

PSYPIONEER

Founded by Leslie Price

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SITTING WITH CHURCHILL - AND KING

Most people in public life, such as politicians, do not wish it to be known that they sit with mediums. This presents a problem for the historian because the absence of written record does not mean that such connections never existed. What we can do is to assess the evidence of silence by common sense, asking for example, when the claim was made, and by whom. In the case of Helen Duncan, and her supposed association with Churchill, the absence of any such claim in her daughter Gina Brealey's memoir is significant. Moreover, Churchill never seems to have assisted the Spiritualist Movement in any way.

An interview in Psychic News (7 June 2008) managed to claim two Churchill links on one page. Eric Hatton spoke of his late wife Heather, who lived at Ventnor, Isle of Wight, in the war, at a time when few mediums came there

“One who did was known simply as Jacqueline. When I spoke to Gordon Higginson about her, I discovered that he was one of the few people who had known her. Anyway Heather's dad was talking with her, and she told him that there had been occasions when her cousin had availed himself of the advice of mediums when the conduct of the war was imperative to him. Her name was Jacqueline Churchill.”

There was a noted medium in 1930s London called “Miss Jacqueline.”, about whom more in a later issue.

The interviewer comments “It’s often been suggested that Churchill sat with the medium Bertha Harris”. Hatton responds “Yes, he did”.

The career of Bertha Harris was certainly distinguished¹. One attempt at her life story “From Séance to Science” by George Meek and Bertha Harris (1973) was based on taped interviews that I conducted at her home in Golders Green. I am sure that George (whom I had first met while standing on a ladder in the library at Stansted) would have been very pleased to know more about these famous sitters, to further enliven the book.

In Maurice Leonard’s informative biography “Battling Bertha” (Regency Press, 1975), the author refers to a PN story of 21 November 1970 which was chiefly about her sittings with Gen. De Gaulle, which had been disclosed by a French newspaper.

“In the PN article the names of Winston Churchill and King George of Greece are conspicuous. According to Bertha, Churchill was another of her clients, and he consulted her on many occasions, leaving his limousine a few streets away so as not to attract attention. Again, she will not divulge the contents of these sittings.... A grandson of Sir Winston’s gave the denial that his grandfather had consulted Bertha and she replies with vigour “How can he possibly know. He’s arrogant if he thinks he does.” (Leonard, p.95)

A basic step for anyone interested in Churchill and Spiritualism is to consult the Churchill Archives².

From the online catalogue, it is possible to find a number of references to Spiritualism which was in the public eye for much of Churchill’s life. But the Churchill Archives tell me that Bertha Harris and Jacqueline Churchill do not appear. So historians will have to follow up these matters in other places.

In contrast, one wartime leader whose interest in Spiritualism is now public knowledge was the prime minister of Canada, William Mackenzie King (he finally retired in 1948).

King kept a diary, which you can consult online³. Suppose you enter the name “Phillimore” (in the ‘Search’ facility) looking for Miss Mercy Phillimore, LSA secretary. By reading the entries, you see he got books from the Quest Club of the LSA before the war, and that after the war he arranged sittings in London with mediums via Mercy, and talked to her about changes at the LSA.

¹ See: - <http://www.answers.com/topic/bertha-harris>

² See: - <http://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/>

³ See: - <http://king.archives.ca/EN/default.asp>

If you enter “Geraldine Cummins” you will find an actual page from LIGHT with a review of a GC book, as well as accounts of his communications with Roosevelt through GC.

In February 2008, a new doctoral thesis by Margaret Bedore of Queen’s University, Ontario was published in full online⁴.

This examines the reading of Mackenzie King, and enables one to see how he used the psychic books he obtained from LSA and elsewhere. Some of these books were probably selected by Ruby Yeatman, librarian at the LSA, and later principal when its name had changed to CPS. They show what was regarded as good evidence by a leading Spiritualist body of the time.

LP.

FIRST PSYPIONEER WEBMASTER DIES

The passing of Tony Hern on 25 May 2008 in St. Thomas’s Hospital London came as a shock, as he had only just begun a course of treatment for lung cancer. Tony was the webmaster for Psypioneer in its first incarnations as a web site. Knowing of his interest in computers, I had sought his help to actualise the concept of a publication concerned with the pioneers. In late 1999, he secured a free site, and then an actual “dot.com” address. He designed the site and uploaded the content. Clearly without his aid, it would not have come to pass.

In fact we had been friends for forty years. In 1968, when I went to work as librarian for the College of Psychic Studies, also the chief meeting place of the Psychic Youth Group, he was to become vice-chairman of PYG, until it dissolved itself at a meeting at Acacia House in January 1970. Tony went on to spend several months in India which he found too noisy. For some years he worked in Watkins Bookshop, and also in Compendium. In 1978, he had joined me for a time at the short-lived Transpersonal Bookshop in Hove.

It was in 1993 however that he made his main contribution to history. He was then living near to the India Office in Blackfriars Road, and at my suggestion examined their archives in search of Madame Blavatsky. Astonishingly, he found papers concerning a secret 1879 investigation into her background by the British, following a tip from an Ottoman source. A grant from Blavatsky Trust made it possible to transcribe and where necessary translate the papers. They were one of the revelations in Paul Johnson’s best-selling book “The Masters Revealed” (1994). Tony continued his research, publishing a pamphlet about the historic borough of Southwark where he lived.

⁴ See: - <http://qspace.library.queensu.ca/handle/1974/1019>

Tony was one of a number of persons in the London esoteric book scene who became Sufis. His own teacher was a headmaster in India who visited England. He had a Moslem funeral and was interred in the Moslem section of Nunhead cemetery, SE London.

LP.

EMMA TO THE RESCUE 1881

Emma Hardinge Britten re-started her British public propagandism in September 1881; this decade saw much achievement in her public and literary works, but these years are little referred to in her Autobiography. They were very demanding years and perhaps led to her sad decline in health.

Below is taken from: -

THE HERALD OF PROGRESS Sept. 16, 1881 page 123.

A PLEA FOR THE REVIVAL OF SPIRITUALISM

BY EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN

TO THE ENGLISH SPIRITUAL JOURNALS

Some eight months ago I returned from a long tour round the world, and many years of incessant labour, intending to devote one twelvemonth to rest and urgent family duties. With this view I refused to fulfil any of the numerous engagements to lecture tendered to me, and I now beg to state why I rescind this decision, and desire to give such service as my health and strength will permit, to the cause of spiritual propaganda for a brief period. From every side I heard of the many "disgraces" that "evil doers had put upon the cause," and how many of the "best people" who had formerly graced its ranks had withdrawn from all public connexion with it.

During my residence here, I have been a silent, but not uninterested, observer of this policy and its results.

As may be expected, Spiritualism has indeed sunk to a very low ebb, but still it is by no means defeated by its TAME FRIENDS. Here, in the North of England, I find any number of those earnest souls who have even more to lose than the wealthy and influential, giving their all to maintain the truth they believe in, but, of course, working the stream for want of that support which has been withdrawn from them.

After earnest questioning on the part of my spirit friends, which I considered to be "the best people," those who had deserted the cause for fear of being tarnished by the ill name put upon it, or those who still risked everything to stand by it, and I have had to come to the conclusion that the "best people" are those who bravely do their duty in despite of obstacles, rather than those who retreat behind them; and so I have at last yielded to the desire of my spirit friends to do what lays in my power to show the world that Spiritualism is one thing and Spiritualists are another; also, that no individual or community can, in their own good or bad actions, represent a world-wide cause like Spiritualism. I am quite aware that if those who possess wealth and influence would come forward to lift up their cause, instead of boasting that they had done so much in shrinking from it, they would replace it on the pinnacle of popularity which it occupied when I came to England twelve years ago. But each one knows his own duty best, and if those who will not uphold the cause they believe in for fear of the scandal that has been brought upon it, can reconcile their conduct and their responsibility hereafter, it is their affair, not mine; meantime, I believe that anything I can do for the cause of Spiritualism is now more imperatively demanded than ever.

I know, beyond a doubt, that the great success of the movement in America is due to the zeal and activity of its PUBLIC PROPAGANDISM. Private investigation of phenomena goes hand in hand there with public expositions of its facts and philosophy; neither ever did, or ever can, act alone, but combined, they are irresistible.

The drawing-room Spiritualists of Europe, who ignore the rostrum and the newspaper, may satisfy themselves here, but may find hereafter that they have been commissioned to distribute the bread of life to others as freely as they have received it, and failed to do so. Let me add, that those who attempt to salve over their consciences by urging that the world has the Bible (revised), the churches, and tens of thousands of Christian pastors ready to minister to it, had better read the columns of the daily papers; see the enormous fruits of ever-increasing crime that their much vaunted systems of eighteen centuries religious growth is producing, and if they are not satisfied that the people are pining and perishing for want of true practical religion, I am; and finding that religion, in the facts of immortality and personal responsibility, demonstrated by Spiritualism, I mean to dispense it as far as I can, and that even if the great ones of earth won't put forth a hand to help me.

Let the friends of the cause in the North of England, or within a comatable distance from my residence, understand, therefore, that I am ready, for a short time, to give lectures, as heretofore, on Spiritualism. Let them help me, as I will help them, to put our faith fairly before those who will come to listen, and it is quite possible that we may effect as much for the cause of truth as if the very "best people" were with us. Perhaps they will be; certainly we may rest assured the best spirits will be there, and in that faith I am now ready to receive applications as early as possible, addressed to "Emma Hardinge Britten, The Limes, Humphrey Street, Cheetham Hill, Manchester." Sept. 7th, 1881.

Emma Hardinge Britten gave her first oration, on Sunday 18th September: -

LIVERPOOL: - Mrs Emma Hardinge Britten began her present campaign under promising auspices, at the Concert Hall, Lord Nelson Street, last Sunday, delivering two orations to highly appreciative audiences. Subject in the morning - "Signs of the Times;" evening subject (or rather subjects), for her controls took six questions, and dealt with them in the lucid style for which Mrs Britten's guides are noted. It is to be hoped that Societies will avail themselves of the generous terms placed at the disposal of the Spiritualists of this country for a time, and that increased interest on important questions will be the result.⁵

Following EHB's return to England, and the commencement of her orations on Sunday 18th September 1881 until the year end, she was heavily booked with meetings. Sunday bookings often saw her giving two orations during this day, and if her stay at any given venue was to be longer, she could well have given up to seven orations. Checking through her diary of bookings we see her appearing at Halifax, Newcastle, Nottingham, Keighley, Sowerby Bridge, Oldham, Birmingham, West Pelton, Batley Carr and Manchester to name but some of the societies that organised these meetings.

At the 'Batley Carr Association', (West Yorkshire) EHB opened their bazaar on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day she gave two lectures (afternoon and evening) Boxing Day the bazaar was continued and EHB was again present at a social Christmas gathering. The bazaar was intended to raise funds for a Library - a sum of £31.00

EHB lectures were interlaced with other leading exponents at this time namely J.J. Morse and Mr. J. C. Wright. E.W. Wallis would normally be added to this list, but at this period he was in America, returning to England in April 1882.

Britten's second meeting was at Halifax, I have printed below⁶ a review of this meeting that gives us an insight into the enthusiasm and passion she felt. Admission was 6d. and 3d. in the large room of the Mechanics' Hall, doors open at 2pm. and 5.30p.m. It was stipulated that the evening discourse was to be the choice of the audience: *which must be a religious one.*

⁵ Taken from: *THE HERALD OF PROGRESS* September 23, 1881 page 141

⁶ *THE HERALD OF PROGRESS* Oct 7, 1881 page 170

MRS. E. H. BRITTEN AT HALIFAX

Sunday, September 25th, was a "red letter day" to the Spiritualists of Halifax and surrounding neighbourhood. That grand and valiant apostle of Modern Spiritualism, Emma Hardinge Britten, rendered invaluable service to our noble cause in this town. Spiritualists from Bradford, Batley Carr, Huddersfield, Sowerby Bridge, and other surrounding districts came to the Mechanics' Hall, to hear the world-famed Spiritualist orator, anticipating a spiritual feast, and well were they rewarded, and we think a profound impression must have been made on the minds of non-Spiritualists in favour of our cause. The Hall was nearly full both in the afternoon and evening, and there was a fair sprinkling of strangers, who doubtless came out of curiosity. However, I venture to say that most of them went away highly edified and elevated. Never can the sight of the upturned faces be forgotten, as they were rivetted towards the lady orator. The subject in the afternoon was- "Who are the World's Saviours?"

The speaker commenced by adverting to the importance of salvation as evinced by the money lavished in the erection and maintenance of salvation houses (churches and chapels) and salvation ministers; but she did not omit to combat the erroneous and current notions of salvation en passant. The reputed saviours of the time, i.e., the salvation ministers, had failed in a great measure to save the world from the four ghastly demons - War, Crime, Want, and Ignorance. The dear Jesus and other spiritual teachers of the past had contributed to man's salvation by their divine and humanitarian labours. They were grand beacon lights - illumining our pathway and by their labours and influence drawing us up nearer to the all-Father. She concluded by showing the value of modern Spiritualism, in the great work of human salvation from sin and spiritual darkness. The returning of the immortals tended to save humanity from fears and doubts in regard to the here-after, and furnished the best incentives to the attainment of the higher life even in this sphere by the revelation that the Christ principle, which is the saving principle is inherent in every man and woman, all must save themselves.

The evening subject announced on the posters was to be chosen by the audience; about fifteen subjects were handed up to the chairman. To save time six subjects were chosen from the lot, and the chairman was about to put them to the vote, when the speaker offered to dilate upon the whole of the six subjects.

They were as follows:-1st-"What is the Difference Between Spirit, Soul, and Mind and their Relation to the Physical Organism;" 2nd-"The End of the World;" 3rd-"The Trinity;" 4th-"What Evidences are there to show the Superiority of Spiritualism over Salvation;" 5th-"Is Spiritualism Devilish or Divine;" 6th-"Righteousness Exalteth a Nation."

I forbear to enter into details in regard to her treatment of these subjects, because in the first place I fear to tread on your valuable space, and in the second place because of my deep sense of my inadequacy to do so. Suffice it to say that the speaker elicited repeated bursts of applause from the audience, and wrung tears from many eyes. In her treatment of the last subject, she very feelingly referred to President Garfield, not only as a president but as a great and good man. The speaker had been sheltered under his hospitable roof and had shared his board, and she claimed to know

something of the spirit and grandeur of the man. A resolution thanking the speaker for her soul-stirring discourses was about to be put by the chairman, Mr John Culpan, an influential townsman and Spiritualist, when the speaker rose and forbade the procedure. She was made to say that the speaker was but the willing instrument and vehicle through whom a noble band of spirits operated. Let God and his angels be thanked for what they had received. Heaven grant that this noble lady may have continued health and strength to enable her to preach the gospel of Spiritualism throughout the land.

A. O. WILSON.

Paul J. Gaunt

Comment by LP...

It is worth considering the wider situation in which Emma wrote the initial letter here republished. She had perhaps been moved to write by the need to earn money to support her husband and elderly mother.

Some leading Spiritualists had gone over to the Theosophical Society founded in 1875, ironically with Emma a founder member. Emily Kislingbury, BNAS secretary, was a prominent example of a Spiritualist turned Theosophist.

The British National Association of Spiritualists was gradually succumbing to internal disputes. Moreover, at one of its séances in January 1880, Mrs Corner had been seized,⁷ causing great scandal.

William Crookes had withdrawn from active investigation.

However there were signs of hope. After the seizing of Mrs Corner, Stainton Moses had published some papers on “Higher Aspects of Spiritualism” (1880) which eloquently restated the Spiritualist philosophy.

In January 1881, the new weekly “LIGHT” had appeared. This represented, however, a type of mild intellectual Christian Spiritualism which Emma would not find congenial.

In January 1882, following a suggestion by Dawson Rogers to Professor William Barrett, the first meeting was held of the Society for Psychological Research.⁸ This event was to prove a mixed blessing to Spiritualism.

Emma’s interest in a more radical Spiritualism was to develop during the 1880s which, I understand, Psypioneer will explore in the months ahead.

⁷ The Seizure of Mrs. Elgie Corner See: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.8August06..pdf>

⁸ SPR was Conceived by Spiritualist See: - http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP1.pdf

DUNCAN REJECTED SPR APPROACH

Helen Duncan declined an invitation from the SPR, despite a substantial cash inducement.

It was in May 1947 that a group of S.P.R. members interested in the investigation of physical phenomena decided to subscribe to an award of £250, to be given to the first medium able and willing to demonstrate supernormal physical effects. The offer closed on December 31st 1947. The SPR research officer, Dr Donald West, was to judge the genuineness of the phenomena, and the SPR séance room and infra-red telescope were to be used for the purposes of the investigation.

The results were published in JSPR January 1948, and SPR members can read the full text online (all SPR journals and proceedings are made available in this way, after a year or so). The report states: “Mrs Helen Duncan (materialisation) was very definite in her refusal, saying that she would not sit at the S.P.R., “for a million”.”

Credit must be given to Mrs Duncan for at least replying – Alec Harris did not. But one cannot help thinking this refusal was regrettable. Although individual SPR members did sit with Mrs Duncan throughout her career, she never sat at the SPR or on behalf of the Society. Yet this would have offered a number of advantages. There would have been no danger of the attentions from the police which caused such problems. Conditions could have been carefully worked out. Her reputation, damaged by the recent loss of her SNU certificate, would have been enhanced by such SPR research. It would also have been the perfect vindication to those who had imprisoned her in 1944.

LP.

LAST MINUTE HALT TO INFRA RED TESTS

Infra red filming which could have verified the phenomena of William Olsen was halted at the last minute when the equipment was already in position. The sitting was in 1956, but full details were only published in Tony Cornell's 2002 book “Investigating the Paranormal.” (New York, Helix Press).

The Olsens had agreed to the filming at a home circle of which Cornell was a member. The Parapsychology Foundation sent a supply of infra red film (not easily available then in England) and paid for a high-quality tape recorder and other equipment.(p.309) A good deal of effort went into setting up the camera. But the host, referred to only by his initials B.C. then changed his mind, fearing that “*suppose something goes wrong and he gets hurt like Helen Duncan did. Infrared light nearly killed her.*” (p.310.)

(This claim about infra red and Helen Duncan was made, it should be noted, not by Tony Cornell, but by the host. So far as we are aware, Helen Duncan never had any contact with infra red. But the belief that she did, and was injured by it, may well have been part of Spiritualist folk lore.)

The equipment was accordingly dismantled. Cornell notes that since then thermal cameras have been developed which permit the movements of a medium in the dark to be followed by their body heat, but physical mediums have not consented to their use.

In another chapter, Cornell gives an account of an Alec Harris séance in Cardiff which he attended with his home circle in 1955. A variety of figures materialised, but Cornell concluded for several reasons that each was Harris in disguise. For example, the materialisations were so heavy that the floor boards creaked as they moved. This 11-page analysis should be set against the many positive testimonials to Harris.

[Note- for basic reading on Harris, Guy Playfair recommends “They Walked Among Us” by Louie Harris (wife) Psychic Press 1980, much shortened from the original manuscript and “From Materialisation to Healing” by Isa Gray. Regency Press, 1972.]

In 1984, Cornell was among those who sat with a physical medium he identifies only as Mrs R.G; these phenomena also appeared to be suspicious to him (p.347-352). This is clearly Rita Goold. She produced phenomena which greatly impressed Michael Roll, but Roll noted in Paranormal Review 2004 (issue 32, p. 22.).

“In 1983 Prof. Archie Roy and other members of the SPR made a determined effort to capture these experiments on film - in order to share this evidence of survival after death with as many people as possible. Sadly this attempt was thwarted by the medium withdrawing her services just as the team were about to go in with the infra-red cameras. Everything now rests on another fully developed materialisation medium coming forward and letting scientists of the calibre of Roy complete their experiments.”

THE EAGER RESEARCHER?

A former president of the Society for Psychical Research attempted to beget a world leader or a gifted medium, a new book by another former SPR president has revealed.

Gerald Balfour (SPR president 1906-7) was one of the researchers who investigated Mrs Willett, (Mrs Winifred Coombe-Tennant) who had approached the automatist Mrs Verrall in 1908 after the death of her baby daughter. But the child of their union, Henry Coombe-Tennant (1913 -1989) never fulfilled the imperial hopes.

Professor Archie Roy was invited to tell this story by descendants of the Balfours. His book "The Eager Dead" (Book Guild) is the result.

Because he has had access to the relevant Balfour papers (what is now called the Kremer archive) he is able to amplify the information recently made available in Trinity College, Cambridge. This was used in the first article to break the silence about the newly released Cambridge papers "The Lost Messiah"⁹ by Massimo Polidoro in Skeptical Enquirer, September 2003

LP.

Notes by the Way: -

IN THE LATTER DAYS

During the time of Queen Victoria, many intellectuals lost faith in the Christian gospel, as Alan Gauld described in his classic work "The Founders of Psychical Research" (1968). It was hoped that the study of psi might provide an alternative basis for belief. Some of these thinkers are remembered chiefly as Spiritualists, such as Stainton Moses, while others like F.W.H. Myers are identified with psychical research.

Spiritualism did not have a good reputation, but psychical research gradually achieved respect in society. In 1912, a Bishop (Boyd Carpenter) actually became SPR president. Behind the scenes however an extraordinary scandal was unfolding that could have permanently discredited the SPR in the eyes of the public.

Winifred Coombe-Tennant (later known as the non-professional medium Mrs Willett) was already related to Myers. She approached Mrs Verrall, and by degrees came into contact with others in the SPR leadership. She was, and remained deeply vulnerable because of the death of her infant daughter. The Society owed (I would suggest) especially when she continued to practice mediumship with their encouragement, what we might now call a duty of care to her and to her husband. Instead, one of the investigators entered into an adulterous relationship with her.

In Archie Roy's book "The Eager Dead" the private memoranda of Jean Balfour provide the most intimate perspective on personalities and events. From this we learn that the investigator, Gerald Balfour eventually claimed to his own wife "she had persuaded him that love like theirs should have its way..."(p.333), and indeed Jean his daughter-in-law, observed "in great passions there is no right and wrong" (p.328)

G. Balfour was one of the intermarried family who greatly influenced the SPR until about 1930 - and indeed for a generation longer, if we include W.H. Salter and his wife, who shared their outlook.

⁹ See: - http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2843/is_5_27/ai_108114809

The secret of the affair between the SPR investigator and the medium was preserved within the Society, like similar affairs in the psychic field. But there was considerable suffering. Gerald's wife Betty who was pregnant, found herself abandoned in the marital bed, without explanation, for eight years. (p.331); Charles Coombe-Tennant, the husband, became estranged from Winifred; Gerald's legitimate son, known as Ral, had to take second place in his father's heart to another son. (p.327)

It is not clear when the child of the affair, Henry Coombe-Tennant, born 9 April 1913 was told or deduced his true parentage. Upon him pre-eminently the paranormal hopes rested. "I still think he may do something really important" wrote Salter in 1967 (p.455)" It would be something if he could tidy up religion so as to make it really alive to most thinking people all over the world.."

But by then, Henry had become a monk and had no need to be concerned further about "the Plan" (p.520.) or whether his mother was attempting to contact him via Miss Cummins. (See "Swan on a Black Sea" edited by Signe Toksvig.)

And this brings us to the wider implications of this story. After all, scandals are nothing new. But what does this case tell us about mediumship? The cross-correspondence mediums were not just producing erudite allusions which when fitted together pointed towards the survival of ingenious minds. They engaged in prophecy, portentous and obscure. Salter wrote in May 1957:

"A very difficult problem of interpretation is connected with 'psychological eugenics'. Is the Plan intended to produce a race or breed of 'children of the spirit', fitted to introduce the Age of Peace, not of course a race in the national sense, but a number of persons with the requisite gifts of mind and character. Or has it a more restricted personal aim?" (p.447)

In 1910, Mrs Willett sat with Mrs Piper who was visiting England, and who wrote scripts with some disturbing suggestions (p.273). In them, the claimed communicator Edmund Gurney, declared his love for her. Mrs Willett found this "incredible", though it had already been claimed in one of his communications through her. Moreover:

"G. asked me to bear another child – to be, as he says Alexander is, in some sense his child - & to be 'a playmate' for Alexander. Considerable portions of Piper sittings were devoted to urging this."

Moreover, there was,

"Prediction of Mr Willett's decease, which it is asserted will occur by an accident, within a period of time not much greater than a year. (I assured Mrs W. that predictions of death are rather common in SPR experience, & that we do not attach much weight to them.)" (p.275)

Sir Oliver doubtless was correct – indeed perhaps he was too sensible, for by 1914 he was largely excluded from the group interpreting the scripts. (p.317). Mr Coombe-Tennant was still alive. The affair was in progress.

One cannot but be reminded, in reading of a spirit who declares his love for a married woman, or who urges the disregard for the marriage ties, of the free love deceptions which ended the expansion of American Spiritualism before the Civil War. The Balfour group would undoubtedly have regarded themselves as superior beings compared to the self-confessed Spiritualists, who suffered obloquy for their faith.

The group were often not content any longer with the established religion, though a glance at 1. Timothy 4.1. might have given them pause. The apostle Paul, who knew a thing or two about the gifts of the spirit, had reported that “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;”.

In retrospect we can see that some of those SPR leaders involved in script work, lacked discernment. Unlike Sir Oliver, (a liberal Anglican) and having little time for the Messiah of scripture, they were vulnerable to the false prospect of “a genius in fact of high order” (p.276) Ironically, at the same time, Lady Emily Lutyens, sister of the wronged wife Lady Betty Balfour, was causing distress to the Lutyens family by her enthusiasm for Krishnamurti as a vehicle for the World Teacher.

Professor Archie Roy has performed a considerable service to everyone by telling this story with considerable documentation. Not everyone in the SPR believes it is helpful to psychical research to write such a book. But in view of the importance of the cross-correspondence to survival research, we do need to fill in the gaps of their development.

For the historian of psychical research, the story is also essential reading. No doubt more documentation, not least from the Salter papers, needs to be put in the public domain.

Serious questions are also raised about the entities purporting to be deceased SPR early workers. The tendency of mediumship, or the Unconscious, to predict great things that do not come to pass had been made clear as early as the 1850s. Herbert Thurston documented it in his book “Modern Spiritualism” which we reprinted in *Psypioneer* from March 2007. Not without reason, “The Eager Dead” carries the subtitle “A Study in Haunting”. Jean Balfour’s memoranda leave no doubt that she too was sensitive to the presence of entities in the houses where these activities took place. A question mark must hang over their true identity.

LP.

NEW CFPSS PRESIDENT

The Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies has revealed its new president – on page 13 of the Summer 2008 issue of its Quarterly Review. He is Alexander Wedderspoon, retired Anglican Dean of Guildford, Surrey, with a particular interest in spirituality. He has been a CFPSS member since 1990. Members are promised information about the editorship of the flagship journal "The Christian Parapsychologist" in the next issue.

NEWTON CROSLAND

1819-1899

The Crosland home circle has a significant place in history. As we see in the reprinted article printed below¹⁰ it attracted important early influential Spiritualists and critics alike.

Their medium, who is only referred to as "a young lady" it is said, possessed remarkable mediumistic abilities. In 'The Pioneers of the Reformation' by Anna Mary Howitt Watts, published 1883, while referring to her father William Howitt on page 247 stated: -

It was through the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Newton Crosland, shortly after our return from Normandy, whilst my father naturally suspended his judgment, and the chaotic mediumistic condition, to which I have referred, still existed, that we became acquainted with a lady, a seeress from childhood possessed of great powers as a "psychic" both on the intellectual and physical planes; and whose gentle, refined, and benevolent nature endears her to all who have had the privilege to know her intimately. Preferring to be one who works for good and truth in secret, and ever shunning publicity, I feel constrained to speak of this lady- whose extraordinary experiences, if properly recorded, would form a pendant to those of the celebrated Seeress of Prevorst-simply under the initials "L. M".

It is to this friend that William Howitt ("History of the Supernatural," p. 226,¹¹ vol. ii.) refers, saying that she is "one of the ladies who saw the apparition of Squire and Dame Children at Ramhurst, in Kent, the particulars of which are given by Mr. Owen in his 'Footfalls.' These particulars," he adds, "were also well known to me before Mr. Owen took up the subject, and discovered, by a visit to Ramhurst and to the British Museum, in consequence, "facts regarding Squire Children and his family known only at Ramhurst through the apparitions, the memory of the family

¹⁰ LIGHT July 10, 1899 page 271 – 72.

¹¹ The author has put the wrong page number - should read as page 246.

there having almost wholly died out.” Amongst the particulars communicated to this lady by Squire Children's ghost was the date of his death, which Mr. Owen, after much search in the MS. department of the British Museum, found to be perfectly correct.

The manner in which we became acquainted with this lady might be counted amongst “modern miracles.” “L. M.” visiting us occasionally whilst we were residing at the Hermitage and later on at West Hill Lodge, Highgate - whither we shortly removed - such remarkable séances took place, such unpremeditated tests occurred, proving the identity, incontestably to my father's mind, of spirits belonging to his own family - to whom the seeress was an entire stranger; - such characteristic messages, from the spirit of his beloved mother were given - one of which, the first delivered, has remained henceforth as a talismanic motto for her descendants -- that he found his doubts to fade away, and his judgment to become fully established as regarded the existence of communication between the invisible and the visible worlds.

Newton Crosland at the time of his death on the 18th May 1899 was living at 29, Ondine Road, East Dulwich. He was one of the first to espouse and publicly defend the Spiritualist movement in Britain. He was so sound in his own convictions that he had little patience with those of different opinions. In Crosland's last letter published in *Light* (May 27th) this was quite apparent on the question of reincarnation, to which he was strongly apposed.

His wife also a Spiritualist had achieved some literary reputation under her maiden name Camilla Dufour Toulmin (1812-1895). Newton Crosland authored an early book *'Apparitions'* (1856); it appears that he also wrote an autobiography just before his death¹². A year later Camilla Crosland authored *'Light in the Valley'* Subtitled: My Experiences of Spiritualism (1857) this is reprinted by Kessinger Publishing Co¹³. In Mrs. Crosland's last work *'Landmarks of a Literary Life'* a chapter is devoted to the bold defence and elucidation of Spiritualism¹⁴.

William Howitt refers to the Crosland books in his two volumes *'The History of the Supernatural'* 1863 page 252 volume 2: -

“Mr. Newton Crosland 'New Theory of Apparitions,' and Mrs. Crosland's 'Light in the Valley,' should have careful perusal. They are very important,

¹² See book seller Richard Neylon: - <http://209.85.129.104/search?q=cache:a5cIzcadN2OJ:www.antigbook.com/boox/ney/7922.shtml+Apparitions%3B+An+Essay,+Explanatory+of+Old+Facts+and+a+New+Theory.+To+which+are+added,+sketches+and+adventures.&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1>

¹³ See booksellers: - <http://www.abebooks.co.uk/servlet/SearchResults?an=crosland&sortby=3&sts=t&tn=Light+in+the+Valley&x=17&y=10>

¹⁴ See *'The New York Times'* December 10th 1893: - http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?_r=1&res=9401E0DE113BEF33A25753C1A9649D94629ED7CF&oref=slogin

and only came out too early, the subject then being almost wholly unknown, except by mere and absurd report.”

Michael Faraday was invited to the Crosland circle to test his unconscious muscular action theory, but instead he sent John Tyndall (1820 – 1893) later to be Faraday’s successor. In ‘*Fragments of Science for Unscientific People*’ 1871 New York D Appleton and Company, Tyndall published a derisive account of his sitting; he described the medium as “. . . a delicate-looking young lady, who appeared to have suffered much ill health”. In the next issue of *Psypioneer* I will publish Tyndall’s account.

Information on Crosland generally is not easy to find, Arthur Conan Doyle in his ‘*The History of Spiritualism*¹⁵’ draws our attention to an involvement in the B.N.S: -

The establishment of the British National Association of Spiritualists in 1873 gave the movement an impetus, because many well-known public men and women joined it. Among them may be mentioned the Countess of Caithness, Mrs. Makdougall Gregory (widow of Professor Gregory, of Edinburgh), Dr. Stanhope Speer, Dr. Gully, Sir Charles Isham, Dr. Maurice Davies, Mr. H. D. Jencken, Dr. George Sexton, Mrs. Ross Church (Florence Marryat), Mr. Newton Crosland, and Mr. Benjamin Coleman.

Below is taken from: -

LIGHT June 10, 1899 pages 271-272

A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF NEWTON CROSLAND

BY ‘AN OLD INVESTIGATOR’

There are very few Spiritualists living at the present who are fully aware how much is due to Newton Crosland (who died on May 18th last), as one of the earliest boldest pioneers of Spiritualism.

At the present time a person may state that he has seen phenomena, and is acquainted with facts, which prove that communication with the spirit world is possible, and yet he will not be hooted at, and told he is a madman, or a fool. Of course I exclude those learned gentlemen who write for some of our popular papers, and who imagine they possess a monopoly of all knowledge. These individuals are still so ignorant that they class under one head Spiritualists, fools, mediums, tricksters, swindlers, impostors, and liars. Such persons, however, are rapidly passing away, and as the human intellect becomes more aware of the importance of facts, and less influenced by ignorant prejudice, and pre-conceived opinion, they

¹⁵ Page 170 Arno Press edition New York 1975

will die out like the Dodo and Great Auk, and will, in the future, be referred to, merely as remnants of the dark ages.

When, in the year 1855, Newton Crosland first took a prominent part in Spiritualism, such ignorance and prejudice prevailed, that to admit one's self a believer in facts which we had seen, was sufficient to justify a medical man in giving a certificate of our being lunatics. Crosland, however, was not deterred by these dangers, but was bold enough to give a lecture on the subject at the Mechanics' Institution, Deptford, on February 27th, 1856.

He shortly afterwards published a small book termed 'Apparitions,' which was the first book on Spiritualism published in England with the name and address of the author.

The results of this bold proceeding were, Newton Crosland states, that 'Old friends pitied and deserted us. Some people would not ride in the same railway carriage with me. Some would not pass close to our house; they crossed over to the other side. Others would not engage servants that left our employment. My partner and clerks left me in a body. My foreign agencies were withdrawn, and at one fell swoop I lost £600 per annum.'

We read that in olden times men were persecuted, and even burnt, for standing up for the cause of truth; but only forty-three years ago persecution, as far as the law permitted, was practised, and by people claiming to be Christians, or by men who claimed to be scientific, and to be guided by facts.

It was on Sunday, December 31st, 1856, that I made the acquaintance of Newton Crosland. I was asked to dine with him, and to witness such spiritual phenomena as might occur. Up to that date I had no knowledge whatever of spiritual phenomena, but having had a scientific education, I was fairly able to judge what could be accomplished by trick or conjuring, by so-called scientific machinery, and by the influence of the surroundings. When, therefore, proofs were given me, which could not have been given except by some power then unknown to science, I realised the fact that a new world was opened to me, and I resolved that to closely investigate this should be the main object of my future.

Newton Crosland's system of investigation was what may be termed 'two-fold.' He endeavoured to learn and also to teach, and in the following manner. Having found that, besides himself, his wife, and the young lady (the medium), there were two friends who harmonised with the conditions, he arranged that on one day (Thursday) each week, this party of five should dine together, and after dinner should sit for such manifestations, or instructions, as might be given. Nothing was allowed to interfere with these meetings, and no outsider was permitted to be present. After a few of these meetings, the party ceased almost to pay much attention to the movements of inanimate bodies in the room, the most interesting subjects being the instruction given by our invisible friends, as to the laws which governed spiritual communications; how mentally and physically we could develop; how to maintain our health; and the reasons why certain persons were incapable of even comprehending the importance of spiritual phenomena.

During more than two years these weekly meetings occurred, and I cannot find that since then, any spiritual circle has succeeded in becoming acquainted with the laws governing these communications, even half as efficiently as was made known to the special circle at Newton Crosland's. When the same five people sat together each week, the phenomena that occurred were such as would even now be considered astounding.

Crosland, however, considered that to keep all such matters limited to five people was not just; he therefore gave one, and sometimes two days a week, for strangers, (limited to one or two) to dine and witness the phenomena. No sooner did a stranger join our circle than the manifestations became very weak, and not until this stranger had been present several times could we obtain satisfactory results. The reasons for such failures were clearly explained by our invisible friends. Now, when we hear of the proceedings of certain gentlemen who believe they are fairly investigating spiritual phenomena, and succeed in obtaining no results, we are astounded at the ignorance they display of the elementary laws which govern the occurrences, of which they set themselves up as competent investigators.

It was at the house of Newton Crosland that Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall had their introduction to spiritual phenomena. Mr. Hall was at first slightly disposed to teach rather than to learn, but he soon overcame this weakness, and the manner in which he helped to make the facts of Spiritualism known prove what an able missionary he became.

William and Mary Howitt, and Miss Howitt were frequent visitors at Newton Crosland's, and W. Howitt became a stalwart champion of Spiritualism. The late Robert Chambers had his first experience of the phenomena at Crosland's house. It was also there that the late Professor John Tyndall came one evening, professedly to investigate. His proceedings were such, that he broke all the laws by which the phenomena occurred, yet phenomena did occur, but he failed to comprehend them. It was little short of pitiable, to see a man who had the reputation of being infallible in science, behaving like a spoilt child. He informed us that he was acquainted with all the laws of Nature, and that *a priori he knew* that what we stated we had seen occur, was impossible; he therefore intended merely to devote his attention to discover how we were deceived, or how we attempted to deceive others.

Numerous other men of science, and note, came to see. The results were as curious as they were interesting. In some cases the physical manifestations were powerful, but the visitors seemed really incompetent to comprehend them. Like the late Sir David Brewster, they would say that the table *appeared* to rise in the air without contact, and objects in the room, and at a distance from any one, *appeared* to move, but whether or not they really moved, they could not venture to state. Others again would carefully test the phenomena, and at the termination of the seance, would volunteer the remark, that there was no use denying the facts, and the only possible solution was, that invisible beings were the agents who had produced the phenomena, and given the messages. Then these same individuals, a few days afterwards, would state that, on thinking over the matter, they had come to the conclusion that nothing had occurred at the séance which was not easily explained by tricks, or collusion, and they did not care to repeat their visit.

These peculiar attributes of the human mind puzzled us, and we asked our invisible friends to give us some explanation. Their reply was curious but interesting: 'The spiritual nature of many persons is so dormant, that they are utterly incompetent to perceive, or comprehend, anything of a spiritual nature. They cannot distinguish the difference between a conjuring trick, and an actual spiritual phenomenon. Their natures, therefore, being so materialistic, they adept the material explanation. During their visit here their spiritual nature was partially awakened, but on returning to their usual surroundings, and companions, it again became dormant, and the facts they had witnessed ceased to produce any effects. No man can comprehend anything, when he has not in his nature the capacity to perceive it.'

Newton Crosland bore patiently the insults and ridicule of many of his guests. This was the more remarkable, as he was by nature a fighter, and disposed to be somewhat self-opinionated and dogmatic. It was probably these attributes that enabled him forty-five years ago to stand firm against an opposition, that really amounted to persecution. In recent years these attributes caused many of his friends to become cool with him.

I, one of his oldest friends, would receive from him a letter, little short of abusive, in which he would assure me I was wrong, unsound, and weak in my reasoning. I would meet him on his own ground, and pelt him with facts and arguments. He would shortly reply and would confess he had been wrong, and was much obliged to me for having proved him so.

Newton Crosland was a thoroughly kind-hearted, good man, who would sacrifice much for the cause of truth. Those who can now state that they are convinced of the fact of spiritual communication, without incurring the risk of being put into a lunatic asylum, are perhaps not aware how much they owe to Crosland's bold statements years ago when mediums were scarce, and when confirmed and experienced Spiritualists, numbered few more than the fingers on our two hands. He was enabled to do his work because he had, almost as a daily visitor to his house, a young lady whose powers, and high teaching, were such as to far transcend those of any medium since that time. Those who were permitted to receive this teaching, and witness the phenomena, may consider themselves fortunate.

I was one, and I owe to Newton Crosland's kindness this treasure. I can overlook his little weaknesses when I remember his many acts of kindness, and self-sacrifice, to many besides myself.

Several of those who gained their first experience of Spiritualism at Newton Crosland's, afterwards developed as mediums, and became themselves promulgators of the facts, so that the results of his work spread far beyond the small circle, that used to meet at Hyde Vale, Blackheath.

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[**Note by Psypioneer:** - In October 2007 issue¹⁶ we published Arthur Ford (1897 – 1971) ‘Makes Psychic History in Australia – FIRST BROADCAST OF SPIRIT MESSAGES’ Reported by *Psychic News* April 17th 1937.]

Printed below is taken from: -

LIGHT, November 11th 1937 page 709

WHAT I SAW IN AUSTRALIA

By **ARTHUR FORD**

AUSTRALIAN and New Zealand Spiritualists are like Spiritualists everywhere these days, enthusiastic and hard at work. After six months "away down under," I return to America with renewed zeal. The movement is growing at a tremendous pace, and our only problem is to keep it clean.

I visited Australia upon the invitation of the Society for Psychical Research, and all my work was done under the auspices of this society, but the Spiritualists as a whole supported the effort loyally. The Psychical Research Society of Australia has among its members a large number of successful and prominent business and professional people. They maintain splendid rooms and have one of the best libraries to be found anywhere. The two Secretaries, Mrs. Dorothy Hall and Mrs. Wall, are in daily attendance and often find it necessary to call upon volunteers to assist in handling the throngs of people who visit the rooms in quest of information and literature. I marvelled at their tact and patience.

Preliminary publicity had been well handled and the Press interviews started four days before I got to Sydney, when the Press in Auckland, New Zealand, printed front-page interviews with me. These were also cabled to the Australian Press. It was a good start, but ruined my trip from that point on. I had not told anyone on the ship the nature of my business, but when we sailed from Auckland everyone on board knew, and from that time on I was besieged with questions and found that many of the passengers were intelligently interested.

My campaign in Sydney began with the inevitable banquet, at which the speakers were Sir Ernest Fisk, head of the Australian Radio Company, and Mr. Eric Baume, Editor of the *Sydney Sun*. Mr. Baume requested the first sitting with me and afterwards wrote an editorial in his paper, which resulted in great interest. The Press everywhere were generous and absolutely fair in reporting my activities. There was but one attack, and that rebounded to our good. A certain weekly printed a vague and general sort of attack, heading it, "Ford Rides Through Australia on a Wave of Mass Hysteria" . . . I rather welcome newspaper attacks. They can always be turned to good account. We have the privilege of replying, and our answer is always so much more intelligent and interesting than the attacks from reporters who know nothing of the subject. If I accomplished nothing else in Australia, I succeeded in keeping Spiritualism in the papers almost daily for four months.

¹⁶ <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.10October07..pdf>

Apart from my public lectures, I wrote a weekly article for *Woman*, the leading weekly magazine in Australia. This magazine also sponsored a weekly radio broadcast. Mrs. Hamilton, editor of *Woman*, is the outstanding woman journalist of the country, and co-operated with me in every way. Not once did she blue-pencil my articles, or place the slightest restrictions upon what I should say in my broadcasts. These broadcasts with the beloved Goodie Reeve in charge reached countless thousands all over the Commonwealth. The mail was enormous and a large part of the programme was devoted to answering questions about Spiritualism itself. There was no attempt to answer personal questions or solve problems of that nature. In both Melbourne and Brisbane the broadcasts went on just as they did in Sydney.

Great interest was aroused when *Woman* decided to attempt the broadcast of a public seance from the Assembly Hall. With eighteen hundred people in the hall, the entire meeting was sent over the air. Messages of an evidential nature were given to people listening in as far away as five hundred miles. We asked those recognising a message to telephone in at once and later to confirm in writing their message.

Before the meeting ended, about a dozen calls were received, and within a few days nineteen out of twenty-one broadcast messages were confirmed and verified. So interested was the editor in the success of this first attempt at broadcasting a seance that she personally interviewed several of those claiming messages and wrote an article about the experiment in her magazine. So far as I know this is the first time such an experiment has been conducted. Yet, from a psychical standpoint there is no reason why it should not have been a success. Time and space are purely physical limitations and do not obtain in a mental and spiritual realm. This experiment was later repeated with equal success in New Zealand over a Government-controlled station.

Huge crowds greeted me everywhere. From the first, the halls were packed, and for the last three lectures in Sydney it was necessary to call for police to clear the streets and permit ticket holders to enter. My farewell meeting in Sydney was held in the Town Hall, and three thousand people crowded the place on the rainiest night in years.

My visit in Melbourne was cut short by illness, which compelled me to seek a warmer climate in which to recover my health. But the one lecture there was well received. The chairman was Dr. Huston, Editor of the *Harbinger of Light*, edited for many years by the late Brittin Harvey. Dr. Huston is a Congregational minister, and while editing this famous Spiritualist journal, continues to serve as minister of the leading Congregational church in Melbourne.

The Spiritualist Church movement in Australia is in bad repute and in a sad state of chaos. Too many one-man churches and a total lack of organisation with proper standards have brought about the inevitable result. No one seems responsible for anything, and consequently the general public looks with suspicion upon what passes as Spiritualism. There are notable exceptions to this rule, however. There are a few splendidly organised churches with competent leadership. One of these churches, with the Rev. Mr. Nicholson as pastor, is heading a group now fighting for legal recognition. We held a meeting while I was there and laid the plans for a better type of Spiritualist Church. This meeting was largely attended by leading Spiritualists as

well as many orthodox clergymen and several members of Parliament. A Bill is now pending in Parliament which will give proper recognition to the proper sort of church.

Australia has several fine Mediums, who compare favourably with the best to be found anywhere. Chief among these is a young man by the name of Alfred Rayner. His platform work is remarkable and he is refreshingly modest and studious. He works almost entirely under the auspices of the S.P.R. The other is Mrs. Effie Leish, of Brisbane. I consider her one of the finest trance Mediums I have ever known. I had a series of sittings with her and found her amazingly accurate. She is the wife of a Unitarian minister and is supported in her work by her husband's whole-hearted co-operation.

One of the gratifying things about my visit to Australia was the discovery that large numbers of orthodox clergymen are sympathetic to our cause. This was especially true among the Anglican clergymen. They attended my lectures everywhere and I came to know many of them. The outstanding liberal minister of Australia is Dr. Wyndham Heathcote (Oxon.). He is a fearless and outspoken Spiritualist. I do not know why one is surprised when the clergy evince an interest in so vital a matter, but one always is. (From *The Progressive Thinker*, Chicago).

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EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN WEBSITE

In the June 2007¹⁷ Newsletter (3.6) *Psypioneer* announced a proposed website dedicated to Emma Hardinge Britten; this announcement was coupled with *Psypioneer* re-publishing 100 facsimiles of her first book '*Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*' (Hardinge) published in 1860.

Although a two year subscription was paid for the website, it remained *under construction* for this period. It was anticipated the revenue from the re-published Hardinge book would pay for the website to be professionally designed to be easily updated together with contributions from interested parties, and so providing a more accurate historical record of this remarkable woman's life.

Sadly this did not go to plan, only 5 copies of the book to date have been sold at the cover price; 2 sold at cost price to university/society libraries, and a few complementary copies given to the British Library, etc.

The subscription for the website has now been stopped and the EHB site has been removed.

¹⁷ <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.6June07..pdf>

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See Psypioneer 4.1: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

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**Re-Published by Psypioneer** @ £14.95 + pp. ISBN: 978-0-9556539-0-2  
See Psypioneer 3.6 issue: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.6June07..pdf>

*'Magical Spiritualism a warning address given in 1878 to mark thirty years of Modern Spiritualism'*, Andrew Jackson Davis. Published May 2000 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 7pp £2.00 incl. U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

*'The Mystery of Stainton Moses an address given in 1992 on the centenary of his death'* Leslie Price Published December 1999 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 8pp £2.50 Inc U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

*'Occultism and Spiritualism* – a book review by, Stainton Moses originally published under the pseudonym M.A. (Oxon). Published 1999 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 10pp £2.50 Inc U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

All three Psychic Pioneer Publications £6.00 Inc U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

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Paul J. Gaunt