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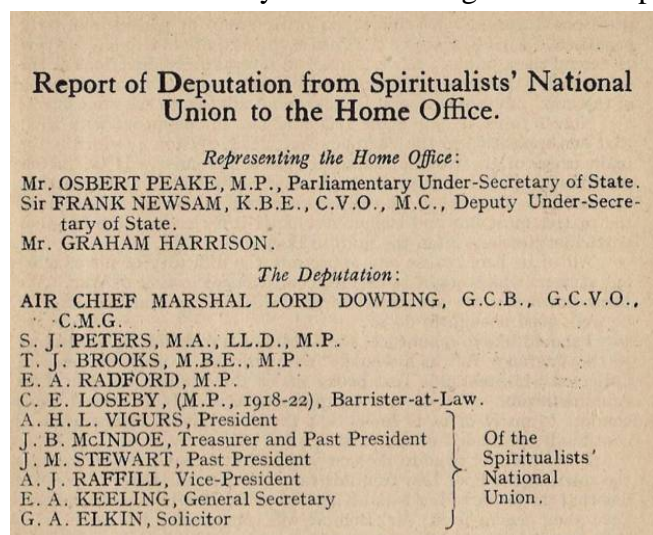
| | |
|--|------------|
| Tom Brooks – Paul J. Gaunt | 268 |
| “M.P. for Spiritualism” passes on – <i>The Two Worlds</i> | 270 |
| Castleford National Spiritualist Church - Paul J. Gaunt & Judith Seaman | 272 |
| Tom Brooks’ Church is Re-dedicated – <i>Psychic News</i> | 274 |
| Venables and Broadbent – Paul J. Gaunt | 276 |
| Passing of Mr. H. H. Broadbent, of Castleford - <i>The Two Worlds</i> | 276 |
| More on Swaffer – Leslie Price | 278 |
| Swaffer continued ... An anti-Spiritualist film? – Leslie Price | 279 |
| Mrs. Norman Culver, and Kate Fox – Paul J. Gaunt | 280 |
| Tennyson – <i>Light</i> | 289 |
| The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England | |
| Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Wood 1854-1884 continued ... | 291 |
| Some books we have reviewed | 298 |
| How to obtain this Journal by email | 299 |

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TOM BROOKS

Thomas Judson Brooks MBE, JP. 7 July 1880 – 15 February 1958. The name Tom Brooks may not be instantly recognised, but in the 1940s – early 1950s he substantially helped to achieve religious and legal freedom for all Spiritualist mediums especially by the passing of the Fraudulent Mediums Act in 1951. Brooks, a Labour M.P. was a devoted Spiritualist; for some years he was connected with and president of the Castleford National Spiritualist Church, which he opened in May 1912.

Spiritualist mediums, since the early days of the Spiritualist movement, had been plagued by unfair outdated laws that made it almost impossible to legally defend them, even if arrested for merely demonstrating mediumship.¹ Spiritualist societies and individuals



utilised various freedom funds and lobbied Parliament for a change in the law, so that genuine mediumship could be recognized and demonstrated without fear of prosecution. The long battle started in 1876, with little effect until victory in 1951.

The history of the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts, as affecting the Spiritualist movement will be given in a separate paper titled: *The Law Against Mediumship:—Vagrancy Act, 1824 – Witchcraft Act, 1735*, which is nearing completion.

Tom Brooks' official involvement commenced around 1943, in a deputation to the Home Office. Captain Charles E. Loseby² was the legal spokesman for the Spiritualists' National Union's deputation in opposition to the Vagrancy Act, 1824, Section 4.³ Their aim was to

¹ This did not just include mediums, as was shown in the 1928 Cantlon case. The Secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, Miss Mercy Phillimore was charged with aiding and abetting in an offence. This cost the LSA over £800.00 in costs. Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle spoke for the defence at Westminster Police Court. The magistrate neither convicted nor acquitted Clair Cantlon and Mercy Phillimore; the decision really amounted to finding them guilty and dealing with them under the First Offenders' Act, whereby, although discharged, they were condemned to pay the costs of the case. Details of this case will be given in:—*The Law Against Mediumship:—Vagrancy Act, 1824 – Witchcraft Act, 1735*, when completed.

² Captain Charles E. Loseby defended Helen Duncan in 1944; he died aged 88, in January 1970.

³ Loseby had tried to defend numerous mediums arrested under this act, as early as 1929. For mediums arrested under Section 4 "the right to trial by jury is not given". This was because the maximum sentence under this section of the Vagrancy Act for the first offence, was three months imprisonment and also to be put on a certain black-list known as the List of Rogues and Vagabonds. A sentence over three months gave the defendant the right of trial by jury, Loseby argued:—"Trial by jury is the only known method calculated to ensure Justice at every stage. It enables the accused to examine the evidence of hostile witnesses, reduced to

amend that particular section. Until this time, no Spiritualist medium had been charged under the 1735 Witchcraft Act.

Brooks was suitably placed as an M.P., and John B. McIndoe former S.N.U president (1930-1938) was at this time Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee. At the S.N.U.'s, deputation to the Home Office on July 27th 1943, the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison (1940-1945) was not in attendance, but was represented by the Under Secretary of State Mr. Osbert Peake. War time Britain was not a good time to promote legislation to amend section 4 of the Vagrancy Act. But the fight continued with letters being sent to Morrison by McIndoe, Loseby and Brooks.

McIndoe replied to a letter from the Home Secretary on December 7th, 1943. The letter was personally delivered to Morrison's hand by Tom Brooks on the same day. It appears from this time Brooks dedicated himself to work on the inside and to use his position as a go between for the Spiritualists' National Union and other interested parties, to get the law changed. One of the main aims of the deputation was to secure for the mediums the right of trial by jury. Brooks wrote to Morrison on behalf of the SNU, on January 14th, 1944 asking him to "initiate a one line amendment to Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act *increasing* the maximum penalty of imprisonment from *three* months to *four* months." Brooks continued "Such an amendment would carry with it automatically the right to trial by jury, and whilst bettering the position, would not favour the accused, would be non-controversial, and would take up but a few moments of Parliamentary time" (See footnote 3)

Morrison did not share this view, and closed the dialogue—"... there is no further action I can take." Shortly after this, the physical medium Helen Duncan,⁴ was charged under the Vagrancy Act. But this was soon changed and she was re-charged (amongst other charges) under the Witchcraft Act, 1735. She was the first Spiritualist medium to be tried under the Act, and also to be tried by jury.

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writing, and to protect himself against unscrupulous evidence and surprise—a vital point for mediums. ...” (Quote taken from SNU's Report of Deputation report 1944, page 4)

⁴ It is often assumed and published that it was due to the Duncan trial that the campaign to change the law was launched, for example Wikipedia incorrectly states:—"However, after the prosecution of medium Helen Duncan in 1944, the Spiritualists decided to campaign for a change in the law." See:—http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Brooks

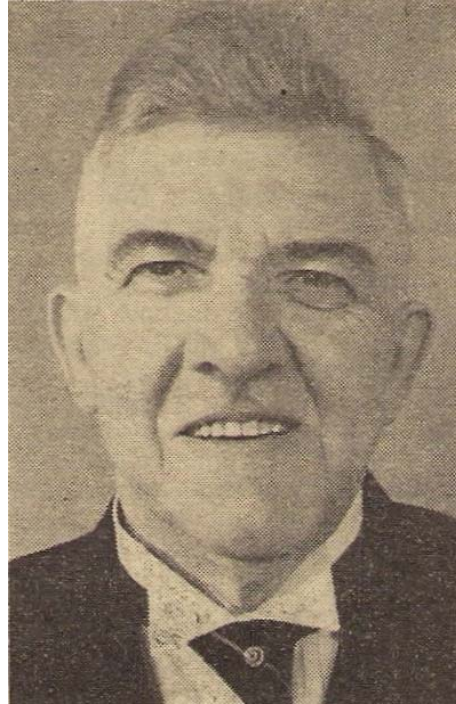
“M.P. for Spiritualism” passes on

*The Two Worlds:—*⁵

“The M.P. for Spiritualism,” Tom Brooks, passed on last Saturday at the age of 77. In Parliament he played the leading part in getting his colleagues to vote for the Bill which gave Spiritualists religious and legal freedom. This was the Fraudulent Mediums’ Act which became law in 1951.

Tom Brooks, who was Labour M.P. for Rothwell, Yorks., was a Spiritualist for over 40 years. For half that period he was president of Castleford National Spiritualist Church.

He made a great impression when he was one of an all-party deputation of M.P.s who called on the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, in 1945, to plead for our religious and legal liberty. Though, as a Spiritualist, he was not expected to say anything, he spoke for a few minutes with great sincerity and earnestness about his religious convictions.



The services at his own Spiritualist church, he said, “were as sacred and spiritual as any church in the country, but we do endeavour to prove what we preach.”

Clement Davies, leader of the Liberal Party, was so moved by Brooks’ speech that he placed his hands on the Spiritualist’s shoulders and said to Morrison, “You see, under two Acts of Parliament, this man is a criminal.”

Our Bill had 12 Labour sponsors of whom Brooks was the only Spiritualist. One of them, Walter Monslow, a Methodist, had the luck of the draw in the ballot for the right to introduce private members’ Bills. They had all agreed that whoever had the luck of the draw would sponsor the Spiritualist measure. So, after eight years’ crusading in the House of Commons by Brooks, Monslow presented our Bill.

Brooks was congratulated by M.P.s of all parties on this chance that had come his way. They all admired his sincerity, honesty of outlook and doggedness of purpose which had led him to plug away despite all difficulties.

⁵ *The Two Worlds* February 22, 1958. Front page, 8.

He was the host at four dinners in the House at which M.P.s were invited to hear our case and to witness clairvoyance by Estelle Roberts and Helen Hughes.

In his speech supporting the Bill, Brooks said, "I have every reason to know that spiritual gifts such as were recorded in the Bible are to be found so this day in people we call mediums."

Spiritualists believed in communion with the spirit world through mediumship as the basis of their religion. We also claimed that, in this way, we were restoring a basis which had been fundamental to all religions in their beginning, Christianity included.

Triumph over despair

"We yield to no one in our claim to bring joy and comfort into darkened lives, and to draw people back from the abyss of despair, or materialism, to a recognition of the goodness of God and the spiritual quality of His universe."

In his appeal that the Witchcraft Act of 1735 and the Vagrancy Act of 1824 should be altered so as not to apply to mediums, he asked Parliament, "in common justice, to take away this stigma from those who, with the highest religious motives of serving their fellow men and women, use the special faculties which God has given them."

In his peroration, Brooks included an extract from the "Lyceum Manual," the handbook of instruction used in training Spiritualist children. Tom, who had helped to teach children at Lyceums, said he was impressed to include it so that all who read it in "Hansard" would at least be familiar with our teachings.

Here is his peroration: "May I close on the note which is a cardinal factor in the Spiritualist movement? We can never finish the noble task of life. We can never cease to be. No period is set to our being, for it is eternal."

Worth a taxi!

After a four hours' debate, in which every M.P. took Spiritualism seriously, the Bill was unanimously passed. Tom, greatly elated, left the House to go to his Yorkshire home. Usually he travelled by bus for the nine miles' journey from Wakefield to his house. "I think I'll take a taxi," he said. "It's 15s, but it's worth it tonight!"

Brooks, in many respects a rough diamond, was a miner for 40 years, and spoke in an unmistakable Yorkshire dialect. Even the "Times" in its obituary referred to his Spiritualism.

Arrangements were made to hold the funeral service on Thursday of this week at Castleford NSC where he laboured for many years, to be followed by a cremation service at Leeds.

Castleford National Spiritualist Church

I contacted Castleford Church which is still situated at Lower Oxford Street, Castleford, West Yorkshire, WF10 4AQ, and now known as Castleford SNU Church. Details of their location, activities, speakers and service times, etc can be found on their website.⁶

My request for further information on Tom Brooks and their church history was forwarded to their Honorary Vice President of over 30 years whom I found to be Mrs. Judith J. Seaman MSNU,⁷ a former S.N.U., President (1996-2000) making her the second female president of the Union. Judith Seaman is Vice-President (Spiritual) of the S.N.U.⁸ Jessy Greenwood⁹ was the first female SNU, President (1923-1925) and incidentally was the speaker in 1933 to mark the church's twenty first anniversary celebrations under the presidency of Tom Brooks.

Judith Seaman, MSNU, informed me:

Tom Brooks was instrumental in finding permanent premises for Castleford SNU Church which had previously met in rooms near the police station, believe it or not! May 2012 will mark 100 years since he opened and dedicated the new church in the premises where it is still situated. There is a plaque in the church commemorating this event. He also laid the foundation stone which is still clearly visible. He was President at the time and remained so for many years though I do not have a record of when he stepped down from that position. The Church and its Lyceum were a very big part of his life.

Castleford Church's history includes several rather special early pioneers which have been long forgotten.

I also received from Judith Seaman a programme giving details of a "Great Public Meeting – Spiritualist Freedom Day," held at the New Star Cinema, Aire St, Castleford on Sunday 27th, 1952. During the meeting a presentation was to be made to Mr. and Mrs. Brooks, in recognition of his outstanding services to Spiritualism. The meeting was chaired by SNU

⁶ Castleford SNU Church:—<http://www.castlefordspiritualistchurch.piczo.com/?cr=6>

⁷ MSNU:—Minister of the Spiritualists' National Union.

⁸ S.N.U., council:—<http://www.snu.org.uk/council.htm>

⁹ See *Psypioneer* Vol 6, No.12:—*Forgotten Pioneers of the S.N.U: Mrs. Jessy Greenwood – Paul J. Gaunt*, pages 348-351:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.12December2010.pdf> Her husband William Greenwood, was the first SNU Treasurer see *Psypioneer* Vol 6 , No.11:— *Forgotten Pioneers of the S.N.U: William Greenwood April 13th, 1861—April 22d, 1905*, pages 314-315:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

president (1950-1953) Percy Wilson;¹⁰ speakers were Percy Hitchcock,¹¹ International Spiritualists Federation President, and Mr. F. H. Bendall, Greater World Christian Spiritualist League President. Also in attendance were John M Stewart, former SNU president (1941-1943),¹² and Mr. J. W. Dawson. The demonstration was given by Gordon Higginson.

Later Gordon Higginson would rededicate the church, in his role as SNU president (1970-1993), on January 2nd, 1993; this was probably Higginson's last 'Service of Dedication.' He died on the 18th of this month.

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¹⁰ See *Psyioneer* Vol 6, No.1:—*Our new president, Percy Wilson – The Two Worlds*, pages 17-22:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.1January2010.pdf>

¹¹ For many years Hitchcock was affectionately known as P.J., he died in 1953. He was once secretary to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and former president of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association (MSA) still in existence as the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB). More on Percy Hitchcock in the next issue.

¹² John M. Stewart was the S.N.U.'s Freedom Committee Secretary who worked with Tom Brooks. Stewart looked after the S.N.U., interests in the legal field. He was involved in the long fight of freedom for over 20 years and was present at the Deputation who met with the then Home Secretary J.R. Clynes on Tuesday July 1st, 1930. The delegation included Arthur Conan Doyle (who died six days later), S.N.U., President Ernest Oaten, Vice-President, James J. Morse (editor of *The Two Worlds* who secured space in the journal for the ongoing campaign, after Morse's death in 1919 Oaten took over the editorship). Oaten initiated the S.N.U.'s, freedom fund (various defence/funds had been put into place since the late 1870's) at their Annual General Meeting in Glasgow, July 1916. See also Ernest Oaten's Presidential address, in 1919:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.6June2011.pdf>

Finally, Judith brought this article, as published below, to my attention:

Tom Brooks' Church is Re-dedicated

Psychic News:—¹³

VIGURS' TRIBUTE TO MAN WHO WON FREEDOM FOR SPIRITUALISTS

FOR THE FREEDOM WHICH SPIRITUALISTS TO-DAY ENJOY IN THE EYES OF THE LAW THEY HAVE TO, THANK ONE MAN ABOVE OTHERS—TOM BROOKS.

For it was the stalwart Tom, a lifelong and ardent Spiritualist, who, when he was M.P., steered the Fraudulent Mediums Bill through Parliament.

At the recent re-dedication service of the Castleford National Spiritualist Church, which has just been extensively renovated, Harold Vigurs¹⁴ made use of the occasion to pay tribute to Brooks, who has been so long associated with the Castleford church.

Tom Brooks, he said, was always available at the House to discuss matters concerning the passage of the Bill. It became law in 1951.

Vigurs spoke of the high esteem in which other M.P.s held Tom, and he recalled how Brooks never let an opportunity pass to press home his demand for the religious freedom of Spiritualists.

“VAGABONDS”

Whenever another greeted Tom the latter would return the salutation, with the added remark, “You have full liberty to worship as you wish?”

“Yes, of course,” would come the reply, and Tom would answer “Well, why shouldn't I?”

“I don't understand,” the other would say, which gave Tom the opportunity to point out that if Spiritualists gathered together to practise their own form of worship they were “rogues and vagabonds” in the eyes of the law and could be prosecuted.

Few M.P.s realised that Spiritualists suffered under the archaic Vagrancy Act, and it was largely due to Tom Brooks' efforts in enlightening them in the fashion that he did that adequate support for the Bill was obtained when it came before Parliament.

¹³ *Psychic News*, December 10th, 1955.

¹⁴ Harold Vigurs was SNU president 1943-1948.

Before the Bill was drafted deputations called upon the Home Secretary, Chuter Ede, and undoubtedly the deputation which had the greatest effect was the one in the final stage, when Tom Brooks and another Member, Sam Viant,¹⁵ called on their own.

In his forthright Yorkshire manner, Tom asked the Government to take direct action in the matter, and as a result of his deliberations with Tom, Chutes Ede gave the Bill official blessing by speaking in support of it when it came up for debate.

Briefly reviewing the history of the Castleford Church, Vigurs recalled how it all began in 1896, when a few men and women with Spiritualist interests met together at the house of a Mr. Watson.

Very soon the group grew so much that they had to find larger accommodation, and they met at the Old Teapot Café.

So began the Castleford Church. Its growth was so rapid that members were constantly seeking larger halls, until the present premises were acquired in 1912.

They were opened by the Mayor of Walsall, Mr. J. Venables, and the chairman for the occasion was the clerk to the urban district council, Mr. H. H. Broadbent Tom Brooks was then the lyceum conductor.

MATURITY

By the time the church came of age in 1933, Brooks had become its president. He had already been awarded the M.B.E., and, in addition, he was a Justice of the Peace, a county councillor, and a member of the Castleford U.D.C.

At the ceremony to mark its 21st birthday Mrs. Jessy Greenwood was the speaker.

Harold Vigurs, himself a past- president of the Spiritualists' National Union, was sharing the re-dedication service with Ivy Powell, of Leeds.

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¹⁵ Samuel P. Viant, C.B.E., was Labour M.P. for West Willesden. He himself was not a Spiritualist. I quote part of his speech on December 1st, 1950 (a day of triumph for British Spiritualists. For four hours Members of the House of Commons spoke):—"We cannot afford to dismiss Spiritualism in an easy manner. As was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. T. J. Brooks) in seconding the Second Reading, some of the finest intellects throughout the world have been converted to Spiritualism. One has only to think of the late Dr. Alfred Russell [correct spelling is Russel] Wallace, who started up as a physicist, and who, as a result of his studies and investigations, became converted to Spiritualism. Again there is no less an authority than the late Sir Oliver Lodge. In the light of these facts, I re-assert that we should keep an open mind on this subject and permit those who undoubtedly have greater knowledge and a vaster experience than ourselves to have the opportunity of practising their religion in accordance with their own faith and ideals. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill." Taken from: *The Two Worlds*, Saturday 9, December 1950, all the speeches, including the Home Secretary, Chuter Ede will appear in the forthcoming article, *The Law Against Mediumship*:—Vagrancy Act, 1824 – Witchcraft Act, 1735.



Photo by O. Ford Jones, Birmingham.

JOHN VENABLES, ESQ., J.P., OPENS THE DOOR OF THE
NEW CHURCH AT BROWNHILLS.

I was rather surprised to read in the above report:—"They were opened by the Mayor of Walsall, Mr. J. Venables, and the chairman for the occasion was the clerk to the urban district council, Mr. H. H. Broadbent."

This rather reads as if Venables and Broadbent were just council officials on official business!

John Venables and his wife Esther (1854-1923) were veteran pioneers of the movement and in the formation of the 'Spiritualists' National Union,' John Venables, was the 'Spiritualists' National Federation' President in 1901.

Venables opened numerous National Spiritualist churches. The photo¹⁶ shows Venables opening the Brownhills N.S. church on July 22nd, 1926. John Venables died on August 25th 1931.

Broadbent, who became Honorary Life President of Castleford National Spiritualist Church.

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Another Stalwart Promoted

The Two Worlds:—¹⁷

Passing of Mr. H. H. Broadbent, of Castleford

WE regret to record the death recently of Mr. Harry Higson Broadbent at his residence, "Mount Royal," Roundhill Road, Castleford, at the age of 72 years. He had a seizure late at night shortly after retiring to bed, and remained unconscious to his death.

He was born on October 8th, 1848, and came to Castleford as Clerk and Surveyor to the Local Board of Health-in November, 1878, having previously been Clerk to the Pudsey Local Board, and he held the dual office up to 1894, when he relinquished the duties of surveyor.

¹⁶ Opening of New Church at Brownhills:—*The Two Worlds*, August 13th, 1926 page 476

¹⁷ *The Two Worlds*, March 4, 1921 pages 103-104.

In many respects he was a remarkable man, and he was a most eloquent speaker. As recently as January 25th he attended with a deputation of the Urban Council before Wakefield Corporation with regard to water supply, and conducted the case on behalf of the Council with marked ability and brilliance, and at the last committee meeting of the Council he was warmly congratulated on the manner in which he had presented the matter.

He could relate many extraordinary experiences of his earlier days with the old Local Board during his surveyorship. During a heavy flood in the Wheldale area he was one who conveyed food to the people by means of a boat on another occasion during an epidemic of smallpox, when certain streets had to be boarded off, he bravely assisted the sanitary inspector in seeing that the people so isolated were fed. During a period of distress through trade depression in the early eighties he was secretary for a relief fund, and in many other ways he has always had the welfare of his fellowmen at heart.

He was identified with the Castleford Flower Show Committee throughout its existence. He was Clerk to the Castleford Old Age Pensions Committee, and he was one of the vice-presidents of the Urban Council Clerks' Association. In religious matters he was a staunch Spiritualist, being trustee and President of the Castleford National Spiritualists' Church for many years.—CASTLEFORD EXPRESS.

The Two Worlds continued:

Spiritualism in Castleford and Yorkshire generally will feel acutely the physical loss of Mr. H. H. Broadbent, but we rejoice at his release and freedom from the encumbrance of his much worn and weakened physical frame. Mr. Broadbent's interest in Spiritualism has continued unbroken for 30 years or more. He was the founder of the original Society in Castleford some 24 years ago, and has held the position of President almost continuously during the intervening years, culminating in his election about a fortnight ago as Honorary Life President.

Rarely absent, never late, he had a keen sense of duty in all matters that had relation to the well-being of the church. In 1910 he, along with Messrs. Atack, Belcher and Ward, was appointed Trustee in connection with land purchases on which a church was finally erected and duly opened for service on May 12th, 1912, by Mr. Venables, of Walsall. He was a familiar figure at almost all Societies in Yorkshire during the time the old Yorkshire. Union held sway. For several years he was an executive member of that body, and made great sacrifices in the fulfilment of his duties.

For some years past Mr. Broadbent has sat in a private circle at Normanton and a book has been completed (which it was his greatest ambition to see published) dictated to the sitters from the spirit side. His most treasured experiences were the long talks it was his privilege to enjoy with Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten.

The interment took place at Castleford on Monday, February 21st, but it was not possible to carry out what one feels would have been his desire, namely, a Spiritualist service. A short service was held at the Carlton-street Wesleyan Church, followed by a short service at the graveside, the Wesleyan minister officiating. The following

representatives were present to pay tribute to the valuable services he has rendered to the Cause: Spiritualists' National Union, Ltd., Yorkshire District Council, A. E. Beety; Sheffield District Committee, Mr. J. Oliver and Mrs. Hunt; Leeds District Committee, Mr. J. H. Baldwin; Bradford District Committee, Mrs. Fell. Churches represented were Castleford (led by Mrs. Winsor and W. H. Vemam), Pontefract, Ossett, Wakefield, Normanton, Leeds (Cookridge-st.) Keighley; and upwards of 60 members and friends of the local Church.

At the close of the official service at the graveside we were accorded the privilege of rendering Mr. Broadbent's favourite hymn, "Father and friend, Thy light and love," followed by invocation sweetly rendered by Mrs. Hamer, of Oldham. His kindly help and guidance were always at the disposal of all who sought it, and their numbers were legion.

We extend our thanks to Minister Judith Seaman, for her help in this research

Paul J. Gaunt.

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MORE ON SWAFFER

By Leslie Price:

Readers of the last issue will recall that Hannen Swaffer (1879-1962) was a significant figure in Spiritualism. In 1974, Tom Driberg who had known him, published a biography "Swaff", and apologised:

"It is a matter of deep regret that I could not here record my gratitude for the co-operation of Swaffer's housekeeper, Miss Rose Baston—like him, an ardent Spiritualist. When one of those helping me first contacted Miss Baston, she seemed most anxious to help; but when we telephoned her again to arrange an appointment, she said that 'Mr Swaffer' had come through at a séance on the previous night, and had advised her against any such co-operation. She also said that he had added 'Ask him why he's taken so long to write that book'—which, my patient publishers will agree, seems a fair point."¹⁸

Driberg gives a valuable portrait of Swaffer, and (helped by Maurice Barbanell and some papers from Swaffer), covers much of Swaffer's psychic work. There is a detailed account of the conversion of Swaffer by the spirit return of Lord Northcliffe, his former chief. Evidentially this is a difficult case. Swaffer had obviously known Northcliffe well. Others in London like Dennis Bradley (the investigator and possible medium at some of the séances) may also have known quite a lot about Northcliffe perhaps even about his children

¹⁸ Page X1

and mistresses. Moreover the circumstances in which Northcliffe withdrew from public life and died would also merit re-examination, and what if anything Northcliffe said about this in his communications. Some people find the supposed mental breakdown and subsequent death of Northcliffe suspicious. All this complicates the assessment of messages.

Incidentally, Swaffer got off on the wrong foot with the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). He was accused by Una Troubridge in JSPR¹⁹ 1925 of publishing off the record information acquired at a Dennis Bradley séance at which they were both present. Swaffer did not join the Society and his book on Northcliffe was not reviewed, though it was put in the SPR library.

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LP continues:

AN ANTI-SPIRITULIST FILM?

In Tom Driberg's biography "Swaff" we read (p.210):

"At the end of 1940, Swaffer was involved in an incident, far removed from the war, arising from his reputation both as a critic of entertainment and as a Spiritualist. A film called *Spellbound* had been banned by the film censor because he thought that it would be offensive to Spiritualists. The distributors appealed to Swaffer to see the film privately and to intervene. He saw it, thought it inoffensive, and offered, as one of the leading Spiritualists of the day, to intercede with the censor and also, himself, to write and speak an introduction to be shown with the film. The film was released, though the new introduction was not included in all the prints of it. If a copy of this still exists in some film library or producers' or distributors' archives, it may be the only animated record that survives of Swaffer's appearance and voice." (p.210)

And sure enough, there is it on a film database, listing Swaffer.²⁰

Swaffer had already appeared in the films "Death at Broadcasting House" and "Late Extra".

There's a DVD of *Spellbound* in the States, and an alternative name for the film "Passing Clouds." Other titles were "Ghost Story" and "The Spell of Amy Nugent."²¹

¹⁹ JSPR:—Journal of the Society for Psychical Research

²⁰ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0033088/>

²¹ <http://www.amazon.com/Spellbound-Aka-Passing-Clouds/dp/B0034ZQCDW>

[“Spellbound” was a popular title for films, notably the one by Alfred Hitchcock in 1945.]

The 1940/1941 film *Spellbound* was based on the classic anti-Spiritualist novel by Robert Hugh Benson “*The Necromancers*, about whom more soon. It a moot point why IMDB credits the story to Hugh Benson and the novel to Robert Benson!

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MRS. NORMAN CULVER, AND KATE FOX

In October 1888 the two youngest Fox sisters; primarily led by Margareta (Maggie or Margaret) Fox-Kane, and her younger sister Catherine (Cathie or Kate) Fox-Jencken;²² publicly confessed they were frauds. They claimed, and Maggie demonstrated at the Academy of Music, New York on October 21st, that the raps were not made by the spirit world:—²³

“When she (Maggie) finished her statement Dr. Richmond called several physicians onto the stage. Maggie slipped off one of her shoes and placed her stocking-clad foot on a small pine table. Sharp raps were heard resounding throughout the theater. The reporter for the *New York Tribune* wrote that the noises increased from faint to loud, “traveling up the wall and along the roof of the Academy.”

“While the raps continued, the doctors solemnly examined Maggie’s feet, a procedure that the audience met with suggestive laughter and ribald remarks. Then Maggie stood on the table for another examination, after which the doctors pronounced that the raps were indeed made by her big toe.

“Nobody seemed to question whether the raps produced by Maggie's toe were supplemented by other means: whether Dr. Richmond himself might have

²² Photograph of Kate Fox-Jencken, taken from *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism*, by Ann Leah Underhill, published by Thomas R. Knox & Co 1885.

²³ *Talking to the Dead*, by Barbara Weisberg pages 224-224. For book details see the end of this issue:—*Some books we have reviewed.*

had confederates in the audience willing to mount the kind of symphony for which the spirits had become famous.”

Although some claimed this would be the “Death-Blow” to the Spiritualist movement it had little impact. The Fox sisters had already fell by the wayside in many respects and Spiritualism was already well established. Later both sisters would recant their claims, and shortly die. Some 37 years earlier, it was claimed by Mrs. Norman Culver that the then young Kate made another confession of being a fraudulent medium. Mrs. Culver was the sister-in-law to Elizabeth Fox, wife of the sister’s brother David.

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THE GHOSTS AT THE CONFESSIONAL

*Modern Spiritualism:—*²⁴

*Extract from the deposition of Mrs. Norman Culver, taken at Arcadia, N. Y., April 17, 1851.*²⁵

“I am, by marriage, a connection of the Fox girls; their brother married my husband’s sister. The girls have been a great deal at my house, and for about two years I was a very sincere believer in the rappings; but some things which I saw, when I was visiting the girls at Rochester, made me suspect that they were deceiving. I resolved to satisfy myself in some way, and soon afterwards I made a proposition to Catharine to assist her in producing the manifestations. I had a cousin visiting me from Michigan, who was going to consult the spirits, and I told Catharine that, if they intended to go to Detroit, it would be a great thing for them to convince him. I also told her that if I could do anything to help her, I would do it cheerfully; that I should probably be able to answer all the questions he would ask, and I would do it if she would show me how to make the raps. She said that, as Margaretta was absent, she wanted somebody to help her, and that if I would become a medium, she would explain it all to me. She said that when my cousin consulted the spirit, I must sit next to her, and touch her arm when the right letter was called. I did so, and was able to answer nearly all the questions correctly. After I had helped her in this way a few times, she revealed to me the secret. The raps are produced with the toes. All the toes are used. After nearly a week’s practice, with Catharine showing me how, I could produce them perfectly myself. At first it was very hard work to do it. Catharine told me to warm my feet, or put them in warm water, and it would then be easier work to rap; she said that she sometimes

²⁴ *Modern Spiritualism: Its Facts and Fanaticisms, its Consistencies and Contradictions*, by E. W. Capron Bela Marsh, N.Y and Partridge and Brittan, Philadelphia 1855, pages 421-424 (Appendix)

²⁵ This account is also published in the *Occult Life of Jesus of Nazareth*, by Alexander Smyth (1899), republished by Kessinger Publishing Co, 1st, August 2003 Paperback 440 pages. The author concludes:— “Here is a complete exposure of the Fox girls under oath. That in connection with *Prof Grimes, settles the fact that they were frauds, and fraudulently made raps which were ascribed to spirits; and hence, where ever there is a rap, back of it there is a rouge” Pages 81-83 (account slightly enlarged) See:— <http://www.google.com/search?q=Occult+Life+of+Jesus+of+Nazareth++By+Alexander+Smyth&btnG=Search+Books&tbm=bks&tbo=1> *See also *Psypioneer* Volume 4, No.9:—*James Stanley Grimes: – Fox séance - Paul J. Gaunt*, pages 119-124:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

had to warm her feet three or four times in the course of an evening. I found that heating my feet did enable me to rap a great deal easier.

“Catharine told me how to manage to answer the questions. She said it was generally easy enough to answer right if the one who asked the questions called the alphabet. She said the reason why they asked people to write down several names on paper, and then point to them till the spirit rapped at the right one, was to give them a chance to watch the countenances and motions of the persons, and that in that way they could nearly always guess right. She also explained how they held down and moved tables. [Mrs. Culver gave us some illustrations of the tricks.] She told me that all I should have to do to make the raps heard on the table would be to put my foot against the bottom of the table when I rapped; and that, when I wished to make the raps sound distant on the wall, I must make them louder, and direct my own eyes earnestly to the spot where I wished them to be heard. She said, if I could put my foot against the bottom of the door, the raps would be heard on the top of the door. Catharine told me that, when the committee held their ankles in Rochester, the Dutch servant-girl, rapped with her knuckles under the floor from the cellar. The girl was instructed to rap whenever she heard their voices calling the spirits. Catharine also showed me how they made the sounds of sawing and planing boards. [The whole trick was explained to us.] When I was at Rochester, last January, Margareta told me that when people insisted on seeing her feet and toes, she could produce a few raps with her knees and ankles.

“Elizabeth Fish (Mrs. Fish’s daughter),²⁶ who now lives with her father, was the first one who produced these raps.²⁷ She accidentally discovered the way to make them by playing with her toes against the foot-board while in bed. The whole secret was revealed to me, with the understanding that I should act as a medium when the girls were away. Catharine said that whenever I practised, I had better have my little girl at the table with me, and make folks believe that she was the medium, for she said they would not suspect so young a child of any trick. When she was instructing me how to be a medium, she told me how frightened they used to get in New York for fear somebody would detect them, and gave me the whole history of all the tricks they played upon the people there. She said that once Margareta spoke aloud, and the whole party believed it was a spirit.

“MRS, NORMAN CULVER.

²⁶ Mrs. Fish is Anne Leah Fox, the eldest sister. Later she married Calvin Brown (1851m.-1853d.) See *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.3 page 69:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.3March2011.pdf> . Finally she married Daniel Underhill.

²⁷ In 1878 Kate and Maggie claimed:—“This older niece [Elizabeth (Lizzie) Fish] was the questioner with whom the early conversations were carried on with the unseen communicants, little Katie merely responding by clasping her tiny fingers together. See *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No.3:—*The Wrong Fox Sister?* – Paul J. Gaunt, pages 57-60:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.3March2010.pdf>

“We hereby certify that Mrs. Culver is one of the most reputable and intelligent ladies in the town of Arcadia. We were present when she made the disclosures contained in the above paper; we had heard the same from her before, and we cheerfully bear testimony that there cannot be the slightest doubt of the truth of the whole statement.

“C. G. POMEROY, M. D.
REV. D. S. CHASE.

I have in my possession other depositions from persons residing in Rochester, who have been confederates of the Fox girls in the rapping business, which, in due time and form, will be made public. The reign of those impostors is nearly at an end; and the few editors who have been the means of deceiving the public in relation to their real character will, I trust, have their reward in the deep indignation and scorn of those whose credulity has been abused.

H. BURR.

“Pittsburg, May 20, 1851.’ ”

Eliab Wilkinson Capron responds:

The boldness of this statement was its only merit. It was an entire fabrication in all its essential statements. Being perfectly conversant with the investigation at Rochester, and knowing that part of the statement to be false, I sent the following brief reply to the *Express*, which was published:

“I notice in the *Express* of Saturday what pretends to be a statement of a confession (in ‘extracts’ from an unsworn-to ‘deposition’) made by Catharine Fox to Mrs. Norman Culver, of Arcadia, N.Y. Without noticing the loose and indefinite manner of the whole statement, I wish to call attention to the following extract:

“ ‘Catharine told me that, when the committee held their ankles at Rochester, the Dutch servant-girl rapped with her knuckles under the floor from the cellar. The girl was instructed to rap whenever she heard their voices calling the spirits.’ ”

“As I was present during the investigations, and had an opportunity to know something of the circumstances, I will ask space to state,

“1st. That, during that investigation (which lasted three days, and was carried on by three different committees),²⁸ not one of the examinations took place in the house of the Fox family; the first meeting of the committee being in the Hall of the Sons of Temperance, the second at the office of Vice-Chancellor Whittlesey, and the third at the rooms of Doctor Gates at the Rochester House.

“2d. There was no previous notice given to the family, and they did not know where they were to go until the committee called for them.

²⁸ Capron is referring to the first meeting/demonstration (he was also a speaker at the meeting) which commenced at the Corinthian Hall, on Wednesday 14th, November 1849. Sometimes this date is stated as 1848 see:— <http://spiritualismlink.forumotion.com/t311-1849-the-corinthian-hall-investigations-of-the-fox-sisters>

“3d. They did not have, and never had, a Dutch or other servant-girl in the family at Rochester up to the time of the investigation.

“4th. Catharine Fox was not in Rochester during any part of these investigations, *but was at my house in Auburn, seventy miles distant.*

“Any further comment on the above unsworn ‘deposition’ would be superfluous, as the above serves to illustrate its character.

E. W. CAPRON.”

Capron concludes:

It may be well, in this place, to state some other facts in connection with this singular affair. The two persons—doctor and preacher—who gave the certificate of character to Mrs. Culver, were not neighbors, and knew very little about her, living as they did several miles distant. They were, moreover, bitter and unreasonable opponents of the manifestations. It will be observed by the careful reader, who has heard Burr lecture, or seen his position stated, that the “deposition” is made, in every particular, to corroborate his theory. Everything was “exactly as he thought it would be,” like the old lady who was told that the cow had eaten the grindstone.

Her way of producing the sounds, of accounting for them in different places, of the sounds on the wall, all was precisely as he had been stating in his lectures and writings. It was a great misfortune for Mr. Burr that he was not acquainted with the fact that Catharine did not attend the celebrated Rochester investigation, and that Mrs. Fish never had a Dutch servant, or any other, up to that time. Had he known this he would, no doubt, have fixed up a story that would have been more plausible. At it was, the Messrs. Burr and Mrs. Culver sank together, and their notoriety, as the exposers of spiritualism, ceased.

I have not thought it necessary to follow the Burrs to every place, and give an account of their reception. In Pittsburg they made an indiscriminate attack on Mrs. Fish and the Fox family, Mr. Tiffany (who confronted them at Cleveland, and also acted as counsel for Mrs. Fish in her prosecution of C. C. Burr for slander), and a medium and other citizens of Pittsburg. He was completely answered and silenced by an article published in the Pittsburg Post of that city, in which O. S. Fowler and others give certificates, completely overthrowing the slanderous assumptions of Burr. He was defended in character, talents and honesty, by Jane G. Swisshelm, editor of the *Saturday Visitor*. She has always opposed spiritual manifestations with what ability she had; but was much more combative and flippant than profound.

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The Burrs referred to above by Capron, are the ex-Reverend C. Chauncey Burr and his brother Heman Burr. Late 1850—early 1851 C.C. Burr claimed, to produce/demonstrated rappings that could be distinctly heard in every part of a crowded hall with an audience of a thousand people. The sounds, he alleged were produced (in part) by his toe joints.

Capron states on page 419:

“Failing in his attempts to make much money by the “exposé” he concluded to make a bold stroke for the utter annihilation of all media in general, and the Fox family in particular. In his peregrinations, he visited a Mrs. Culver, who lives in the town of Arcadia, N. Y., and is a distant relative (by marriage) of the Fox family. This woman was, for a long time, a bitter enemy of the part of the family to which the mediums belonged. Moreover, for some time after the Fox girls went to reside at Rochester, she was a medium herself, and had the “rappings” with her. She was a sympathetic clairvoyant, and a very susceptible subject, and, when in this state, could be made to say and do anything the operator pleased. With this woman Mr. Burr agreed, either for a consideration, or from motives of envy, jealousy, or revenge, to make and publish a story which would forever put to rest this question, so far as the Fox family was concerned.”

26 years after Mrs. Norman Culver’s allegation, Kate Fox-Jencken again defends herself, the letter published below from *The Athenæum* and republished in *The Spiritualist*, gave no other information to Home’s involvement:

THE ROCHESTER RAPPINGS

The Spiritualist:—²⁹

To the Editor of “*The Athenæum*.”

Scarsdale Villas, Kensington, June 4th, 1877.

In your impression of the 26th of May last, I noticed with deep regret that my letter to Mr. D. D. Home has been the cause of bringing my name before the public. The publication of my letter by Mr. Home, of February, 1876, was improper and unauthorised. As regards the serious charges contained in Mrs. Norman Culver’s unsworn deposition, made, not as you erroneously put it, six years ago,³⁰ but twenty-six years and upwards ago, I think in common fairness you will not deny me the right of reply. At the time of the publication of this defamatory, unsworn deposition I was a mere child. My family, however, took up the matter, and Mrs. Norman Culver, subsequently, not only verbally, but in writing, retracted all the charges brought against me and my sister. Shortly after the

²⁹ *The Spiritualist*, June 29, 1877 page 304.

³⁰ The statement that Mrs. Culver’s deposition was made only six years ago is Dr. Carpenter’s. (*The Spiritualist*)

publication of this document, Mr. E. W. Capron, published in the *Express* in 1851 (recopied in the *Pittsburg Post*) a letter to this effect:—

As published above in Capron's reply to the *Express*, so admitted:

For further evidence rebutting these charges I refer you to the contemporary literature on that subject from the year 1851 onwards.

I may be perhaps permitted to state that, as regards Mrs. Norman Culver, she left her husband some year or two prior to the year 1851, and wandered about with a person named Burr who gained a livelihood by giving public lectures, principally denunciatory of Spiritualism. After her return to her husband her mind gave way, and she had temporary attacks of kleptomania; her husband, in despair, committed suicide. It is painful for me to state these facts, known only to our family, to whom Mrs. Culver was distantly related; but I deem this necessary to show the character of the witness brought up to testify against me after the lapse of upwards of a quarter of a century. I ask, is this conduct on the part of Dr. Carpenter fair and reasonable?

The theory Dr. Carpenter endorses is, that these rappings are produced by the joints of the toes of the foot. Can any explanation be less satisfactory? I appeal to Mr. Wm. Crookes, Mr. Serjeant Cox, Lord Rayleigh, Mr. H. Cholmondeley Pennell, Mr. A. R. Wallace, Mr. Varley, and many more, to whom I have afforded every opportunity of testing these phenomena and ascertaining their cause, whether the toe-joint theory suffices to account for these mysterious rappings, or whether they are produced by artificial means.

These rappings, or echoes from an unseen world, as I call them, have occurred in the presence of the gentlemen I have referred to, and in the presence of other men of science, in a clear light, against the pane of a window, on the panel of a door, abreast with those present, even overhead, upon a wire stretched across the room, and beyond my reach or touch. They have taken place on the floor, while I was seated on a swing several feet off the ground; they have happened while I stood isolated on glass tumblers, the floor beneath vibrating as the rappings sounded on the carpet. If the phenomena called spiritual rested on these rappings as their sole evidence, possibly suspicion might be justified; but, I ask, how does Dr. Carpenter account for the appearance of forms? These appearances have been witnessed by Mr. H. P. Townsend, Mr. C. F. Livermore, Dr. Gray, Dr. Edward Bayard (all of New York), by Mr. Irving Vanwart (nephew to Washington Irving), and others in the United States.

On a recent occasion, at the house of Mrs. S. C. Hall, Kensington, a luminous hand, descending from a considerable height opposite to me, seized a pencil and wrote a few words, then rose and gradually faded away. I ask, what produced this phenomenon?

In conclusion, I repeat my request that I may be heard in answer to the unprovoked, unjustifiable attack now made upon me, For years past I have lived in strict seclusion, only allowing intimate friends to visit; and now, after the lapse of upwards of a quarter of a century, I am called upon to repel slanderous statements made against me by a person I had

hardly ever spoken to, knew nothing of, and which statements have been retracted and denied by the accusant again and again.

KATHARINE FOX-JENCKEN

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In conclusion, below is published a little known statement by Mrs. Chauncet Culver; this was unearthed by my colleague Leslie Price:

THE FOX FAMILY

*The Spirit World:—*³¹

We have had many statements and counter-statements in regard to the Fox family—the first and most noted media for the “rapping” in this country. Some time since, two or three papers in this vicinity published a slander, put forth by C. C. Burr, in the *New York Tribune*, backed up by the statements of a Mrs. Culver, who is a distant connection by marriage, of the Fox family. We happened to know some facts in regard to the matter, and promptly contradicted so much of them as we knew, to be false, in a letter to the *Tribune*. This, the papers that copied the letter of Burr did not copy, thinking it well enough to let their readers have but one side of the story. In the *Tribune* of Saturday last, is the substance of a letter from the Fox sisters, giving the most positive denial of all the charges made against them by Mrs. Culver. Each of the sisters contradict Mrs. Culver’s story in all its various parts, and repel her implications by implications equally serious. They and she are (by marriage) very distant relatives, but appear to have long been at variance. Mrs. Fish deals more especially with the averment of Mrs. Culver, that Catherine Fox once confessed to her that the mysterious sounds heard in her own (the Culvers’) house had been made by Mr. John Fox, father of the Fox sisters; to which Mrs. Fish replies:

“I pity her; she stands condemned in the sight of heaven, for thus shamefully slandering an innocent old man that never harmed her. About ten years ago, a scale of hot iron flew in his right eye and deprived him of the sight of that eye. He can see with the left eye, but not sufficiently to venture out after night alone, from the house to the barn. He lives a mile and a half from Mr. Culver’s (Norman’s Father). Part of the road is laid out through a swamp, and most of the time is very muddy.

“My father is sixty-three years of age,³² a man who was never known to meddle with other people’s business; strictly religious; who, instead of traversing the uneven ground which lies between him and Mr. Culver, at midnight, to practice deception upon the family, is silently praying to Heaven to protect his injured children.”

³¹ *The Spirit World*, Saturday November 1st, 1851 pages 175-176.

³² John Fox died in January 1865, aged 76; later in August his wife Margaret died of typhoid fever. See:—*Talking to the Dead*, by Barbara Weisberg page 209. For book details see the end of this issue:—*Some books we have reviewed*.

As to the blindness of Mr. Fox, and the statements of the distance and the road between the residences of the two families, *we know it to be true.*

Mrs Fish states that the persons who have certified that Mrs. Betsey Culver is a woman of truth and character, nearly all live several miles from her, and that her near neighbors either were not asked or would not consent to sign any such certificate. And in answer to the averment that Catherine had confessed that the mysterious sounds heard in the dwelling of the Culvers were made by Mr. John D. Fox, she gives the following certificate from one of the Culver family:

“*Arcadia, Saturday, Oct. 4, 1851.*

I feel it my duty to state to the public that I *know* the sounds which have been heard in my father’s house (where I also reside,) were not made by John D. Fox.

I positively say that owing to the peculiar circumstance, at different times, when the sounds were heard, *I know* there was no possibility of his or any of his family, making the sounds.

CHAUNCET CULVER.”³³

We make these statements in justice to the Fox family, and ask the Burrites, here and elsewhere, to dispose of the certificate of Mr. Culver as they may. He can neither be biologized or bribed by C. C. Burr, and cannot be moulded to his purposes.

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³³ We can note there is a Miss Culver, in the signed statement of Elizabeth Fox (12/04/1848) this is followed by:—“I was present to-day, at the time Mrs. Elizabeth Fox has spoken of as having heard these rappings, and I heard the same sounds in answer to the questions as she has stated. I have never been there before to hear the noise since the excitement first commenced. April 12th, 1848. (Signed.) VERNELIA CULVER.” See *Psypioneer:—A report of the Mysterious Noises Heard in the house of Mr. John D. Fox, in Hydesville, Arcadia, Wayne County,.....*, by E.E. Lewis 1848:— http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP12.pdf

[**Introductory Note by LP:**—In the previous issue, Mr South (p.245) referred to the visit by Stainton Moses to Lord Tennyson. The poet passed away only a few weeks after the medium, and Paul Gaunt noticed the following comments.]

TENNYSON

LIGHT:—³⁴

Just as the leaves are beginning to redden at Aldworth, as the October wind rushes up the valley, the spirit of Tennyson has passed away. Something has gone from us, that has been with us, most of us, for all our lives. No more will come of that pure music which delighted our youth, no more of that lofty imagining which purified our maturer age. Tennyson is dead.

There are spiritual men who are not professed Spiritualists, as there are Spiritualists who are not spiritual men. Tennyson was a spiritual man, and even if he did not publicly profess a belief in Spiritualism, his interest in it was great, and one of the most pleasant acts of his later life was to desire and receive a visit a few years ago from Mr. Stainton Moses, to whom he gave his autographically signed portrait.

But that he was a spiritual man is evident right through his poetry. No invidious comparisons need be made between his work and that of some where beauty of form, and of form alone, is predominant, whose pleasing jingle charms the ear, while the under-meaning, if any, is not easily found. That Tennyson was the singer of singers is seen at once in the outburst of small echoes that come from all quarters in the public Press.

How truly Tennyson saw beyond the veil is evident continually. In “Aylmer’s Field,” in a passage of surpassing beauty, he writes thus:

Star to star vibrates light; may soul to soul
Strike thro’ a finer element of her own?
So, from afar, touch us at once! or why
That night, that moment when she named his name,
Did the keen shriek “Yes, love, yes, Edith, yes”—
Shrill, till the comrade of-his chamber woke,
And came upon him half-arisen from sleep,
With a weird, bright eye, sweating and trembling—
His hair, as it were, crackling into flames,
His body half flung forward in pursuit,
And his long arms stretch’d as to grasp a flyer,
Nor knew he wherefore he had made the cry.

... Continues with more poems.

³⁴ *Light*, October 15, 1982 page 498.

The article continues:

TENNYSON AND SPIRITUALISM

Some of the papers are exercising themselves about the laureate and his interest in the Unseen, as witness the following. Says the "Morning Leader":—

Was Lord Tennyson a Spiritualist? Many of those who read his "Demeter" volume, especially its concluding poem, "Crossing the Bar," thought that this must be the case; and one such reader wrote an article on the internal evidence furnished by the book. The Rev. Stainton Moses, the late Editor of "LIGHT," to whom he forwarded it, begged him not to publish the article. He himself, he said, had recently been staying with Lord Tennyson, and had brought the subject of modern Spiritualism before him, with the result that the Laureate was "converted," but did not wish the fact to be made public. Now that both of those concerned are dead there seems no reason for reserve. The writer of the article at once withdrew it in deference to the editor's desire. Mr. Stainton Moses was an intelligent man, formerly one of the masters at University College School, and died only a few weeks ago.

And the "Evening News":—

It is not at all improbable that a revelation of what may be called the inner life of Lord Tennyson, which sooner or later must be made, will yield some curious evidence of his inquiries into the truth of the higher cult of Spiritualism. For the lower—the trafficking in materialistic displays at sensational séances—he had a wholesome contempt. The late Elizabeth Barrett Browning had, it is now known, extraordinary sympathy with the work of the Howitts, and with that of other investigators in the same field, past and present. There is a letter of hers extant which shows how intensely at variance she and her husband were with regard to the pretensions of the more intellectual of the Spiritists. Some years ago Lord Tennyson, not then a peer, showed extraordinary interest in the Spiritualistic movement. On the occasion of his meeting with a well-known poet, who was a declared believer in and preacher of the occult doctrine, nearly the whole of their conversation, which, by-the-way, took place in the Laureate's bed-room, he being at the time temporarily indisposed, took the shape of a grave discussion of the genuineness of certain phenomena which were then matters of public comment. Ever since the time in question the Spiritualists, in speech and in prints, have, without intermission, claimed Lord Tennyson as one of their order. And it is a singular matter of fact, to be taken, of course, for just what it is worth, that that claim has never once been disputed.

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The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations in England

Catherine (Kate) Elizabeth Wood 1854-1884

Continued:

Catherine (Kate) Wood's career as a physical medium was severely tested primarily by the committees at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and later at Belper, Derbyshire. In November 1873, at the age of 19, Kate was engaged as a paid medium by the Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society (NSES) where she remained to around mid 1876. Becoming independent of the Society she did not sever her links with Newcastle. Her early years at NSES have been covered in *Psypioneer* in our July issue.³⁵ Later Kate was sitting for materialisations in the light, often sitting outside the materialisation cabinet, making herself and the forms visible to the sitters.

These were witnessed by numerous well respected Spiritualists, like Mr. H.A. Kersey and Mr. John Tyerman:

SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENTAL SEANCE.

*Some Reminiscences:—*³⁶

“This morning, Oct. 20, [1878] I had the pleasure of witnessing some very convincing form manifestations through the medial power of Miss C. E. Wood, at the Newcastle society's rooms. I will spare unnecessary detail, and shortly say that the cabinet, which consisted of a curtain suspended across the corner of the room, was inspected by myself and others, both previous to and after the seance. The medium sat outside of the cabinet in full view of all the sitters, numbering nineteen, the whole of the time, and was never once out of their sight. Three forms successively appeared, the first purporting to be a woman, who, after several efforts, walked out of the cabinet and passed around the medium, and re-entered the cabinet on the other side of her. At the solicitation of the sitters she repeated this. The next form purported to be a child, who came out of the cabinet, and succeeded in getting about two feet clear of the medium, but could not get around her. The last form was a large one, and purported to be that of a man, but did not succeed in getting far out.

³⁵ See *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.7:— *Miss Wood's Mediumship* by T. P. Barkas, F.G.S., Newcastle-on-Tyne, pages 229-232:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.7July2011.pdf>

³⁶ *Some Reminiscences An Account of Startling Spiritual Manifestations* by Alfred Smedley published by Light, London, and British Lyceum Union Depot, Dewsbury, Yorkshire, 1900. The book is made up of various reports these two quotes were taken from *Medium and Daybreak*, Oct. 25, 1878 and *Medium and Daybreak*, April 4, 1879 respectively.

“The only improvement I could have wished was for the light to have been stronger; but as it was I could see all the sitters and the medium distinctly. ‘Pocka’ controlled and spoke through the medium whilst the last two forms were out. Now the value of this to me, Sir, is that I never lost sight of the medium from first to last, and I am certain none of the sitters left their seats and went into the cabinet.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

“Newcastle-on Tyne.

“H. A. Kersey.³⁷

On Sunday March 16, 1879, Mr. John Tyerman,³⁸ of Australia was present:

“The morning I was there Miss Wood sat outside of the curtains, which formed a sort of cabinet, and was visible to all present; and besides being in sight, she kept speaking, under control, every minute or two, and especially when any form appeared or other manifestation was taking place, so that there could be no doubt as to her position. A materialised form appeared several times, and once moved slowly from one side of the curtain, around the medium, and in at the opposite side. I never before saw a form and the medium at the same time so distinctly. And while the form and the medium were both visible outside the curtain, a bell was rung, chairs were moved about, and other things were done inside the curtains, which all present heard. I then held a walking-stick inside the curtains, and it was taken out of my hand. A white pocket-handkerchief was laid on a chair just outside the curtains, and it was taken up on one end of the stick. It was next tied to the stick, and was then thrust out at the openings of the curtains, and waved repeatedly as a flag. The form finally came outside the curtains—the medium being outside all the time, bear in mind—and handed me the extemporised flag, which I took from it. After a few other things were done, the seance terminated.

When the sitting was over, the curtains were thrown back, and the keenest sceptic would have found nothing but plain solid walls and floor—nothing to facilitate trickery by confederates. Besides, Mr. Mould, Mr. Kersey, Mr. Burnside, and other gentlemen who were present, had the whole conditions of

³⁷ In 1880 Kersey was Hon. Secretary of the ‘Newcastle Spiritual Evidence Society’, we have previously published the imprisonment of the medium Mr. F.O. Matthews see *Psypioneer* Volume 2, No.9:—*Rogues and Vagabonds*, pages 55-62:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.9September06.pdf> The Newcastle Society, circulated a petition across England and Scotland and contained 2,110 signatures, which was sent to the Home Secretary. The full report will be in:—*The Law Against Mediumship:—Vagrancy Act, 1824 – Witchcraft Act, 1735*, when completed. The *Lyceum Manual* for use in Progressive Lyceums first published in 1887, compiled by Emma Hardinge Britten, Alfred Kitson and H.A. Kersey. The story of the *Lyceum Manual* is told in *Psypioneer* Volume 7, No.2:— *Autobiographical Sketch of Alfred Kitson*, pages 55-62:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.2February2011.pdf> Later Kersey was involved with the early, ‘Spiritualists’ National Federation,’ (foundations of the S.N.U.) for example in 1892, he was on the Publishing Committee e.g., *New Federation hymn-book*.

³⁸ See *Psypioneer* Volume 3, No. 5:—*The Harbinger of Light—Death of Mr. John Tyerman*, pages 112-113:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.5May07.pdf>

their own arranging, and as they have no personal ends to serve, but are simply trying to get at genuine facts, the idea of imposture is, in view of all the facts of the case, utterly impossible.”

Kate Wood’s main control/guide was a young child named Pocahontas. The child was often referred to as, “Pocha”, “Pocka,” or “Pocky.” Pocahontas claimed to be of Native American birth and described as being around three feet in height with a dark brown or black face. It was a regular occurrence for her to walk around the seance room, climbing and sitting on the laps of sitters, sometimes kissing and cuddling, or just sitting and chatting. Two further controls/guides reported at Kate’s séances were “Benny” a large well made man complete with dark beard and whiskers, speaking with a strong Scottish accent. The second introduced as “Maggie,” she appeared robed from head to foot in long flowing white garments, and described as being slender in build.

In January 1877 Kate Wood’s travelled to Belper, Derbyshire. 2003 I wrote in *The Ark Review*:—³⁹

“Mr Adshead,⁴⁰ a gentleman of wealth, had sent for Kate for the purpose of conducting experimental seances under strict test conditions. He invited fellow researcher, Alfred Smedley⁴¹ to join him with the experiments, and when enquired of as to which test conditions he would propose as satisfactory, Mr Smedley suggested the medium sit in a wire cage, further covered with wire netting and the doors be fastened with screws from the outside.

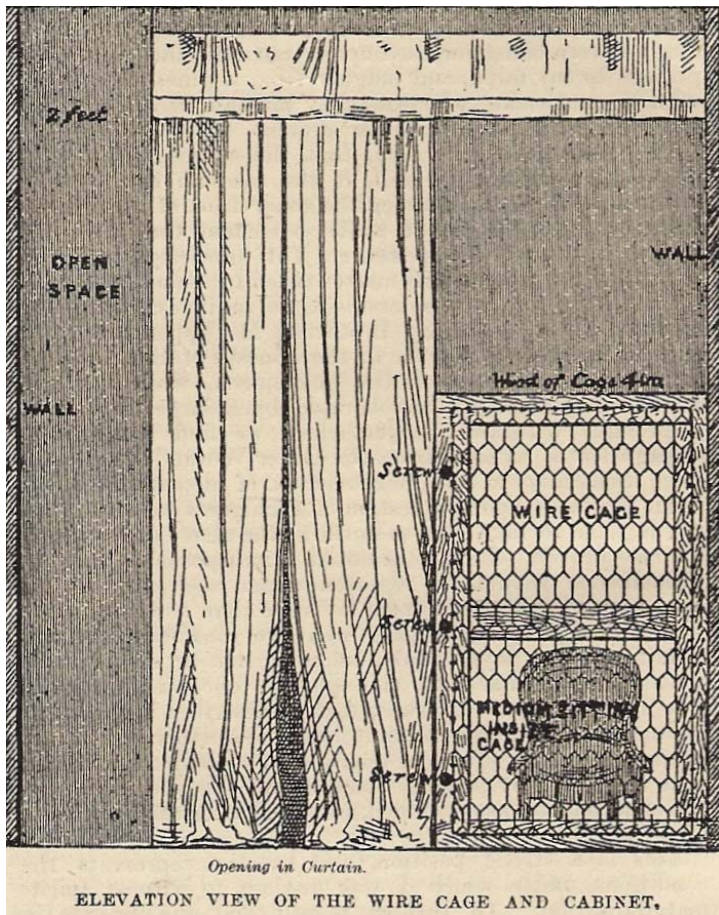
“Mr Smedley was eager to witness spirit manifestations under controlled conditions and would appear to have adopted the cage idea from Colonel Olcott, who had conducted similar controlled experiments with the Eddy Brothers, where William Eddy was secured inside a bolted cabinet. These test experiences were published under the title of *People From the Other World*, in

³⁹ *The Ark Review*, journal of the Noah’s Ark Society, issue 130 May/June 2003:—*The Mediumship of Catherine Wood*, pages 5-18.

⁴⁰ We can note in *Psypioneer* Volume 4, No.11:—*The Origins of LIGHT*, pages 276-281:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.11November08.pdf> that Mr. W.P. Adshead was a director of, “The Eclectic Publishing Company, Limited”

⁴¹ Mr. Alfred Smedley was later involved with the ‘Spiritualists’ National Federation’, and party to the discussions with regards to the Deed Poll (obtain legal status) which were again discussed at the 9th, SNF Conference at Keighley 1898. Incidentally, it was also the Heber-street Spiritual Temple, Keighley, who celebrated their 45th Anniversary, in conjunction with the National Conference, the birthplace of English Modern Spiritualism. Previously in 1890 at the first Conference, Emma Hardinge Britten had given six statements/doctrines, these eventually became the Seven Principles of the S.N.U., in 1902 (some changes were made). Since these were initially given little attention to these was given, but at the above Conference:—“*Mr. Smedley brought forward, on behalf of the Belper Society, the proposition to incorporate in the first sentence as the declaration of principles the summary that Spiritualists had no creed, but believe in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, personal responsibility, and endless progression.*” Taken from *The Two Worlds*, Friday, July 8, 1898. [I cannot be 100% sure this was Alfred, as other members of the family were also involved in the National Federation, but feel confident this is in fact correct Ed.]

1875 where Olcott reported, “in my opinion it is indispensable that the phenomena should be repeated under such strict conditions as to leave no room for more than one opinion.”



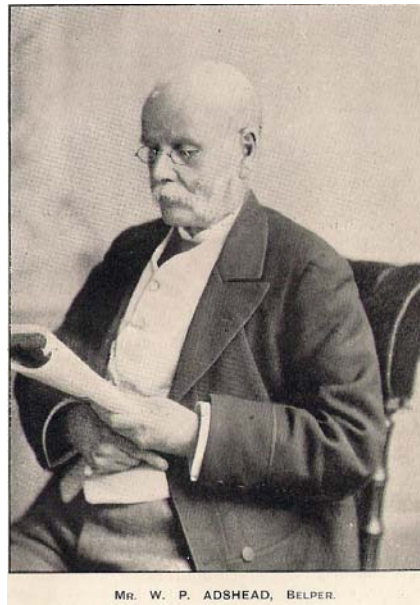
ELEVATION VIEW OF THE WIRE CAGE AND CABINET, both cage and cabinet were under the complete supervision of all present.”

“Kate agreed in writing to the proposed stringent conditions and so Mr Henry Wigley set about constructing the cage ready for her pending visit following her agreement to give a series of seances whilst detained within the cage.”

“The construction⁴² was large enough to contain only an easy chair for its occupant and when placed into position it occupied two sides against a solid wall in which there were no windows or breaks of any kind. At the side of the cage curtains were hung to form a cabinet and when drawn across the cage, materialised forms could walk out and in all cases,

⁴² *Some Reminiscences ...*, pages 71-72:—“Four strong wooden frames were prepared, a solid wooden bottom, and a frame for the top. These frames which were six feet high, and four feet wide, were covered with galvanised wire, two inches mesh, which was fastened on by staples which were driven through from the outside, after which, the frames, the top, and bottom were put together by having screws driven in from the outside. The door which faced the sitters was hung upon hinges, and so made that when the medium went inside it would be secured with screws. It will thus be seen that anyone placed inside was powerless to tamper with the screws, as they could only be reached from the outside, whilst the wire netting could only be removed by having the staples drawn from the outside, and could not possibly be refastened by anyone inside. When the cage was placed in the position it was to occupy, it was found that two sides stood close against a solid wall in which there was not a flaw; one side of the cabinet was formed by another side of the cage ; whilst the front was the door, which was at all times in full view of the sitters. The curtains which were to form the cabinet were then hung, entirely covering the front of the cage, and on the completion of the whole, the most severely exacting were compelled to admit that if phenomena were obtained under such a test, there could be but one opinion as to their production.”

Kate agreed to six séances (although there were seven) and arrived on Monday January 29th, 1877 accompanied by Miss Coltman,⁴³ the series of séances commenced on the same day the weeks séances were an overall success: Monday was a failure, Tuesday Kate sat behind the curtain, restrained (see foot note 10), materialisation occurred, Wednesday Kate sat in the cage, however, the cage door was open six inches, and a table placed against it Mr. Adshead sat against the table. Kate was restrained as the Tuesday séance, materialisation occurred.



Thursday February 1st, Success:—⁴⁴

Precisely at seven o'clock on Thursday evening, February 1st, our circle met, For the most part it was composed as before; the fresh elements introduced, as the event proved, were not in any sense prejudicial.

After laying aside her walking jacket, and throwing her shawl round her shoulders, Miss Wood entered the cage, was bound and sealed in her chair, as before,⁴⁵ after which the cage door was screwed up.

⁴³ *Some Reminiscences* ..., page 72:—"On Monday, January 29th, Miss Wood arrived in Belper, accompanied by Miss Coltman, a young lady whose presence we were told would be an advantage to our seances. Under the circumstances we would rather Miss Wood had come alone, but we did not object to the presence of her companion, feeling quite confident that, in conducting the experiments on which we were about to enter, we could hold our own; indeed, after the first night it was discovered that Miss Coltman was not in any sense a factor in the problems awaiting solution.

She sang for us very sweetly, and we were all pleased to look upon her happy smiling face, but beyond contributing thus to our enjoyment, her share in anything that was done was *nil*; for when, as a precautionary measure, she was asked to occupy a seat far removed from the cage and cabinet, she instantly complied, and there remained during the whole of the seance. I mention this because I have been asked if Miss Wood had not a companion, and if she did not in some way help in the production of phenomena."

⁴⁴ *Some Reminiscences* ..., pages 78-80.

⁴⁵ *Some Reminiscences* ..., pages 73-74 as described on the Tuesday séance:—"The back of the chair in its broadest part is twenty-one inches, and in its narrowest part sixteen inches. A piece of broad tape was stitched round the narrowest part of the chair-back, the stitching covered with wax and impressed with my seal; the remaining portion of the same piece of tape was carried down to the floor, to which it was nailed, the nail being covered with wax and sealed. Tape was then stitched round the wrists of the medium, and these in turn were stitched to the tape which went round the chair, care being taken to place the hands of the medium at such a distance from each other that, supposing the stitches had been severed by any means, the hands could not have been mutually helpful in placing matters as they were. Thus conditioned, the medium was thoroughly secured; and while we felt that phenomena obtained under such a test would be exceedingly difficult to account for on any sceptical theory, we were agreed to accept any manifestations which might occur as simply preparatory to those which we hoped would be given under conditions more severe."

An examination of the cabinet proved there was nothing there but the bare floor and the curtains hung round.

The medium was soon controlled by "Pocks," who informed us the conditions were good. More than an hour was spent in the usual way, that is, in doing whatever would best serve to produce and sustain a harmonious atmosphere. We were then told to lower the light, join hands, and sing—"Pocks" adding "Benny peaks; him tink him able terialise with cage door fast." This information of course we were delighted to receive. Nor had we long to wait, for "Pocka," addressing a young lady in the circle, said, "Benny peaks; him coming out, and him going kiss ou, and him say, ou feel him whiskers wet." We were then told to sing again. While we were doing so the curtains divided, and a white robed form was seen behind. In anticipation, I drew a long breath, for, judging from the position which I occupied, I felt quite confident that the test was complete, and that the phenomenon of materialisation had been obtained under our own severe conditions. Much quicker than on the former occasion the form stepped from behind the curtains. The upper portion of the robe was thrown back so that the face, notably the dark beard and whiskers,



MR. ALFRED SMEDLEY, BELPER.

were distinctly seen. With a firmer step and swifter motion than we had yet seen manifested, the form walked across the floor towards the chair on which the young lady alluded to above sat, and gave her the promised kiss.

I addressed the spirit as "Benny," asking him to shake hands with me, which he did. Mr. A. Smedley and others were also thus favoured, Mr. Smedley remarking that "Benny" gave him a grip which made him wince. I handed him a two-foot rule which lay on the table, with this he proceeded to tap some of the sitters on the head; then, taking a bundle of small cords from the table, he laid the scourge right lustily on the shoulders of a young gentleman who had asked to be so treated.

The large musical box of which I have spoken, weighing 35 lbs., had been placed on the floor, close to the curtain; this he wound up with amazing celerity and set it going. After it had played a few tunes, he picked it up without any apparent difficulty, and carried it behind the curtains; returning again, he walked out towards the sitters forming the first circle, taking the hands of several, and then, to prove he was not such "stuff as dreams are made of," he jumped about, causing the floor most sensibly to shake.

After "Benny" retired, "Pocka" making an effort, managed for a moment to show herself between the curtains, and had then to relinquish the attempt, not having power to do more. As I felt certain would be the case, we found the cage

door screwed up, and the medium inside entranced, the tapes uncut, and the seals unbroken.

It is therefore a fair question to ask, Whence came the forms on which we had looked, which our own hands had handled, and which, so far as our senses would enable us to judge, had all the physical attributes of our common humanity?

I do not put the case too strongly when I say, if it was not the medium—and who will dare to say or undertake to prove it was—it could not under the circumstances, by any conceivable possibility, have been a human being, or in other words an aid or confederate.”

The Friday séance was as Wednesday, form materialisations—Maggie and Pocka, Saturday was another success with the cage secured and Kate restrained within it, and finally on Sunday morning, again similar to Wednesday’s sitting.

An account of these stringent tests was published in pamphlet form by James Burns in London 1879 and authored by Mr W P Adshead of Belper, entitled, “Miss Wood in Derbyshire, a Series of Experimental Seances.” Some of the account appeared, published in *Medium and Daybreak*, prior to the pamphlet’s publication. All the above accounts are taken from:—*Some Reminiscences. An Account of Startling Spiritual Manifestations* by Alfred Smedley, published by *LIGHT*, London, and British Lyceum Union Depot, Dewsbury, Yorkshire, 1900.

Adshead and Smedley jointly put forward a prize sum 500 guineas to any person, who under similar test conditions as those imposed on Kate Woods, could produce the same kind of phenomena as she had. A more detailed report can be read in Emma Hardinge Britten’s *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, Britten stated:—“*Miss Woods felt no degradation in submitting to the tests imposed, nor did they spoil or even interfere with the manifestation, numerous attestations to that effect being given and signed by the parties who attended the seances.*” The prize remained unclaimed.

After these experimental séances Kate Wood gave some materialisation séances at Derby, and decided to prolong her visit at Belper returning on Tuesday, February 13th. New challenges would be set and Kate agreed: (1)—for the spirit to materialise inside the cabinet and come out whilst the medium sat in circle; (2)—for the spirit to materialise outside the cabinet while the medium sat inside; (3)—to obtain moulds of spirit hands or feet while the medium was detained inside the screwed up cage. Severe as the tests were, Kate said of them:—“Your conditions are so good I think it is quite possible you may succeed”. We will detail these in the next issue, which includes dematerialisation in full view of the circle.

Stainton Moses in an article *Form Manifestations*,⁴⁶ which we have not yet published, Moses remarks on Adshead:

What proof ought we to consider final? Nothing, as it seems to me, short of a clear view of medium and form at the same time, in light sufficient for careful observation, and on repeated occasions. I dwell on the latter point, for I find that reiterated evidence is necessary to bring home to the mind so stupendous a fact as this. This proof has been obtained by fortunate individuals in some cases: and on them I confess my faith rests. I have not been able to secure personal proof, though I have had evidence which makes very strongly for conviction. Among the clearest cases I would instance the experiments' of Mr. Adshead with Miss Wood, of Mr. Barkas at Newcastle, ...”

—§—

Due to space Evan Powell will conclude in the next issue

SOME BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

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

An Extraordinary Journey:—The Memoirs of a Physical Medium, by Stewart Alexander, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England, 2010. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9557050-6-9., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 294-296:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

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

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

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

Mrs Miller’s Gift’ - a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library, by Gerald O’Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback

⁴⁶ *The Spiritualist*, May 18, 1877 pages 232-233

ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0., available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1-4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

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

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

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

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

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Paul J. Gaunt

