notice and Wilburn’s description, we see him manifesting a much larger range of spirit-proofs, including spirit music via accordion (a la D. D. Home) and spirit-painting.

And, as the first mention of Slade’s mediumship appears in the *BofL* for February 24, 1866, it’s safe to say Cora Wilburn is witnessing Slade, at the beginning of his career.

As a perhaps important side note, a review of first-hand séance accounts for the mid-1860s will reveal that slates were being used for automatic writing, or psygraphology, as it was often called at the time, in séances, well before they became the mechanism for independent slate-writing. Cora Hatch’s mother, for example, claimed that Cora practiced automatic writing, as a small child, using a slate. It seems likely that Slade repurposed what he found in the séance rooms, rather than bringing an entirely new apparatus into the mis-en-scene.

The slate-writing innovation masses slowly; Slade himself receives little coverage from the Spiritualist press in 1867, and it is not until J. M. Peebles rectifies the East Coast’s lack of interest in the middle west by becoming the “Western Editor” for the *BofL* that Slade gets his due as an innovator, in Peebles’ notes for May of 1867:

“Dr. Henry Slade, Pontiac, Mich.

“Wonderful, absolutely wonderful, are the tests and proofs of spirit-power through this medium. He sits in no dark circles, and when the rooms are lighted, bells are rung and musical instruments played. Whole communications are written upon a slate in the light, he holding it with thumb and finger. All present may see Mr. Slade -- see the slate -- hear the pencil move, and then get mental tests of the most extraordinary character. Hundreds and hundreds will testify to this -- ourself [that is, Peebles] among the number. What is it? That’s the question. Is it God, devil or spirits? It certainly has no conscious mortal, power.”

It’s worth noting, I think, that just at this time (June of 1867) Slade – who still earns his living as a medical clairvoyant -- is under attack in Jackson County, Michigan, where he

lives, for his Spiritual practices. A letter from Slade appears in the Jackson City Patriot, on June 7, 1867, that is worth weaving in here:

“Mr. Editor:

“From the many reports coming to me, it appears that much is being said in regard to my holding circles for the purpose of practicing deception, and that many are freely expressing their views and opinions in the matter without possessing a knowledge of even the first principles pertaining to it. And one individual, professing Christianity, has gone so far as to openly declare that the people ought now to take Dr. Slade out and shoot him. Once more, and for the last time, I wish it distinctly to be understood that the manifestations are not, nor never have been, practiced by me as a profession [Emphasis added]. My sittings have invariably been held at the solicitation of my friends, as those who were candidly investigating the phenomena. And I am not aware that any deception has ever been practiced, so that any person has ever left my rooms at such times feeling that they had been deceived or trifled with.

“My business, as indicated by my sign, is healing the sick, to which, as in times past, I shall continue to devote my attention to the best of my ability in rendering aid and assistance to the sick and afflicted who of their own accord shall call on me for treatment or advice.

“And I shall also, whenever my strength will admit, continue to entertain my friends at such times as I can without interfering with my business.

“As far as Dr. Van Vleck is concerned, I have no objections to his exhibitions. I shall, however, try to manage my own affairs, independently of him. And now let me ask who are they that are crying deception? The answer is, those individuals who have never entered my rooms, consequently have never witnessed my manifestations. And I have yet to learn of the first instance of its coming from one who has had a fair investigation.

“Here allow me to venture an opinion, that were the sentence of death to be carried out to-day in all cases where deception has been practiced by persons doing business in this city, to-morrow we should look in vain for their familiar faces; but, in their stead, the probability is that the survivors would behold the usual amount of black crape suspended from the door-knobs of every business in Jackson, and the stranger on enquiring the cause of all this mortality, would receive the answer, “Deception.”

“Dr. H. Slade”

I have a lot of sympathy for Henry Slade, at this particular juncture in his career. Van Vleck, the great itinerant exposé of Spiritualism, had visited Slade on June 1, 1867, in the company of a “committee of five gentlemen, consisting of Judge Gridley, Messrs. Alonzo Bennett, W. F. Thompson, J. C. Wood and Judge Bebbe.” The Patriot reports that “a circle was formed, and certain manifestations given by Dr. Slade, such as writing on the slate and playing the accordeon, Dr. S. claiming that everything that was done at the sitting was under the influence of spirits of deceased persons.”

Van Vleck subsequently demonstrated everything witnessed in Slade's presence, including independent slate-writing, for the committee, who "stated that Dr. Van Vleck's performances with them that evening were similar in every respect to the manifestations given at Dr. Slade's rooms," and on that basis (and with that advertising) Van Vleck then performed his "exposure" of Slade for the general public, after which "he pronounced spiritualism the greatest humbug and cheat ever invented, as was willing at any time to prove it to be so....the anti-spiritualists pronounced this a great triumph for them, and declare that the Doctor has exposed a swindle and a humbug in the most thorough manner."

Van Vleck comes in for some criticism as well; an pseudonymous "Spiritualist" writes that Van Vleck is "a precious rascal, an unprincipled scoundrel, whose life is a life; but even such reptiles as you are of some use to in the economy of nature."

To be clear, Van Vleck did not expose Henry Slade; he replicated his phenomena by other means. That is a powerful way of calling a medium's explanation of cause into question, and one favored by stage magicians (of which Van Vleck was one), but Slade is fundamentally correct in his complaint: reproduction of phenomena by other means is not exposure. We are just now reaching the stage in the controversy over Spiritualism where the decorum in the séance room is disrupted by in-situ seizures, the unveiling of darkened lanterns, and other similar tactics (the Davenport's have already been exposed in this fashion, by the use of darkened lanterns, on several occasions).

So Slade is correct: howling "Deception" because a stage magician has demonstrated another, merely physical, way to produce effects, is over-reaching.

But Slade himself is over-reaching, in this indignant letter, and in a way that's, well, reckless, given the population of Jackson County, Michigan at the time (a couple thousand folks at most).

A year earlier, in June of 1866, Slade had run a series of advertisements in the Jackson Citizen Patriot, featuring his medical practice, but including at the end notices that "Sceances [sic] will be held every Wednesday evening [at Dr. Slade's rooms], commencing at half past 7 o'clock, in a room furnished for that purpose adjoining the [medical] office, where persons can have the opportunity of witnessing those wonderful manifestations that occur in the presence of Dr. Slade; Also, on Thursday evenings, a promiscuous circle, at which other mediums may be expected. Persons wishing to attend can procure tickets at the [medical] office at any time during the week. – Admission: Wednesday night, 50 cents. Thursday night, 25 cents; all mediums free."

Slade's positioning in his letter -- that his Spiritualist work is private entertainment for his friends -- won't hold, based on an examination of the historical record, and I am sure it didn't hold, for the "anti-spiritualists" in Jackson County, Michigan, in the summer of 1867. Slade had, a year earlier, declared himself: he was a public (that is, fee-taking) spirit medium. And as such, he became a target.

This is a difficult time, in Slade's life, I think. Henry's first wife, Emily Brady, has been dead for two years, and his father, Thomas, follows Emily to the Summerland in March

of 1867. He is fighting, publicly, to maintain his position in the community he will consider, for his entire life, to be home, but he's also traveling the midwestern Spiritualist circuit, and developing a national reputation.

In August of 1867, George W. Hatch, of Princeton, Illinois, writes to the BofL describing his sitting with Slade, and he is quite specific that Slade's manifestations are superior: at this time, to those of the Davenport Brothers, the gold standard of physical manifestations. Hatch says that Slade is "a physical medium of the best demonstrative manifestations that has ever been [sic] passed through this section of the West -- the Davenport Brothers not excepted -- as their manifestations were in the cabinet, in the dark. Dr. Slade's are in the broad, open light in the room." Hatch describes the pencil on the slate as "about as large as half of a kernel of wheat" (this will become the commonplace description of the pencil) and says that the independent slate-writing witnessed was the "names of spirit-friends of persons present were written on the slate (all entire strangers to the medium,) by some unseen power" and that the "power made itself known by pulling, twitching and jerking the garments of persons in the circle, and the motions were plainly visible in the light." He records that in the séance he witnessed spirits made use of the accordion, and that Slade, in a trance, provided direct communications from spirits (but he does not say whether by direct voice, or raps and cards).

Hatch also notes that the slate pencil is repeatedly thrown across the room by the spirits, and mysteriously replaced on the slate, when Slade requests it. This physical manifestation -- the movement of the slate and slate pencil by unseen forces -- is part of the first descriptions we have of Slade's phenomena in the secular press, in early 1868 (as Slade starts to travel, as far east as Buffalo); those descriptions include other physical manifestations, such as the floating of bells, and table-tipping, in Slade's presence.

Unambiguously, Slade invented independent slate-writing. There is no coverage of independent slate-writing performed by anyone other than Henry Slade, in the Spiritualist press, until the end of 1868, when a medium named Peter West (of 127 Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois) exhibits slate-writing (witnessed by J. O Barrett and others). West disappears almost immediately from the Spiritualist record.

Henry Slade goes national, as it were, in January of 1869, when he marries the pioneering American trance medium Alcinda C. Wilhelm, MD. Alcinda Wilhelm has a national reputation as a trance medium and Spiritualist lecturer; Emma Hardinge herself said in several instances that she followed in Wilhelm's "flowered path" as a lecturer in the US, and there is more than one plea from Spiritualists that Wilhelm not leave the rostrum following her marriage. The Slades make their home (notably, they are described as "permanently located") in Kalamazoo, and open up a joint medical practice "for clairvoyant examinations and magnetic remedies" while Alcinda continues to lecture on Spiritualism and reform topics in the midwest. It is on a lecture tour that she dies, in her husband's presence after 10 days of illness, on November 23, 1869, in Galesburg, Illinois. She will become Slade's primary control, A(lie). W. Slade. Speculatively, were it not for Alcinda's death, slate-writing phenomena would have had a very different trajectory, and the movement itself changed in material ways.

Slade is invisible to us for most of 1870 -- no doubt due to his wife's death -- until August, when he appears in Boston, and begins conducting public test séances, with Alcinda as his control. Meanwhile, Mrs. Hollis,<sup>13</sup> a Southern medium, is highly visible in the secular and Spiritualist press: more visible, in fact, than Slade. She is practicing slate-writing, above the table and under a shawl, with bare and visible forearms, as part of a three-part séance that also includes a direct voice session, and dark cabinet manifestations. Before her slate-writing tests, Mrs. Hollis specifically admonishes sitters to pay close attention to her forearms to detect any movement of her arms or arm muscles.

The séance Wilburn witnessed in March 1866 is almost certainly not Slade's first slate-writing séance; Slade himself claimed that he first produced slate-writing in the presence of a prominent Spiritualist, Gardiner Knapp, in New Albany, Indiana some time late in 1865, which aligns with what we know about Slade's travels at the time.

—~§~—

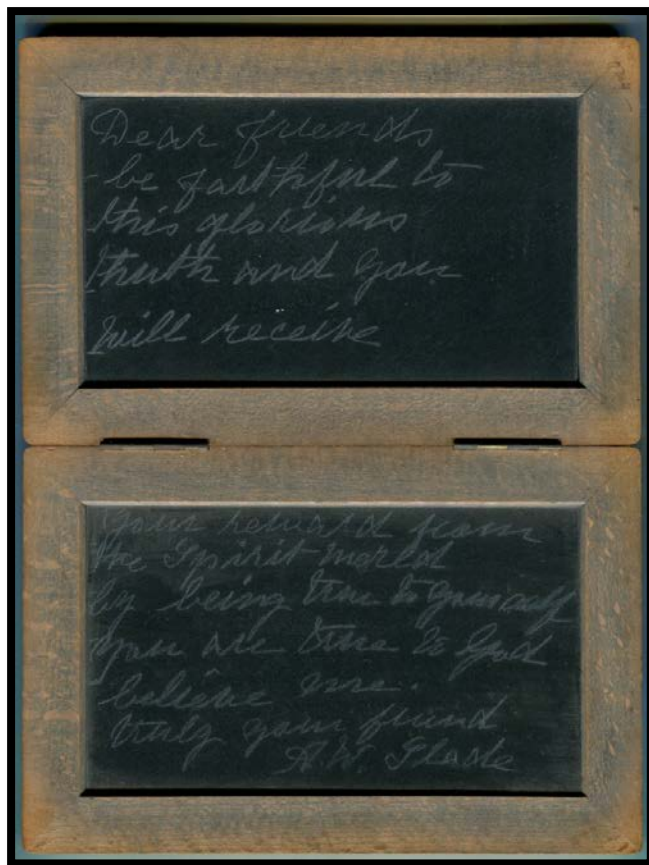
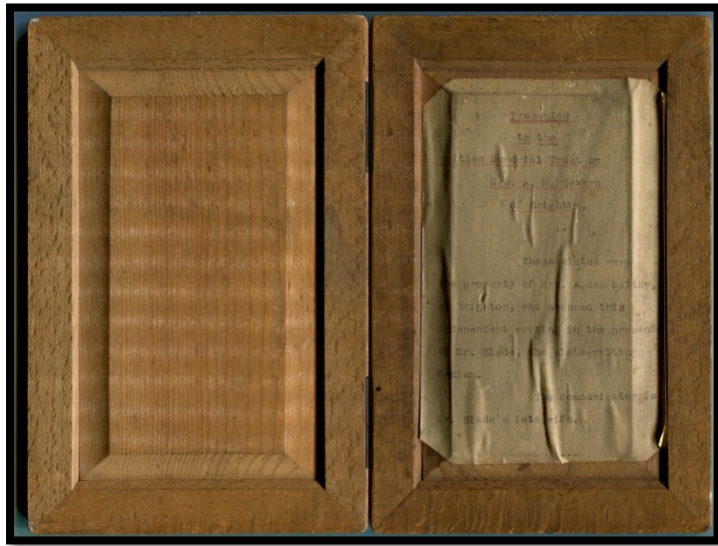
---

<sup>13</sup> Mrs. Mary J. Hollis; see *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No 10: October 2010: *Mrs. Mary J. Hollis – Paul J. Gaunt and Leslie Price & “Skiwaukie,” the Indian spirit-guide – Medium and Daybreak:—* <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.10October2010.pdf> Also use the *Psypioneer* search engine for more on Hollis.



## INDEPENDENT WRITING IN THE PRESENCE OF MR SLADE

The Spiritualists' National Union's Britten Memorial Museum, is housed at the Arthur Findlay College, Stansted Hall, Essex.<sup>14</sup> It holds many valuable artefacts and documents pertaining to the history of Modern Spiritualism including some original slates from the 19th century, two of which were used by Henry Slade.



The museum exhibit (BMT 338) as shown is a folding slate; the Slate was the property of Mrs Agnes Maltby (Brighton), who secured this independent writing in the presence of Mr Slade.<sup>15</sup> The communicator was Mr Slade's deceased wife:

“Dear friends – be faithful to this glorious truth and you will receive your reward from the spirit world by being true to yourself you are true to God believe me. truly your friend A W Slade”

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Findlay College:—<http://www.arthurfindlaycollege.org/>

<sup>15</sup> Direct – Independent Writing should not be confused with Automatic Writing e.g., scripts produced by the medium's hand – by automatists like Geraldine Cummins and Stainton Moses (M. A. Oxon). Moses gave a collective name to this phenomenon “Psychography” and he published a book under this title in 1878. Psychography is writing without the intervention of ordinary human agency.

## BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

*If you have any problems locating a copy we can contact the author*

**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, available at Amazon. Psypioneerreview, by Leslie Price pages 294-296:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

**Helen Duncan The Mystery Show Trial**, by Robert Hartley published by H Pr (Publishing), London 2007. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9553420-8-0. Psypioneerreview, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 244-247:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

**Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as It Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling**, by John Benedict Buescher Theosophical History Volume XI available at:—then—Occasional Papers. Psypioneer references by Leslie Price page 7:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08.pdf>

**Dead Men's Embers**, by Gerald O'Hara, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2006. Large Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9514534-6-9, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 1-2:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

**Mrs Miller's Gift' - a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library**, by Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1 - 4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

**Mrs Miller's Gift CD:—Helen Duncan Séance, Ernest Oaten and Harry Edwards**,  
Written and produced by Gerald O'Hara B.Sc. Psypioneerreview, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 106-107:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

**The Indescribable Phenomena – The Life and Mysteries of Anna Eva Fay**, by Barry H. Wiley published by Hermetic Press, Inc., Seattle Washington 2005. ISBN: 0-945296-50-9, available at:—[http://www.hermeticpress.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=45](http://www.hermeticpress.com/product_info.php?products_id=45)Psypioneer references by Leslie Price pages 39-42:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

**Immortal Longings – FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death**, by Trevor Hamilton published by Imprint Academic in Exeter, U.K (also VA, U.S.A) 2009. ISBN: 9-781845- 401238 H.B, 9-781845-402488 PB, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 157-148:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

**Talking to the Dead – Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism**, by Barbara Weisberg published by HarperSanFrancisco New York 2004. Hardback ISBN: 0-06-056667-1, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 9-10:—[http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP2.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP2.pdf)

—~§~—

### **How to obtain this free Journal**

The Psypioneer journal is at present available, complete with all back issues on the web site <http://www.woodlandway.org> and we are greatly indebted to our Australian friends for hosting and posting this Journal. You can obtain it free and direct by sending an e-mail entitled "Subscribe" to [psypioneersub@btinternet.com](mailto:psypioneersub@btinternet.com) or "Unsubscribe" to discontinue. To contact Psypioneer please e-mail [psypioneer@btinternet.com](mailto:psypioneer@btinternet.com)

Paul J. Gaunt

—~§~—