The PIONEER

The Pioneer is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses.



A Question of Fraud

the PIONEER

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A QUESTION OF FRAUD!

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Special thanks to Charles Coulston for his work in sub-editing these issue

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A QUESTION OF FRAUD!

Throughout our history physical phenomena have been a debatable issue within the movement from its earliest days, even though the Spiritualist movement was largely founded on physical phenomena.

By the end of the 1880s much discredit had been placed on the dark séances. With many exposures, some of course were well-deserved and rightly exposed; some were self-exposed by the medium themselves! Others were merely alleged, etc. Its process and its history are indeed complex but in some instances of alleged fraud we may hold some of the answers. Many of the exposures were almost always by Spiritualists themselves; this can also be said of the Spiritualist press over the ensuing decades. But sometimes an alleged exposure cannot be as clear-cut as it may appear on the surface, as there may be other underlining issues, misrepresentation, jealousy and a real possibility of unconscious fraud.[18]

It is often claimed that physical mediums are sometimes badly injured, with some claims of actual death as a result of a spirit form, ectoplasm, etc. being grabbed. There are numerous accounts, but there appears to be no firm documented material, medical evidence, etc. of such injuries.

As noted: *Its process and its history are indeed complex but in some instances of alleged fraud we may hold some of the answers*: over the next few issues Pioneer will look through the history of some of these alleged cases of fraud, looking at both sides if possible. Some will be without doubt fraud, others perhaps *wrongly* alleged — others due possibly to the complex psychological process of physical phenomena.

Harry Boddington, along with his brother Richard, was involved within the SNU, more so Richard, a former Vice-President of the Union, elected to the Council in 1907. In 1928 Maurice Barbanell became a member of the SNU Council, taking over from the veteran Richard Boddington as London Area Representative.

The article below is by Harry Boddington and is picked up in the Two Worlds issue of September 9th, 1939 under the editorship of Ernest Oaten; it appears that the debating issues mentioned in the article were ongoing for clarification:

In the 1930s a group was formed by Harold Chibbett called “The Probe”, which had a newsletter by the same name—hence Boddington’s names: ‘Probitis’ and ‘Probites’. “The Probe” investigated various occult fields, Spiritualism, psychical research, etc.

Another name which appears in the below article is that of Mrs Wakely, who was the President of Walthamstow National Spiritualist Church and a member of “The Probe”.

[18] Conscious or unconscious fraud? Do mediums consciously premeditate fraud or is the fraud carried out unconsciously by *low* mischievous spirits? Some will argue that the medium premeditated the fraud and is therefore conscious and responsible for their actions, whilst others would say that due to the influence of *low* mischievous spirits or of the sitters in the séance the medium is totally unaware of their actions, as they are in a somnambulistic state and therefore cannot be accountable for their *unconscious* actions. For example, in August 1877 Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Wood (1854-1884) was headlined “Miss Wood Caught Personating a Spirit”. The report states: “During the unconscious state the medium is made the victim of the circumstances by which she is surrounded, and either through the perverted action of some of her own controls, or the intrusion of other spirits, she is reduced to the disgraceful position in which she was found.” See Psypioneer, Vol. 8, No. 2, February 2012.

Harry Boddington replies to his critics, and discusses "an extraordinary disease called 'Probitis'"

Fraud



THE extraordinary disease called "Probitis" attacks all psychical researchers at some time or another. It is due to the fact that dwellers in a three-dimensional world find it quite impossible to accept the idea that a four-dimensional world interpenetrates it and that people conditioned to a four-dimensional world can, by very delicate mental and physical adjustments, produce results inexplicable to those living on the three-dimensional plane.

Add to this the fact that in this world everybody is on the look-out for "easy money" and is suspicious of everybody who attains that end by producing apparently incredible happenings, and that we are entirely ignorant of the dynamic effect of thought upon the elements around us, and you at once perceive the basis of the disease that continually drives genuine physical mediumship out of existence.

An Answer

Even when Spiritualists understand some phases of psychic phenomena they seem utterly incapable of grasping the fact that all psychic phenomena are mental at base and can therefore be unset by *other* mentalities.

First I must deal with my opponent, Mrs. Wakely seems to have adopted the role of representative for the Probites. As soon as she heard I had an answer to her theories she prevented her members hearing the other side of the question by cancelling my date. I note that she has this week added another victim at Kensington to her credit. Again the "flash-and-grab" process was utilised, but instead of grasping draperies they discovered a medium holding a trumpet to her mouth. Associated with Mrs. Wakely is a lady of theosophic tendencies who assured me that "all physical mediums were frauds."

Get two sitters obsessed with this mental outlook and their effect upon the delicate conditions of a seance room needs no further comment. They discover fraud wherever they go. No matter whether it is physical or mental phenomena that is being examined, the medium quite definitely passes under their control.

Mental Interference

Mrs, Duncan's spirit guide, "Albert,'' once gave the sitters a striking demonstration of their power over the entranced medium. One of their number was selected to *mentally* ask the medium to come and place her hands upon his shoulders, The medium could not possibly know who was selected, but as soon as the mental request was made the medium promptly left the cabinet and came and put her hands upon him

Mr. Oaten assures me that he has known of people who deliberately practise mental interference with seance room phenomena.

The only difference between these premeditated mental interferences and that of the Probite mind is that the former act consciously and the Probites ignorantly. The effect is the same.

In combating fraud we must not fail to note the main difficulties under which all trance mediums labour: 1, the unconscious medium is liable to suggestion from spirits both in and out of the body; 2, to seize an unconscious man and charge him with fraud means ignoring the very factors which constitute the basis of his mediumship; 3, subconscious action also produces fraudulent effects if the intense desire of the medium for success, or the urgent need for money worries him while sinking into trance, Many other motives conduce to the same end.

The offence of the Probites is that they destroy the "pearl of great price" in their vain effort to check the medium's money making.

I do not condone fraud, no matter whether produced consciously or subconsciously. It indicates a weakness somewhere, but that weakness is just as often in the mental atmosphere created by sitters as in the medium. Get the economic conditions altered and the main reason for fraud in every apartment of life will cease. That is why I want to see Spiritualists making it a definite plank in their propaganda platform.

My book on "Materialisations" cited one death and many injuries inflicted by the Probite method of testing mediums. Mrs Wakely suggests that my arguments are theoretical only. The book easily disproves that suggestion. In the first chapter on "The Mechanism of Mind," I prove the definite action of the mind upon inanimate objects. How much more powerfully operative must it be upon the quiescent brain of a medium?

My case against the Probites is that they ignorantly misuse the powers of hypnotism and telepathy. Harmonious seances succeed because of the trust and harmony present. In this condition the medium's brain responds to spirit action only.

The Walthamstow Probites are in a difficult position. I am sorry for them, but it should not blind them to the consequences of vindictive attacks.

Mrs. Wakely wrote to Harry Brown that he was the "one and only medium her society had ever seen or was ever likely to see." Their pet medium now denies that his phenomena are "psychic" in any way. Since throwing over trance states—which presumably include hypnotic control by Mrs. Bell—he successfully produces psychic phenomena on the music hall stage In imitation of Kuda Bux, with his eyes so completely bandaged that it is impossible for him to see anything, he rides bicycles, plays cards and billiards, reads sealed letters and does other incredible things previously attributed to spirit aid. It seems to have annoyed them. I want to whisper a word of consolation to them. What Harry Brown is now doing could, I believe, be achieved by any well-developed physical medium who travels along Yoga lines of development after being sensitised by spirit operators over a long period of time.

If Probites want to stamp out fraud it is useless attacking *unconscious instruments*. They must first kill *unconscious trance mediumship*. This in its turn would be incredible folly, for from this class the most definite tests and spirit teaching are obtained. The way out of the difficulty is to teach trance mediums how to co-operate—in good light—with their spirit guides. Harry Brown is merely indicating a way.

HARRY BODDINGTON,
London Psychic Educational Centre.

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The following issue of Two Worlds naturally brought a response from Mrs Wakely and "The Probe".

Mrs E Wakely's response:

Sir,—Logic teaches us that we must have our premises correct. If the premises on which Mr. Boddington builds his case for materialisation are as incorrect as those in his article on "Fraud" in last week's issue of *The Two Worlds*, then one doubts the wisdom of his attempt to write a book on the subject.

I did not cancel Mr. Boddington's date. The Secretary of the church, acting at the *unanimous* vote of the Church Committee, did this. It was felt that in view of the fact that Mr. Boddington was publicly supporting Clive Holmes, it was unwise to permit his presence on the platform of a church which is out to do its best to raise the standard of Spiritualism. As several members of the Church Council (not all members of "The Probe") had witnessed the so-called phenomena of Clive Holmes, and had positive proof of his fraudulent practices, it was felt that no opportunity of talking on such a subject should be given to one whose observations were apparently not sufficiently careful to detect the presence of the fraud we had witnessed.[19]

Mr. Boddington was given a chance to appear on our platform on a weekday, when the very members he seems so convinced *want* to hear him would have a chance of voicing their own opinions, but, so far, he has not availed himself of the opportunity.

On no account, however, will he—at least while the present Council is in power—be allowed to speak on a Sunday evening, when only his side of the question can be voiced and heard. I have no one of theosophic tendencies associated with me, nor yet anyone who is likely to have assured Mr. Boddington that "all physical mediums are frauds." May we ask Mr. Boddington to give the *name* of the medium who was killed through being tested by any method. *We want facts*. As he claims to know how exposures should *not* be done, will he please tell me how they should be carried out.

In no exposure with which I have been connected has the so-called medium suffered any injury, and in every case ample proof of fraud has been visible to all sitters.

As Mr. Oaten pointed out in his recent article, exposures are not published until sufficient evidence has been previously gathered. The same applies to the actual exposures with which I have been concerned. As long as people of Mr. Boddington's calibre are alive to provide excuses for these ghouls in human form, just so long will Spiritualism cease to make the progress it deserves.

Not having read Mr, Boddington's book, I have yet to learn what he considers proof. Unfortunately for Spiritualism, commercialisation and vested interests are not solely confined to fraudulent mediums.

Mrs. E. WAKELY,
President,
Walthamstow S. Church.

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[19] **NOT RESPONSIBLE**: Sir,—As Vice-President of Walthamstow Spiritualist Church, I would like to point out that Mr. Harry. Boddington's bookings were cancelled by the Church Council. We were notified of the matter he was to speak on, and we did not think this desirable for a Sunday service. Mrs. Wakely was not, responsible. LEONARD C. BOOTH, Vice-President, Walthamstow Church.

Response from "The Probe":

NO CONNECTION

Sir,—The article, entitled "Fraud," by Harry Boddington, contained in last week's issue of *The Two Worlds*, may have conveyed the impression to your readers that "The Probe" is actively concerned in the controversy between Mr. Boddington and the members of the Walthamstow Church.

This is not so, and Mr. Boddington should seek information regarding "The Probe's" organisation from authoritative quarters before assuming that every exposure is necessarily the work of "The Probe."

"The Probe" is concerned chiefly with *bona fide* research, and resents the loose use of the terms "probitis" and "probites" in connection with the exposure of fraudulent mediums, which contain the implication that "The Probe" exists solely for that purpose.

It is time that responsible Spiritualists such as Harry Boddington realised that psychic researchers are not ignorant fools, and that co-operation in the investigation of psychic phenomena is much more likely to be of use to the Spiritualist. Movement than abuse and unprovoked attack.

Per pro "The Probe,"
H. S. W. CHIBBETT, Hon. Sec.

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A Church Council member adds: [20]

Sir,—My name has been brought into Mr. Harry Boddington's vituperative explosions, all because our local Church Council cancelled his dates. My wife and I must, according to him, face a charge of condoning fraud or else we must read his book !

Straight speaking is now required. Constant misstatements of fact and misrepresentations are made by Mr. Boddington.

Being a member of the Walthamstow Church Council, a member of the Probe, and a friend of many years' standing of Mr. Harry Brown, whore remarkable mediumistic development my wife and I were privileged to watch, I am in a position to reply to Mr, Boddington.

I challenge Mr, Boddington to produce one tittle of evidence of Mr. Brown's confession of fraud, or prove that he ever stated that his mediumship was not genuine.

I challenge Mr. Boddington to produce one letter from Mrs Wakeley asking him not to use Holmes' name.[21]

[…]

Now as to the Probe, with whose name he tries to make such capital. What does he know of this organisation? Because they once successfully exposed a fraudulent medium, he feels he has the right to use his questionable wit at the Probe's expense. Well, he has a tough nut to crack. The Probe is strong enough and independent enough to follow its own. line of investigation and research. It does not depend on popularity or advertisement, and Mr. Boddington's cheap sneers will neither help nor harm the Probe.

[20] Two Worlds, October 21st, 1938 (*slightly edited – repeated information*).

[21] Mr Bell misspells "Wakely" as "Wakeley".

With regard to the matter of my wife and I condoning fraud. Let Mr. Boddington first prove fraud by Mr. Harry Brown—I wish to emphasise the word *prove*, not make statements—then I will take up the matter of condoning fraud.

We can all have differences of opinion. We may not all see alike, but let us state facts plainly and truthfully, and not rely on subterfuge to make our case good. Only thus can we hope to arrive at some germ of truth.

FRANK H. C. BELL.

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The editor, Ernest Oaten, on October 28th brings a halt to the argument, letting Harry Boddington have the final say (*slightly edited*):

This brings us to the crux of the matter so far as Brown is concerned. Both of them deny that he uses extra-sensory perception, psychic sight, or the faculty of clairvoyance (which Mrs. Bell admits he developed), during his stage shows. The "dangerously misleading statement" is theirs, not mine. Readers must judge.

I have before me two printed accounts of the way in which he claimed to train for his stage show. The clearest explanation is taken from *Pearson's Weekly* of July 10th, 1937, and reads as follows:—

" 'But how did you suddenly discover that you had this power' I asked.

" 'It wasn't sudden,' he corrected. '*It's a matter of concentration and development*.' As a child he could see hazy forms while blindfolded. He mentioned this to a friend, who suggested he might be able to do the Kuda Bux [1905-1981: known as "The Man with the X-Ray Eyes."] act.

" 'I tried, but at first it did not work. Yet I somehow felt that with patience I should be able to recapture my childhood's powers. I lighted a candle in a darkened room, bandaged my eyes very tightly, *so that I could not see the candle*, and sat gazing at the place where it was. I concentrated on seeing it.

" 'After a time I began to see the dim form of the light, A mere glimmer. Then it took shape. I could see the actual outline of the flame. Then, *after weeks of further practice*, I got expert that I could not only see the candle, but some of the things in the room which were lighted up by it.

" 'Then I increased the bandage thickness and tried again, gradually developing the power *of seeing without my eyes*' "

What becomes of the suggested stage "trick" after that very lucid explanation? I called it positive development on Yoga lines. I still adhere to that explanation.

I think Brown's denial that anything "psychic" enters into his show is due to the fact that his later development differed from his earlier clairvoyance in that his concentration has caused him to restrict his extra-sensory perception to the physical plane that same act shuts out normal clairvoyance and its relationship to the spirit world. To me, it is simply a difference in degree and not in actual fact.

Please note that I have not suggested that Brown ever committed conscious fraud. But I have emphasised the fact in "Materialisations" that all entranced mediums are liable to subconscious actions and also to influence from their audience. These are the actual points in debate, but which have in no way been dealt with by any contributor.

H. BODDINGTON.

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Editor's note:

Boddington's article, "Fraud", and its response brought out some complex problems of what truly constitutes fraud, pointing to the possibility of blatant deliberate fraud, unconscious fraud and perhaps other considerations as to the mechanics of physical mediumship, as in the case of Clive Holmes, the materialisation medium, whom Boddington does not directly mention in the above article *but in fact, strongly supported*—while others *cited above* were equally satisfied from their first-hand observations and experience of Holmes' mediumship: "*... had positive proof of his fraudulent practices…*". However, the magistrate had no problem in their judgement that Clive Holmes was indeed guilty of his charges.

Regarding the points raised in the article, "Fraud", by Boddington and his apparent attack on Mrs E. Wakely, Frank Bell and his wife (Margery), these people were all Spiritualists, President and Councillor of an SNU church, Boddington a Diploma-holder of the Union, etc. On the surface, it appears that Boddington was not impressed with "The Probe", in which Wakely and the Bells were active members. The published response from "The Probe" was from its founder and then current Honorary Secretary, Mr Harold Chibbett.



Harold Chibbett

Harold Stanley Walter Chibbett (1900-1978) was in fact a supporter of physical phenomena, as is demonstrated by his involvement with Noah Zerdin (1889-1972), who was well known for pioneering a general awareness, and the safe practice, of physical mediumship.

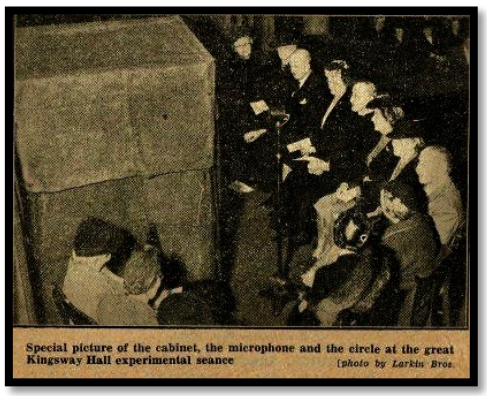
The development of physical mediumship, generally speaking, is restricted to private home circles. Around 1930 Noah Zerdin began to exchange reports of his home circle with those of Harold Chibbett. This would lead to the formation of the "Link Association of Home Circles" in 1931, which developed into an international association of home circles, privately publishing its own monthly journal, "The Link".



NOAH ZERDIN

In 1931 Harold Chibbett and Noah Zerdin held their first conferences of "The Link". Chibbett became its Honorary Secretary. It represented 21 home circles and the following year it increased slightly to 26. By the third Conference, held on October 15th, 1933 in London, it had reached 156 affiliated home circles (1934 – 187 home circles).

"The Link" held large mass meetings for psychical phenomena. Mrs A.E. Perriman was the first voice medium for "The Link" in 1934 at the Æolian Hall.



Special picture of the cabinet, the microphone and the circle at the great Kingsway Hall experimental seance [photo by Larkin Bros.

A year later Leslie Flint,[22] a friend of co-founder Noah Zerdin, gave a large direct-voice séance at

[22] The photograph is a later Leslie Flint direct-voice public séance by the "Link Association of Home Circles" in 1946, where over one thousand people witnessed direct voice. The photograph shows the cabinet Flint was sitting in; the microphone can be seen surrounded by Leslie Flint's home circle members. The "Link" event was started by various speakers: Noah Zerdin (whose photo is shown), Lord Dowding and former SNU Presidents Percy Wilson and Harold Vigurs (then SNU President).

Bloomsbury's Victoria Hall. Colin Evans' home circle was a member of the "Link Association of Home Circles" and reports were circulating of remarkable physical phenomena in Evans' home circle, in which he was already a well-known clairvoyant. "The Link" decided to centre some large mass séances around Evans' home circle. This was in late 1937; arrangements were made for Nandor Fodor, research officer for the "International Institute for Psychical Research", to record any phenomena which might occur.[23]



In more recent years, after the deaths of Chibbett and Zerdin, in their footsteps came the formation of the "Noah's Ark Society", whose journal carried important articles on pioneers of physical mediumship. The name came from Noah Zerdin, followed in later years by the "Zerdin Fellowship", which also had its own magazine, the "Zerdin Buzz Sheet". All of these are now sadly defunct.

See Psypioneer, Vol. 10, No. 8: "The Link"—The Association of Home Circles & "The Noah's Ark Society"—for Physical Mediumship.

To conclude the arguments between Boddington and the "Probites," it is correct to say that Mrs Wakely, Frank Bell and his wife Margery were sometimes involved in the exposure of alleged fraud. For example, Frank Bell and Mrs Wakely were involved in the exposure of the flower apport medium, Miss X – Miss Hilda Lewis, 'Flower Medium'. Bell played a fairly substantial part, with Mrs Wakely as a signed witness. An overview of the story is published in Psypioneer, Vol. 6, No. 6: "The Flower Medium — Mrs. Hewat McKenzie, Oct 1935", albeit this article does not include the involvement of Wakely and Bell.[24]



During the discussions of Boddington and the "Probites" former SNU President and editor of the Two Worlds Ernest Oaten publicly exposed two physical mediums, Mrs Grover and Mrs Woolf. Following the exposures Oaten publishes in the Two Worlds, August 26th, 1938:

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[23] See Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 5: International Institute for Psychical Research – The Case for Real Psychical Research – by Arthur Findlay.

See also Psypioneer, Vol. 10, No. 8: "Spiritualism through the Lens – Colin Evans" – "Paul J. Gaunt comments on Colin Evans" – "Sitters See His Body Floating in the Air – A. W. Austen" and " "The Link" Triumphs Again – Two Worlds".

[24] Further information is available from the editor.

The Question of Fraud

THE exposure we have published in the last two weeks, which concern Mrs. Grover and Mrs. Woolf, draw attention once again to the element of fraud in psychic phenomena. In the minds of many people mediumistic phenomena, by reason of their strangeness and exceptional nature, are invariably associated with fraud, credulity and deception. Unfortunately such accusations are not always without foundation.

Accusations of fraud have *always* been levelled against. mediums, and while some of them have been undoubtedly based upon facts a large number of such accusations have been due to the fact that men of ordinary experience found it impossible to believe that such phenomena *could* actually occur; there appeared to be no laws known to science which would allow such happenings, and it was therefore far easier to assert that they were produced fraudulently than to accept results which lay beyond the pale of ordinary experience. We are convinced that a very large number of the accusations of fraud in the early days of the Movement were by no means well founded. Men were dealing with phenomena which were new to them, the laws of which were *not* understood, and the only comparison which most men had was to the delusions produced by conjurors, and they imagined that there was some relationship between the deceptions of the conjuror and the seances of mediums.

Rogues and cheats are to be found in every walk of life. “The Church, the Law and Medicine are all disgraced occasionally by the conviction of disreputable practitioners,” but however numerous such people may be, it is only when we come to Spiritualism that the existence of fraud and deception is used as an argument against the whole movement.

Psychical researchers have *ever* been suspicious of professional mediums, and, of course, it is quite conceivable that where the element of gain enters into the matter the prevalence of deception is far more likely than in cases where no material gain is at stake. There are, of course, other factors, such as the desire for fame, notoriety or personal vanity, all of which may enter into the matter, but in the main it can be said that ability to extort heavy profits in any department of life or trade offers a temptation to the cheat to pretend to powers which he does not possess.

The difficulty of dealing of with fraud in mediumship, however, would be very much simplified if it was attempted by people who processed no genuine powers whatever, but there have been remarkably few cases of this type in the history of the Movement. The problem is complicated by the fact that we have to deal with sensitive people who under *some* conditions are capable of producing genuine phenomena, but who, when those conditions are not present, resort to deceit and trickery. Now in our opinion, when we are dealing with the most sacred convictions of the human soul, when we are attempting too, to analyse the very serious matter of the love-links which bind us to our best-beloved friends, the individual who would practise wilful fraud under such conditions deserves the worst that can be said about him. To exploit the deepest emotions of the human soul and the most sacred of human associations by using fraudulent means to exploit them for personal gain is a detestable and disgraceful thing, showing a lack of all fine feeling and of decency.

As the importance of Spiritualism grows in public estimation, as its claims become popular, it is obvious that there is a greater demand for phenomena, and while, half a century ago the best mediums in this country lived on the borders of starvation, to-day the medium who can produce definite and positive evidences can undoubtedly command large fees. There seems little doubt, from facts in our possession, that Mrs. Grover must have been receiving somewhere in the region of £20 per week, and for an individual whose

position in life has always been moderate and humble one, the ability to acquire such fees is a very great temptation. The fact, too, that such fees are payable to-day throws upon the Spiritualistic Movement a very great deal more responsibility than in the days when fees were few and mediums wore despised.

Let us be perfectly frank: we should maintain that the individual who can produce actual evidence of the continued survival of loved ones, the apparent loss of whom has brought sorrow, misery and despondency into the hearts of their relatives; the individual who can stem the tide of sorrow, which is the result of bereavement, and substitute therefor the joy and confidence which comes from the conviction of reunion, is doing a great deal more good in the world than a Hollywood film star. The medium who can bridge the gulf of death is conferring quite as great a benefit on humanity as any bishop or archbishop, and is entitled—and rightly entitled—to comfort, security, and those amenities which bring peace of mind, so essential to the practice of mediumship.

It must not be forgotten that in the practice of mediumship there are psychological factors at work which are too often overlooked by the uninformed. The fact that a medium in the seance room is more or less in a hypnotic condition and may react to mental and psychical factors which are difficult to trace, very often causes them to do things unconsciously which they would not consciously do. Sitting some time ago with one materialising medium, the guide distinctly told us, "Will you bear in mind that my medium is in a hypnotic state, and if you give orders she will obey your suggestions; when in state she acts automatically." Such a statement throws a great deal of light on the process.

Again, Dr. Crawford [25] showed that much physical phenomena is produced by the extrusion of psychic rods (visible or invisible) from the body of the medium, and it would seem that there in a current of nervous energy flowing through those rods which corresponds very closely to the nerve energy flowing through the arms when we attempt to lift a chair, for instance. It is not surprising that in such cases part of the energy thus projected *is* directed through the limbs, and one gets involuntary twitchings and movements of arms and legs which may easily excite suspicion and lead to the supposition that the medium is wilfully and very crudely attempting to move objects with his hands. These characteristics were especially notable with Eusapia Palladino, who made little or no attempt to disguise the facts.[26]

It is always well to remember, then, that a medium in the seance-room may be liable to act unconsciously to psychological factors of which the sitters may be largely ignorant. In the days of long ago when such matters were imperfectly understood, many accusations of fraud were made against mediums which had no foundation other than the ignorance of the sitters. Such considerations, however, are not an excuse for fraud —in fact, when they are understood they make fraud easily apparent. When, however, as in the case of Mrs. Grover, it can be definitely shown that preparations were made beforehand to practice fraud by carrying into the seance-room the materials used for fraudulent purposes, such as butter-muslin and band of linen with a large safety pin in it, there is only one conclusion to be reached, namely, that a deliberate attempt had been made beforehand to deceive the sitters. And we hope Spiritualists, despite their sympathy for the bottom dog and the desire to practise kindliness and the spirit of brotherhood will let no false sentiment stand in the way of keeping the Movement clean. There is far less fraud in the Movement than the outsider is prepared to admit, but with the growing popularity of Spiritualism one can understand the danger of an increase. It's up to Spiritualists of every grade to denounce and make

[25] See Pioneer, Vol. 4, No. 5: "Letter from Harry Houdini to Dr W. J. Crawford", "Dr. W. J. Crawford & the Goligher Circle", "Ectoplasm Photographed – John McIndoe", and "Editor's endnote".

[26] See Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 6: "Eusapia Palladino – Hereward Carrington".

public every case in which fraud has been definitely proved. It is our duty to the spirit world to keep *their* reputation and our own as clean as the conditions of this world will allow. Any false sentiment is a reflection upon that band of ministering spirits who in the last ninety years have laboured under very trying conditions to establish their case.

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Mrs Elizabeth Grover's exposure was published in the Two Worlds, August 12th, 1938; below is the full report by Ernest Oaten:

MRS. GROVER EXPOSED

IT is with very great regret that we have to announce that Mrs. Elizabeth Grover, who has posed as a materialising medium, was definitely discovered in fraud last week while giving an alleged materialising séance near Birkenhead. The seance had been arranged for the 2lst of August, but to fit in with Mrs, Grover's engagements, at her request the date was altered to the 7th. There were nine sitters, in addition to Mrs. Grover and Mr. J. L. Hampson. Mrs. Grover was met at Liverpool and motored across to the Wirral peninsular. Two ladies were appointed to take her into an ante-room for a complete search. After her outer clothes had been removed there was some delay before she removed her underclothing. She was *never* completely stripped. While the search was in process, Mr. Hampson called the two ladies, who were examining her to examine the clothes that she was to wear, thereafter they returned to the ante-room. A complete search was not made and to that extent the sitters were lax.

After the seance had started a form came from the cabinet who claimed to be Albert Stewart. Close scrutiny showed no likeness to the Albert Stewart whom many of the sitters were familiar with not even the voice being satisfactory. Two other forms came from the cabinet, one claiming to be "White Rose," a guide, and another one, who said he was Hill, but no one knew him, and he couldn't tell the sitters who he was. Mrs. Grover had heard a sitter addressed as "May," and the next form announced itself as being for May, although there was no one of this name in the room. The sitters were by now definitely of the opinion that in every case the form which appeared *was* Mrs. Grover, clothed in white substance. When another form appeared who gave the name of Ethel, one of the sitters slipped into the cabinet and found the cabinet empty. The light was put on and Mrs. Grover was then discovered in her underclothes draped with wet butter muslin, with a calico bandage round her head. The exposure was complete, and no attempt was made, either by Mrs. Grover *or* Mr. Hampson to disguise the fact. Mrs. Grover signed the following statement:—

> I, Elizabeth Grover, hereby acknowledge that on August 7, 1938, at 3 p.m., at a seance held in Wye View, Meadowbrook Road, Moreton, Wirral, I fraudulently produced the materialised form of "Albert Stewart" and others. These forms were produced by muslin and other material hidden on my person, in the presence of Edward Edwards, Caroline Davies, Lilian Roberts, Ethel Wearing, Dorothy H. Pugh, W. J. Lee, K. Nichols, W. O. S. Lee, Ada Lee.
>
> Signed,
>
> E. Grover,
> J. L. Hampson.

Mr. Hampson expressed his surprise, as he claimed that he had believed absolutely in Mrs. Grover, but as it was he who called the two ladies aside from the task of searching her, Mr. Hampson has signed the following statement:—

August 7, 1938.

I hereby agree that it was possible for Mrs. Grover to have secreted the muslin on her person, when I called, the two ladies who were examining Mrs. Grover into the seance room, to examine the gown she would wear,

J. L. Hampson.

The sitters acquit Mr, Hampson of wilful complicity and assert that he was as much surprised as they were.

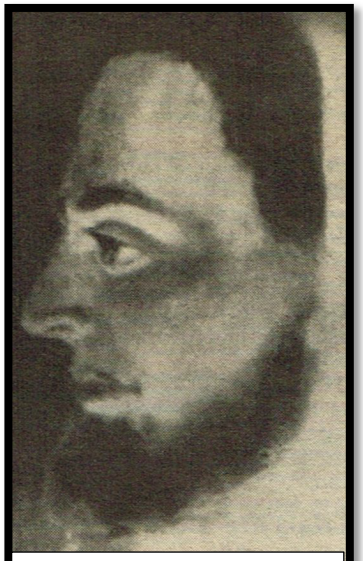
Mrs. Grover has been sitting for a number of years in Edinburgh, and from time to time reports have reached our editor. He had hopes that a reliable medium was in process of development, but some months ago Mr. Hampson offered *The Two Worlds* a series of advertisements announcing that Mr. Hampson and Mrs. Grover would be prepared to undertake materialising seances throughout the country. Our editor wrote Mr. Hampson *definitely* stating that while Mrs. Grover might possess mediumship, he was of the opinion that that mediumship was by no means sufficiently advanced to guarantee the giving of public seances, and advised that she remain for another year or two in her developing circle. It was a loss of advertisement income to us, but *The Two Worlds* has always put the interests of the Movement first. Steps were then taken to give Mrs. Grover publicity in other ways. Since then we have received quite a dozen adverse reports of seances held in different parts of the country, and at least five persons who have sat with her have called upon us personally to express their dissatisfaction, On the other hand we have had two reports only which express satisfaction, and in neither case did the evidence offered seem to us conclusive, otherwise we should have published it.

There are many materialising mediums who can produce good results when they sit in the same circle with the same sitters regularly, but who are quite incapable of producing satisfactory results when they have to sit with different sitters at each seance, It *may* be that Mrs. Grover possesses mediumship, though we have little evidence of it, but in any case, the best course open to her is to put herself in the hands of a carefully selected committee for a series of seances under rigid test conditions. It is a matter of deep regret to us to have to call attention to wilful fraud, but in the interests of honesty and for the protection of honest searchers, it has been the policy of *The Two Worlds* for fifty years to make such facts known wherever they occur.

E. W. O.

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The exposure of Mrs Elizabeth Grover brings out another problem that some mediums *claim* to have other mediums' guides/controls. This was indeed sometimes the case with Estelle Roberts' "Red Cloud." At one point the alleged guide made a statement to the effect… *that he only works through his medium and after her death he will not chose another medium*—this is in contrast to "John King", who, it is claimed, worked with numerous mediums for decades—even today!



Alleged image of Albert Stewart

The Grover séances claimed Helen Duncan's alleged control, "Albert Stewart." The story was written very much from the point of view that Helen Duncan was *herself aware* of the fact that Grover was to be exposed. The letter below is from one of the people present at the exposure and a signatory to the confession, Edward Edwards; the following is a quote from the Two Worlds, August 26th, 1938:

Will you permit me, Mr. Editor, to explain how and why the exposure came about? For some considerable time at Mrs. Grover's "seances," a form purporting to be "Albert Stewart" has been appearing and giving so-called advice to sitters, which, when acted upon, has caused quite a lot of sorrow and disappointment. So much so that Albert himself was greatly grieved at the havoc that was being done.


MRS. VICTORIA HELEN DUNCAN
Aged 32½ years

When Mrs. Duncan was in Birkenhead during May last, Albert spoke to me very feelingly about this, saying: "Mr. Edwards, can you not, for God's sake, do something to stop this use of my name," I asked what could I do. He then suggested that I write a disclaimer to the Spiritualist paper, which I did. The Editor can bear me out in that. The letters were not published. Laws of libel, etc., had to be considered. At a trance sitting, Albert again pleaded for something to be done. He was asked if we should arrange a sitting to try and find the lady out. This, through Mr. W. J. Lee, was eventually arranged. We were directed by Albert all through. He told us what Mrs. Grover would be wearing, how we were to sit, and what we would find when the light went on.

Mr. Hampson is quite right in saying that Mrs. Duncan knew of the proposed exposure. She was staying for the week-end at the home of Mrs. Roberts, some five miles away, as we wished to keep in touch with Albert, and to ask him if the arrangements we had made were satisfactory. Mrs. Duncan gave up part of her holiday so that we could do this. Apart from that she had nothing whatever to do with the exposure. It was carried through by personal friends of "Albert Stewart," solely in an endeavour to vindicate his name.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Hampson considers he was subjected to some little abuse, but, as I have stated previously his action in calling the ladies away from Mrs. Grover placed him under suspicion. Regarding, his statement that he has received letters from persons who still have faith in Mrs. Grover, and are prepared still to engage her, I believe it was the "Great Barnum" who said, "There is one born every minute." So consequently, I am not surprised at this. And now, Mr. Hampson, a message to yourself from the real "Albert Stewart," which asked me to pass on to you. Albert said you were not knowingly a party to the frauds perpetuated by Mrs. Grover. And, in conclusion, I can only say I regret to find you still sign yourself as "Acting Secretary for Mrs. Grover."

EDWARD EDWARDS.

5, White Street,
Birkenhead.

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Many points of view have been expressed and discussed and reasons given for and against conscious and unconscious fraud, etc. In the next issue Pioneer will look at the early Victorian mediums and the claims of fraud against them. As Ernest Oaten remarked:

> "… that it may be quite possible for suspicious sitters, who sit with the express purpose of exposing the medium to so permeate the mental atmosphere with their intentions that a medium acts under their suggestion. Mediums, being sensitives, must necessarily, in some measure, be influenced by the mental powers brought to bear upon them. The theory is perfectly valid, and is well recognised by all qualified experimenters. It is because of this that many people have been accused of fraud, when they have been perfectly innocent, …"

Given this article, “Fraud”, by Harry Boddington, it appears to suggest that perhaps the underlining factors of his article were the conviction and imprisonment of the physical materialisation medium Clive Holmes. It has been noted that it was Mrs. Wakely who said:

> “… several members of the Church Council (not all members of “The Probe”) had witnessed the so-called phenomena of Clive Holmes, and had positive proof of his fraudulent practices, …”

In Boddington's article, “Fraud”, he called “The Probe” members ‘Probitis’ and ‘Probites’, which he used throughout the article, but “The Probe” had nothing to do with the conviction of Holmes directly, albeit some were members of “The Probe.” Clearly its founder and Honorary Secretary, Mr Harold Chibbett, was in support of physical mediumship with “The Link”!

Below, Pioneer publishes the front-page story of the Two Worlds, July 30th, 1937:


CLIVE HOLMES

A MEDIUM CONVICTED

CLIVE HOLMES SENTENCED

FROM OUR SPECIAL REPREHENSIVE

WHATEVER one’s ideas of justice may be, the sentence on Clive Holmes will rankle in all minds. Robbery with violence gets no heavier sentence. A clean life’s record, honourable army service, with King George’s Jubilee medal, twenty years’ service in Government employ, employment which will automatically cease, with loss of pension, and not even the grace of the First Offender’s Act. All this will be the normal sequence of four months’ imprisonment, because a lad claimed to seize a piece of muslin in a seance room. The magistrate said he had “no doubt a clever conjuror could produce all the phenomena.”

The witnesses who testified to searching, stripping, handcuffing, and recognising spirit forms, and accepted the manifestations as genuine, were dismissed as “dupes.” The magistrate’s attitude towards psychic phenomena is illustrated by the following extract from his summing up: “A certain French cynic said, ‘Faith consists of believing what you know to be untrue.’ I cannot help thinking that the faith of these witnesses is faith of that variety.” He also decided that ‘the “religious atmosphere in which these manifestations occur all form part of the ‘false pretence.’ ”

Mr. Ronald Evans, who sat next to the prosecutrix and her son at the seance on May 20th, said he had known Clive Holmes about three years. He was not an official, but went as a seeker after truth. He had definitely recognised his grandmother because of a particular scar on her nose. He had also recognised his aunt Mary, seen two forms out at a time, and sometimes young children had manifested. (Holmes is 6ft. 2in.) Sometimes he had seen forms and heard Clive’s voice speaking from the cabinet at the same time.

Several people had inspected the cabinet on May 20th. On that night four forms materialised. Three were recognised by sitters. Mr. Smith had handcuffed Mr. Holmes. He was a stranger to him, and was there for the first time. Smith held the key. The fourth form did not “lash out” at Evans, but tried to strike the light down with the luminous slates. Mrs. Evans could not have fallen on to the floor, as he was sitting next to her and she would naturally have fallen on him. The spirit form seemed to rise from the floor about 3 ft. away from him. As it passed him he was tapped gently on the face. He then saw the beam of light which for a moment he mistook for a psychic phenomenon. The torch was directed towards the stomach of the spirit, which used the slates as a shield to ward it off. The form then

disappeared towards the cabinet. He saw nothing whatever of the alleged striking of either Mrs. Evans or her son. Mrs. Evans held his hand nearly all the time and sat still. He went to the cabinet within a few seconds and found Clive Holmes, still handcuffed, with his head lolling on one side. He saw no theatrical properties nor anything suspicious in the cabinet.

He helped Mr. Clive Holmes out of the cabinet still handcuffed. The key was obtained and he was released and helped downstairs and laid on the couch. The unscrewing of the handcuffs occupied two or three minutes. One of the sitters had taken off his coat and made a pillow of it. They did this because the medium was apparently lifeless. When they got him downstairs he seemed in a very bad state, and complained that he could not see. Cross-examination rebutted the suggestion that he had concocted this story in collaboration with the defendant's solicitor. He had summarised his evidence in a letter to a psychic journal before he saw the solicitor for the defence.

Mr. Forsyth said he took the photographs exhibited in court. They were the same as Mr. Boddington took at the same meeting. He examined the cabinet while he was busy fixing up the infra-red photographic apparatus. It was impossible for anything to be smuggled into the room after the examination, and he was quite sure there were no theatrical properties in the cabinet. He saw Mr. Boddington cut the lock of hair from the head of "White Moose." He was quite sure it was not Clive Holmes, and that Holmes was a genuine medium.

Miss Silver, a maidservant to the Holmes', said she had access to all cupboards, drawers, and every part of the house. She was a Baptist and did not go to the meetings, but had never seen anything suspicious. Part of her Work was to clean the seance room. The lino over the cabinet floor was one solid piece. She was certain there were no trap doors or hiding places for theatrical properties. There was no restriction at any time to prevent her going to cupboards and drawers.

Mr. Chitty submitted that on the evidence of the prosecution he had no case to answer. There had been no false pretence. No specific promise to produce anything. In any event, if it was held that the phenomena were not genuine it was for the prosecution to prove it.

The magistrate intervened, and said it had been a false representation to suggest that Holmes could produce genuine psychic phenomena. It was not genuine, it was a fraud.

Then as to Mrs. Evans. She had posed as a poor ignorant widow duped by Mr. Holmes. Her own evidence proved her to be a woman who ought to have known all about psychic phenomena as she had been a practising medium for twenty years, and her son claimed to have been clairvoyant all his life. She first instructed a solicitor to claim compensation on her behalf and then denied instructing him. He was quite sure that if Mr. Seaton had known the type of woman he was acting for he would not have taken up her case. Exactly the same phenomena occurred on the 20th as had occurred when Mr. Holmes was sitting under strict test conditions. The material with which the forms are clothed cannot be distinguished from the manufactured article. If, therefore, any of it is seized it is no proof of fraud. If Mr. Evans could come armed with a torch, why not also a piece of muslin as well. This quite apart from the white scarf which Mrs. Evans admitted losing on that night.

In summing up, the magistrate said: "The case merely concerns what happened on the 20th May. Matters followed their usual course until Mr. Evans produced a torch. Mr. Evans' sworn evidence is that he saw the defendant. He apparently did not attempt to do Mr. Evans any bodily harm, but in the struggle his mother may have been struck. The fact of the handcuffs being used also constitutes a pretence that the phenomena were genuine. It is said, amongst other things, that white light would destroy the spirit.

But this never happened. It is said that the Evans' were inspired by spite against the Holmes' and brought the muslin in themselves. It is extremely unlikely. If any competent conjuror were asked to simulate the phenomena I have no doubt he could do so. I think that the whole thing can be reproduced. It was therefore a fraudulent series of seances. The procedure followed on that night was no different from those on any other night. Therefore representations were given to Mrs. Evans to produce genuine phenomena. She paid money by reason of these false pretences. I must therefore find him guilty. Police testified to the witnesses' good record. Mr. Chitty reminded the magistrate that the defendant had already lost a source of income by resigning his post as chorister. Also that his client had held a steady appointment for twenty years, and that he made no personal gain from the work of the centre. To this the magistrate dissented. Bail was demanded in £250. On further protest this was reduced to the prisoner's own recognisances in £50 and two sureties of £25 each. Bail was immediately arranged. Notice of appeal was given.

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The Two Worlds, October 1st, 1937:

CLIVE HOLMES APPEAL FAILS

The Clive Holmes appeal has failed. A grave miscarriage of justice has occurred. In the present state of the law and the prevailing ignorance of psychic science, nothing else was to be expected, no matter how honourable or innocent a medium may be.

Had I no other evidence of the genuineness of his mediumship than the letter I enclose from Mr. Case, the Vice-President of the Cambridge Psychic Research Society, I should hold myself justified in proclaiming his imprisonment a martyrdom.

At the moment, my energies are being directed into providing a means of livelihood for the martyred man. To this end, I am collecting all available reports on his mediumship and will publish them with an analysis on physical phenomena generally. Every aspect of the case will be reviewed in my forthcoming book on *Clive Holmes' Martyrdom*. I aim at producing a cheap volume at 2s. 6d. each. Subscribers helping me to cover the initial outlay by ordering their copies in advance will receive them at 2s. each. The entire proceeds, after paying costs of advertising and production, will go either to Clive Holmes as salary for organising a centre, or to the expenses of its creation. Full details will be stated in the book itself.

In the letter which follows, note the facts. Flesh is nipped into the lock of the handcuffs. It remains fixed until after the seance. Blood flows, which proves the location has never shifted.

> Dear Mr. Boddington,—I have been following with great interest the case of Clive Holmes, also your articles in *The Two Worlds*. It may interest you to know that in June of last year, in company with the President and other members of the above Society (Cambridge Society for Psychical Research), I attended one of the seances at Blackheath.
>
> I was invited to secure Mr. Holmes to his chair, and in doing so caught a small piece of the flesh of his wrist in the handcuffs. He told me not to bother about undoing them again. When I released him after the sitting, I found the flesh still nipped in the handcuffs and a small quantity of blood on the wrist. This seems to rule out any idea that he could have been released during the sitting.

I may say we were invited to search the room before the seance commenced, which I can assure you we did thoroughly, and were satisfied that there were no props or make-up concealed anywhere.—Yours faithfully,

A. J. CASE (Vice-President, C.S.P.R.

P.S.—Quite a number of materialisations took place, and in our opinion there was no loop hole for fraud.

The Committee and Mrs. Holmes tender their thanks for assistance rendered in their hour of need. The long period between arrest and hearing of the appeal, with all sources of income dried up, has proved a great strain. If no donors object, the Committee contemplate cleating all liabilities to date and pacing the balance towards clearing the rent as it comes due.

HARRY BODDINGTON,

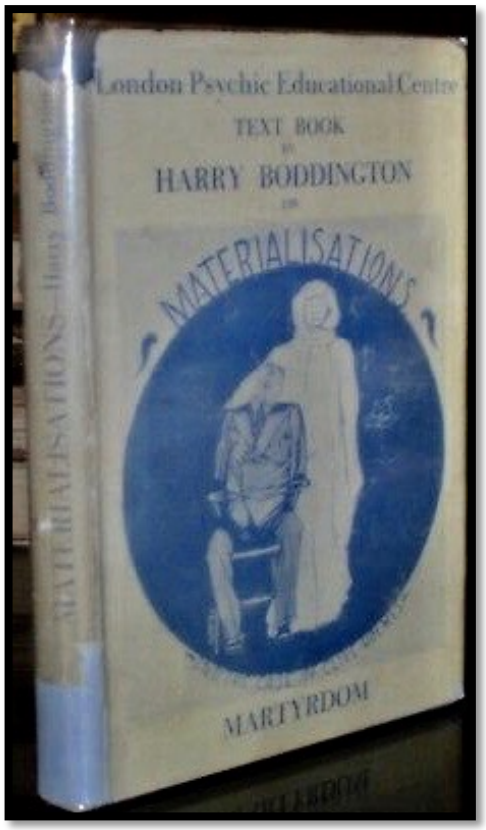
Director, London Educational Psychic Centre.

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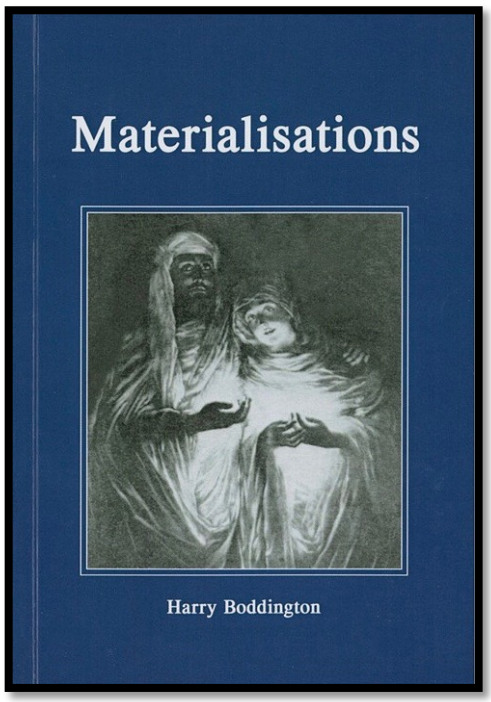
For further information please see:

"Materialisations: a critical analysis of physical phenomena, an instructive text-book showing the martyrdom of Clive Holmes"

by Harry Boddington, published by Psychic Press for the London Psychic Educational Centre [1938]



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Available at the SNU online shop
and the Arthur Findlay College (AFC)

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A QUESTION OF FRAUD!
Continued … Pt II.

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In the last issue of Pioneer, an article by Harry Boddington was published, titled "Fraud", which delved into the various avenues of fraud in physical mediumship/materialisation either by conscious action or, indeed, totally unconscious action. It was noted:

> Do mediums consciously premeditate fraud or is the fraud carried out unconsciously by *low* mischievous spirits? Some will argue that the medium premeditated the fraud and is therefore conscious and responsible for their actions, whilst others would say that due to the influence of *low* mischievous spirits or of the sitters in the séance the medium is totally unaware of their actions, as they are in a somnambulistic state and therefore cannot be accountable for their *unconscious* actions.

This led to some mediums being accused, and sometimes convicted, of *fraud* who were *in fact* acting unconsciously owing to the medium being in a trance or somnambulistic state, but unconsciously acting, not under the influence of the medium's control-guide but under the direct influence of a sitter or sitters in the circle or *low* mischievous spirits. In the last issue former SNU President Ernest Oaten noted:

> "… that it may be quite possible for suspicious sitters, who sit with the express purpose of exposing the medium to so permeate the mental atmosphere with their intentions that a medium acts under their suggestion. Mediums, being sensitives, must necessarily, in some measure, be influenced by the mental powers brought to bear upon them. The theory is perfectly valid, and is well recognised by all qualified experimenters. It is because of this that many people have been accused of fraud, when they have been perfectly innocent, …"

In the case of the exposure of Mrs Elizabeth Grover, Oaten further added:

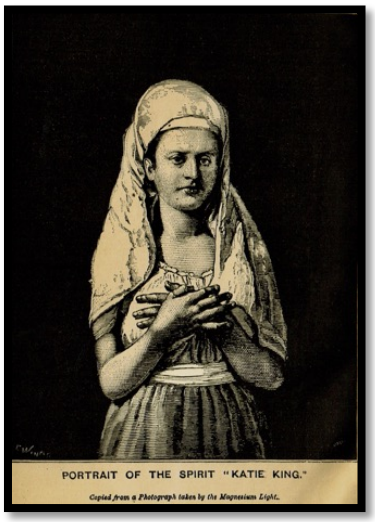
> It is always well to remember, then, that a medium in the seance-room may be liable to act unconsciously to psychological factors of which the sitters may be largely ignorant. In the days of long ago when such matters were imperfectly understood, many accusations of fraud were made against mediums which had no foundation other than the ignorance of the sitters. Such considerations, however, are not an excuse for fraud —in fact, when they are understood they make fraud easily apparent. When, however, as in the case of Mrs. Grover, it can be definitely shown that preparations were made beforehand to practice fraud by carrying into the seance-room the materials used for fraudulent purposes, such as butter-muslin and band of linen with a large safety pin in it, there is only one conclusion to be reached, namely, that a deliberate attempt had been made beforehand to deceive the sitters.

The Pioneer Editor noted:

> It is often claimed that physical mediums are sometimes badly injured, with some claims of actual death as a result of a spirit form, ectoplasm, etc. being grabbed. There are numerous accounts but there appears no firm documented material, medical evidence, etc. of such injuries.

In this issue Pioneer will start at the beginnings of full materialisation in Britain, and look at the alleged exposures of the Victorian physical mediums; many were physically grabbed to expose them—but were they *all* conscious of their actions? In addition, were there any serious injuries or deaths to the person when the alleged spirit form was grabbed, as is sometimes claimed in reports?

In November 2010, for over a year, I ran a series in Psypioneer titled: "The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England". Naturally some of the material will be reproduced here but, in general, I will cite new research materials and a different perspective. One early researcher from the start of form materialisation was William Henry Harrison (1841-1897), who was the founder editor of the Spiritualist journal, "The Spiritualist Newspaper" (1869-1882). Harrison was an experienced photographer, which would aid him in his investigations into this early phenomenon in Modern Spiritualism.



When the name Florence Cook is mentioned, it is the scientist William Crookes who springs to mind! As her researcher, etc., however, it would be, I believe, fairer to include William Harrison equally. Harrison was one of the most experienced sitters with Florence Cook, covering at least two years during her stages of development to full materialisation, and he was the first to obtain photographs of the alleged materialised figure, "Katie King".[15] Many of the books and reports claim that the photographs of the alleged materialisations of Katie King were taken by William Crookes but in fact they were taken by William Harrison at his séances with Florence Cook, albeit Crookes may have been present at some of these séances. See Pioneer, Vol. 5, No. 6: "Florence (Florrie) Cook - Corner & Katie King Photographs".

Below is quoted from "The Spiritualist", December 1st, 1872 and gives an account of Mrs Mary Andrews, who appears to be credited as the first medium with whom spirit faces, etc. began to appear regularly:

SEANCES AT MORAVIA, UNITED STATES.

The *Banner of Light*, of November 16th, contains the following account of five *seances* for spirit faces, held at the house of Mr. John Andrews, Moravia, New York State. Mrs. Andrews was the medium, and it will be noticed that the spirits have the power of making themselves visible, so as to be identified by their friends,—a stage of development not yet reached in England. The following description was written and signed by Messrs. Daniel, D. Bonnett, and John Hayward, of New York:—

> In the light circle, where everything in the room could be seen, we saw several faces, arms, and hands. The faces resembled those whom they represented so closely, that in nearly all cases they were readily recognised.
>
> The eyes of one figure were extremely bright and clear; the beards of some of the men were seen so plainly that the colour could be easily distinguished. A pure white handkerchief was held in fall view, in the hands of another dressed in female attire; it was then by her placed over her mouth while coughing; she then withdrew it, and on it was a large spot of fresh-looking blood.
>
> We afterwards saw the head of a coloured female; her curly hair was partly covered with a white kerchief; she gave her name as 'Bet.' She was not known to anyone present. John Pierpoint came, and was recognised simultaneously by many. As viewed by us, he seemed to be an old man with long white hair and beard. Before leaving he delivered a short address, concluding with these words: "Thank God, we live after death!" Giving his name, he disappeared from view. The son of Mr. Pope, a Universalist minister of Hyannis, Mass., showed himself to his father, mother, and others, three different times. At one time he said that drowning was not so hard a death

[15] Portrait of the spirit "Katie King" (as shown): Psypioneer, Vol. 6, No. 9.

as was thought; he said further that Spiritualism was true, and requested his father to preach it, promising that he (his son Milton) would inspire him. Mr. Pope stated, after the *seance*, that one of his sons, named Milton, was drowned a few years ago, and he was fully convinced that he saw and conversed with that son.

Three brothers, of the name of Weaver, from Baltimore, Md., recognised one of the faces as that of their mother; the kind of cap on her head, and the way she wore a kerchief about her neck (one of the brothers informed us) being strong points identical with her while in earth-life. The face and hands of another lady were plainly seen; the hair was dark and glossy; her hands were nearly of the same colour and appearance as if alive; on her wrist was a bracelet, and on the small finger of her left hand a plain ring; both had the colour and lustre of fine gold.

[…]

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Mary Andrews is reported to have remained conscious during the phenomena; it appears she started her form materialisations in late 1871.[16] Soon afterwards the spotlight was pointed to London. In January 1872 Mrs Agnes Elizabeth Guppy [17] became the first British medium to materialise spirit hands and faces, followed by Frank Herne and Charles Williams, followed closely with the introduction of the teenager Florence Cook.

Reference has been made to the then weekly periodical, " 'The Spiritualist Newspaper'—A Record of the Progress of the Science and Ethics of Spiritualism". Its editor, William Harrison, was without doubt a major historian in the early phases of *form materialisations*.[18] Unlike William Crookes, Harrison was a Spiritualist; although Crookes is often stated as being a Spiritualist this *would not* be the case until many years later, after the death of his wife. In "The Spiritualist" for February 1st, 1873 Harrison gives an informative overview of its progress up to the beginning of 1873:

SPIRIT FACES

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THE systematic appearance of spirit-faces to ten or twenty people at the same time, at *seances*, although a comparatively new manifestation, has now developed to such large proportions that it may be as well to review the whole range of facts, as far as they have been recorded. In all the past history of Spiritualism, there are occasional instances of the appearance of a spirit to one or more persons; for instance; Lord Lindsay and Mr. Home once saw the spirit of Mr. Home's first wife, Sacha; and Mr. S. C. Hall and several other witnesses saw the materialised spirit-form of Mr. Hall's sister at a *seance*. The regular occurrence, however, of such striking and interesting manifestations, is a thing of comparatively recent date.

[16] In the latter part of 1871 the American papers contained accounts of sittings held with a new medium, Mrs Andrews, at the house of a farmer named Keeler, in Moravia, New York, not far from Auburn. At these sittings spirit hands and faces were shown from the cabinet, and spirit forms, frequently recognised as those of deceased relations, walked about the room and conversed with the sitters. (*Mediums of the 19th Century*, Frank Podmore)

Mary Andrews was of Irish parentage and lived for some time as a domestic in Mr Keeler's family. She was described (Dec., 1871) as "a well-formed, comely married woman between twenty-five and thirty years old, and the mother of three little girls". From p. 32, *The Proof Palpable of Immortality*, by Epes Sargent.

[17] Sometimes called Elizabeth Guppy – later Volckman.

[18] Frank Podmore commented: "The Spiritualist was avowedly intended to represent the scientific element. It essayed primarily to record the phenomena, to analyse the evidence, and discuss the explanations, and proposed to defer theological and Socialist speculations until a more convenient season. This paper, which was conducted with fairness and ability for some years, did in effect adopt a more critical standpoint than any of its predecessors or contemporaries, and did contrive to keep clear of theological controversy and irrelevant humanitarian enthusiasms."

One Sunday morning, about a year ago, Mr. Benjamin Coleman, of Upper Norwood, called our attention to several New York and Boston newspapers, containing column after column of descriptions of the *seances* through the mediumship of Mrs. Andrews, at Moravia, U.S.; the *New York Sun*, a daily paper, had sent a correspondent to the scene of the occurrences, and he fully authenticated the facts. Mrs. Andrews, it appeared, sat for manifestations in a cabinet, as the Davenport brothers did, but instead of spirit hands and arms making their appearance, spirit-faces were formed in the dark, and afterwards showed themselves at the opening in the cabinet, so as to be recognised by friends or relations present. The faces were living, and could in some instances talk. At once full details of the new manifestations were published in *The Spiritualist*.



Mrs. Guppy

Mr. Guppy read the account thus published in these pages, and resolved to try at home whether he could not get spirit-faces through the powerful mediumship of Mrs. Guppy. He accordingly turned a photographic dark room into a cabinet, by cutting square openings in its wooden sides, out of which the spirits might thrust their heads if they could make them. Spirit faces were seen, obtained in a very feeble light at first; and a long account of the first manifestations at Mr. Guppy's; written by Mr. Harrison, was published in the *Daily Telegraph*. Shortly afterwards, Messrs. Herne and Williams began to obtain spirit faces at their dark *seances,* the spirits themselves making an artificial phosphorescent light to reveal their features to the observers. Next, Miss Florence Cook, of Hackney, and her spirits resolved to give their time and attention almost exclusively to the production of spirit-faces. Lastly, Mr. Holmes, an American medium, who recently arrived in England, began, a few months ago, to obtain spirit face manifestations.

Before the manifestations became common, it was thought that the appearance of spirits to several persons at once would be one of the strongest proofs of spirit identity that could possibly be had, but the facts have not borne out the anticipation. The faces are *manufactured* by the spirits, and are not usually like themselves as they are at present, but are made to resemble the faces they had on earth, in order that friends present may recognise them. The spirits who make these wonderful living faces often speak of them in a most irreverent manner, just as a hairdresser might speak of the wax dummies in his shop window. "That last spirit had scarcely any nose," remarked an observer, one evening. "Yes," replied the spirit Katie, "I know that. I only had a little dab of stuff left, and stuck it on for a nose."

In the earlier development of the manifestations, the first spirits who showed themselves were not deceased relatives of the sitters, but the chief spirits almost always in attendance upon the mediums for the production of the physical phenomena,—the spirits calling themselves John and Katie. Most of the first spirit-faces strongly resembled the faces of the mediums in shape, though not usually in colour. Many can testify how much Miss Cook's "Katie" usually resembles herself, though there are often unaccountable differences. Mr. Burns and Mr. Harrison have testified that Mr. Williams's "Katie" had



Florence Cook / Corner

features much like himself, though softened, more effeminate, and of fairer complexion. Mr. Guppy has published that in the lines of the eyes and nose, the faces he has seen through Mrs. Guppy's mediumship strongly resemble herself'; he also says that the faces seen by him through Mr. Herne's mediumship were much like Mr. Herne. Mr. Holmes, who has been the most successful medium as yet in getting recognisable faces, said that at first they bore a certain amount of resemblance to himself, but not enough to excite comment.



"Katie"

In the early days of Spiritualism the question of the possibility of the duplication of the whole or portions of the human form had been mooted. An article published by Mr. Coleman in the *Spiritual Magazine* of March, 1865, tells how, at the house of Sir Hesketh Fleetwood, where the Davenports gave a *seance,* a match was suddenly struck by a spirit, and the "double" of Ira Davenport, who himself was firmly bound in his chair, was seen gliding before the observers. Mr. Coleman states also that Miss Laura Edmonds, a medium, the daughter of Judge Edmonds, of New York, had the power occasionally of leaving her body, and appearing to friends at a distance. She frequently appeared in this way, and delivered messages to Miss Mapes, daughter of Professor Napes, the American agricultural chemist. Once, Mr. Coleman was on the platform with Mr. Fergusson at one of the Davenports' public exhibitions. The brothers had been elaborately tied and sealed as usual by a committee elected by the observers. Their hands, moreover, were filled with flour, as usual, to show that they did not unclasp them during the dark *séance*. Four hands came out of the cabinet, and after the *seance* Mr. Fergusson said to Mr. Coleman,—"Did you see those hands?" "Yes," was the reply, "and one of them was covered with flour." Mr. Fergusson remarked,—"It's a good job the audience didn't notice it, or we have had a row." There was a particularly noisy audience that night.

The Banner of Light recently stated how some ink was squirted by observers on some spirit-hands, and the ink was afterwards found on the hands of the boy medium in the cabinet, so that he was denounced as an impostor there and then. A gentleman, who had seen spirit-hands thrust out of one end of a shawl, when the boy simply put his hands under the other end to get darkness, was not satisfied. He tried experiments, and discovered that colouring matters placed upon spirit-hands, were afterwards found upon different parts of the body of the medium. The spirits told him that the colouring substances went into every part of the body of the medium. A little tar was once rubbed round the end of one of the paper speaking-tubes used at the *seances* of Mrs. Andrews, at Moravia, and a ring of tar was afterwards found round her month, yet the spirits who appeared at her *seances* had been recognised by their friends at the rate of more than a dozen a week, so that there was no reason to suppose imposture on the part of the medium.

Recently, at one of Miss Cook's *seances*, some violet ink was rubbed on the back of a spirit-hand for the purpose of experiment, and the smear—larger than half-a-crown—was afterwards found on the arm of the medium near the elbow. Mrs. Holmes tells us that once she was at a dark *seance* in America. A gentleman called suddenly for a light, saying he had caught a hand. A great, long additional arm and hand was then seen protruding from the body of the medium, and it shot back into one of the normal arms of the medium as swiftly as the eye could follow it. At dark *seances* spirit-hands and arms are very busy. The tying of the medium does not appear to prevent their formation, but the holding of his hands seems, so far as we have seen, to do so. After a short time has elapsed, the holding of the medium's hands does not matter much; but if the hands be held closely from the first; it is, probably, a barrier to the production of many manifestations. This is one of the many reasons why persons of a thoroughly suspicions nature, get fewer tests and more inconclusive manifestations than nobler people.

It would seem that the spirits always in close companionship with powerful physical mediums, because of similarity of tastes and character, can make themselves visible with more ease than others. They rise out of the bodies of the mediums, and, at first, exactly resemble the mediums, though they can change their features within certain limits before they show themselves. They do not materialise more of their bodies than is necessary, but usually form only a head, and sometimes arms and hands. The faces at Mr. Holmes's *seances* do not seem to come from him, but have been seen forming near the ceiling of the dark room, and then floating down towards the opening. Katie has been seen rising from the body of Miss Cook; and while she manifested, she was connected with the medium by cloudy, faintly luminous threads.

The recognisable faces of deceased persons seem to be formed with more difficulty, and to be able in all cases to bear less light, than the faces of the spirits in affinity to the medium. The latter spirits have the advantage of constant practice in making themselves visible, which, they say, is one reason why they can bear more light, their first attempts producing but weak results. The recognisable faces have less life in them, and but few of them can talk.



"JOHN KING."
A Materialised Spirit-form.—Medium, Charles E. Williams.

At Mrs. Andrews's in America, where this kind of manifestation is more developed, they can talk more than they can at present, through any British medium. In no case, as yet; has a recognisable face been known to come directly from the face of the medium, in the same manner that the faces of their attendant spirits do. Some of the heads are bound up in white spirit drapery, or have white turbans upon them, the object, they say, being to economise power, as the heads would not last so long were they bare, and wholly materialised. The intelligences animating the heads for the time being, say that both light and the intense gaze of the eyes of the spectators, give them a burning sensation while manifesting, and cause them to feel tied.

The influence of the spiritual state of the observers finds optical expression at face *seances*. Worldly and suspicions people get the feebler manifestations; the spirits then have often a pale, ghastly look, as usual when the power is weak. Spiritual people, in whose presence the medium feels thoroughly happy, see by far the finest manifestations.

Different mediums, however, vary very considerably in their power of resisting and overcoming adverse mental and psychological influences. Although spiritual phenomena are governed by fixed laws, those laws so work in practice that Spiritualism undoubtedly partakes much of the character of a special revelation to special people.

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Below, Harrison again gives an equally valuable overview of the different classes of form manifestations in "The Spiritualist Newspaper" dated December 28th, 1877:

CLASSES OF FORM MANIFESTATIONS

OBSERVATION shows that there are two great classes of form manifestations; in the one class the forms appear with living, flexible features, plainly visible to all the observers, and in the others the features are rigid, or not visible at all.

FORMS WITH FLEXIBLE FEATURES

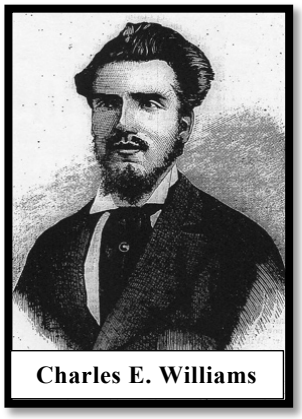
Sometimes when strong mediums, like Dr. Slade, are sitting with their hands in full view, in broad daylight, living hands and arms are thrust into view from some position where shade prevails, usually from under a table. These hands, when we saw them in Dr. Slade's case, were apparently the duplicates of his own, like the invisible hands which do the writing on his slates, for the said writing generally bears a very strong resemblance to his own, tending to show that it was executed by fingers and muscles like those of his own hand.

And this fact of the duplication of hands and forms has been demonstrated in many ways during a long course of years.

It was first well proved through the mediumship of Florence Cook (Mrs. Corner); indeed, it was better and more continuously tested in her case than in any other. She frequently left her own home to present the phenomena in the rooms and laboratories of men of science, and submitted patiently to every test which they could devise. For the last two years or so of her mediumship she scarcely ever sat without being carefully secured with tapes, applied by scientific and carefully considered methods by numbers of responsible people; the knots were sealed with signet rings. The upshot of all this was to prove that in some cases a separate form, bearing a strong resemblance to herself, was materialised; also that the power about her could free her, like the Davenports and other mediums, from any kind of bonds, and return her to the same.

The same phenomena took place with the Davenports, for there are records that when lights have been suddenly struck at their *séances* one of the Brothers has been seen in duplicate.

It is the same with Mr. Eglinton. The materialised form bears a strong resemblance to himself, as testified to at the last meeting of the National Association of Spiritualists by Mr. Fitz-Gerald. Moreover, in one case it was the medium himself, for Mr. Stainton Moses recently recorded that, at Mrs. Makdougall Gregory's, Mr. Eglinton became covered with white drapery, and that when his entranced figure stood before them there was no medium on the sofa where he had been lying. Mr. A. P. Wallace and others searched him thoroughly after one of his sittings, and no white drapery was found upon him. Yet had the form been seized, plenty would have been obtained, and this shows how much injury might be done by rough "investigators" to the reputation of an innocent medium, the subject of abnormal phenomena understood neither by himself nor the sitters.


Charles E. Williams

The late Mr. Samuel Guppy once printed in these pages how through the mediumship of his wife (now Mrs. Volckman) he had seen materialised faces strongly resembling her own.

With Mr. Williams a form appears, with a face strongly resembling his own in the lines of the eyes and nose, when a close view of it is obtained in a good light. This form has sometimes

appeared under good test conditions in an open circle with no cabinet, and while the medium was held by both hands.

Mr. C. P. B. Alsop has often seen in Mr. Herne's presence a form, the duplicate in features of that medium.

In the presence of Miss K. Cook a form appears, which on the one occasion we saw it had a face resembling that of the medium.

The forms once presented through the mediumship of Miss Showers, bore a strong resemblance to herself.

Mr. C. C. Massey and others can testify that at Miss Lottie Fowler's form seances, the faces strongly resembled her own.

Mr. Olive told us that Mr. W. G. Haxby's recent *séances* at his house, the faces had some similarity to that of the medium, but that some of them had beards.

Mrs. Fay's spirit forms, as observed by Mr. Serjeant Cox, ourselves, and others, resembled herself, and were accompanied by undoubted evidence that the medium herself was not presented.

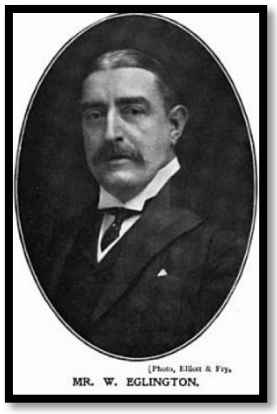
The Blackburn Spiritualists are quite satisfied that Miss Wood's forms resemble the medium.

Thus it is well established that there is a class of manifestations in which forms and faces, more or less the duplicates in appearance of those of the medium, present themselves to view, and that the intelligences animating the forms claim to be spirits. These forms have living flexible features, which are seen by all the observers, but while they are visible, the medium is usually in a cabinet out of sight; on other occasions his body, transformed by abnormal power, and released from the securest bonds, is presented to the gaze of the observers.

FORMS WITHOUT FLEXIBLE FEATURES

In another class of manifestations, the medium is in full view, instead of in a cabinet, but the forms do not generally as yet under these conditions, present flexible features, with the life in them visible to all the observers.

Once, while Mr. Eglinton was held on both sides, at the house of Mrs. Makdougall Gregory, a draped form, with no features visible, rose from the floor behind him to a height of about two feet six inches, then sank again.


[Photo, Elliott & Fry.
MR. W. EGLINGTON.

Sometimes when Mrs. Volckman has been similarly held, not in her own home, a form has appeared in the same way, without the presentation to the gaze of all the observers, of flexible, living features.

In the presence of Miss Cook, in Signor Rondi's studio, a form appears while the medium is in full view; but it does not present living, flexible features.

Thus the established manifestations divide themselves into two classes as yet—those *with* flexible, living features, visible to all the sitters, and those *without* flexible, living features, visible to all the sitters. We have patiently watched for years for a living, flexible face in a good light, which face bore no resemblance to that of the medium, and was not produced on his or her own premises. Hitherto this search has been prosecuted without success.

Mr. A. R. Wallace and Mr. Crookes have witnessed a great number of form manifestations, without once recording, that off the premises of the medium, they have seen a living, flexible, materialised spirit-face, bearing no resemblance to that of the sensitive. Neither has Mr. Varley made any such record.

We have been present at *séances*, on the premises of professional mediums, where perfectly honest and enthusiastic sitters saw anything the spirits gave them a suggestion that they ought to see, accompanied by any objective "something" which gave them a slight excuse for seeing the thing desired. Also, on the premises of mediums, who afterwards proved not to be trustworthy, we have seen a few living faces, bearing no resemblance to their own. But, sweeping these things away as "not yet proven," one can but wait patiently for living, flexible faces to make themselves visible to all the sitters at once, off the premises of the medium, in a good light.

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Editor's Note:

William Harrison gives the reader a good overview of this new phase of physical phenomena which started to change the face of Modern Spiritualism in England in early 1872. It can be noted that in the early stages of form materialisation it would be the early controls who *were almost always in attendance upon the mediums for the production of the physical phenomena—the spirits calling themselves John and Katie*.

This is referring to John King, his wife and his daughter. As the phenomena grew, this could become confusing, as both wife and daughter were called "Katie King"! Later, the recognisable deceased relatives and friends of the circle sitters would come. Generally, the materialised spirit-faces strongly resembled the various mediums; marks made on the materialised form were later represented on the medium.

Further noted is the manifesting spirit sometimes rising out of the medium's body*; ...at first, exactly resemble the mediums, though they can change their features within certain limits before they show themselves*.

To conserve the required power to form the materialisation only the necessary body parts were formed; *...usually form only a head, and sometimes arms and hands*.

Recognisable faces of family, friends, etc. were formed with much more difficulty and needed more subtle light than those of the spirit controls owing to the spirit attendants having constant practice in the development of the medium. *The recognisable faces have less life in them, and but few of them can talk*.

It is also noted that some of the heads were bound; *...in white spirit drapery, or have white turbans upon them, the object, they say, being to economise power, as the heads would not last so long were they bare, and wholly materialised*.

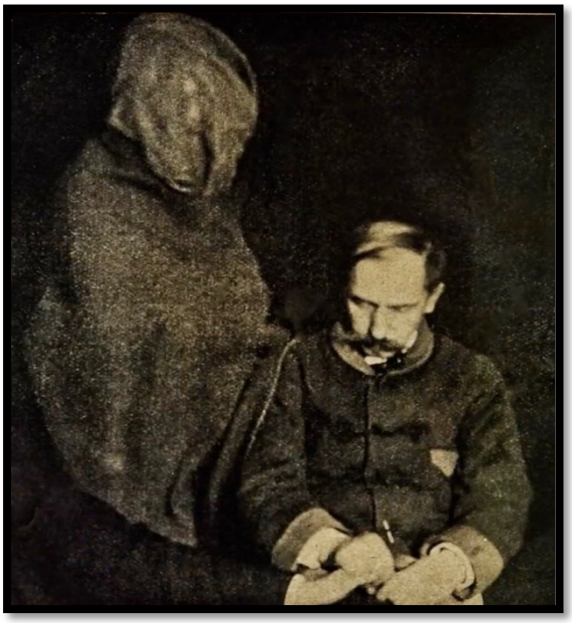
The most constant factor in all the above articles giving these early stages of form materialisation is the *fact* that the materialised form bears a strong resemblance to the medium! The above examples of *duplicates in appearance* of those of the mediums shown were British mediums: William Eglinton, Charles Williams, Frank Herne, Kate Selina Cook (Florence's younger sister), Miss Mary Rosina Showers, Annie Eva Fay, Catherine Wood and Florence Cook.

All of them were strongly subjected to allegations of deliberate conscious fraud, given that their alleged spirit forms strongly resembled the medium at this time and also the fact that the

medium could shed their restraints and be found out of the cabinet, etc.; this would be, of course, a disadvantage to the genuine medium and an advantage to the fraudulent medium!

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The above information about the first five years of form materialisation in England indeed gives the reader some reference and idea of these earlier stages and its problems. It can be noted that the withdrawal of the necessary fluids, more widely known today as ectoplasm,[19] did not appear to present itself in the way of later mediums from the mouth, etc., as with, for example, Helen Duncan.



At Christmas Week 2019 at the Arthur Findlay College my lecture focused on the Polish physical medium Franek Kluski and I strongly noted that Kluski's mediumship was reminiscent of past mediums Henry Slade, Florence Cook, Catherine Wood, etc. Until researching this article, both the old and the new material, I did not realise just how accurate that statement was; his remarkable mediumship represented much of the early mediumship given here. For example, Kluski's forms were doubles of himself; he produced forms with and without flexible features, etc. I have been wondering if in fact Kluski was the first to produce ectoplasm being shown *objectively* to come from the body, e.g., the mouth, but further research is required.

Pioneer will, at this time, focus on the most famous British medium of this era, Florence (Florrie) Cook, who in April 1874 married Captain Edward Elgie Corner. Following Florence's death on April 22nd 1904 from pneumonia, aged 47, he married her sister, Kate Selina Cook (1859-1923), in October 1907.

William Crookes, who investigated Florence Corner, was, as previously noted, not convinced



of the alleged identity of Katie King, who claimed to be the daughter of Sir Henry Owen Morgan, ex-buccaneer and Governor of Jamaica under Charles II. Her name was Annie Owen Morgan. The name "John King", assumed by her father, was never satisfactorily explained: his identity with the Governor, Sir Henry Morgan, has never been established. Crookes, in a letter to Professor Brofferio in 1894, said:

> *All that I am concerned in is that invisible and intelligent beings exist, who say that they are the spirits of dead persons. But proof that they really are the individuals they assume to be, which I require in order to believe it, I have never received, though I am disposed to admit that many of my friends assert they have actually obtained the desired proofs, and I myself have already frequently been many times on the verge of this conviction.*
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> *Für den Spiritismus*. Leipsic. 1894.

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[19] The term generally used at this period would have been "psychic force".

Below are a few quotes from "The Spiritualist Newspaper" dated December 12th, 1873:

SPIRIT FORMS

Dr. Purdon, of Sandown, Isle of Wight, was the first to see the face of the spirit Katie in strong daylight, and he was exceedingly startled and pained to discover the strong resemblance of her features to the features of Miss Cook, which, it will be remembered, caused the medium a great deal of trouble at the time, until it was discovered that the faces through all the other mediums in London, bore more or less resemblance to themselves. It appears as if spirits, when clothing themselves with matter, find it most convenient to take the material form of the instrument through whom they act. Although the faces of Miss Cook and Katie were very much alike, it was soon found that there were also strange differences, varying in amount at different times. Sometimes the spirit face would be half as big again as the face of the medium, and the parts of the face which seemed to be least subject to change, were the lines of the nose and eyebrows. The similarity of the features of the media and the spirits, soon gave rise to an elaborate system of testing, to relieve mediums, especially those engaged in the rough work of proselytising, from the odium of being supposed to do the manifestations themselves, so that at the present time nearly all the mediums in England who get spirit forms and faces, are bound with ropes and sealed with signet rings in their cabinets while the manifestations are going on.

"To return to Miss Cook's *seances*. After a time Katie began to exhibit not only the whole of her bare face, but her hands and arms in a strong light. In these early stages of the development of the manifestations, Miss Cook was nearly always awake while the manifestations were going on, but sometimes when the weather was bad, or the other conditions unfavourable, Katie would entrance her; the effect of the said entrancement being simply to increase the power of the manifestations. The medium usually objected to be entranced, because she very naturally wished to see and hear what was going on, although sometimes the sight made her nervous. She said that it was not pleasant to be shut up in a nearly dark room with a person in white floating about in it, who had a head and shoulders, but no legs or body. The activity of the mind of the medium also seemed to interfere with the manifestations, and after a time Katie never appeared without the medium being in a trance.

"From that time for the next year or two, Miss Cook never saw the materialised form of the spirit Katie, although of late she has seen her again on one or two occasions. Now that the spirit Katie appears in full form, and even walks about in the room outside the cabinet, she says if her medium were to wake up while she (Katie) is outside the cabinet, she would be in considerable danger; she also sometimes says that malignant spirits occasionally attempt to wake up the medium at inconvenient times."



Some sittings, for recognisable faces, were held at Miss Cook's, and the spirit Katie said that while they were showing themselves, on no account was the medium to go to sleep, and that if she did she was to be taken out of the cabinet at once. It soon therefore became clear, that the "recognisable face manifestations" were altogether different in kind from the appearance of the John's and Katie's, who so commonly manifest through different physical mediums.[20] Katie said that

[20] As previously noted, John King, his wife and his daughter could become confusing, as both wife and daughter were called Katie King. Katie King senior was active with other mediums, for example Charles Williams.

while these strange faces were about, malignant spirits who sometimes tried to interfere with their work, always began by trying to put the medium to sleep. It will be remembered also, as another example of the way in which different manifestations fit in with each other, that Mrs. Andrews is always awake in the cabinet while recognisable faces come, and she, like the observers outside, comments upon their general appearance.

"Another circumstance was noted in connection with the advent of these recognisable faces at Miss Cook's. Noises and disturbances became common in the house, and trinkets and other small articles were often missing; sometimes they were found hidden away, and sometimes stolen altogether. It was quite clear that the medium was passing through a period of danger, and there were disagreeable influences about. Katie said it was an ordeal which all mediums must pass through before getting recognisable faces.

"Of course, when low spirits of this nature were about, every kind of protection should be thrown over the medium, but it chanced that at the same period visitors were admitted very freely out of pure kindness to Miss Cook's *seances*, and if an occasional failure occurred, some few of them put the worst construction upon it, thereby causing the medium additional trouble and annoyance. It was further found that these strange faces began, as did Katie's, in a weak light, and were imperfect; in fact, this new manifestation wanted cultivating under the influence of genial sitters for many months, just as the Katie manifestation had done, and it was impossible to do this when visitors were admitted, who wanted to see startling manifestations, and not new and imperfect ones in their undeveloped form. For all these reasons sitting for recognisable faces was discontinued, but it is to be hoped that they will be resumed at some future time. These facts are very interesting, as tending to prove the desirability of entirely separating scientific from proselytising work in Spiritualism, since this manifestation was not perfected, solely in consequence of the fear of showing undeveloped phenomena to visitors who wanted tests."



"More recent developments at Miss Cook's circle, such as the appearance of Katie in full form, and her walking about the room, and her being able to bear so strong a light as to be photographed, are fresh in the memories of the readers of these pages. Of late Miss Cook has seen Katie once or twice when materialised, the spirit waking her up for that purpose."

"Where the white drapery of the spirits comes from is a mystery. The manifestations were too important in their nature not to be verified in every possible way, although to the many who know the integrity of the medium, tests are not considered to be necessary. Nevertheless, not only is the medium bound and sealed while the manifestations are going on, but sometimes she has requested ladies to accompany her to her bedroom to take off all her clothes and to search her, to see that she had no drapery of the kind concealed about her. At the same time the cabinet has also been thoroughly searched.

"The cabinet is nothing but a large cupboard, with no concealed machinery about it, and, in fact, the manifestations go on just the same at the residences of Mr. Luxmoore, Dr. Purdon and others, away from the home of the medium. Katie says she makes this drapery out of matter obtained from the dresses of all the sitters in the circle. She says that when she is forming herself she materialises the drapery first, and her own body afterwards; indeed, one or two persons have thought that they have seen Katie's head on the floor, in the middle of a heap of drapery, just inside the cabinet, although this has not been witnessed in a good light.

"Two hypotheses have been mooted to account for the phenomenon. One is, that the spirit Katie is not an independent spirit, but the spirit, or "double" of the medium, and certainly, in mental capacity, Katie is considerably limited by the intellectual capacity of the medium. But when the medium is awake, Katie and she carry on conversations and arguments with each other; in such case they would appear to be two distinct individualities.

"The other speculation, and the one to which we most incline is, that Katie is an independent spirit, allied in tastes and inclinations to the medium, consequently, much resembling her in mental capacity. Perhaps the spirit in attempting to communicate with mortals, is much limited by the mental powers of her medium, and by the conditions of manifesting, so that in the materialised spirit we have a mixture of the individualities of Katie and of Miss Cook."

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In the same issue is a report of a séance held with Florence Cook at Mr Luxmoore's house in London on November 28th, 1873, where the alleged Katie King is questioned:



"Is it possible for you to explain to us what are the powers or forces you employ in materialising and dissolving your form?" *"No, it is not.*"

"Is it electricity or does it bear any resemblance to it?" "*No; it is all nonsense what they talk about electricity."*

*"*But have you no name or mode of conveying it?" "*It is more like will-power than any else; in fact, it is the will which is at the bottom of the power I exercise."*

"When you disappear where is it to?" *"Into the medium, giving her back all the vitality I took from her. When I have got very much power from her, if anyone of you were to take her suddenly round the waist and try to carry her, you might kill her on the spot: she might suffocate. I can go in and out her readily, but, understand, I am not her, not her double: they talk a deal of rubbish about doubles; I am myself all the time."*

"When you dissolve, which part disappears the first. the body or the dress?" *The body, of course; its material power goes back to her and then the dress goes into the elements"*

"Do you think one in the flesh can ever appreciate the powers you use in manifesting?" *"No; you never can."*

"You speak of being yourself, and not a double of the medium—who were you when in the flesh?" *"I was Annie Morgan."*

"Were you married?" "*Yes; but don't talk of that."*

(At this she retired behind the curtain, apparently either hurt or grieved at the question, a state she has exhibited before when questioned about her married life.) She speedily returned, and was asked, "Have you a husband now?" *"Of course I have."*

"Can you give us any idea under what reign you lived?" *"I left the body when I was twenty-one years old, and 1 lived in the latter part of the reign of Charles I., during the Commonwealth, and to the early part of the reign of Charles II. I remember the high peaked hats of the Commonwealth and the broad hats of Charles I. and II.; the short hair of the men, but Cromwell's was not short."*

At this point the time which had been agreed on as the utmost that could be given, having the health of the medium in regard, was reached, and although the spirit expressed a desire to remain longer, she retired on Mr. Luxmoore insisting on it, and the *seance* terminated.

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Katie King / Annie Morgan

SEIZED AT A SÉANCE

Florence Cook was the first form materialisation medium to have her séance disturbed by a fully materialised form being seized. This took place on December 9th, 1873 at Hackney, London. Mr William Volckman, a known respected researcher and Spiritualist, had gained an invitation to the said séance. Volckman breached the circle conditions set down by the medium's father, Henry Cook: he felt that the circle itself was in breach, because he claimed that the medium, Cook's eldest daughter, Florence, was in fact acting as the spirit form—"Katie King"—and that the whole affair was a fraud. Volckman would claim to have taken the 'responsible' position to show this! Reports at the time and today of what actually took place at Mr Henry Cook's residence and Volckman's actual actions on December 9th, 1873, and before, are often contradictory, sensationalised and incomplete.

The full story is discussed in detail and is published in Psypioneer over three issues, starting in Vol. 6, No. 7, "William Volckman"; not only is this a story of the seizure of Florence Cook/Katie King but later, in 1875, the medium Mrs Guppy would marry William Volckman. This will bring in the possibility of Guppy's involvement and also the name of Mr and Mrs Holmes, mentioned in this article. Anyone wanting a pdf of these issues should please contact the editor.[21]

Below is quoted from Psypioneer, Vol. 6, No. 8:

"GROSS OUTRAGE AT A SPIRIT CIRCLE.

"LAST Tuesday night there was a seance at Mr. Cook's. Among the guests present were the Earl of Caithness (who is not a Spiritualist), Lady Caithness, and the Count El Conde de Medina Pomár, of 46, Portland-place, W.; Mr. Charles Blackburn, Parkfield, Didsbury, near Manchester; Mr. Henry M. Dunphy, barrister-at-law, Essex-court, Temple, E.C.; Mr. J. C. Luxmoore, J.P., 16, Gloucester-square, Hyde-park, W.; Mrs. A. Corner, and Mr. E. E. Corner (ship's first officer), St. Thomas's-square, Hackney; Mr. H. Bielfeld,[22] 208, Euston-road; Mr. G. R. Tapp, 18, Queen Margaret's-grove, Islington; Mr. W. H. Harrison, Wilmin-villa, Herne-hill; Mr. and Mrs. Cook and children; and the person who committed the outrage described in the following document:

"This evening at Miss Cook's seance, during the appearance of what purported to be the spirit 'Katie,' a man, named Volckman, rose up, grasped her round the waist with both arms, and tried to throw her down with his feet. Mr. Tapp and Mr. Corner seized the man who thus broke the conditions which we were all admitted on the understanding we would keep. 'Katie' instantly extricated herself from his clutches, and aided by Mr. Luxmoore, was in a moment back in the cabinet. After a delay of about five minutes, during which Katie gave earnest instructions to the sitters, the cabinet was opened and Miss Cook found in black dress, and boots, with the tape tightly round her waist, as at the beginning of the seance, the knot sealed as at first with the Signet-ring of the Earl of Caithness, and sewn underneath the seal with thread, as it had been sewn before the seance by Mr. Luxmoore.

9 Psypioneer, Vol. 6, No. 7: Henry Bielfeld (1802-1892).

The tape and seal are now in the possession of the Earl of Caithness. Before the seance the cabinet was searched by the strangers present, and after it by Lady Caithness and others. Lady Caithness and Mrs. Corner, who never lost sight of Miss Cook from the moment the cabinet was opened, subsequently led the medium to her bedroom after she had recovered from the severe shock, and searched her. She had her boots and black dress on, and no white drapery, and nothing but her ordinary dress.

There was nothing in her pockets. Her under garments were coloured wadded winter clothing. We all regard the act of the man as a gross outrage, and think the results redound greatly to the credit of Miss Cook.

"CAITHNESS.
MARIE CAITHNESS.
EL CONDE DE MEDINA POMAR.
CHARLES BLACKBURN.
AMELIA CORNER.

J. C. LUXMOORE
HENRY M. DUNPHY.
HENRY BIELFELD.
EDWARD ELGIE CORNER.
GEORGE ROBERT TAPP.
WILLIAM H. HARRISON.

"Dec. 9th, 1873."

—~—☼—~—

William Volckman responded initially in "The Spiritualist Newspaper":

'SIR,—In the report which appears in your journal of a *séance* lately held at Mr. Cook's, I am accused of seizing the ghost, thereby breaking the conditions by which the members of the circle were bound.

'In reply I have to state, that having for forty minutes carefully observed and scrutinised the face, features, gestures, size, style, and peculiarities of utterance of the so-called spirit, the conviction irresistibly forced itself upon me that *no ghost*, but the medium, Miss Florence Cook, herself, was before the circle. I perceived also an occasional tip-toeing by the young lady as if to alter her stature, and was much struck by the utter puerility of her remarks throughout the *séance*. I am confirmed in my conviction, as above stated, by the facts that the *struggling* ghost had to be forcibly extricated from my grasp, and afterwards to be "aided" into her cabinet by a Justice of the Peace.

'I may add that no third-parties had any knowledge of my invitation to, or presence at, the *séance* in question.

WM. VOLCKMAN.

'Dec. 16th, 1873.

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Second seizure:

During a séance with Mrs Corner on Friday, January 9th, 1880, and under the protection of Edmund Dawson Rogers, Chairman of the Séance Committee of the British National Association of Spiritualists (B.N.A.S), London,[23] Sir George Sitwell seized the full-form materialization of 'Marie', who appeared attired in white robes. The seized 'Marie' was found to be the medium herself, Mrs Elgie Corner (Florence Cook).

The 'seizure' raised the question: was Mrs Corner actively and consciously producing fraudulent mediumship or could she have been unconscious of the fact and under the influence of a controlling spirit or that of the sitters in the séance, the medium being totally unaware of their actions, as they were in a somnambulistic state and therefore not accountable for their *unconscious* actions?

This case became public with "The Capture of "A Spirit."—To the Editor of the Times" by Sir George R. Sitwell and Carl von Buch. The account of Sitwell, Buch, Dawson Rogers, the BNAS Council, etc. is published in Psypioneer, Vol. 2, No. 8, "The seizure of Mrs. Elgie Corner". This account shows both sides of the story, in full agreement that the seized *spirit of Marie* was, in fact, the medium.

Sir George Sitwell and the others claim that the medium was *consciously producing fraudulent mediumship*, whereas Dawson Rogers

> "… believed her to be totally unconscious, and therefore totally guiltless of any deception, and that he was satisfied the Council, after hearing his report, would arrive at the same opinion."

Quoted from Psypioneer, Vol. 2, No. 8, August 2006:

THE CAPTURE OF "A Spirit."
To the Editor of the Times.

> Sir,-We think the following facts will be interesting to the readers of The Times. Some time ago, being desirous of investigating the truths of so-called Spiritualism, we were advised by an eminent Spiritualist to attend the seances held at 38, Great Russell-street (British National Association of Spiritualists). We were assured that the seances conducted at that association were the most genuine in England and under strict test conditions. On our first visit, the medium being tied by one of us with great care, no manifestations followed.
>
> At the second visit (January 2) one of us again tied the medium, but under the directions of the chairman, who is officially connected with the institution, a "Spirit" soon appeared; which we were told was "Marie," and was represented to be that of a dead child 12 years of age. She was dressed in white, her face covered with a veil, and her arms and feet bare. We were surprised to distinguish the appearance of a corset under the white robes, and her voice and general appearance gave us the idea that it was the medium herself—Mrs. Corner (nee Florrie Cook).
>
> On the third visit, January 9, we were accompanied by a friend, Mr. John C. Fell, engineer, and editor of a scientific journal, of 23, Rood-lane, E.C., with his wife. The spirit "Marie" again appeared, and rendered our former suspicions almost certain by the audible

[23] BNAS would evolve into The London Spiritualist Alliance (LSA), later The College of Psychic Studies (CPS), as it is today. The BNAS members would help substantially in the formation and foundation of the "Society for Psychical Research". See Psypioneer, Vol. 4, No. 10: "The Society for Psychical Research, Officers and Council for 1882".

sound of undressing within the curtain and by the “unspiritual” levity of her behavior and conversation.

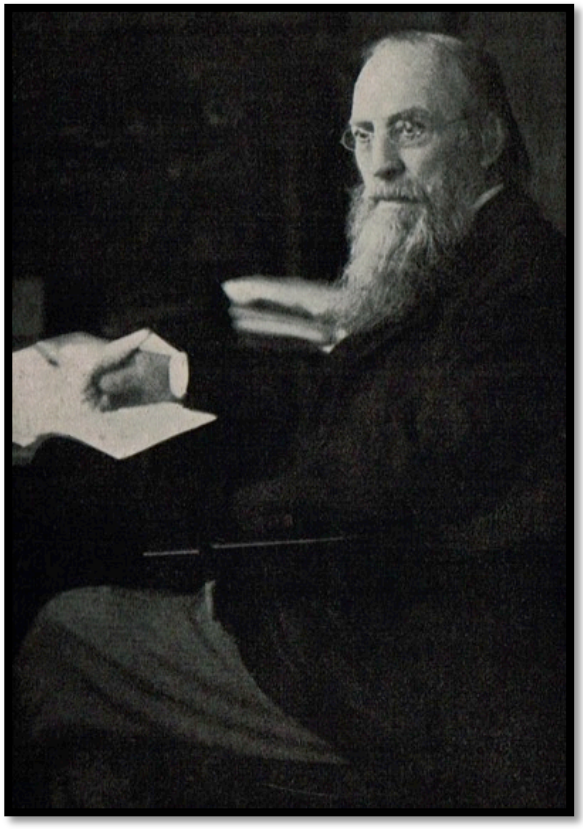
One of us by a sudden rush intercepted and gently held “the spirit,” while another dashed into the curtains, and drawing them aside, displayed the medium’s empty chair with the knot slipped, her dress, stockings and boots, and other discarded garments. There was sufficient light from a half-obscured candle for the captured “spirit” and all the above objects to be plainly seen, which latter were handed round for inspection and examined by those present. After a few minutes—to cover the confusion, we presume—the candle was extinguished by the official present, and we adjourned to the lower room. All present, except the officials, one of whom took refuge in abuse, entirely agreed with us and thanked us for exposing the deception.

Now, Sir, we leave general conclusions on Spiritualism to others, but what we do claim to have proved is that in the first society of Spiritualists in England, one of its best mediums has been detected in personating the spirit herself. Not wishing to further occupy your valuable space, we shall be happy to give fuller information to any one interested in the cause of truth.

GEORGE R. SITWELL.
CARL VON BUCH.

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Quote from Dawson Rogers' response to the letter:



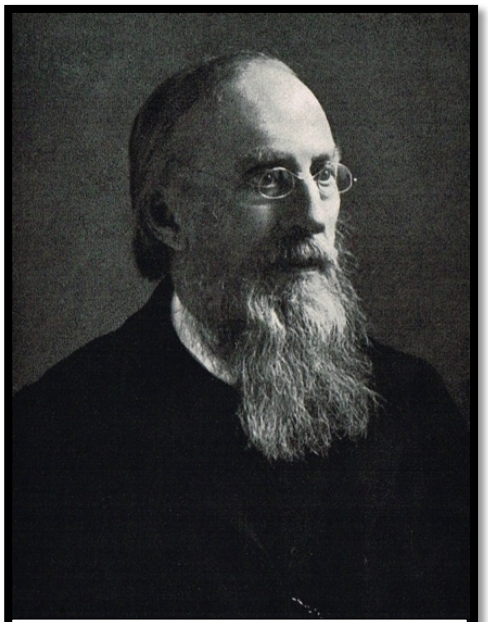
Mr. DAWSON ROGERS then proceeded. This letter, he said, stated that at a séance held at the rooms of the Association, on the evening of Friday, January 9th—and at which he (Mr. Dawson Rogers) was present in his capacity of Chairman of the Séance Committee —a form appeared attired in white robes, that the form was seized by one of the circle, and was found to be the person of the medium (Mrs. Corner), and that the chair to which the medium had been bound was found to be vacant, while several articles of the medium’s dress were scattered about the floor behind the curtains which were used as a cabinet. He was sorry to be obliged to admit that all this was true. He would also take this opportunity of stating that, in the act of seizure, Sir George Sitwell was as gentle and considerate towards the medium as the successful accomplishment of his purpose would permit, and that he (Mr. Dawson Rogers) was sorry that in the heat of the moment he applied to Sir George an epithet which he freely confessed he ought not to have used. Having made a mistake he had done all he could to remedy it, and had personally conveyed the expression of his regret to Sir George, who had kindly accepted it.

He would now briefly state all the circumstances connected with this unfortunate affair, prefacing what he had to say by the assurance that he had no word of censure for Mrs. Corner, that he believed her to be totally unconscious, and therefore totally guiltless of any

deception, and that he was satisfied the Council, after hearing his report, would arrive at the same opinion. Naturally enough, perhaps, some persons would hastily conclude, after what had occurred, that notwithstanding all that had been heard of Mrs. Corner, she was not a genuine medium for physical manifestations, and that the Séance Committee ought to have taken more care before they accepted her services in that capacity. But as a matter of fact great care had been taken. At some of the preceding seances she had not only been well secured by tying, but her dress had been so sewn together that it was simply impossible that it could be removed and replaced without detection; and he himself had also, when sitting near the curtains, put his hands behind them and felt the medium's head, shoulder, arm, and hand at the same time that the "form" was out and visible to all the company; and he had reported the fact to another member of the committee. He had also had recourse to other tests which left no room for doubt as to the genuineness of Mrs. Corner's mediumship.

But how about the third sitting—that at which the capture was made? Mr. von Buch did exactly as he pleased without a single suggestion being offered by any other person. Did he then tie the medium securely, and, if not, why not? Be this as it might, a "form," after a little while, came out from curtains at the side, and stood with the back to the wall. It was covered with white drapery over head, face, and shoulders, and had a long white robe reaching to the heels, so that the naked feet could not be seen except when they were put slightly forward from beneath the skirt. While in this position Sir George Sitwell made a sudden rush, captured the "form," and, gently holding her, exclaimed, "It is the medium; I knew it was."

He (Mr. Dawson Rogers) at once stepped up, and taking the "form" out of Sir George's hands, threw up the veil to see whether it really was Mrs. Corner or not. For the moment he could scarcely recognise her, as the eyes had a vacant gaze as though there was no consciousness of what had occurred. He had been told that at the same moment Mr. von Buch rushed forward, and from the front of the curtains drew out the empty chair and various articles of Mrs. Corner's apparel; but of this, as he was then standing at the side curtains, he knew nothing. It should be borne in mind that when he took Mrs. Corner in this apparently unconscious state from Sir George's hands she was covered with white drapery as mentioned. He at once put his arms round her, and led her behind the curtains. There, for a few seconds, she remained perfectly quiet and silent, then trembled violently, and presently exclaimed, "Where am I? Where am I? What is it? Tell me, what is it?"



Edmund Dawson Rogers

He endeavoured to soothe her, but finding that she was getting heavy in his arms, and fearing that he should able to prevent her from falling, he proposed to lead her out into the adjoining room. She replied, "Yes, do!" and he was about to remove her, when she suddenly exclaimed, "Why, I am undressed; get away, get away" He did not, however, feel that he could leave her without letting her fall, and he therefore called Mrs. Maltby, who received her from his hands behind the curtain, and removed her into another room. Mrs. Maltby would tell them in what condition she was at the time.

Mrs: MALTBY: She had nothing on but her corset and flannel petticoat, and no white drapery whatever.

Mr. DAWSON ROGERS: What then had become of the drapery? It was impossible that Mrs. Corner could have removed and secreted it, for he had his

arms round her from the moment he received her from Sir George Sitwell's hands to the moment he placed her in the hands of Mrs. Maltby behind the curtains. The published letter already alluded to said that to cover the confusion he had put the light out. This was altogether untrue. The light was at one end of the room, and he at the other, and he was engaged all the time as he had said in attending to Mrs. Corner. Moreover, in another part of the letter, the writers themselves admitted that there was sufficient light for the discarded garments to be handed round for inspection.[24]

[…] full report available in pdf from the editor.

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To conclude in this issue:

SPIRIT FORM, ECTOPLASM, ETC. BEING GRABBED

As earlier noted, it is often claimed that physical mediums are sometimes badly injured, with some claims of actual death as a result of a spirit form, ectoplasm, etc. being grabbed. There are numerous accounts but it appears that there is no firm documented material, medical evidence, etc. of such injuries.

The first reference to any serious injury or death appears to come from Florence Cook's "Katie King":

> "… if anyone of you were to take her suddenly round the waist and try to carry her, you might kill her on the spot: she might suffocate."

We can clearly note that, when William Volckman seizes the alleged form of "Katie King", he

> "… grasped her round the waist with both arms, and tried to throw her down with his feet."

We can clearly note that, when Sir George Sitwell seizes the alleged form of "Marie", he

> "… made a sudden rush, captured the "form," and, gently holding her, …"

It can also be noted that Dawson Rogers, without apparent permission,

> "… when sitting near the curtains, put his hands behind them and felt the medium's head, shoulder, arm, and hand at the same time that the "form" was out and visible to all the company; …"

albeit given in Katie King's own words just a few weeks prior to the William Volckman incident: "…if anyone of you were to take her suddenly round the waist and try to carry her,

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[24] **Psypioneer Vol.11, No.02: February 2015: "SPR Recognises Dawson Rogers At Last".** The Society for Psychical Research has acknowledged Edmund Dawson Rogers as a founder in 1882. This follows a ten-year campaign by Psypioneer. In our first issue of May 2004 we carried a lead story, "SPR was conceived by a Spiritualist" and cited evidence of the significant role played by Rogers, a journalist. He did not hold an academic position, however. In November 2014, we presented new evidence from both Rogers and Professor William Barrett, the other prime mover in the first meetings. On Christmas Eve, we were informed that the SPR had revised the history section of its web site to state:

The SPR, the first learned society of its kind, was founded in London on 20 February 1882, following initial discussions between William Barrett and Edmund Dawson Rogers, and then a conference convened in London in January to discuss the viability of such a Society.

P.S. The inaugural SPR conference in January 1882 was held at the rooms of the British National Association of Spiritualists. Leslie Price.

you might kill her on the spot: she might suffocate." Apart from the initial shock of the grabbings of the alleged *spirits,* Florence received no injuries!

Continued in the next issue …

Given that this issue holds numerous references to the now defunct Psypioneer all issues can be downloaded via my website (Study Weeks) page:

www.pauljgaunt.com

A QUESTION OF FRAUD!
concluded

A twisty path indeed has been trodden over the two last issues of Pioneer, with its articles on conscious and unconscious fraud in physical mediumship and the difficulties shown in the early development of form mediumship, as well as the psychological considerations raised, together with the claims of serious injuries or even death to the medium if the necessary required fluids such as psychic force, psychoplasm and ectoplasm, etc. are seized, light shone on the alleged spirit form, the medium touched without permission, etc. Claims have been challenged but those who make such claims appear unable to back them. For example, Mrs E. Wakely noted,

> "May we ask Mr. Boddington to give the *name* of the medium who was killed through being tested by any method. *We want facts*."

All responsible researchers and sitters should, of course, be responsible and accountable for their actions, for example the "National Laboratory of Psychical Research" director, Harry Price, had a strict policy in place – "Do not seize teleplasm without the medium's permission!" It was further noted that Helen Duncan was in fact aware of the proposed seizure of Mrs Grover in 1938! Duncan was seized on three occasions, firstly in 1933 at Edinburgh; due to the structure of the charge she was found guilty at the trial but deemed innocent at the following Spiritualists' National Union AGM.[20]

In this third and final part of "A Question of Fraud" much of the material has given the reader *first-hand* accounts and original reports by those actually present, for example, in the last issue with the second seizure on Friday, January 9th, 1880 Mrs Corner (Florence Cook) was under the protection of Edmund Dawson Rogers, Chairman of the Séance Committee of the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS), London, when a sitter, Sir George Sitwell, suddenly seized the full-form materialisation of 'Marie', who appeared attired in white robes. The seized 'Marie' was found to be the medium herself. Albeit it was without doubt the medium herself who was *acting* as the alleged spirit, 'Marie', it was well argued by the BNAS chairman that he

> "… believed her to be totally unconscious, and therefore totally guiltless of any deception, …"

On the other hand, Spiritualists and the psychic press have publicly acted responsibly on numerous occasions on the practice of conscious fraud, for example Ernest Oaten in the first part of this series stated:

> "To exploit the deepest emotions of the human soul and the most sacred of human associations by using fraudulent means to exploit them for personal gain is a detestable and disgraceful thing, showing a lack of all fine feeling and of decency."
>
> "When, however, as in the case of Mrs. Grover, it can be definitely shown that preparations were made beforehand to practice fraud by carrying into the seance-room the materials used for fraudulent purposes, such as butter-muslin and band of linen with a large

[20] An SNU sub-committee was appointed to look at the situation which had arisen from the prosecution and conviction. Their unanimous conclusion was that the alleged facts of the case were not "supported by the weight of evidence at the trial." President John McIndoe agreed; at the SNU Conference held in Doncaster on July 1st, 1933 and after a lengthy discussion a resolution was passed approving the Committee's report by fifty-seven votes to two—Duncan was innocent and her Diploma remained.

safety pin in it, there is only one conclusion to be reached, namely, that a deliberate attempt had been made beforehand to deceive the sitters.

"And we hope Spiritualists, despite their sympathy for the bottom dog and the desire to practise kindliness and the spirit of brotherhood will let no false sentiment stand in the way of keeping the Movement clean."

It was also pointed out by Oaten that "it has been the policy of *The Two Worlds* for fifty years to make such facts known wherever they occur."

The alleged exposures and the consequences of a *seizure* of a physical medium have not so far appeared to have the *drastic effects* which are so often noted in our literature of injury and even death to the seized medium. It is on this note that Pioneer will look at the effects of the early high-profile alleged exposures, given that the early mediums' spirit guides/controls looked strongly like a *double* of their medium! Some mediums preferred to be secured to avoid the possibility of unconscious fraud but it was also noted on occasions that the mediums appeared out of their cabinet, free of their binds, sealed knots, etc.



Catherine (Kate) Wood was one medium who agreed, on occasions, to be severely tested during full-form materialisation; her materialisations occurred sometimes in lighted conditions, often sitting outside the materialisation cabinet, thus making her fully visible to all present. One example is at Belper in 1877, where Kate accepted further challenges: 1)—for the spirit to materialise inside the cabinet and come out whilst the medium sat in circle; (2)—for the spirit to materialise outside the cabinet while the medium sat inside; (3)—to obtain moulds of spirit hands or feet while the medium was detained inside the screwed-up cage.[21]

Various reports in the Spiritualist press reported Kate Wood as being very susceptible to *evil* spirits—a better and more correct term would be *low* spirits. It can be noted in the John King séances with Charles Williams that they were sometimes of a rough character. Kate was developed in what most Spiritualists would call the correct way, that is, under the protection and harmonious auspices of development groups run by experienced Spiritualists; Kate fell into such responsible hands at the Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Venturing away in 1876, she initially maintained early protection and

[21] In the early 1870s a group of psychical researchers emerged who became known as the "Sidgwick Group". Catherine Wood (along with Annie Fairlamb, later known as Mrs Mellon) would become the focus of some of their researches. A report dated February 17th, 1875 from two members of the group, F.W.H. Myers and Edmund Gurney, led to Miss Wood and Fairlamb being more fully investigated by this group; it was reported: "… Pocky leant over him to kiss Gurney he felt no body; nothing but drapery. Asked whether her trunk is materialised she replies that it is not—only head hands and some kind of legs—not regular feet. She [Pocky] retires to a point near the cabinet but quite outside it, so that wall of room is plainly visible between her and cabinet. She then dematerialises herself—sinking away into a slight white mark on the ground in about half a minute. This mark soon disappears. When the mediums have recovered we enter and examine seals and knots. We do this carefully. All is unbroken, though the nails had been driven so thoroughly through the substance of the silk that a slight push severed the silk from nails and seals."

procedure at the Derbyshire experiments, where she received careful and judicious supervision. Alfred Smedley and Mr W.P. Adshead undertook test séances; Adshead at Belper recorded an incident of *low* spirits on February 13th, 1877:

> "As usual, Miss Wood, on entering the seance-room, went at once into the cage, was bound and sealed to her chair, and the door of the cage screwed up. As I was about to let the curtain drop in front of the cage I observed Miss Wood lying back in the chair as in a death-swoon. Thinking she was perhaps more deeply entranced than usual, I said nothing. She must have remained in that condition for nearly a quarter of an hour, as not the slightest movement was heard.
>
> "Then "Pocka" took control,[22] and informed us the conditions were bad; that in coming to the seance some drunken men had jostled against the medium; that spirits who had been drunkards in earth-life were present, and their influence would prevent any manifestations taking place that evening; that, on being bound, the medium had been controlled by a spirit who had committed suicide by poison, and that she had been injuriously affected by the control; that the cage must be opened and the medium released at once, taken home under control and put to bed. This was done, and she remained under control until a late hour." [23]

However, there is no doubt that Kate Wood was seized and found to be impersonating one of her alleged spirits, "Pocka", on two occasions! On August 11th, 1877 the "Blackburn Times" reported on a series of seances held with Miss Wood at Blackburn. "The Medium & Daybreak" of August 17th reported the story; the paper's founder editor, James Burns, noted that there were present on the first occasion twenty-eight or twenty-nine sitters, including a newspaper reporter and a doctor. Burns noted:

> "From the flippant, slangy, self-sufficient style in which the report is written, it is easy to be guessed what kind of influence predominated in the circle."

Below is quoted from the "Blackburn Times", as published in "The Medium & Daybreak" referenced above:

MISS WOOD CAUGHT PERSONATING A SPIRIT

> Since the above was placed in type, our worst suspicions have been realised; the medium has been caught imposing upon the circle—caught in the very act of playing the spirit. It appears that the committee, finding it was impossible to have satisfactory manifestations whilst so many "sceptical minds" were in their midst, went through a weeding-out process, and recommenced sitting on Monday last with a smaller circle, understood to be composed of thorough-going Spiritualists. The seances were held at the house of a friend; and it was believed that they would thus obtain such phenomena as were witnessed during Miss Wood's first visit to Blackburn. There was nothing at all on Monday; but on Tuesday night "Pocks" did something more than take possession of the medium; she took possession of the sitters by appearing in their midst, and distributed biscuits and kisses to those whom she thought worthy of such spiritual favours. The biscuits, we should, explain, were handed to her; but the dessert, in the way of kisses, was all her own.
>
> One of the sitters, Mr. T. E. Atkinson, of 76, Whalley Road, has been looked upon all along as a confirmed believer, but the fact is that he was a confirmed sceptic after all he

[22] "Pocka" is also referred to as "Pocks" and "Pocky" in some reports.

[23] "Some Reminiscences", by Alfred Smedley, published in 1900: Adshead noted: — "We were afterwards informed by those who accompanied Miss Wood to the seance that in passing along the street two drunken men rushed from the road on to the pavement, nearly knocking the medium down. This fact, to those who know anything of sensitives and the laws which govern mediumship, will be premise enough on which to build a theory which will account for the peculiar occurrences of the evening."

had seen; and when he observed “Pocks” supplying him with a bit of biscuit, he was more than ever assured that it was the medium on her knees. Shortly afterwards he disengaged one hand, and lightly touched “Pocks” garment—a circumstance which caused her to get out of his reach, and to complain when she returned to the chair that someone had been attempting to poke holes in her dress.

On Wednesday night, sitting was resumed under customary conditions, that is, the medium was tied more or less securely to a chair, which was placed in a recess with a curtain before it. Mr. Atkinson was present with two friends in court in the shape of his wife and a grown up daughter. “Pocks” affirmed that everything was favourable, and that good manifestations might be expected. Indeed, it was intimated that three spirits might appear at once; but nothing was seen until about eleven o’clock, when several present saw a form emerge from the recess, and immediately afterwards various sitters on the shadier side of the room were touched with a tube, or fan, provided for the purpose.

It was really so dark that our wide-awake friend could not see “the spirit,” though he could hear the taps being administered on the other side of the room. But he was not to be imposed upon any longer; and was determined, if he could, to make a seizure, as he had not signed any regulations, and was fettered by no promise. It was the last seance of the series, and his only chance of exposing the humbug; so, with a courage which does him great credit, and guided by his ears, he dashed across the room, and made a grasp at the form, which, however, slipped through his hands. It became a race then for the recess, but the vigilant sceptic was more alert this time, and seized the figure whilst it was still amongst the sitters. What a struggle then ensued! It was as if life and death on both sides depended upon it, though there was no screaming and not a word was said.

The company seemed paralysed; there was much to hear, but nothing to see, and they knew not what it meant. The strong man proved in the end too powerful for the desperate woman; and when matches were lighted by Mrs. and Miss Atkinson, the medium was found on the floor, near the curtain of the recess, in attire which was confined to chemise, stockings, and a pair of —!

Miss Wood braved it out to the last, hardened sinner as she is, and speaking as “Pocks,” after being assisted to her chair, declared that she had been controlled by an evil spirit, who had all but stripped her naked, and sent her out in the circle. This was too much for Mr. Atkinson, who gave his opinion of what he called her “devilment,” and went so far as to say that, unless every penny that had been paid for the seances this week and last was returned to the sitters, he would put the case in the hands of the police.

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Problems again arose five years later when Kate Wood was seized *impersonating* "Pocka" during a séance at Peterborough. The alleged exposure was well covered by the Spiritualist publications, including E. Dawson Rogers, who was featured in the last issue in connection with the seizure of Florence (Cook) Corner by Sir George Sitwell just two years earlier. Dawson Rogers was the founder of the then weekly journal, "Light", noting "It is with deep regret that we publish the following communications, but fidelity to the truth leaves us no alternative.—ED. "LIGHT." (E. Dawson Rogers)" September 16, 1882:

MISS C. E. WOOD EXPOSED

To the Editor of "LIGHT."



SIR,—Last night, Miss C. E. Wood, of Newcastle, gave a sitting at my house. There were seventeen friends present, the majority Spiritualists. Miss Wood was tied to an armchair by two gentlemen. After sitting for two hours, a form draped in white came from the cabinet, then immediately retired. Then the supposed "Pocka" came out in white to a small table in front of me, played two small musical boxes, gave some sweets to a gentleman, kissed a lady, and chatted for some minutes. Then Mr. Cade, who is a medium, and a sitter at Mr. Chapman's circle, at Stamford, who sat on my left, suddenly seized the supposed "Pocka," and instead of a little Indian girl it was Miss Wood with her dress off, and covered with muslin, part of which was secured. I have retained some, and Mr. Cade part. In the interest of Spiritualism, I hope you will publish this, as Miss Wood is so well known as a so-called professional medium. It is only loyalty to the cause that compels me to discharge the painful duty of reporting this unsatisfactory sitting.—Faithfully yours,

ROBERT CATLING.

Granville-street, Park-road, Peterborough,
September 12th, 1882.

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To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—With your permission I would like to place on record an account of a seance at which I was present in the house of Mr. Robert Catling, of this city.

For the information of your readers I may say that I have been very intimately acquainted with Mr. Catling for about eight years; he has been a very devoted friend to the cause of Spiritualism before I knew him and ever since. Miss Wood arrived at his residence on Thursday, 7th inst. She was received and treated as a friend by Mrs. and Mr. Catling till the night of Monday, 11th inst., when the séance was held about which I wish to speak.

I may say that Mr. and Mrs. Catling went with Miss Wood to Stamford on Sunday, the 10th inst., when a séance was held at Mr. Chapman's Lyceum. This séance gave great satisfaction to all but one or two. Mr. Cade, who is to some extent identified with the Spiritual movement in Stamford, was present, but was not satisfied with what he saw, and he came to Peterborough on Monday evening, to be present at our séance.

During the séance, while what was supposed to be "Pocka" was outside the cabinet, Mr. Cade sprang forward, and there was a scuffle. The light was very dim. I stepped to the cabinet, and could see Mr. Cade sitting in the chair in which the medium had been tied at

the beginning of the séance. He called for more light, and held a figure draped with white in his arms, which seemed to struggle to get free. A gentleman who tried to turn up the light turned it out in mistake. I kept my place for about a minute, and when the light was turned on I could see that the figure with which Mr. Cade struggled was Miss Wood, the medium. She had a quantity of muslin wrapped round her head and shoulders, but through openings I could see parts of her body. I said to Mr. Cade, "We had better leave her to the ladies." I turned to call some of the ladies, and when I turned back again, in what seemed to me about one minute's time, Miss Wood was dressed in the black dress in which she commenced the seance, and the muslin was hidden away. Mr. Cade said, "We must have the muslin;" and after another severe struggle the muslin was found in some part of her and taken from her. These are a few of the disagreeable facts connected with this séance.

On Friday, when we were making arrangements for the Monday's séance, I suggested as a test that a piece of tape should be sewn round each of the medium's wrists, and the ends given to the sitters to hold, but Miss Wood objected to this, I think, very reasonable test.[24]

As the result of what I have seen, I have come to the painful conclusion that Miss Wood deliberately planned the deception, and that practice has made her too perfect in the art of deceiving.

I did not feel the least excited through the whole séance, and I do not feel the least discouraged now. Fraudulent mediums will always exist in proportion to foolish people.

Let us study Spiritualism by spiritual methods. Let us get our heads clear and keep them so, and let us—

"Keep a brave heart still."

When we have cleared the path of folly and fraud true spiritual manifestations will—

"Come as a waking joy
After bad dreams,"

THOS. MCKINNEY,

New Fletton, Peterborough,
September 12th, 1882.

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Frank Herne and Charles Williams, noted elsewhere over the last two issues, were major mediums at the beginning of form materialisations, especially in public demonstrations. It was in 1871 that Frank Herne was joined by Charles Edward Williams; their partnership was successful and they held séances at 61, Lambs Conduit Street, Holborn, London. Around April 1872, Herne and Williams started their form materialisations. Florence Cook, who had attended some of Herne and Williams' early séances, had been a pupil of Herne as arranged by her father, Henry Cook; around June 1873 they ended their partnership and continued independently. Charles Williams continued giving public séances at the Holborn address.

In 1887 William Harrison published a report in the Spiritualist newspaper, "An Exposure of Imposture", on Friday, 20 September, 1878; the account was also published in the October issue of "Spiritual Notes".[25] News was received from The Hague that two mediums working

[24] In response Miss Wood stated in her letter dated September 16th, 1882 and published in "Light" on September 23rd, 1882:—" Mr. McKinney says I objected to what he calls the "reasonable test" of a piece of tape sewn around each of my wrists, the ends to be held by sitters. This is put by him in such a way as to constitute a perversion of the truth. The fact is that *two or three days before, in the, course of conversation*, such a test was mentioned, but I recommended its non-application, as I thought that the sitters holding the tapes might, through their inexperience of such phenomena, jerk my wrists and injure me during any possible manifestation; but I offered to have my wrists sewn in the manner suggested, the ends of the tape to be sealed on both wall and floor in view of the circle."

[25] "Spiritual Notes" was the official monthly journal of the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS). However, the journal was short-lived and was in production only from 1878.

together, Williams and a medium called Mr Rita, were unmasked; not only were they seized but "John King" apparel was found!

On Tuesday evening, the 10th of September, some good investigators held a séance with Messrs. Williams and Rita at the rooms of one of the sitters. Two days before the mediums had given another sitting, and suspicions were aroused by some of the manifestations; therefore some of the sitters made up their minds to obtain security on that point, convinced as they were that both mediums cheated in the most impudent manner. On the said evening, at first the usual physical manifestations at the table occurred, but were very weak. After that the cabinet was made, and Messrs. Williams and Rita placed behind the screen. After some singing and the playing of the musical box, the materialisation began. "Charlie," one of Rita's spirits, showed his face, lighted by his spirit-lamp.

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

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



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

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Similarly, Francis (Frank) G. Hearn appears to have had the same fate but not so detailed. For further information on the above quotes please see, as previously mentioned, Psypioneer's eight-part series, "The Beginnings of Full-Form Materialisations in England", available on one pdf; please contact the editor for a copy.

Further high-profile mediums such as Annie Fairlamb/Mellon/Cleave and Elizabeth Hope Reed, better known as Madame d'Esperance (sometimes spelt D'Esperance and Esperance) were both similarly seized during their séances.

To conclude the quoted reports, published below is the 1880 first-hand report on the alleged exposure of Elizabeth d'Esperance,[26] published in the "Medium & Daybreak", September 10th, 1880. The editor, James Burns, noted: "In presenting the following evidence it is necessary to add that we have cut down the first letter nearly one half. In this department we only want a statement of fact—not insinuations and prosecutory pleadings."

THE SEIZURE IN MRS. ESPERANCE'S CIRCLE



MADAME D'ESPERANCE.
(*From a Photograph by Mr. Boursnell.*)

THE SEIZURE SEANCE
By "RESURGAM."

Tuesday, the 24th of August was intended as the final weekday seance to be held by Mrs. Esperance, before leaving England. Twenty-four persons, besides the medium, then formed the seance, of whom seventeen formed the inner circle nearest the cabinet, and the remainder were in the outer row at the back of the others and at intervals. I was at the top end of the inner circle, by side of the circle manager, next the medium. Mr. Warnes, the gentleman who seized the form purporting to be "Yolanda," was the fifth person from the bottom end of the circle, and ten other persons sat between him and me. My son, however was in the outer circle, very nearly at the back of Mr. Warnes, but nearer to the bottom of the circle, being behind the third and fourth sitters exactly, and thus close to where the seizure occurred.

After the customary singing for the commencement of harmony I was observing to myself that I felt no indication of the spirits then being at work, for, whenever they are collecting the "power" from the sitters, I can recognise the fact by my own feelings. A gentleman then arose to deliver an invocation, and, at the same time, I, to my surprise, saw a form just inside the curtain at the further end of the cabinet, and I at once entered the fact in my note-book, as, "a form at Mrs. Fidler's end of the cabinet, like 'Yolanda,' but taller, I think." As the invocation proceeded, "Yolanda" retired a moment, and was next seen at the nearer opening of the curtains, in the prostrate form of Mahomedan prayer, and at the conclusion of the invocation she arose and looked curiously at the strangers present, and then retired, presently emerging with a small veil half over her head to look again at the visitors, when she held out her skirts for trinkets to be thrown to her, this action causing me to note the extreme scantiness of drapery clothing, as every contour of the body was discernible, while the neck, face, arms, &c., were bare, and the legs half way to the knees or more.

[26] Psypioneer, Vol. 9, Nos. 9/10: Doubt about Madame D'Esperance's Early Life – Lis Warwood.

She retired within the cabinet, and raps were heard for the alphabet to be called over, and "p." for "pitcher" spelled out. Mr, Armstrong handed up the pitcher with approved quantity of water, and "Yolanda" retired with it within the cabinet, as usual, but very soon emerged with the pitcher full of roses and other flowers. She walked out into the centre of the circle with the pitcher on shoulder, and then across to Mrs. Fidler's end of the circle, where she commenced to distribute the flowers, and had given some by handing the pitcher for each one to help him or herself to one therefrom. She had so helped a gentleman, and my son also, who were in the back row of sitters there, and also the first four of the sitters in the front row, and was in the act of holding out the jug or pitcher towards the fifth sitter (Mr. Warnes), when I heard, instantly, a scream proceed from that spot, and my daughter, who was at my elbow near the cabinet, at my end, also gave a scream of fright on the same instant. A man's voice had said, "I've got you at last." "It's madam." "It's the medium." "I'll not let go till there is a light." "Turn up the light!"

As an instant *ruse de guerre*, and believing the medium still to be in the cabinet, I called out: "It's not the medium, she is here in the cabinet!" The form continuing to loudly squeal, and scream, and struggle energetically, I stepped to the cabinet, as Mr. Armstrong rushed to the rescue of the form purporting to be "Yolanda." I carefully but swiftly passed into the inside of the cabinet, well knowing that, if so be the medium were there, she would be in fatal convulsion, or death; but, however, the cabinet was absolutely void of all living entity. Mrs. Esperance, of course, was not there; her chair was empty, the gauze partition was uninjured and unmoved; but I was truly shocked when I observed the dark dress of Mrs. Esperance lying, carefully placed, on the floor of the cabinet, at the foot of partition, and in front of the chair; while the pair of boots belonging to Mrs. Esperance were on the floor, one under the chair partially, and in part under the dress, while the other was clear of contact with anything else. This shocked me exceedingly, although I had been fully warned and truthfully informed by my own spirit-friends that I should actually so discover the medium personating a spirit.

On Mr. Warnes seizing "Yolanda," my son had rushed upon him with intention of at once knocking him down, but seeing that it was unmistakeably Mrs. Esperance, my son of course wisely abstained from such an assault, and contented himself with merely taking firm hold of Mrs. Esperance by the wrist and the man by the arm to pull the two asunder; at the same time a lady in the rear caught Mr. Warnes by the throat firmly, and so compelled him to lose his hold of Mrs. Esperance. I only wonder the medium was not dismembered, as the united tugging was incredible.

Now I found, on carefully close inquiry that, from the very first instant, all so closely concerned were satisfied that it was, from the first, Mrs. Esperance, and not a spirit-form; hence nobody there would strike the man who had seized her, as he merely demanded more light to see her features by, and used no further violence than holding her by the wrist very tightly, A lady turned up the light fully, on which I rushed and turned it down again, as even a mortal lady should be spared exposure to too much light under such circumstances, and I was sorry for Mrs. Esperance.

Mr. Armstrong by this time had received the liberated "Yolanda," and partially carried, but chiefly dragged, her towards the cabinet, as quickly as possible; a lady observing that Mrs. Esperance was too much for him to carry.

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The writer of the above report, who was in fact Mr Pettitt under the pseudonym of "Resurgam", was naturally criticised for his comment,

> "… although I had been fully warned and truthfully informed by my own spirit-friends that I should actually so discover the medium personating a spirit."

as he gave no warning of the pre-warned pending danger to the circle or the medium herself, with whom he was himself a frequent sitter. From Pettitt's ("Resurgam"'s) description of the unfolding events of the seizure it is clear that he appeared not to have told his son or daughter about his spirit friend's warnings. In the following reports of the seizure of Esperance Pettitt is held in a negative light for a number of reasons, especially in Grace Fidler's report. Unfortunately, the various reports are too long to publish here; however, any reader wishing a pdf of the "Medium & Daybreak" reports, please contact the editor.

The "Resurgam" report refers to Mr William Armstrong, who was a well-known Spiritualist researcher, co-founder and first President of the "Newcastle Psychological Society",[27] founded in July 1872 as previously noted, the society where Kate Wood would start her career, along with Annie Fairlamb, better known as Annie Mellon.[28]

Below is William Armstrong's version of the seizure of the medium, also published in the same edition of the "Medium & Daybreak", which gives the reader a different perspective:

MR. W. ARMSTRONG'S REPORT.

"The truth shall make you free."
To the Editor of the MEDIUM AND DAYBREAK.

Sir,—The Spiritualists of Newcastle having circulated throughout the country reports injurious to the character of Mrs. Esperance as a medium, you have been kind enough to request me to furnish you with my opinions, based on my experience from my standpoint of the circumstances connected with the unfortunate seance held in our rooms, on Tuesday evening, the 24th ult. I have been very anxious to know what were the opinions of the other members of the circle, and on what grounds they had formed their opinions and based their conclusions, and I think I have riddled the whole.

I will now endeavour, in as few words as possible, to describe the seance, and what part I took in it. The meeting was one, the order of which has so often been described that I need not repeat it here. The circle was composed of twenty-three ladies and gentlemen, including the medium. The seance was opened in the usual way by singing a hymn; the medium entered the cabinet, and the conditions of the seance were stated. No one it was expected would take hold of the form if any should appear, without the form giving permission to do so.

Very shortly, "Yolanda," the flower girl, came out of the cabinet. She appeared to look very anxiously at some one in the direction in which her enemy was afterwards found to be sitting. She stepped back, and stood for some time with her back against one of the iron columns supporting the cabinet as if in a state of suspense, cogitating what she should do. She appeared to make up her mind, and called for the pitcher, which was handed to her nearly half full of water. She required more, and was supplied from the water-bottle. She then entered the middle compartment of the cabinet, taking the pitcher with her. Presently she came forth, pitcher in hand, and commenced distributing her flowers at the extreme

[27] The society, founded in July 1872, was named the "Newcastle Psychological Society" and operated under that title for seven years, when it was renamed the "Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society".

[28] Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 4: Mrs Annie Mellon – Materialisation medium.

part of the circle from the medium. My eye for a second or two was off "Yolanda" when I was startled with a sudden scream from or in the cabinet.

(It is generally admitted that the first scream came from the cabinet, one gentleman says he heard the medium moaning when "Yolanda" was on the floor.)

I saw at once what was up, "Yolanda" was caught. I jumped to my feet, hesitated a moment between the cabinet and the form when "Yolanda" screamed, I sprang forward, and got "Yolanda" who was lying with her face on the floor, her arms above her head, held in the iron grip of her captor, and the same time calling out to him to leave loose, but he would not loosen his hold until a lady who sat behind him seizing him by the throat choked him off. When freed, I carried what remained of "Yolanda" into the cabinet, and placed her on the chair. My first impression was that the chair was vacant, and that was afterwards confirmed by two of the sitters.

And here comes, to me, the most wonderful part of the whole business, and is to me an additional incentive to be careful of rash conclusions. The student of the occult must observe all the facts if he be desirous of arriving at the truth. He must be prepared to meet with difficulties and disappointments, but he must not suffer himself to be carried away by his emotions, or he will soon find himself in the Slough of Despond; but enough of this, and now for the facts. I took up and carried "Yolanda," I had no difficulty in doing that, she was like a cork in comparison to the weight of the medium, and was fast melting away. I placed her as I have already said in the chair (you, sir, and your readers may believe what I have further to say, or they may not; it is a matter of indifference to me, as it has been my privilege all along to witness phenomena in advance of that enjoyed by others, but which they all must have in good time), and laid my hands on her bare neck and shoulders. Her bare arms hung down before her, a part of the white drapery still remaining. I reached over her shoulders to feel for the long hair (the medium's hair is very short), while doing so, "Yolanda" raised her bare arms and gave me a gentle push in the breast, I drew back my left foot, which was in advance of the right, and *instantly* laid my hands again on the shoulders, not this time of "Yolanda," but on those of the medium dressed in her brown cloth dress in every respect buttoned up to the neck, just as she entered the cabinet, and as she retired from it. I brought my hands gently down her arms as they hung by her side. I have been asked if there was time for the medium to dress in the cabinet, I say emphatically, No; had she been conscious she could not have done it.

I took both her hands in mine and held them; the metamorphosis was complete. I have seen many transformations; but to me this was the most astounding. There I stood holding the hands of the medium, sitting on the chair, where, but a moment or two before, sat the form of "Yolanda." I do not profess to be versed in the scientific modes of investigation so much insisted on by some people, but I do profess to be able to observe facts as they are presented to me, and I was quite able calmly to observe what was going on before me, until the raps on the wall, above the head of medium, rapped out, through the alphabet, "give the medium restoratives." By a singular coincidence a lady present had a little brandy in a flask. That lady has attended hundreds of seances, but never before had she a drop of alcohol in a séance room.

She helped me to a little in a glass, but the difficulty was to get it into the mouth of the medium in the unconscious state in which she was, with her teeth firmly set. I succeeded at last in getting a few drops between her teeth, when she struck at the glass, and dashed it against the wall, exclaiming, in a moment of consciousness, "Get away you nasty thing." Conscious for a moment, and but for a moment, for she now became convulsed, she ground her teeth, and her hands were clenched so that I could not open them. In this state she remained some time. When the spasms relaxed, I put the glass, with a little more brandy, to her mouth; she made a convulsive snatch at the glass with her teeth, and I succeeded in pouring the brandy into her mouth. I now took both her hands in mine, and held them until

she recovered consciousness; which was some time; but long before I had reasoned out the position.

She required to be supported into a cab, taken home, and carried into her room. So soon as she was conformably seated and rested I examined her arms and wrists; as I was told that there must be some marks on her arms—they must be blackened with the iron grip of "Yolanda's" captor, and the struggles made to release her. I am happy to say there was not the least discolouration or the least mark of any kind, either then or on the following morning, when I again examined them. She did not complain of her arms in the least; but she did complain of her neck then, and has done ever since: but more of anon.

In the investigation of this subject of manifestations the medium is an important factor, and the state of their feelings and their experience can be obtained if it is well to do so; these may assist us in our inquiries. With this end in view, I asked the medium:—

"Did you see 'Yolanda' in the cabinet?"

"No, I did not."

"What, then, were your feelings; will you give me your experiences?"

"Yes; I was just sitting this way (bent forward with the hands on the knees), not thinking of anything in particular, when I felt a sudden grip in the region of the heart, such as I felt and described on a former occasion. I felt a pull forward, and, falling in doing so, I grasped at the iron stanchion with my left hand; I missed with the right. I screamed. I felt pulled forward off my seat. I tried to scream again, but could not, but heard my voice in the distance, and felt as in a nightmare, as I dropped down upon the floor. Of what transpired afterwards I have no knowledge, until something disagreeable was put into my mouth, which caused sensation, and I exclaimed, 'You nasty thing,' or something to that effect."

I have thus given you a very brief statement of the facts as they came under my own observation. I have endeavoured to reason the subject with myself. I know the chair was vacant. I am told the medium's clothes were in the cabinet on the floor, while "Yolanda" was outside; how much more than her clothes I am not informed. No one felt them; it may have been the medium on the floor for anything they know, and I am satisfied from the weight of "Yolanda" that she was not the medium, and from what I witnessed in the cabinet I am thoroughly convinced that the medium, as a whole, was never out of the cabinet.

There is no evidence whatever against the medium; the same "Yolanda" has from time to time given the very best proofs of a distinct individuality.

That Mrs. Esperance is a medium of the highest order none of her "exposers" dare dispute. In her presence husbands have met their wives and wives have met their husbands; parents have met and acknowledged their long-lost children; children have recognised and embraced their parents; forms have grown up in their presence, passed before them, and again dematerialised; forms have been seen without heads, and heads have been seen rolling on the floor, laughing without a body; flowers and plants and fruits have been produced under unexceptionable conditions; sitters have seen the medium brought out of the cabinet by the forms; they have seen these forms dematerialise alongside her and again build up; all these things have they seen, and much, much more through the mediumship of Mrs. Esperance; but all this is forgotten in a moment—"Yolanda" is trapped, and there is an "exposure." Yes, Sir, there is an exposure, but whence and of what? Not of the medium. She has nothing to fear, nothing in her conduct to be ashamed of. But I leave it to intelligent Spiritualists to say who have exposed themselves, and to what purpose,—Yours for the Truth, Wm. ARMSTRONG.

Newcastle, *Sept. 6*.

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The question remains: when a medium is seized, or caught in what appears to be blatant fraud, are they *actually* in a trance/somnambulistic state and therefore unaccountable for their *unconscious* actions—or *conscious*, suggesting that they are therefore accountable for their actions, i.e. premeditated fraud?

Editor's Notes:

The numerous first-hand accounts published in the Spiritualist press of the day in this short series of "A Question of Fraud!" without doubt give the reader an informed understanding of the foundation and the early development of form mediumship.

Generally speaking, in the various accounts it can be noted:

There seems little doubt that the seized alleged spirits were indeed the medium himself or herself—*with* or *without* drapery.

Reports show that the medium when seized appeared to be dazed, confused or in trance; also noted is the alleged spirit form *usually* closely resembling their medium, their *double*.

The seizures reported have in all cases shown that they were the mediums' alleged control/guide, though not friends or family of the sitters,[29] but they almost certainly suggest that it is not the medium's *double* which is seized, as some literature suggests. If this was the case, the medium would presumably be in their chair in the cabinet and the items of their *physical* clothes not scattered about in the cabinet, as has been noted.

So, the difficult task remains of deciding if possible, when an alleged materialised spirit is found to be without doubt *the medium* acting as the *spirit*, whether or not, when caught, they were in actual fact unconscious of their actions, or conscious in the action of fraud. Of course, it is also a rather convenient escape for the true fraudulent medium to claim they were in fact fully *unconscious* of their actions and controlled by sceptical sitters, and/or low spirits, etc.!

It has been noted that during these sometimes rather rough seizures of suspected fraudulent actions of the mediums cited, some seized in *ectoplasmic form* with the drapery later *disappearing*, there appears to have been *no* detrimental reaction in some, *no* serious injuries recorded, and certainly *no* deaths!

What can be concluded:

In all cases quoted the medium was not in their intended position, i.e. the cabinet, and none of the seized mediums/spirits received any serious injury or worse, as is often warned. The early articles by William Harrison, founder editor of the "Spiritualist" newspaper, give the reader the complex psychological formation and the problems of the early development of materialisation mediumship.

All the seizures cited are very similar, apart from the velocity and violence of the attack on the alleged spirit form. It is clear that all the seizures must be looked upon on their own merit, and the reader must judge, if at all possible, as to who may be guilty of deliberate, conscious fraud. With the psychological processes of materialisation it can be readily accepted that the *unconscious* state of the medium may well induce their actions to a control other than the intended spirit control/guide desired, as well indicated throughout this series.

Apart from the Sir George Sitwell seizure of the full-form materialisation of 'Marie', who appeared attired in white robes but was found to be the medium herself, Mrs Elgie Corner (Florence Cook), and the Elisabeth d'Esperance seizure of the full-form materialisation of 'Yolanda', who also appeared attired in white robes, these quotes are fairly detailed, with both

[29] Excluding the later medium, Clive Holmes.

outcomes in favour of the mediums being innocent and unaccountable for their *unconscious* actions; in both accounts no drapery was found. However, the d'Esperance seizure is more complex, which readers can themselves discern. For example, it is noted in the Sir George Sitwell seizure that Edmund Dawson Rogers, Chairman of the Séance Committee of the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS), London, took hold of the seized figure. It is noted:

> "He [Dawson Rogers] endeavoured to soothe her, but finding that she was getting heavy in his arms, and fearing that he should able to prevent her from falling, he proposed to lead her out into the adjoining room. She replied, "Yes, do!" and he was about to remove her, when she suddenly exclaimed, "Why, I am undressed; get away, get away" …"

It is noted similarly in the first part of the d'Esperance seizure by "Resurgam" that his report notes:

> "Mr. Armstrong by this time had received the liberated "Yolanda," and partially carried, but chiefly dragged, her towards the cabinet, as quickly as possible; a lady observing that Mrs. Esperance was too much for him to carry."

Both reports suggest that Dawson Rogers and William Armstrong are both carrying the full body weight of the medium herself! However, in Armstrong's version this is not so:

> "I [William Armstrong] took up and carried "Yolanda," I had no difficulty in doing that, she was like a cork in comparison to the weight of the medium, and was fast melting away. I placed her as I have already said in the chair […] and laid my hands on her bare neck and shoulders. Her bare arms hung down before her, a part of the white drapery still remaining."

Like the alleged entranced 'Marie'/Corner (Florence Cook) and 'Yolanda'/d'Esperance, both similarly in their unconscious state remained perfectly quiet and silent, then trembled violently/convulsed, and spoke some confused utterings. This is what Madame d'Esperance said about her experience in a letter to James Burns, and published in the same issue of "The Medium & Daybreak" as the above reports of her seizure:



When I went into the room, rather late, the light was turned down, and I could not distinguish one person from another after coming from the daylight outside into semi-darkness. I don't remember speaking to anyone, but I remember noticing that the room was nearly full, and I felt sorry for it, and very tired, for I thought there would be little or no phenomena, owing to my weariness, and many who came would be disappointed. You see those highly coloured reports caused people to flock to the rooms in order to try to see their friends as he had seen his, and consequently very great disappointment has been felt, and I have been vexed and annoyed very often when I have learned of poor people travelling a hundred miles or so, paying hotel expenses, attending one or two seances, and seeing nothing to satisfy them. Of course no one was to blame in the matter except themselves perhaps, but it has always made me feel very sorry.

> However, I went into the cabinet, not feeling much inclined to talk to anyone. I did not know for a while that "Yolanda" had gone out, and when 1 did know I did not care to bother myself about her or her doings. The next thing I knew was a horribly agonizing pain all over me. I cried out, but felt as though in a nightmare, and the sound I made was like that made by one trying to scream when oppressed by some bad nightmare, and it sounded as though it was a long way off. I remember falling from my seat and catching at the uprights

of the cabinet as I did so, and missing them, and feeling as though I was missing hold of my life.

I don't remember touching the ground—only the act of falling from my seat, and nothing more but a vague recollection of something being forced down my throat, seeing somebody's face close to me, and hearing voices. I don't remember getting to the friends where we were staying, nor very much that passed next day, except that I knew I had a very great deal of work depending on my shoulders that must be done and only I could do it.

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A few days later she noted that she was better and her post-séance memories were returning. It can also be noted in this instance that d'Esperance received no body bruising from her seemingly violent seizure; it is recorded in this series and other reports that marks placed on a spirit form are often reproduced on the medium.[30]

Seizures of full-form materialisations – effects on the mediums:

1873 Florence Cook: Alleged spirit of "Katie King" seized by William Volckman. Severe shock reported.

1877 Catherine (Kate) Wood: Alleged spirit of "Pocka" seized by Mr Atkinson. No injuries to the medium reported.

1880 Mrs Corner (Florence Cook): Alleged spirit of "Marie" seized by Sir George Sitwell. Drapery disappeared; medium again in convolutions/shock.

1880 Elizabeth d'Esperance: Alleged spirit of "Yolanda" seized by Mr Warnes. Drapery disappeared; medium in convolutions/shock and temporary memory loss.

1882 Catherine (Kate) Wood: Alleged spirit of "Pocka" seized by Mr Cade; stated muslin was found on the medium. No injuries to the medium reported.

1887 Charles Williams & Mr Rita: Alleged spirit of "Charlie"; both mediums seized by sitters. Theatrical materials and muslin found on both. No injuries to either medium.

1937 Clive Holmes: Appeared apparently lifeless; he seemed in a very bad state and complained that he could not see. Convicted to a term in prison.

1938 Mrs Elizabeth Grover: No ill-effects. Admitted to fraud.

All the above reports suggest no serious injuries, no burns as often suggested, no deaths.

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[30] Plate of the "Phantasmal Photograph of Yolanda with her Medium Madam D'Esperance", taken from Cesare Lombroso's "After Death – What", published in 1909.

For further research and some interesting photographs see "Historical Perspective: Revealing the Real Madame d'Esperance: An Historical and Psychological Investigation", by Adrian Parker and Elisabeth Warwood, published by the "Journal of Scientific Exploration", Vol. 30, No. 2. Available free online.



FIG. 50. PHANTASMAL PHOTOGRAPH OF YOLANDA WITH HER MEDIUM, MADAME D'ESPÉRANCE.



THE PHANTOM OF YOLANDA.

