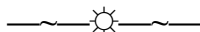




Volume 7, No. 4: August 2020

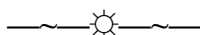
Contents list:



The Pioneer (bi-monthly) is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses.

This history journal is presented using original researched material wherever possible. Articles and quotes are taken from original sources as they were published at the time and reproduced by optical character recognition (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

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



- 107 – Pioneer's seventh birthday – Reaches Two Thousand Individual Subscribers!**
- 108 – James Arthur Findlay**
 - 3,000 At Glasgow Meeting – Mr J. Arthur Findlay and Mrs Estelle Roberts**
 - List of Arthur Findlay's books about Spiritualism and Religion**
 - Friends of Stansted Hall – Founded 1969**
 - Stansted Hall Cleared of Debt**
- 115 – Robert Boursnell**
 - The Photographic Mediumship of Robert Boursnell**
- 123 – New One-stop Website – Paul J. Gaunt**
- 125 – A Question of Fraud! – Continued ... Part II**
 - Seances at Moravia, United States**
 - Spirit Faces**
 - Classes of Form Manifestations**
 - Forms With Flexible Features**
 - Forms Without Flexible Features**
 - Editor's Note**
 - Spirit Forms**
 - Katie King / Annie Morgan**
 - Seized at a Séance – The Capture of "A Spirit." – To the Editor of the Times.**
 - Spirit Form, Ectoplasm, etc. being Grabbed**
- 145 – Britten Museum & Library Research – Study Weeks at the Arthur Findlay College**

“Subscribe” free to Pioneer or contact the editor –
pioneer@snu.org.uk

All references to Psypioneer in this issue are archived at <http://psypioneer.iapsop.com/>



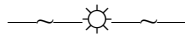
PIONEER

Pioneer was launched at the Torquay AGM 2013, replacing the SNU hardback magazine of the same title; a special edited edition of the first issue was published for the delegates.

The front page noted:

The foundations of the Spiritualists' National Union were laid over a long period of time, and its growth ensured by dedicated pioneers, many of whom have been forgotten. Most readers will be unacquainted with their names and the roles they so valiantly played in the building of the SNU, an organisation that today stands firm due to their bold efforts.

This journal is dedicated to those Pioneers.



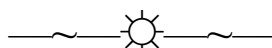
The AGM this year, 2020

Marking the journal's seventh birthday

**Pioneer is pleased to announce
it has reached:**

**TWO THOUSAND
individual subscribers!**

Additionally, there are SNUi & on-line readers



JAMES ARTHUR FINDLAY



Findlay is probably best known for his books, his first major publication being “On the Edge of the Etheric”, September 1931. Findlay was a ‘Glasgow Investigator’, achieving astonishing results from the non-professional physical medium in direct voice, John Sloan. Sloan’s mediumship is mostly associated with Findlay but in the *Psypioneer* journal, Vol. 8, No. 12, we find a rare report on Sloan’s mediumship in London at the British College of Psychic Science (BCPS).

We can note in the *SNU Pioneer*, Vol. 1, No. 1, that Findlay founded the Glasgow Psychical Research Society on October 27th, 1920; it can be noted that Findlay’s association and experiments with John Sloan started a couple of years earlier. Below is taken from the *National Spiritualist* for November 1925:

THE TESTIMONY OF A GLASGOW INVESTIGATOR

Experiences of psychic phenomena were related before the Birmingham and Midland Society for Psychical Research on October 1st, by Mr. J. Arthur Findlay, vice-president of the Glasgow Psychical Research Society. The lecture was largely a record of a series of sittings the speaker had had with Mr. John C. Sloan, the Glasgow trance and direct voice medium. Mr. Findlay said in his careful investigations, which had lasted over seven years, he found from his notes of 44 different seances that 77 separate voices had spoken to him, or to personal friends he had taken with him; 271 separate facts had been given to him or to them, 169 of which facts he classed as A1, as it was impossible for the medium or anyone else present to have known them. The other facts he classed as A2, because by means of newspapers or reference books the medium could have found them out.

Mr. Findlay gave examples of the communications which he and his friends had received, and described how, in his opinion, it was possible for the departed to re-materialise their vocal organs sufficiently to communicate with this world. He said his father had given him good evidence of his continued existence on a number of occasions. In relating the communications he had received, the speaker declared them to be fraud-proof and telepathy-proof.

Pioneer has featured Arthur Findlay in various issues, for example: “James Arthur Findlay – Stansted Hall & Elms Farm”, Vol. 4, No. 3; “The Case for Real Psychical Research – by Arthur Findlay”, Vol. 6, No. 5; “The J. Arthur Findlay College, for the Advancement of Psychic Science – The early years”, Vol. 1, No. 2; “Arthur Findlay: His Life and Work – Ernest Thompson” and “Arthur Findlay at the Albert Hall”, Vol. 2, No. 3.

Below gives another example of Findlay working with famous mediums publicly like Estelle Roberts,¹ who often worked with the likes of Maurice Barbanell² and Hannen Swaffer in large halls in the promotion of Spiritualism. The article below is taken from the *Two Worlds*, May 27th, 1932:

¹ Vol. 1, No. 5: “Estelle Roberts and the House of Red Cloud”.

² Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 6: “Maurice Barbanell, the S.N.U. and his Propaganda Work”.

3,000 AT GLASGOW MEETING

BY OUR SCOTTISH CORRESPONDENT



UNUSUAL interest was shown in a meeting arranged by the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists, and held in the St. Andrews Hall, Glasgow, on Wednesday, May 11th. The hall, which has a seating capacity of 3,000, was crowded to hear Mr. J. Arthur Findlay speak and Mrs. Estelle Roberts demonstrate clairvoyance.³

It was the first time in Glasgow a public demonstration of clairvoyance had been given before a huge audience, and a most successful experiment it proved to be, though entirely novel to a large portion of the audience.

Seven people were given descriptions, and all were recognised. Only one woman did not appear to understand the purport of the messages, but the medium was able to later bring the information to her mind. The demonstration lasted for half-an-hour.

Mr. J. Arthur Findlay spoke on "Survival Scientifically Explained." He submitted that definite proof of life after death had been provided. Death was, in fact, just a change of appreciation.

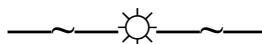
The world in which we live is mental, and we only know the world from the point of view of imagination," he said. "When we die we simply change our appreciation and experience a higher range of vibrations, because we begin to think in an etheric sense."

Mr. Findlay made a stirring appeal to the leaders of the Church to move in the matter. If they remained with the old conceptions and creeds, fewer and fewer people would attend their services, while more and more would support Spiritualist churches.

The meeting was a great success, and a credit to the local organisation.



J. Arthur Findlay at his home in Stansted Hall



³ Photograph of Estelle Roberts at the Royal Albert Hall in 1934.

List of Arthur Findlay's books about Spiritualism and Religion

First Edition Dates

On the Edge of the Etheric: September 1931.

The Rock of Truth: August 1933.

The Unfolding Universe: March 1935.

The Torch of Knowledge: August 1936. *

The Psychic Stream: June 1939.

The Curse of Ignorance: Two volumes, 1947. **

Where Two Worlds Meet: 1951.

The Way of Life: 1953.

Looking Back: 1955. ***

* The story is based on Findlay's psychic experiences; he noted: "One thing I would like to emphasise, which is that all the characters in this story are fictitious and are not portrayed to resemble anyone. Having said this I wish also to emphasise the fact that all the psychic phenomena, which run through this story, have actually happened. What I have done has been to change their setting and the details." (JAF, August 1936).

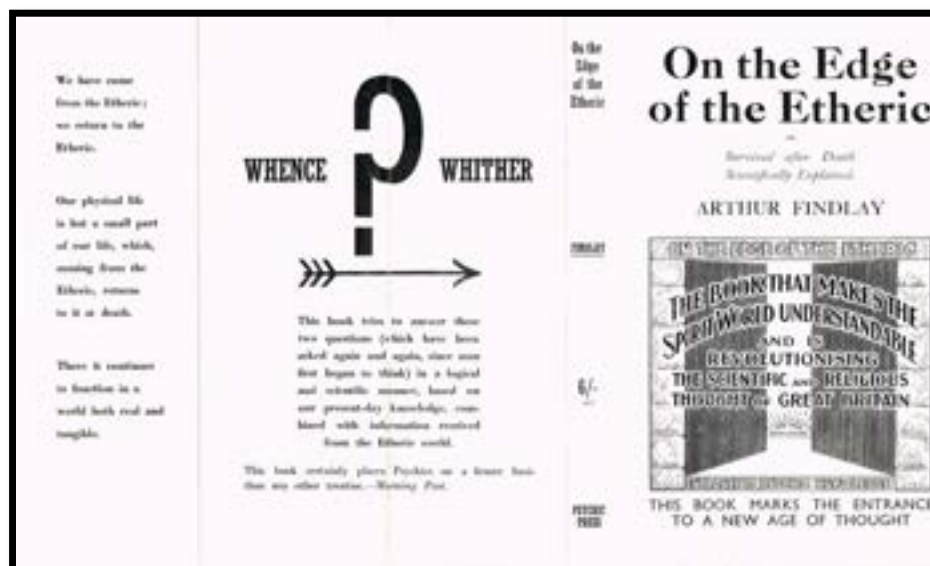
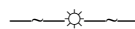
** These two volumes in some references are titled "A History of Mankind".

*** Arthur Findlay's autobiography.

Other related information

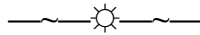
The Effect of Religion on History: A lecture to the Cambridge Historical Society at Cambridge. Booklet privately published 1930s.

Combined Index to Arthur Findlay's trilogy on Spiritualism (contains 15,630 references), compiled by Dr Albert Neale, published by Psychic Press, Ltd, c1936: On the Edge of the Etheric, The Rock of Truth, The Unfolding Universe.

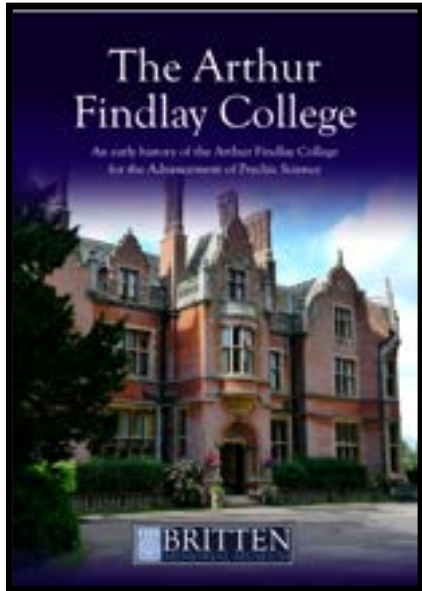


Friends of Stansted Hall

Founded 1969



The article in Pioneer, Vol. 1, No. 2, “The J. Arthur Findlay College, for the Advancement of Psychic Science – The early years”,⁴ traces Arthur Findlay’s wonderful gift of Stansted Hall to the Spiritualists’ National Union and the early formation of Findlay’s wish, a College *for the Advancement of Psychic Science*.



January 1966, SNU General Secretary Richard Ellidge:⁵

“It was early in 1945 that Mr J. Arthur Findlay first approached the Union regarding Stansted Hall when it was occupied by the Red Cross as a Convalescent Home and when he resided at Rockingham Castle, Market Harborough. This was followed in 1950 by personal contact with W. Lorraine Haig, then President of the Union, who appointed a President’s Committee to investigate and report on a College for Spiritualism. But it was not until January, 1954, that Mr Findlay wrote to Mr H. Dawson, who had been elected President six months previously, followed by meeting at Stansted, that a direct and close liaison between the Hall and the Union was established.

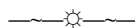
“Mr Findlay submitted the Charter of the proposed Arthur Findlay College and at his request only sufficient copies were duplicated for the then Members of the National Council each marked “Private and Confidential.” The Council accepted the proposed bequest of Stansted Hall in April, 1954. At that time the bequest was to comprise the Hall, thirty five acres of land and a more substantial endowment than that which the Union eventually received.

“In 1955 Mr Findlay transferred £2,000 to the union in the form of Stock towards the cost of furnishing and decorating the proposed College, and in 1956 the Council accepted a gift of shares in Psychic Press Ltd.

“The position changed however, and following the passing of his wife in 1963 he transferred Stansted Hall in April, 1964, by Deed to the Union along with £28,000 cash. It was intended that Mr Findlay should occupy five rooms in the Hall and the first plans of the architect provided for this.

“Unfortunately Mr Findlay passed to Higher Life in July, 1965 [should read 1964], rendering the arrangement void.

“There were no legal “strings” attached to the gifts, but the College of his dreams is now nearing fruition, perhaps in a modified form – but who knows!”



⁴ Also available in booklet form from the SNU online shop and the Arthur Findlay College (AFC).

⁵ Pioneer, Vol. 6, No. 6: This Man is the Mainspring of Organised Spiritualism – Richard Ellidge, SNU Registered Offices.

The early years of the College saw the mounting financial pressures with the amount of work and the finances required to keep up the College, which far outweighed the income it received, plunging the College into possible financial ruin, with a roll-on effect on the Union.⁶

Much support was given by Union members under the presidency of Charles Quastel, who in 1968 became SNU President for the second time,⁷ when every effort was made to save Stansted Hall. In 1969 General Secretary Dick Ellidge provided a list of Class B members for Gordon Higginson to prepare a further list of possible 'Friends'. In 1969, with a small, dedicated group of people, the "Friends of Stansted" was founded, with Gordon Higginson being elected as Chairman, Bertha Frank as Secretary and Wilf Potter as Treasurer, aided by Mrs E. Anderson and Frank Tams.⁸

It can be noted in the minutes, as published below, of the Inaugural Meeting of the "Friends of Stansted":

MINUTES OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE "FRIENDS OF STANSTED" held at STANSTED HALL STANSTED, Essex on the 21st. & 22nd. February 1970.

Present 150.

Chair was taken by Mr. Gordon Higginson. MSNU.

Opening the meeting Mr. Higginson clearly stated the reason why the Friends of Stansted was formed last year, when a few decided to support the College and to fight for its continuation. With this in mind his appeal letter was sent out in December 1969 to which, he stated, the response had been very encouraging and membership was gradually increasing.

FINANCE. Mr. Higginson put to the meeting the arrangements made in dealing with subscriptions and donations received. These he stated would be placed in a separate account which had been opened in the name of the "Friends of Stansted".

FUTURE EVENTS. Mr. Higginson referred to the Flower Festival to be held at Easter, which would be in the hands of Eileen Roberts and he hoped Members would endeavour to book for that weekend. There would be two "Friends Weeks" during the year and a Senior Citizens Week, when a coach outing would be arranged by the Friends. The Gala to be held in July would have the help of the Friends, who would arrange to have various stalls at this event, in order to raise funds and to endeavour to make this a great success.

Mr. Tams stated that Members had been advised of the Committees decision to arrange for the collection of **GREEN SHIELD STAMPS** with the views to purchasing a car to be raffled to raise a large sum of money.

CONSTITUTION. DRAFTS of the Constitution were put to the meeting and after considerable discussion, the Constitution was adopted - the Chairman being given authority to alter the Constitution for the purpose of facilitating registration under the Charities Act 1960.

It was agreed that the word "Hall" be added to the "Friends of Stansted".

⁶ A valuation of the Hall, Annex, Gardener's Cottage, Front Lodge and Land by Sworder and Co. was prepared on January 7th, 1969 and reported by the Principal (John Winning) to be at a gross figure of £100,000; this did not include the furniture and fittings, etc. Findlay had purchased Stansted Hall in September 1924 for the sum of £9,998.

⁷ For Charles Quastel see Pioneer, Vol. 3, Nos.1 and 2.

⁸ Prior to the formation of the "Friends of Stansted" there were 'Founder Members of the College'.

Mr. Percy Wilson proposed and Mr. R. H. Wandless seconded this proposal,⁹ that the Steering Committee as standing be nominated on block until the Annual General Meeting. Agreed.

Committee Principal Dr. J. Winning.

Chairman Mr. Gordon Higginson.

Secretary Miss B. Frank.

Treasurer. Mr. W. Potter.

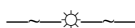
Mrs E. Anderson.

Mr. F. Tams.

The meeting ended at 5/30 p.m.

Dated. 1st November 1970

(signed) G M Higginson



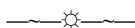
From this day on the “Friends of Stansted Hall” have been raising funds through garden parties, sometimes in conjunction with churches, District Councils, dinner dances, and weeks at the Arthur Findlay College.

At the 1970 AGM Gordon Higginson became President of the Union. Seven years later, during the “Arthur Findlay Weekend” of November 19th and 20th, a Dinner Dance and, on Sunday, the Arthur Findlay Memorial Lecture took place. It was customary in the early years of the College for the year to generally end with the Arthur Findlay Memorial dinner.

In 1977 the guest of honour was Maurice Barbanell, who had supported numerous dinners at the College to raise the much-needed funds for it to survive.

Gordon announced at the Dinner Dance

“President of the Spiritualists’ National Union expressed his gratitude to all who had supported him and the Union, through the ‘President’s Appeal’ and through ‘The Friends of Stansted Hall’ in order that the Debt to the Building Fund Pool might be cleared.”



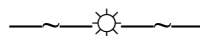
⁹ This refers to Roy Wandless. Roy and his wife Christine would later become the founders of the J.V. Trust, which over the years has substantially contributed to Stansted Hall and the Arthur Findlay College. J & V refer to Roy and Christine’s children, John and Valerie, who were both lost from cystic fibrosis; they wanted to set up a charity in their memory, so the name derives from their children’s initials (**J**ohn and **V**alerie), hence **J.V. Trust**.

Both Roy and Christine knew Arthur Findlay before he handed Stansted Hall over to the SNU.

In the President's letter to the SNU publication, "Communicator" (Vol. 2, No. 5, 1977), Mr Higginson reiterates his thanks, as published below:



"Stansted Hall Cleared of Debt"



During the period of my Presidency of the Union, I have been greatly moved by the invaluable support that I have been given at all times, with this support I have been able to make many alterations which tend to the advancement of our Movement. One of my aims on taking over this onerous job was to find the means to clear the debt owing to the Building Fund Pool for the adaptation of Stansted Hall for the purpose of a College. The generosity of the late Arthur Findlay has been recognised and acknowledged on many occasions. It is now my pleasure to give my acknowledgement to the many ordinary people who by their generosity have made it possible to repay the debt owed to the Building Fund Pool.

Realising the enormity of the task of raising the money to repay the debt and the accumulating interest, I launched an Appeal a few years ago, and today I can give my thanks to all those who responded with outright gifts of money and to those who made interest free loans. My fellow custodians and I, ably advised by Mr Wilf Potter, the Custodian Trustee have been able to invest the monies received at very advantageous rates and we can now make our contribution to the clearing of the debt.

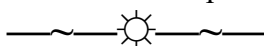
We are greatly helped towards the end of clearing the debt, by the Friends of Stansted Hall who have contributed their investments which have been received or raised for this ultimate purpose.

It is not my purpose to make reference to the specific amounts which have been contributed, but to inform you that aided by the Union as the Trustee of the Britten Memorial Trust in purchasing Britten House for the Union's Offices [annex building] it is possible to clear, as from the beginning of October 1977 the debt to the Building Fund Pool has been set at £100,000. This is a magnificent effort and I cannot let the occasion pass without giving to all concerned my most grateful and heartfelt thanks.

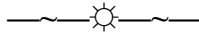
In acknowledging the efforts of the past, we must look to the future and the work that has to be done and above all to the part which can be played by the Hall in the scheme of things. Undoubtedly it has been proved that there is a demand both from this country and from overseas for a College where all can be helped in their search for the Truth and for their spiritual advancement. We have started a Foundation Fund for the College under the auspices of the Union and though at the moment the investments that we have been able to make are very small nevertheless it is a beginning towards assuring that there will be an income each year which will allow us to maintain the Hall in good condition and perhaps make any improvements.

I would close by once again paying my acknowledgement to everyone who has aided my efforts, either by giving money, making loans or by taking the necessary care that the money received has been wisely used in order to achieve this most satisfactory.

Thank you,
G. M. Higginson,
President.
Spiritualists' Nat. Union



ROBERT BOURSNELL



Robert (also referred to as Richard) Boursnell is claimed by some researchers to have obtained psychic images on his photographic plates a decade before William Mumler in America, who was the first to bring psychic photography to public attention, becoming the first professional photographic medium. Mumler was publicly introduced in the Spiritualist press in November 1862.

Psychic/spirit photographs have had much abuse and allegations of fraud levied against them from the very early days; this phase of mediumship has been the most controversial and debated within the Spiritualist movement.

One reason is the actual way the images are presented onto the photographic plate, which has been heavily debated over the decades, insomuch as a genuine and a fraudulent image would most probably be accomplished in a similar way, i.e. by psychic/spirit—*genuine*—means or by normal manipulation—*fraud*. Boursnell referred to his “extras” as ‘shadow pictures’; various theories have been suggested in the Spiritualist movement over the years, for example:

(1) That there is an invisible image before the camera; (2) that the “extras” are the result of artistic work by the invisible operators; (3) that the invisibles use a transparency with an image upon it; and (4) that the “extras” are “thought-forms” exteriorised by the medium, the sitters or both. The transparency method of an *ectoplasmic* transparency/overlay over the years has been well circulated, which perhaps also addresses the problem of various photographic mediums giving the same extra! Similarly, a fake transparency/overlay for the fraudulent medium.

Pioneer has addressed a fair range of psychic/spirit photography:

Vol. 4, No. 2:

Psychic Photography Deception in Psychic Photography – Mr. C.P. MacCarthy
Spirit Photograph of the Great Composer

Vol. 4, No. 4:

“Dorchagraphs”, *known today as “Skotographs”*

Andrew Glendinning – a pioneer of Psychic Photography

Estelle Roberts’ “Album of Red Cloud Pictures and Script in Skotographs by Madge Donohoe”.

Vol. 4, No. 5:

Spirit Photography – Alfred Kitson

The Case for Spirit Photography – Arthur Conan Doyle

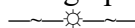
The Crewe Circle

“The Case for Spirit Photography”, now republished

Vol. 6, No. 1:

John Bruce Beattie – Spirit / Psychic Photography

Ernest Oaten Spirit Photography – M. J. Vearncombe



Below is mainly focused on Robert Boursnell and is quoted from “Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science”, Vol. VI. No. 2, July 1927. It gives a nice overview and shows that, unlike most, Boursnell saw the spirit form before he took the photographs; it throws some light on his photographs and explanation, as shown below:

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC MEDIUMSHIP OF ROBERT BOURSNELL

Mr. Boursnell died in 1909, at the age of 77. The following notes on his life, by Mr. W. T. Stead, are taken from “Borderland,” vol. iv., No.1, January, 1897.¹⁰ Mr. Stead made many experiments with him, and introduced sitters to him.

“Robert Boursnell began his career as a professional photographer, forty-four years ago. It was in the early days of the silver bath, and the collodion process.¹¹ All the plates spoiled during the day were cleaned up at night, or the next morning, and used over again. Many a time upon those plates they would get half a face more than they wanted—sometimes a hand—or sometimes two heads. This used to happen five or six times a week, more or less. The unwelcome figures upon the plates exasperated Boursnell’s partner. He declared Boursnell did not clean the plates properly, (an amusing example of the obtuseness of this average mind), and so it was arranged that each should have his own plates. It was further decided that Mr. Clarke, the partner, should take the photographs, and that Boursnell should finish them.

“Mr. Clarke, being an actor as well as a photographer, was sometimes called to rehearse at the theatre. On these occasions Mr. Boursnell was left in charge, and to his annoyance, the figures began to reappear. When Clarke returned from the theatre, and the plates were shown with the second figure upon them besides the sitter, there was a great row between the two partners.

“ ‘You have been at it again,’ said Clarke, ‘Why cannot you clean your plates?’ ”

“Boursnell therefore lost his temper, dashed the plate under discussion on the floor and solemnly damned the glass and the people too. From that moment shadow pictures never appeared upon Boursnell’s plates until some years ago (1886) when he first made acquaintance with Spiritualism; then, to his great surprise, the same forms which used to appear on the plates in the old days reappeared, and just about as frequently. They came about once a day or about five times a week. Such is the narrative Mr. Boursnell sends me.”

Boursnell had the faculty of clairvoyance excellently developed, and often described the building up process of the “spirit extra” before exposure. “Borderland” of the same issue reports the experience of a sitter who went to him in 1896, and who had made previous experiments under good conditions:—

“A spirit form was minutely described before the exposure by Boursnell, who stated that flowers were held up in the hand. I asked my wife, who accompanied me, to hold out her hand, and perhaps our friend would hold the flowers towards her. Boursnell at once said, ‘Yes, she holds the flowers down now.’ The plate was at the time waiting exposure in the camera. The photo was recognised as a relative, but the fact of changing the pose on the spur of the moment *after the plates had been placed in the camera*, precludes all possibility of imposture.” Similar happenings occurred on several occasions with this sitter.

¹⁰ William Stead began his quarterly journal, “Borderland”, in 1893, which continued until 1897.

¹¹ The collodion wet plate process started circa 1851: it required the photographic material to be coated, sensitised, exposed and developed within the span of about fifteen minutes, necessitating the availability of a darkroom. During the 1880s the collodion process was largely replaced by gelatin dry plates—glass plates with a photographic emulsion of silver halides suspended in gelatin. Not only was the dry gelatin emulsion more convenient but it could also be made much more sensitive, greatly reducing exposure times.

Mr. Woolley, who has kindly supplied the photograph of Bournsell, says that Mr. Bournsell used to take ordinary commercial photographs as these taken by Mr. B. were “spoiled” by “extras.” Bournsell personally had no misgivings at all but that the pictures were produced by spirit agency. He was highly clairvoyant and clairaudient. He was not an educated man, and not scientific in any way, nor a man likely to have discovered some new method of producing the photographs. Mr. Hewat McKenzie had some excellent results with Bournsell twenty-five years ago.

SUPERNORMAL PHOTOGRAPHY.
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CERTAIN PHOTOGRAPHS BY
R. BOURSNELL.

Among all the various forms of physical phenomena, this is one which is most easily checked for genuineness, and is most fruitful in producing conviction of the life Beyond. The common-sense of the average man who has had an experience of it perceives at once that whether the person whose portrait appears is there present invisibly or not, some assistance from the Unseen is obviously at work in producing the phenomenon. This is still more obviously the case when the portrait is of some person, such as Lieut. McKenzie, whom no one in the studio had ever seen.

Nevertheless, supernormal photography has never been examined by the Societies for Psychical Research with anything approaching the attention that it merits; presumably because nothing reliable can be predicated of any print or negative apart from the circumstances of its production, and nothing is easier than to counterfeit such photographs.

Numbers of private photographers, however, have taken advantage of the presence among us of photographic mediums like Mr. Hope, of Crewe, and Mrs. Deane,¹² and have been convinced of the genuineness of their work. Mr. Traill Taylor, the editor of the *British Journal of Photography*, made a test of Mr. David Duguid, and described the results in a lecture to the London and Provincial Photographic Association in 1893. He certified that, accompanied by two detectives, and using his own camera, plates, and all apparatus, he obtained a number of “extras,” Mr. Duguid being merely present in the studio and not touching the plates at all. He was, of course, ridiculed, and lost caste among his fellows for his credulity.

In the case of the photographs of Dr. Geley, obtained by myself at the British College, I intimated to Mr. Dingwall, as Research Officer to the S.P.R., that Mr. Hope had not touched the plates throughout the process, and offered them for his inspection. The only question he put to me was, to the best of my recollection, “What was the size of the beaker in which the developer was mixed?”—a question whose inwardness I have never been able to penetrate.



In 1918, the Society for the Study of Supernormal Pictures was formed, with Dr. Abraham Wallace as its president, Mr. Fred Barlow being secretary, and till last year it continued its work of examination and testing. That Society consisted largely of professional photographers. It reported at its May meeting at the College, in 1920, that:—

“The members here present desire to place on record the fact that after many tests and the examination of thousands of pictures, they are unanimously of opinion

¹² See *Pioneer*, Vol. 7, No. 1: “Famous Psychic Photographer Passes on – Ada Emma Deane”.

that results have been obtained supernormally on sensitive photographic plates under reliable test conditions. At present the members do not undertake to explain how the results have been obtained, but they assert that they have undoubtedly been secured under conditions excluding the possibility of fraud.”

Probably the most remarkable psychic photographer that has appeared as yet, was Mr. Robert Boursnell, of Shepherd’s Bush, who died in 1909, and had been taking these photographs for twenty years, without any attention being paid to his work unless by private experimenters of whom Mr. S. W. Woolley was one.

Much could be added on the history of Supernormal Photography, and those interested are referred to Mr. Coates’ *Photographing the Invisible*, to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *Case for Spirit Photography*, and Mr. Campbell Holms’ chapter in his book *The Facts of Psychic Science and Philosophy*. The late Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace and Sir William Crookes were convinced of its genuineness; and Sir William Barrett after experimenting with me, came to the same conclusion, as he mentions in his last paper to the S.P.R., published in the Proc. xcii., 1924.

Supernormal photography differs from normal photography in that the objects recorded are not visible to the eye. Nor is the camera an indispensable adjunct. Numerous cases are on record of “Skotographs” (Gr. Skótos = darkness) taken on one plate in an unopened packet.

[...]

ROBERT BOURSNELL’S NEGATIVES.

As announced in the Transactions in a previous issue, the College has received from Mr. S. W. Woolley, the generous gift of 89 negatives, taken by Robert Boursnell, in conjunction with himself from February 1897 to April 1907. This gentleman is an experienced photographer and chemist, who set himself the task of examining Boursnell’s mediumship with the view of discovering its genuineness or otherwise, and if possible the method of production of the phenomena if he were convinced of their super- normality. Mr. Woolley shows a thorough knowledge of the tricks by which results can be artificially produced. He writes:—

“In regard to the authentication of the photographs, the control which I exercised was never relaxed, but I cannot, at this distance of time, give anything definite regarding a particular print. I took my own plates, previously marked, placed them in the dark slides at Mr. Boursnell’s, examining the slides well, and after exposure, took them out and brought them home with me for development. This procedure was only varied a few times in the earlier photographs, the alteration being that in my presence, the negatives were developed, fixed, and partly washed. I took them home in grooved boxes completing the washing at home. Mr. Woolley’s records show that as a rule several plates were exposed the same day and taken home for development, as stated above.”

In an exceedingly interesting conversation which he kindly gave me at the National Liberal Club, on April 28th, 1927, he explained that until thoroughly convinced of Mr. Boursnell’s genuineness, these precautions were rigidly followed. In the later examples, he omitted to mark some plates, but invariably took his own. He states that they were not handled by Boursnell at all. This disposes of the greater part of the ingenious methods of fraud usually put forward.

As in the cases quoted above, no single hypothesis will cover all the various types of photographs, always excepting the hypothesis of fraud. There is scarcely one of these photographs that could not be produced by trickery, *given the time and opportunity for manipulation of the plates*. But this goes dead against Mr. Woolley’s positive statements as to the conditions of their production, and also assumes that among the scores of

competent and professional photographers who have conducted the most rigid tests in a thoroughly sceptical spirit, there is not one who had sufficient acumen to perceive whether the medium touched, or changed the plates, or manipulated the back-ground. This kind of scepticism sterilises enquiry. It is therefore set aside in the present article. Personally, I was sceptical of the genuineness of the phenomenon till in company with Dr. Geley, I visited Mr. Hope at Crewe in November, 1919, I have given the full account of the experiment there in my book *Psychical Research, Science and Religion*, and will therefore say no more here than that the medium did not touch the plates till developed and fixed, and that both Dr. Geley and I were satisfied that there is a case for enquiry.¹³



Fourteen plates have been selected as typical. Of these it is curious that Figs. 1 and 2 should have been the first to conform to the usual idea that the image produced is of an invisible person. It is said to be a sister of Mr. Woolley's who died in infancy.

Mr. Bournsell claimed to be clairaudient, and he gave this information, which would be valueless, but that the picture is recognised by Mr. Woolley as having a strong family likeness to a living sister. He says that the occasion was the first on which he met Mr. Bournsell, who did not know of his

intention to visit the studio. It will be noticed that the lighting of the normal sitter is from the left, and that of the supernormal from the right. This is usually claimed to be proof of fraud, it being *assumed* that the plate has been prepared beforehand. It is here necessary to repeat that all such arguments are based on the *a priori* reasoning. Not all the pictures are of this clear kind. Fig. 3 is a transition. It was recognised by the sitter (Mr. Clarke) as his wife. It presents a rather wooden appearance in general outline.

Fig. 4 seems to be a figure made up to show another method. It is absolutely wooden, the anatomy is impossible. Compare the two shoulders, impossible in a living figure.



¹³ "Psychical Research, Science and Religion" by Stanley DeBrath: Published by Methuen & Company, 1925.



FIG. 5.
Taken October 18th, 1904.



FIG. 6.
Taken October 18th, 1904.

PLATE IV.



FIG. 7.



FIG. 8.

Number 6 shows a man who was said to be a pavement artist, who, Mr. Boursnell said, had produced Fig. 5 drawing on the plate. The lines of the sketch are quite clear glass in the negative, and it will be noticed that the drawing overlaps the face. There is another negative taken on the same date which shows a very clear bust of a woman above the cloud of light or ectoplasm.

Figs. 7 and 8 are an illustration of quick changes. The sitter has not moved at all, and the plates were therefore taken in rapid succession: the non-movement of the sitter is important. It shows that the two exposures from a double slide were made at short intervals, and that the "extra" is nearly, but not quite, the same in both, the hair showing slightly more and the pectoral cross is added on the second.

Fig. 9 illustrates the mode of formation. In another photograph taken on the same day (March 18th, 1897) the cloud is vague; in this the beginning of a head is seen as the cloud is gathered together.

Yet another mode of procedure seems to be given in Fig. 10, which seems to be a reproduction of an oil-painting. Note the close lines across the breast of the figure and the set of the drapery below the waist; also the hard outline of the shoulder drapery.

Figs. 11 and 12 are remarkable for the clearness of the supernormals which are in focus, the sitter being slightly out of focus. This is due, Mr. Woolley explains, to Mr. Boursnell having focussed the figure on the background, *which he could see*. Again the sitter has not moved at all during the interval between the exposures.

Number 13 is a slightly different pose of another not shown here; the face and figure are more complete and clearer. Again the sitter has not moved between the exposures. As Mr. Woolley loaded the slides himself there is no known means by which the alteration could be produced.

Fig. 14 is an illustration of a figure taken on October 7th, 1906. The self-same figure, identical down to the scratches on the plate, appeared in a photograph taken February 20th, 1905. Note that the scratches on the shoulder extend beyond the figure in both. This is almost certainly due to a psychic transparency being used.

It is unfortunate that the block-maker has neatly obliterated these scratches which are not on the plate, but in the structure of the gelatine.

CLASSIFICATION BY THE MECHANISM.

Assuming that all the photographs are genuine supernormal effects, let us now attempt to deduce some kind of system in their production. We are always dependent not only on the experimenter's good faith (however unexceptionable as in the present case), but also on his powers of observation and his skill in guarding against trickery. I have always maintained, and have experimentally verified, both in company with Sir William Barrett and others, that no trickery whatever is possible when the medium does not touch the plates in any way whatsoever, and the background is plain and the camera my own.

We are agreed that there is scarcely any supernormal photograph (with the exception of unmistakable portraits of a deceased person taken with an unexpected sitter) that cannot be imitated by normal methods, given time, opportunity, and skill. In the present case Mr. Woolley states that "in no case were the supernormal appearances which subsequently

appeared on the photographic plate apparent to the eye, and it is hardly necessary to add that all the ordinary precautions were taken of marking the plates, examining the dark slides, camera and lens stops, and background."

Based on experience in normal photography, be classified as under:—

I.—*The Objective Method.*

By this is meant that some normally invisible¹⁴ person is present before the camera, and the photograph is produced by the ultra-violet rays reflected from this body. This would account for the faces in half-tone but not for the drapery nor for the lighting which later should be identical for normal and supernormal but not for skotographs.

II.—*The Thought-form Theory.*

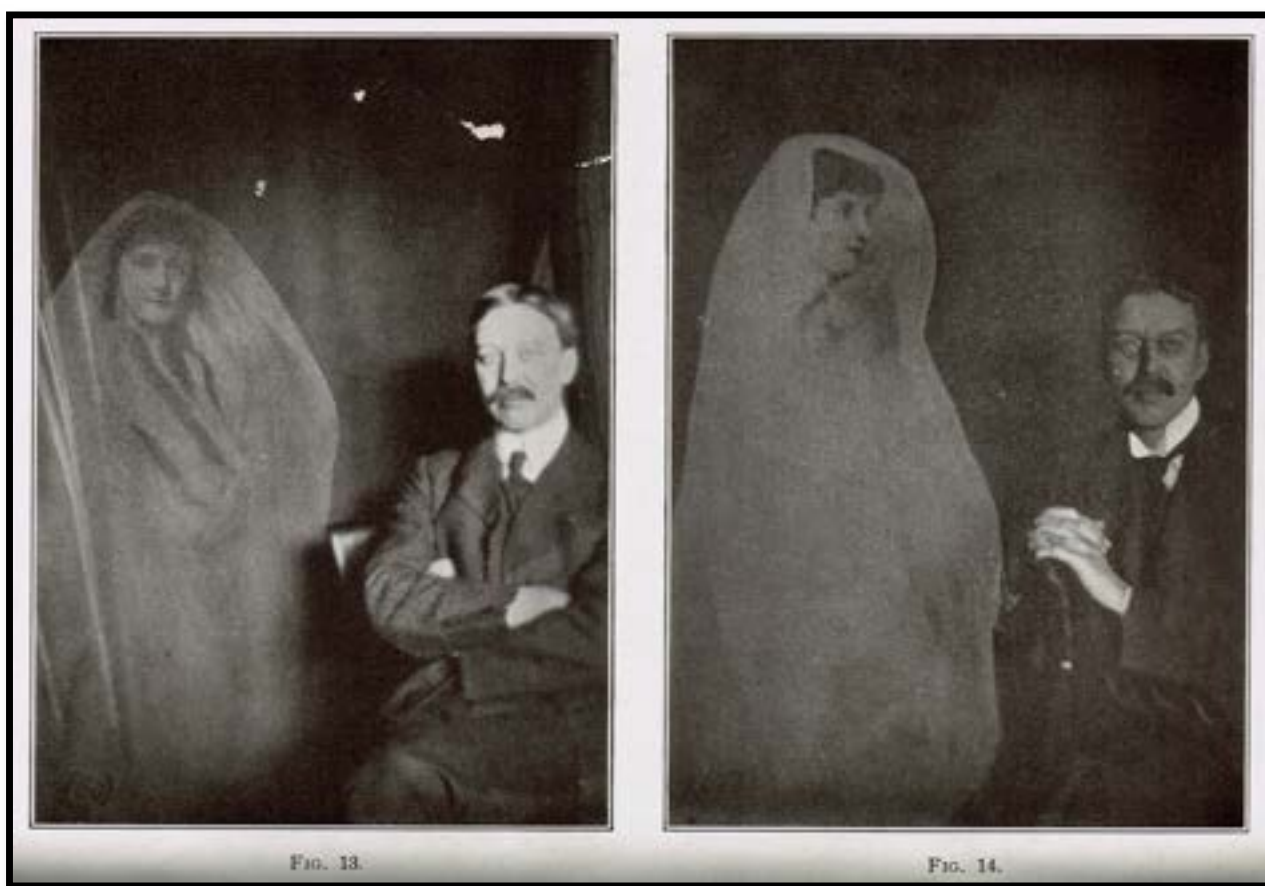
The image is a thought-form projected from the unconsciousness of the medium and sitters. This has a slight plausibility as certain forms—a cap, a stick, and a bottle, have already been produced by intense concentration for fifteen to twenty minutes. But so far no face ever seems to have been produced. Moreover the time of exposure is but a few

¹⁴ "In some cases clairvoyants present would appear to have described these persons as present".

seconds; the faces and forms vary rapidly; and the theory is quite unequal to account for the many variations in form, and for writing, unless indeed the thought-form is produced by the agency of the discarnate.

III.—*The Transparency Theory.*

The image is not produced on the plate but on an invisible film placed between the plate and the lens. This is almost certainly at least one method employed, as is shown by the cases of mirror-images in which the exact replicas are given reversed. The marks on the edges of plates which are usually referred to double exposure (fraudulent) are due to this in some cases, (not all). This would account for everything that could be produced by such method normally—writing, portraits, reproductions, and every variety of image. It would not account for the extremely rapid variation on plates taken within a few seconds of each other, nor for the clairvoyance of Mr. Boursnell, who would seem to have seen the images 11 and 12 on the background. It does not account for the “skotographs” where no light is admitted. If however the photographs are taken by some other means than light, it may indicate another process altogether.



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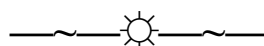
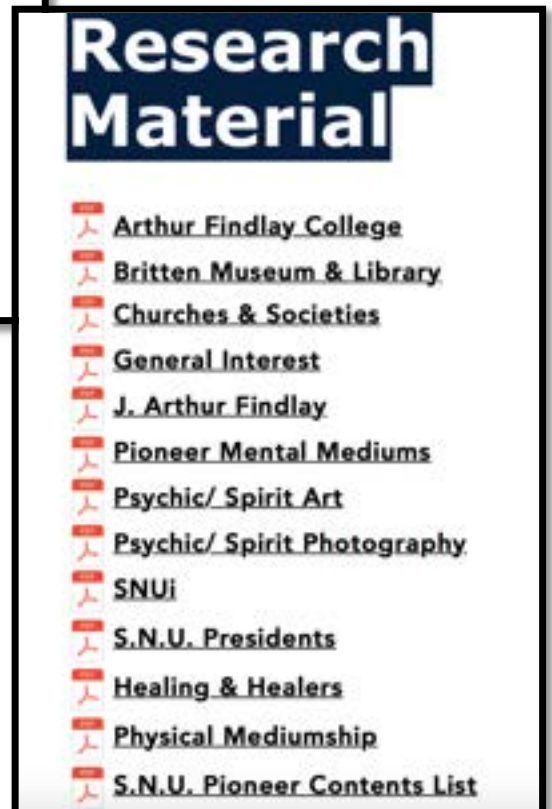
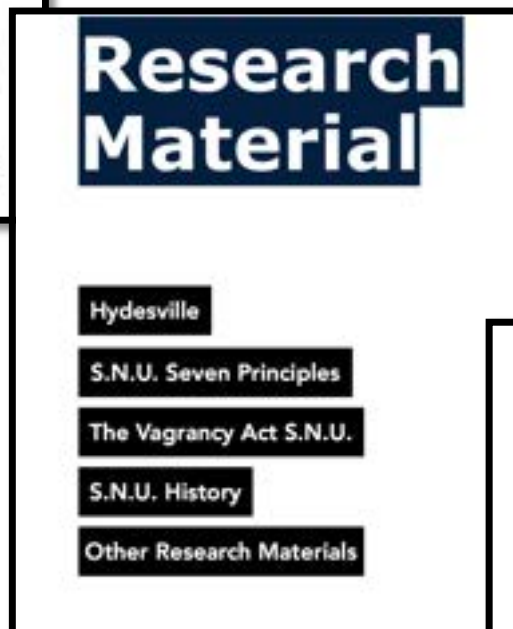
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A QUESTION OF FRAUD!

Continued ... Pt II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Pioneer Editor noted:

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

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

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



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

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

SEANCES AT MORAVIA, UNITED STATES.

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

In the light circle, where everything in the room could be seen, we saw several faces, arms, and hands. The faces resembled those whom they represented so closely, that in nearly all cases they were readily recognised.

The eyes of one figure were extremely bright and clear; the beards of some of the men were seen so plainly that the colour could be easily distinguished. A pure white handkerchief was held in full view, in the hands of another dressed in female attire; it was then by her placed over her mouth while coughing; she then withdrew it, and on it was a large spot of fresh-looking blood.

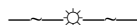
We afterwards saw the head of a coloured female; her curly hair was partly covered with a white kerchief; she gave her name as ‘Bet.’ She was not known to anyone present. John Pierpoint came, and was recognised simultaneously by many. As viewed by us, he seemed to be an old man with long white hair and beard. Before leaving he delivered a short address, concluding with these words: “Thank God, we live after death!” Giving his name, he disappeared from view. The son of Mr. Pope, a Universalist minister of Hyannis, Mass., showed himself to his father, mother, and others, three different times. At one time he said that drowning was not so hard a death

¹⁵ Portrait of the spirit “Katie King” (as shown): *Psypioneer*, Vol. 6, No. 9.

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

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

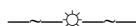
[...]



Mary Andrews is reported to have remained conscious during the phenomena; it appears she started her form materialisations in late 1871.¹⁶ Soon afterwards the spotlight was pointed to London. In January 1872 Mrs Agnes Elizabeth Guppy¹⁷ became the first British medium to materialise spirit hands and faces, followed by Frank Herne and Charles Williams, followed closely with the introduction of the teenager Florence Cook.

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

SPIRIT FACES



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

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

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

¹⁷ Sometimes called Elizabeth Guppy – later Volckman.

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

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



Mrs. Guppy

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

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

observer, one evening. "Yes," replied the spirit Katie, "I know that. I only had a little dab of stuff left, and stuck it on for a nose."

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



Florence Cook / Corner

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

In the early days of Spiritualism the question of the possibility of the duplication of the whole or portions of the human form had been mooted. An article published by Mr.

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



“Katie”

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

CLASSES OF FORM MANIFESTATIONS

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

FORMS WITH FLEXIBLE FEATURES

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

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

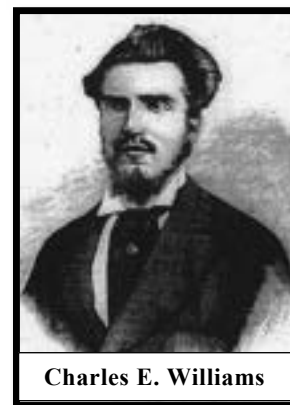
It was first well proved through the mediumship of Florence Cook (Mrs. Corner); indeed, it was better and more continuously tested in her case than in any other. She frequently left her own home to present the phenomena in the rooms and laboratories of men of science, and submitted patiently to every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

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

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

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

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



Charles E. Williams

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FORMS WITHOUT FLEXIBLE FEATURES

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

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

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

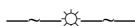
In the presence of Miss Cook, in Signor Rondi's studio, a form appears while the medium is in full view; but it does not present living, flexible features.



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

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

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



Editor's Note:

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

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

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

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

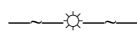
Recognisable faces of family, friends, etc. were formed with much more difficulty and needed more subtle light than those of the spirit controls owing to the spirit attendants having constant practice in the development of the medium. *The recognisable faces have less life in them, and but few of them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

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

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

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

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



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



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

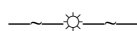
Pioneer will, at this time, focus on the most famous British medium of this era, Florence (Florrie) Cook, who in April 1874 married Captain Edward Elgie Corner. Following Florence's death on April 22nd 1904 from pneumonia, aged 47, he married her sister, Kate Selina Cook (1859-1923), in October 1907.

William Crookes, who investigated Florence Corner, was, as previously noted, not convinced of the alleged identity of Katie King, who claimed to be the daughter of Sir Henry Owen Morgan, ex-buccaneer and Governor of Jamaica under Charles II. Her name was Annie Owen Morgan. The name "John King", assumed by her father, was never satisfactorily explained: his identity with the Governor, Sir Henry Morgan, has never been established. Crookes, in a letter to Professor Brofferio in 1894, said:



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

Für den Spiritismus. Leipsic. 1894.



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

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

SPIRIT FORMS

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



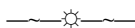
“More recent developments at Miss Cook’s circle, such as the appearance of Katie in full form, and her walking about the room, and her being able to bear so strong a light as to be photographed, are fresh in the memories of the readers of these pages. Of late Miss Cook has seen Katie once or twice when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

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

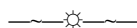
“You speak of being yourself, and not a double of the medium—who were you when in the flesh?” *“I was Annie Morgan.”*

“Were you married?” *“Yes; but don’t talk of that.”*

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

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

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



Katie King / Annie Morgan

SEIZED AT A SÉANCE

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

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

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

"GROSS OUTRAGE AT A SPIRIT CIRCLE.

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

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

²¹ *Psypioneer*, Vol. 6, No. 7: Henry Bielfeld (1802-1892).

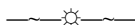
The tape and seal are now in the possession of the Earl of Caithness. Before the seance the cabinet was searched by the strangers present, and after it by Lady Caithness and others. Lady Caithness and Mrs. Corner, who never lost sight of Miss Cook from the moment the cabinet was opened, subsequently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

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

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

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

“Dec. 9th, 1873.”



William Volckman responded initially in “The Spiritualist Newspaper”:

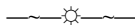
‘SIR,—In the report which appears in your journal of a *séance* lately held at Mr. Cook’s, I am accused of seizing the ghost, thereby breaking the conditions by which the members of the circle were bound.

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

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

WM. VOLCKMAN.

‘Dec. 16th, 1873.



Second seizure:

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE CAPTURE OF “A Spirit.” To the Editor of the Times.

Sir,-We think the following facts will be interesting to the readers of The Times. Some time ago, being desirous of investigating the truths of so-called Spiritualism, we were advised by an eminent Spiritualist to attend the seances held at 38, Great Russell-street (British National Association of Spiritualists). We were assured that the seances conducted at that association were the most genuine in England and under strict test conditions. On our first visit, the medium being tied by one of us with great care, no manifestations followed.

At the second visit (January 2) one of us again tied the medium, but under the directions of the chairman, who is officially connected with the institution, a “Spirit” soon appeared; which we were told was “Marie,” and was represented to be that of a dead child 12 years of age. She was dressed in white, her face covered with a veil, and her arms and feet bare. We were surprised to distinguish the appearance of a corset under the white robes, and her voice and general appearance gave us the idea that it was the medium herself—Mrs. Corner (nee Florrie Cook).

On the third visit, January 9, we were accompanied by a friend, Mr. John C. Fell, engineer, and editor of a scientific journal, of 23, Rood-lane, E.C., with his wife. The spirit “Marie” again appeared, and rendered our former suspicions almost certain by the audible

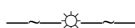
²³ BNAS would evolve into The London Spiritualist Alliance (LSA), later The College of Psychic Studies (CPS), as it is today. The BNAS members would help substantially in the formation and foundation of the “Society for Psychical Research”. See *Psypioneer*, Vol. 4, No. 10: “The Society for Psychical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

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

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

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

GEORGE R. SITWELL.
CARL VON BUCH.



Quote from Dawson Rogers' response to the letter:

Mr. DAWSON ROGERS then proceeded. This letter, he said, stated that at a séance held at the rooms of the Association, on the evening of Friday, January 9th—and at which he (Mr. Dawson Rogers) was present in his capacity of Chairman of the Séance Committee—a form appeared attired in white robes, that the form was seized by one of the circle, and was found to be the person of the medium (Mrs. Corner), and that the chair to which the medium had been bound was found to be vacant, while several articles of the medium’s dress were scattered about the floor behind the curtains which were used as a cabinet. He was sorry to be obliged to admit that all this was true. He would also take this opportunity of stating that, in the act of seizure, Sir George Sitwell was as gentle and considerate towards the medium as the successful accomplishment of his purpose would permit, and that he (Mr. Dawson Rogers)



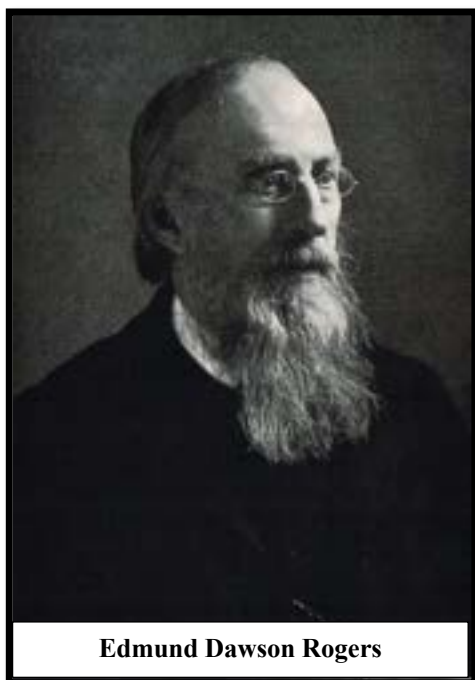
was sorry that in the heat of the moment he applied to Sir George an epithet which he freely confessed he ought not to have used. Having made a mistake he had done all he could to remedy it, and had personally conveyed the expression of his regret to Sir George, who had kindly accepted it.

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

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

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

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



Edmund Dawson Rogers

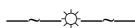
He endeavoured to soothe her, but finding that she was getting heavy in his arms, and fearing that he should be unable to prevent her from falling, he proposed to lead her out into the adjoining room. She replied, "Yes, do!" and he was about to remove her, when she suddenly exclaimed, "Why, I am undressed;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

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

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

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

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



To conclude in this issue:

SPIRIT FORM, ECTOPLASM, ETC. BEING GRABBED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

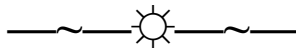
P.S. The inaugural SPR conference in January 1882 was held at the rooms of the British National Association of Spiritualists. Leslie Price.

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

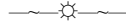
Continued in the next issue ...

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

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