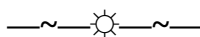




Volume 9, No. 3: June 2022

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

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pioneer@snu.org.uk**

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



A moment of pause

A step from the invisible to the visible

Four years ago, at the Arthur Findlay College Christmas Week, my presentation was on the subject of “Psychic Photography” and reached to the first commercial photographer, Frederick Hudson, in England. At the point of presenting the first slides of Hudson’s very first psychic images I had *a moment of pause*; the images were, in fact, images of full materialisation but this phenomenon was not yet developed in England. However, it was from a subjective standpoint—that a full materialised image could be photographed in full form, in daylight, albeit invisible to the human eye.

In January 1872, Mrs Agnes Elizabeth Guppy became the first British medium to materialise spirit hands and faces.¹ Her husband Samuel had read an account in late 1871 of a medium, Mrs Andrews, at Moravia, U.S. Andrews sat for manifestations in a cabinet, as did the Davenport brothers earlier, 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—a stage of development that had not yet reached England.

Samuel Guppy was resolved to try to get spirit-faces through the mediumship of his wife Agnes.² He turned a photographic darkroom into a cabinet by cutting square openings in its wooden sides, from 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 the home of Mr Guppy was written by the founder editor of the “Spiritualist” weekly journal, Mr William Harrison, and published in the “Daily Telegraph”, albeit full materialisations were not achieved at this time, as was the case with Mrs Andrews.

Around this period Agnes Guppy, along with Georgiana Houghton, was instrumental in the early development of Frederick A. Hudson’s mediumship. It was Hudson in March 1872 who introduced psychic photography to England; these were very different from the images of William Mumler ⇒, who was the first professional photographic medium a decade earlier in America,³ which was publicly introduced in the Spiritualist press in November 1862.⁴



It was Georgiana Houghton who chronicled Hudson’s work, describing him as “a photographer of marvels”. In 1882 Houghton published “Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings and Phenomena Invisible to the Material Eye”,⁵ detailing the work, development and images produced by Frederick Hudson. As noted, Hudson’s images were very different from Mumler’s: they were not *all* ghost-like, transparent in appearance, but had a density in appearance, often arousing suspicion, as the faces were often veiled or could not be recognised.

¹ Followed by Frank Herne and Charles Williams, followed closely with the introduction of the teenager Florence Cook.

² Sometimes called Elizabeth Guppy – later she married William Volckman.

³ Some researchers suggest that it was the Englishman Robert Boursnell (1832-1909) who obtained psychic markings on his photographic plates years before Mumler circa 1851.

⁴ Psychic/spirit photography from the very early days; this phase of mediumship has been the most controversial and debated within the Spiritualist movement.

⁵ “Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings and Phenomena Invisible to the Material Eye” is available as a free download.

Claimed as the first images taken by Frederick A. Hudson
on March 4th, 1872



Mr and Mrs Samuel Guppy:



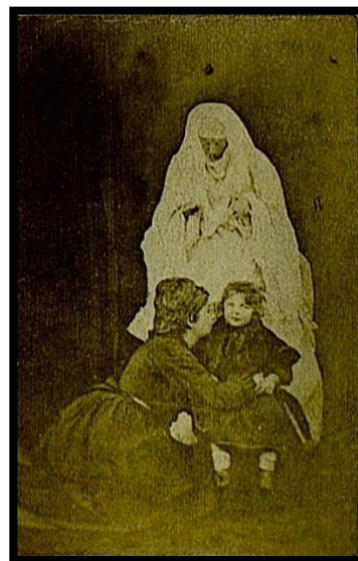
In the above image Samuel Guppy posed in daylight in front of a screen with his wife, Agnes, behind him in an improvised cabinet. While the photograph was being taken, Guppy felt a garland of flowers being delicately placed on his head. The image of Georgiana Houghton shown here is taken from Plate 1, Image 1, “Mamma extending her hand towards me”, from Houghton’s book; this gives a good view of the cabinet where Agnes Guppy would sit to generate the required conditions to produce the *invisible* materialised form in daylight conditions which registered on the photographic plate.

In the above image (bottom right, again shown here) it states: “Mrs Guppy, child, & Katie”; this shows Guppy ⁶ and her son Tommy, with the alleged

materialised image of Katie standing behind, who was the spirit who presided over the Hudson development circle.

This is said to be “Katie King” but not the “Katie King” of Florence Cook/Corner, who would become famous as England’s first full-form materialisation medium around a year later.

This Katie is said to be her mother, the wife of the early *control*, “John King”; Florence or Florrie’s Katie 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.



Mediums Frank Herne, Charles Williams and the teenager Florence Cook were associated with Hudson, all of whom were, or would become, attached to the John King family for their alleged spiritual manifestations.

It has been previously noted in *Pioneer* that the well-known images of Florence and Katie (Annie Owen) were *not* actually taken by William Crookes, as is so often assumed, but by William Harrison.⁷

Another image, again often attributed to Crookes or Harrison, is the image of Florence in a trance with her head on a chair, and the shrouded alleged materialisation of Katie King, as shown here.

However, this image is not an objective materialisation of Katie King/Annie Owen, as is often claimed in our

⁶ I do sometimes doubt that this is Agnes Guppy, as stated in Houghton’s book, owing to the fact that she was a very large lady, unless it is the camera angle which appears to make her look slight.

⁷ 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. See *Pioneer*, Vol. 5, No. 6: “Florence (Florrie) Cook - Corner & Katie King Photographs”.

Spiritualist literature but was taken by Frederick Hudson in his studio – not at Crookes' residence, as is sometimes incorrectly stated. So, taken presumably in daylight, the materialised image behind the chair would have been invisible to the human eye!

So, without doubt, if one did not know the origin of some of Hudson's images $\Rightarrow$ in the early 1870s it might be difficult to be sure whether one was looking at his psychic photography or an actual objective physical materialisation; the image of young Florence with her head on the chair has caused error for some 150 years.

The images by Hudson are similar to what would some years later become known as ectoplasmic drapery, used in materialisation séances, etc., what some researchers and Spiritualists would describe as resembling muslin or a cheesecloth material.



Plate I, No. 2

Plate I, No. 9:

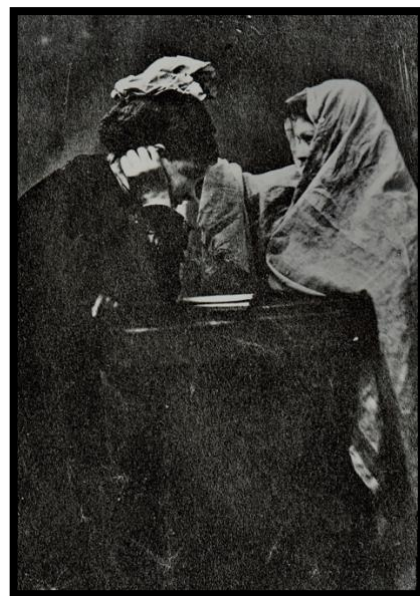
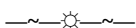
This shows Georgiana Houghton with Tommy Guppy and the spirit of his grandmother.

Houghton generally refers to the substance later called ectoplasm as:

“Embroidered drapery”

The images varied: the white-garbed forms were not always transparent and were partly hidden by the medium, a table, a chair, etc., which could not be double exposures, i.e. a single exposure.

Arguments raged, splitting the Spiritualist movement for and against Hudson



However, when full-form materialisations developed in England, we can note that they were not at first like the *embroidered drapery*, as Houghton defined it, as can be clearly seen in the Florence Cook/Corner materialisations of Katie King junior, i.e. Annie Owen Morgan. Katie's drapery was always as white as snow and she was dressed in a single garment with a girdle around her waist and with bare feet; her dress varied in shape at nearly every séance, it was noted. It feels like material *uniting* the spirit and the medium.

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

SPIRIT FORMS

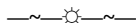


"Where the white drapery of the spirits comes from is a mystery. The manifestations were too important in their nature not to be verified in every possible way, although to the many who know the integrity of the medium, tests are not considered to be necessary. Nevertheless, not only is the medium bound 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."



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:

"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"

Various names over the years have been given for the production of the *drapery* used in materialisation (and indeed for all physical phenomena); for example, Edward Cox coined the term 'Psychic force' – atmospheric magnetism. The term 'Psychic force' was used by William Crookes – basically related to the existence of a nervous atmosphere – vital force – i.e. nervous energy; this force was embraced by certain people called "mediums". 'Psychoplasm' followed, and another term was 'teleplasm', but it was mostly known as 'ectoplasm'.⁸

⁸ Leading researchers investigated Eusapia Palladino's phenomena, e.g. Frederic Myers and Oliver Lodge. Polish researcher Julian Ochorowicz held experiments with Palladino during 1893-1894 and concluded that the

Frederick Hudson images only seen via a photographic plate vs objective images via a physical medium ⁹



As full-form materialisations started to develop after Florence Cook/Corner, we find, generally, that the drapery was similar to that in Hudson's images – except that now it is visible to the human eye.

The drapery in materialisation is often considered to be white in appearance but this is not always the case, especially in the case of Helen Duncan, where it was often reported as off-white or grey/brown, with an offensive odour.



As far as the actual withdrawal of the fluids is concerned, i.e. ectoplasm, which is required for materialisation, it is normally depicted as coming from the mouth of the medium¹⁰. At the time of writing this article I believe that this method of externalisation began around four decades after the first known British materialisations began with the teenager Florence Cook.

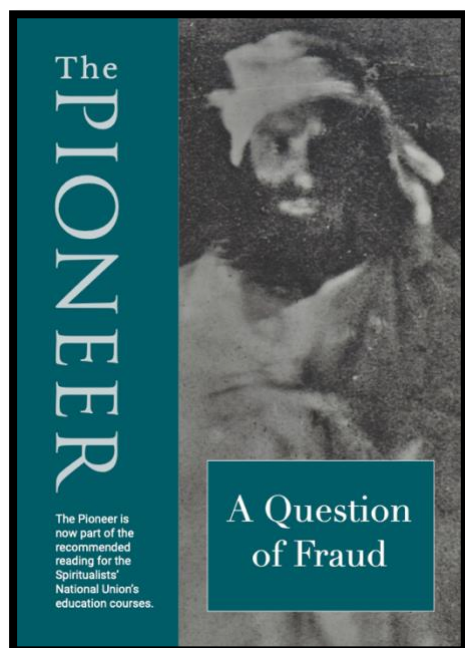


phenomena were due to “fluidic action”. French researcher Charles Richet brought in the term ‘ectoplasm’ at the time he investigated Palladino in 1894.

⁹ A sitter at Hudson's studio with an *extra*, perhaps a relative, guide or friend of the sitter. The other image on the right shows early Victorian physical medium Annie Mellon and “Cissy”, her Black Spirit Girl. Annie worked for over four decades as a materialisation medium.

¹⁰ Minnie Harrison, active circa mid 1940s – 1950s, and Helen Duncan circa 1941.

This article has primarily focused on the similarity of psychic photographer Frederick Hudson's early images, which were most similar, or even the forerunner, to what would later become a new phase of objective physical phenomena known as full materialisation. In the Pioneer three-part series, "A Question of Fraud," Part 2 showed in some detail the classes of form, "Manifestations: Forms with Flexible Features – Forms Without Flexible Features", with the early materialisation mediums in the 1870s. I noted:



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.

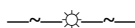
To conserve the required power to form the materialisation only the necessary body parts were formed; *...usually form only a head, and sometimes arms and hands.*

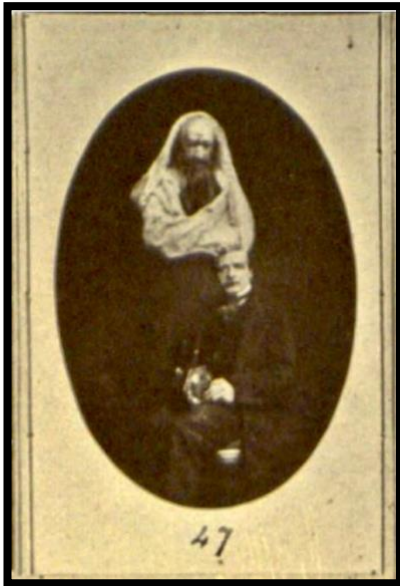
Recognisable faces of family, friends, etc. were formed with much more difficulty and needed more subtle light than those of the spirit controls owing to the spirit attendants having constant practice in the development of the medium. *The recognisable faces have less life in them, and but few of them 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 image shown here is Plate VI, No. 47, taken from facing page 244: “Mr. Hudson and Thurston” (his alleged spirit helper), from Houghton’s 1882 “Chronicles of the Photographs of Spiritual Beings and Phenomena Invisible to the Material Eye”.

As noted in the above quote from “A Question of Fraud” it is strongly noted that “the *fact* that the materialised form bears a strong resemblance to the medium!” – “this would be, of course, a disadvantage to the genuine medium and an advantage to the fraudulent medium!”



This problem also stems from one of Hudson’s images of the physical medium Frank Herne; Hudson’s critics took Hudson severely to task on his image of Frank Herne being in fact both sitter and ghost image, as shown here ⇒.



This article began with a PowerPoint presentation, which has also revealed an unfortunate observation by myself and those who were present. I had my images enhanced to the best quality I could achieve. When the above image of Hudson and his alleged spirit helper Thurston was shown, it was clearly noted on the large screen that under the drapery is a man standing in a dark suit, with the drapery over his shoulders—supporting the headdress! I had not noted this on my computer screen while composing the PowerPoint; it is by far less evident on the small screen, as will be noted in the Pioneer booklet, “Spirit Photography”. There was on occasion good testimony of his genuineness as well as accusations of fraud.

Was Hudson himself duped, as the image is behind him? Sitters generally would not turn around but sit still without moving, as would be the usual instruction to them.

Almost all the information for this article is taken from the Pioneer pdf booklets:

“Spirit Photography”

“Physical Mediumship”

“A Question of Fraud”.

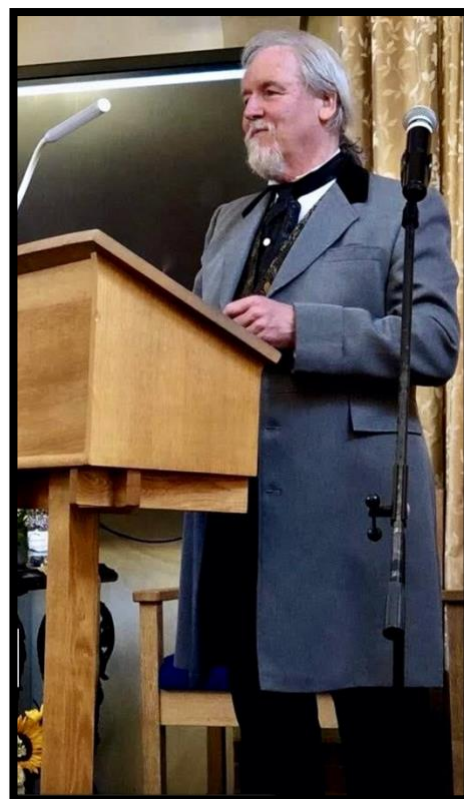
These are freely available to search online or to download; see the last page of this issue.

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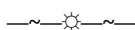
July 2nd – 9th 2022

September 3rd – 10th 2022



This page also has a selection of downloadable important subjects from the history of the Spiritualists’ National Union, designed to cover key topics for anyone studying one of our courses or for anyone looking to further their knowledge on the history of our movement.

Also, a link to all “Psypioneer” issues often referenced in Pioneer





AUTOMATIC OR SPIRIT WRITING

Automatic writing has featured over past issues of Pioneer, for example Grace Rosher, whose method of writing is shown in the photograph; others include Geraldine Cummins and her faithful assistant Miss E.B. Gibbes, as well as Stainton Moses, who used the pseudonym 'M.A. Oxon'.¹¹

Below is featured another pioneer of this form of writing mediumship, Sara Underwood, who was married to one-time editor of the weekly American Spiritualistic journal, "Religio-Philosophical Journal", Benjamin Franklin Underhill (1839-1914), sometimes referred to in the article as B.F.U.; for more information on this valuable journal, which was founded by Stevens Sanborn Jones in 1865, please see Psypioneer, Vol. 3, No. 2: "Religio-Philosophical Journal". On March 15th, 1877 Jones was murdered just after mid-day and died instantly from two pistol wounds; he was at his office at the Religio-Philosophical Publishing House Building, No. 394, Dearborn Street, Chicago. Some background information on Benjamin and Sara Underwood can be noted from this article, as quoted here:

At this period the journal was under the editorship of Benjamin Franklin Underwood. In the 'Light of Truth', Album issued by The Light of Truth Publishing Company Columbus, Ohio 1897 we read this about the Underwoods:—

B. F. Underwood

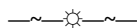
One of the most prominent lecturers, debaters, and writers of the Free Thought cause, was Mr. Underwood, at this time. Besides this he is a journalist of high rank. He was born in New York City, July 6, 1839, and in 1857 already contributed articles to first - class journals. He served as lieutenant in the Union army. At the close of the war he re-entered the lecture field, and was late editor of the Boston Index and Chicago Open Court. Few men have ever received such editorial deference by the press as Mr. Underwood. For several years he was editorial writer for the Religio Philosophical Journal, on scientific, religious, and moral subjects, and for about two years he himself conducted the paper along the lines and in the interest of the Psychical Research Society. Mrs. Underwood associated with him, writing directly in support of Spiritualism, citing in proof her own personal experiences. As a young man Mr. Underwood was inclined to materialism, but latterly he has lectured on Spiritualism – having made its phenomena a subject of careful investigation. He has also contributed articles to the Arena and Journal of Psychic Research anent his observations in relation to this subject. He was also secretary of the Psychical Science Congress held in connection with the World's Fair, co-operating with many other prominent men in contributing to the success of those important meetings.

Mrs. Sarah A. Underwood.

Until her eighteenth year, Mrs. Underwood was a Methodist, but shortly after reasoned herself out of orthodoxy into liberalism. About this time the writings of Mr. B. F. Underwood also came to her notice, which resulted in correspondence and eventually marriage in 1862. She then became identified with the reform movement, though

¹¹ This is found in the Pioneer pdf booklet, "Mental Mediumship", as advertised at the end of this issue, which can be searched online or downloaded.

longing all the while for a higher light and some definite evidence of immortality. But upon reading the results of investigations made by Professors Sidgwick, Lodge, and James, she remembered some youthful experiences with the planchette, and determined privately to experiment in automatic writing. The results proved that “spirits” were the agency, as described in her book entitled “Automatic Spirit Writing.” Her present address is 2653 Evanston avenue, Chicago, Ill.



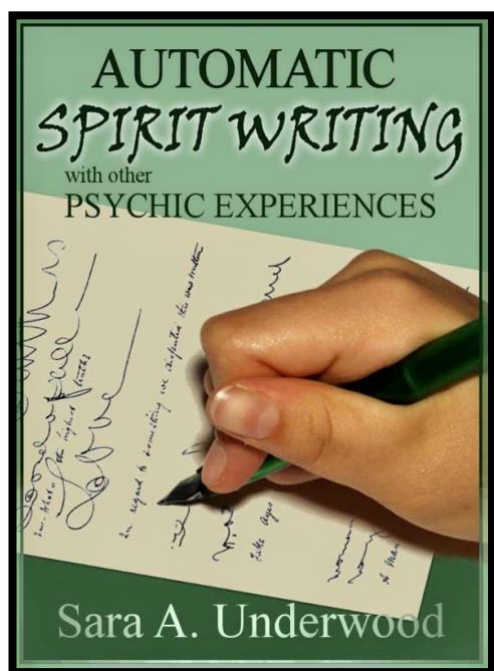
The book review by “W”, published below, is taken from the Two Worlds, July 24th, 1896, and mentions the development of Sara as a writing medium, shrouded in her own doubts as to the actual phenomena claimed by spirits, and the challenging questions she put to the spirits who it was claimed wrote through her rather than her subconscious mind. In the early phases of the various mediumships in Victorian times it can be noted, for example in psychic photography and some trance art, etc., that the medium *sometimes* needed a partner—for a better word—to *boost* their required psychic force to produce the phenomena required by the spirits. Mrs Underwood soon discovered that she was not successful as a medium unless Mr Underwood (B.F.U.) was also present—a blending of powers:

AUTOMATIC OR SPIRIT WRITING.

SARA A. UNDERWOOD.¹²

By W.

What you don’t grasp is wholly lost to you,
What you don’t reckon, think you, can’t be true.



THE ABOVE LINES, from Goethe’s “Faust,” should be remembered by all opponents to the phenomena of Spiritualism. Some oppose it from one motive, some from another, but all may be reckoned up in the thought that they don’t grasp the full significance of the deductions to be drawn from its teachings. Our attitudes to all such should be as that of “seers to those yet in the dark—as full of lovingness and tenderness as one who sees to those bereft of sight, eager to remove the disability, but patient with their natural mistakes and halting steps. Remember, as they are so once were ye, and they too shall be ultimately led to the light.” That is the feeling one often has while reading Mrs. Underwood’s thought-inspiring book on automatic writing. For Spiritualists, it is not merely the book of the month, but a standard work, to be studied, not only for the curious phenomenon of automatic writing, but for the ‘beautiful moral teachings’ given by that means.

There are often references to the “conditions” necessary for getting the writing, and Mrs. Underwood soon discovered that she was not successful unless Mr. Underwood was also present. If he left the room the writing instantly ceased, even if she was in the middle of a sentence, and no more writing could be got till he returned. That “power” was drawn from him is proved by the fact that it produced a feeling of fatigue with him, which, however, would soon pass away when the writing ceased. This suggested to the

¹² Originally published by Thomas G. Newman, Chicago, Ill. in 1896. It has been more recently republished in 2012 and is available in various formats from Amazon. It is also available as a free download.

medium to ask her spirit friends if it would be injurious in its effects, the reply was that it might cause a little nervousness for an hour or so, but, ultimately, it would be beneficial rather than injurious.

One evening, when Mr. Underwood was busy, and not paying any attention to the medium, the invisible intelligence asked for “a warmer greeting from B.F.U.” as he is usually denominated. They tried to write, but coming to a sudden stop, the medium asked, “why not go on?”

A. “We are not strong enough to do with your aid alone.”

Q. “Why?”

A. “Blended powers are of greatest use to us.”

On another occasion, after a rather warm discussion between themselves, they asked the control a question on an entirely different subject, but instead of answering, there was written:—

Want you two to be in sweet accord, otherwise we cannot give you the best and highest which waits for such as you when in more harmony.

Only mediums fully understand the absolute necessity for perfect harmony at circles, even if there are manifestations, they are liable to be faulty, if not mischievous. And not only at the seance is it necessary to have good conditions, but it should be prepared for.

“Save your power of spiritual friendliness for the occasion, and we will give powerful tests.”

Q. “How can we save power?”

A. “By some previous care of temper. Let not emotion of any sort control your spirit. Be guided by our higher desires and aspirations, let us for once fully control.”

“Come willingly to us, or we cannot give you communications.”

Here is one of the many little proofs that it was not the medium’s own brain, as some have suggested, which dictated the writing. She says:

Often when I note the first letters of a word my thought runs on ahead, and I guess the word is going to be this or that, but the intelligence which rules seems to be cognisant of my guessing, and to take a perverse pleasure in twisting the words into something wholly unexpected, yet bringing the sentence into harmonious thought when finished.

It was the development of Mrs. Underwood’s mediumship which eventually convinced both herself and her husband of the truth of Spiritualism, and drew them away from Agnosticism, their former belief, or rather want of belief.

In the introduction, Mr. Underwood tells us that the medium’s private opinions were often vigorously combated by the various intelligences using her hand, and matter-of-fact information, unknown to either of them, was often given—another proof that it could not have been her own brain or sub-conscious self that dictated the writing, or even a case of thought transference. He also says:

Sometimes philosophical questions are discussed; at other times verse is composed with greater rapidity than Mrs. Underwood can write even prose in the ordinary way. I have seen written by her hand thirty or forty lines, quickly and without pause, and a curious fact worth mentioning is, that in several cases the

poem was constructed in a way which showed that the whole must have been in the mind of the real author when the first verse was composed.

On one occasion, after a communication from an entirely different source, and one in no way suggestive of Browning, the words, “one word more,” were rapidly written, then followed the verse:

Round goes the world, as song-birds go,
Then comes an age of overthrow;
Strange dreams come true, yet still we dream
Of deeper depths in Life’s swift stream.

Objections were raised by the medium to so many of the communications being signed by noted names, when was written:—

Elaine and Guinevere were not real beings, but types—so somewhere in our sphere, are spirits who embody cleverness in creations of their fancy, and adopt names suited to their ideas.

The medium also objected to the false and often mischievous statements which were sometimes made, and she asked why such things were allowed. They replied:

Rather tough problem. There are certain phases of our existence here which are not explainable to you on your plane, and the test we were obliged to make of your credulity was one of these.

Naturally, there was a strong protest made against what appeared to be very deceitful proceedings. But they said:

Why do you protest when you already know you are but a tyro in this phase of being? You don’t now willingly do the work assigned you, and B.F.U. is still harder to manage.

Perhaps the explanation may be that:

These invisibles declare that they are as seriously and anxiously experimenting on their side to discover modes of untrammelled communication with us, as we, on our side, ought to be, if what they write be true, and if such a thing be possible.

To account for some of the phenomena of Spiritualism, it has been suggested “that a portion of the self becomes alienated and appears to the mind as a separate, foreign personality.” A most curious suggestion, and decidedly a “far-fetched hypothesis to account for all mental phenomenon, one of the peculiarities of which is that it sometimes surpasses the conscious mind of the psychic in the power of thought shown, knowledge of facts, and in force and facility of expression.” It seems equally out of the question to attribute this wonderful gift of automatic writing to the sub-conscious self, for, as Mr. Underwood says, “The sub-conscious self would then be deceiving the upper self, which is an absurdity when ‘the psychic’s conscious self is, as to veracity and trustworthiness, beyond suspicion.’ ”

Mr. T. W. H. Myers, who has made automatic writing a subject of prolonged and careful investigation, says that in some of the automatic messages received he cannot avoid the conviction that it is the “departed personality” which originates them.¹³

¹³ It should read: F[rederic] W. H. Myers, who was on the first Council of the Society for Psychical Research, founded in 1882 (as was Frank Podmore, mentioned elsewhere in this issue); Myers’ work in psychical research was indeed extensive and much of this is to be found in *Psychopioneer*.

Rev. Minot J. Savage is equally emphatic:

I have been told things which neither the medium nor myself knew, or could by any possibility have known. If there is any other theory than a Spiritualistic one to explain facts of this sort, I don't know what it is.

Professor Alfred Alexander, of Brazil, thinks there is a special value in automatic writing, because—

It may not be merely fanciful to say that the supraliminal self, being awake, stands sentinel over the operation, and prevents the ingress of disturbing forces.

Mr. Underwood says:

It is not improbable to my mind that much of the so-called sacred literature of the world was written by scribes, who were moved to write by intelligences which they could not identify with their own, and which they believed were divine. The Koran, the sacred authority, and guide for many millions of people, was, I believe, produced in this supernormal manner, and may it not be true of some of the books of the Bible ? ¹⁴

Mrs. Underwood must have inherited some of her mediumistic gift, for she refers to her mother's experiences "of visions and voices;" but for all such things she had only "lofty feelings of pity for her superstitions and imaginings." Little did she think that in a few years she would herself be an authority on the subject. She had the same feeling of "lofty pity" for all who confessed themselves Spiritualists; and as for the phenomena, she says, "I was sure it was imagination, or partly due to some undiscovered law, but mostly due to deliberate fraud."

Her own first experience was with the planchette, when such a remarkable test was given, that her companion, a blind man, exclaimed excitedly, "Throw that thing away. It is of Satan ! don't touch it again. Please don't !"

While still an Agnostic, a strange experience came to her at the bedside of a dear friend on the point of death.

It was near midnight; death was momentarily expected. All the other watchers, exhausted by days of grief and care, were snatching an hour of rest; and I stood alone, looking at the unconscious face before me, which was distinctly visible, though the light was heavily shaded to keep the glare from the dying eyes. All her life my friend had been a Christian believer, with an unwavering faith in a life beyond this, and for her sake a bitter grief came upon me, because, so far as I could see, there were no grounds for that belief. I thought I could more easily let her go out into the unknown if I could but feel that her hope would be realised, and I put into words this feeling. I pleaded that if there were any of her own departed ones present at this supreme moment, could they not, and would they not give me some least sign that such was the fact, and I would be content.

Slowly over the dying one's face spread a mellow radiant mist—I know no other way to describe it. In a few moments it covered the dying face as with a veil, and spread in a circle about a foot beyond, over the pillow, the strange yellowish-white light, all the more distinct from the partial darkness of the room. Then from the centre of this, immediately over the hidden face, appeared an apparently living face, with smiling eyes, which looked directly into mine, gazing at me with a look so full of comforting assurance that I could scarcely feel frightened. But it was so

¹⁴ See Pioneer, Vol. 9, No. 1: "The Relation of Modern Spiritualism to Christianity - Ernest W. Oaten", which was continued in the next issue.

real and so strange that I wondered if I were temporarily crazed, and as it disappeared, I called some one from another room, and went out into the open air for a few moments, to recover myself under the midnight stars. When I was sure of myself, I returned and took my place again alone. Then I asked that, if that appearance were real and not an hallucination, would it be made once more manifest to me; and again the phenomenon was repeated, and the kind, smiling face looked up at me—a face new to me, yet wondrously familiar.

Afterwards, I recalled my friend's frequent description of her dead father, whom she dearly loved, but whom I had never seen, and I could not help the impression that it was his face I saw, the hour that his daughter died.

To be concluded.

The Two Worlds, July 31st, 1896:

AUTOMATIC OR SPIRIT WRITING.

SARA A. UNDERWOOD

By W.

Concluded:

WHEN Mr. and Mrs. Underwood were one time discussing the advisability of asking a medium of their acquaintance to sit with them, they were told to "Wait. It is always best to test even mediumistic persons, since their control and yours may be on different planes, and belong to altogether different spheres. You do not on your plane wish to take into your confidence every one who professes to think and believe as they think you do." Good advice, truly, and another variation on the word "conditions."



*Sincerely yours,
Sara A. Underwood.*

The indefinite nature of description, usually given by "controls," of their environments in spirit life has many times been remarked upon, and it has even been brought as an accusation against mediumship that it was proof the control was not really from the spirit side of life, but probably merely an exalted state of the medium's own brain or thoughts, gathered from the other sitters. Mrs. Underwood complained about these indefinite descriptions being given in reply to her questions for information of spirit spheres, when was written:—"Words, as you know, are inadequate to present clearly pictures of the things most familiar to sense-perceptions. How, then, can we paragraph to your limited knowledge wonders beyond our power to describe or comprehend?"

Q. "Can you give a hint as to what the most marked differences between what your ideas were while here as to spirit existence, and the reality as you now know it?"

A. "Void are words, bounded by earthly meanings, to answer your query. Sense perceptions are on so much lower a plane of spirituality, that no words within your knowledge could convey definite ideas of spirit existence. . . . Those studying the A B C of life, cannot expect to understand the x of algebra."

Let us all remember this when inclined to complain of the imperfection of mediumship, that need not, of course, hinder us from ever striving after perfection, but it will help us to cultivate the virtue of charity in thought.

The following reply to a query as to whether it was worth while striving after more perfect knowledge of spiritual things, should stimulate those who think there is no progress in mediumship, and be an encouragement to the faint-hearted to persevere. "Those who have advanced as far as you have advanced, will grow in esoteric knowledge in spite of hard conditions."

An instructive and interesting answer is given to the question: "Are the different religious beliefs held by men on our plane carried on to your sphere, and believed in after their death?" "Clear thinking is not at once attained by even the fairest-minded, who experience the change you call death; and with new meanings attached to old ideas, the sects will persist for one or more changes of planes."

'Are you happy?'" is often asked by inquirers, when a spirit friend controls the medium. Here is a reply from one, which is almost enough to make one long for the future life:—"Told as a wonderful dream of poet or seer, I should have thought this phase of existence a phantasm too beautiful for realisation, but living this new, sweet, helpful life, I am constantly wondering if I am a real part of this sphere."

Here is another question which has, in various ways, often been asked by investigators. The reply is instructive. "Why do you not answer our appeal to you on behalf of M.L., that she may hear from her friends?" "A. Shall not we who are *en rapport* with all spiritual entities such as the soul whose earth name you speak, know more fully than your short sight can guess at, the spiritual need of silence from our side, though desire and earthly longing would break and cancel all spiritual law? Should not a spiritualistic mortal like the sweet soul you mention be disciplined to wait the proper hour for spirit communion?"

And that "proper hour" often is when the soul is in such deep sorrow that it inclines one to say with the psalmist, "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me."

Spirit friends often remind us of the ephemeral nature of all life's trials, and that suggested the question, when Boehme purported to be in control, how he viewed his own earthly sorrows now?"

A. "Bitter was the cup which spiritual powers compelled me to drink when on your plane. In the light of my higher knowledge on this plane, I am only sorry that even more bitter draughts were not offered me, while with such as you, to give blessed cause for the joys which I now experience. Be of good cheer, children of truth, ye shall reap tenfold what ye sow in tears and fearfulness."

One control spoke of feeling crestfallen when he got to the spirit-side of life, and how much better it would have been had he known something of the truth while in earth life. Another said, "The trials and temptations of both upper and lower strata of society are essential to true development."

The conditions on the other side of the veil seem to be as varied as on this—perhaps more so—and one spirit found everything so different to anything he expected that it made him feel quite "homesick," and he was glad to get into communication with his old friends again.

A wealthy materialist wrote through the medium, "Those may thank their fates to whom has been given the cult of poverty." He was charitable, and did much good with his money when in earth life, but in spirit life his constant regret was, "Oh, the good I could have done had my eyes been opened; that makes me unhappy."

There are many discussions between the medium and her spirit friends, on deeply interesting subjects, such as Cremation; Religion and Morality; Christ, Buddha, and Mahomet; Theosophy and Spiritualism; Evil; Spirit and Matter; God; Eternity—all

stimulating thought, whether we agree with what is written or not. Those who believe in individual immortality will be inclined to doubt the truth of the following, but which, nevertheless, sounds very like “a natural law in spiritual life.”

“Spirit as a whole is eternal—exists, did exist—will exist by force of powers you do not understand. But you, as individuals, self-conscious atomistic particles of spirit wholeness, are not eternal, and must return to the Primal Source. There is happiness, however, almost undreamable—possible, before your atoms are submerged—returned to that Primal Source, which makes your existence all-good.”

In the medium’s desire to obtain fuller and more perfect knowledge of spiritual truth, she asked what was the best way. The answer was: “Love for all humanity is the ‘short cut.’ Salvation comes through love always, never through mere philosophical attainments.”

Mrs. Underwood has a word of reproof for those who seek for phenomena only, instead of considering them simply as a means to an end.

“To those for whom phenomena and spirit recognition are the be-all and end-all of Spiritualism, only phenomena, and that not of the highest type, will come. In Spiritualism more than any other religious faith is it true, that only to those who earnestly ask for it shall the truth be given, and only those who knock at the door of spirit for admittance in their search for the key to the higher life shall find the way open?”

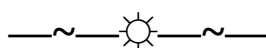
Mrs. Underwood was, at first, very reticent about her gift for automatic writing, and for some time did not mention it even to her most intimate friends; but this reticence was not pleasing to her spirit friends, who desired her to publish the writings. As a preliminary, they said: “Share your gladness with a select few before publication.”

After a while they began to urge her to publish, but for long these importunities were resisted. Then they called her a coward; and sometimes in the middle of a sentence there would be a sudden pause, and then came the word “coward.” While in a state of doubt on the subject, she asked: “Don’t you know that many will disbelieve what we say ?” to which they replied: “Some will doubt what you may state, but the many are an hungered and athirst for the truth as it has been given through you two.” These invisible powers complained of feeling impatient because of there being “so little sensible appreciation of their work. . . . Your vanity is in the way. Mortals are as queer as ever !” Which compliment may, sometimes, be returned to our spirit friends !

After the first publication of her experiences, Mrs. Underwood had letters from many, to whom they had been helpful and comforting. And all who read the book will rejoice that she was at last obedient to the wishes of her spirit friends, for from cover to cover it is of unceasing interest. One lady, who lived in a lonely place, and who had gone through a like experience, but feared to tell anyone for fear they should think her mad, and treat her accordingly, was very grateful in her acknowledgment of the help it had been to her to know that hers was not a solitary case.

So interesting, suggestive, and instructive are the writings as a whole, that we can quite believe with Mr. Underwood that “These experiments have convinced her, as nothing in the orthodox faith held by her ancestors, in which she was educated, had or could, of the truth and reasonableness of the soul’s survival of death, and of its progressive existence in spheres beyond this mortal life.”

May every reader be equally convinced of its truth, and may there be many readers of Mrs. Underwood’s interesting book on “Automatic Writing.”



THE LEVITATION

Of Daniel Dunglas Home

There are numerous contradictory accounts of what appears to be a remarkable psychic event in the history of Spiritualism, for example:



*'On December 13th, 1868, the English medium D.D. Home floated out of the window of his apartment on the third floor in front of three impeccable witnesses and returned through another one. This is how it is described in this chalk drawing hanging in Conan Doyle's "psychic" museum.'*¹⁵

The first task, of course, is to try to get the facts correct: Home was a Scottish medium and it was not his apartment, as quoted. Other available information has different addresses as to where it is said that Home drifted out through one window and came in at another seven feet or so away, and, also, variations of the lighting at the time, i.e. full moon or in darkness, and the séance date, etc. of the alleged levitation; however, the location and date confusion are more easily accounted for, as will become apparent.

The account of this extraordinary feat of levitation was first recorded by one of the three witnesses, Viscount Adare, in "Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home", published privately in 1869. This is available as a download from the valuable website run by historian Marc Demarest, "The International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals".¹⁶

Adare gives the séance date and location, which includes Home's levitation, as *No. 41.—Séance at 5, Buckingham Gate, on Wednesday, December 16th, 1868* on pages 82-83, which is quoted below (only the levitation part of the séance is quoted here, not the full séance) in the presence of the three witnesses, Viscount Adare (later the fourth Lord Dunraven), the Master of Lindsay (later the Earl of Crawford) and Captain Charles Wynn (Adare's cousin):

Home then got up and walked about the room. He was both elongated and raised in the air. He spoke in a whisper, as though the spirits were arranging something. He then said to us, "Do not be afraid, and on no account leave your places;" and he went out into the passage. Lindsay suddenly said, "Oh, good heavens ! I know what he is going to do; it is too fearful."

ADARE: "What is it ?"

¹⁵ Published in UHU Magazine, November 1927 (reference not checked). Doyle's "Psychic Bookshop, Library & Museum" is featured in *Psypioneer*, Vol. 5, No. 5: May 2009.

¹⁶ "The IAPSOP is a US-based private organization focused on the digital preservation of Spiritualist and occult periodicals published between the Congress of Vienna and the start of the Second World War. Our all-volunteer staff digitizes, indexes and makes available free of charge these periodicals, in our archive, for use by students and researchers: <http://iapsop.com>". The site also archives the now defunct issues of *Psypioneer* (May 2004 until December 2016) noted on the index page of the *Pioneer* issues.

LINSAY: "I cannot tell you, it is too horrible ! Adah ¹⁷ says that I must tell you; he is going out of the window in the other room, and coming in at this window." We heard Home go into the next room, heard the window thrown up, and presently Home appeared standing upright outside our window; he opened the window and walked in quite coolly. "Ah," he said, "You were good this time," referring to our having sat still and not wished to prevent him. He sat down and laughed.

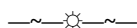
CHARLIE: "What are you laughing at ?"

HOME: "We were thinking that if a policeman had been passing, and had looked up and seen a man turning round and round along the wall in the air he would have been much astonished. Adare, shut the window in the next room." I got up, shut the window, and in coming back remarked that the window was not raised a foot, and that I could not think how he had managed to squeeze through. He arose and said, "Come and see." I went with him; he told me to open the window as it was before, I did so: he told me to stand a little distance off; he then went through the open space, head first, quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again, feet foremost, and we returned to the other room.



It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp, or rest upon, the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in. Outside each window is a small balcony or ledge, 19 inches deep, bounded by stone balustrades, 18 inches high. The balustrades of the two windows are 7 feet 4 inches apart, measuring from the nearest points. A string-course, 4 inches wide, runs between the windows at the level of the bottom of the balustrade; and another 3 inches wide at the level of the top. Between the window at which Home went out, and that at which he came in, the wall recedes 6 inches. The rooms are on the third floor. Home presently got up again, told us not to be frightened or to move, and left the room. Adah Menken told Lindsay that they were going to shew us the water test; but for some reason or other I suppose they were unable to do so, for Home came in again directly, sat down and said "Dan must awake now, he will be very nervous; but you must bear with him, it will pass off." I asked Lindsay how Adah had spoken to him on the three occasions. He could scarcely explain; but said it did not sound like an audible human voice; but rather as if the tones were whispered or impressed inside his ear.

When Home awoke, he was much agitated; he said he felt as if he had gone through some fearful peril, and that he had a most horrible desire to throw himself out of the window; he remained in a very nervous condition for a short time, then gradually became quiet. Having been ordered not to tell him, we said nothing of what had happened.¹⁸



¹⁷ Adah Isaaks Menken was an American actress acquainted with both Home and Adare etc.; she died in August 1868.

¹⁸ Pioneer: The text is reproduced as given by Adare, despite the confusion caused by much of the evidence of Adare being mixed up in the paragraph under the heading "Home".

It is clear that the *original* account is not so well defined as some later reports suggest inasmuch as all the three witnesses *claim* to see Home float—levitate—between the two windows, i.e. exit and return in one action.

Home met Viscount Adare in 1867 soon after he was living with Adare at his residence at Ashley House, Westminster. It was here that some of Home's manifestations took place and were recorded in Adare's book, "Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home". Home remained at his friend's residence until just before Adare's marriage in April 1869.¹⁹

Much research was done by Trevor H. Hall in his 1984 book, "The Enigma of Daniel Home: Medium or Fraud?"; albeit the tone of the book is to discredit the mediumship of Home, some of his research is nevertheless valuable. The author notes in his chapter on "The Levitation", page 111:



It is perhaps surprising to have to record first of all that students of the case have always found difficulty in ascertaining where the famous levitation actually took place, because the observers, for some incomprehensible reason, succeeded in enveloping this simple piece of information in a fog of confusion. Adare incorrectly headed his account of the evening "No. 41. Séance at 5, Buckingham Gate, Wednesday, December 16th," following this immediately in his text with a contradiction: "On Sunday last, Charlie Wynne and I went over to Ashley House after dinner. There we found Home and the Master of Lindsay. Home proposed a sitting."

The séance evidently took place on Sunday, 13 December 1868, in a building known as Ashley House, which was certainly not 5 Buckingham Gate, the London home of Adare's father, the Earl of Dunraven. These muddles naturally caused confusion among later writers, including Madame Home herself, who on page 299 of *D. D. Home: His Life and Mission* gave the wrong date. Harry Price, on the other hand, on page 276 of *Fifty Years of Psychological Research* offered the correct date of 13 December but for some reason said that Home's aerial journey took place in Victoria Street;²⁰ while Frank Podmore, on page 255 of the second volume of *Modern Spiritualism*, repeated both the mistakes made by Adare. Miss Jean Burton said that the medium and Adare lived together at 5 Buckingham Gate. She ventured no opinion regarding the date of the levitation, but said that the account of it was "microscopically examined for discrepancies." She said that the date of *Experiences in Spiritualism*, which she called "the little book," was 1870 (Heyday of a Wizard, pp. 192-93, 201).

The two addresses are distinguished in *Experiences*, séances having taken place at both, but for some reason Adare never indicated in his text the street in which Ashley House was situated. Madame Home, in one of her books, simply said that Adare and Home were staying together in the former's rooms in Ashley House in London.²¹ Adare himself, in later life, when challenged on the incorrect address of 5 Buckingham Gate, admitted the mistake but was still infuriatingly uninformative about the location of

¹⁹ Image of Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quin, 4th Earl of Dunraven and Mount-Earl (12 February 1841-14 June 1926), styled Viscount Adare between 1850 and 1871.

²⁰ Pioneer: Ashley House was close to Victoria Street, which is parallel to Ashley Place, where it was situated.

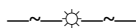
²¹ Hall: *The Gift of D. D. Home* (London, 1890) pp. 270 and 279.

Ashley House in his letter responding to an inquiry from Mrs. W. H. Salter of the SPR of 6 May, 1924:²²

The discrepancy is unfortunate, but it is, I think, easily explained. I frequently stayed at my father's house—5 Buckingham Gate—and Mr. Home often stayed there with me. In my father's and mother's absence the house was, of course, shut up, and my recollection is that I and Mr. Home just had bedrooms there and lived out.

It is plain from the context of the book that we frequently went from Buckingham Gate to attend séances at other places. I take it that the heading in the "Experiences" is copied from the letter which I wrote to my father from Buckingham Gate, and probably on Buckingham Gate notepaper, relating to the séance which took place at Ashley House on the previous Sunday. The correct title should have been, "No. 41. Séance at Ashley House, Sunday, December 13th." The discrepancy applies to the date as well as the address, as the title states Wednesday the 16th and the context commences "On Sunday last."

There can be no doubt whatever but that the séance was held at Ashley House on Sunday, December 13th and that the notes concerning it were posted by me from 5 Buckingham Gate on Wednesday, December 16th.



Naturally, for historical reasons the correct address and date is required but, more importantly, in this case it is crucial, given that during the séance details are given about the outside measurements of the building where it is said that Home took his aerial flight, so the correct location is vital:

It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp, or rest upon, the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in. Outside each window is a small balcony or ledge, 19 inches deep, bounded by stone balustrades, 18 inches high. The balustrades of the two windows are 7 feet 4 inches apart, measuring from the nearest points. A string-course, 4 inches wide, runs between the windows at the level of the bottom of the balustrade; and another 3 inches wide at the level of the top. Between the window at which Home went out, and that at which he came in, the wall recedes 6 inches. The rooms are on the third floor.

Ashley House was located on the corner of Ashley Place and Carlisle Place, Westminster, London. Hall obtained from a friend, an architect named Peter A. Bond, an illustrated report, with plans and photographs of Ashley House before it was demolished; a photocopy is shown here.

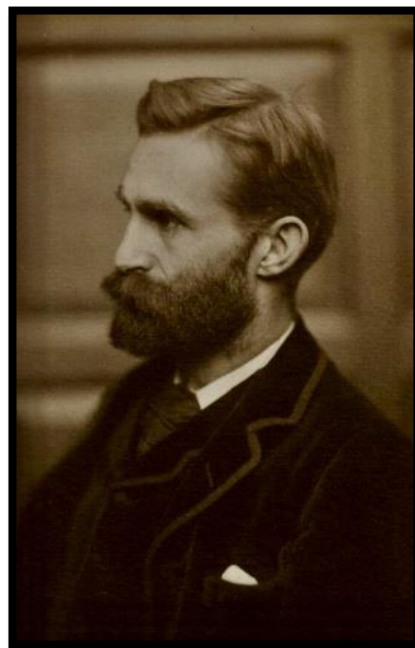


²² Hall: SPR Proceedings, June 1924, pp. 152-53. Mrs. Salter evidently noticed the discrepancy when the SPR reprint of 1924 was being prepared.

Bond calculated and claimed it to be *within a matter of inches* that the height of the building from street level to first-floor balconies was 12 feet, first floor to second approximately 11 feet, second floor to third approximately 9 feet 6 inches, which shows that the levitation was approximately 32 feet 6 inches above ground level.

However, in the account of the levitation given in “Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home” in 1869 only the *first* account is given by the same three witnesses, as noted by the critical psychical researcher Frank Podmore²³ in his “Newer Spiritualism”, published in London in 1910, pages 66-70:

The more famous incident took place in December of the same year, 1868, a week or two later than the case just recorded. Mrs. Home²⁴ gives the date as the 16th of the month. But this date appears to be founded on a misreading of Lord Adare’s account (the only account known to the present writer in which any date is given). His record is headed “Séance at 5, Buckingham Gate, Wednesday, December 16th.” But the report of the séance commences “On Sunday last,” *i e.*, December 13th. [...]. The fullest account is that of the Master of Lindsay. In his evidence before the Dialectical Society he is reported as saying:



“I saw the levitations in Victoria Street when Home floated out of the window. He first went into a trance, and walked about uneasily; he then went into the hall. While he was away I heard a voice whisper in my ear, ‘He will go out of one window and in at another.’ I was alarmed and shocked at the idea of so dangerous an experiment. I told the company what I had heard, and we then waited for Home’s return. Shortly after he entered the room, I heard the window go up, but I could not see it, for I sat with my back to it. I, however, saw his shadow on the opposite wall; he went out of the window in a horizontal position, and I saw him outside the other window (that in the next room) floating in the air. It was eighty-five feet from the ground.”²⁵

In a letter written two years later he writes:

“I was sitting with Mr. Home and Lord Adare, and a cousin of his. During the sitting Mr. Home went into a trance, and in that state was carried out of the window in the room next to where we were, and was brought in at our window. The distance between the windows was about 7 feet 6 inches, and there was not the slightest foot-hold between them, nor was there more than a twelve-inch projection to each window, which served as a ledge to put flowers on. We heard the window in the next room lifted up, and almost immediately after we saw Home floating in the air outside our window. The moon was shining full into the room; my back was to the light, and I saw the shadow on the wall of the window-sill, and Home’s feet about six inches above it. He remained in this position for a few seconds, then raised the window and glided into the room, feet foremost, and sat down.”

²³ Pioneer: Image of Frank Podmore.

²⁴ Podmore: “Life of D. D. Home”, p. 299.

²⁵ Podmore: Report, p. 214.

Lord Adare's account of this incident is as follows:

"We heard Home go into the next room, heard the window thrown up, and presently Home appeared, standing upright outside our window; he opened the window and walked in quite coolly."

Lord Adare's account appears to have been written a few days after the incident. In February, 1877, the third witness, Captain Wynne, gives his testimony, in a letter to Home, as follows: "The fact of your having gone out of one window and in at another I can swear to."

Here we have three separate accounts of what purports to be the most stupendous marvel of modern times. Let us examine each account separately. Lord Lindsay was the chief spokesman. What did he see and hear? He heard a sound which suggested to him that a window in the next room was being lifted up. Subsequently, sitting with his back to the window, he saw on the wall a shadow which he interpreted as that of Home "floating" outside the window, opening the window, and gliding into the room feet foremost. Even if the outside illumination had been good, and the shadows on the wall quite sharply defined, Lord Lindsay's testimony would amount to very little.

The shadows, we are given to understand, were cast by the moon, and Lord Lindsay could not of course determine from the shadow on which side of the window Home was standing. At most, he could testify that there was a space between Home's feet and the window-sill. But were the shadows sharply defined? On reference to the almanack, it will be found that the moon was new on December 13, 1868. A three-days-old moon (on the improbable assumption that the date quoted by Mrs. Home was correct) would not have afforded much light; a new moon is, of course, invisible. The only light which came through the window, it would seem, was that of the stars and the diffused light from the streets of London, eighty-five feet below.²⁶ Did this light enable Lord Lindsay to see anything at all?

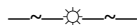
But we have two other first-hand accounts. What do the other witnesses say? Captain Wynne, eight years afterwards, says he can swear to the fact. Lord Adare says: "We heard the window open, and presently Home appeared . . . outside the window." Appeared to whom? Lord Adare tells what he heard. Why does he not tell us what he saw? Is it not a little curious that two of the witnesses to this stupendous marvel should be content to give so meagre an account, without any details, and couched in such ambiguous language? And is it not still more curious that the task of describing the details should have been undertaken by the one member of the party who from his position could see nothing?

If Lord Adare had really seen the whole drama, is it likely he would have left it to be told practically at second-hand? A comparison of the three accounts, and the ambiguous wording of the testimony given by Lord Adare and Captain Wynne, suggest that possibly none of the witnesses had their faces turned directly, towards the window, and that Lord Lindsay was the only one of the three who made the attempt to distinguish between what he saw and what he inferred. For Lord Adare is not generally chary of detail. He records much more fully an incident which took place immediately after, an incident of which he was the only spectator:

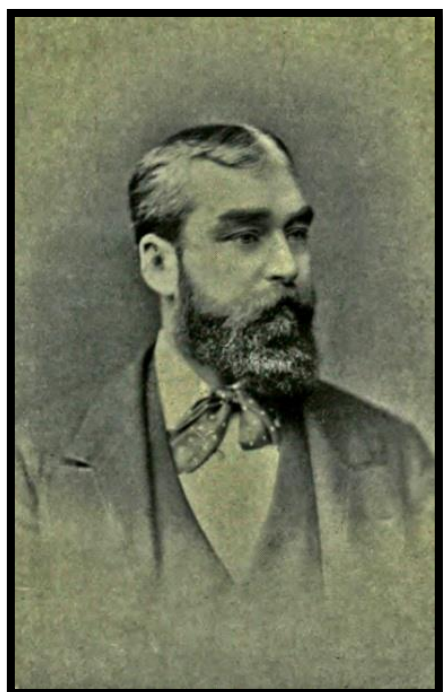
At Home's request he had shut the window in the next room. On his return to the séance-room.

²⁶ Podmore: Lord Adare states that the room was on the *third* floor. Some one has blundered. Perhaps 85 is a misprint for 35.

“I remarked that the window was not raised a foot, and that I could not think how he [Home] had managed to squeeze through. He arose and said, ‘Come and see.’ I went with him; he told me to open the window as it was before. I did so; he told me to stand a little distance off; he then went through the open space, head first, quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again feet foremost, and we returned to the other room. It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp, or rest upon, the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in. Outside each window is a small balcony or ledge nineteen inches deep [*i.e.*, apparently, nineteen inches wide], bounded by stone balustrades eighteen inches high.”



Podmore then speculates on how Home could have possibly achieved the levitation by normal means. The chain of events so far is clearly contradictory and constructed on numerous errors and confusion; given that the story is only told about on one *singular event*, lasting no more than a few minutes, by the three witnesses present, it is by no means straightforward and clear.



Further, it is recorded that Adare, then Lord Dunraven, gave a handwritten account of Home’s alleged levitation at Ashley House to Sir Francis Burnand (1836-1917), an English comic writer and prolific playwright; later Sir Burnand referred to this in his memoirs, “Records and Reminiscences”, published in two volumes by Methuen, London, 1904.²⁷ Lord Dunraven’s account is, unfortunately, not quoted by Sir Burnand verbatim and the author makes no reference to the date when Lord Dunraven gave the report to him. It is published in Vol. II; below is the full account on pages 109-12:²⁸

Lord Dunraven’s story as to Home floating in the air, which I think appeared in some magazine, but of which his Lordship kindly furnished me with an account written out in his own hand (I have it by me now among my “archives”), may be by this time forgotten. In a few words I can, and I think I ought to, recall it, as it certainly tends to clear Home’s character and to make us wonder what sort of weird creature he was. Before and

since the time of Simon Magus, to float in the air is, as I gather from certain occult works on “signs and wonders,” one of the recognised manifestations of supernatural agency.

We have the evidence of Holy Writ in confirmation of the phenomenon. It is, as we know, as dangerous as is “playing with fire,” since, though the magician may “go up like a rocket,” yet, the spirits being notoriously untrustworthy, he *may* “come down like a stick.”

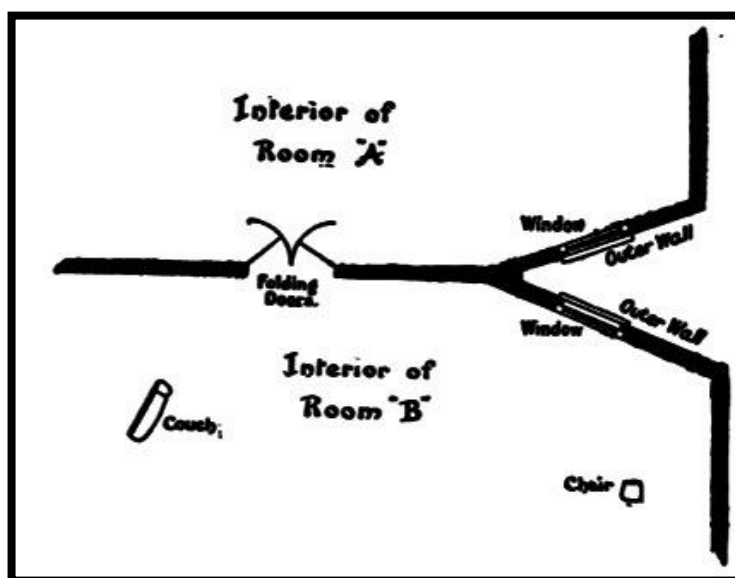
Lord Dunraven, then Lord Adair, had, I believe, rather “taken up” Mr. Home, who had been raised to the rank of a Lion of the Season, and had gone in for spiritualism, just

²⁷ Pioneer: Image of Sir Francis Burnand, circa 1870s.

²⁸ Pioneer: Available as a free download. It can be noted that Sir Burnand was acquainted with D. D. Home, having previously with his wife attended a gathering with Home and remained undecided: “Whether Home’s “spirits” were “above” or “below Proof,” I have never as yet been able to decide.”

as, being of an inquiring turn of mind, his Lordship in his time has tried his hand at many, if not at most, things.

It was in Lord Dunraven's rooms, not on the occasion of a formal professional *séance* as I understand the account, but of a casual visit paid by Home, who found Lord Dunraven at home chatting with a friend. There were two rooms which communicated with each other by folding-doors. A window of one room faced a window of the other. Each being on opposite sides of a triangle, as in the plan here shown—²⁹

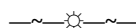


The rooms were on the first floor with, therefore, a formidable drop into the area below.

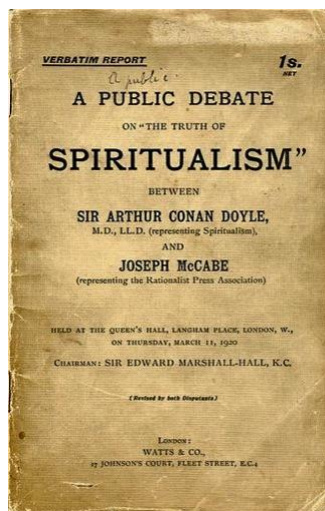
Lord Dunraven and his friend passed from room A into room B, leaving Home in the former. He had gone to sleep, or, as he afterwards described it, “had fallen into a trance.”

While Dunraven and friend were seated in B, discussing the pros and cons of spiritualism, his Lordship's attitude towards it being that of “philosophic doubt,” a tapping was heard at the window, and turning towards it, they, to their amazement and horror,—for the result of a slip, on so small a space for standing securely as the ledge afforded, would have been fatal,—perceived Home erect on the ledge. Lord Dunraven opened the window, and Home entered. He still appeared to be in a trance, and his action was that of a man walking in his sleep. He sat down; and very gradually awoke.

Such is the plain unvarnished tale, for the truth of which Lord Dunraven vouched, though, he added, that he committed himself to no sort of opinion as to means whereby this phenomenon was produced. If Home's aerial flight had an object, that object must have been primarily to gain over entirely to his side this philosophic nobleman, whose support would have been of the greatest value to him socially, and therefore financially. In this object he failed. Lord Dunraven was puzzled: that was all. But how did Home contrive to open one window and at the risk of his life jump, for it was more than a mere step could have accomplished, from one ledge, on which he scarcely had a footing, to another that afforded him no greater rest for the sole of his foot, and all this without anything whatever to cling to? I have never heard it explained; and, personally, I find it impossible to explain on any ordinary **un**-supernatural hypothesis.



²⁹ Pioneer: The plan supplied by Adare or made up by Burnand re the facing of the windows shows no resemblance to the official photograph of Ashley House shown elsewhere in this article.



Trevor Hall records in his book, “The Enigma of Daniel Home: Medium or Fraud?”, that Lord Dunraven wrote a later, third account, as published in the “Weekly Dispatch” issue, March 21st, 1920 (unfortunately I have not been able at present to find a copy), which stimulated a public debate held at the Queen’s Hall, London on March 11th, 1920 between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mr Joseph Martin McCabe, who was extremely critical of the Spiritualist movement. Hall notes: “... the Home levitation was the subject of a violent if somewhat uninformed dispute.”³⁰

Doyle wrote a pamphlet, “Spiritualism and Rationalism: With a Drastic Examination of Mr. Joseph M’Cabe”, dated July 30th, 1920, where he briefly refers to the debate mentioned by Hall on pages 10-12:

Mr. M’Cabe in the recent debate centred himself upon the case of levitation in Ashley Place in 1868, when in the presence of Lord Adare, Lord Lindsay, and Captain Wynne of the Guards, Mr. Home is alleged to have passed out of the bedroom window in Lord Adare’s lodgings and floated seventy feet high over the street, entering in through the sitting-room window. Three excellent witnesses were present, each of whom agreed that this extraordinary thing occurred. Mr. M’Cabe, who, of course, was not present, explains after his fashion what really happened, and that they saw not what they said they saw, but something entirely different. We must always presuppose in order to get Mr. M’Cabe’s point of view that everybody present was either a liar or an incompetent idiot who needs a man of sense—Mr. J.M. for choice—to set him right and dry-nurse him lest he be the victim of a delusion.

Let us consider Mr. M’Cabe’s explanation of this incident. I say “explanation”, but on carefully reading over what he has said I do not find that he has offered any explanation at all, though he has given a most grotesque account of what took place. He begins by making the legitimate point that whereas Lord Lindsay said the moon was shining upon December 16th, the almanac shows that on that date it was only three days old. That is fair enough, though, as I pointed out in the debate, when a man sees so wondrous a sight as a figure floating in the air, he may well be excused for making some mistake as to whence the light came from.

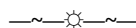
But bar this one point, there is no common sense in any of Mr. M’Cabe’s criticisms. He is under the strange delusion that these three men who were expecting that Home would attempt this feat and had been warned of it, sat with their backs to the window. Could anything more absurd be imagined ! Why should they sit with their backs to the point where they expected a wonderful manifestation to appear ?

They actually sat with their faces to the window, as any reasonable beings would sit. They then saw, not “a shadow on the wall”, as Mr. M’Cabe so perversely supposes; but the shadow of the man outside thrown across the window sill in front of them. “Home’s feet were six inches above it,” says Lord Lindsay. “We heard Home go into the next room, heard the window thrown open, and presently Home appeared standing upright outside our window,” says Lord Adare. “I can swear that Home went out of one window and came in at the other window,” says Captain Wynne. What quibbling it is to suppose that there is anything nebulous about this evidence, or that these gentlemen are bolstering up some doubtful case ! I repeat that many historical events have been accepted upon far slighter evidence.

³⁰ Pages 105-106.

Up to this point, Mr. M'Cabe is not open to any more serious charge than that of having twisted the facts in order to produce some vague feeling of deceit which he cannot apparently himself define. But there follows a *suppressio veri*, which must forever shake confidence in Mr. M'Cabe as a controversialist. Both Lord Lindsay and Lord Adare have stated that the latter then went into the bedroom with Home, and finding the window only slightly open, wondered how he could have got through. Says Lord Adare, writing at the time to his father Lord Dufferin [sic]:

“He told me to stand a little distance off; he then went through the open space head first quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again, feet foremost, and we then returned to the other room.” Mr. M'Cabe, not being able to explain this incident in any way, has omitted it altogether. Surely it is a very weak case which has to pick its evidence in this fashion, and a very wild advocate who winds up his impotent criticisms by saying, “the supposed levitation of Home was the most hollow piece of charlatanry in the whole history of Spiritualism.” Such a saying is on a par with a previous assertion that “Home lived on his spiritualistic gifts from his sixteenth year to the year in which he died.” It is not true, and anyone who reads the man's life must know that it is not true, and that it is a posthumous slander upon a most ill-used and noble man.



Editor's Note:

The reports given above give the reader some idea of the confusion about one of Spiritualism's greatest stories: the levitation of Daniel Dunglas Home. The different accounts of the same story and the different variations of added or changed material are normally accumulated over years, as we have seen with Hydesville, the Seven Principles, etc., but the confusion here is created by just three of the *first-hand* only witnesses within just a few years of the actual event taking place and where they were all present at the time it took place.

In my view, it is most important to stress that this was an impromptu séance by three young friends, one a close friend of Daniel Home. Given this fact it was not a controlled experiment under any kind of test situation, etc., but this séance nevertheless resulted in one of the biggest stories in British Spiritualism, which ideally needs to be told in context and foundation. However, the contradictions and the changing of the story by those involved over a short period of time have naturally drawn the attention of historians and psychical researchers outside and within the Spiritualist moment. It has shown good cause to be skeptical and in some avenues it can be seen that the whole thing can be explained as being done by normal means, as well as by psychic phenomena.

The point regarding the wrong address and date of the alleged levitation has been, to my mind, satisfactorily explained, but, of course, our history books had already recorded the confusion over the location and date of the séance. It is understandable that Adare cloaked in mystery the location of “Ashley House”, the residence which he shared with Home, as Home was well-known within the public eye, so privacy would no doubt have been welcome.

I have not, of course, published above all the reports from the three witnesses, for example Lord Lindsay told his story twice, firstly as written evidence on July 6th 1869 to the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, who were appointed to investigate the claims of Spiritualism. His contradictory evidence is quoted within the above reports. He later sent a letter to the then weekly Spiritualist journal in 1871, “The Spiritualist”. One of the numerous examples of the problems of the contradictions and story changes is apparent. The original report by Adare states: “It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside.” Lindsay in his report the following year, some seven months later, states: “The moon was

shining full into the room”. I need not give more examples given the previous statements in this article.

From the critics’ and psychical researchers’ point of view—and naturally some Spiritualists—they can see the possibility that fraud could occur under the cover of darkness, given that, as some accounts state (unlike Lindsay), it was a new moon, with only the stars to light the rooms. There were possibly street lights below but whether or not any street lights would be on in the Victorian era approaching midnight I cannot say. There is also the matter of the various heights given of the levitation by the witnesses, etc.; Lindsay said eighty-five feet above the ground, Doyle gave seventy feet. However, the modern calculations are more probably realistic, as given by Hall, at approximately 32 feet 6 inches; this was also noted by Frank Podmore as probably thirty-five feet.

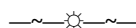
As already noted in my editor’s note, this was not a controlled séance in any way, it was simply between friends, so no blame for inaccuracies should be attached to Adare’s estimates of the outside structure of Ashley House (albeit they appear to be precise). However, as he included it in the first 1868 report it has become of interest to some historians and psychical researchers.

As previously noted, Adare stated:

It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp, or rest upon, the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in. Outside each window is a small balcony or ledge, 19 inches deep, bounded by stone balustrades, 18 inches high. The balustrades of the two windows are 7 feet 4 inches apart, measuring from the nearest points. A string-course, 4 inches wide, runs between the windows at the level of the bottom of the balustrade; and another 3 inches wide at the level of the top. Between the window at which Home went out, and that at which he came in, the wall recedes 6 inches. The rooms are on the third floor.³¹

Trevor Hall notes on page 120 of his book, “The Enigma of Daniel Home: Medium or Fraud?”, referring to the architect Peter Bond:

Lord Adare said in *Experiences in Spiritualism* that the windows and balustrades at Ashley House were 7 feet 4 inches apart. Peter Bond calculates that the distance was nearer to 6 feet 6 inches. Both these estimates, however, relate to the distances between the windows of *adjoining houses*. As can be clearly seen from the photograph reproduced, however, if the windows are in the same house they are much nearer; and Peter Bond calculates from the large-scale official photograph of Ashley House taken before demolition that the distance between the two windows of the adjoining rooms on the third floor with which we are concerned was about 4 feet 2 inches. He considers that the ledge that connected the two balconies was probably somewhat wider than Adare’s estimate of 5 inches.³² It is clearly visible in the photograph. Each balcony was surrounded by a low balustrade.



³¹ Pioneer: We can note in Sir Francis Burnand’s report that he stated the levitation took place on the first floor: it can be assumed that this is an error either by Adare or Sir Francis, as there is no doubt it was the third floor.

³² Hall: I can find no reference to this claim.

In conclusion:

It is, of course, almost impossible to furnish ourselves with a clear picture of the actual events which took place; it seems that none of the witnesses *actually* saw Home float between the two windows, as claimed in much of the literature! Adare's first report: "Do not be afraid, and on no account leave your places;" (D. D. Home) and he went out into the passage ..." where he claimed to go out of the window in another room. "We heard Home go into the next room, heard the window thrown up, and presently Home appeared standing upright outside our window; he opened the window and walked in quite coolly. "Ah," he said, "You were good this time,"".

Sir Francis C. Burnand's report to Adare's handwritten letter to him, albeit not verbatim, states: "While Dunraven and friend were seated in B, discussing the pros and cons of spiritualism, his Lordship's attitude towards it being that of "philosophic doubt," a tapping was heard at the window, and turning towards it, they, to their amazement and horror,—for the result of a slip, on so small a space for standing securely as the ledge ..." This shows they had their backs to the window! And why state "Dunraven and friend ..."? Which friend? Or can we assume that the missing one of the three was Lindsay? His statement to the Dialectical Society is perhaps suggestive that he was in the room where Home was said to have exited; he said: "I heard the window go up, but I could not see it, for I sat with my back to it. I, however, saw his shadow on the opposite wall; he went out of the window in a horizontal position, and I saw him outside the other window (that in the next room) floating in the air. It was eighty-five feet from the ground."

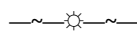
It is, of course, difficult to understand what position he was in to view from both rooms, but these two accounts do show that all three had their backs to the window/s or were not paying attention. We can note in Doyle's public debate with Joseph M'Cabe, who suggested this scenario, that Doyle replied: "He is under the strange delusion that these three men who were expecting that Home would attempt this feat and had been warned of it, sat with their backs to the window. Could anything more absurd be imagined ! Why should they sit with their backs to the point where they expected a wonderful manifestation to appear ?"

I have always believed that to reach an informed, balanced overview of any claimed phenomena one requires as much flexibility as possible to reach an informed personal decision with the available information, negative and positive. On the negative side, researchers have put forward feasible suggestions of how this could be achieved by normal means, given Adare's comment; "It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside." Some base their conclusions on this, others on mesmerism. Trevor Hall looks at the outside structure and, of course, the profound darkness, but he was no doubt urged on by the architect Peter Bond's later estimation of the space between the windows and the width of the ledge etc.; this is what Hall concludes on page 120:

I do not think it can be doubted that an active man *who had no fear of heights*, could stand on one balcony, holding the balustrade for support, place one foot over the balustrade on to the ledge, and stride with safety onto the other balcony with the other foot, using the other balustrade as a second hand-hold.³³ The fact that Home was quite fearless of heights is demonstrated on page 77 of *Experiences in Spiritualism*, when during the séance (séance No. 40) immediately before that of the levitation he actually opened the window and stepped out on to the balcony. Adare and Lindsay were alarmed for his safety, but he stepped calmly back into the room, chiding his friends for their lack

³³ Hall: As regards the feasibility of what I believe Home did, it is worthy of note that the late Harry Houdini, whose head for heights and agility were excellent, like those of Home, recorded privately in his diary on 6 May, 1920, that he "offered to do the D. D. Home levitation stunt at the same place that Home did it in 1868." B. M. L. Ernst and H. Carrington, Houdini and Conan Doyle: *The Story of a Strange Friendship* (London, 1933, p. 47).

of faith in him. This highly important incident, which in my view was part of the psychological preparation of the observers for what was to happen at the next séance, ...

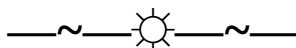


It appears that none of the three witnesses actually saw the alleged levitation of Home floating out from one window and into the other.

There is no indication that they watched Home leave from the first window or viewed him outside the building floating and returning in mid-air to their location at the second window.

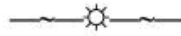


Much on D.D. Home can be found in the Pioneer pdf booklet, “Physical Mediumship”, as advertised on the last page of this issue.



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