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WILLIAM HOWITT

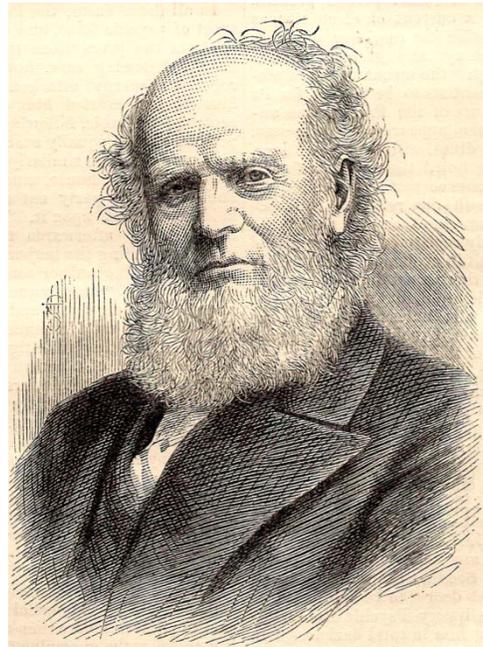
December 18th 1792 – March 3rd 1879

William Howitt is mentioned later in this issue in the article, *The Building of the Spiritualists' National Union*. He was well-known as a Christian Spiritualist, and as a constant contributor to the *Spiritual Magazine*, which commenced in January 1860. During the first thirteen years under its original management, (William Wilkinson & Thomas Shorter) Howitt contributed over a hundred articles. A series of papers he ran was titled *Gleanings from the Cornfields of Spiritualism* and considered one of his most important contributions. Howitt's first articles on spiritual manifestations were published in 1858, in the pages of the *British Spiritual Telegraph*:¹

WILLIAM HOWITT

Spiritual Notes:—²

FOR the portrait of WILLIAM HOWITT, which we give in the present number of SPIRITUAL NOTES, we are indebted to the courtesy of the Proprietors of the *Illustrated London News*. We have already noticed Mr. Howitt's important services to the cause of Spiritualism, but have pleasure in adding the following testimony to the nobility of his character from Mr. D. D. Home,³ who had been on terms of the closest intimacy with him for many years. Mr. Home says:—



“We have a departure from earth-life to regret in the person of William Howitt. He was one of our true Spiritualists, ever seeking to separate the true from the false. I quite rejoice in the glorious welcome he will have in Spirit-land, where he stands awaiting the

¹*Yorkshire Spirituu1 Telegraph*, published at Keighley, in Yorkshire, at the expense of Mr. Weatherhead, a grocer, and edited by his shopman, Mr. Benjamin Morell, who conducted it with much ability from 1855 to 1860. After the publication of one volume it assumed the title of the *British Spiritual Telegraph*, and contained a great mass of valuable matter. It ceased on the appearance of the *Spiritual Magazine*, and it contained contributions from Dr. Garth Wilkinson, Dr. Ashburner, the late Mr. Elihu Rich, Mr. Thos. Shorter, etc.) “Beside the support of this journal, Mr. Weatherhead built a Spiritual Lyceum. Mr. Weatherhead lived, not only a staunch Spiritualist, but as a Temperance and Dietetic Reformer, till 1875, when he died at the age of seventy-three—a man who, in a remote corner, had rendered most essential services to truth and progress.”—William Howitt. Whosoever shall undertake the important task of writing the history of the rise in England of the Spiritual movement, will find in the volumes, now all but forgotten and rare, of the *Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph*, a mine of curious and highly valuable information. The memory of earnest workers in the cause is so speedily overgrown by new labours and new names, that it is necessary an “Old Mortality” should ever and anon appear to piously restore their epitaphs. Taken from “William Howitt and his Work for Spiritualism,” a biographical sketch by his daughter Anna Mary Howitt Watts (page 294 “Spiritual Telegraph”).

² *Spiritual Notes*, Front Page Vol I. No. XI. May 1879 (price two pence)

³ See *Psypioneer* Volume, No. :—*The Late D. D. Home, Medium – Medium & Daybreak*, followed by *Mr. D. D. Home his last years, last illness, and burial – Mrs Home*, pages 239-251:—
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.9.September2010.pdf>

coming of the beloved and gentle Mary, his wife. What a wondrous and beautiful life theirs has been. By their own exertions, surrounded by the sunshine of earthly and heavenly love, not a shadow has ever rested or even passed over their fair fame. These are the types of what Spiritualists ought to be. I have had the honour and privilege knowing William and Mary Howitt the past twenty years. In 'Incidents of My Life,' 1st vol., you will read the touching obituary notice of my wife, written by Mary Howitt. Mr. Howitt was a great comfort to me when I was compiling 'Lights and Shadows.' "

Mr. Howitt was born at Heanor, in Derbyshire, in 1795,⁴ and had therefore reached the age of eighty-four. He was the son of a Derbyshire yeoman, who in middle life joined the Society of Friends. He was educated in local schools belonging to that body, and in 1823 married Miss Mary Botham, also a member of the Society of Friends. In 1837 the Howitts moved to Esher, but from 1840 to 1842 they lived at Heidelberg, in Germany, for the benefit of the education of their children. In 1852 Mr. Howitt, accompanied by his two sons and a few friends, made a voyage to Australia,⁵ where he remained upwards of two years. After his return to England he settled at West Hill, Highgate, where he remained until six or seven years ago, when he took up his residence abroad. Mr. Howitt's works were very numerous. Among the best are his "Boy's Country Life," "Homes and Haunts of the English Poets," "Rural Life of England," "The Northern Heights of London," "Illustrated History of England," and the "History of the Supernatural."⁶

He passed away at Rome on the 3rd of March last.

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The Medium and Daybreak,⁷ asked the question:

WAS WILLIAM HOWITT A SPIRITUALIST?

THERE is a severe war of words respecting Spiritualism going on in the *Ashton Reporter*, a column of small type being occupied with letters to the editor. One of them is written by a Methodist preacher, whose personalities are vehemently commented on by another correspondent. This preacher quotes from a sermon by Dr. Sexton, intended to show that the Spiritualists are wrong in having regarded William Howitt as one of them, the point being to make out our recent article to be the vehicle of falsehood. The Christianity of the most modern of Methodistical sects seems to be to make out every man to be unworthy and a liar. We may tell

⁴ The date used at the head of this article is 1892 as taken from "William Howitt and his Work for Spiritualism." A biographical sketch by his daughter Anna Mary Howitt Watts, was published in "Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation Justinus Kerner – William Howitt" by Mrs Howitt Watts, published by The Psychological Press Association, and E. W. Allen both of London, 1883.

⁵ See *Psympioneer* Volume 2, No.5:—*William Howitt in Australia – Mrs Howitt Watts*, pages 107-109:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/2.5%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

⁶ In two volumes published by Longman Green Longman Roberts & Green, London, & J. B. Lippincott & Co, Philadelphia, 1863.

⁷ *Medium and Daybreak*, May 23 1879, page 316.

Dr. Sexton, in the first place, that it is impossible to give the lie to his position, seeing that it is difficult to determine whether exception should be taken to his statements before he was a Spiritualist, when he was a Spiritualist, or since he has not been a Spiritualist; and to sectarians of all shades we would remark that Spiritualism is wholly incomprehensible to people of their tone of mind, because it is not a belief at all, a sectarian dogma, but a knowledge of facts respecting the spiritual nature of man, and the power of those who have departed this life to communicate with their friends remaining in the flesh.

Mr. Howitt never was in any way connected with Spiritualism as a popular movement in the strict sense, nor would his having withheld his name, or not being associated with that Movement, have made him less of a Spiritualist, for Spiritualism is purely a matter of personal experience; and to our knowledge there are thousands of Spiritualists labouring in their own personal sphere for the Cause, who are in no way associated with any external or conjoint effort to create a Movement. In short, William Howitt took exception to the conduct of many who call themselves Spiritualists, and who no doubt are Spiritualists, but conduct their efforts in such a way that William Howitt could not approve of their course of action. This is neither more nor less than what every other Spiritualist does; for there is possibly no one Spiritualist who can approve of the conduct of every other Spiritualist, and yet they are all Spiritualists; and in repudiating the opinions or actions of one another they do not thereby repudiate Spiritualism. Surely Dr. Sexton is not quite such a fool as to suppose that he was at all logical in the use which he made of Mr. Howitt's position as a Spiritualist; indeed Mr. Howitt's only connection with the Movement was to write books and contribute to periodical literature, especially to the *Spiritual Magazine*,⁸ which was conducted by his friends, and in sympathy with his views. When the magazine changed hands, and ultimately became extinct, he had no such outlet for his ideas, but he was none the less a Spiritualist on that account.

In conclusion we may say that we have received the cordial expressions of Mr. Howitt's own friends in respect to our article upon him, and surely they most know better than either Dr. Sexton or the unbridled-tongued preacher at the Peak. Our article on Wm. Howitt is evidence that Spiritualists may differ entirely on metaphysical, historical, or theological questions, and yet most heartily respect one another. To our sectarian countrymen we say: Go and do likewise.

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⁸ Free downloads of *The Spiritual Magazine*, and of other valuable spiritualistic material is available at: The International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals (IAPSOP) curated by Marc Demarest:—<http://www.iapsop.com/archive/index.html>



HELEN ALEXANDRINA DALLAS.

Helen Alexandria Dallas

1856-1944

Miss Dallas was a well-known respected British investigator into psychical research, Spiritualism, and related matters. She authored several books, and contributed a wealth of articles for the spiritualistic journals such as *Light*, *The Occult Review*, and *Psychic Science*. We have previously published in our February 2009 issue,⁹ her report of the physical medium Mrs. Everitt. The autobiographical article which follows contains some of her reminiscences up to the year 1927:

LEAVES FROM A PSYCHIC NOTE- BOOK

My Psychic Reminiscences:—¹⁰

My excuse for writing the following reminiscences is that I have been asked what led me to take up the study of Psychical Research, and I think my experiences may be helpful to other students who are at the outset of this line of research.

My first attempt to get information about the work of the Society for Psychical Research was not encouraging. I was then about twenty-three years of age. When I asked a friend if she knew anything about its work, she replied that she understood that the testimony to apparitions of the departed obtained by the Society was never *first-hand* testimony. This erroneous statement sufficed to check my interest at the time and for long after. Looking back on my life I can see that it was better so. I had not yet learned enough of other subjects to be able to cope with this study. It would have disturbed me, and in so far as it did so, it would have hindered my development, and my fulfilment of the many duties which claimed me. I am thankful that my way in that direction was temporarily blocked. In order to form a balanced estimate of the facts and problem involved in the term Psychical Research, it is important to have made careful studies along other lines.

About twelve years later, the Vicar of a neighbouring parish, who was a member of the S.P.R., gave me such an interesting account of the volume of Proceedings which he had just read, that I decided to become an Associate myself. That was about the year 1893.

⁹ *Psypioneer* Volume 5, No.2:—*Reminiscences of a remarkable medium – H. A. Dallas*, pages 59-63:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

¹⁰ *Leaves from a Psychic Note-Book*, by H. A. Dallas. Published by Rider & Co, London 1927.

I did not approach the subject, as many have done, in order to discover whether man survives bodily death. I valued the Christian faith deeply and I had, by careful study, taken trouble to assure myself that its historical basis is valid. Among many books which I read with close attention were Lord Balfour's "Foundations of Belief" and Dr. Salmon's work on the authenticity of the New Testament. I had travelled mentally along a difficult but educative way, which gradually led me out of the rather narrow (though, devout) theology which I had passively accepted in my girlhood, and placed "my feet in a large room", where reason and intuition could work in harmony, and the eternal truths which underlie many exude expressions of doctrine discover themselves. I owe much to such teachers as Frederick Robertson, F. Denison Maurice, and many others, whose writings led me to realize that the character of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is the standard by, which *all* theological doctrines must be tested, and that doctrines inconsistent with the Nature of God, as a Father of infinite love and wisdom, could not be true.

Having reached this standpoint I was ready for fresh discoveries; nevertheless, my introduction to Psychical Research was somewhat of a mental shock. It obliged me to make room in my mind for so many new facts and ideas; and at first I did not see how to accommodate these without displacing other facts and ideas which experience had taught me to value. The result was mental perplexity. I have since learned to realize that mental perplexity is often the herald of clearer vision, but at that time I was not assured of this. One of the first volumes of the Society for Psychical Research Proceedings which I studied was the issue in which F. W. H. Myers dealt with the mediumship of Stainton Moses.¹¹ The facts were startling to a novice to whom these supernormal phenomena were quite new. My diary shows how bewildering I found them to be. I was confronted with evidence which I recognized as thoroughly sound, but I was puzzled as to how to interpret the phenomena. I see from the comments which I jotted down that I tried to bring the new knowledge to the test of experience. A few lines will illustrate my meaning.

"Jan. 15th, 1894. I have been reading carefully Mr. Myers's papers on the Subliminal Consciousness. He says: The Self manifests through the organism but there is always some part of the Self unmanifested'. As I read, my mind asked, how can these things be? And I felt at the same time that thoughts were latent within me, but that I could not make the upper Self grasp them. It needed an effort, which I felt might not be successful, to think the *thought* out. This feeling is to me evidence of the truth of what he says. We are only aware of a certain part of ourselves. This seems to me essentially true. We may become aware of more by exercise perhaps. Often I have felt the presence of latent thought-felt that I must bring it somehow into the field of mental vision, but I feel that the instrument I am working with in order to do this may not be adequate to the undertaking."

I make this quotation to show how I tried to deal with new ideas. With regard to the physical phenomena which occurred with Stainton Moses and others, however, I had no personal experiences which could assist my interpretation. In 1860 a scientific man wrote of Pasteur's discoveries:

¹¹ Leslie Price has been republishing *The "Controls" of Stainton Moses – A. W. Trethewy*, see: *Psypioneer* issues 8.2 (Feb) – 8.7 (July) to be continued later this year.

“The world into which you wish to take us is really too fantastic”.¹²

I felt like that about these new facts.

At this stage I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Edward Bennett, who was then Secretary of the S. P. R. He lent me books from the library and helped me to select them. I remember standing before the bookcase in the office and saying: “Please do not give me anything to read which does not count in good evidence.” I felt that I must first discover what facts were actually so well attested as to be practically assured, before I could form any opinion about other asserted facts which might be true. I found it difficult enough to assimilate the former, and I did not want to get bewildered by the latter. Mr. Bennett forwarded one of my letters to Mr. F. W. H. Myers in which I mentioned a small experiment by which I had tried to test a psychometrist. This brought me a kind and encouraging letter from Mr. Myers. It was one of several in which he gave me good advice. I was particularly grateful for the considerate way in which he encouraged me; although my attempts to interpret the phenomena were obviously crude, he did not make me at once feel how worthless they were, but tactfully guided me into closer “attention to the canons of evidence”. I have always remembered his kindness gratefully at a time when a smaller mind might, with justice, have treated with indifference my efforts to understand. F. W. H. Myers was himself learning all the time, and therefore was ready to encourage others who were at the outset of this study; I ventured to write to him several times.

I was slow in gaining my convictions; I dreaded the mental shock of discovering that I had given credence too readily; I preferred to advance slowly rather than risk having to retrace my steps. I can see that this method of approach, with all its doubts and difficulties and prolonged uncertainty, has enabled me to understand and help others who have sought the same kind of assurance and have experienced similar perplexity, so I do not regret it; at the same time I recognize that this very cautious attitude involves some serious disadvantages. I look back upon lost opportunities and realize my slowness to apprehend the significance of experiences. With quicker insight I should have harvested richer gains, and I cannot but regret these losses, for which I have only myself to blame.

In 1898 I read Dr. Richard Hodgson’s report on Mrs. Piper (published that year).¹³ After the first reading I determined to put myself, so to speak, into a jury-box and re-read it, trying to form a fair estimate of each case, with the result that I was finally convinced that the Spiritualist hypothesis was the only one that could account for the bulk of the facts. This being so I joined the London Spiritualist Alliance,¹⁴ that I might reap the benefit of its meetings and library; and I received kind and valuable advice from time to time from Mr. Edmund Dawson Rogers, who was President of the Alliance.

¹² “Science and Scientists of the Nineteenth Century”, p. 241.

¹³ S.P.R. Proceedings. Part XXXIII.

¹⁴ We can note in this issue, *The Building of the Spiritualists’ National Union*, dealing with the history and foundations of the BNAS, precursor of London Spiritualist Alliance.

I remember the diffidence with which I ventured to send my first articles to “Light”, which I signed with initials only. I felt that my knowledge of the subject was not mature enough or wide enough to enable me to estimate the worth of the ideas I expressed in these early articles, and I disliked the notion that I might be offering worthless matter. Mr. Dawson Rogers, the editor, kindly encouraged me; and I told him, later, that this experience had taught me how to write. I became a frequent contributor from 1898 onwards. I still have some articles I contributed in 1899 and 1900 on the subject of the Resurrection of Christ and the empty tomb; and a reply by “V. C. Desertis”, i.e., Mr. Stanley De Brath,¹⁵ to a question I had raised on that subject.

In my diary I find the following note. “April 24, 1900. Mr. Rogers remarked that clairvoyants see emanations from both the physical and psychic organisms.” This started a train of thought which I will condense and simplify as follows:—

What do we mean by emanations from the psychic organism? I assume that we mean vibrations in the ether started in the psychic body (which is probably ethereal). My theory is that these vibrations might persist even after death – after the withdrawal from the physical organism of the ego and its psychic or spirit body, and that these vibrations, or emanations, act as an opposing force, preventing organic compounds (which are, of course, unstable) from immediately disintegrating, and that if these vibrations ceased suddenly the physical form would collapse. Also I suggest that spirits discarnate may be able voluntarily to attract to themselves the “bound ether” which is still vibrating in unison with their psychic organisms, and by so doing may hasten the disintegration of the physical body.

This theory which I find in my diary and which I have re-cast in clearer language, is perhaps inaccurately expressed; but the main idea is consistent with the vision of Andrew Jackson Davis in which he described the process he saw at a death-bed. He mentions a vital electrical element which by its presence in the corpse “prevented immediate decomposition”. It is also in harmony with the teaching of Kapila,¹⁶ an Eastern Seer, who is said to have originated the Sankhya system of philosophy some centuries before our era. This sage asserted clearly the existence of “*ākasha*” or ether, as an imponderable fluid filling all space; and he taught that the soul at death is invested with a subtle body called the “*linga*”, that it also has a grosser vehicle attached to it which he calls the “*linga sharira*”, and that this vehicle enables the soul as long as it exists in a material life to *sustain its connection with matter*, even after it has divested itself of its earthly body.¹⁷ This also seems to be in agreement with some passages in Sir Oliver Lodge’s book, “Ether and Reality”. He asks: “How do we ourselves act on matter? . . . What do we mean by contact?” His reply is that when we touch or move any object “we touch it only through the Ether. . . . I wish to make the hypothesis” he writes, “that it is the

¹⁵ *Psypioneer* Volume 8, No.3:—Stanley De Brath – Notes on Mr. Stanley De Brath’s Career *Psychic Science*, pages 101-106:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.3March2012.pdf>

¹⁶ Kapila:—<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapila>

¹⁷ My authority for this statement will be found in a note by Cockburn Thomson in his translation of the “Bhagavad Gita”.

Ether that is really animated, and that this animated Ether interacts with matter; I suggest that the true vehicle of life and mind is Ether and not matter at all.”

The Seeress of Prevoist also spoke of an instrument by which the soul could operate in the external world, and said that this substance accompanies the soul at death: “By the aid of this substance they can make themselves seen, heard, and felt by man; they can excite sounds in the atmosphere of earth.”¹⁸ As the spirit progresses it frees itself from this substance.

It seems worthwhile to compare these statements from different sources and to consider their import. In an article sent to “Light”, I said:

We know of one occurrence of unparalleled importance and far-reaching results in the history of Christendom in which such a sudden dissipation of a human organism seems to have taken place. . . . Perhaps the science of this plane correlated to the science of the other may yet solve that problem for us, and enable us to understand how, without contravening any laws of His Father’s Universe, but merely by adapting them . . . this Archetypal Man robbed death and the grave of their illusive terrors and revealed to His brethren their true life and destiny.

To these remarks Mr. De Brath replied at some length, pointing out that whether or not an opposing force exists which may hinder decomposition, can be determined by experiment alone. He added that it is “rash to assume that we know more than the merest fringe of the laws which connect matter and ether. It may well be that the phenomena of the first Easter morning are readily capable of explanation by the dissolution of the material into the ethereal”. I pursued this question further in a long article published fourteen years later (June 27th, 1914), and included in this volume.

In 1899 I had my first experience with a professional medium, Mrs. Bliss. I must have been a difficult sitter. She said my aura offered an opposing wall, and I understand, now, that it must have done so. I believed that communication from the other side was possible; but I did not feel at all sure that it was coming to me—I felt uncomfortable and incredulous. I had two sittings with her; re-reading my scanty notes I see that she was interesting and very correct in the statements she made, and I might have got much more if I had been more receptive.

On the first occasion she spoke of a male influence with me which she thought was my grandfather,¹⁹ and on the second occasion she gave a description which might well have been a description of him, and added that he would write through me. I now think it highly probable that my writings on religious subjects were influenced by him. Only on one other occasion was my grandfather mentioned by a medium I visited. Mr. Vango told me that he was interested in a lecture I was soon to give. I saw no particular reason why this lecture should interest him; I was met at the station by Miss Ward, who had arranged the lecture, and when driving to the lecture hall she told me that her father was my grandfather’s godson. I know that my grandfather would

¹⁸ “Guardian Spirits”, quoted in “From Matter to Spirit” by Mrs. de Morgan, p. 132.

¹⁹ His name was Rev. Alexander R. C. Dallas, for forty years Rector of Wonston, Hants.

be likely never to forget his godchildren, so I understood the appropriateness of the previous communication.

Among other things, Mrs. Bliss said I should write a book, and added, "five books". When she came out of trance I told her what she had said, and I remarked that this was unlikely. If I omit the translation of M. Delanne's book, which I published under the title "Evidence for a Future Life", and "The Nurseries of Heaven", to which I contributed a few pages only, her statement is correct: I have written five books. The two on the subjects of the Creed and the New Testament I wrote under a strong sense of obligation. The title of the first was, "The Victory that Overcometh". If it has been useful, as I am told it has, I owe this to my teachers and helpers in the Seen and the Unseen life. Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce read it in type and kindly commended it. The second book I wrote with more difficulty, "Gospel Records Interpreted by Human Experience". It deals more particularly with the bearing of *Psychical Studies* on the Gospels. Both these books are out of print.

Later, I published a series of articles in "Light" on, "Objections to Spiritualism". This series I wrote in response to the request of a friend whose objections I had tried to meet. It was subsequently published by the L.S.A., a second edition was issued by Bell & Sons, and an abbreviated third edition is to be published soon by the L.S.A. I have a kind letter from Dr. Richard Hodgson, in which he expresses his emphatic agreement with most of the contents of this book.

The most difficult bit of work I have had to do as an author is the little book "Mors Janua Vitæ?" The publisher has told me that the title greatly interfered with the sale, as the Latin words are not intelligible to everyone. It was difficult, because I attempted to present some of the complex evidence by which F. W. H. Myers sought to prove to his colleagues, still incarnate, not only that he survived bodily death but that he retained his memory of the literature he formerly loved and, in fact, that his faculties were intact. This complex evidence is known as "Cross-correspondence". I had to abbreviate the verbatim records in the volumes of the S.P.R. Proceedings and at the same time to convey as forcibly as possible the quality and cogency of the evidence of identity which these communications contained. When I read one particularly difficult chapter to a friend, whose opinion I greatly valued, I was disappointed to find that she found it hard to follow, and therefore dull. I was in despair, and thought I must give up the task altogether. But when I awoke next morning I remembered a sentence which I had heard clearly in a dream. It was this: "Do not hesitate or be discouraged about any work you have undertaken." I regarded this as a message, and resolved to re-write the chapter and persist in my attempt.

A few weeks later I joined a circle at a private house; we had some rather disjointed communications through table-tilting. The letters F. R. E. were spelt out twice, and when I subsequently asked the lady who was acting as medium to take a pencil, the following was written for me:—"We shall be with you in the work you are going to undertake . . . we want you to have more light." This was followed by M. Y. and a scrawl which was illegible. In my note-book I find this additional remark: "N.B.—Now, some hours later, I am surprised to recognize that this may be a message from Myers for me about the book concerning which I have been discouraged." The lady who acted as medium was a stranger to me; whether she knew that I was writing a book I cannot say, but she could not know

that I had been discouraged. It is quite possible that this was an attempt to cheer me in the work by which I was trying to make the evidence for the survival of Mr. Myers more widely known. This is one of a class of experiences which cannot be regarded as “evidential”, but which may be that which, taken at its face value, it seems to be. If, as we have good reason to believe, mental contact between those in the other life and in this life is frequent and natural, it is unreasonable to expect that to every wave of thought they will attach evidence of identity. When they are trying to prove identity, we may of course ask for, and expect, such evidence, but communication of mind with mind, if it is real intercourse, ought not to be trammelled *always* by the effort to meet the demands of doubting Thomases.

I was too often in that attitude for my own comfort and my own incredulity helps me to understand the doubts of others. Also it has helped me to realize that experiences which have been personally very convincing and very cheering to myself are not always suitable for passing on to others. There is a personal element—a personal touch, I might say—in some of these experiences which carry their own evidence and significance to one who participates in them, but which cannot have the same effect when recounted to another who is simply looking for proof, and for whom they were not originally intended. Having made the mistake of not realizing this several times, I have now learned to be more discriminating in the kind of episodes I speak of, and to keep for myself alone some intimate experiences which are not transferable.

The little book was published. Before it had been definitely accepted for publication I happened to have an interview with a medium (Nurse Graham) on May 11th, 1909. She mentioned someone called Robert, and said he was interested in my literary work; she referred to some work I “was doing”, and said the first step would be taken in July; she gave number 7 in this connection. My great grandfather was the author of several books; his name was Robert, and it is not unlikely that he would be interested in the literary work of his great-granddaughter. He was a man with unusually strong family affections. The letter which I received from Mr. Shirley definitely undertaking on behalf of Messrs. Rider & Sons to publish “*Mors Janua Vitæ?*”, was dated July 7th, 1909.

My fifth book, “*Across the Barrier*”, is a record of experiences with a gifted medium, the mother of a sweet child called Monica. I published the record because it seemed to me that some of it carried undeniable evidence of the supernormal, and, moreover, the evidence for real communication from those who have passed on was very strong. There were many other experiences which do not appear in this book; some of those which were too private for print were among the most personally convincing to me. I did not claim that the record was evidential throughout. I tried to make it as complete as I could whilst limiting myself in many ways. Others have had as remarkable experiences with this medium as I have. She has now passed out of her very tried and troubled life into happier conditions, in which I trust that her brave and loving spirit will find a satisfaction she never found in this life.

Before leaving the subject of my books I will refer to the book of prayers called “*Communion and Fellowship*”, which I compiled (by request). Having failed to find a publisher willing to bear the cost, I had put the MS aside, but the following circumstances led to its publication in 1921.

At an interview with Mrs. Osborne Leonard, Freda described someone to me with careful details and gave his initial W., adding that he would remove material limitations (in some way I could not comprehend). She then spoke of a new effort to help and a new book. Shortly after this I saw a request in "Light" for a prayer to be used for those who have died, and I wrote offering to lend my MS to anyone who applied for it. Among others I received a letter, signed Walter Jones,²⁰ from a gentleman who offered to bear the cost of publication and to take the risks. When I saw him I recognized that his appearance corresponded in detail to the description given to me by Mrs. Leonard a few weeks before. The book has justified the venture.

During the first decade of this century I attended sittings with materializing mediums and witnessed interesting physical phenomena, sometimes under excellent conditions. I also had many personal sittings with clairvoyants and obtained very satisfactory evidence. Particularly fruitful were my sittings with Mr. Otto von Bourg. In "Objections to Spiritualism Answered", I have given a detailed account of one excellent test I received through him at a time when I was specially seeking evidence that would exclude telepathy. I had many other interesting sittings with this gifted medium. On one occasion he said to me: "You doubt." I replied: "I am sorry—I do." He answered: "You cannot help it; I doubt when I go to other mediums. But presently you will be convinced; then you will do good." I have also had very good experiences with Miss Maccreadie, Miss Bacon, Mr. J. J. Vango, Mrs. Brittain, Mrs. Osborne Leonard,²¹ Mrs. Elliott (Miss V. Ortner), Mr. Peters,²² and others, and more recently I have had very valuable written communications through my friend Miss Bazett. The letter I received from a friend through her mediumship is the most striking of the kind that I have ever had. The appropriate allusions could only be appreciated by one who knew her as intimately as I did. Miss Bazett had never seen her and knew very little about her.

The War brought me into contact with many bereaved persons. At such a time one realized that any knowledge, and assurance concerning the life beyond which had been gained was a trust, to be used, if possible, as opportunity offered for the comfort of broken hearts. It was with this object that I wrote a little pamphlet called, "The Bridge of Death".

The knowledge and conviction which by that time I possessed had come to me in many ways—partly by personal experience, partly by study and partly by the work I undertook for twenty months as Secretary for the English edition of "Annales Psychiques".

²⁰Owing to an oversight when correcting the proof, this name is erroneously noted as a "pseudonym" in Proceedings Vol. XXXVI, p. 316.

²¹ *Psypioneer* Volume 8, No.3:—*Mrs. Osborne Leonard – Her life and Mediumship – By D. A. Nickelson, LIGHT, 1965 and The Mediumship of Mrs Osborne Leonard – Later Years: New Facts and Factors, by D. A. Nickelson, LIGHT, 1966, pages 118-129:—*<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.5.May2010.pdf>

²² Alfred Vout Peters, see *Psypioneer* Volume 4, No.2:—*Alfred Vout Peters – Paul J. Gaunt, pages 29-34:—*<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.2February08.pdf>
Psypioneer Volume 4, No.3:—*An English Medium in the Celtic twilight – Wendy E. Cousins, pages 54-60:—*<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.3March08.pdf>
Psypioneer Volume 4, No.4:—*Alfred Vout Peters 1867 – 1934 – final part, pages 80-84:—*<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.4April08.pdf>

The French edition, under the auspices of Professor Richet, was ably edited by M. Caesar de Vesme,²³ who I had the pleasure of meeting in Paris and introducing to the Professor. My task in connection with the English edition was not only to examine the proofs but also to translate many of the articles, and to write short notices of some of the books sent to the English office for review: I have since realized how much knowledge I gained in this way of the Psychical Research work on the Continent which I should not have had otherwise. It enabled me to help inquirers with firmer assurance and wider understanding, and I am very glad to have had the experience.

My first public lecture was delivered to the members of the L.S.A. about the year 1911. Up to that time I shrank very much from so formidable a task. Perhaps it will help beginners who are as disposed to be nervous as I was, if I say what helped me most to overcome self-conscious nervousness, It occurred to me shortly before I gave my lecture that, provided I honestly did the best I could, it did not really signify much whether my lecture was a failure or whether it was not. Of course, it would be a pity if the audience was disappointed, but the universe is too big to be affected by so small an incident. I looked at the stars and I said to myself: "If I fail it really does not matter. I will do my very best not to fail altogether, but if I do so, the result will not make any practical difference to the universe." Whether this was sound philosophy or not, I cannot say, but it enabled me to read my lecture without the nervous terrors which, on a previous occasion, when I had to make quite a short speech at a public meeting, had set my heart beating violently. After this I delivered many lectures, not without some nervousness but with growing confidence, and after a time I made notes only and talked to my audiences instead of reading a paper. The questions that followed often occupied a considerable time, and were perhaps the most useful part of the proceeding.

The work to which I have felt most urgently drawn is that of helping others to believe that those they think they have lost are not really out of reach. This has brought a rich reward, in so far as I have been able to direct them into channels which have revealed the truth to them. One vicar has repeatedly invited me to speak in his house; another arranged for me to address a gathering of clergy, with a rural dean in the chair. It is only right that I should mention this because the clergy are often blamed, sometimes with justice, for their indifference to this subject. On another occasion I was invited by the Rev. Dr. Cobb to speak in the parish room at St. Ethelburga's, Bishopsgate, on the subject of "The Resurrection in the Light of Psychical Research". The palmist "Cheiro" told me that I could speak in public long before I had either the inclination or the courage to do so.

I have never sought advice on material matters through mediums. On one occasion such advice was voluntarily offered and influenced my action. It came unsought and I weighed it as I would the advice of a friend on earth; as it seemed to me to be wise, I took it, and had no cause afterwards to regret having done so. On another occasion a medium, having shown that she had correctly sensed my conditions, offered advice which I at once recognized, as based on a misapprehension. The experience was valuable as an object-lesson. It was easy to perceive that although her insight was correct up to a certain point, her mind had involuntarily drawn a false conclusion from a true premise. This was obvious to me, but if it had not been so I might have been seriously misled. I am sure that it is not wise to take advice that comes in this way with

²³M. Caesar de Vesme:—<http://www.answers.com/topic/count-cesar-baudi-de-vesme>

blind acceptance. It should always be examined on its merits; we are not right if we surrender our judgement. It is better to make mistakes on our own responsibility and learn from them, than to let ourselves be led simply because we think we have had a message from the Other Side. Even if that be so, our unseen friends are not infallible, and the wisest of them would wish us to make our own decisions. On two other occasions unsought advice was given to me which may have, subconsciously, influenced my decision, although I was not aware that it did so.

On August 15th, 1903, I attended a circle at Mr. Von Bourg's flat at which the experiment was tried of each person writing a question on a piece of paper, folding it, and handing it to the medium to answer (unread). I wrote: "Will the publisher who now has my translation [M. Delanne's book, 'Evidence for a Future Life'] undertake to publish it?" When he took my paper he put it to his forehead and said: "Granny [his control] says, 'Will not!' Do you understand?" I replied, "Yes, unfortunately, I do." He then continued: "You will have a disappointment with this, for I feel as if I went down. It will come all right, but not as you expect. It will be in October, you will be able to put it off your mind. It will be all right." [This proved to be correct. The publisher's first letter led me to think that the MS would be returned, but it was off my mind by October, a satisfactory agreement having been made.] Mr. Von Bourg continued: "There will be a meeting of importance for you in about a month. [I think he connected this with my writing in some way.] It will be good for you. You will be going out of Town, but you must put off for a day or two on this account. You must accept it when it comes." I made a note of this on my return home and thought little more of it when I found that I did not have any meeting with the publisher, as I supposed the prediction applied to this. On September 13th, however, I added the following note in my book: "I have only to-day noted the fulfilment of a statement made to me on this occasion. A few days ago I had a note from Canon C—, a stranger to me, who had been reading, 'The Victory that Overcometh', saying he hoped to call and see me in October. [He was an old friend of my grandfather.²⁴] I replied that I had intended to leave London on the 6th September, but would postpone to the 9th in order to meet him. To-day I received his reply. . . . Only then did I recall what had been said by V. B. The meeting is being arranged just a month after he said this."

Something of importance did eventually ensue, for the Canon introduced me to a friend of his who had suffered a severe bereavement, and I was able to help him by leading him to study psychical works; it was "good for me", too, for I gained a lasting friendship. This experience is a good example of the confusion which may arise through the blending of impressions which refer to different episodes.

In 1913 I received an invitation to pay a visit in Holland which with reluctance I felt I must decline. It was posted on the 9th of October. On the 15th I received a note saying that a short message through little Monica's mother had come for me about the 10th; it was, "Don't go," The writer added, "we do not know what it means." It was *impossible* that the message could be understood by the senders. It confirmed my belief that I had made a wise decision.

As I write, the memory of many to whose friendship I owe so much crowds in upon me—men whose important work might well have excused them from attending to smaller claims have yet

²⁴ Already referred to in connection with my first experience with a medium.

found time to extend to me the privilege of their friendship and help in this difficult study; for the help and kindness I have received from them the only return I can make is that of constant gratitude and unflinching remembrance. This world offers (as Sir Oliver Lodge has said) rich opportunities for making friends. And in the larger life such contacts will, I hope and believe, abide and become a more extended fellowship in knowledge and sympathy and service under conditions beyond anything of which we can at present conceive.

What effect have my psychic studies had on my faith as a Christian? This is a question which may interest some readers.

I cannot give a full answer in a few words but I can affirm that these studies have greatly strengthened my belief in the New Testament as a faithful record of events that really happened. Of course, one must recognize that the writers were subject to the limitations of other fallible men and to the errors of memory to which even eye-witnesses are liable; but the so-called miracles of the Gospels are in general not more difficult to accept than many well-attested psychic phenomena which are of comparatively recent occurrence. More particularly I can now whole-heartedly accept at their face value those important records of the appearances of Christ after death. The modern critic's tendency to explain away incidents which lie at the foundation of the faith of Christendom, because they seem miraculous, seems to me a grievous error resulting from the fact that they will not examine the evidence for experiences alleged by Spiritualists, and that prejudice closes their minds to what may be called a new science or a new revelation, according to the viewpoint from which it is approached. I am profoundly thankful that these avenues to knowledge were opened to me, and that the main facts of the faith of my childhood have thus become more firmly established in my convictions. Particularly, these studies have confirmed a belief which I had arrived at many years before I knew anything of Spiritualism, namely, the belief that the resurrection of the body occurs at the hour of death, that it is then that the spirit's new body emerges, the husk of matter being left behind for ever. This idea, which dawned upon my mind in a moment of perplexed meditation more than forty years ago, has found abundant support in my study of psychical research and spiritualism. This research, moreover, has proved a valuable education, demanding the exercise of patient thought and impartial judgement, revealing a wider spiritual horizon, changing the aspect of life and death and involving an altered scale of values.

I have merely skimmed the surface of my reminiscences, and I have given no account of numerous séances at which I have witnessed various phases of physical phenomena, the most evidential being an experience in our own home with Mrs. Corner (*née* Florence Cook) during which a materialization occurred, visible to all present, by the light of the lamp which was burning all the time. What I saw myself was not, however, more convincing to me than the record which Sir William Crookes published of his wonderful experiences with the same medium. No one who reads that record with an open mind can doubt the reality of this phenomenon.

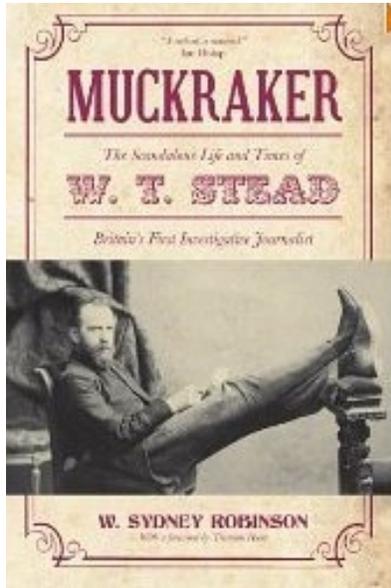
The intimate experiences which cannot be passed on to others, or scientifically proven, are often those which contain the most convincing and consoling facts, as anyone can testify who has been in contact with this subject for many years. Like other great subjects it should be approached reverently and with caution. There are pitfalls for the careless and unwary, but there are treasures for those who

seek prayerfully, provided they never cease to use their judgement and are willing to be guided by pioneers who have already blazed the trail.

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Notes by the Way

A NEW LOOK AT W. T. STEAD



When someone was a pioneer, we tend to feel positive about them, and may not like facing up to the bad side of their character. 2012, the centenary of the loss of the Titanic, and of W.T. Stead has brought many articles, including our own in the April issue by Edith Harper which began.²⁵

“Spiritualism’s long Roll of Honour contains no name more admirable than that of W. T. Stead—a pioneer, if ever there were one.”

It is instructive then to read a new account of Stead by a historian which puts him in a wider perspective. Here we do not reach Spiritualism until after 200 pages, and Robinson is not very interested in that side of Stead’s life.²⁶

Stead, born 1849, married Emma Lucy Wilson in 1873 (Robinson, p. 25) and neglect begins on the same page. This was not unusual in ambitious public men. Nor was Stead’s lifelong susceptibility to other women, which was to cause much suffering to Emma.

In 1952, Stead’s old colleague, J. W. Robertson Scott published *The Life and Death of a Newspaper* about the various editors of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, especially Stead. This included the shocking private diaries of Stead in which he did not hesitate to criticise his own personal conduct.

²⁵ Psypioneer Volume 8, No.4:—*W. T. Stead: Chief of the Old Brigade* - Edith K. Harper, *Julia’s Bureau: Points of interest noted* by Paul Gaunt, — *The W. T. Stead Bureau to Close, Light*, pages 111-122.
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.4April2012.pdf>

²⁶ *Muckraker: The Scandalous Life and Times of W. T. Stead* by W Sydney Robinson, 281 pp., £20.00, May, 2012 ISBN 978 1 84954 294 4. For a recent account of Stead’s psychic work, we can recommend Grace Eckley’s biography which we noted in Psypioneer April 2008:—*The most influential Spiritualist* – Leslie Price, pages 260-276:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.4April08.pdf>

Stead was one of the fathers of tabloid journalism, which in the UK was to become a monster. In pursuit of stories, he earned a reputation for untrustworthiness. It was widely believed that he often neither spoke nor wrote the truth.

Some of his campaigns were worthy, others were not. Where a campaign was justified, like that on the age of consent his methods caused even his allies to wince. Sometimes he would expose a villain, sometimes he would refrain. The power to choose went to his head.

Stead was in some respects a radical (on the equality of women for example) but the more he rose in society, the more he trimmed his sails, and became part of the privileged elite whom he attacked.

One of the most serious problems concerns judgement. Robinson concludes “If Stead had a fatal weakness, it was his unshakable belief in his own infallibility. Again and again, he staked his entire reputation on the vaguest hunches, dreams and assumptions, which often caused harm, even ruin, to innocent bystanders.” (p.256).

This is a fatal handicap in the psychic field, where one’s fallibility and the need to be aware of possibly making mistakes, go with the territory, and one reason why Stead does not have an entirely admirable name in the pioneer roll of honour.

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THE BUILDING OF THE SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Part Two:

In the last issue, we published one of the first structured conference speeches on an organised National Spiritualism in this country, given by James J. Morse at the 1873 Liverpool Conference. From this a “National Association of Spiritualists” was formed, but not without opposition and criticism.

Below is quoted from Geoffrey K. Nelson:—²⁷

“The conference, which lasted for three days, was attended by official and unofficial representatives from societies, and individual Spiritualists from the major towns in the country. Mr John Chapman of Liverpool argued ‘that organization was necessary for the welfare and further progress of Spiritualism, and order was necessary for great achievements’. ‘We should’, he said, ‘band ourselves together to give a wider spread to Spiritualism and its philosophy, but not to make them into a creed or formula’. He also thought that organization could be used to prevent or resist, ‘the legal persecution’, of Spiritualists. His arguments were supported by W. H. Harrison, editor of *The Spiritualist*, who also pointed out that a National organization could help the growth of the movement by providing aid and support for new local associations, or for those associations that were experiencing difficulties.

“The eloquence of the supporters of organization was successful in persuading the Conference of the need for a national body, and it adopted the proposal of J. J. Morse that the conference should form itself into a National Association. An executive council was elected and given the task of drawing up the rules and constitution of the new association.



James Johnson Morse

²⁷*Spiritualism and Society*, by Geoffrey K. Nelson. Published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1969. The second and third part of this book is a Doctoral thesis “The Organisation and Development of the Spiritualist Movement in Britain.” This book holds a wealth of information and statistics of British Spiritualism. But unfortunately, there are few references and material sources. The quote is taken from pages 104-105.

“Opposition to this move towards central organization came from some prominent Spiritualists. James Burns was a violent opponent, but many people felt that this was largely because he feared the effect of such a move on his business interests in the Spiritual Institute.²⁸ Opposition based on idealistic principles centred around the personality of W. Howitt, a well known and influential Spiritualist author of the day. Howitt objected to central organization as such, and repeated most of the old familiar objections. He suggested that there was no need for a national organization, since Spiritualism had grown extensively and was still growing without the aid of any such body. In the second place he argued that all organizations tended to become tyrannical and to repress individual thought. With particular regard to the National Association, he held that this body was ill-founded since the only authority for such an association would be derived from a mandate given as a result of a universal election by all Spiritualists. No such election had been held, he pointed out, and thus the ‘National Association’ had no legitimate authority. He raised no objections to local organizations, which he thought were indeed useful in the promotion of the movement.

“The editor of *The Spiritual Magazine*²⁹ was also opposed to attempts at central organization, but was more cautious and moderate in his criticisms of this particular attempt. He pointed out that ‘Hitherto all attempts at national organization whether in America or England have met little or no success, generally leading to a more complete disorganization, by bringing out more conspicuously the wide and fundamental differences on important subjects which divide spiritualists and which vitally affect their conceptions of the spirit and objects that should be aimed at in any movement for its more general diffusion’. He went on to point out that, ‘The new association hopes to escape the difficulty by avoiding theological discussion, disallowing collective responsibility for religious opinion or belief, but leaving its members and speakers free to express and advocate any views on the subject they may individually entertain’.

“The dispute between the supporters of Howitt and the members of the National Association was not only based on the question of organization but also on what Howitt and Enmore Jones, writing in *The Medium* and *The Christian Spiritualist*, interpreted as an attack on the Christian elements in Spiritualism. In 1874, the National Association published a ‘Declaration of Principles and Purposes’, which included the statement, ‘The Association, while cordially sympathizing with the teachings of Jesus Christ, will hold itself entirely aloof from all dogmatism or finalities, whether religious or philosophical,

²⁸ This reference does not give, or indicate the amount of involvement/work James (Jas) Burns did for these Conventions up until 1873, Nelson may well be using material from the *Spiritualist* which would not be generally supportive of Burns. When we return to the Conventions, we will publish both sides of the reports. For his “Spiritual Institute” see *Psypioneer* Volume 6, No.1:—*Spiritual Origin of The Spiritual Institution & The Medium and Daybreak* also includes:—*The founding of the Liverpool Psychological Society – The Spiritualist, & My first contribution to spiritual literature – James Burns*, pages 3-16: — <http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.1January2010.pdf>

²⁹ The *Spiritual Magazine* (1860-1877) was started in January 1860 under the editorship of Mr. William Wilkinson, its originator and proprietor, along with Mr. Thomas Shorter, better known at the time by his *nom-de-plume* of Thomas Brevior (a Latinized version of his name), as sub-editor. William Howitt and Benjamin Coleman were well-known contributors. Later editors in the final years were Dr. George Sexton, followed by J. Enmore Jones.

and will content itself with the establishment and elucidation of well attested facts, as the only basis on which any true religion or philosophy can be built up'. This statement angered Christian elements by dissociating the Association from Christian dogma, and in an effort to placate Christian opinion and to unite all Spiritualists the Association dropped the 'Declaration' from its constitution."

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The council of the "National Association of Spiritualists" met for the first time at Lawson's Rooms, Gower Street in mid October 1873. Plans were discussed for renting Halls, introducing Sunday meetings all year round,³⁰ helping societies like the St. John's Association which had a small debt,³¹ also help for Mr. Cogman who was doing pioneering work in the East End of

³⁰ It was James Burns who introduced Sunday Meetings in London. During the autumn of 1869 Burns was impressed with the necessity for the establishment of a free platform for the advocacy of Spiritualism in London on Sunday evenings. In December, Mr. Peebles returned from the East, and together they found the Cavendish Rooms a suitable place for making a commencement. On January 13th, 1870, meetings were held at the Spiritual Institution, to raise funds (Mr. Everitt contributed 5s.). Six weeks later £7 18s. 7d., was handed to Mr. Peebles for his services, Sunday meetings were commenced with the sole idea of promoting Spiritualism,

The first six meetings proved so successful that a committee was formed to establish them on a more permanent basis. Donations to meet Mr. Peebles's salary and a special guarantee fund were originated. After Peebles, various speakers took the platform including James Burns. It was at these Sunday meetings that James Morse commenced his career as a trance-speaker. The services continued until August 28th. On October 2nd, 1870, a second series of meetings at Cavendish Rooms commenced. Emma Hardinge Britten delivered her first oration on Sunday December 4th, 1870. The Cavendish Rooms were found to be too small; Emma Hardinge Britten made a choice of Cleveland Hall. After she left, the meetings were suspended for the season, and a third series commenced on November 5, 1871, terminating on May 5, 1873. Burns' full report *History of Sunday Meetings in London* will be given in this series; other speakers would include Mr. Farquhar, Mr. Shorter, Mr. Powell, Mr. Wallace, etc.

³¹ Letter published in the *Spiritualist* November 14th, 1873, gives an overview of expenses at this period:

SIR,—An article in the last issue of your journal, whilst discussing the constitution and future work of the National Association of Spiritualists, suggests that its most effectual and economical mode of operation, at first, would be to make money grants to local societies, with a view to enable them to carry on well conducted Sunday services. As the St. John's Association of Spiritualists has been the first, and up to the present time is the only London society which has established regular Sunday services, it may probably be of interest to your readers, and also serve as information for the guidance of other societies who may desire to follow our example, if I state the result financially of the meetings, eight in number, which we have held up to the present date. For these the expenditure has been as follows:—Rent of Goswell Hall, £4 4s.; printing and advertising, £2 18s. 8d.; lecturer's expenses, &c., £4; sundries, 15s.; total, £11 17s. 8d. On the other hand, the receipts at the doors, as voluntary donations, have been £5 15s. 7d., leaving a deficit of £6 2s. 1d. The success of the meetings, as regards attendance and the good that is being accomplished, are all that could be expected. [...]

The article to which I have referred, in speaking of our efforts, says, "The St. John's Association has a small debt, which ought to be cleared off by public aid, but its present work is probably nearly self-supporting." It would give us much pleasure to receive assistance, whether as grants from the National Association, or in the shape of subscriptions from individual Spiritualists; and I trust we may before long be able to work more effectually and on a wider basis than it is possible for us to do at present. At any rate, our committee are resolved to continue the services, and firmly believe they will eventually be self-supporting.[...]

RICHARD PEARCE, *Honorary Secretary, St. John's Association of Spiritualists.*
Committee Rooms, 30, Parkfield Street, Islington, N.
10th November, 1873.

London. Robert Cogman was greatly instrumental in the cultivation of James Morse's trance mediumship.

At a meeting on October 20th, under the presidency of Thomas Everitt, held at 145, Gower Street, London, W.C, it was agreed to adopt the title: National Association of Spiritualists; it being understood that upon the constitution being brought up for final settlement, the word "British" to be substituted for "National." In the *Spiritualist*, November 21st 1873, the Rules and Constitution of the Association were published for the recommendation and adoption of the Council. Number one on the list was the proposed name of the Association: "The British National Association of Spiritualists" (BNAS), rather than substitute "British" for "National," they decided to add the word British to the title. It appears that at some point in 1874 the new name was adopted; however, throughout its life, it was still referred to in many reports as "The National Association of Spiritualists." But, in reality it never became a representative national organisation; its focus was London with comparatively few affiliated societies. However, in their publication "Spiritual Notes,"³² which ran from July 1878 to December 1880, the reader was well informed of the progress mainly in the Northern provinces. A series of "Notes by the Way"/"Spiritualism in the Provinces" was contributed specially for BNAS by James J. Morse.

The British National Association of Spiritualists had a long history.³³ But in May 1882, BNAS decided to re-constitute the Association under a new Constitution by the name, "Central Association of Spiritualists," taking over the membership and premises of BNAS. Later, at a meeting on October 25th 1883, the Central Association of Spiritualists was dissolved. Stainton Moses moved for the foundation of a new society, subsequently to be called The London Spiritualist Alliance, (LSA). The name was changed to The College of Psychic Science on 31 January 1955 and to The College of Psychic Studies (CPS) in 1970, and remains so today.³⁴

The years 1865-1875 represent the first phase of attempts to build the foundations of a National Movement of Spiritualists. In our last issue we published James Morse's paper, "The Nationalisation of Spiritualism" read before the Spiritualists' Debating Society, at Corbridge's Café, Manchester, on Tuesday, March 20th, 1894.

Morse stated:

"There have been some four distinct efforts that merit attention. These were national Conferences at Newcastle-on-Tyne, Darlington, Liverpool, and Manchester, all before 1878. The memories of these are all that remain, and even the memory of them is almost confined to the pamphlets and reports that published their proceedings. Of actual work, or effect upon either the country, or the cause, there are but few and faint traces to-day."

³² Prior to this the *Spiritualist*, acted as the mouthpiece of the National Association.

³³ The Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was founded on BNAS premises, on January 5th and 6th 1882. The conferences were held at the invitation of Professor Barrett (Dublin) resulting in the formation of the SPR, which was constituted on February 20th 1882. Its appointed council and committees were partly made up by B.N.A.S., officers and council members; see pages 231-238:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.10October08.pdf>

³⁴ CPS:—<http://www.collegeofpsychicstudies.co.uk/index.html>

We note that in the brief reports of these Conventions, as they were then called, there are no names mentioned of those involved, or agendas for what was discussed like the introduction of Lyceums. To do these justice we will return to the Conventions later.

The stimulus of organisation within the movement was always the North of England, as Morse reiterates in the above mentioned paper (1894):

“The next, and as a working body, by far the most successful ever made, though distinctly local, instead of national, was the Lancashire District Committee, whose labours still bear fruit, while following, and upon similar, but not identical lines, is the Yorkshire Committee, now known as the Yorkshire Spiritual Union ...”

It was within the various District Committees that such immense work would be undertaken and upon the structures of good working relationships, the pooling of their best speakers and mediums, the setting up of “Guarantee Funds,” district representatives, and unrivalled dedication to the cause that foundations could be built for a future “National Organisation”. The detailed history of these District Committees, can only be found in interviews with those who were connected, reports of their progress, and conference meetings in the various journals of the day. The original foundation of these District Committees was generated by the Lancashire Spiritualists:

SPIRITUALISM IN LANCASHIRE.—Mr. W. Johnson and Mr. John Hartley write:—³⁵

“Organisation is the basis of all efficient movements, whether social or political. The Lancashire Spiritualists have determined that a more vigorous organising policy shall be commenced at once, for the purpose of enabling every town where there are a few Spiritualists only, to hold regular Sunday services and week-night classes for research and discussion in connection with the subject. There is scarcely a town or village in the district which the Lancashire Committee has not already visited, and sown the first seeds. Organisation would aid the progress of Spiritualism in these places.”

The “Lancashire District Committee” was the first district association to be formed, at a Conference at Bury in August 1875. Its aim was to promote Spiritualism in new Districts, places of weak or non-existent Spiritualist activity, supply experienced speakers, and distribute literature. The format of the working structure of the District Committee was given by Mr. John Hartley, and reported in a paper by Richard Pearce, in early 1877 to which I will return, and reference later.³⁶

³⁵ *The Spiritualist Newspaper*, Friday February 2nd, 1877.

³⁶ The first-mentioned of these methods was originated by the formation of the Lancashire District Spiritualist Committee. For the following particulars of this committee I am indebted to Mr. John Hartley, of Hyde. It consists of an executive of six members, two secretaries, a treasurer, and a general body of district representatives to the number of about forty, who all resign office quarterly. At some of the quarterly conferences as many as eighty representatives have been elected; there are no “rules” or “members.” Its business is carried on by propositions approved at the quarterly conferences, and by the minutes passed at the various meetings of the executive. The conferences are held on the first Sundays in February, May, August, and November respectively, with intermediate

Geoffrey K. Nelson notes on p.112:

“By May 1878 this association was large enough to support the publication of its own monthly paper, *The Spiritual Reporter*. It was estimated that there were some 2,580 Spiritualists in the Lancashire district in 1878, and that of these, 560 belonged to societies working in association with the Lancashire Association. Their work continued to take the form of organizing meetings throughout the district. The extent of their work can be seen from the report of work given to the conference in November 1878, when it was stated that during the previous quarter 102 meetings had been held, attended by an estimated total of 9,000 persons.”

The conference report quoted below is taken from the fourteenth quarterly conference held in the Temperance Hall, Grosvenor Street, Manchester, on November 3rd 1878. The president was John Lamont; the secretary who gave the above (quoted) report was John Hartley (William Johnson Vice-President).

In *Spiritual Notes*, p.77 Lamont explained:

“a scheme which the Liverpool Psychological Society wished to enter into with the Committee, for the Lancashire Committee to supply the Liverpool Society with speakers every Sunday for six months, except on the five-Sunday months, when they would supply their own speakers on the fifth Sunday of such months. The Liverpool Society desired that Mr. Morse should be sent them one Sunday and one Monday in the month at least.³⁷ On one of the Sundays in each month the society would not object to a local

meetings if necessary; they are attended by representatives from north-east, east, and mid Lancashire; north Cheshire, and north Derbyshire. At each conference representatives from the various towns and villages are elected for the next ensuing quarter, and from these are chosen the president, secretaries, treasurer, and executive, who take in hand the management of the movement and follow up the work of their predecessors. The executive meet once a month, or oftener if necessary, and arrange for meetings to be held in the several towns and villages in the before-named districts, and appoint representatives to act in those places to arrange the preliminaries of the meetings to be held; the executive also provide the speakers. One of the representatives thus appointed (of whom there are usually four or five for each place) is the corresponding secretary, who attends every meeting; he forwards a statement of the receipts and expenditure at such meetings to the general secretary; and the surplus of the proceeds (if any) to the treasurer. Should there be a loss, which is usually the case, the corresponding secretary advances the money at the time, and gets repaid by the treasurer. The meetings are always best attended in places where no meetings on Spiritualism have been held before, and a second, third, or fourth meeting rids them of the lower elements, the residue being people of intelligence. Recent meetings have been very successful, and a permanent footing has been gained in many places, amongst which Mr. Hartley mentions Stockport, New Mills, Glossop, and Middleton. As a rule the meetings do not pay expenses, but leave a loss of from 20s. to 30s., except when a local speaker takes the platform free of charge. Great difficulty is met with through want of funds; there are sufficient speakers for the present work, but if more funds were at the disposal of the committee, a great deal more work would be accomplished. The loss arising from the meetings has to be made up by the local Spiritualists; as a reserve from which such loss may be partly met, a “guarantee fund” has been formed, and which is for about £30 per annum for five years. The committee has a plan for the distribution and sale of Spiritual literature; at all meetings held under its auspices there are books for sale and other literature for free distribution. The works of Mr. A. R. Wallace and Mr. W. Crookes are the principal ones sold.

³⁷ In June 1879, Morse entered into a second “six months’ contract with the Lancashire District Committee to give ten lectures per month (*Spiritual Notes* p157)

speaker (that is, a resident of Liverpool). The other Sundays to be filled up by other speakers. For this the Society offered the Committee £27 for the six months. The proposal was unanimously adopted.”



William Johnson

District Committees were formed in other areas, but not all would be successful. In mid 1876, Newcastle was the centre of the North of England Conference Committee, formed on the same basis as the Lancashire committee, to promote co-operative effort and union amongst the numerous circles springing up in the other towns and the country round about (County Durham and Northumberland). The Newcastle Spiritualists backed up this movement, and the surrounding districts elected representatives on the committee, but it soon declined and little was accomplished. At the conference on Sunday October 13th, 1878 held in Derby, under the auspices of the Psychological Society, a deputation from “Lancashire District Committee” (LDC) was represented by William Johnson.

Spiritual Notes reports pages 62-63:

“Mr. JOHNSON was the first to address the meeting, and he gave the history of the rise and progress of the committee which he represented, showing how from the first Conference at Bury down to the last in Manchester the committee had gradually and effectively increased in usefulness, and had gone on gaining the confidence of the Societies and the District. They had no rules, no creed. All were free, and aided by their institutions, the advice of spirit friends, and their own common sense, coupled with a stern determination to work, the present successful state of things had been created. He strongly advocated the wisdom of forming a “Conference Committee” for the Midland Counties, alike as a means of strengthening existing efforts, as of assisting the spread of Spiritualism. In closing, the speaker urged upon the Conference, *if* they decided to adopt the “Conference Committee” plan, to strengthen the work already going on, and not, at first, to exhaust their energies on new ground.”

Mr. Wallis stated:

“Mr. E. H.³⁸ Wallis of London, remarked that he was very much interested in the proposed “Conference Committee,” and in all the places he had recently visited he had advocated it, and done his best to persuade the friends to unite in the matter. He had the pleasure of saying that in Leicester, Loughborough, Walsall, Northampton, Mount Sorrel, and other places he had visited, the friends all expressed a desire to unite and help to form the Committee. He felt the need of organisation, and without it the cause would always be chaotic and unsound.”

³⁸ Should read E. W. Wallis

The report continues:

“After various questions had been asked and answered, the following resolution was proposed and carried:—“That a Conference Committee for the Midland Counties district be formed,” and the following were elected as the executive for the ensuing quarter: Mr. Taylor, Nottingham; Mr. Hunter, Sheffield; Mr. Burdett, Leicester; Mr. Blinkhorn, Walsall; Mr. Bodel, Belper; and Mr. Mayle, Derby.

“The following officers were also elected:—President, Mr. R. Harper, Birmingham; Treasurer, Mr. Hitchcock, Nottingham; Corresponding Secretary, Mr. Morse, Derby.

“A ladies committee was also elected, consisting of Mesdames Hitchcock, Storey, Bodel, Preston, Farmer, Groome, and Bewcastle.

“It was then decided to adopt a Guarantee Fund, on the model of a similar fund created by the “Lancashire Committee,” and, at once, upwards of £40 was entered upon the list.”

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The newly formed “Midland District Committee” was started off by Wallis giving a series of successful mission meetings in the district. Later that year the Wallis family moved to Nottingham.

An important development was made in 1879 that would substantially strengthen the work started in 1875 by the LDC, *Spiritual Notes* p 171:

“THE Yorkshire friends are earnestly invited to attend a conference to be held at Sowerby Bridge on Sunday, July 13, 1879, in the Progressive Lyceum. The Lancashire Committee of Spiritualists have kindly deputed Mr. W. Johnson and Mr. J. Hartley, of Hyde, to attend and help in forming a sister organisation similar to the one in Lancashire. The sittings will be held from 10.30 a.m. to 1p.m., and from 2.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Trance addresses will be delivered by E. W. Wallis, of Nottingham, in aid of the anniversary of the Lyceum. Tea and refreshments will be provided. All the “districts” and towns are urgently requested to send representatives to confer as to the best means of carrying on a more thorough system of propagandism in Yorkshire. It is hoped that the Spiritualists of Yorkshire will attend in force, and will help by their presence in making this Conference and anniversary the most successful ever held.”



Edward Walter Wallis

YORKSHIRE DISTRICT COMMITTEE

“THE anniversary services held at the Progressive Lyceum, Sowerby Bridge, on Sunday, July 13th. were rendered specially interesting by the timely action of the Lancashire Committee, who, having the valuable experience of past labours in the cause, felt the necessity of assisting the Yorkshire friends in the adoption of similar measures to their own. The Lancashire Committee kindly deputed Mr. W. Johnson and Mr. J. Hartley, of Hyde, to meet the local representatives in conference at Sowerby Bridge, and assist in deciding upon some practical course of action. At the morning session it was unanimously decided to form a sister organisation for Yorkshire similar to the one in Lancashire, Messrs. Hartley and Johnson clearly explained the system of propagandism adopted by the Lancashire friends, and offered every assistance in the future.

“A hearty discussion ensued, which strongly manifested a unity of thought on the subject of combined action. The following were elected as a committee, with power to add to their number:—Messrs. Lee, Sutcliffe (Sowerby Bridge); Holgarth (Ossett); Jarvis, Backhouse, Kealey (Bradford); Judson, Morrell (Keighley); Edison (Leeds); Addy (Pudsey); Applegarth (Halifax); Armytage,³⁹ and Walker (Batley). It was also resolved to form a guarantee fund of £500. Two trance addresses were delivered in the afternoon and evening by Mr. E. W. Wallis, of Nottingham. Mr. W. H. Lambelle also briefly addressed the meeting. It is to be hoped that the friends will not swerve from their adopted course of action, but will steadily persevere in their endeavours to spread a knowledge of the truth of Spiritualism. Communications and suggestions will be gladly received by the secretary, Mr. John Kealey, 2, Cordingley-street, Bradford.”

It was announced in August 1879 that The Lancashire District Committee has adopted *Spiritual Notes* as their organ “for the communication of their monthly plan of speakers and meetings...” the newly formed Yorkshire District Committee followed.

I have already noted the name Richard Pearce. In early 1877, he had been busy collecting statistics of the present condition of the spiritualistic societies. Months earlier Spiritualism was experiencing the first police trials under the Vagrancy Act of 1824. Henry Slade had narrowly escaped prison on a technicality, but Francis Ward Monck was not so lucky. He was charged (at Huddersfield) under the act on November 11th 1876, resulting (after appeal) in him being adjudged as a rogue and vagabond and committed to the House of Correction at Wakefield and sentenced to three months hard labour. Against this backdrop, Pearce read his paper on February 8th before the “National Conference of Spiritualists,” held at 38, Great Russell Street, London (house acquired in 1875 as its headquarters).

³⁹ Should read: (Joseph) Armitage

This paper and the surrounding discussions will be published in full later in this series. Pearce started with these remarks, published in the *Spiritualist*:—⁴⁰

“In the present paper I purpose to speak of Spiritualists rather than of Spiritualism—that is to say, I do not intend to deal with the scientific or philosophic phases of Spiritualism, but merely to give a cursory survey of its outward aspect as a movement, to speak of the number of its adherents, their methods of action (whether as investigators or propagandists), and especially of the organisation of Spiritualists, both general and local.”

Pearce continued:

“But while we see Spiritualism making rapid strides, and gathering such inherent strength as to arouse strong feelings of antagonism, we become sensible of the need, on our part, of firmness and increased zeal and activity, individually and collectively. And if Spiritualism is to pass through a crisis which will test our strength to the uttermost, it is necessary that we should look within our movement, and know our weak points as well as our strength. In doing this, I do not think we have cause for unmixed satisfaction. It is gratifying to know that our ranks are being constantly recruited by men of a degree of intelligence, commanding the respect of the world, and that the phenomena have reached phases which challenge the investigation of men of the highest social, literary, and scientific standing, yet I think we have within us sources of weakness which call for our serious consideration. One of these, in my opinion, is that we are not united. “Unity is strength,” but Spiritualists are divided into factions, and although the various sections are all working earnestly, and all have one common object, we have no common action; thus, not only our work as Spiritualists, but our power of resisting persecution, is weakened.

“We have been told that organisation is not in harmony with the principles of Spiritualism, that a spiritual work cannot be carried on by ordinary material agencies, and a whole host of evils are held up to our view as the only sure fruit which can result from any attempt at the organisation of Spiritualists; a great deal, however, of what has been said and written on this question is very conflicting and indefinite, and not at all applicable to any plan which has been suggested or attempted.

“Organisation is but systematic co-operation, and when we consider the struggles which Spiritualism will have to make, the difficulties to be encountered, and the powerful combinations which may be brought against us, it is evident that we on our side cannot work efficiently unless we do so as a united body, joined in one firm alliance, not only that we may be better able to encounter our opponents, but also for our mutual aid and encouragement, for the more effectual dissemination of those truths which are destined to accomplish a great and good work, and that we ourselves may be in the best condition to receive the further evolution from the spirit world of those facts

⁴⁰ Taken from: “The National Conference of Spiritualists,” published in the *Spiritualist Newspaper*, February 16th 1877, front page to p.84 (Pearce pages 78-82). The *Medium and Daybreak* also published an edited version in their issue February 16th 1877.

and teachings which, when accepted and assimilated with our lives, make and constitute us Spiritualists. But whilst I firmly believe in “friendly united action,” “systematic co-operation,” or “organisation” (call it what you will), I distinctly repudiate all idea of opposition to any individual, or any class of Spiritualists. There is no worker, or any section of workers, within our ranks to whom I cannot give my hearty goodwill, no party in the broad field of Spiritualism with whom I could not work in the most friendly manner. As Spiritualists we can work to the fullest extent individually, each doing as seemeth to him best, carrying out each our own hobbies, or acting up to the best and noblest of our inspirations, and yet we can and should be all joined in friendly union for the general good of the whole. I believe this can be done without conflicting with any plan of work now in operation—without stifling in any degree our sense of individual responsibility, or curtailing our spheres of personal awfulness. Further, I think we have a basis for such friendly union and co-operation already in existence in the British National Association of Spiritualists, under whose auspices we have to-day met together.”

The discussion was started off by Mr. Thomas Shorter who said:

“I have had to do in past years with the collecting of Spiritualistic statistics, and can bear witness to the large amount of labour contained in the paper which Mr. Pearce has read before us this evening; I think it would be valuable if all the information contained in his paper were to be tabulated; it would be well to record the number of members contained in every organisation. I am surprised that he has not furnished us with information from Darlington, for there the first convention of Spiritualists was held.”
[...]

James Morse stated:

“Mr. J. J. Morse: I hope that the paper will be reprinted, because at present the people in one locality do not know what is going on in another. I am continually traversing the ground which Mr. Pearce has gone over, and I do not think he has overstated the facts in any respect. He made remarks about lack of unity, but that want of adhesion has its uses; there is internal lack of unity sometimes in the managing bodies themselves; there is also lack of union with each other in many instances of the various societies. When attempts are made to bring about union, local prejudices, ideas and interests come into conflict. Four of the chief societies in the country have entered into alliance with the National Association of Spiritualists, and I wish all of them had done so, for by union and by becoming acquainted with each other the welfare of the whole cause is promoted. I think that there is a species of natural selection at work in the provinces, whereby the movement, after all, is worked in the best way. The “institutional” plan spoken of I do not understand, for how it differs from a local society my brains are unable to grasp; it is simply a rose by another name.

“The Lancashire District Union of Spiritualists works well. Cannot we enter into some correspondence with this committee, to know whether assistance from us would be of use to it?” [...]

James Burns, had broken away from the National Association at its formation in 1873, being opposed to a central organisation. However, he was very supportive of societies, attended some meetings, and supported the Lancashire District Union of Spiritualists; on occasions supplying them with their literature. It is well at this point to record Burns' view on "Organisation". Much of the provincial activity of the District Committees and their progress was published in his journal *Medium and Daybreak*, during their early years:

ORGANISATION

The Medium and Daybreak:—⁴¹

"If every Spiritualist would ask himself, What can I do to promote a knowledge of Spiritualism amongst my fellows? And fall to work to give the answer effect we would not hear so much about "organisation," but the visible results of it would be much more abundant. The true way to organise is to go to work, do something, and all who sympathise therewith will at once put their hand to the plough and help. Society making is NOT organisation. We could point to places where the trade of lecture committees has led to empty halls, and a complete demoralisation of the spiritual body. The basis of spiritual action is not a man-made committee, we wish we could engrave that one sentence ineradicably in the brain of every reader. No; we repeat, the basis or subsequent success of spiritual work is not a human foible of any kind, however wisely it may be planned or however practical its appearance may be. What, then, is our foundation? Whereon shall we build as on a rock—not the fleeting sands of man's invention? We reply, On spiritual power. The cultivation of mediumship, the wooing of the spirit-world into our midst is the seed, the fertiliser of all our efforts. An organisation of a dozen men—appointed men—are impotent to stir the minds of the people, but a feeble woman or all illiterate boy pervaded with the power of the spirit may move nations. Human beings charged with spirit-power become magnetic, and they draw all mankind to them, just as the bar of soft iron becomes a magnet when pervaded by electricity. O ye soft iron tools, ye unmagnetised ones! why do you try to make an edge on the grindstone of your own conceits, when by cultivating spiritual gifts you may cut your road triumphantly to success.

"An illustration of the truth of these remarks is afforded by the Marylebone friends,⁴² who have made mediumship the prime calling of their efforts. Their little hall is magnetic and beautiful, and it allures visitors to its spiritual atmosphere, and when there, the mind overflows with spiritual ideas, and spirit-friends come close to the souls of those who attend the meetings.

⁴¹ *The Medium and Daybreak*, Friday, March 2nd 1877, page 136.

⁴² The Marylebone Spiritualist Association (M.S.A.), was founded in 1872. On February 24th, 1960 it was renamed the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain (SAGB) and continues today at 11 Belgrave Road, City of Westminster, London. For its early history see *Psypioneer* Volume 2, No.12 :—*The story of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association 1872-1928*, pages 266-276:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.12December06.pdf>

“As far as general agencies of an external nature are concerned, it appears to us that Spiritualists are organised—that is, supplied with “organs.” By the common use of language it is decreed that a public newspaper is an “organ,” and no movement can assume a public or consolidated position without such an “organ” of the Press. The effect of organisation is to bring all points into reciprocity or rapport. This is what the Press does, and all the societies and bodies it is possible to bring together could not effect this result without the Press. The MEDIUM weekly brings some 20,000 Spiritualists into one counsel, discussing the ruling ideas of the week and exchanging through it expressions from one end of the land to the other. This is the grandest attempt at organisation that has ever been effected amongst us, and we submit that it is all that is required. We have further to ask, Do all Spiritualists who avail themselves of this “organ” ask whether they take their share in its responsibilities? For a community of Spiritualists to ignore the claims of that which has already organised them, but use it to realise a variety of uncalled-for schemes, is not very commendable. The basis of all external organisation is a periodical, and to maintain that in every possible manner should be the first duty of every friend of organisation.

“Other departments of organisation are, a popular literature and a depot for information and intercommunication. A means of producing and circulating literary information must certainly be regarded as an important element of organisation. What a brainless movement Spiritualism would be without an evidence of its intellectuality in the form of books. Then Spiritualism has its open door and metropolitan *locus standi* for the supply of gratuitous information for the public, a registry of all known workers in the Cause; thus the friends of the Movement may avail themselves of their services.

“What more do we want with organisation? We answer that Spiritualists do their duty to sustain that which already exists, and, secondly, that they mind their own business by doing their duty in their several localities; and by cultivating spirit-power, and diffusing its influences, produce spiritual fruits which when gathered might be reported on in the “organ” for the information and encouragement of others. When these agencies have been set in motion the grand work of organisation has been accomplished, and it remains for others to fall in therewith, and see that the organic position is sustained and utilised by their individual efforts. When we think of the thousands who have heard of Spiritualism through our “organ” and the thousands of houses in which our popular literature finds a place, likewise the countless numbers of documents which we have given to inquirers, forming the basis of family circles beyond computation, we also think of what might be done if our organic arrangements were fully taken; advantage of, and how much lighter the burden of sustaining them would bear on those shoulders which, aided and strengthened by spiritual influences, have done more than their proportionate share of the work.”

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There were numerous reports throughout the 1870's of criticism levied against the National Association, suggesting it was not nationally representative of the Spiritualist movement as it was intended or claimed in this country. Edward Wallis, for example put this claim in an article in January 1879.⁴³ Prior to this in June 1878, BNAS Secretary Miss Emily Kislingbury in reply to a letter from John Chapman gives us the official Council view on their function:

SPIRITUALISTIC WORK IN THE PROVINCES

The Spiritualist:—⁴⁴

The following correspondence has taken place between the National Association of Spiritualists and Mr. John Chapman, of Liverpool:—

“10, Dunkeld-street, Liverpool, June 8, 1878.

“DEAR MADAM,—I herewith send you my subscription to the B.N.A.S. I am sorry the Association does not take up more work of a national character than it has hitherto done. Its original intention appears to be lost sight of in its centralisation. It ought to have adopted measures like those of the ‘Lancashire Committee,’ in sending mediums and speakers out in all the provinces to spread a knowledge of Spiritualism in all parts of the country. You must expect subscriptions to fall off from outside your local sphere, except you adopt some measures to meet and co-operate with other towns and societies.

“This can be done by engaging and sending out speakers, &c., whose mission would draw a sympathy towards the institution. Could it not be blended with the ‘Lancashire Committee,’ and made to work so as to effect economy, and have the greatest work done throughout the country?

“Could not every local institution work in its own way, each having the privilege of a speaker sent wherever a door can be opened, even where a society, or the people, cannot pay much, or nothing, for a time? Aid, no doubt, would be forthcoming, when the work

⁴³*Spiritual Notes*, “Provincial Notes” written by Wallis, pages 89-90:—“... It is impossible not to feel very regretful over the state of things at the B.N.A.S., as revealed in your last month's issue, but that body has failed to commend itself to the Spiritualists of the country, to either assist or represent them, and Mr. Chapman's letter, in which he suggests the affiliation of that body to the Lancashire District Committee, clearly indicates the feeling of the majority of provincial Spiritualists. Up to the present time it has not justified its claim to be considered “national,” and unless something is done of a more general character it will certainly lose a deal of the support of individual provincial Spiritualists which it now enjoys”. BNAS commented at the end of Wallis's article:—“We cannot altogether agree with the remarks of our correspondent on the subject of the B.N.A.S. The Association certainly is not “national” in the sense of affording material aid to the promotion of Spiritualism in the provinces. That was what was originally intended, but circumstances to which we need not further allude have made it chiefly metropolitan and very “respectable,” though any friend can join who desires to do so. Still, the Association is doing an important work, and its death would be a serious injury to the cause. Happily, with the aid of such helpers as Mr. Wallis, Mr. Morse, and a few other hearty workers, the provinces are showing that they can assist the movement very efficiently in their own way.—ED. S. N.

⁴⁴*The Spiritualist*, October 25th 1878, page 195.

was seen, and we have now plenty of Spiritualist papers to show it well up. Thus upon the efforts of the B.N.A. of Spiritualists must the institution, in my opinion, rise or fall.

“JOHN CHAPMAN.⁴⁵

“To Miss Kislingbury, *Sec. B.N.A.S.*”

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“Mr. John Chapman,

“June 22nd, 1878.

“DEAR SIR,—Your letter of June 8th, which was read to the Council on the 11th inst., and referred to the General Purposes Committee, was laid before that committee at their meeting on the 19th inst. In reply, I am instructed to say that your letter was received with respectful consideration and that after considerable discussion it was agreed that, while the committee recognise the desirability of more extended action, the present state of our finances does not admit of such action being taken at present. The committee would at the same time call your attention, and that of all provincial friends, to the fact that a certain amount of benefit is reflected on the *whole* Spiritualist movement by our maintaining a strong and vigorous centre in London; that an honourable recognition and a better social standing is thus gained for it in the world, and a higher standard of public opinion created among ourselves, and that the money expended in keeping open good reception rooms, a well-stocked library, free *séances* for inquirers, and fortnightly meetings, the papers read at which are published in full, and can be read by all, goes as far in support of the movement at large as if we were directly aiding local societies in their work; further, that all foreign Spiritualists are received at these rooms, the literature of foreign societies is filed, and correspondence with their members maintained; and that thus it can hardly be said that the work of the National Association is purely local, but rather general and international; and that though some of the advantages offered are only available for London members, it must be borne in mind that these pay a higher subscription in consideration thereof, and that five-shilling membership is still open to all Spiritualists, with the privilege of a vote at the annual general meeting, of a seat on the Council; and of sending in motions for discussion on any question affecting the work or government of the Association.

“The committee have recommended that a copy of this letter be published and sent to the secretaries of local societies, in order that this view of the position of the National Association may be as widely disseminated as possible.

“EMILY KISLINGBURY, *Secretary B.N.A.S.*”<sup>46</sup>

*To be continued in November ...*

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<sup>45</sup> John Chapman was a supporter from the first Convention at Darlington in 1865, and was born Buttersett, in Wensleydale, Yorkshire on May 28th, 1819.

<sup>46</sup>Miss Emily Kislingbury was secretary to the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS), and authored numerous papers on physical mediumship etc. In March 1879, Miss Kislingbury resigned after four years' service, her successor was Miss Burke. Miss Kislingbury wanted to devote herself to literary work. Later she turned to Theosophy. See also a paper by Emily Kislingbury: *Spiritualism in its relation to Theosophy* (1892) :—<http://www.numerologic.com/theosophy/SpiritualismRelationTheosophyEK.html>

## 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:— 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 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://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](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://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

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Paul J. Gaunt

