

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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# Sir William Fletcher Barrett F.R.S

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Sir William Fletcher Barrett, F.R.S., was born in Jamaica, on February 10, 1844 and died suddenly of heart failure on May 26, 1925.

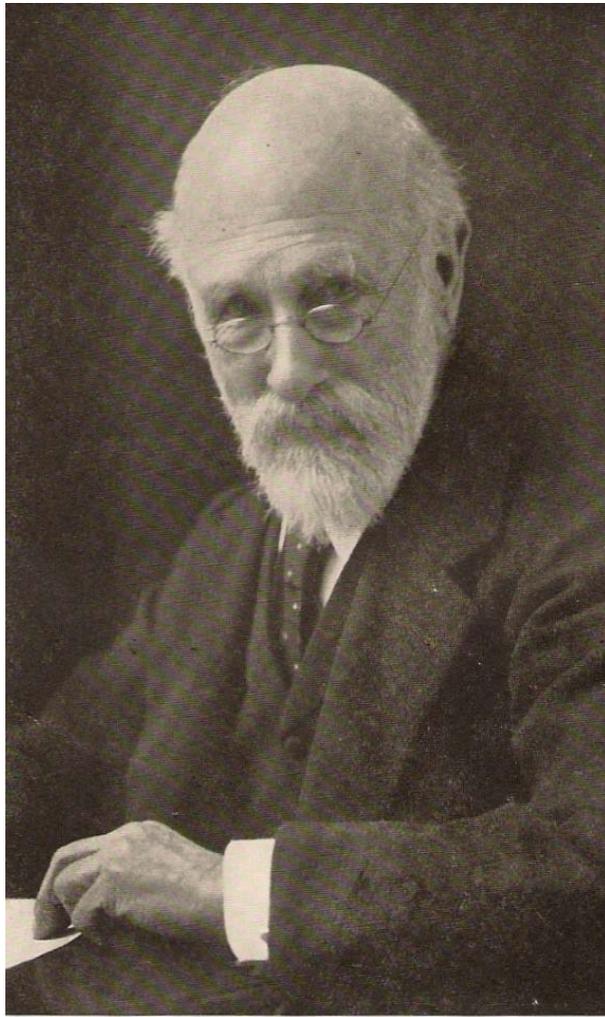
In the first issue of *Psypioneer*, May 2004, Leslie Price opened with the headline: “S.P.R. was Conceived by a Spiritualist” quoting from Edmond Dawson Rogers’ posthumously published *Memoirs*,<sup>1</sup> and asking who was the founder of the SPR. “Rogers or Barrett?”<sup>2</sup>

Later in *Psypioneer* October 2008, I picked up on the story with “The Grave of William Stainton Moses” and “The Society for Psychical Research, officers and council for 1882”.<sup>3</sup>

Below, the history of the foundation of the SPR is told by Sir William Barrett in his own words.

Photograph is taken from *Psychic Science*.<sup>4</sup>

Paul J. Gaunt.



SIR WILLIAM F. BARRETT, F.R.S.

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<sup>1</sup> *Life and Experiences of Edmund Dawson Rogers—Spiritualist and Journalist*. 1910 published by Office of LIGHT, London. This is a Memorial reprint from LIGHT of the Life and Experiences of Mr. E. Dawson Rogers’ and was issued by the London Spiritualist Alliance (LSA).

<sup>2</sup> Volume I, No.1:—*SPR was Conceived by a Spiritualist – Leslie Price*, pages 1-3:—[http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP1.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP1.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Volume 4, No.10:—*Grave of W. S. Moses & SPR Officers and Council for 1882 – Paul J. Gaunt*, pages 231-238:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.10October08.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Vol. IV, Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science April 1925 to January 1926, page 86.

# THE EARLY YEARS OF PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

*LIGHT*:—<sup>5</sup>

By SIR WILLIAM BARRETT, F.R.S.

I am very glad *LIGHT* has published those most interesting memories of my old friend Mr. Dawson Rogers. In its issue for March 15th, Mr. Rogers gives his recollection of the origin of the Society for Psychical Research which with the following slight exception—I can corroborate.

Mr. Rogers states that about 1882 or the end of 1881, when I was visiting him he suggested to me “that a Society should be started on lines which would be likely to attract some of the best minds which had hitherto held aloof from the pursuit of the enquiry” [into psychical phenomena]. He adds that I approved of the suggestion and called a conference for the purpose. The fact is long before I visited Mr. Rogers, Mr. F. W. H. Myers had discussed with me the possibility of obtaining the co-operation of leading Spiritualists in the psychical investigations we were both pursuing, and in which Professor and Mrs. H. Sidgwick for some time previously had also been engaged. Myers was aware that I had been contributing papers on Spiritualism to *LIGHT* and to the “*Psychological Review*” for October 1881, which brought me into contact with the Editor, the Rev. Stainton Moses, and also with Mr. Dawson Rogers and Mr. C. C. Massey. In a letter from Stainton Moses to me dated August, 1881 (which I happen to have kept) he refers to the subject and to my letter in the scientific journal, “*Nature*”—giving the first intimations of thought transference, in the normal state of the percipient.

The numerous experiments I made with many different persons both in England and Ireland had convinced me that a real “transfusion of thought” (as I expressed it in 1881) occurred between one person and another without the aid of the usual sensory channels. In an article in the “*Psychological Review*” for 1881, I described these experiments, but no scientific society would publish my paper on the subject, as it involved a transcendental or supersensuous faculty. Hence it became necessary to found a new Society to record and investigate psychical phenomena.

Shortly after this I asked Stainton Moses if he would co-operate with Myers and myself and others if a Psychical Society on scientific lines were formed. He agreed and suggested my consulting Dawson Rogers, and that was the main object of my visit to Mr. Rogers’ house at Finchley a little later.

In his “*Human Personality*,” Vol. 2; p. 224, Myers has correctly stated the facts as follows:—

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<sup>5</sup> *LIGHT*, June 21, 1924 page 395.

When in 1882 [this should be the latter end of 1881] Professor Barrett consulted him [Rev. Stainton Moses] as to the possibility of founding a new Society, he [Stainton Moses] warmly welcomed the plan. Edmund Gurney and I were asked to join.

They heartily co-operated together with Professor H. Sidgwick, who consented to be the first President.

The preliminary conference, as Mr. Dawson Rogers remarks:—

... was held at the rooms of the British National Association of Spiritualists in January, 1882. At that meeting, Mr. Stainton Moses, Mr. C. C. Massey, Mr. F. W. H. Myers, Mr. J. G. Romanes, myself [Dawson Rogers] and others were present.

I was asked to preside, and Mr. Rogers arranged for a shorthand report of the meeting, which was taken, and I hope some day may be recovered and published; for the discussion was a most interesting one and some able speeches were made by Sidgwick, Myers, Romanes, Roden Noel, Mrs. Anna Kingsford and others.

Mr. Rogers not only provided the rooms, but defrayed the cost of the shorthand reporter and of printing the notices convening the meeting which were sent out in my name and which read as follows:—

*Private and Confidential.*

18, Belgrave Square,  
Monkstown, Dublin.  
December, 1881.

It is proposed to hold a Conference of friends interested in Spiritualism and Psychological Research, during the first week in January, to compare notes, talk over the present condition of affairs, suggest lines of work, and consider the advisability of having a select Central Society organised, under some such name as the London Psychical Society.

The Conference will be held, by the kind permission of the Council of the B.N.A.S., at their rooms, 38, Great Russell-street, Bloomsbury, on January 5th and 6th next, at four p.m. May I ask for your attendance?

Yours truly,

W. F. BARRETT.

Many of the replies to three notices I have kept as they are of considerable interest, coming from eminent and representative men such as the late Lord Houghton, General Pitt Rivers, Mr. J. G. Romanes, F.R.S., etc. The numerous letters of Romanes to me on the

subject are worth publishing, and as his widow informs me that she has no objection to this, I hope some opportunity may be afforded for their publication.

I have before me a letter which Stainton Moses wrote to me on January 12th, 1882, in which he says:—

When you invited me to attend a Conference, my first impulse was to decline, not from lack of interest, as you know, but because I believed the disintegrating forces to be insuperable. Socially I thought that such men as you and I would desire to see governing a Society and directing its aims, would not find themselves able to act with the average B.N.A.S. man; ... and two societies existing side by side would be mutually injurious to each other's interests. What I feared is coming to pass. The B.N.A.S. people will never amalgamate with the S.P.R. They will, I think, refuse to make the attempt. If they do make it there will be a house divided.

They did, however, make the attempt, and their leaders, Stainton Moses, Dawson Rogers, C. C. Massey, Morell Theobald, Alexander Calder, F. W. Percival, Hensleigh Wedgwood, and other Spiritualists were elected on the first S.P.R. Council together with Myers, Gurney, Balfour Stewart and myself, with Professor H. Sidgwick as the President.

Unfortunately acute differences of opinion arose after a year or two, and though Myers and myself did our best to reconcile the opposing points of view, it was impossible, to do so—especially after an unfortunate report on a poltergeist case, which I believe Andrew Lang subsequently showed to be inaccurate. Accordingly, Stainton Moses, C. C. Massey, Dawson Rogers, and others—with whom some of us were in close sympathy—left the Council and the Society, to our great regret.

Much the same conflict of opinion is now occurring in the American S.P.R. and the moral of our experience here suggests the advice I have ventured to give our American friends, *vis.*, to recognise that there must always be a conflict of opinion between those who have had *first hand* knowledge of genuine successful psychical phenomena, and those who have not, but who are interested and may be valuable critics, Hence a right and left wing of our and their Society must necessarily exist.

Here I may add that before the S.P.R. was founded not only Professor and Mrs. Sidgwick but Frederic Myers and myself had spent laborious hours investigating various mediums in London, Dublin and different parts of England. My paper at the British Association in 1876 brought me into touch with Frederic Myers whom I first met when staying with his gifted mother in Cheltenham.

I have before me some interesting letters from Frederic Myers dated 1877 and 1878, in which he reports to me his investigation of certain mediums. If LIGHT had space to publish these letters they would show the zealous and open-minded way in which Myers sympathetically and yet critically investigated every medium to whom he could get access. I was then in Dublin and had asked Myers if he could see Mr. Henley at Notting Hill and

others of whom I had received encouraging reports. He found Mr. Henley an enthusiast, not quite trustworthy as to his facts, but honest. He saw a Miss B (now Mrs.—) and found her and Miss T.—both reputed to be good clairvoyants—to be wanting, the former he thought fraudulent. Then Myers relates that he visited the medium Cain at Bow and found him “an entirely trustworthy man, a bluff old soldier.” He sat with the family circle but no striking phenomena occurred; however, Myers narrates some really remarkable physical phenomena that occurred with Cain’s little daughter before his arrival and which he thought were genuine. Myers adds: “I will go to Hastings shortly and investigate the case you have sent me if you will give me an introduction to the lady.” In reply to a letter in which I asked his views as to the most efficient way of making the facts of psychical research known to the scientific public, he says in a letter dated October, 1877, that he has talked the matter over with Henry Sidgwick and urges our friends to make personal inquiry and suggests that if I wrote an article on the subject both he and Sidgwick would gladly read it over and make suggestions.

Here perhaps I may be forgiven the egotism of adding a later letter from Frederic Myers to me dated February 2nd 1899:—

My Dear Barrett,

Bennett will have informed you officially that the Council of the S.P.R. unanimously elected you a successor to Gladstone as Honorary Member; but I want to add my personal expression of pleasure at having been able to take part in the well-earned compliment. May your name long stand on our front page! The front page of the Society which you more than anyone, *founded*.

Yours ever,

F. W. H. MYERS.

Though it is true I happened to be instrumental in founding the S.P.R., yet, as everyone knows, the high position it has won and the success it has achieved, is largely due to the three great pillars built on its foundation—Sidgwick, Myers and Gurney. It would be an impertinence on my part to add anything to the noble tributes that have been paid to their memory and their labour.



## Afterword:

Trevor Hamilton, biographer of Myers,<sup>6</sup> kindly commented to Psypioneer.

“The replies are included in the Barrett papers SPR.MS.3/A2. 27 replies, I think, and from my notes I couldn't find Myers, Gurney, Sidgwick's replies in them. I think they were cautious and, as you know, not prepared to go forward without Sidgwick.

In his unpublished autobiography Myers Box 26/63/44 Myers clearly stated that the telepathy, etc. side of things led by Barrett's work was what revived Sidgwick's and Gurney's interest but that he, in his heart, hoped that he might get admission to private Spiritualist sittings which would be superior to the professional/semi professional seances that had so disappointed him and his colleagues.

Using the excellent SPR online library, one notes that Fraser Nicol, Inglis, and Alvarado (review of Haynes SPR book) have all gone into this, as well as an outline in my book and more details in Alan Gauld's *Founders*.<sup>7</sup>

I give references to PhD theses by Noakes and Williams in my book which also cover this but they broadly reflect the above view except that Noakes rather stresses Barrett's isolation by geography, philosophy (pro Home Rule etc) etc from the Cambridge group: Perhaps exaggerates this? Certainly both Myers and Mrs Sidgwick stressed Barrett's role rather than Dawson Rogers' (who, however, provided a lot of organisational help at the very beginning). I rather think the idea was in the air from several sources in 1881 and from several different perspectives. But the core quickly, and quite rightly, became the Cambridge group.

I have never come across a shorthand report of the meeting.

Peter Hallson wrote an account of the origins of the SPR in *Paranormal Review* in 2002. Janet Oppenheim said that Barrett eventually acknowledged that the original impulse came from Dawson Rogers (137) though Barrett's energy was important. She mentions the replies to Barrett's circular were fascinating. Moses, I think, was quite right about the social and intellectual barriers to overcome at that time. Re Sidgwick as President—in his draft autobiography Myers mentions that Wallace was against Sidgwick leading the society and Cerullo hints that Rogers/Barrett debated this issue of leadership for some time.”

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<sup>6</sup> Psypioneer volume 5, No.6:— *Myers is back: - book review – Leslie Price*, pages 157-158:—  
<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *The Founders of Psychological research*, by Alan Gauld: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, England, 1968 (Schocken Books, New York 1968).



## NEW, ANNOTATED EDITION OF ART MAGIC RELEASED

**The Typhon Press: News Release—For  
Immediate Release July 21, 2011 Company: The  
Typhon Press Contact: Marc Demarest Phone:  
503-804-5800**

The Typhon Press announced the immediate availability of its newest title, an annotated edition of Emma Hardinge Britten's classic occult text, *Art Magic*.

First published in 1876, *Art Magic* is one of the founding documents of the Victorian occult revival. Published under mysterious circumstances, the book was controversial in its own day, and has intrigued and infuriated students of the occult for nearly 150 years. Regarded for years merely as a supplement to the more famous *Ghost Land* (1876), this new edition of *Art Magic* demonstrates clearly that *Art Magic* is actually the more important work: closely connected to the founding and early teachings of the

Theosophical Society, to Helene Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* (1877), and to the teachings of the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, as well as to the work of J. C. Street, R. Swinburne Clymer and other occult figures.

This definitive, corrected edition of the text fixes errors in the first edition text, and includes an in-depth bibliographical and historical introduction, as well as extensive annotations to the text by Marc Demarest, the curator of the Emma Hardinge Britten Archive.<sup>8</sup>

The text is available immediately from the Typhon Press web site, and from CreateSpace,<sup>9</sup> and will be available by August 15 from Amazon, the Kindle store, iBooks and the Barnes and Noble Nook store.

Emma Hardinge Britten (1823-1899) was one of the most influential Spiritualist and occult propagandists of the nineteenth century. Her work informs modern-day organizations as diverse as the international Spiritualist movement, the Theosophical Society, esoteric Freemasonry, and the Church of Light.

Full Contact Information:—<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [www.ehbritten.org](http://www.ehbritten.org)

<sup>9</sup> [www.createspace.com](http://www.createspace.com)

<sup>10</sup> Marc Demarest—The Typhon Press, Fountain House, Suite 9000, 2011 17th Avenue, Forest Grove, Oregon 97116. Web URL:— <http://www.thetyphonpress.com/catalog.html>

# LIGHT STILL SHINES

In *Psypioneer* we often reprint material from *LIGHT*, which as a newspaper was “The Times” of Spiritualism. The 1924 article by Sir William Barrett on the origin of the SPR, which we reprint in this issue, is a typical example. Although we routinely draw attention both to copyright and to the fact that *LIGHT* is still published, the latest issue of *LIGHT* prompts a fuller note.

*LIGHT* is the oldest psychic journal. It is older than the *Proceedings of the SPR* (1882), the *Journal of the SPR* (1884) and *Two Worlds* (1887).

*LIGHT* often carries material of historical significance; last year, for example, in Vol. 130 No 2, articles about Oliver Lodge and Geraldine Cummins. The latest issue (Vol. 131 No 1 Summer 2011) is no exception. It comes from an editorial board of Brian Adams, Susie Collings and Max Eames. Tribute is paid to Tina Lawlor-Mottram who edited the previous issue, the first one ever to appear in colour.

Susie Collings, CPS principal, contributes a report “Synchronicity and Strength of Will; the College’s Recent Refurbishment” which is illustrated with beautiful photographs. This is an important account of the history of the building, up to the latest high-tech innovations in such matters as lighting and water supply. Buildings are a significant part of psychic history. This report ought especially to be studied by anyone concerned with the management of such buildings.

The College has renamed what it calls the grand reception room below the Library as “The Sir Arthur Conan Doyle room”. This is fitting as Sir Arthur served as president and was one of many noted persons to enter the doors of the 16 Queensberry Place. He might well have descended to the basement where the *LIGHT* office once shone.

In another article entitled “From the Archives”, the President Max Eames recalls William Crookes, especially his investigation of materialisation. This is a reminder that CPS is a repository for much rare historical material, including unpublished letters from the time of its foundation as LSA in 1884.

LP.



# EMMA'S FINEST HOUR?

[Note by LP:—In this issue we are reprinting with slight changes my article about the 1890 Manchester conference, which first appeared in *Psychic News*. To this Marc Demarest has kindly added some notes, and a wider comment at the end.]

When someone has many achievements, it can be difficult to identify what was the most important. In the case of Emma Hardinge Britten, some will point to the foundation of the weekly newspaper *Two Worlds* in 1887. Others will single out the transmission of the Seven Principles which became the legal basis of the SNU. And then there were the historical works, like *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (circa 1884).

I should like to choose a conference of Spiritualists which Emma encouraged in 1890. This conference became an annual event. Eventually the people involved formed the SNU.

It may well be that some of those people wrote down their memories, and that we will come across them in the pages of an old diary or newspaper. But recently we have been given an inside view of the 1890 conference as it happened. Marc Demarest (MD) has put the opening years of *Two Worlds* on line.<sup>11</sup> Initially they were loaded on the Emma Hardinge Britten site<sup>12</sup> but eventually they may transfer to a new site devoted to old psychic journals.

An excellent account of the 1890 conference was given a century later by Jean Bassett in the official history of the SNU *One Hundred Years of National Spiritualism* (1990). Ray Taylor, then editor of *Two Worlds* had drawn her attention to the bound volumes of the newspaper which told the story of the conference.

Perhaps the most interesting document was the actual Proposal for the 1890 conference, whose oratorical style was typical of Emma's inspiration. This clearly indicated the religious inspiration of the project.

The 1880s had been marked by several attempts to organise the paranormal. In 1882, Stainton Moses and other leading Spiritualists had supported the formation in London of a Society for Psychical Research, but had soon become disillusioned by the negative tone sometimes shown in its publications.

In 1884, metropolitan and county Spiritualists had established the London Spiritualist Alliance whose leadership was moderately Christian, and had no aspiration to set up separate churches. The LSA is with us today as the College of Psychic Studies in South Kensington, and remains a major training centre for mediums.

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<sup>11</sup> They are at:—[http://www.ehbritten.org/texts/primary/two\\_worlds/](http://www.ehbritten.org/texts/primary/two_worlds/) and will remain there for the time being. They're now being indexed by Google - MD

<sup>12</sup> [www.ehbritten.org](http://www.ehbritten.org)

There were other large societies such as the Marylebone Spiritualist Association (founded in 1872), and many small centres and churches which suffered from their isolation.<sup>13</sup>

In recent years, the Theosophists had established active Lodges in several British cities, but their message of course was distinctly unsympathetic to Spiritualism. Emma and her husband had been founder members of the Theosophical Society in the distant New York days of 1875. But now they rejected such occult claims.

Most of all, Victorian Britain was controlled by a Christian establishment. Emma clashed with its spokesmen week by week in *Two Worlds*.

Emma's proposal was to "call together in a primary annual moveable conference, the best and united thoughts of the age on the question of how to carry on the propagandism of pure practical spiritualism, both in its phenomenal and religious aspects. Also, how we can aid and improve our local meetings by better methods of awakening our several districts to the value and importance of our work."<sup>14</sup>

Conference was the important word. Once this institution was launched, it gathered to itself a wide variety of activities.

Whose idea was it? An editorial of July 18 recalled "For many weeks past, a party of some sixteen spiritualists have met together at the earnest request of Mrs Hardinge Britten, to consider a plan given to her by the spiritual guides and friends of the higher life, who have directed her world-wide travels and protected her through the unnumbered trials and experiences of her past thirty years of public spiritual propagandism."

Emma gave the names of this council - Dr and Mrs Britten, Mr and Mrs E.W. Wallis; and Mrs Wilkinson; Messrs J. J. Morse (Liverpool) W Johnson (Hyde) J.B. Tetlow (Pendleton), H. Boardman (Openshaw), P. Lee (Rochdale), Messrs Rayner and J. Gibson (Oldham), R. Flitton, T. Brown, J. Simkin, and F. Tomlinson (Manchester) "the latter gentleman being elected as treasurer, the others in groups as sub-committees on different departments of use." We should not forget their joint share in this work, even though Emma was the most prominent.<sup>15</sup>

It will be noted that this committee was drawn entirely from one region, NW England, and nearly all from Manchester. The committee sent out 8000 copies of their circular, hoping to assess the views of British Spiritualists. There were hundreds of positive responses, and the conference at the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street Manchester on Sunday July 6 1890,

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<sup>13</sup> Emma and William were close to the MSA. William was sometimes "in the chair" for their gatherings, when he was in London, and Emma spoke before them almost every time she went down to London, which was not all that often. MD

<sup>14</sup> *The Two Worlds*, March 21 1890

<sup>15</sup> These folks were almost all within the circle of TW—their names appear there frequently, and some of them were directors of TW. MD

was full. The Yorkshire Federation (of 16 societies) was represented by its secretary, Mr M. Marchbank, and Mr Wortley represented the London Federation of Spiritualists, not to be confused with the LSA. James Robertson of Glasgow took part in the debate.<sup>16</sup>

The religious background of the proceedings was evident. The meeting began with an invocation from Mrs Britten addressed “To the Father of Spirits, the Lord and Master of Life”, followed by the first of several hymns. There were also musical interludes.

In her original proposal, Emma had praised Spiritualism as the only religion able to offer “present practical and undeniable proofs of their affirmations.” These not only confirmed survival but also knowledge of life’s duties, and the demands of the laws of God, nature and duty.

She denounced “idealists, cranks, transcendentalists and speculators” who had infiltrated the movement “to foist their vain theories on the one hand, and their worldly practices on the other.”

She had particular scorn for orthodoxy.

“Christianity, in its modern form of absurd creeds, antiquated ideas, unworthy conceptions of the creator, and ridiculous teachings concerning the life hereafter, is simply crumbling into pieces beneath the analysis of reason, reverence for the grand problems of existence, and the revealments of creative wisdom in present-day science.”

During the conference, Emma gave an important address on the need for unity about the basis of spiritualism. (Interestingly, the capitalisation of “Spiritualism” and “Spiritualist” lay in the future, after a definite platform had been agreed.)

She recalled that when she attended her first séance, “her mind was pervaded by the doctrines of the Church of England, in the tenets of which she had been educated.” Her spirit friends had given her a better faith, which she summarised in six doctrines. These were the later Seven Principles, save only for the omission of the communion of spirits and ministry of angels.<sup>17</sup>

She considered this a superhuman rather than human revelation. She asked “that it should neither be affiliated with man-made creeds, labelled with simply human beliefs, opinions or unproved revelations, nor be confounded with any sect in existence that did not offer similar and equally incontrovertible proofs of a supermundane origin and revelation.”

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<sup>16</sup> Emma had a habit of circularizing the local societies, as with her annual census. MD

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, in the Autobiography, she says she ran from this first encounter because she heard, during the seance, heterodox statements being made, critical of conventional (Anglican) religion. MD

The conference was a resounding success; indeed Mr Wortley of London claimed never to have enjoyed any day so much in his life. Most obviously, the conference continued as an annual event, growing into a national organisation.

For Emma, sadly, troubles were henceforth to multiply. Marc Demarest is at present researching the end of her work. She quietly announced her retirement from public speaking at the 1891 Bradford conference - in the next year; she was deposed from the editorial chair at *Two Worlds* for reasons that were obscure.

But Marc Demarest reveals (July 2011) “They are not obscure any more. William Britten, who was chairman of the board of the Two Worlds Publishing Company, was called to task by the board for stock manipulation. He had taken in two thousand pounds, in two tranches, from an anonymous donor ( Countess of Caithness, I believe), along with a few hundred pounds in “donations”, to prop up TW, which never made any money because it was a penny paper—the cover price barely covered the cost of production. Instead of putting this capital into the corporation as ordinary revenue (how that would have been accounted for in those days, I don’t know), William used at least some of the money to purchase shares in the corporation under various names (this is where it does get a bit obscure). The goal on William’s part was control of the Two Worlds Publishing Company. The question, for the board of TW, was: does this money constitute an investment or a donation? When challenged on these transactions, William at first declined to provide details, and then produced a phony proxy from the putative donor, named “Nemo” and witnessed by one Jabez Sherratt, saying in essence “I own 180 shares of TW and William Britten is my proxy.” The net effect was that the board invalidated the proxies, changed voting rights so that INDIVIDUALS rather than SHARES voted, and tossed William out of the company. William was intemperate in a board meeting. Emma published an equally intemperate “circular” alleging all sorts of things on the part of the Two Worlds board, and resigned her editorship. William and Emma then sought a restraining order against the board of the Two Worlds, in Chancery, and lost. That was the unpleasant end of things. Wallis’ version of events, substantially correct I think, is in the February 26, 1892 issue of TW.”

Marc concludes “My read of the situation is that the Wallis camp saw Emma largely as an unwitting/unwilling participant in William’s schemes. They went out of their way at the time to be kind to her, continued to cover her peregrinations and activities after she left TW, and welcomed her back as soon as William died in 1894.”

However, an attempt to raise a testimonial for Emma caused such ill-will, that she ordered it to cease. Her new magazine *Unseen Universe* (1892) was short-lived. Organisational bickering developed between the Midlands and London. In 1894, her husband William Britten died age 74, and by 1897, her own health had broken down.

Marc explains “Keep in mind that she terminated the *Unseen Universe* for three reasons: one private (the paper was a money loser) and two public: (1) a decided lack of organization in English spiritualism (she publishes an article by Hudson Tuttle, someone with whom she was often at odds, on this topic; and (2) she is going to work on her Autobiography.

Marc continues: It's an open question how "with it" she was in those last few years, and whether her sister Margaret Wilkinson wasn't running the EHB enterprise, day to day. She gets trotted out for events in Manchester, as some kind of grand old dame, but doesn't speak in public much. Some kind of deal is cut for the reprinting of *Ghost Land* and *Art Magic* with the *Progressive Thinker*: which I have realized of late is \*shocking.\* The reason why Emma did not allow those works to be reprinted earlier was simple: they contained pretty direct evidence that Emma was a proponent of the obsession-by-elementaries hypothesis...or that the author of *Art Magic* was, anyway. The only reasons I can think of why she might have allowed them to be republished in 1898 are: (1) she didn't know (Margaret cut the deal) or (2) she didn't care (she knew her public life was over). I incline to (1) but it's just a guess.

Perhaps she looked back wistfully to that perfect July day in Manchester, when there had been such a sense of harmony. Although the Union was not to be formally constituted until after she passed in 1899, societies had begun at once to affiliate to the Federation, as it became known at the 1891 Bradford conference.

Most of the consequences still lay in the future—the hundreds of member churches, the education schemes, the college for Spiritualists at Stansted, the ordination of Spiritualist ministers. It was only a later generation that could see the full consequences of Emma's 1890 proposal.

LESLIE PRICE



### **Afterword by Marc Demarest:**

Emma learned about the value of organization early. How early I don't know. It's possible her father Ebenezer was a labor radical of some kind—a Chartist, possibly. I feel—no evidence to support this—that Ebenezer's move to Bristol in the late 1820s was a move motivated by political beliefs. But here's what's clear from the documentary record.

(1) Emma, who was the editor of its organ and a test medium under its auspices, learned a great deal from the collapse of the Society for Diffusion of Spiritualist Knowledge in NY in 1857 (see *Modern American Spiritualism* p. 134 for her diagnosis);

(2) Emma is credited with organizing Spiritualism in NY in the late 1850s: the church (and they called it that) she and Elizabeth J. French started in NY in 1858 is viewed by the secular journalists at the time in the NY papers as being the \*first\* formally organized such church in NY.

(3) Emma is credited, again by the secular press in California, with being the woman who organized Spiritualism in San Francisco, when she founded the Friends of Progress there in late 1863: nearly as soon as she got off the boat from Panama.

(4) she is focused on institutionalization issues (among other things) in MAS, in 1869/70 having seen what Coleman was able to do in London on the strength of his personal network, and recognizing by that time that that the economic viability of Spiritualist promotion (propaganda as she called it) depended on an organization to both fund and amplify the propagandist;

(5) she proposes a 'School for Prophets' in *Art Magic* (1876), albeit for "another reason associated with organization" (the too-varied communications and methods of mediums), and keeps on about such a school until she dies;

(6) she participates in the founding of the TS, remains there after the Sotheran incident, and honours her pledge of secrecy;

(7) she sees what real organization can do when she's in Australia in 1877 (see *Nineteenth Century Miracles* p. 233 for example);

(8) she gets behind Dawson Rogers and Stainton Moses (and even anticipates them) when they begin arguing for standard methods and practices for mediums in the early 1880s;

(9) she does succeed in turning TW into the voice of "the amorphous opposition" to Theosophy in the late 1880s and early 1890s, but she is dismayed - - as are others -- by the UK Spiritualists' inability to mount a concerted defense against Theosophy, and indeed against other (Christian and non-Christian) debunkers who are circulating through the country attacking Spiritualism;

(10) as you say here, she is a driving force behind the National convention; and

(11) when she terminates the *Unseen Universe* in 1892, she does so with her usual complaint: you people can't get your collective act together and support those of us who are doing the work of the movement.

My point is: she is on about institutionalization of the movement from the outset. She IS the major force for institutionalization. Her motive is both pure and personal: the movement can't grow without institutionalization, and she can't do her job (and get paid for it) without institutionalization.

In the *Unseen Universe*, in issue 8 (November 1892, pp. 420-1) a reader calling himself "Watchman" writes:

"Can you give me, and your numerous readers, any suggestions how to remedy or improve the present low and deplorable condition of Spiritualism in this country? I have been, as you, dear madam, during your long residence in America may know, an earnest believer and something of a working adherent of "the cause" for many years. Having returned to visit my relatives in my native land, and with some expectation of making my home here, my first and greatest desire has been to ascertain how far the cause I so much love, and that which, in my way, I have endeavoured to aid, has progressed in England, and what do I find? Scores, if not even hundreds, of petty meetings held of a Sunday, but secularized into paltry shows by attempts at describing spirits in a manner that would apply to any and every stranger you meet in the street; an exhibition of attempts also to spin yarns that would apply to anyone in the audience, by touching handkerchiefs, letters, keys, and all sorts of trash, in a manner calculated for practice amongst curiosity hunters in a seance-

room, but really clownish and repulsive in the extreme to spiritually-minded people who wish to devote their Sundays to higher thoughts than those of earth, and go to meetings - not shows - in the hope of feeding their souls with noble and exalting teachings. I said as much to one of the managers of these Sunday Spiritual (?) shows lately, and he replied to my remonstrances by saying, "Oh! Unless we have something of this sort to draw an audience, we can't get the people to come." "Indeed," I said, "then if your only aim is to draw an audience, why on earth don't you black your performers' faces, put them in mountebanks' clothes, and give them bones, tambourines, and banjos to play? You'll draw much better audiences that way, than by caricaturing such a noble cause as Spiritualism with the trash you exhibit now." Alas! alas! Madam, can nothing be done to lift up such a grand possibility as we have had in Spiritualism, and so well calculated to be the religion of the age, as well as to be the basis of a science in the seance-room, and home circle? I have learned something of how you stand personally since my return to England, and have wondered many times why you do not go back to the land where, as Sterne says, there are at least "a few to love you, and so many to admire you." Since you are here, dear madam, can you still do nothing more, or suggest something, to redeem and lift up our noble cause from its present degradation in England?"

Emma says, in answer to the letter, which I half-suspect she wrote herself:

"It cannot be denied that there is as much truth as severity in "Watchman's" arraignment of the present status of Spiritualism in England. Our Sunday services should be purely religious meetings, and for this end we need better music, better and more qualified public teachers, more select and generally appropriate places of gathering, and a higher and nobler sense of the purposes for which Sabbath meetings should be undertaken. Secondly, we need a school or COLLEGE, not only for the training and culture of medium power, but also for the purpose of establishing in our media such a high sense of morality and purity that they may become living examples of the sublime revelations which spirit communion brings, and still more, of the lofty religion and noble science which Spiritualism might have been under better human guidance than it at present enjoys.

" From what I personally know of the societies in the provinces, I believe they are formed chiefly by good, earnest, honest people, who deem that such meetings as they can get up, under every kind of disadvantage, are better than none at all, and such Spiritualism as they can put before the world is also better than none at all. Contrasting the grand and influential Sunday services which were held in the metropolis some twenty years ago, with the present divided and fragmentary ranks, or, I should say - no ranks - of the same great cause to-day, I cannot but feel as if there were an undercurrent somewhere more prompt to destroy that cause than good intentions are potent to build it up. At present this is neither the time nor place in which to review my own efforts to advance the mighty movement in this country. It is enough for me, as a matter of self-respect, to allege that I have never ceased to labour for it in every direction, according to my highest light, and with the means at my disposal, since setting foot again on English soil. I am neither prepared to answer "Watchman" in full (at least just now) as to the causes of the stupendous and ruinous divisions prevailing amongst Spiritualists, nor yet to suggest any other remedies for the subject of his complaints, than such as I have above alluded to. For my own part in this movement, one

which, like “Watchman,” I consider to be the greatest, most salvatory [sic], and fraught with the mightiest possibilities of any the world has ever known before, I can only say with J. G. Whittier, “I watch, wait, and labour.”

“To sum up, all I can say, not only in answer to one, but to a perfect army of correspondents writing on the same lines as “Watchman,” I have proved, and now know, that Spiritualism is divine, Spiritualists are human. The one represents heaven, the other earth, and all the heterogeneous grades of being that inhabit earth. To any strong as well as capable workers that desire to lift those grades and help to organize them into a grand resistless army of heaven, I can only add, they will find a willing coadjutor in the most devoted of spiritual soldiers, and in verification of this promise I call attention to my own Manchester Sunday evening meetings, the notice of which will be found in the cover of this magazine. These meetings were projected and urged upon me by a few earnest and interested persons in and near Manchester, and their cost (excepting the collections) falls upon those ill enough able to bear the trouble and expense of the undertaking. Yet though we make no exhibitions at these meetings, their religious character seems to be sufficiently well appreciated as to draw excellent audiences, attracting even on one Sunday night, when the rain was falling in torrents, over a hundred persons, when scarcely one was expected.

“I am well convinced the phenomena of Spiritualism is the only present day PROOF EXTANT of the soul's immortality and the conditions of life hereafter, but such proof should be given in circles, and these, when organized upon harmonious and well-ordered conditions, constitute the science of Spiritualism. Meantime the Sunday meetings should be devoted to the religious and philosophic teachings of the spirits, and when these are given in respectable places by educated and qualified teachers, and in reverent and appropriate services, I am well convinced Spiritualism, both as a science and a religion, would be the most exalting, as well as the truest, corrective of all the abuses of the age.”

She never stopped agitating for organization, scale, strategy and financial viability for the movement. As an outsider, I look at her position, in light of the decline in Spiritualism and Theosophy, as a prescient one.

MD



# Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Welsh Physical Medium

## EVAN POWELL

1881 – 1958

There is very little referenced information on this once famous and—highly respected physical medium from Merthyr Tydfil, in Wales. Much of the web information available on Evan Powell associates him with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and claims profound influence on Doyle’s early Spiritualist involvement; for example:—<sup>18</sup>

“... it is alleged that he [Doyle] left a séance in Wales with the medium Evan Powell and declared “Tonight Sherlock Holmes died!” as he vowed to take forward the cause of Spiritualism, which he did to great effect until his death”.

This quote possibly originated from a séance given by Mrs. Gladys Mallaburn:—<sup>19</sup>

“After one of their many sittings, Doyle announced he was killing off Sherlock Holmes—public clamour



SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, M.D., LL.D.  
(Hon. President of the College.)

<sup>18</sup> This is taken from the excellent website of the Northampton National Spiritualist Church, which includes its church history, and a link to some S.N.U. videos including ex-S.N.U., presidents Eric Hatton and Judith Seamen. There are interesting sections on Hannen Swaffer and Conan Doyle, from which the quote is taken see:— <http://www.northamptonspiritualists.org/main.htm>

<sup>19</sup> “The Mallaburn Circle” by Maurice Barbanell, see Frank Brown’s website Voicebox PDF version:— <http://www.freewebs.com/ebabeiknarf/Seances/The%20Mallaburn%20Circle.pdf> The séance is undated but would be post 1958\* [ see end note re:—Roy Stemman.]

Gladys Mallaburn was a Spiritualist’ National Union minister (MSNU). There is (Dec 2009) a Gladys Mallaburn Trust:—“The fund was established in 1978 to provide that interest on investments be utilised towards the general administration expenses of the head office of the Union, the fund to be invested in dated Government stock and any capital accretion at the redemption dates being added to and forming part of the trust for reinvestment.” See:—<http://www.snu.org.uk/Images/pdfs/accounts2009.pdf>

later prevented this slaying—to devote the rest of his days to espousing Spiritualism. Jokingly Powell often said, “I was responsible for murdering Holmes”.”

A more factual reference to any kind of influence Powell may have had on Doyle’s motivation is suggested by Mrs. Barbara McKenzie who at this time was the Hon. Secretary to the ‘British College of Psychic Science’,<sup>20</sup> founded by her husband James (Hewat) McKenzie.<sup>21</sup> The College was opened on April 12th, 1920. In January and February 1923, Evan Powell gave séances at the College and these were reported in their journal *Psychic Science* by Barbara McKenzie. At this time (April 1923), Conan Doyle who incidentally was one of the first members of the College,<sup>22</sup> became President of its newly established “Advisory Council.” The Chairmanship was held by Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, with Vice-Chairman Rev. C. Drayton Thomas.

Barbara McKenzie states in her report:—<sup>23</sup>

“The editor of a well-known Welsh daily paper is amongst those who have in recent years received some astounding demonstrations at Evan Powell’s séances. Later, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle confesses to having received in Merthyr the inspiration which sent him round the world as a lecturer on fire with his subject. In *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, he says, “For two hours my wife and I had sat listening to the whispering voices of the dead—voices which are so full of earnest life and of desperate endeavours to pierce the barrier of our dull senses. They had quivered and wavered round us, giving us pet names, sweet, sacred things, the intimate talk of the olden time. Graceful lights . . . had hovered over us in the darkness. It was a different and a wonderful world to us now. . . . God had given us wonderful signs, and they were surely not for ourselves alone.”

Mrs. Hewat McKenzie was the speaker at the first lecture under the auspices of the International Institute for Psychical Research,<sup>24</sup> on the evening of Friday November 16th, 1934. Again she reaffirms the important part Powell played towards Doyle’s conviction of Spiritualism:—<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.2:—*Whatever happened to the British College? - The International Institute for Psychic Investigation (IPI)*, pages 35-46:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.2February2010.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 3, No.8:—*A Knight Errant of Psychic Science James Hewat McKenzie - Barbara McKenzie*, pages 169-178:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.8August07.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> The portrait of Sir Arthur president of BCPS that heads this article is taken from *Psychic Science* July 1923.

<sup>23</sup> Evan Powell the Welsh Physical Medium, by the Hon. Secretary: *Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science* Vol. II.—No.1. April, 1923.

<sup>24</sup> See *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.2:—*Whatever Happened to the British College? - The International Institute for Psychic Investigation (IPI)*, pages 35-46:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.2February2010.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> *LIGHT*, November 22nd, 1934 Page 722.

“It was through Mr. Evan Powell’s Mediumship that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle received his most convincing proofs; and research work and Spiritualism is the poorer that his Mediumship is not available to-day”.

One thing is certain. Sir Arthur held Evan Powell in high regard as to his abilities as a physical medium:—<sup>26</sup>

“On the whole, Evan Powell may be said to have the widest endowment of spiritual gifts of any medium at present in England. He preaches the doctrines of Spiritualism both in his own person and while under control, and he can in himself exhibit nearly the whole range of phenomena. It is a pity that his business as a coal merchant in Devonshire prevents his constant presence in London.”

Doyle makes another reference to Powell in his 1921 book, *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*:—<sup>27</sup>

“I employed the time by running down to Devonshire to give addresses at Exeter and Torquay, with admirable audiences at both. Good Evan Powell had come down to give me a last seance, and I had the joy of a few last words with my arisen son, who blessed me on my mission and assured me that I would indeed bring solace to bruised hearts. The words he uttered were a quotation from my London speech at which Powell had not been present, nor had the verbatim account of it appeared anywhere at that time. It was one more sign of how closely our words and actions are noted from the other side. Powell was tired, having given a sitting the night before, so the proceedings were short, a few floating lights, my son and my sister’s son to me, one or two greetings to other sitters, and it was over”.

Below is a short report of a séance with Evan Powell held in March 1923, as published in *LIGHT*:—<sup>28</sup>

The “Western Morning News and Mercury,” in its issue of February 23rd, publishes the following account of a séance held at Paignton, Devon, at which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was present. The report states:—

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<sup>26</sup> *The History of Spiritualism* (in two volumes), by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle 1926, SNU edition 1989 volume two page 208.

<sup>27</sup> *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1921 (first American edition published by Doran, 1921.) pages 17-18.

<sup>28</sup> *LIGHT*, March 10, 1923 page 153.

Mr. H. P. Rabbich, President of Paignton Spiritualist Society, who would be termed a shrewd and successful inhabitant of this world, gave a representative of *The Western Morning News and Mercury* yesterday a full account of the seance in his house at Paignton attended by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. "Evan Powell was brought in, and Sir Arthur examined him. He was fastened in a chair, as he always will be fastened in. After tying him I had, for double security, fastened cotton around his thumbs, because in these sittings we very often get the physical phenomena of his coat being taken from his back and laid in the middle of the floor, or over the other end of the room. On this night we started to sing a hymn, 'Abide with me,' and in the midst of the hymn a beautiful bass voice broke in with us outside our own voice. The volume of the voice more than overpowered the whole of our eight or nine voices in the room. He joined in and sang in perfect harmony with us. As soon as the hymn was finished, I heard a voice distinctly saying, 'Hello, dad,' and then Sir Arthur exclaimed: 'Hello, Kingsley, old man; glad you are here, glad you are come.'

I cannot tell you the whole of the conversation between the boy and his father. He used familiar names of the family, of which we in the room had no knowledge whatever because it was the first time I had met Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The conversation might have lasted for about five minutes, and then the boy wished us good-bye, and thanked my wife and me for allowing his father to come through, and for the privilege of letting him speak to us. After that there started a quite different voice louder and older. Sir Arthur turned to me and said that was his brother, Colonel Doyle, who was shot in the war. He introduced me to his brother who thanked me for the privilege of making conditions so that he could come back to give a message to Sir Arthur before he started on his great missionary tour to Australia. Three voices came to Sir Arthur—his son, his brother, and an old University friend. The only thing I can say about those voices is that no one in my dining-room could have imitated them. It required the unmistakable University cultured voice to speak like them, and no one in the room had that ability. There were other voices at the same time, and we heard the two voices together. And that same night my own son and daughter came. When my boy came through, there was no mistaking our boy George's voice.

Finally, the very first book I purchased on a visit to the SAGB in London was *One Hundred Years of Spiritualism*, by Roy Stemman<sup>29</sup> in 1972.<sup>30</sup> Roy kindly gave me permission to use the material, I quote from page 43:

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<sup>29</sup> See Roy Stemman's Paranormal Review; subscribe free on line:—<http://paranormalreview.com/>

<sup>30</sup> This is the story of the Spiritualist Association of Great Britten (SAGB) 1872-1972, formally called Marylebone Spiritualist Association (MSA). In 1960 the M.S.A., changed its name to the SAGB and is the oldest Spiritualist Society still in existence. Now moved to new premises see:—<http://www.spiritualistassociation.org.uk/> Pspioneer published:—*The Story of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association 1872-1928* by Leigh Hunt. Volume 2, No.12 pages 260-276:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.12December06.pdf>

“Perhaps the most striking of all the thousands of lectures given during this period was that by Evan J. Powell, JP, on August 11, 1946. The audience were astonished to learn that it was the 50th anniversary—to the very day—of the first Spiritualist service Powell had taken.

“Powell was an extremely powerful physical medium in his early days. A native of Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales, he left school at a very early age and went into the pits. It was then that his mediumship developed. He played a vital role in the growth of the local Spiritualist church. Later, he moved to Paignton, South Devon, where he took part in local politics and ultimately became chairman of the Urban District Council and a Justice of the Peace. Thousands of holidaymakers to the area have enjoyed the cliff gardens and promenade at Goodrington, and have bathed from the spacious sands there. It was largely due to Powell’s foresight and enthusiasm that these beautiful gardens and cliff walks were constructed.

“Powell’s sitters included princes, statesmen and scientists, and his mediumship played an influential part in convincing Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of Spiritualism’s reality. He took scores of meetings all over the country with the famous writer. In his *History of Spiritualism* Sir Arthur wrote:

“Evan Powell may be said to have the widest endowment of spiritual gifts of any medium at present in England. He preaches the doctrines of Spiritualism both in his own person and while under control, and he can himself exhibit nearly the whole range of phenomena ... the author has heard the spirit voices as loud as those of ordinary human talk, and recalls one occasion when three of them were talking simultaneously, one to Lady Cowan, one to Sir James Marchant, and one to Sir Robert McAlpine. Movement of objects are common in the Powell seances and on one occasion a stand weighing 60lb was suspended for some time over the author’s head. Evan Powell always insists on being very securely tied during his seances, which is done, he claims, for his own protection, since he cannot be responsible for his own movements when he is in trance.”

“Ralph Rossiter was a personal friend of Powell’s,<sup>31</sup> and owed his life to the healing he received for chronic asthma and tuberculosis of both lungs through the medium. Rossiter wrote about one seance he attended at which he heard four strong spirit voices speaking simultaneously, three in English and one in Russian, with the sitters joining in the conversation.”

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<sup>31</sup> It was through this friendship that allegations were made against Gordon Higginson, see *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No.5:—*The Curious Case of Gordon Higginson – Philip Paul*, pages 136-142:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.5.May2010.pdf> There is an obituary for Philip Paul, the ghost hunter and sometime Spiritualist researcher, and author of *Some Unseen Power* in *Fortean Times* no.277, July 2011. Born 31 August 1923, died 12 June 2010 [sic], also a journalist and PR consultant. Friend of [Hannen] Swaffer.

In conclusion, we can note there is no strong referenced material to substantiate the claims that Evan Powell was a profound influence on Doyle's resolve to champion the Spiritualist religion. My colleague, Garth Willey commented:

I don't recall any validating statement written or spoken by ACD that any of the Powell séances was a critical turning point in convincing him of life after death and the ability of spirits to communicate. Sir Arthur frequently stated that his spiritualistic views were built up over many years of investigation, it being a standard part of his 'patter' to establish his credentials and to put down anyone who attempted to decry spiritualism without plenty of firsthand experience of phenomena. Those 'many years' dated back into the early 1880's, nearly some 40 years before he first met Powell in 1919 in Portsmouth. That first meeting, incidentally, resulted in a séance in ACD's hotel room on September 7 wherein ACD's son Kingsley materialised for the first time: no doubt a powerful influence on ACD but not to the tune of launching ACD as the St Paul of Spiritualism since he had already embarked on that pathway.

And, as for Powell's séance room phenomena being cause for ACD wanting to kill off Sherlock Holmes in favour of championing Spiritualism, Holmes had already been killed off in *The Adventure of the Final Problem* in 1893; not at all because of Spiritualism: it was because ACD wanted to rank as a writer of a better class of literature. And as it had already turned out, ACD had then 'resurrected' Holmes from the dead in 1903 in *The Adventure of the Empty House* – and continued to churn out Sherlock Holmes stories whenever the pecuniary need arose until he finally put Holmes into retirement (as a beekeeper) in 1927.

An interesting observation is in the last paragraph of Stemman's quote regarding Ralph Rossiter<sup>32</sup> "... owed his life to the healing he received for chronic asthma and tuberculosis ..." if we turn back to the Gladys Mallaburn circle in the same section of my first quote we find:

He was responsible for an ingenious communication. 'The Hawk is here,' he said, which Ralph Rossiter, the Spiritualist Association's secretary, understood, even before the communicator added, 'Black Hawk . . . his name is Powell. . . . This is my beloved son...' Ralph, of course, will never forget old Evan Powell, that wonderful physical medium, whose guide, Black Hawk, was responsible for virtually saving his life when it seemed that he was condemned to suffer from tuberculosis. The phrase, 'My beloved son,' was one that Evan always used in referring to him. I could not follow, until Ralph explained it later to me, Powell's statement, 'I have met Holmes.' Evan was a great friend of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

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<sup>32</sup> Ralph Rossiter died August 10th, 1969, in Boscastle, Cornwall. Rossiter with his wife Maud dedicated many years to the SAGB.

Later on page 45 of Stemman's book we find:

“Three years later [1960] came an equally outstanding seance, this time with a British medium, Gladys Mallaburn, a widow from Chopwell, near Newcastle-upon-Tyne. She is a Spiritualists' National Union minister, a healer and public clairvoyant, and has produced materialisation and direct voice in her home circle for years. When he learned that she would be attending the International Spiritualist Congress in London in 1960 (organised by the Association, incidentally), the Editor of “Two Worlds”, Maurice Barbanell, asked if she would give a seance. She agreed and he arranged with the Association for it to be held in one of its rooms”.

Then came this un-related communication:

“He was followed by a woman's voice through the trumpet, which moved to Sydney Richardson. ‘My husband, Syd,’ she said. ‘This is hard’. Then clearly the sound of a kiss was heard. She sent ‘my love to Ursula’, the famous medium, Ursula Roberts who is Sydney's second wife. ‘She is so good’, she added, ‘and you have much to be thankful for.’ “There was a cryptic message, ‘The wheels do go round’, which Sydney understood. Then came, ‘It is so nice to hear your voice. Thank you for all the happiness we had. Tell Ursula I have brought her mother’.”

This information is contained in “The Mallaburn Circle” cited above (note 19) although the article states: “Now the scene changes to a small village near Newcastle-upon-Tyne, to another home circle and to a séance, one which lasted five hours”

In the next issue we will publish more on Evan Powell's life and his mediumship. Below is another short report of Powell's mediumship by Leslie Curnow a close associate of Doyle, see *Psypioneer*:—“Conan Doyle's Australian Helper- Leslie Curnow” published in August 2009.<sup>33</sup> (That issue was dedicated to Don Galloway (1929-2009) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930); the 7th July 2011 marking 81 years since Doyle's passing.)

Paul J. Gaunt



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<sup>33</sup> Pages 270-279:— <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.8August09.pdf>

# EVAN POWELL'S MEDIUMSHIP.

*LIGHT*:—<sup>34</sup>

## WONDERFUL SITTING AT THE BRITISH COLLEGE

BY LESLIE CURNOW

It is well known that mediums for physical phenomena are rare nowadays. Manifestations now are more on the mental and spiritual planes, an evolution that was predicted years ago. But we still have in Mr. Evan Powell, of Wales, a wonderful medium, whose results challenge comparison with some of the great mediums of earlier days.

He has been giving a course of sittings at the British College of Psychic Science, Holland Park, and it was my good fortune to be present at one of these on the evening of Wednesday, April 11th, when remarkable manifestations occurred., including telekinesis, the Direct Voice, spirit lights, and materialisation. Before the sitting started, Mr. Powell insisted that a committee of three gentlemen should accompany him to an upstairs room, undress him, and examine his clothing. I was one of this committee, and we thoroughly satisfied ourselves that nothing was concealed. In view of the rigid tying to which he was afterwards subjected, such search was not necessary, but it was undertaken at the medium's express wish.

On returning to the seance room, Mr. Powell was securely lashed to his chair by cord, the knots being covered with sealing wax and stamped with the signet ring of one of the sitters. Finally the medium's two thumbs were tightly tied with a single strand of thin cotton.

One could not fail to be impressed by the earnestness displayed by this medium in endeavouring to meet every test that could be devised. Indeed, he suggested many himself, in that way strongly recalling D. D. Home. One suggestion offered by Mr. Powell was that the sitter should kick out vigorously into the space in front of him, when any manifestation was taking place before him. This I did on numerous occasions during the subsequent proceedings, always failing to come in contact with anything solid.

There were fourteen sitters, who sat in horseshoe formation, the farthest away being about eight or ten feet distant from the medium, behind whom was a small curtained recess in which stood a small wicker table bearing a set of fairy bells and a trumpet. This enclosure was thoroughly searched before the sitting began. There were two doors in the room. One was locked by me and the key kept in my possession. The other, which was not in use, was found to be locked, but as an extra precaution I affixed stamp edging in various places along its contact with the frame-work.

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<sup>34</sup> *LIGHT*, April 21, 1923 page 247.

The lights were extinguished, and all joined hands. The medium was quickly entranced, and Black Hawk took control. The fairy bells were brought out from the cabinet by the spirit Ethel, and moved about the circle, touching various sitters at places where they said they wished to be touched, as the top of the head, the knees, the chin. Then in answer to requests the electric light globes in the ceiling were struck. The bells moved with great rapidity about the circle.

Next came spirit lights, and these were plainly visible in all their wonderful brilliance. They touched sitters, who described the feeling as “spongy;” or “like cotton wool.” The lights conveyed no sensation of heat. At request, a light came to within six inches of my face. It was orange-coloured, and the fingers of the hand conveying it could be clearly seen—thin delicate, tapering fingers. This very fine exhibition lasted a considerable time. In answer to a sitter, a light traced the form of a triangle, and then of a circle in the air. It was a surpassingly beautiful manifestation of the higher chemistry. Black Hawk attempted all explanation of how the lights were formed—an explosion of particles confined in a small space, with more that was not easily comprehended.

Cold breezes were felt during the sitting, and flowers from a vase in the room were brought into the circle. After brushing the faces of the sitters with them, the flowers were dropped in the laps of various sitters. Drapery was materialised, and a number of sitters felt it.

E. W. Wallis (a former Editor of *LIGHT*), Dr. Ellis T. Powell, and Mr. Cecil Husk (the famous materialising medium), spoke to me in the Direct Voice; and during the singing of hymns, Cecil Husk and a lady (contralto) were plainly heard joining in. At the close the small table was brought from the cabinet into the circle, and pressed against a lady sitter, whose hand-bag was taken from her lap and placed on the table. Afterwards the cord and the cotton fixtures were found to be just as they were at the beginning. Nothing had been broken or untied.

It was altogether a remarkable and convincing sitting, and Mr. Evan Powell is to be congratulated on the results obtained through his mediumship, and for his efforts to satisfy all who were present that there was no loophole for fraud or hallucination. The British College deserves the gratitude of all psychic researchers for the fine work it is carrying on.



Returning briefly to the August 2009 Psypioneer issue we can also note:

## PSYCHIC WARNINGS

*LIGHT*:—<sup>35</sup>

### SEQUEL TO PUBLICATION OF A CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENT

[**Note by LP**:—In our August 2009 issue, we published several accounts of the prophecies of cataclysm received by Conan Doyle which so exercised his last years. ACD had sent a collation of such prophecies to Sir Oliver Lodge and others. How this list, preserved in the Lodge papers, relates to the Wright version below is a moot point. This legal case is an early example of copyright problems over ACD material, with which ACD biographers would have much concern over the years.]

As a sequel to the publication in the *Sunday Express* of a document written by Sir A. Conan Doyle in regard to psychic warnings of earthquakes and other disasters, judgment was given in the Chancery Division of the High Court on Wednesday last week for Lady Doyle and Mr. Denis Doyle, executors of Sir Arthur's will, in an action to restrain Mr. S. F. Wright and his son, Mr. G. Wright, from issuing the document for publication and defendants were ordered to pay the agreed sum of £10 as damages.

Giving judgment, Mr. Justice Clauson said plaintiffs had had some damages from the *Sunday Express* for infringement of copyright by publishing the document.

Opening the case, Mr. Galbraith said that about two years before his death, Sir Arthur sent a confidential document in regard to psychic warnings to five or six of his friends. The first defendant, Mr. S. F. Wright, had written a novel called *Deluge* and Sir Arthur wrote to him on Nov. 15, 1927, as follows:

“Dear Sir,—I am reading your powerful novel ‘Deluge’ with considerable amazement. The reason for this emotion is that I have for some years had all this information given me in my own home circle by psychic means and that I have had at least 100 corroborations from circles all over the world. I could show you this evidence. The great wind, the flood, the Mediterranean subsidence. I have it all in the same order, too. I have not given details to the world for fear of panic, but I have hinted at it in public all I dared. What I want to know is where did you get it all? I could see you on Friday at 10, or we can correspond.”

Towards the end of 1927 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle sent the document which he had written to Mr. S. F. Wright, but it was not to be published or broadcast, as the document at the end said.

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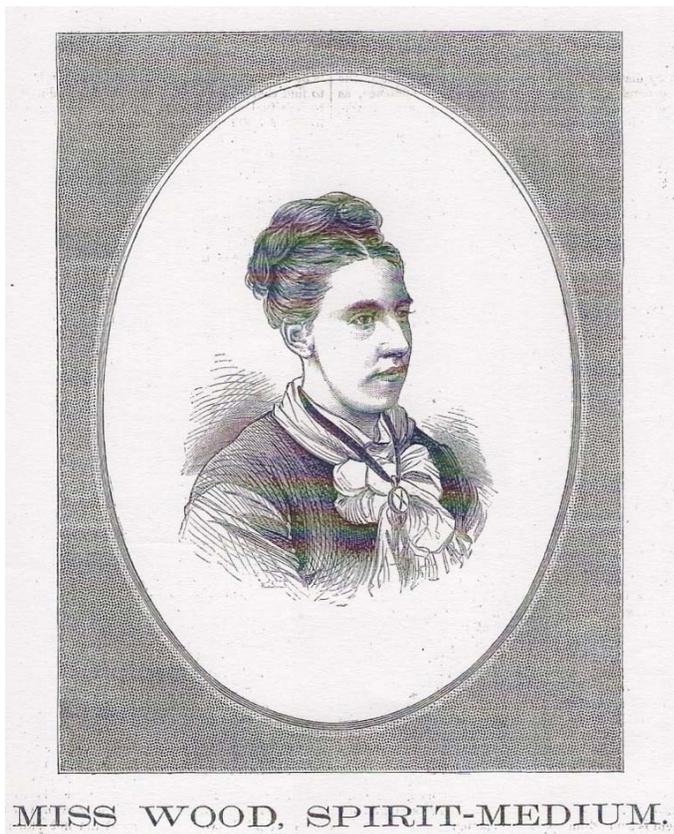
<sup>35</sup> *LIGHT*, July 10, 1931 page 334.

The defendants saw the editor and other representatives of the *Sunday Express* on July 9, 1930, and subsequently, and the whole document was published by that newspaper on July 20.



## The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England

**Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Wood 1854-1884**



In April 2003 I wrote my first ever article, titled “The Mediumship of Catherine Wood” which was published in *The Ark Review*, journal of the now defunct Noah’s Ark Society.<sup>36</sup>

Published below is a brief review of Kate Wood’s early life and development as an early materialisation medium.

In the next issue we will continue with her mediumship.

Paul J. Gaunt



<sup>36</sup> *The Ark Review*, issue 130 May/June 2003 pages 5-18. The first issue from *The Noah’s Ark Society for Physical Mediumship* was titled *Newsletter No1* August, 1990. In 1993 it was called *The Newsletter* and later called *The Ark Review*. The final issue was November/December 2004.

# MISS WOOD'S MEDIUMSHIP

*The Medium and Daybreak:—*<sup>37</sup>

BY T. P. BARKAS, F.G.S., NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

The phenomena of Modern Spiritualism have been developed and investigated in Newcastle-on-Tyne for about twenty-five years but it has been reserved for the last five years to introduce the manifestations prominently before the general public, and to have them developed to the extent which they have now reached.

Prior to the year 1872 the majority of the manifestations were of a private character, and took place in private houses before select circles.

In July, 1872, a society was formed in Newcastle-on-Tyne, under the presidency of a very old worker in the Cause—Mr. W. Armstrong—for the investigation of the alleged phenomena of Modern Spiritualism, and the result was that in the course of a few months several members of the society were developed as mediums for various forms of manifestation. It was not, however, until the phenomena had taken the form of materialisation of human forms that great interest was excited by them. The society met twice a week for the purpose of developing mediumship and observing the phenomena.

In the year 1873 it was discovered that two young ladies, who were then mere girls, had very great mediumistic power. The one (Miss Wood), was at that time eighteen years of age, and the other (Miss Fairlamb) was about a year younger.

The society felt, and justly felt, that they could not claim the services of these young women without in some way compensating them for the services they rendered, as it was impossible for them to follow the occupations in which they were engaged, and from which Miss Wood derived a livelihood, and devote a large portion of their time to the interests of the society.

In consequence of this feeling, the society arranged to give the young women some trifling remuneration for their services, and under those conditions the manifestations very rapidly developed, until not merely control, conversation by the guides through the mediums, but extraordinary movements of tables, chairs, bells, and other articles of furniture, and musical instruments took place in the dark under test conditions.

When experiments for materialisation were tried in 1874 it was found that spectral forms of human faces and hands presented themselves at the openings of the cabinet in which the mediums were enclosed, and eventually, after much investigation, and considerable sacrifice of time and patience, fully developed human forms, having the appearance of men, women, and children, walked from the cabinet in which the mediums

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<sup>37</sup> *The Medium and Daybreak*, May 4, 1877 page 274.

were placed, and in various ways—by speech, motions, touch, &c.—made themselves palpable to the audience.

The preliminary materialisation manifestations took place in the presence of a general and somewhat promiscuous audience, as strangers were admitted, so that although they were very remarkable and apparently inexplicable by reference to trick or ordinarily understood natural laws, they were, nevertheless, not entirely conclusive, as few really satisfactory tests were used, and the audience for the most part was inexperienced and promiscuous, and in that sense not altogether reliable witnesses when occult phenomena occurred in their presence.

In order to meet this objection of miscellaneousness, private seances were organised in private houses of well-known gentlemen. The audiences consisted of personal friends well known to each other; there was therefore more sympathy and harmony in the circles. Rigid but friendly tests of many kinds were tried, and the result was that materialisations took place, that nothing but a stubborn prejudice, perfectly inaccessible to the logic of facts; could resist or gainsay.

I have seen through the mediumship of Miss Wood in a private house living forms walk from the curtained recess which it was utterly impossible for her to simulate. I have seen children, women, and men of various ages, walk forth under her mediumship. I have seen a materialised form, and the medium at the same time. I have had through her mediumship a childlike form standing beside me for about half an hour together; the child has placed its arms round my neck, and permitted me at the same time to place my arm round her neck, and has laid its cheek against mine, breathed upon my face, and, in fact, caressed me precisely as a child would do its parent or guardian. This was not in darkness, but in light, and in the presence of professors and fellows of one of the leading universities in the kingdom. I have, under these conditions and after having handled the psychic form, seen it gradually vanish or dematerialise, and become invisible in the middle of the room.

Miss Wood was born in October, 1854; she is the second daughter of Thomas Wood, of this town, and lost her elder sister, Maggie, when she was young. She remained with her parents until she was fourteen years of age, and at that time went to a situation which she occupied until November 1873 when she was engaged as a medium by the Newcastle Society. Her father, who is a working mechanic, and an investigator into Spiritualism, took her to a meeting of the society, in 1872, which speedily led to her development as a medium. She remained as one of the society's mediums until about eight or ten months ago, when she withdrew from the society, and is now acting as an independent medium for these occult manifestations. Miss Wood's early mediumistic experiences were of a very demonstrative kind, principally physical, and in the early stage of her mediumship she required careful and judicious supervision. Her chief controls are referred to in the letters of Mr. Adshead, but she is subject to strange, controls, which there is some difficulty in banishing.

It is of the utmost importance that her mediumship should not be injured, and for this purpose she should not sit with very miscellaneous audiences, and should be screened from all influences of an objectionable kind, as she, like many sensitives, is subject to controls that are attracted by improper surroundings.

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## BOOKS FOR SALE

Please e-mail [psypioneer@aol.com](mailto:psypioneer@aol.com) for details

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

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

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

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

'*The Cathars and Arthur Guirdham*' **Published by Psypioneer** @ £4.50 Inc U.K., postage, elsewhere (airmail) £4.95 Inc postage. ISBN: 978 0 9536719 3 9.  
See Psypioneer 4.4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.4April08..pdf>

'*Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as It Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling*' by John Benedict Buescher @ £14.50 – incl. U.K. postage.

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

'*Mrs Miller's Gift*' - *A Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library*' By Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison @ £7.50 + Pp ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0.

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

'*Dead Men's Embers*' By Gerald O'Hara @ £14.99 +Pp £2.50 (U.K.) ISBN: 978-0-9514534-6-9. See Psypioneer book review:—  
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

'*Six Lectures on Theology and Nature*' By Emma Hardinge first published in 1860. **Re-Published by Psypioneer** @ £9.95 + 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. \*

*'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.\*

\*For both Psychic Pioneer Publications £4.50, incl. U.K. postage.

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