PIONEER

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The Pioneer (bi-monthly) is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses.

This history journal is presented using original researched material wherever possible. Articles and quotes are taken from original sources as they were published at the time and reproduced by optical character recognition (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

Special thanks to Leslie Price and Charles Coulston for their work in sub-editing this issue

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More information about Psypioneer or to subscribe please contact: editor@psypioneer.org

OPEN WEEK

Britten Museum & Library

The National Executive Committee welcome visitors for the 2017 Open Week as they enter the Arthur Findlay College.



Left to right are Ministers

Financial Director Julia Almond, Vice-President Alan Rawnsley, Vice-President Judith Seaman and President David Bruton.

Open Week (April 29th–May 2nd) is always an exciting time to visit; this year was no exception. Lots of discussions take place in the Museum & Library at the Arthur Findlay College. As featured in Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 4, August 2016, the Britten Library has become once again joined to the Museum, which is now renamed the "Britten Museum & Library". For those who wish to go further our various bound journals trace the history of Spiritualism in the UK week by week from 1870.



One of President Bruton's VIP guests was Minister Mary Clifford, who presented a beautiful gold Minister's badge and brooch to the Britten Museum & Library. Mary told me the long history of how she came into possession of this lovely example of an old Minister's badge, which is given below:

After 43 years, Higginson's wish comes true

The owner of the badge was a lady by the name of Mrs Florence Moule. She was a member of the Portsmouth Temple at 73a Victoria Road South, Southsea, Hants, and she lived in an apartment in a three-storey house at the entrance to the Temple.

She was a very good medium and I came to know her when she visited Bitterne Spiritualist Church, Southampton, to conduct services. In 1954, my parents, my husband and myself became members of Bitterne Church and in 1957 Mrs Moule conducted the naming service for my two daughters.

My father was President at Bitterne Church for four years until his passing in 1961, when Mrs Moule conducted his funeral service. Mrs Moule made regular visits to Bitterne Spiritualist Church for some years and was highly respected in the South.

I received a small registered parcel in the post some time later, together with a letter, enclosing her Minister's badge. Unfortunately, I did not keep the letter but I remember the contents very well. Mrs Moule said she was nearing the end of her life and, as her family were not Spiritualists, it was possible that they would put it in the bin. After giving considerable thought, she was impressed to send it to me, as she knew that I would become a Minister one day. I was asked to treasure it, wear it if I wished, but would I make sure that it would always be in the possession of Spiritualists.

Gordon Higginson conducted my Ordination service in Bitterne Spiritualist Church on 17th January 1974, where I showed him the badge. He wanted to take it back to Stansted Hall to go in the archives but agreed that I should keep it as long as I promised him that I would return it to Stansted Hall when I felt the time was right.



The day I received the invitation to be a guest of Minister David Bruton, I just knew this was the time and the opportunity to entrust the badge to the Britten Museum & Library. I know Mrs Moule would be thrilled to know I had handed it to the Museum's Curator. What safer hands could there be? Mr Gordon Higginson would also be very pleased that after 43 years I kept my promise to take the badge to Stansted Hall, to remain in the possession of Spiritualists!

The most popular topic for discussion in the Museum and its exhibits is usually physical mediumship of the past and its various phases throughout the decades.


Leslie Price

Leslie Price was a guest lecturer over Open Week and one of his lectures was on Helen Duncan. Leslie is the founder editor of Psypioneer and is presently the archivist at the College of Psychic Studies in London. His lecture generated much interest not only in Duncan's physical mediumship but also in MI5's involvement in her 1944 trial at the Old Bailey. The conspiracy was revealed by Dr Robert Hartley in his book, "Helen Duncan: The Mystery Show Trial". Bob called into the Britten Museum & Library during Open Week; the photograph shows Bob, with College tutor Janette (Jan) Marshall and Curator Paul Gaunt. Bob was also present at Leslie's lecture on Helen Duncan, and he spoke at the end of the lecture on his findings published in his book – for example, the lead prosecutor, John Maude KC, was in fact a senior MI5 officer.

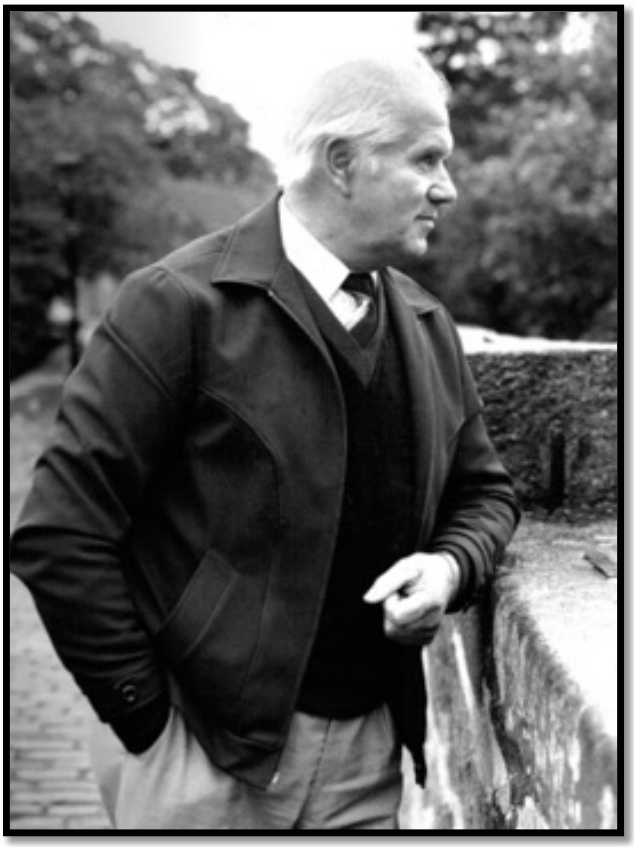


Thanks are due to Janette (Jan) Marshall for providing the photographs during Open Week

GORDON HIGGINSON

Another valuable donation was made by Vice-President Minister Judith Seaman, who gave the Britten Museum & Library two of Gordon Higginson's photograph albums. Gordon, the longest-serving President of the Union (1970-1993), gave Judith his two personal photograph albums shortly before his death in 1993.





These albums will be available in the Museum from mid-June 2017

Former Vice-President Minister Steven Upton told me he is donating Estelle Roberts' "Album of Red Cloud Pictures and Script in Skotographs by Madge Donohoe". This collection of original photographs contains many images of skotographs; these are images impressed on to photographic plates. This new process of photographic imagery was developed (no pun intended!) in the early 1890s by Andrew Glendinning, an early Scottish pioneer, who from 1864 to 1908 was involved in psychic photography. He gave the name "dorchagraph" to distinguish them from photographs – basically meaning "hidden images", an image on a photographic plate – but without a camera! Generally speaking, the medium would "magnetise" their materials – in other words, "permeate it with the psychic aura".



Later, these images would be better known as skotographs, a term proposed by Felicia Scatcherd – spirit writing, images or thought photography impressed on photographic plates in unopened packets, etc. One medium for this was Madge Donohoe, who produced the well-known image of Estelle Roberts' "Red Cloud" in 1932.

Dorchagraphs and skotographs will be featured in a later issue of Pioneer. Below is an image from the album of "Red Cloud Pictures and Script in Skotographs" by Madge Donohoe, dated 13th January 1934.



AUTOMATIC WRITING

Automatic writing is a vast subject spanning many decades and can take the reader in so many directions from the early days of Modern Spiritualism, for example in the 1870s independent/direct writing (slate writing, etc.).



"Pioneer" has previously noted that the editor and AFC tutor Janette Marshall visited the College of Psychic Studies, where we were given access to the papers of Stainton Moses (who used the pseudonym 'M.A. Oxon'), including numerous notebooks, which contained the material later edited and published in 'Spirit Teachings', 1883. This book is regarded by some as the Spiritualists' Bible; the communications were received by the process known as automatic or passive writing. Please see, for further details, Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 3, June 2016.



Other cases involve 'living communicators', i.e. from the mind of a *living person,* as was often the case with William T. Stead, who wrote messages from friends, with distance being no object; afterwards he verified the accuracy by referring to the transmitters. He noted in his "Borderland" (Vol. I, page 50) that he knew at least ten other automatic writers who received messages from living friends through "automatic telepathy".

Campbell Holms' "The Facts of Psychic Science" was originally published in 1925; below is taken from page 168:

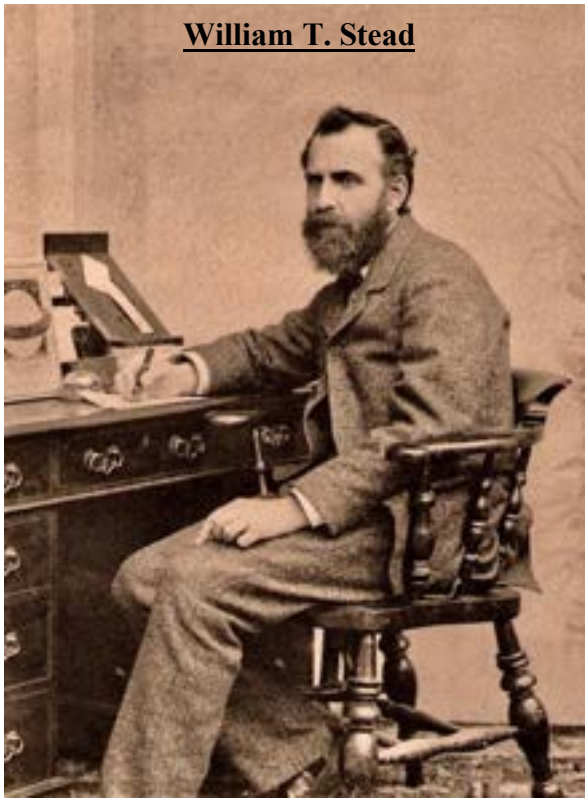
> In his address to the London Spiritual Alliance, in March, 1893,[1] Stead described some of the peculiarities of his automatic correspondence with living friends. He said that it was only possible with some, and that, while with some, 99 per cent. of their statements were accurate, with others there was a curious mixture of truth and error, falsities of the most unmeaning kind being given as facts (probably due to inopportune intervention of other controlling influences); in other cases the statements were entirely false. On one occasion, a friend wrote a statement through his hand which, although not true at the time, became true a few days later, and was thus in the nature of a premonition.

Holms quotes on the previous page a remarkable case from Stead's book, "After Death", published in 1909; Holms gives page 15 but not the edition:

> "A lady friend of mine, who can write with my hand at any distance with even more freedom than she can write with her own, had been spending the week-end at Haslemere, a village about thirty miles from London. She had promised to lunch with me on Wednesday if she returned to town. Late on Monday I wished to know if she had left the country, and placing my pen on the paper I mentally asked if she had returned to London.

[1] Published in Light, 1893, pp. 133, 143.

My hand wrote as follows: –


William T. Stead

'I am very sorry to tell you I have had a very painful experience, of which I am almost ashamed to speak. I left Haslemere at 2.27 p.m. in a second-class carriage, in which there were two ladies and one gentleman. When the train stopped at Godalming, the ladies got out, and I was left alone with the man. After the train started he left his seat and came close to me. I was alarmed, and repelled him. He refused to go away, and tried to kiss me. I was furious. We had a struggle. I seized his umbrella and struck him, but it broke, and I was beginning to fear that he would master me, when the train began to slow up before arriving at Guildford Station. He got frightened, let go of me, and before the train reached the platform he jumped out and ran away. I was very much upset. But I have the umbrella.'

"I sent my secretary up with a note, saying merely I was very sorry to hear what had happened, and added, 'Be sure and bring the man's umbrella on Wednesday.' She wrote in reply, 'I am very sorry you know anything about it. I had made up my mind to tell nobody. I will bring the broken umbrella, but it was my umbrella, not his.'

"When she came to lunch on Wednesday, she confirmed the story in every particular, and produced the broken umbrella, which was hers, and not his. How that mistake occurred in the transmission of the message I do not know. . . . I may say that I had no idea as to the train she was travelling by, and had not the slightest suspicion that she had experienced so awkward an adventure.

"I may say that since then, for a period of fifteen years, I have been, and am still, in the habit of receiving similar automatic messages from many of my friends. In some the percentage of error is larger, but as a rule, the messages are astonishingly correct. This system of automatic telepathy from friends who are still in their bodies and who are in sympathy with me is for me as well established as the existence of electric telegraphy, or any other fact capable of verification every day."

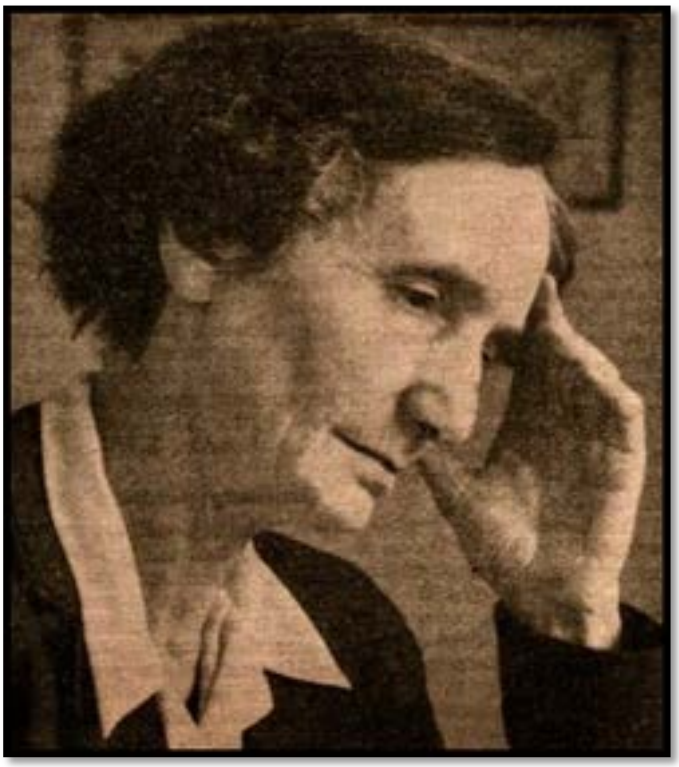
Hester Dowden (1868-1949) became Mrs Hester Travers Smith but after her divorce she reverted to her original name. Although today she is little known this was not the case during her time as a medium. She commonly used a ouija board.[2]

One name that is still well-known today in automatic writing is Geraldine Dorothy Cummins. It can be noted in the short profile below by Philip Paul, published in the "Two Worlds", November 19th 1955, page 7, that her technique does not conform to the more general understanding of automatic writing (produced by involuntary movement of the writing hand),

[2] Please see Psypioneer, Vol. 9, No. 3, March 2013: A review of *Voices in the Void* by Hester (Dowden) Travers Smith by Maxine Meilleur.
Vol. 9, No. 4, April 2013: From Home Shores to Far Horizons: Hester Dowden as a Child – Wendy Cousins.

as the interview states, “Geraldine hears each word clairaudiently and puts it on to paper through the normal processes of penmanship.”

Incidentally, the photograph of Geraldine Cummins (1890-1969) was taken by the infra-red séance photographer Leon Isaacs, who was featured in Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 1, February 2017.



The moving finger writes; and, having writ.
Moves on: nor all your piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line.
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.

So, nearly a thousand years ago, wrote Omar Khayyam. His words have echoed through the ages, finding a poignant place in the hearts of succeeding generations of men.

The immortal lines come again to mind in relation to the life and work of a small pale, brown-eyed Irishwoman whose inscribing fingers have moved through 40 years of human history, writing she believes, at the dictation of men who have gone on beyond the realms of the flesh ….

Grim seance warning

Geraldine Cummins was one of 11 children borne by the wife of a professor of medicine at Cork University. In due time, bent on a literary career, she left home for Dublin where, writing plays for the Abbey Theatre, she lived in the home of a Spiritualist, Hester Dowden.

Despite this close contact with the movement, her first participation in a seance did not take place until June, 1914. At that time, she and her hostess were holidaying in Paris. Sitting at her Ouija board, Mrs. Dowden received a grim forewarning of great bloodshed and horror to come.

Talking it over, they decided there must have been some mistake. How could bloodshed and horror overtake the gaiety of the carefree Europe of that time? The answer came within weeks.

From that time on, Geraldine made a close study of the art of automatism in the production of scripts. Her well-known “Scripts of Cleophas” was the first major work she produced by those means. Her recently-published “Fate of Colonel Fawcett” is her 17th book, of which 14 have a psychic content. Her latest work, “Mind in Life and Death,” aimed at providing evidence of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s survival is to be published shortly.

Famous sitters

She has always tried to maintain an attitude of objectivity and analysis towards her work, and thinks of herself as a psychic researcher rather than a Spiritualist. She gave sittings for Sir Oliver Lodge, had discussions with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and sat for Lord Gerald Balfour in 1939.

In 1923, she met Edith Beatrice Gibbes, an enthusiastic researcher who guided and watched over her work until her death in 1951. The two spent many hours together during Geraldine's writings. Miss Gibbes placing fresh foolscap sheets beneath the moving hand as the close-packed, linked words covered the pages. Normally a slow writer, Geraldine has, in her automatism, produced as many as 1,750 words in an hour – and not a word needed correction.

Conscious, but –

Her technique does not conform to the normal rules of automatic writing. The scripts are not, as is usual, produced by involuntary movement of the writing hand. Geraldine hears each word clairaudiently and puts it on to paper through the normal processes of penmanship. She is fully conscious during her seances, but nonetheless "never quite knows" what is going on.

Slow in speech and deep of voice, she found no difficulty in answering a question inquiring whether she had ever received personal evidence or advice through her mediumship. "I always make it a rule never to seek advice for myself. I think that would be wrong and I mustn't use it in that way. I think the reason people get into trouble when getting communications is that they try to get advice for themselves."

She did, however, recall a remarkable dream-experience. In 1932, she said, she had an actress friend in London. Following an operation, Geraldine went to Ireland for convalescence, leaving her actress friend in good health and spirits.

Scar as test

During a dream, the actress appeared to her, saying, "I am very well and happy." Geraldine had time to notice an unfamiliar scar on her friend's forehead.

Remembering the experience next day, Geraldine wrote to Miss Gibbes in London, giving the details. Upon inquiring, Miss Gibbes discovered that the actress had died during an operation. The scar on her forehead had been revealed during her hospital treatment. Normally, she wore her hair style which covered it.

Geraldine confessed to "an open mind about guides. They may be secondary personalities acting as guides. I leave it to others to form a verdict."[3]

But she is satisfied about the importance of her self-chosen path. "It is wonderful to be able to help people who have been shattered by bereavement. In three cases my work has prevented people from committing suicide."

[3] Numerous well-known mediums such as Eileen Garrett (well-known for her mediumship after the R101 airship disaster in 1930) held similar open-minded views on guides: she maintained during her lifetime her firm belief that her spirit guides/controls (Uvani, Abdul Latif, Tahotah and Ramah) were different aspects of her deeper self. She was not convinced that her mediumship stemmed from separate, discarnate entities. See Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 1, February 2016.

There was an occasion when she received a communication signed "F. W. H. Myers." In it, there was a remark to the effect that he was unable to make contact as strongly as he might because he was trying to speak elsewhere at the same time. Later, Geraldine learned that, at the very moment of receipt of this communication, a communicator announcing himself as "F. W. H. Myers" was talking to Miss Gibbes through Gladys Osborne Leonard!

Oliver Lodge's joke

She remembers Lodge as "a critical mind. He arrived at his conclusions after long deliberation. I was much impressed by what I would call the massive intellect. One day, when he was having tea with me, he said, 'There are two antiquities at Salisbury – Stonehenge and myself.' "

Quite properly, the conversation passed to posthumous tests. Again Geraldine was in no doubt about her opinion. "I think sealed letters are valueless as evidence of Survival, because 'authorities' say that any medium who succeeds in getting the contents proves his success in clairvoyance but does not establish Survival."

Nevertheless, "I have had evidence which leads me to believe that the whole mind goes on after death."

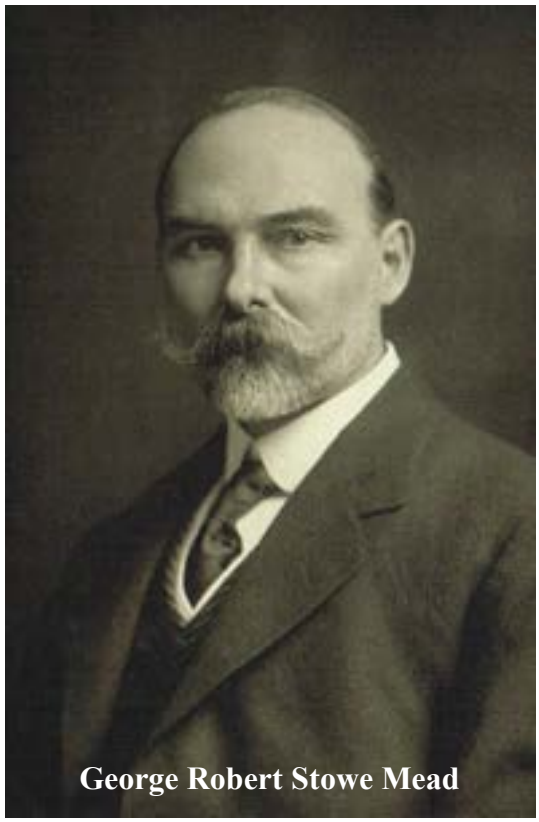
Nowadays, Geraldine's time is divided between her family home in Cork and the Chelsea house bequeathed to her by Miss Gibbes. Thus, living amid London's literati is a woman who has penned millions of words to the simple but tremendously significant testimony, "There is no death."

—~—☼—~—

Below was published in "Light", November 24th 1933, page 474, and gives us some insight as to how the Cummins scripts were formulated – showing the close working relationship between Cummins and Miss Gibbes.

The alleged communicator is G.R.S. Mead (1863-1933), a respected senior member of the London Spiritualist Alliance. In 1884 he joined the Theosophical Society and worked closely, amongst others, with Mme Blavatsky.

Later he was editor of a high-quality journal, "The Quest", and its associated Quest Society; the Quest ceased publication in 1930.[4]



George Robert Stowe Mead

[4] For further details see Psypioneer, Vol. 11, No. 3, March 2015.

AN UNEXPECTED MESSAGE

IN THE WHIMSICAL STYLE OF G. R. S. MEAD

SEVERAL communications appear to have been received lately in various quarters from or in connection with our departed friend "G.R.S.M."

From Miss E. B. Gibbes we have received one which is so highly characteristic that we give an extract from it. Miss Gibbes, in a prefatory note, says: "After a lapse of four and a half months, during which Miss Cummins was in Ireland, we had a sitting (Sunday, October 15, 1933) just to see what would transpire. We had not anticipated a communication from the one who purported to write, neither had we thought of him or spoken of him that day. We had never even suggested that he might come to us."

Miss Gibbes's notes are as follows:

A message from Astor, the guide, indicated the presence of "two rather aggressive souls" and then the writing changed to a small hand, each word being separated:—

De mortuis nihil nisi bonum. G. R. S. Mead. Do you know me? Yes, of course. I have forced my way in, because, though you often discussed an invitation with me, the invitation never came. I want to get in my little say before you kick me out for good.

I am ready now to accept David Gow's suggestion of two years ago, that I occupy the Editor's chair in the offices of LIGHT. I feel fully qualified for such a task and they can none of them get at me and plague the life out of me. Ask Lethem if I may act as supernatural editor, and tell him to reserve at least a page for my gossip notes about the famous departed. For instance, the "Old Lady," (God bless her soul!), and Annie Besant are making rings round each other. They are making a Theosophical Inferno which would defy the pen of Dante to describe. The Old Lady feels that Annie has wrecked the nice bit of work she left behind her on earth. The girls can't be separated. They meet and give each other a wigging twice nightly while all Paradise looks on. [Laughter from E.B.G.]

It is no joke for me I can tell you. I am their reference book. They appeal to me for dates and descriptions of old rows and I'd damn them both, only for my affection for the "Old Lady."

Look here, you two, I have found Heaven and Hell out and metempsychosis too. All the Hereafter is in the rubbish-heap. I mean the kind manufactured by the Christians, the Buddhists and the whole bang lot of the high-toned souls who have special communications from the Almighty.

E.B.G.: Have you met M—?[5]

Yes, I went up to him and said, "Hullo, old chap, we are both on the same lines, trying to find the truth. So we're out against all the peddling clergymen, priests and Masters." He was rather chilly about it, but I have no doubt he will warm to me when he gets to know me. Anyhow, you two girls had better take down a book from me now. I can tell you a great deal that M—omitted.[6]

[5] Leslie Price notes: I take this to be Myers – Mrs Myers was very touchy about his name being mentioned in communications.

[6] Leslie Price notes: Geraldine wrote two books automatically from Myers, "The Road to Immortality" and "Beyond Human Personality".

He is too far off from the earth to understand that he must be practical and write in film lingo if he is to interest people. My book will be full of slang—if you will take me on.

E.B.G.: We shall have to see. But, as usual, Geraldine has much work to do and is very much engaged. Also she has not much power to do a lot of psychic work at present.

Title: "Fragments of a Heaven and Hell Forgotten."

E.B.G. Excellent.

Most of you people have looked in here and then pulled down the window and have let the train carry you back to earth. . . . .

The message is in the whimsical manner of Mr. Mead, who sometimes ruffled his serious friends with his apparent irreverence. The "Old Lady" is, of course, Madame Blavatsky for whom he had always a warm regard. Those who knew him well will recall his impatience with doctrinal or scholastic ideas of the Hereafter—to him the next world was as human and as natural as this one.

Astor's reference to the "two rather aggressive souls" is explained by the fact that G.R.S.M., in the course of the message, alluded to a connection of Miss Gibbes's who had rather resented him pushing his way in.

As to the reference to "David Gow's suggestion," Mr. Gow remembers that about a year or two ago, he made, in a conversation with Mr. Mead, some humorous proposal of the kind mentioned.

It should be recalled that the title of the book which Mr. Mead proposed to communicate, is a play upon the title of a learned work which he wrote some years ago called *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*.

Readers who are familiar with the *Cleophas Scripts* and *The Road to Immortality* should note the contrast in the style of these communications. The whole message is in the racy manner of G.R.S.M. as we knew him.

—~—☼—~—



Geraldine Dorothy Cummins

As noted, Miss E. Gibbes passed suddenly in 1951 and the tribute below was published in "Psychic News", January 5th 1952, page 5.

Sudden Passing of Miss E. Gibbes



MISS E. B. GIBBES, WHO FOR SO LONG HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE WORK OF MISS GERALDINE CUMMINS, THE AUTOMATIC-WRITING MEDIUM, HAS PASSED TO THE NEXT LIFE.

Death occurred at her Chelsea home a few days before Christmas. She was 71.

Miss Gibbes, who is chiefly known to Spiritualists for the great assistance she has given Miss Cummins in the compilation of her scripts into book form, was a woman of considerable ability and wide interests.

She could, if she had chosen, have made a fine career for herself as a singer, for she had a rich voice and had studied and trained in both New York and Paris.

TWICE ROUND WORLD

A widely travelled person, she had twice encircled the globe, and was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society.

Her interest in psychic things had its roots in a fatal traffic accident which occurred in 1919. She lost a young friend, a married woman who left two children.

She worried about what would become of the kiddies and eventually went to visit her sister-in-law, Mrs. M. G. Gibbes, whom she knew to be interested in survival and communication, with the hope that she might contact the dead mother for advice.

Mrs. Gibbes, whose father, Mr. George Matthey was, incidentally, a scientific colleague of Sir William Crookes, advised her to contact Mrs. de Crespigny. She in turn introduced her to Mrs. Gladys Osborne Leonard.

Amongst such illustrious company Miss Gibbes had a flying start in psychic research. Her interest aroused she visited the London Spiritualist Alliance where she had sittings with Eileen Garrett.

Later she became a member, and ultimately graduated to the Council. She also became a member of the Society for Psychical Research.

LONG FRIENDSHIP

Some four years after her first contact with Spiritualism she met Miss Geraldine Cummins, who at that time was making a few moderate but unpretentious experiments with automatic writing.

Miss Gibbes quickly saw the great ability of Miss Cummins and there commenced the close friendship which lasted until her death nearly 30 years later.

At nearly all of the seances which Miss Cummins conducted and which have produced such remarkable works as the Cleophas scripts Miss Gibbes was at her side replacing writing paper as the entranced medium covered the sheets with rapid strokes of the pen.[7]

She did an astonishing amount of work in this field for after the sitting she would annotate the manuscripts, file them and even write articles about them, many of which were published in the "Journal" of the S.P.R., "Light" and *Psychic News.*

These articles drew voluminous correspondence all of which was dealt with by the faithful Miss Gibbes. A great deal of this was foreign correspondence and there is record that letters were received from no less than 29 different countries.

FINE INVESTIGATOR

Of her great friend, Miss Cummins has told *Psychic News*:

"She was a very fine investigator because she was so thorough. Every manuscript was kept with the notes appertaining to it.

"Mrs. Piper was supervised for several years but Miss Gibbes supervised my mediumship for 26 years. Except for the war years she kept me under observation the whole time and also kept the records.

"I could not have accomplished anything without her. She was the type of investigator who was really scientific. She gave her whole time to it; it was her great interest and her work in life."

LAST WORK

On December 18 Miss Gibbes completed the material from which "Reynolds News" printed their story this week, then she finished correcting the last few page proofs of "Beyond Human Personality" – one of Miss Cummins' books which is being re-printed.

Rather symbolically, almost as though it marked the end of her life's work, she was seized with a sudden heart attack and collapsed. She died almost immediately.

Owing to the Christmas holidays the funeral, which was at Mortlake crematorium, did not take place until December 27. At her own desire it was quite private, only a few friends and relatives being present.

—~—☼—~—

[7] It can be noted that in the Cummins profile it is stated: "She is fully conscious during her seances, but nonetheless "never quite knows" what is going on." This possibly suggests a light trance or Cummins' development changed after her colleague's death.



Britten Memorial Museum & Library

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Scans will be available of some material.

All those intending to book should contact Paul first to make sure any specialised subject material is available

curator@snu.org.uk

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4 nights £285.00 all meals and accommodation
5 nights £300.00 all meals and accommodation
6 nights £335.00 all meals and accommodation
7 nights £360.00 all meals and accommodation

Alternatively, accommodation is available in the village; a list is available on request.

HAROLD VIGURS

Spiritualists' National Union President 1943-1948

He was an important civil servant who brought his expertise to bear within the Union, particularly during the problems of Helen Duncan's trial.

He was well-known for his exposition of the Seven Principles.

Below is taken from the "Two Worlds", March 24th 1956, page 7:



TRYING to persuade him to talk about himself becomes a kind of biographical strip-tease. He peels the facts off one by one, only in answer to questions and then with obvious reluctance. But his is one of the outstanding stories of modern Spiritualism.

The elder of two sons, Alfred Harold Leonard Vigurs comes of Celtic forbears. He was born in Portsmouth, where his father was in business. His mother was "naturally psychic. She used to see her father after he had passed."

Harold evidently inherited some of his mother's sixth sense. His clairvoyant experiences often terrified him. At two o'clock one morning, he awoke to see an erect figure standing at the foot of my bed. It was radiantly luminous—so much so that it paled the moonlight shining into the room.

Vision fulfils wish

"Then I saw the figures of four children on each side of my bed, kneeling in prayer. They appeared solid, blocking out the furniture and wallpaper behind them. The message they gave me was: 'You have had your vision. Now always remember that you are a child of many prayers.'"

At that time he was a member of a Baptist church. The minister had been preaching about seeing visions and dreaming dreams. Harold, then 14, had thought that he would like such an experience. The vision, he believes, was the answer to his wish. But there was a strange sequel.

Just before his mother passed, she told him of her conversation with the Baptist minister. "He told me I should be a very proud mother," she confided. "He said you are a child of many prayers."

He wanted to know

Then, as now, Harold had an inquiring mind. He wanted to know more of the how and why of these strange occurrences. Studying science and mathematics at Portsmouth College, he was delighted to discover, in the library, some copies of the "Proceedings"

of the Society for Psychical Research. Thereafter, much of his time was spent in poring over their pages.

Having left school, he entered the legal branch of the Inland Revenue—the profession he has retained throughout his business career. He is due to retire in August. The black clouds of the first world war gathered and, 12 months after joining his office, he was in the army.

His ideas concerning military activity were quite clear—"In l9l4 I belonged to the old school and thought that war was very stupid. Then I realised I had to take my own share in it." A ranker, he found the army "one of the finest universities in the world. Rubbing shoulders with human nature made up for a Victorian type of education."

Prompting proved right

He was sent to France in 1917, then on to Belgium. Serving with a unit of assault troops, he went through the bitter fighting of Passchendaele. During the advance, he dropped into a shell-hole to rest and consolidate his position. He made himself a seat and sat down, but was at once prompted to move.

Sitting in another position in the hole, he was joined a quarter of an hour later by a comrade who seated himself in Harold's old place. He laughed away Harold's pleadings that he should not remain there. A few minutes later, he was struck in the arm by a piece of shrapnel from a shell-burst.

Harold cut away his uniform and dressed the wound which though not unduly serious, resulted in the man being sent back to England for treatment. Harold followed him on Christmas Eve, 1917, ill with fever contracted through the hardships of the battlefield. Eight months' hospital treatment and convalescence were needed to restore him to normal.

After the war, he became a Rationalist. Then he attended a number of physical seances, during which he was able to see many examples of materialisation and levitation in good red light. Next, he contacted a medium living near his Croydon home. A series of experiments, conducted under "purely domestic circumstances" followed.

"Among the results achieved, an object in a sealed box was shifted a distance of three miles. The seals remained untouched." Others among his outstanding memories of this period are recollections of the impressive phenomena he witnessed at seances given by the physical medium, Lynn.

Held high office

Harold has always had a great interest in music. Through this hobby he met his attractive, intelligent wife. They married in 1926.

His service to the Movement came when he was elected to represent Croydon on the district council of the Spiritualists' National Union. Soon, he was serving on the executive. Then he was elected to vice-presidency. He occupied the presidential chair during the difficult years 1943-48.

He looks back upon many years of rich experience in physical seance rooms up and down the country. Etta Wriedt, Murphy Lydy, Arthur Ford, William Hope, Helen Duncan and Mary McCallum are some that he names as the rocks upon which his convictions are founded.

It is not well known that photography is among his hobbies, nor that he is something of an expert in that field. Thus, his views upon Hope's famous photographic mediumship are of value. "I was entirely convinced of his genuineness."

In this light, it was not surprising that the conversation should turn to Hope's "exposer"—Harry Price. "Yes," said Harold. "he gave a lecture to the SNU once. Afterwards, he told me, 'Of course I'm a Spiritualist. but I don't publish it because then people wouldn't read my books."

Rich in oratory

Shrewd and stolid, the cherubic Harold views the world acutely through his keen, hazel-coloured eyes and makes few gratuitous comments. But when he consents to mount a platform any journey is worth the travelling in order to hear his words. Spiritualism is not rich in orators. Harold Vigurs is rich in oratory and in Spiritualism.

He is satisfied that liquids and salads form a diet "conducive to the unfoldment of psychic faculty." He is convinced of the reality of astral travel, remembers "once, when I was in hospital, I visited a meeting by projection and tried to control a person there. Unfortunately, all I could get were small physical reactions."

He has found his personal answers to two basic Spiritualist controversies: "As you get older you come to accept reincarnation and karma."

Met in sleep-state

Once, when he entered a shop in Drury Lane to buy some hinges, the shopkeeper, a total stranger, greeted him with the words: "I have been waiting for you for three weeks! I want to talk to you about music in the after life!" "It appeared," Harold recalls, "that we had met in the sleep-state."

Virtually all his leisure is spent in psychics. "I take most things in my stride," he says, "but the road winds uphill all the time."

Yet he is always ready for more. He looks forward to the greater freedom which will follow upon his forthcoming retirement from Her Majesty's Service as an opportunity to "give more time to the Movement, to do some writing and to do some work on healing."

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Alfred Harold Leonard Vigurs was known as Harold Vigurs. He was closely associated with Croydon National Spiritualist Church and was the church's president from 1957 until Harold's passing in 1970. Croydon church is featured in "Pioneer", Vol. 3, No. 3, June 2016.

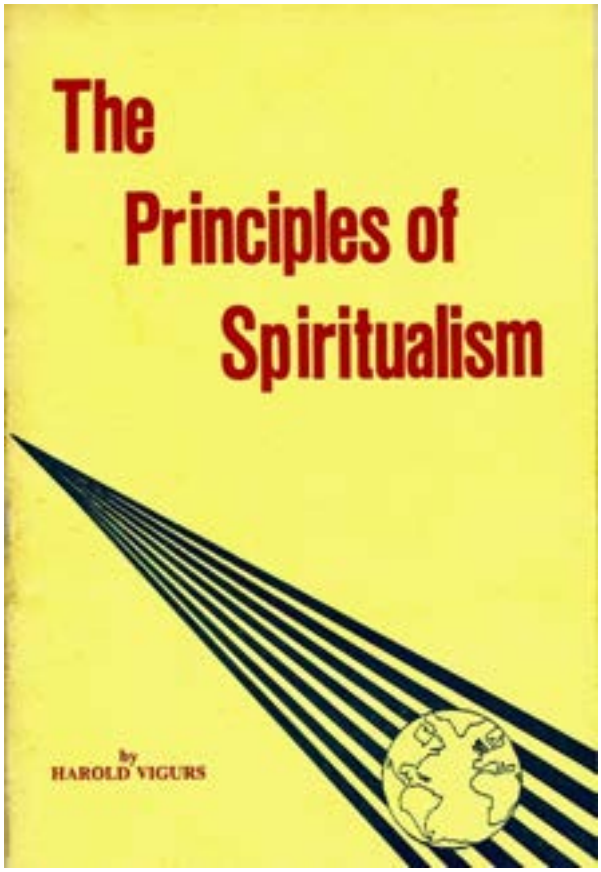
In the 1950s Harold Vigurs was chairman of the "Fourteen Group", which consisted of a group of leading Spiritualists who met monthly to discuss the various aspects of Spiritualism. All were chosen for their personal contribution to the Spiritualist movement, not as representatives of any of the organisations. The group included Brigadier Roy Firebrace, Lord and Lady Hugh Dowding, Maurice Barbanell, Ralph Rossiter, Gladys Osborne Leonard, Meurig Morris, Ivan Cooke and Harry Edwards.

Each member produced a paper on the subject under discussion; these were then considered and discussed over several meetings and on reaching agreement were published in various publications. These all now seem to be unobtainable; some titles included "The process of spiritual healing" and "Spirit healing and its implications: a spiritualist symposium", by Edwards, Cooke and Vigurs, Fourteen Group 1958 and circa 1959 respectively, and "Spirit

communication and the mind of the medium, the sitter, the communicator: a Spiritualist symposium", by Fourteen Group 1958.[8]

The above information regarding the "Fourteen Group" is taken from Vigurs' "The Principles of Spiritualism", first published in 1984 by the Headquarters Publishing Co. Ltd, London. Later in 1996 it was republished by SNU Publications, Stansted. The first publication on the Union's Seven Principles was by the SNU General Secretary Hanson G. Hey shortly after the Spiritualists' National Federation was reconstituted in 1901, when National Federation President William Johnson added the Seven Principles; for further information please see "Pioneer", Vol. 3, No. 1, February 2016, "National Federation to National Union".

It is unknown when Vigurs wrote "The Principles of Spiritualism"; Harold had given the manuscript to his long-standing friend Connie Ransom around 1960 but the MS became mislaid. Vigurs wrote in the Author's Preface:



Do we always fully realise what we are letting ourselves in for when we pledge acceptance of Spiritualism's basic principles? I know I didn't, at least at first. Understanding came later when, mulling over my boyhood knowledge of the Apostles and Nicene creeds, I recalled how I used to "rattle them off" without having the slightest idea of what I was professing, even after declarations of acceptance at confirmation ceremonies. So I began to examine the basic principles in detail and in depth, first each in turn then collectively as a unified whole, and I was amazed at the spiritual importance of the information presented by them for consideration, which had hitherto escaped me.

But first of all, what is a principle? The dictionary definition is "a fundamental truth on which others are founded, or from which they spring", whilst another definition, based on Spiritualist philosophy, is a "teaching which everyone knows or can believe to be true, although different opinions can be held about its lesson". In other words, freedom of interpretation, which is the crux of the matter.

This aspect is unique to Spiritualism. Consider the strict adherence to, and unquestioning acceptance of, creeds and dogmas demanded by other religious groups and sects throughout the ages—and even up to the present day—which have resulted in persecution, massacres and wars, together with causing untold suffering to mankind, so that, in comparison, we can be extremely grateful to our spirit-world inspirers, who make no such claims upon us. On the contrary, their love, wisdom and understanding is expressed in the fundamental teachings imparted through the mediumship of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, and on which on what is now the National Union of Spiritualists are based, formulated and adopted as basic principles.

[8] The only surviving copies I am aware of are at the College of Psychic Studies, which holds fourteen copies.

These are:

1 The Fatherhood of God
2 The Brotherhood of Man
3 The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels
4 The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul
5 Personal responsibility
6 Compensation and Retribution hereafter, for all good or evil done on earth
7 Eternal Progress open to every Human Soul

Careful examination revealed to me a glorious promise of mankind's spiritual destiny and of the spiritual goals possible of attainment by all who earnestly desire to make progress and are prepared to persevere in striving for it. And it was not long before I reached the following conclusions:

The first and second principles are statements of out ideal of God, and of our consequent human relationships; the third and fourth declare our discovery that conscious personality survives so-called physical death, and that we are able to communicate and commune with discarnate human spirits, who have imparted knowledge of afterlife conditions; the promise and the warning of the fifth and sixth are a summary of spirit teachings regarding our spiritual nature and our freedom to choose our mode of life, with the grand objective towards which we should all aim, and at which nobody but ourselves prevent its realisation.

Let us now examine each principle by itself and conclude by trying to summarise our understanding of the task. From there each of us will be in a position to continue the search for a deeper and wider comprehension of the Universal Plan and the part each of us must play in bringing about its realisation.

SNU AGM 70 YEARS AGO

Harold Vigurs was known as a fine orator; the following is a verbatim report of Vigurs' Presidential Address at the 1947 SNU Bournemouth Conference, as published in the "Two Worlds", July 18th 1947, pages 226-227 & 230.

Vigurs stresses a: *"Fatal Weakness of Spiritualist Churches – Warning to Spiritualist Leaders"*



INFLUENCE WANING IN SOME AREAS

A. H. L. VIGURS, IN HIS PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH AT THE BOURNEMOUTH S.N.U. CONFERENCE ON SATURDAY SOUNDED A CALL TO THE SPIRITUALIST CHURCHES AND SOCIETIES IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND, PARTICULARLY IN LANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE, WHOSE INFLUENCE HAS WANED OVER THE YEARS. ONCE THE STRONGHOLDS OF SPIRITUALISM, THESE AREAS ARE NOW IN DANGER OF BECOMING THE BACKWATERS.

HE URGED THAT YOUTH SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO TAKE CHARGE AND THAT OLD MEN AND WOMEN SHOULD NOT CLING TENACIOUSLY TO OFFICE.

VIGURS ALSO CRITICISED THOSE WHO "HANKER AFTER THE DOG COLLAR OF THE PRIEST AND COVET THE TITLE OF REVEREND." SPIRITUALISM, HE DECLARED, "SEEKS NO AUTHORITY, NO DRESS, NO TITLE."

THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF SPIRITUALISM

BUT S.N.U. IS NUMERICALLY STATIC!

FULL REPORT OF PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT S.N.U. ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

When we meet in Conference, it is pleasant to reflect upon the influence Spiritualism has exerted in nearly every department of human activity. We are a progressive movement, we are not tied to a static revelation in history; we are not governed in our ideas by the rulings of any Council; for leadership, we look solely to our friends in spirit. Our earnest endeavour is to let the dead past of our mental world bury its own dead and to keep the mind ever fresh from outworn ideas, that it might receive the impress of that larger vision which our spirit friends are ever anxious to give. With no small measure of satisfaction we have seen how, in modern religious thought, the message of Spiritualism has modified the former conception of heaven and hell, and how redemption has come to be regarded as the outcome of effort, made by the individual for his own salvation: our principle of personal responsibility has gained and is gaining wider and wider acceptance. We have made our contribution to political thought, and there is a growing recognition that man's physical requirements are not his only needs, and that he must have social conditions that will allow him to find and also to develop his spiritual nature if his larger happiness is our true objective.

Fundamental Ingredients of Society

In the realm of our social entertainments, this growing influence can also be seen, and to-day it is a commonplace to find a psychic theme portrayed on the stage or at the cinema. Spiritualism is more than news value; it has become a fundamental ingredient of our social structure. At moments such as these, we remember with gratitude, the constant and loyal efforts made by our spirit friends to correct errors in human thought, and where the channel is truly open, to give growing revelation. New thought always demands courage to meet the prejudice of outmoded convention and to-day we pay tribute to those pioneers who, faithful to their witness from spirit, scorned delights and endured contumely, that we might be able to meet as we do in public conference to-day. We have indeed good reason to be proud of the contribution we have made to human thought; but when we examine our organisation, we are forced to the conclusion that the influence of this great wave of reconstructive thought, has, in the main, passed us by, for our numbers in membership remain roughly the same. This progress in social evolution has not been accompanied by any substantial influx in our membership.

Not Progressing as we Should

As an organisation, indirectly we exercise considerable influence; numerically we are static; we are not causing people to wish to link up with us in active membership.

This is not healthy. Moreover we have evidences that not only are we not progressing as we should, but that in some areas we are even declining. What I regard as a major tragedy for our Movement has taken place during the last year. Unfortunately it is not a lone experience. One of our Churches, in an industrial town in the north, has been sold for commercial usage; the Church, as such, has gone out of existence. This Church was strongly linked with some of the founders of our Union. A group of early pioneers laboured well and eventually were able to secure a well built stone Church, close to the centre of one of our industrial towns. The Church was not vested in the Union, either in joint trust or sole trust. It was held by local trustees alone, and now those trustees have sold the building. They did not ask the National Council or the District Council concerned for help in running the Church or for advice as to selling. They acted on their own initiative and the matter first came to the notice of this Union when the sale had been effected.

Anaemic Condition of Membership

Subsequent enquiry shewed that the membership had dwindled to just about twelve, all of whom were over 60 years of age. The time came when the President was no longer able to carry on, and when he tendered his resignation, the Secretary also tendered his. The Trustees then found that none of the members of that Church were prepared to assume office; such was the apathy that existed in that Church. Some excuse can be found for those members, individually, because of their age, and the dilemma in which the Trustees found themselves can be understood. I still maintain however that it is a major tragedy for our Movement to think that one of our affiliated Churches can get into such a parlous state without an opportunity being afforded to the parent body to revive it. This tragedy however is one of the facts of our history and we can only minimise the loss as we faithfully and accurately diagnose the causes that led to this anaemic condition in membership and then take action to prevent the possibility of any recurrence of such condition. One has only to glance through the TWO WORLDS publications of about fifty years ago to appreciate how the prominence in our Movement, that then belonged to parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire, has now departed, and unless we take active steps now, even those areas which to-day seem so progressive may in their turn, become subject to this same apathy and retrogression.

Drained of Younger Members

Seven years is a long time in the history of a Church and during the last seven years most of our Churches have been drained of their younger members. When they return they will often come back to a new generation; a generation that knows not Joseph.

Moreover they themselves will have changed. In the Forces they will have made new contacts and probably have assumed new responsibilities, and when they return there will be a tendency to seek fresh outlets for communal activities that accord with the experiences gained whilst with the Forces. Sometimes I am afraid these fresh outlets do not fit in with the more mature atmosphere of some of our Churches. Any Church which has a membership of which the youngest is sixty is in a very bad way, and there is a very clear indication that real leadership in that Church has been stifled for many years. Our message is virile; it makes its appeal to the young, provided that younger mind is welcomed and encouraged to take its share in managing the affairs of the Church.

A Pointed Analogy

I was once talking to a friend who had a very brilliant record during the recent war. I will refer to him as Col. 'W.' I asked him what was the biggest lesson he had learnt whilst he was with the Army. "Actually" he said, "I did have a very big lesson; in fact the biggest I have ever had in this life." He explained to me that even before the war he had been drawn to the Army as a career. At Sandhurst, he just revelled in military studies. Apparently he had no time for theatres or pictures; he spent every available moment studying military matters. When it came to the examinations, he passed with flying colours. He was top and easily top of his year. His record attracted special notice. He mentioned these things to me just to shew me that all his interest was in soldiering; for the time being it represented all his life. During the war he gained very rapid promotion until he was in command of a Regiment. The time came when they were training for the landing to take place later on the beaches of Normandy. "I managed to get the Regiment to take on my enthusiasm," he told me. "I got them all on their toes. Soldiers do not mind discipline provided everything is clear cut and there is no muddle. They like things well organised and soon they entered into the very spirit of the training. I got really proud of them and I knew that they were better than any other Regiment in the Division. I welcomed inspections from Brigade. It did not matter whether it was a kit inspection or a particular exercise; whether we were informed or not; my men were really good."

Badly Trained

"One day I got a message asking me to report to the Brigadier the next morning at 11-30 a.m. and I expected the usual eulogies about the Regiment which I felt were fully earned. In due course I reported. 'Good morning W" said the Brigadier, 'Can you guess what I want to see your about.' I suppose it is about the Regiment, Sir,' I replied. 'Quite right, quite right,' and then imagine my surprise when he said, 'Col. W., I am very concerned about your Regiment. It is no earthly use to me. It is the worst in the whole Brigade if not the Division.' That was one straight between the eyes. All I could do was to falter lamely, 'But I thought Sir, that you were very pleased with our last exercise. .' 'Yes, Yes, I know. The training seemed excellent. Everything went off without a hitch; but I have no illusions. You see, W., when I asked the Orderly Officer certain questions, you were there and with your prompting, I got all the right answers. When I went out in the field and talked to one of your sergeants, you turned up and again I got all the right answers. And so it was wherever I went. You, Col. W., were always there. I know that you know your stuff thoroughly, but your Regiment is absolutely of no use to me. What do you think is going to happen when we get on the beaches if you get hurt and have to be sent back? With you there, I know all would be well, but without you all would be Hell. Your Regiment would be a damned nuisance. Nobody would know exactly what to do and I should have to draw them out of the line and replace them. No, Col. W., your regiment is very badly trained and I am going to send you away for a month. You will report tonight

at—for a course in—.' 'But Sir,' I interposed, intending to tell him that I had taken that course and that it would only be a waste of time. 'I know, I know, W, but you are going to take that course. Take your fishing rod as well. I don't care if you don't attend a single lecture; you have got to stay away from the Regiment for a full month. There is a train you can catch at — and I am sending you back by my chauffeur. He will wait while you pack your bag and then will run you to the station. He can then report to me whether you are safely on the train. Now go and have a well earned holiday and don't come back until I send for you'."

Fatal Weakness

"Well, orders is orders. I had that holiday and had some nice fishing. You know how dumb we used to think all 'Brass Hats' were. Well this old boy knew his stuff. He was right, absolutely right. When I thought the thing over, I had to admit that I had carried the Regiment. I did it all, and the old boy was right. I thought that I had impressed him, but he had seen through the whole game and spotted the fatal weakness. When the month was up, I received orders to report to the Brigadier. There was more than a twinkle in his eye when he told me that I should find the Regiment very much changed. 'Now, W., you are going to build up a new regiment, and it will be the finest in the Brigade.' As I was leaving, after giving me his best wishes in my new task, he added, 'Look here, W., a Commanding Officer is no good unless the Regiment can carry on just as well without him.' I found that Regiment in a very sorry mess. The discipline had gone to pot. Nothing undermines morale so much as muddle, countermanded orders, and arrangements improvised at the very last moment. The Regiment was just chaos and I had got to rebuild on sound lines."

Lesson for Spiritualism

What was required for D. Day, can give us seriously to think as far as our own planning arrangements are concerned. You and I are not efficient officers of our Churches of our District Councils or our National Council, unless those bodies can function just as well if we are unable to be present. Whether we preside or do secretarial work; whether we keep the accounts or run the library; whether we conduct a discussion group or run a developing circle; whether we give psychic readings for our church or diagnose in the healing circle; our constant aim must be to see that we train others so that, should we not be available, the work of the Church, or the Council will not be impaired. We are none of us so important that somebody else could not be trained to do the work as well.

Too often in the past, under the driving influence of a live President or Secretary, or the grateful enthusiasm of a generous medium, a Church has grown and exerted a strong influence in our Movement, and when that individual has been removed, that influence has waned. We are only successful in our leadership when the organisation can carry on as well whether we are present or not. If we are not always alert to pick out suitable material that we can and do train to deputise in our stead, we are failing in our responsibility to our spirit friends, and our service to our cause becomes mainly the expression of an egotistic urge rather than the unfoldment of a spiritual development through service. Only the mental desire body seeks expression of itself; even though that expression be the extolling of the wish to serve others. The spiritual urge is selfless and indeed prefers others, especially when worthy. The touchstone of true leadership is the unfoldment of the spiritual self, where the individual, as such, is lost in the whole, and where the whole individual effort is to enable the Church to carry on its ministry apart from any personality. As we value the Cause more than our individual contribution, so we progress until we, through our efforts, are enabled to stand aside and see the work we have done carried on—more ably, by younger hands we have trained. Truly we shall learn as Milton taught us: "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Our Duty is to Stand Aside

Rigidity in holding on to Office is one of our limitations and sources of weakness. Rigidity of outlook is another. We are apt to forget that each new generation is more than a generation ahead of us. Educational methods and facilities are far ahead of what they were in our youth, and each generation seeks its own expression of truth. What has served you and me, will no longer meet the needs of to-day; for youth to-day builds where you and I left off. That is the natural outcome of that progression that we extol so freely; which we see so readily in others but so rarely perceive when the crest of the advancing wave sweeps forward leaving us stranded in its wake. Our duty is to stand aside and allow the rising generation to express our Spiritualism in their own terms. Things that you and I value, have not the same value to youth, and we, in our leadership, must be big enough to stifle our own personal inclinations and to foster this new expression until it is strong enough to carry the main burden of our Church work. Ours should be the hands in reserve; ready to give support and to sustain, and only to direct if the emergency arises.

Relics of a Fading Tradition

With advancing years, we all tend to live more and more in the past; in the good old days; and sometimes prefer the forms and values of yesterday to the fearless thought and creative speculation which characterises the evolving spiritual life. So to-day, in certain quarters, we see a tendency amongst a few to value the shadow of yesterday more than the substance of to-day. They hanker after the dog collar of the priest and covet the title of Reverend. He who is borne of the spirit needs no ordination, for his life embraces spirit, and his service must needs manifest that ‘spirit. The dawn of our Spiritualism is chasing away the dark shadows of a materialist world and dispersing the mists of theological dogma. This dawn is putting the light of natural revelation in the heavens and is colouring with roseate hues, this physical world in which we live. This beauty is the outcome of natural law and not ordination. Let us preserve the healthy quest for greater knowledge of the laws of spirit, confident that that knowledge, dedicated in service to our brother man, needs no sanctification or ordination. The pathway of spirit never divides us from our brother man; the clerical robe and the title of Reverend are relics of a fading tradition which tend to keep us apart.

Man is a Spirit

I have been talking as though we are growing old in Spiritualism. Let us remember and take heart that there is no growing old in spirit. Spirit knows no age and is concerned solely with the progressive expansion of consciousness. Too often we hear that our mission is to prove by proper evidences, individual survival. This may be our immediate aim, but it is certainly not our ultimate objective. That objective is to bring home to man the consciousness that he is spirit. In the religious sense, we are experiencing the birth of a new age. Individual experiment has displaced authority based upon belief alone, and as our Churches meet this new approach, so will they not be abandoned to the languishing care of the over sixties. In this connection both our speakers and our sensitives need to modernise their technique. Proving of survival is not enough.

It is but the doorway to spiritual unfoldment. Study groups, good though they be, are still not enough; for they deal with mental questions but to propound further questionings. Man will not be happy, and at home in his Church, until his mental understanding is happily married to a spiritual discernment.

We need Fellowship

We are not so much in need of more service and better evidences of survival, good as these may be; we need opportunities when man can enjoy fellowship with his brother man. Fellowship of happy social intercourse in the every day walks of life. Fellowship in those

mental realms where his problems can be handled sympathetically and resolved. Fellowship in spiritual companionship, where as Spiritualists, more evolved through development, we can by volitional effort surround our brother man with those uplifting forces which are calculated to induce that inner peace which is beyond all price, and so pave the way for the awakening of the new spiritual consciousness of the individual.

Spiritualism must never be separated from living; it must always be fuller and better living. It must permeate the workshop and the home alike and never be divorced from the practical problems of both. It seeks no authority, no dress, no titles; it seeks but to serve ordinary men and women in their home life. It helps the individual to distil the lesson from experience and with that greater wisdom which belongs to spirit, encourages the young and virile mental life to a fuller opportunity. Ever such is the mission of our spirit friends; theirs to co-operate with us in spiritual experiment, ours through experiment to grow in spiritual understanding.



Alfred Harold Leonard Vigurs – Died 1970
SNU President 1943-1948

Psychic Photography

With the various displays of psychic photography in the Britten Museum at the Arthur Findlay College questions often arise – how do we know the images are genuine? Of course, "We do not know" is my reply – it's more of a case of personal judgement. Mostly the photographs have no information with them, so generally we know nothing of the conditions under which they were taken or, indeed, whether or not the recipient recognised the extra as a family member or a friend, etc. In some cases even the photographer is unknown, although we have some we can identify as William Hope, John Myers, etc.

In the heyday of psychic extras extortionate methods were used to trick the sitter and researcher; psychic photography could be big business for the faker. Spiritualists and the Spiritualist press would often be the *first* to expose the fake medium. Many of our pioneers were expert in photographic techniques used by genuine and fake mediums. Our former President John B. McIndoe (1930-1938) was an expert in psychic photography, who brought to task a well-known psychic photographer. To help to prevent fraud a good knowledge of deception was most helpful, so appropriate test sittings could be developed to ensure genuine photographic mediumship was protected.

The British College of Psychic Science, founded by James Hewat McKenzie in 1920, undertook a lot of important research into various aspects of phenomena, especially in psychic photography; for further details of the BCPS please see Psypioneer, for example Vol. 3, No. 8, August 2007: "A Knight Errant of Psychic Science: James Hewat McKenzie".

On June 26th 1935 Mr. C.P. MacCarthy gave a lecture to the "British College of Psychic Science" and a précis of the lecture was published in its Quarterly Transactions of the BCPS, Vol. XIV, No. 3, October 1935, pages 154-159:

DECEPTION IN PSYCHIC PHOTOGRAPHY

NOTE. —This lecture on this subject was so good and exhaustive that I feel some difficulty in making a précis of it. To be complete it should contain all the plates he showed. I must be content with ten of the leading phenomena. —EDITOR.[9]

The lecture was in three stages: (I) Mr. MacCarthy showed four photographs which he definitely believes genuine psychic productions, and explained how and why he considers them genuine; (2) methods of faking; and (3) how he "was fortunate enough to be able to thoroughly bamboozle a Committee in Sheffield, members of the Sheffield S.P.R."

METHOD OF FAKING

This was the main purpose of the lecture.

I. A slide was shown with "Mumler I862. U.S.A." written across it. This was produced by the lecturer writing on the negative with a stick dipped in hyposulphite of soda, producing a clear impression on the negative plate.

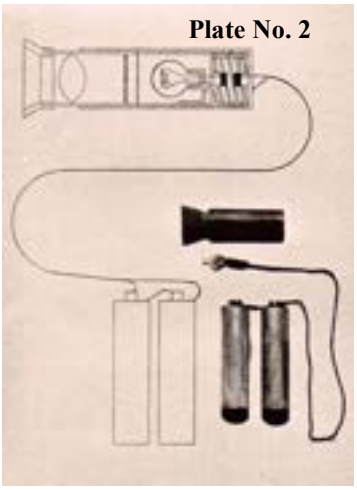
2. Another slide showed "Kate Fox" written on the wallpaper with sulphate of quinine in dilute sulphuric acid, which forms an invisible fluorescent impression, and reappears on the plate exposed.

[9] Stanley DeBrath.

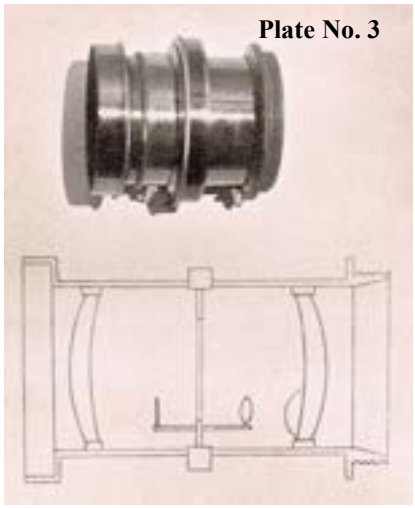
3. Plate No. I is a double exposure. The occupant of the rather obvious white sheet is Mr. MacCarthy himself. Obviously he must have had previous possession of the plate, and very various "extras" could be impressed by this means.


Plate No. I

4. A fourth slide was shown with Miss Gracie Fields as an "extra." This was taken with an American "pusher" instrument, Plate 2. It is an indiarubber tipped metal cylinder which is small enough to be concealed in the hand, and contains a very small positive film of Gracie Fields and a "pea-bulb" light connected to an electric battery. When the pusher is pressed on the plate before development it automatically lights the bulb. The miniature portrait is focussed on the plate. A quarter-second exposure is sufficient.


Plate No. 2

5. Here is another American method which shows the demand existing in the States for fake instruments. Plate 3 shows a "fake-lens." An ordinary lens, it appears to the superficial observer, but it contains a pivot on which swings a small lens and a miniature portrait (of Greta Garbo in this case). The light that takes the sitter's photograph goes through the front lens, but also through the small concealed lens and projects the miniature portrait on to the plate.


Plate No. 3

The ectoplasm in this case is not very good—but it is not meant to be good—I am showing fake photographs and wish them to look like fakes at the moment.

"ECTOPLASM"


Plate No. 4

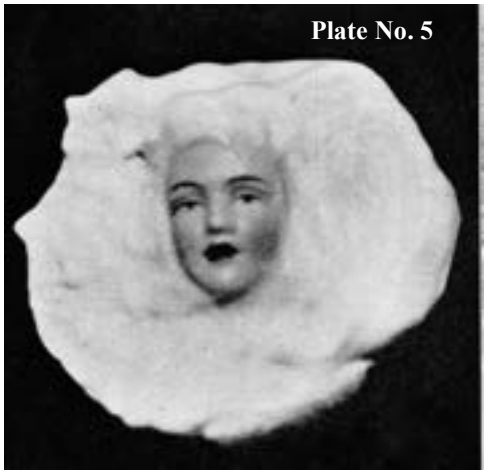
Psychic "extras" have usually some "ectoplasm" around them, and here are some methods of getting good results.

Plate 4. Cotton wool makes a fairly good "ectoplasm," but it is given away by the little hairs at the edges. True ectoplasm resembles cotton-wool, but it has no hairs, it fades into nothingness.

Slide.—This is cheese-cloth. The lecturer said that he was endeavouring to imitate Hope's results but could find nothing quite satisfactory.

Slide.—This is white clay. It is too stiff, but might be handled so as to look convincing. There are of course no hairs.

Plate 5. This is one of the best, though somewhat waxy. It is made with palm-olive shaving soap. The face is a china doll.


Plate No. 5

The Lecturer said:

"I have now shown you some photographs which I believe to be genuine. I have shown you some interesting methods of faking. They have all got one drawback—you have either to provide your own camera, your own plates, or to manipulate the plates. You have to prepare the room. The sitter possibly wants 'test conditions.' I have deliberately not mentioned the method by sleight-of-hand substitution. I leave changing the plate and such-like methods aside. I am interested only in scientific procedure. After studying the subject, I realized that there is a way of putting 'psychic extras' on plates under 'test conditions' stricter than are usually asked, or have been asked, of any medium."

Plate 6. "I therefore wrote the letter of which Plate 6 is a copy [published at the end of the article].

"The Sheffield S.P.R. accordingly selected a Committee, composed of Mr. C. L. MacCarthy, my father, Vice-President of the S.S.P.R., a Spiritualist who is also a Vice-President of the S.S.P.R., who had thirty years of experience of psychical research; a Rector (M.A. Cantab), who is interested in the subject; a professional photographer; and a lady who had experience in psychic photography."

The declared object was:

I. To prove the possibility of fake under 'test conditions.'

2. To show that one can't be too critical of such phenomena.

3. To indicate the increasing scope for fraud with the advancement of science, though not to disprove the possibility of genuine psychic photography.


Plate No. 7

The plates were bought by the Committee and sealed at the shop; the camera was hired from stock. The test was held in the house of a member of the Committee. Mr. MacCarthy was searched, took off his coat and put on a sweater without pockets, and was handcuffed with police handcuffs. Plate 7 shows him in this condition. The Committee decided to take the photographs one at a time, develop, and load for the next.

The lady (*slide*) was given precedence. An elderly woman was to be put over her right shoulder. This was a failure.

Mr. C. P. MacMCarthy's father came next. Mr. C. P. MacCarthy said, "I suggest you give me somebody I don't know and have never met." Some conversation ensued, and I knew that he was deeply interested in a subaltern who had been killed at Gallipoli. I led him to name that man. *Plate* 8, which he recognized.

The next to sit was the Spiritualist. I said, "I am going to put the face of an elderly woman with grey hair and an oval face over your shoulder." *Slide*.


Plate No. 8

Then followed the Rector. "I said to him that above his head I would put the face of a man about 35, with a pear-shaped face and a drooping moustache. He said immediately, "If you can, I think I can recognise it." *Slide*. I have got it in writing that this is his uncle, who has been many years dead. Ben Tillett was chosen because of his family likeness to the Rector." *Plate* 9.


Plate No. 9

The professional photographer was the next. After a proof that the plates were blank. I said to him, "I am going to give you a very special demonstration. We will all go downstairs, and bring the plate with you." So we trooped downstairs, and I said, "This is going to be the main feature of the programme. Will somebody name a book that everyone should know?" The Bible was suggested. I opened it at the Acts, chapter 17, verse 26. I said, "Somebody give me a really difficult language." After some conversation, Chinese was proposed. *Plate* 10. It was shown to a Chinese laundryman who read it—"All men are of the same blood like you and I." It was also referred to a Chinese missionary who gave the same answer, and quoted the reference.

THE EXPLANATION

Mr. MacCarthy gave no diagram of the instrument he used, for the reason that he does not wish to help fakers.

Briefly it is a small brass instrument about the size of the index finger, somewhat on the lines of the "pusher" described in *Plate* 2, but with a simple arrangement for inserting a miniature previously prepared, and a means for sending a ray of invisible ultra-violet light through it. The focal length of the lens is about 18 inches.

Mr. MacCarthy had not this instrument on him when he was searched, but he had put it where it was easily accessible, and the decision of the Committee in giving long intervals between the photographs gave him ample opportunities for changing the miniatures, even though handcuffed. This preparation of miniature positives is essential to the success of the method, and is the only uncertainty in the process. That involved some rather intricate psychological procedure. It was necessary to get the sitter to suggest someone who would correspond to the miniature previously prepared. I give the details in Mr. MacCarthy's own words.

The photograph of the subaltern. "It *was* his photograph. My father had forgotten that before this officer sailed for Gallipoli, he had sent me a photograph of his company. I cut out his portrait and


Plate No. 10

prepared the miniature. I edged my father along, and so induced him to name this man."

The Spiritualist's case. "I went through reams to find someone who resembled the 'elderly woman' proposed. I spent hours and hours on the search. At last I found in an old second-hand book a portrait of Mrs. Gladstone who, though no relation, has a family-likeness to the sitter, cut the head out, and used that."

The Rector's case. "This was another difficult problem. The photograph is of Ben Tillett, and I have actually got it in writing from the Rector that this is an uncle. The mistake is in every way permissible—there is a characteristic likeness."

In regard to the Chinese writing. "I worked that backwards. When you say 'Think of a book that *everybody* will know and *everybody* will have,' the first that will be suggested is the Bible. I was wrong. Somebody said, '*Robinson Crusoe*.' I said, 'No, no, that won't do, everyone has not read it.' Someone said 'The Bible.' I said, 'Well, if you like it that will do.' I happened to know which edition of the Bible was in the house. I got a similar edition. The Bible was brought, and as I had asked for it, it was handed to me. I opened it at the place I had chosen and asked 'Will you have the *first*, or the last verse? They chose the last verse on the page (V. 26). Then the suggestion of language. Hebrew was named. The Rector said, 'I know Hebrew.' Someone else said 'Chinese.' So that was all right. My previously prepared miniature would suit.' "

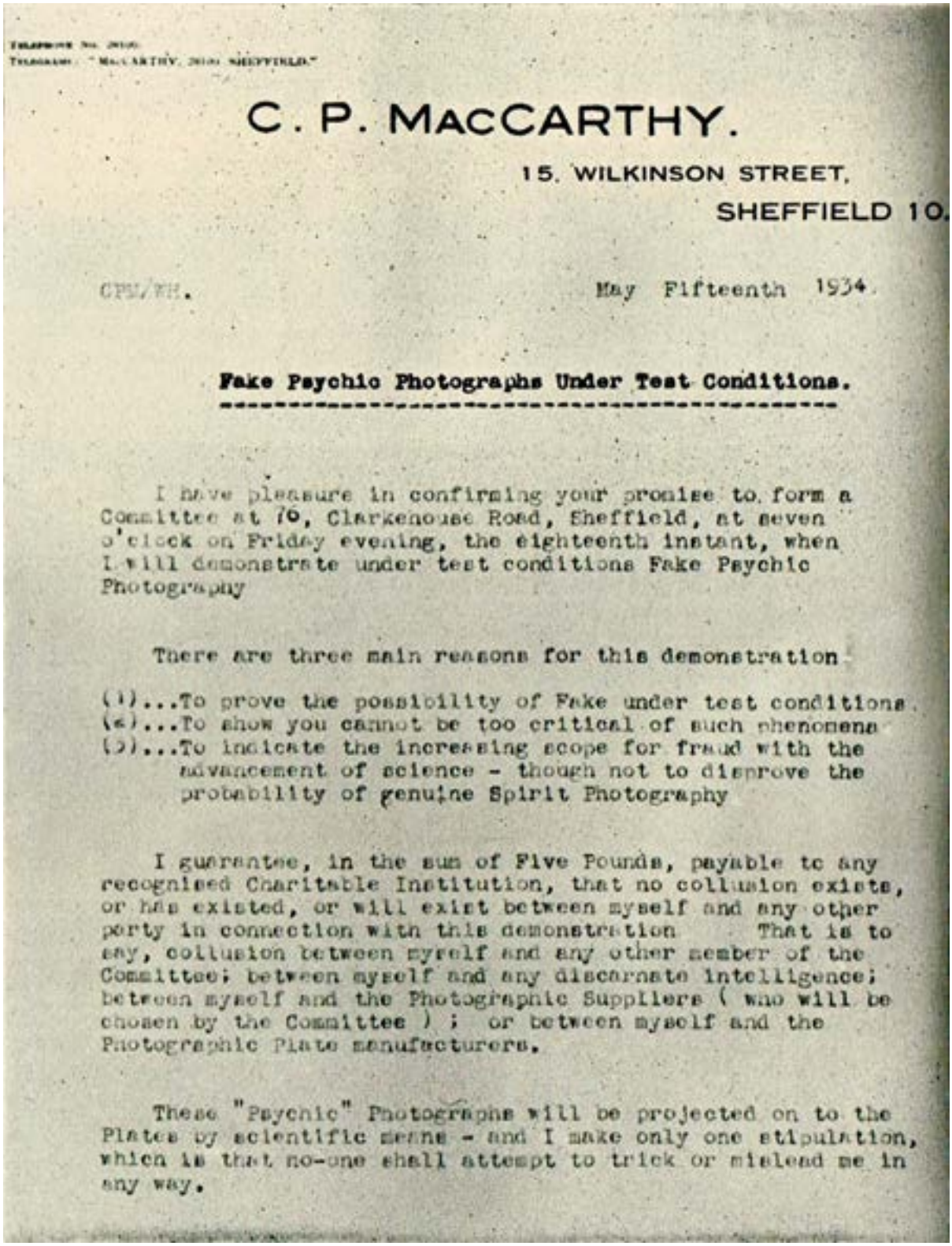
Mr. MacCarthy then showed several slides of photographs taken by infra-red rays, one of a photograph taken by the ultra-violet rays in the dark, gave a description of the eye, and a diagram of the spectrum, showing the infra-red and ultra-violet areas. Mr. MacCarthy said:

"I used ultra-violet, in a special apparatus . . . I simply wished to miss the sensitivity of the eye . . . I just missed it. I had to have small positives, and to get them I took micro-photographs.

Slide. From a quarter-plate negative I got an exact picture little bigger than a pin's head. I put them in an instrument little larger than my little finger. . . . In the dark room when they were loading the slide, from a distance of 18 inches, I projected half-a-second's exposure on that plate. The small apparatus had two rings, and I slipped it underneath my index finger and pointed it at the plate where I wanted it to go. With years of usage I can see quite well by red light."

Various questions were asked by the audience, and to each of them Mr. MacCarthy gave satisfactory replies. Asked if he were handcuffed all the time, he said he was, but that there is a certain freedom allowed in the handcuffs. Mr. Lethem asked what method is most used in faking? Mr. MacCarthy replied, "I am afraid that the usual method is the poor and uninteresting method of substitution." There were many more questions and answers. A cordial vote of thanks closed the lecture.[10]

[10] EDITOR'S REMARKS [articles editor] —This lecture (copyright) was delivered at Sheffield, and Mr. O. J. Wendlandt wrote the report that was printed in Light of Nov. 22nd, 1934 and also in *Psychic Science* of January, 1935. It provoked wide discussion, and it gave no clue to the method used. This is now quite clear. 'Mr. MacCarthy freely admitted that Mr. Hope had neither the knowledge, the skill, the leisure, the instruments, nor the money, to undertake the long, expensive, and complicated method of preparing the positive miniatures, and for all normal photography, the 'test-conditions' when the medium is excluded from the dark room, those conditions are valid. But in view of the new possibilities, evidently conditions need to be tightened up.
One of them must be to exclude all possibility of the examining Committee being led to make choices which agree with the miniature previously prepared by the faker. I am not surprised that on Mr. Wendlandt's letter a lively discussion should have arisen among those who knew nothing of Mr. MacCarthy's very ingenious and scientific apparatus.



C. P. MacCARTHY.

15. WILKINSON STREET,
SHEFFIELD 10.

CPM/RH. May Fifteenth 1934.

Fake Psychic Photographs Under Test Conditions.

I have pleasure in confirming your promise to form a Committee at 70, Clarkehouse Road, Sheffield, at seven o'clock on Friday evening, the eighteenth instant, when I will demonstrate under test conditions Fake Psychic Photography

There are three main reasons for this demonstration

(1)...To prove the possibility of Fake under test conditions.
(2)...To show you cannot be too critical of such phenomena
(3)...To indicate the increasing scope for fraud with the advancement of science - though not to disprove the probability of genuine Spirit Photography

I guarantee, in the sum of Five Pounds, payable to any recognised Charitable Institution, that no collusion exists, or has existed, or will exist between myself and any other party in connection with this demonstration That is to say, collusion between myself and any other member of the Committee; between myself and any discarnate intelligence; between myself and the Photographic Suppliers (who will be chosen by the Committee) ; or between myself and the Photographic Plate manufacturers.

These "Psychic" Photographs will be projected on to the Plates by scientific means - and I make only one stipulation, which is that no-one shall attempt to trick or mislead me in any way.

Plate No. 6

Psychic/spirit photography has had a long history from the mid-1800s. It would be true to state that its practitioners have undergone various exposures and even prison; however, it is also true to state that there have also been many tests which have produced remarkable results beyond the possibilities of fraud. The spirit forms which appear on the photographs are generally known as "psychic extras". Many of our old pioneers like Stainton Moses, Emma Hardinge Britten and James J. Morse were involved in this early phenomenon.

It has been noted in recent issues of "Pioneer" that Morse's lantern glass slides were found at Stansted. Morse wrote "A Brief History of Spirit Photography" while he was editor of the "Two Worlds" and serialised it in the journal, starting in August 27th 1915.

Morse's introductory statement read:



IT is proposed to divide the subject matter to which these introductory lines are appended into three parts. First, the historical; secondly, the evidential; and, lastly, the exegetical. By pursuing this plan it is hoped that the reader will be usefully guided to a full appreciation of the great importance of the topic as unfolded in the course of the following narrative. In the first section the history (the materials of which, unfortunately, are all too meagre) will be stated. It is thought that this portion will not be the least interesting matter offered, since it will serve to show that the efforts to obtain post-mortem portraits run back some fifty-four years past. In the evidential section the record of the attested evidences of such photographs having been obtained, and the additionally important fact that recognisable photographs have been secured, will properly supplement the historical résumé, thus joining fact to history, while in the final section the expository method will enable the reader to realise the important issues involved. The stringent tests, the absolute necessity of certitude, the relationship of these phenomena to natural law are each involved. None of these points can be shirked; each is of definite importance. He is bold indeed who says "It cannot be"; while he is wiser who says "I do not know." The few illustrations used in connection are among the most reliable submitted to the writer. The various contributing writers are men known for their honour and probity.

The complete series is reprinted in Psypioneer.[11] In the set of Morse's fairly extensive collection of psychic extras it includes an image of Emma Hardinge Britten with her musical spirit guide Ludwig van Beethoven, taken by the American photographer William Mumler.[12]

[11] Starting in Vol. 9, No. 06, June 2013.

[12] It is very rare for Emma to name a guide or spirits who controlled her. It was an open question with many at the time whether any such control was in operation during her orations. Her utterances were, at the time when she gave her first four principles in 1871, considered entirely inspirational, which the recorded observations of clairvoyants confirmed!

Morse makes this comment regarding Mumler:

> IN testimony as to the honesty of Mr. Mumler, and to the genuineness of the spirit-pictures obtained by him, it may be stated that Andrew Jackson Davis, at that time editing the "Herald of Progress." issued in New York, engaged a Mr. William Guay a practical photographer, to investigate Mr. Mumler's process, it being stipulated that he (Mr. Guay) should himself perform all the processes, and use any means which might be suggested to him for the most careful examination. He did so investigate, and reported as follows:—
>
> > Having been permitted by Mr. Mumler every facility, I event through the whole process of selecting, cleaning, preparing, coating, silvering, and putting into the shield the glass upon which Mr. M. proposed that a spirit form should be imparted, never taking off my eyes, and not allowing Mr. M. to touch the glass until it had gone through the whole of the operation. The result was that there came upon the glass a picture of my self, and, to my utter astonishment, having previously examined and scrutinised every crack and corner, plate-holder, camera, box. tube, the inside of the bath, etc—another portrait. Having since continued on several occasions my investigations as described above, and received even more perfect results than on the first trial, I have been obliged to endorse its legitimacy.
> > Signed: Wm. GUAY

Guay's report was made in 1863. Other well-known Spiritualists like Dr. Child, Judge Edmonds and Mr. Livermore testified that a large number of recognised spirit pictures had been obtained through Mumler's photographs.[13]

The full story of Emma's sitting with Mumler from different sources is told in some detail in Psypioneer[14] and is well worth reading; below is a much-edited version which outlines the story published in the "Two Worlds", March 25th 1927, pages 181-182:



Emma Hardinge Britten alleged musical spirit guide Ludwig van Beethoven ⇒

[13] It was the American William Mumler who established the practice of spirit photography when he started a trade in psychic photographs in the early 1860s, but was he the first? See Marc Demarest: "The Hands of The Fair Daguerreotypist: Spirit Photography Before Mumler" and see Psypioneer, Vol. 11, No. 03, March 2015.

[14] See Psypioneer, Vol. 9, No. 12, December 2013: "Emma Hardinge Britten, Beethoven, and the Spirit Photographer William H Mumler. "

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH OF THE GREAT COMPOSER



WHILST the civilised world is uniting to celebrate the centenary of Ludwig Beethoven, the great musical composer, it is interesting to recall the close association which was claimed to exist between this great genius and Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, who always claimed that he had on many occasions manifested his presence to and interest in her.

Mrs. Britten was herself no mean musician, and at the early age of 16 composed music (particularly masses) which were used at church services at Bristol. At this age she also composed the Commemoration Ode, which commemorated the life of Edward Colston at Bristol. In later years she wrote musical criticisms for several papers, and was familiar with the greatest works or the great masters.

Her many references to the influence of Beethoven in her life gained corroboration during an experiment in psychic photography with W. H. Mumler, in Boston in 1871, which we reproduce herewith, in which the faint form of the composer is seen bending over her.

Mr. W. H. Mumler was the first spirit photographer, and flourished in Boston from the year 1863.

Ludwig van Beethoven passed away on March 26th, 1827.

The following is Mrs. Britten's own account of the incident, taken from the Medium and Daybreak, December 15th, 1871:

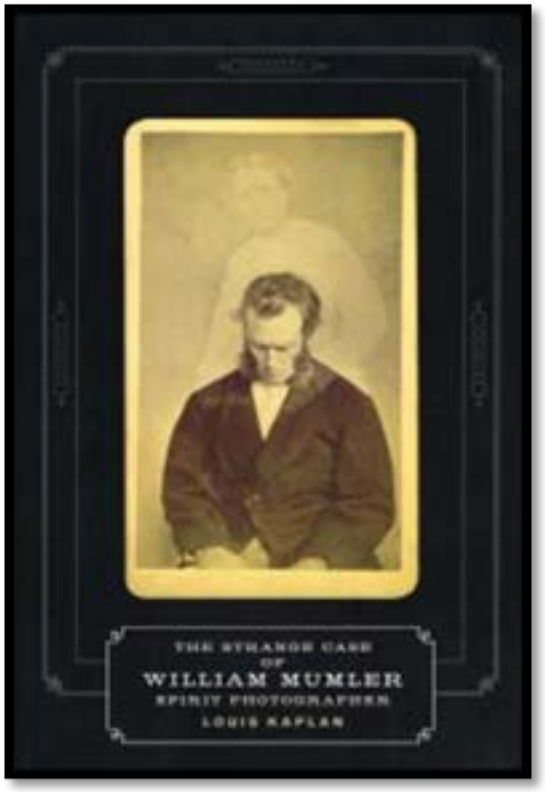
"About a fortnight ago I called upon Mr. Mumler for a sitting, impelled to do so by the remarkable accounts of tests furnished to me by reliable persons, who had obtained through this channel unmistakable proofs of their Spirit-friends' presence and identity. The result of my first sitting was the production of a female form, bending over me in the attitude of affection; but, although the spirit bears some resemblance to a dear departed friend, it is not sufficiently obvious to constitute a likeness. At my next sitting a large and remarkable-looking head appeared on the negative, but ere, the prints were taken I could not trace clearly any well-defined likeness. I remarked to Mr. Mumler that the negative appeared to present the appearance of some musical character, as there were indications of a lyre shadowed forth in the negative. Upon this Mr. Mumler immediately wrote on a slip of paper, backwards, the name of 'Beethoven.' When the prints were at length

produced, they clearly showed the portrait of Beethoven hovering over me, and holding a faintly-defined musical instrument in his hands, so placed as to present the shadow between my dress and the watch-chain which falls across it,

"Now, the circumstances which render the appearance of the great musician upon my photograph singularly significant are these: My principal occupation during my late residence in England was to write musical criticisms, in which the life and works of Beethoven formed the chief theme of my analyses. The very last piece of musical writing which I executed was an essay on the Beethoven Centenary at Bonn, celebrated just as I was about to return to America. Whilst engaged in these writings, I have the best of reasons for believing that the spirit of the noble German was frequently with me, and by a variety of test-facts convinced me and others that he was interested in what I wrote, and not infrequently suggested ideas or dictated corrections upon points of his life and musical intentions. The inspired and venerated spirit assured me, moreover, that he had constituted himself my musical guide, and purposed, in the bright communion of the better world, to reward my unbounded admiration of his character and compositions by assuming the office of my instructor. I think there must be several of my friends in London who will bear witness that I occasionally alluded to communications of the above-named character from Beethoven, but I can most positively assert that I never mentioned them to anyone in America, and I am confident that Mr. Mumler neither knew anything of my musical writings in England nor that I was in the least interested in the appearance of Beethoven.

"These circumstances considered, I think the remarkable resemblance of the spirit-portrait to the well-known head of Beethoven may be taken as a striking and conclusive test of spirit-presence. A vast number of persons with whom I am well acquainted have received admirable portraitures of their spirit-friends from Mr. Mumler, and that when they themselves were strangers to him, and no possibility could exist of his procuring any likeness or knowledge of the spirit-friends represented."





It is of interest to note that Mumler's spirit extras can be generally recognised as his photographs, as the majority have the alleged spirit extra behind the sitter, often with the hands/arms around and touching the sitter.

For example, Mumler's well-known photograph of Mary Todd Lincoln with the assassinated President and their deceased son Thaddeus. Numerous reports do not include the son, maybe because he is more difficult to see, but the name Thaddeus may appear to be incorrect.



Update

The SNU Pioneer is continuing to grow. It is pleasing that interest in our history is being picked up in so many avenues. Some non-Spiritualists, such as university students, are individual subscribers; some have done their dissertations on Spiritualist subjects and used the Britten Museum & Library for their research.

I am pleased to report that Pioneer has over 600 individual subscribers, hundreds of SNUi readers and many more on-line readers on the SNU website. Indeed, the on-line publication generates many questions from readers, including those taking our SNU education courses – especially questions on the events surrounding Hydesville and our Seven Principles, where in recent years errors in the history have been ironed out.