

PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

Edited by
Paul J. Gaunt

Founded by Leslie Price

Archived by
Garth Willey



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Note by LP: In 1931 the LSA returned a negative report on the physical mediumship of Mrs Duncan. Their newspaper LIGHT was still recalling this in 1944 (see Dec 2013 Psypioneer).¹ But one person who did not write off Mrs Duncan in 1931 was the LSA president, Dr Fielding-Ould, as we can see from his letters below.² We also reprint refutations of false reports published at the time in the “Morning Post” in which Harry Price played a mischievous role:

SECONDARY PERSONALITY

DR. R. FIELDING-OULD ON THE
MEDIUMSHIP OF
MRS. DUNCAN

To The Editor of LIGHT.

Sir,—The report on the mediumship of Mrs. Duncan is a record of observed facts with which I entirely concur. But it was unfortunate that all the possibilities of her supernormal faculties have not been explored; this was partly due to circumstances set forth in the report and partly to other considerations to which I shall be obliged to refer in the near future.



My own personal opinion is, that Mrs. Duncan probably possesses what we are accustomed to regard as genuine mediumistic faculties. On several occasions, both in trance and in the normal state, she exhibited clairvoyant and clairaudient faculties and remarkable intuition. This exaltation of normal faculty is of frequent occurrence in people of unstable composition, *vide* W. James, Jung and many other distinguished authorities. Moreover, if Mrs. Duncan is not to be set down merely as a very astute trickster, it is reasonable—and some of the observed facts support the theory—to suggest that were dealing with a case of dual personality.

Her ego-personality was apparently ignorant of the performances of her secondary personality, and all that appeared as transparent fraud was due to the mischievous entity set free by the disintegration of her total personality under the dominant (perhaps hypnotic) influence of her husband.

If this is a tenable theory, and there are considerable grounds for holding it, it gives all those interested in psychic research much food for thought. I hope at some future time to be able to elaborate further this line of thought and at the same time give information as to why our researches were prematurely curtailed.

(Signed) R. FIELDING-OULD.

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¹—Volume 9. No 12. December 2013:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP9.12December2013.pdf>

²—LIGHT July 17th 1931 page 345.

At this time, the LSA had another irritation, which they attributed to Harry Price! This was reported on the same page of LIGHT:

“MORNING POST” and DUNCAN CASE

TWO ACCOUNTS OF THE ORIGIN OF AN ATTACK ON THE L.S.A.



Under the heading of “Spiritualists Hoaxed,” the *Morning Post* of Tuesday published a column in regard to the Duncan mediumship, from information said to have been supplied by Mr. Harry Price, Hon. Director of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research.³ In this article it was claimed that the exposure of the fraudulent practices had been made by Mr. Price and his colleagues and that

the members of the London Psychical Laboratory (the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance) had been “hoaxed” into believing that the spurious “ectoplasm” was genuine,

The extracts from the L.P.L. Committee's report, published in this issue prove that both these claims are without justification, and that, so far from having been “hoaxed,” the members of the Committee performed their work systematically and efficiently. Mr. Price knew that the report of the Committee was about to be made public.

In a communication to the Editor of LIGHT, Mr. Price states that the London Spiritualist Alliance was not referred to in the report which he handed to the *Morning Post* reporter and that it was impressed upon the reporter that the L.S.A. should not be mentioned in anything he wrote.

On the other hand, the *Morning Post* reporter, seen by Dr. Fielding-Ould, stated that all the information contained in the article was supplied by Mr. Price.

It is certain that no enquiries as to the accuracy of the information supplied by Mr. Price were made at the office of the L.S.A.

The fact is, therefore, that, without proper inquiry, the *Morning Post* became the vehicle for the publication of serious misrepresentations regarding the London Spiritualist Alliance Research Committee and allowed itself to be “hoaxed” into announcing that Mr. Price was the discoverer of the fraud.

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³—Photograph of Harry Price at his laboratory at 16, Queensberry Place, London.

The mainly negative verdict on Mrs Duncan by the LSA caused a sensation in the Spiritualist movement. But the LSA defended their conduct:⁴

DUNCAN MEDIUMSHIP REPORT

REVIEW OF THE FACTS, By Dr. FIELDING-OULD

That no vestige of doubt shall occur in the minds of our readers in connection with the breakdown of Mrs. Duncan's mediumship, and to dispel any uncertainty which may still linger, it is thought necessary that a short recital of all the facts should be set forth in the order of their occurrence.

After a few preliminary sittings by the Committee of the London Psychical Laboratory a prima facie case was made out for the complete investigation of Mrs. Duncan's phenomena. Regular "research" sittings began on March 13th and continued until June 12th.

A contract was entered into with the Duncans which, in addition to other provisions, precluded their sitting with anybody but the L.P.L.

Before long (about April 6th) Mr. Price approached the Duncans with offers of large sums of money if they would sit with him.

He well knew at that time that they were under contract to sit only for the L.P.L. and on his attention being drawn to the fact that a contract existed his comment was "that is their affair, not mine."

At the same time Mrs. Duncan discussed the whole question with the L.P.L. Committee and produced Mr. Price's letter.

Mrs. Duncan repudiated the offer, but from that moment she suffered frequent attacks of mental distress, and repeatedly said she had no intention of sitting with Mr. Price.

Under this stress her phenomena deteriorated and it was clear that our best hopes had been destroyed. Nevertheless the clairaudience and clairvoyance which Mrs. Duncan had exhibited in the first instance led us to hope that even at a late date we might have some interesting mediumistic experiments.

It was not to be. Mr. Duncan could not resist the lure of gold and under his influence his wife was induced to sit for Mr. Price.

The L.P.L. prepared a full report for publication as soon as they had obtained conclusive proof of the method by which "ectoplasm" was produced.

Sittings were abandoned and at considerable expense the Duncan family and their furniture were returned to Scotland.

⁴.-LIGHT July 24th 1931 page 351.

Mr. Price now produced a report of his own based on sittings which he had secretly induced the Duncans to hold contrary to their contract. Mr. Price, always cautious, furthermore bound his colleagues to strict secrecy.

Hearing that the L.P.L. report was about to appear in LIGHT, which Mr. Price was informed contained conclusions similar to his own, he precipitately approached the *Morning Post*.

This newspaper, two days before the L.P.L. report could appear in LIGHT, published an article in many respects inaccurate and so far as possible traducing the London Spiritualist Alliance.

Inquiries from *The Morning Post* show that Mr. Price was personally responsible for that article, including its inaccuracies and sneers.

Up to the present time Mr. Price, although he has attempted to put the responsibility on somebody else, has failed to correct the false impression which the un-informed public must have gathered from that article.

It is difficult to understand how anyone purporting to be interested in Psychic Science could have set himself to induce by monied payments the tearing up of a contract and afterwards allow a false and inaccurate account to be published in the daily Press.

R. FIELDING-OULD,

President of the L.S.A. and Chairman of the L.P.L.

**“MORNING POST” AND THE LONDON SPIRITUALIST
ALLIANCE**

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY

An unsuccessful attempt was made to induce the *Morning Post* to give publicity to facts concerning a false statement about the L.S.A. published by that journal in its issue of July 14th. In the July 21st issue of the same paper was published a column headed “The Medium Hoax” in which the reader will find an implied contradiction of the original allegation that the Research Department of the L.S.A. (known as the London Psychical Laboratory) had been hoaxed.

In revealing this fact, another accusation equally untrue is made—namely, that the Research Department of the L.S.A. early in their investigations had proof of fraud, after which money was regularly taken from sitters.

This accusation is based upon the interpretation by the *Morning Post* of the first of the analyses of “ectoplasm” mentioned in the Research Committee’s Report.

It is therefore necessary to explain clearly two points which those inexperienced in psychical research may fail to understand.

The scientist whose words we quoted (but whose name may not be divulged) expressed in conversation a fuller account of his findings than was officially reported upon the examination of the “ectoplasm.” He was puzzled, but frankly displayed his surprise that, if this were truly a fragment of matter supernormally produced, the analysis failed to reveal any substance not hitherto known to science. In other words, he obviously implied that in order to accept its supernormality he would require to find inherent in the substance something presumably of a transcendental nature.

It had never been claimed that physical mediumship is concerned with “supernormal matter.” It only claims that matter, as known to science, is supernormally manipulated.

The second point is this—no investigator familiar with the uncertainty of mediumship and with the various and varied manifestations in the seance room which accompany physical phenomena would hastily accuse a Medium of fraud because something occurred which he could not understand or explain or account for normally. If such methods were applied, no research would ever take place. It would promptly cease.

In examining physical mediumship, patience is required in the endeavour to discover the nature and scope of the supernormal activity and to dissociate it from happenings having a normal interpretation. All physical mediumship has exhibited this complex nature.

The L.P.L. Committee did not hastily condemn on a mere suspicion or too slight evidence. They waited and watched, and, when ultimately evidence of deceptive procedure was proved, they were then justified in coming to conclusions regarding the first signs of suspicious manifestations.

The delicate nature of physical mediumship is difficult to convey to those with little or no first-hand experience.

MERCY PHILLIMORE,

(Secretary of the L.S.A. and the L.P.L.)

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THE COLLEGE ON THE EVE OF PAUL BEARD'S PRESIDENCY

Note by LP: Recently we printed an account of the SAGB in 1970s difficulties.⁵ Below we reprint a critical account of the College of Psychic Science just before Paul Beard became president (for which see *Psypioneer* May 2005).⁶ The author Simeon Edmunds had the advantage of serving on the CPS Council some years previously and working closely with the then editor of their magazine *LIGHT*, Francis Clive-Ross. His disadvantage was that he had come to strongly disagree with CPS and *Psychic News* – with much of Spiritualism in fact – and could be accused of bias:⁷

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The LSA, as it was widely known, was founded in 1884, succeeding the British National Association of Spiritualists which had been established in the previous year.⁸ It was incorporated under the Companies Act in 1896, the subscribers to the memorandum of association including the Earl of Radnor and Alfred Russel Wallace. The first president of the alliance was the famous medium, William Stainton Moses, and a number of leading spiritualists have since held this office, the best known being Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

It was during Conan Doyle's presidency, in 1928, that the famous police court case involving Miss Mercy Phillimore, secretary of the alliance, and a medium, Mrs Claire Cantlon, was brought. Both were charged under the Vagrancy Act of 1824, Mrs Cantlon with having professed to tell fortunes and Miss Phillimore with aiding and abetting. The proceedings were brought after three women, two of them police officers, had had sittings at the alliance headquarters on the instructions of the Commissioner of Police. Both pleaded 'not guilty', but the medium later pleaded guilty to a technical offence.

In evidence, one witness stated that Mrs Cantlon claimed to have an American Indian guide, 'White Chief', who had died 400 years ago. After going into a trance she spoke of a small boy named Alec or Eric, who had a white rabbit, and also described an old man 'of noble appearance' named William. The witness knew of no such persons, nor of 'an Aunt Ellen or Eleanor', who was also allegedly present. A sister was then described, but the witness had no sister in either this world or the next. The medium was even more unfortunate in stating that the witness had a temperamental Irish husband—'a tall, dark man, with blue or hazel eyes'—from which she was parted but would soon be reconciled, for the sitter, an inspector of Women Police, was unmarried. Towards the end of the sitting the allegedly

⁵—*Psypioneer* Volume 10. No 01. January 2014:—*Crisis at The SAGB: A Rebel's Road; Memoirs of a Spiritualist* – Ted Hughes:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP10.1January2014.pdf>

⁶—Volume 1. No13. May 2005:—*Springtime*:—http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP13.pdf

⁷—Taken from *Spiritualism: A Critical Survey*, by Simeon Edmunds. Aquarian Press 1966 pages 70-76.

⁸—This is incorrect:—British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS) was formed from the sixth National Conference of Spiritualists held in Liverpool over a three day's under the presidency of Thomas Everitt, of London which began on August 5th 1873. It was succeeded by the short-lived Central Association of Spiritualists, and then by the LSA..

entranced medium—or her ‘control’—asked the time, and on being told, said she could give the sitter ten more minutes.

A ‘husband’ was also described to the second witness, though she too was unmarried. The third witness, who fortunately *was* married, was told that she had two children whose ages were eight and twelve, and that one of them, a boy, ‘had a delicate chest’. She did have two children, but one was fourteen and the other eighteen, and both were strong and in good health.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sir Oliver Lodge were both witnesses for the defence, which was that the medium was *not* telling fortunes, but in any case was in a trance and thus knew nothing of what was said. Mrs Cantlon and Miss Phillimore were both found guilty and dismissed under the Probation of Offenders Act. In delivering judgment the magistrate said:

‘On her own admission Mrs Cantlon has surrendered herself to an occult power; if this is so, she is responsible and must face the consequences should the law be broken. The law makes no provision for the appearance of a spirit either in the dock or in the witness-box.’ In giving her the benefit of the doubt that she was really ‘under the control of this defunct Indian Chief’, he observed, ‘but I should strongly advise Mrs Cantlon to get rid of a disembodied spirit who wants to know the time when the hour of lunch or tea approaches’.

This case rates as a *cause célèbre* in spiritualist history, for it was the first and last occasion on which the police took such action against a properly accredited spiritualist organisation. It led to questions in Parliament, and there was considerable agitation from spiritualists for a change in the law. No such change was made, however, until the passing of the Fraudulent Mediums Act in 1951.

The London Spiritualist Alliance ceased to exist as such in 1955, when it became the College of Psychic Science. The exact reason for the change is somewhat obscure, but there is no doubt that from that time onwards the society was no longer a spiritualist one; indeed, a number of non-spiritualists, myself included, became members of the college on the clear understanding that it was not a spiritualist organisation, and held no corporate opinion on the question of survival and ‘communication’.

A statement of the aims and objects of the LSA published in *Light* in 1951 reflects fairly its policy from its foundation until the change of name. It includes the following:

‘The LSA exists to bring comfort and confidence to the bereaved, to spread the knowledge that Survival is an established fact and that communication with loved ones who have passed into the next world is possible. It achieves these objects by the maintenance of a staff to give advice and help to enquirers, and by retaining reliable mediums with whom members and non-members may sit. The alliance aims at a high standard of evidence and an earnest and reverent approach to the subject...

‘The policy of the LSA is to maintain a balance between the scientific and emotional attitudes towards Survival. This policy involves the principle that

Spiritualism is not to be regarded as a religion in itself, but that from psychic phenomena inferences of a philosophical and religious nature may be drawn which throw light on religious systems; thus fellows and members of the alliance may be loyal members of any existing religious denomination.'

With the change of name in 1955 the scope of the college was, in theory at least, broadened, and officially it ceased to hold a corporate opinion. This was made clear at a conference held by the college at Brighton in 1959, not only by its theme, 'The Problem of Survival', but by a statement included in his closing speech by the then president, Brigadier R. C. Firebrace. He said:

'At the college many of the speakers have shown that they are on the side of survival, but the College of Psychic Science does not exist for that only. One of our aims is to study the problem of survival. And although many of our members have come to the conclusion in favour of survival, there are other members who have not come to that conclusion and even members who entirely disbelieve in demonstrated survival. They are all members, and that is the object of the college; to afford such facilities for the study of this important problem.'

Many members of the college and almost all the members of its governing council were present when this statement was made, but none took exception to it. Nevertheless, on several occasions when I and others refuted descriptions of the college in the psychic press as a spiritualist organisation, protests were invariably forthcoming from council members because we did this.

In 1963 several council members strongly opposed a proposal that the CPS research committee, of which I had for some years been honorary secretary, should collaborate in a joint project with some leading members of the SPR, on the grounds that if this were done certain mediums would cease to have confidence in the CPS. This opposition led to a decision, on the proposal of the president, to dissolve the research committee. In my letter of resignation from the council which naturally followed this decision I pointed out that one of the principal aims of the college, as laid down in its memorandum of association, was to engage actively in research. By failing to do so it completely belied its name. It was neither disseminating information as the word 'college' suggested, nor engaged in any sort of activity justifying use of the term 'science'. It had become, in fact, nothing more than a spiritualist organisation with a grandiose and quite unfitting title.

For all practical purposes then, the CPS may be regarded as a non-religious spiritualist society. Demonstrations by mediums, which form a regular part of its activities, are similar to those featured by other spiritualist societies, with the important difference that there is no praying or hymn-singing. Meetings, sometimes for 'demonstrations' and at others for lectures on various aspects of the subject, are held on Tuesday evenings and Wednesday afternoons, with one Sunday meeting per month. The total membership is rather fewer than a thousand, and consists predominantly of middle-aged and elderly women. The comparatively few younger people who join the college seldom remain members for long, their general complaint being that except for one night a week it has nothing to offer at times when young working people are able to attend. This cannot be denied, for except on Tuesdays the CPS closes shop at five o'clock, does not open at all on Saturdays, and

only opens for one Sunday afternoon in four. This is in marked contrast to the Spiritualist Association of Great Britain, where younger persons are particularly welcomed.

In addition to the ‘demonstrations’ and lectures, facilities are provided for private sittings with mediums. For this service the CPS takes a substantial cut from the medium’s fee—not that this is wrong, for the overheads of the college premises are high. These premises, at 16 Queensberry Place, SW7, contain, in addition to a fine lecture room and several private seance rooms, one of the finest libraries of its kind in the world. Unfortunately for the serious student, this library is no longer maintained at its former standard, and whereas many books of dubious value are constantly being added, no attempt seems to have been made for years to keep up to date with bound copies of the standard journals of psychical research. The library also badly needs to be recatalogued.

Groups, ‘for the training and practice of mediumship’, are also organised, and these are usually conducted under the supervision of a professional medium. So far as I am aware, no medium of any note has come to light within the last ten years as the result of such ‘training’. This, however, should not be taken as an adverse reflection upon the mediums in charge of the groups. It is a well-known truism that a good performer is rarely the best teacher, and this surely can be expected to apply particularly to psychic know-how.

A point that does call for criticism, however, is the announcement which appears regularly in the syllabus of activities: ‘Members only are notified of opportunities of sitting with physical mediums. Members who are interested in these phenomena should apply in writing to the secretary.’ The implication here is clearly that such opportunities do occur, whereas to my knowledge no physical medium has given sittings at the CPS at which ordinary members could be present within the last seven years. For some years prior to this the only physical seances at the college were those given by a fraudulent medium named William Olsen,⁹ who was detected, out of the chair in which he was supposed to be tied, by Lucian Landau and myself after he had given a number of sittings at the CPS.

Landau and I wanted to make a full public exposure, but the CPS council refused to permit this, on the grounds that it would ‘harm the movement’ and discourage other physical mediums from conning to the college. Instead it authorised publication of the following notice in *Light*.¹⁰

‘The series of sittings held at the college with Mr William Olsen has now come to an end and will not be renewed, as Mr Olsen is not willing to allow himself to be tied to the chair with two separate pieces of rope, instead of a single piece, as is his custom. In the opinion of the Research Committee of the College, it is impossible, with a single piece of rope of the length provided by Mr Olsen, adequately to control

⁹—Olsen is the medium described in case 3 of appendix III. [of the Edmunds book.] **Note by LP:**—It need hardly be said that others had a more positive view of the Olsens. See also “Last minute halt to infra-red tests.” *Psypioneer* June 2008:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.6June08.pdf>

¹⁰—*Light*, Spring, 1959.

the hands and arms, but this can be satisfactorily done with two separate pieces, even of the same total length. This was the only change requested by the college, but Mr Olsen refused to accept it'

It is important not to confuse the CPS with the now defunct British College of Psychic Science, to which reference is frequently made in the literature of both spiritualism and psychical research. The BCPS, which had an important place in spiritualism between the wars, was founded in 1920 by James Hewat McKenzie. Unlike the CPS, it successfully fostered and encouraged the early work of several famous mediums, notably Mrs Eileen J. Garrett. The BCPS amalgamated with the International Institute for Psychical Investigation in 1939,¹¹ and finally closed its doors in 1947. A detailed account of the activities and influence of the 'Old British College' as it is now generally termed, is contained in a book by the former secretary, Muriel Hankey.¹² Mrs Hankey was also secretary of the LSA/CPS from 1953 until 1960, and this is doubtless the reason for much of the confusion between the two societies.

In addition to the organisations mentioned there are a number of small unaffiliated bodies throughout the country. Some unfortunately describe themselves as psychical research societies although their activities follow the standard spiritualistic pattern. The best known establishment outside London is the 'Psychic College' at Edinburgh,¹³ once affiliated to the Old British College and now run on similar lines to the CPS.

There are also some 'fringe' groups, the strangest of which is surely the quasi-religious, quasi-scientific Aetherius Society. This organisation, founded by the 'Reverend Doctor' George King, 'DD', believes itself to be the 'voice of interplanetary parliament', charged with a duty to convey 'profound wisdom and practical advice to all of us from beings who are many thousands of years more advanced than we are'. The 'beings' apparently ride about in flying saucers and communicate their 'teachings' through the mediumship of Dr King.

I once went to a meeting organised by the Aetherius Society. It consisted of addresses, by intense young men attired in vividly coloured blazers with emblems of flying saucers on their breast pockets, interspersed with tape recordings of alleged 'great ones' speaking through the entranced Dr King. The highlight of the evening was a recording claimed to have been made in this way by Jesus Christ. He, apparently, is a special friend of Dr King, for when I interviewed one of the society's officials after the meeting I was assured that on one occasion Dr King's mother was taken for a ride in a flying saucer and that during the trip she and Jesus had a cup of tea together.

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¹¹—See *Psypioneer* Volume 7. No 2. February 2011:—*Whatever happened to the British College? – Psychic Science* also *The International Institute for Psychic Investigation (IPI)*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.2February2011.pdf>

¹²—Muriel Hankey: *J. Hewat McKenzie: Pioneer of Psychical Research*, London, 1963.

¹³—See *Psypioneer* Volume 4. No 1. January 2008:—*The Opening of the Edinburgh Psychic Centre College and Library*:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08.pdf>

MEET THE BENSONS

The Benson story begins with Edward Benson (1829-1896) who died in office as Archbishop of Canterbury. While still at Cambridge he was a member of the Ghostlie Guild (1851), a precursor of the SPR. He married Mary Sidgwick (1841-1918) whose brother Henry Sidgwick was first president of the SPR, and they had six children. In 2011, Rodney Bolt published a candid biography of Mary Benson. It can be assumed that the Benson household were well-acquainted with psychic matters especially through the Sidgwicks.

One son Robert Hugh Benson became a novelist and Roman Catholic monsignor. His novel "The Necromancers (1909) was an exposure of Spiritualism especially as practised in Kensington,¹⁴ and has some power as a ghost story.

As is well known, R.H. Benson became the communicator of the Brighton medium Anthony Borgia in a series of notably anticlerical books.

After she was widowed, Mary Benson received messages from her husband via a medium. This was revealed in the "Life and Letters of Maggie Benson" [her daughter] written by her son A.C. Benson in 1917. Maggie wrote in her diary for 1905:

"Mother to Croydon to see Hutchy and a spiritualist. The spiritualist walked back with her to Croydon, and described Papa walking on one side of her, a French abbe (Hugh's guide) – apparently wearing his name and date 1732 on a label - between them, and Zola in front." (p.338).

It would be interesting to know who was the medium.

LP.

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¹⁴.—Lady Laura Bethell, spinster, had just returned to her house in Queen's Gate, with her dearest friend, Mrs. Stapleton, for a few days of psychical orgy. It was in her house, as much as in any in London, that the modern prophets were to be met with--severe-looking women in shapeless dresses, little men and big, with long hair and cloaks; and it was in her drawing-room that tea and Queen cakes were dispensed to inquirers, and papers read and discussed when the revels were over.

Note by LP: At present a great tide of scholarship and public interest is arising around the early spirit artists, such as Anna Howitt (who used various forms of her name), Georgiana Houghton, Madge Gill and Ethel Le Rossignol. We hope to reprint in *Psypioneer* some material about them, and we begin with Anna, who has some claim to be the first spirit artist anywhere in the world after the Spiritualist Movement begin in 1848.¹⁵

A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE HISTORY OF SPIRIT-ART.

(FROM THE UNPUBLISHED PAPERS OF THE LATE MRS. HOWITT-WATTS.)

“Nor has ever any great work been accomplished by human creatures, in which instinct was not the principal mental agent, or in which the methods of design could be defined by rule or apprehended by reason. Therefore it is that agency by mechanism destroys the powers of Art and sentiments of Religion together.”—RUSKIN’S *Fors Clavigera*, May, 1875.

It is above twenty years¹⁶ since the power of spiritual drawing developed in me. It developed simultaneously with the faculty to behold symbolical visions and spiritual personages, and to hear an internal voice speaking; which voice explained the purport of both the spirit-drawings and of the visions beheld.

Automatic spiritual-writing—that is, words and sentences written by a power not of my own will—had manifested itself some little time previously, and it was in consequence of seeking to check the power of this automatic writing,—which, through its purport having been misunderstood, had caused me much mental suffering—that the power changed from the writing of letters and words into the delineation of forms.

This took place in the year 1856—in the early summer. This was some short time before the first recognition of this phase of manifestation of spirit-power in England, and was to me a cause of the deepest astonishment. I have said that I sought to check the power of automatic writing, and thus give no further outlet to the spiritual influence which had taken possession of my whole being. The consequence was that, night and day, I felt, within my self, a singular phenomenon. I have elsewhere, at the request of a friend, given a short description of this experience,¹⁷ and I cannot do better than here repeat what was written shortly after the strange experience had been passed through—altering a little here and there as my present purposes may require.

The writing development, no longer permitted to find its natural outlet through the hands, had now become *inward*. But painful as it was, and produced—as I have observed—by a checked effort of nature, still out of it a fresh spiritual manifestation developed—that is to say, the spiritual drawing. Together with the perception of words and sentences being written inwardly—so that with closed eyes I yet beheld them, and not alone beheld them with a newly-developed inward eye, but I actually

¹⁵.—*LIGHT* April 13th 1889, pages 176-177 & April 27th 1889, pages 203-205.

¹⁶.—Written May, 1875.

¹⁷.—*Vide Light in the Valley*.

felt the words, and sentences word by word, writing themselves upon my inner self,—together, I say, with this mysterious writing came forth to my inward perceptions, in the same manner, the formation within my whole interior system of human figures or groups of figures. These figures were in outline. They gradually developed themselves in lines of white or grey upon a darker background. It is, perhaps, also noteworthy that these figures were not flat outlines. They were composed of an outline to each external surface of the figure, the result thus being that every position of these figures was gradually brought to the view of my mental eye, the front, back, profiles of each side, the entire rounding of the limbs—the whole figure, thus standing forth although in outline, perfectly completed as though wrought out by the hand of a sculptor as well as by that of a draughtsman.¹⁸

The explanation of each figure or group of figures, was given in writing, also in delicate white or grey lines.¹⁹ The words of explanation would be inscribed above the heads, or beneath the feet, of the figures; upon scrolls held in their hands, upon their shields, their swords, or even upon the borders of their garments. Sometimes a label would proceed from the lips of the figures, upon which words or a sentence would be inscribed. I never at this time awoke suddenly in the night or early morning without instantaneously this process of figure-drawing commencing within me—now within my brain, now over and within my heart; now in the palms of my hands! These figures were at once a torment and a delight, they were so new, so wonderful, so awful an experience! They were expressive of a something portentous. Frequently they were imbued with a character akin to the creations of Michael Angelo. Three of these figures made a profound impression. The descent of the New Jerusalem, to take this first, was the fourth. The New Jerusalem was represented as a majestic woman clothed in wonderful draperies studded with jewels, and wearing many crowns; upon her breast wearing a singular and beautiful breast-plate. The End of the World was the second, and appeared as an expiring Titan. The Last Judgment was the third, a strong celestial woman, hurling down into an abyss a Titanic man, who fell smitten by no sword in the woman's hand, but by the Word of Truth which proceeded from her lips. Another figure thus perceived—*perceived* expresses the experience more completely than the word *beheld*, because the whole mental being took cognisance of the figures thus presented—was of an angel. He, with a countenance like to the face of our Lord as depicted by the early Italian painters, appeared to descend from a clear morning sky. Upon his shoulders he bore a large cross; whilst from his lips proceeded these written words, “Love, Mercy, Peace—but not till after Death.” Again my soul trembled with distress—that portentous word “Death,” which in the spiritual automatic writing had haunted every sentence, and sometimes almost driven me to despair, once more presented itself. This time it had not written itself upon lifeless paper, but as it were “the fleshly tablets of the heart,” upon my living nerves—the word was *within myself, and I could not flee away from it!* I would so fain have escaped from this dreadful something, but it would not leave me, it had become part and portion of myself.

I sought to occupy myself with other things; I went into the country to visit dear friends. The beautiful, amiable, and joy-giving life of the world of nature and of friendship I would rush into; I would bury myself in them; I would shut out my inner

¹⁸.—*Vide* remarkable vision of Benvenuto Cellini when confined in the Castle of St. Angelo.

¹⁹.—*Vide* visions beheld by Jerome Cardan, the celebrated Italian physician, when a child.

life. I once more devoted myself with a forced ardour to making careful studies from natural flowers and other joy-giving objects. One morning whilst sitting before a great sheaf of purple irises, endeavouring to make a sketch from them, I carelessly rested my hand upon a sheet of paper lying on the table before me. I paused thus from my work to converse with one of my friends. To my surprise, whilst thus engaged in conversation I felt the *pencil move—as it were of itself—between my passive fingers, and commence to draw*. When my friend was gone, I glanced down to the sheet of paper to see what the pencil had thus scribbled. It was no continuation of the flower-drawing— it was no sketch of anything that occupied my thoughts. It was a small initial letter, such as one might find in an ancient early illuminated missal, and in connection with it was a small female head. I had not then heard that such thing anywhere in the world existed as drawing by spiritual power.

I pondered much over this strange thing; crude it was, feeble as the lines drawn by an infant hand; but the more I pondered, the more pregnant did it appear to me to be with the coming birth of a new day of art. I then recalled to mind that amongst the countless writings which at various times had come through my passive hand, had been the interlinked names of three great and distinctive artists—of Fra Angelico, of Raphael, and of Blake. Through the tip of my brush—I now recollect—whilst painting in my natural manner, since the automatic spirit-writing had seized upon me—at various times these three names, always interlinked, had written themselves out in colour upon my palette. Also I remembered there had been written, at divers times, the assurance that the spirits of these great painters, together with the spirits of many other painters, combined with the spirit of the Great Mother, would come to assist in the art of the future. This had passed away, without making special impression, but here was a something which had a possible connection with it. Whilst I thus pondered my passive hand was again moved, and once more I saw traced upon the fly-leaf of a volume of Herbert's poems which was lying open upon the table, the three well-remembered interlinked initials A. R. B.; and this time executed as a drawing and with more elaboration.

It may be imagined how deeply my interest was stirred by the discovery that the mysterious influence, for weeks strongly resisted and abjured with all my strength and will-force, was still present, but now impelled my hand to trace forms which, if rudely delineated, were nevertheless curious indeed, from the fact that they were entirely foreign to any idea consciously present to my mind.

With earnest prayer to be delivered from evil, and to be ever guided towards peace, I now entered upon the study of the automatic drawing—with the full permission of our medical attendant, who had strictly forbidden my encouragement of the automatic writing. I believed firmly that only in the spirit of a little child, should I be permitted to enter into the Heaven of Spiritual Art. I sought, therefore, earnestly, to become as a child, through humility, and—if it might be given—purity of heart and singleness of purpose.

With more than the uncertainty of a child's feeble undeveloped strokes did the drawing in this new school begin.

On the morrow of the day when the little initial letter and the combined initials of the great art-masters were given me, having sought to harmonise my inner being, I carried my pencils and sketching-block into a sunny and retired spot of the

pleasant garden of the old country house, where I was visiting, and, seated beneath a blossoming pear tree, I waited to see what would be given through my hand. First of all came these words, written very slowly:—

“Thou must earnestly pray to the Almighty Father, and thou must put aside all earthly desires.”

Then upon one corner of the sketching-block was drawn in extremely delicate and fine spiral lines, a very small form like a horn; then a small heart—all in tendril-like spiral lines; then gradually, drawn blackly, a head as of the Saviour surrounded by numerous circles.

A great awe and trembling came over me. The word “*Logos*” was inscribed in several places, and last of all the sentence, “*Son of the Most High Lord of Hosts. Christ Jesus. Son of God,*” in large round letters. The whole together formed a sort of missal-page of a Byzantine type. It was rude in design and drawn with trembling strokes. But it was a wonderful experience. Each day for an hour I pursued in the sunshine and open air my new art-studies, the result being, for some little time, a series—all crude and rude—of designs in character, like, groups of figures out of sacred pictures of the earliest school—Byzantine, German, and Italian. There were heads as of the Saviour—heads and figures of angels—but especially frequent was a figure of a large woman, like a Madonna of the Byzantine school, bearing in her arms or in her lap a small child, frequently in swaddling bands—a sort of chrysalis child. These heads or figures were placed in spheres or heart-shaped halves, and accompanied with strange ornaments of spiral and shell forms.

I should observe that so soon as these crude drawings came forth through my hand upon paper, the extraordinary inward drawing upon my nerves of the figures in grey ceased entirely. They evidently were in connection with each other, yet I could not fail to observe that these figures, executed thus crudely upon paper, were greatly inferior in power and freedom, in grandeur of ideal form and perfection of art—if such a term might be used in reference to them at all—to the awful forms sketched in the grey and white outline. Those were as from the hand of a Michael Angelo—these as from the human hand of a child copying early Byzantine copies.

I had trusted that the involuntary drawing would bring with it no pain—as the involuntary writing had done—no bewilderment of mind nor distress of heart. How little did I comprehend the new class of instruction awaiting me!

To follow, even in the most rapid manner, the history of the drawing development would require a volume instead of a few pages. At times the power would be entirely withdrawn, and—however desirous I might be to exercise the gift, and carefully develop and perfect it into beauty—to draw by the involuntary movement of the hand was impossible. Often when I most earnestly desired to have a spiritual sketch given me, even though the hand were moved by the automatic power, nothing but the merest scribble of the most unmeaning character would result. Fear, too, of the bewilderment occasioned by the spirit – writing accompanied me for several months. And in this wise. At times, whilst drawing the breast-plate of an angel, or the ornamental border of the robe of a Madonna or angel, or in the curious floral patterns of a garment of some holy personage, my very soul would seem to die within me, as my eyes would suddenly recognise that

in the ornamentation sketched, amidst the scroll work of leaf and blossom, or amidst the encrusted gems, would stand out distinctly written the word “DEATH.”

At length, however, through the mercy of God, the key to this mystery was given—as indeed doubtless, in due course after suffering in faith, will come the key to all mysteries from God.

What was the word when translated into the language of spirit—of immortal—not *mortal* thought? It was CHANGE—translation into new states of being—birth into higher knowledge, into fuller understanding of spiritual things. Upon this foundation many new experiences arose; a wider horizon opened out before me; I was like one let out of a prison. Ideas of new truths gradually unfolded themselves; and old truths breathed upon by spirit were no longer dry bones but clothed in the blooming freshness of immortal life.

A. M. H. W.²⁰

Continued from page 177 by her Husband.



So much of my wife’s experiences in the development of Spirit-Art as took place previously to her marriage in 1859 is broadly detailed in the paper published in “LIGHT” for April 13th; and this, if I may except a few illustrative notes, is all that she has left on the subject, except the drawings themselves. Of the broad facts, however, of all that took place subsequently I am sufficiently well informed to be able, in some sort, to continue her narrative. But before doing so, this seems the time and place to refer to the obstacles which presented themselves from time to time to impede and often destroy the power of “spirit-drawing,” very frequently for considerable lengths of time at a stretch.

(1) The power after having exercised itself—for it would be erroneous to speak of the medium exercising the power, having no volition whatever in regard to it—for a certain time would suddenly cease, as though it had become

exhausted or worn out, or as though a current might have been cut off. The desire might be there to go on, very strongly so generally, the hour opportune, and

²⁰—Anna Mary Howitt Watts was the daughter of William and Mary Howitt (W.H. 1792-1879) see *Psypioneer* Volume 8. No 9. September 2012:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.9September2012.pdf>

In 1883 Howitt Watts published “The Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation” – biographical sketches of Dr. Justinus Kerner, and her father William Howitt.

conditions apparently in every respect favourable; all would be in vain, nothing would come.

(2) The weather was often a sore obstacle. An east wind, or excessive damp or closeness of the atmosphere, would completely destroy the power.

(3) The interruption of visitors would sometimes paralyse the power, often for a considerable time. If it did not wholly do so, the drawing, when resumed, would be quite exceptionally poor and feeble and the composition disharmonised. Some visitors, even though strangers or mere acquaintances only, would produce upon the work no such effects. Others, though intimate friends, would prove absolutely destructive. The visits of one of her earliest friends, for whom she entertained sincere regard, was to her spirit life like the touch of a torpedo. It would destroy the power of spirit-drawing, and indeed all power of that description, for weeks, and otherwise greatly depress her. Little did this admirable woman imagine how unwelcome, to one at all events of her hosts, had her visits become. Fortunately, they had one quality, attributed to those of angels; they were “few and far between.”

But all these obstructions and impediments to the successful production of these Spirit-Art studies were, as nothing to the difficulty, inherent apparently in the process itself, that these designs, in their progress, began always, after a time, to change or evolve into other designs, so that it was found impossible to bring them to any satisfactory condition of completion.

“For some two years,” she says, in some rough notes now before me, “I made in this manner drawings chiefly in pencil, striving in each drawing to complete—or more correctly speaking, to get completed, for I was but a passive agent—the drawings as originally sketched. But here was my difficulty. The outline itself changed by the time I came to complete it. It was in this wise. Imagine that the figure thus sketched, by the hand being moved involuntarily, represented a woman seen in profile, with one hand raised, the other holding a book by her side. By the time my hand was moved again to the head of the figure to complete the profile, my spirit-moved hand could not draw any longer the profile of the woman. The face was now turned towards the spectator. Also the position of the hands would change in the same way, and gradually the whole figure would be entirely altered, and the dress would also change. In short, the whole character of the design was undergoing a constant transformation. *How to complete* any sketch under such conditions was the great and apparently insoluble problem. I have,” she continues, “in my possession a portfolio containing some fifty drawings shaded in pencil, made during this period. There have probably been under each design, as we now see it, at the very least a dozen designs. All these changing drawings, as they formed themselves into new ones, had bit by bit been rubbed out; and in the processes the paper had become in places so thin as to have necessitated the leaving the design finally in the shape in which we now see it, more or less incomplete, more or less incorrect in form.”

The fifty drawings referred to are now before this present writer; also in some instances careful and minute descriptions of the process through which they passed before arriving at the very elementary condition of finish, in which the medium—for she claimed to be nothing else—had been compelled to leave them. These would

probably prove tedious to the general reader, and their interest even to a student of Spirit-Art would largely depend on the reader having before him or her the drawing, as well as the description of it. It will be more to the immediate purpose that I attempt to give some general description of the character of these drawings, with some suggestions perhaps—they can claim to be nothing more—as to the nature of the instruction which they were designed to convey.

They represented, in the first instance, letters of the alphabet, then archaic designs depicting “The Ancient of Days,” “The Christ in the Tomb,” “The Christ Passing through the Spheres,” and subjects of this nature. These drawings bore a certain resemblance to the very earliest forms of medieval fresco, and beyond the circumstance that each conveyed, or suggested, an idea to the mind through the medium of form, possessed no readily recognisable value beyond the fact of their existence and method of production, and the evidence afforded by the character of them that they could not have been the *normal* work of a person who had studied systematically and practised successfully the profession of an artist as my wife had, and must to such a person have involved in their production an absolute and painful abnegation of individual will and pre-existing experience.

The next phase of progress was the introduction into the design of colour. Of the particular occasion on which this first developed itself I possess no definite particulars. She speaks in the preceding record of experience of letters being drawn in colour on her palette when employed on other work. She was engaged about this time in executing a picture for which she had a commission from Miss Burdett-Coutts, and which, from these circumstances, she was not permitted to complete, and I have some recollection of her telling me that while at work she had found her hand guided to colours on the palette, not those which she would have selected for her immediate purpose. This led her to watch whether the same influence would affect her, and to be prepared with her colours, when the spirit power for the purposes of drawing should next possess her. Her hand she found again guided to the colours, and from that time the element of colour was more and more frequently introduced. This she greatly enjoyed, for her mind was eminently a picturesque one, and although a careful and accurate draughtswoman, her love of colour and lively perception of its harmonies was intense and predominant. She, however, continued her efforts, if I may use such an expression in relation to a matter in which she had to be absolutely passive, in the hope of securing greater perfection in the form in these drawings, and with a certain measure of success. Some of the larger drawings of this period, though in many respects highly imperfect, are nevertheless sufficiently finished to enable a sympathetic looker-on to derive pleasure from the tender and beautiful spirit looking out from them.

These more perfected drawings consist of large initial letters, illustrated and adorned by an infinite amount and variety of very graceful and, it might seem, deliberately symbolical detail. They present Spiritualism, in so far as they may be assumed to represent and illustrate it, in a higher, more beautiful and comforting aspect than the earlier drawings. It is no longer the Ambient of Days (the Old Law), the crucified Christ, the Christ in the Sepulchre (the Gospel in embryo perhaps), depicted in archaic forms, that are displayed or suggested: but, as it might seem, the New Liberty—the Gospel fulfilled and triumphant, the risen Saviour;—and the figures by which it is represented are almost exclusively female. Hints of “A Woman’s Word” seem to be thrown out ever and again in these designs. We were

led to surmise that perhaps the initial letters, which formed so conspicuous an element in these drawings, might have some reference to partial revelations at the present day, the completion and spelling out of which might ultimately realise the consummation of the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, Comforter, Leader into all Truth, the Divine Wisdom or Female Hypostasis of Deity; the Uniter of the book of law, or teaching by precept, and the principle of child-like obedience, with the book of nature, or revelation by observation and intellectual development adapted to the maturity of the manhood and womanhood of the world.

But the conclusions at which we arrived on these subjects are foreign to the immediate purposes of these papers except in relation to the fact that our initiation into what we knew—or believed we knew—on this subject was derived in the first instance mainly, if not exclusively, from suggestions arising out of these drawings.

As I have said, a measure of completion in these designs had been attained, but the element of perpetual change and the evolution of new designs from the old before they were completed remained ever present, a perpetual source of discouragement and apparently insurmountable. But these changes, painful though they were, were not without their uses in the development of the spiritual experience of the medium, and the enlivenment of her spiritual being. “These designs,” she says in some notes now before me, “are a species of hieroglyphic writing, and a link between letters and pictures. The peculiarity which speedily showed itself in these sketches when once they had emerged from their very earliest stage of crudity, was that each drawing was, as it were, a series of dissolving views. The forms changed continually, and ideas were conveyed to the mind through these changes and their sequences.

The explanations would sometimes be given in automatic or impressional writing, or more frequently, as the power of spirit intercourse increased with me, through an internal ‘still small voice’ which could clearly make itself heard to my inner ear.” The history of this remarkable and comforting endowment forms no part of the subject of this paper. Of it, and a corresponding gift of spiritual sight which she enjoyed later, I may perhaps permit myself to speak hereafter. With the purpose of the present paper, as I have said, it has nothing to do. Suffice it to say that out of these drawings and their changes, assisted by these further gifts, her progress in the philosophy and theosophy of Spiritualism was largely developed.

Further and Final Change.

After working in the manner above described for some years with, from the merely outer point of view, very inadequate results, until her patience was well nigh exhausted, the idea suggested itself to her—or possibly she was so instructed by the inner voice before referred to—to try the experiment, when the drawing should begin to change its character, of tracing off so much of its outline as had been harmoniously completed, and of commencing work on the next occasion from that point of departure as a new beginning, instead of recommencing *de novo*. She found this answer perfectly. For a time the work would progress quite harmoniously and without change from the point so taken up, until after a while change and the evolution of new designs again set in. When this took place she traced off the outline again up to the point already further successfully completed and began anew from thence. By this process drawings more fully perfected,

though still incomplete, of, as I think, great beauty and harmony and grace of spirit, were now evolved. The colouring in them was especially beautiful—rich, varied, and harmonious. But they were still only studies, and never could be regarded as advanced beyond this preliminary stage. More than this she was not permitted to effect. In the later years of her life, which had been always a highly actively intellectual and emotional one, as the grace and beauty in expression of these studies became more and more developed the mediumship involving power to produce them became more and more delicate and sensitive, more liable to be affected by the external difficulties and oppositions to which I have referred, with less and less strong apparent impulse to manifest itself. Her own desire to produce became also less strong, and her solicitude about the outer in all things less and less active. She now occupied herself more and more in writing, usually in this journal, such things as seemed to her more immediately serviceable to the cause of Spiritualism in all degrees and orders of its utterance, elevating her soul into its highest without ever despising its meanest manifestations (if any may be termed mean), and capable ever, from a highly imaginative intellect and sympathies equally wide and comprehensive, of correlating the whole. The divine pictures which she was not permitted to produce, she became endowed with an ever increasing power to realise and enjoy in the gift of Spirit Vision. These took in her largely the place of Spirit-Art—the faculty to see and to know rather than to do and to produce.

The description of some of these visions was introduced by her in a volume of verse, bearing the title *Aurora*, published in 1872. To add to her rich endowments from Spiritualism operating on such a nature, the highest gift of all—to *be* what she saw, and ever desired to look on, was not withheld from her, as those who knew her would readily testify. But I am sensible that I am yielding again to the temptation of pursuing my wife's spiritual experiences into phases of the subject with which this narrative is not concerned, and into details which can only be of personal and not of public interest.

Of the drawing or sketch with a reproduction of which I am, by the kindness of the conductors of "LIGHT," enabled to accompany this paper, and which my wife was accustomed to designate "A Light-Bearer," she has left no interpretation. Fruits such as those upon which the figure stands, having a harsh and prickly or thorny exterior, when drawn through her hand, she regarded always, and had perhaps on some occasion been so instructed, as types representing fruits or results of human suffering fulfilled or otherwise. With this light to start from she would perhaps have understood the female Light-Bearer, on the face of whom traces of pain seem to be indicated, standing on fruits of this description, fully ripe, as signifying that spiritual illumination stands ever, or is founded upon, fully perfected (full-filled) human suffering; and that to all those endowed with the Divine gift of being diffusers of light or knowledge may be extended the words applied by the poet to such benefactors of the human race of his own order:—

"They learn in suffering what they teach in song."

A. A. W.

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NEW GEORGIANA HOUGHTON EDITION



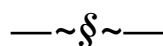
In what we hope will be the first of many scholarly editions, the publisher Victorian Secrets has reprinted one of the volumes of Georgiana’s classic work “Evenings at Home in Spiritual Séance.”²¹

Dr Marco Pasi has reminded me that there were two separate books, a First Series (1881) and a Second Series (1882). There have been a number of reprints of the Second Series, but no reprints so far of the First Series. Victorian Secrets have reprinted the Second Series, and we hope they will go on to reprint not only the First Series but also “Chronicles of the Photographs” (1882), her important contribution to the history of UK psychic photography.

LP.

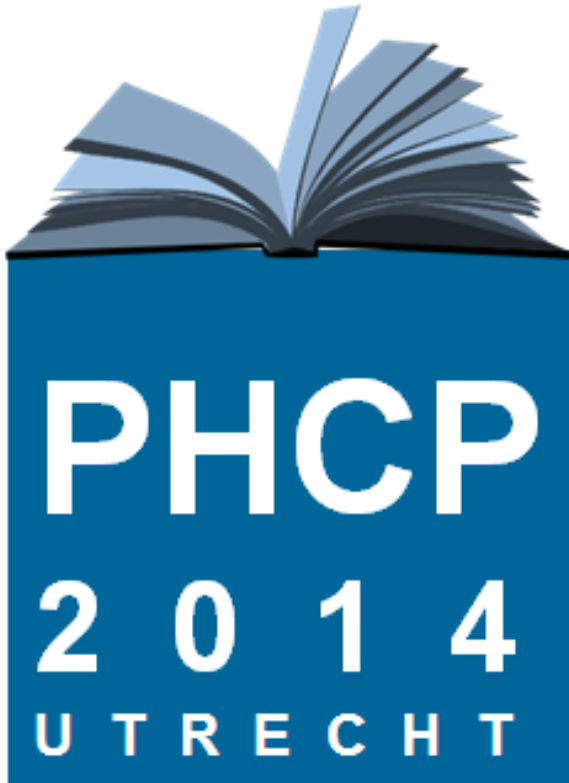
**The spirit photograph shown is taken from
“Chronicles of the Photographs” plate III No. 27**

It shows the author of the previous article “A Contribution Towards the History of Spirit-Art,” Anna Mary Howitt Watts, and her father. The spirit extra is the son of William and Mary Howitt – brother of Anna.



²¹.—Evenings at Home in Spiritual Séance by Georgiana Houghton edited with an introduction and notes by Sara Williams:—<http://www.victoriansecrets.co.uk/catalogue/evenings-at-home-in-spiritual-seance/>

Preserving the Historical Collections of Parapsychology



From 12-14 June 2014 a first international meeting on the preservation of historical archives of parapsychology, psychical research and Spiritualism will be held in Utrecht, the Netherlands. There will be lectures from fourteen professionals with knowledge of the state of related archives in their home countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Germany, Switzerland and Holland. The purpose of this conference is to bring together researchers, archivists, librarians and other professionals who are concerned about the large number of research collections that are at risk of loss.

For more information or registration, please contact hjbfinfo@gmail.com or visit our website [link to: www.hetjohanborgmanfonds.nl]. Read here [link to: <http://journal.extraordinarium.com/2014-02-18-archival-preservation.htm>] the article from Christopher Laursen (SPR) on the conference.

Leslie Price will deliver a paper at this conference about the impact of the Psypioneer project.

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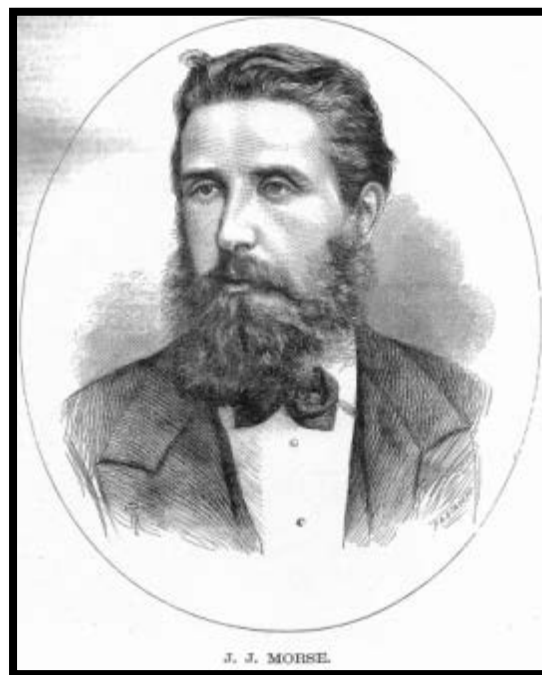
Below is the *final* part of a series of articles by James Johnson Morse,²² taken from the *Two Worlds* Friday November 12th 1915 pages 572-573. November 26th 1915 pages 596-597, & December 3rd 1915 page 604:

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

A Resume, in Three Parts, of the
Efforts Made to Obtain
Photographs of Departed Persons by
Experimenters in Great Britain, the
United States, and France

By J. J. MORSE

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111.—EXEGETICAL.

CRITERIA

THE criteria applicable to psychical investigation and experiment differ from those available for physical research in this: While physical science has accumulated a vast array of knowledge during scores of years, psychic inquiries have only been practically studied for dozens of years. In the realms of physics phenomena follow defined lines—laws—of operation, while in the psychical domain phenomena are encountered which appear to be intimately associated with the will, mental states, and the psycho-radio-activity (personal aura) of the individuals conducting the experiments; and the further important fact that the results are largely related to an unseen, but intelligent, operator at the invisible end of the wire must be noted. Yet, even in physical science, far more is to be known than has become known. Why the proper volumes of hydrogen and oxygen should, when united, produce water, no one knows; that they do so every tyro in chemistry is aware. In short, not to labour the point, all science really knows is that under certain conditions things Do occur, but not WHY they occur. Two hundred years ago steam, the taking of pictures by the aid of the sun and chemicals, the lighting of our homes, cities, highways, coasts, ships, trains, and conveyances by electricity would all have been openly scouted as madness, while the bare idea of being able to convey the vibrations of the human voice by the aid of the same potent force along a thin wire stretching

²².—James Johnson Morse, October 1st 1848 – February 19th 1919: Morse features in numerous issues of *Psypioneer*, for a general overview see: —<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP8.10October2012.pdf> *James Johnson Morse* – Paul J. Gaunt, and, *J. J. Morse* – Julia Schlesinger. Also, use our online search engine at www.woodlandway.org– *Psypioneer Journals*.

over land and under water would have immediately called forth jeers from the foolish, or anathemas from the bigoted.

In dealing with the phenomenal facts of what is called Spiritualism, it must be understood at the outset a range of inquiry is opened which is a further branch of our knowledge of nature, not something distinct and apart from nature. The discoveries achieved should fit into the knowledge we already possess of nature, and so help to increase our understanding of the wholeness, or oneness, of the universe. Truly understood, psychics are not more distinct from natural phenomena than are chemistry, optics, hydrostatics, or any other of the sciences. Therefore the first criteria to be considered is not what relation does a new fact serve to already known facts, but is it a true fact? Facts, in the sense of phenomena of any sort, depend upon circumstances, laws, and conditions. For instance, for the reproduction of a given fact the exact conditions under which it was first observed must be again set up. This needs patient repetition of the original experiments, so that data can be accumulated and verified and re-verified. Facts submitted to such an ordeal and emerging unscathed therefrom have established a *prima facie* claim to recognition. So far this relates to points everybody can readily assent to, but when the demands of reason are denied, and other criteria are set up, then confusion inevitably ensues. To lay it down that any fact must, as a fact, conform to a religious or moral dicta, would effectually block all investigation into natural laws; but if after the fact, as a fact, has been established it is found it is a fact that would inimically affect the individual or the community, why, then, the use or application of the fact might reasonably be inhibited. Such inhibition would not, however, in any way destroy the reality of the fact.

In asserting that what is called “spirit-photography” is a fact, it is intended to convey the corollary that it is a natural fact, that it is possible because of the laws of nature, and that it is not a priori impossible thereto. As a fact it differs from the ordinary physical facts, in that it involves an extension of the ordinary boundaries of nature, as commonly accepted. Whereas the ordinary physical experimenter is dependent upon physical apparatus entirely for his results, the psychical researcher not only needs such aid, but, in addition, he becomes dependent upon human beings for the essential mechanism, and finds in the circumstances of the human organisation the very agencies he most requires. Not only is this the case with the services of the “medium” employed, but it is also the case with the participators in the experiments. But when the question is further weighted with the consideration that the actual agent in producing such a photograph is a being living under different conditions to our own, then it is realised that a region of subtler force-conditions has been encountered, and it becomes necessary to devise tools to work in these new and different states of being. So the second criteria applicable to this matter is that the phenomenon must be examined along its own peculiar lines, and tools must be similarly devised as the inquiry progresses and so suggests the implements which are necessary; put in the simplest phrase, the position is that all facts must occur in conformity with natural law. Facts once established must be related to other facts, and point the way to the existence of similar or related facts. The methods of inquiry must be suited to the nature of the facts, and the tools needed must be decided point by point as the inquiry proceeds.

POSTULATA.

- 1.—None can set a limit to the possibilities of the universe.
- 2.—It is impossible to set a limit to the mental capacity of men.
- 3.—The “natural” and the “spiritual” are words defining not so much two separate and distinctive universes as two aspects of the same universe, when our inner faculties can, or do, correlate ourselves to the ordinarily unseen aspect of nature.
- 4.—Accepting the whole-ness of being, bringing all phenomena within the range of universal law, a “spirit,” and a “spirit” land, or state, is part of the order of being, and
- 5.—As men’s psychic faculties relate them to the psychic or “spirit,” or further side of nature, there is no antecedent impossibility against any form of objective manifestation from that other side, or further side, or, relatively, subjective side of nature generically describable as the other world.
- 6.—While, lastly, the testimony of such manifestation in all ages, and in modern days, is too large in volume, too precise in detail, so overwhelmingly cumulative, and is supported by such irrefragable attestations, that it is impossible to ignore or condemn it as invalid. Part of such testimony concerns and supports the claim for the genuineness of psychic photography.

DESIDERATA.

To successfully establish the claim for the reality of the kind of photography we are concerned with several things must be considered; in fact, a number of points are necessary to the issue. These may be divided into two groups: the first including (A) trickery, (B) self-delusion, (C) false testimony. Let them be dealt with in the order given:—

(A) Trickery bulks largely in the eye of the sceptical. There are many ways in which a trickster can work. If he is an expert in photographic “fakes” he can have little difficulty in imposing on a novice, and, at times, on a not-too-knotting brother of the craft. He can “wash-brush” a form upon a background; he can superimpose an image upon an unexposed plate; he can use trick appliances affixed inside his camera or dark slide; he may employ confederates. In fact, he can utilise a number of methods to accomplish his ends, and send a credulous person away with a profound conviction that his “fake” picture is thoroughly genuine. Because of these possibilities some people rush to the conclusion that all psychic or spirit photographs are fraudulent.

(B) Self-delusion is to be reckoned with. Those who suffer from it are undoubtedly honest in the case. It is easy for the imaginative, for those hungering for a sign from beyond, to mistake a chemical stain in a print, or a trace of “fog” upon a plate, for a face, for often in other affairs the eye sees what the mind thinks. Some people say there are canals on Mars, doubtless honestly saying so. And so on in other instances which might be cited. Self-delusion need not be ignored; it is a possibility which has to be reckoned with.

(C) The first and last of these pointy are closely akin. False testimony is however, exceedingly infrequent. Except for supporting the nefarious photographer, false testimony is of little use, though of course the false testimony of a fraudulent photographer only makes him a worse scoundrel.

It may be frankly admitted that all the foregoing points can be urged against the credibility of spirit-photography, but the question is: Are there no protections against either or all of them? If not, then our case fails. If there is, then the case can go to the jury.

The second group of points really brings us to the actual desiderata of the claim for genuine spirit-photography. These are but two: (A) The circumstances of the experiment, and (B) the results of the experiment.

(A) Whenever possible conduct your experiment without using the apparatus, materials, or premises of the photographer medium. Provide everything yourself; superintend everything yourself. Exercise the utmost caution and scrutiny; leave nothing to chance. The presence of "the medium" is the main thing; his psychic force is what is most needed.

(B) The result of your experiment determines its value. A photograph is not necessarily satisfactory, a recognised and recognisable photograph is not entirely satisfactory, but such a photograph when there never was any such photograph previously taken at any time in the earth-life of the spirit is conclusive. It demands an explanation. It puts to flight all assertions regarding trickery and fraud. There is no means known whereby such a photograph can be obtained outside the limits of this special form of photography. The crucial test is the absolute identity of a photograph of a dead person of whom no like portrait exists. Such a portrait is beyond cavil or dispute. Fraud or trickery of any sort will not explain it away, self-delusion will not account for it. The circumstances, and the result connected with the experiment, are thus of more importance than the merely negative argument that fraud accounts for the pictures. Admitting fraud has been used, it could not be so in the instance suggested, therefore cannot account for the results obtained. Such pictures are referred to in the preceding part of this article. What is the explanation regarding their production?

THE FINAL ARGUMENT.

And now to bring these pages to their ending. In so doing let it be stated that much of this section has been written to meet the sceptic in regard to the truth of this form of photography. Something also was intended for those who are intolerant of any form of objective phenomena in connection with modern spiritual manifestations. It is not felt that a single word is too stringent in import, for in establishing the verity of transcendental photography the most crucial tests and the most irrefragable evidence is demanded of us. Such concession to the case is but just. No earnest and intelligent Spiritualist would say otherwise. But, having made such concessions to the sceptical, one need not further beat the air in connection therewith. The case of the Spiritualist demands a hearing, as, also, a respectful acceptance, at least as respectful a hearing as is accorded his opponent.

WHO ARE THE EXPERTS?

With somewhat of tiresome iteration the sceptical, in regard to all forms of spirit manifestations, constantly assert that expert examination is the one thing required to settle the point whether or not such manifestations are produced, and, if so, whether the Spiritualist hypothesis is proven by them? Exactly, the Spiritualist agrees that expert testimony is necessary. An expert is one whose practical knowledge of a given subject entitles him to respectful attention when giving an opinion, or making a statement, regarding such subject. If one requires the expression of expert opinion, say, upon surgery, one goes to a surgeon; if on chemistry, to a chemist; if on botany, to a botanist; if on astronomy, to an astronomer, because such persons are assumed to be fully acquainted with the various points and principles involved. The rules of commonsense are agreed to in the above instances, and the expert opinion is taken solely upon its merits. But is an expert upon astronomical questions necessarily also an expert upon botanical matters? No, for then the old proverb about the cobbler and his last claims attention. Now if an expert is one who has practical knowledge, then the only expert in regard to spirit-phenomena must be the Spiritualist! He has investigated, inquired, tried, tested, and experienced. Why attempt to shoulder him aside in favour of some other one who is an expert in some wholly different and entirely dissimilar subject—one who knows nothing of spiritual phenomena? The painstaking, experimenting, cool-headed, intelligent Spiritualist is as much to be entertained as the truly expert authority upon the phenomena he has been concerned with, as is any other expert in regard to other matters.

Occasionally a most inept opinion is expressed to the effect that the nomenclature of Spiritualism is so very ridiculous! Such terms as “spheres,” “control,” “psychic waves,” “spirit-power,” “materialisation,” and so forth, are denounced as jargon. But which science has not a particular “jargon” of its own? The wonderful-looking signs of the mathematician and chemist the volts, amperes, and Killowatts of the electrician; the strain, stress, and torsion of the engineer; and the thousand odd terms of innumerable trades, as well as professions and sciences, may just as well be denounced as Jargon. Yet every sensible person knows that such terms stand for definite things and circumstances. Equally so, Spiritualism has its own terminology, whereby it expresses certain definite matters to experienced Spiritualists.

For the sake of convenience the term “spirit-photography” has been used throughout these pages. It is not an exact term; the more correct one would be “the photographing of spirits.” But popular usage has sanctioned the use of the words herein employed. Yet, without unduly indulging in splitting straws, it may here be pointed out that transcendental photography might be a more acceptable definition. The reason for this suggestion being found in the fact that “spirit” photography really presents two aspects. or, rather, two sets of facts. There is the photographic reproduction of faces, the faces of persons formerly living on this earth, for one side, and for the other side, views—landscapes, etc.—objects, and writings. While another definition may be suggested—viz., that the older term be confined to photographs of spirits, and the words “psychic-photography” be used to define things that do not necessarily imply portraiture. After all, however, the term “transcendental photography” would most satisfactorily cover all the facts.

From the Spiritualist point of view, what appears to be the circumstances connected with taking a photograph of a spirit?

An ordinary photographic outfit.

A medium.

A spirit.

A sitter, or sitters.

Let it be understood that the bona-fides of all the parties bare fully conceded, and that every proper precaution against any of the stock arguments for the possibility of fraud has been taken. The parties concerned are willing to accept whatever occurs, to be content even with drawing a blank.

As to the outfit. Any ordinary camera will suffice, a stereoscopic one if desirable. Any make of plates can be used, and the customary formula for development can be followed. It is of no real importance (in the light of what is presently to be written) whether or not the operator is followed into the darkroom and his processes watched.

The medium may be either the actual photographer or one who does nothing to the actual procedure. He or she may be one of the sitters present, but, up to note, under ordinary circumstances, a medium appears to be requisite.

The sitters or sitter should at least be earnest in their desire to obtain a picture of some departed friend. Earnest in seeking such a sign from the departed, for any sign coming from them has seriousness associated with it which, in the minds of right-thinking persons, lifts it out of the common-place vulgarities of ordinary daily life.

Let us assume the exposure has been made, the plate developed, and a portrait picture obtained. Now, let us ask how it has all been done?

SUGGESTIVE ONLY.

If the reader will turn to a previous paragraph in this history he will find that under certain circumstances things invisible to the human eye can be photographed, i.e., can impress the sensitised plate with an image which is made manifest by the process of development. Clearly, then, there must be something capable of affecting the plate in the camera. Further, it must be a something which possesses a certain ponderability but is not necessarily tangible. The operation and its results occur under the conditions of this plane of existence, therefore, whatever or whoever may be concerned, the laws of this plane of existence must be conformed to. To argue that spirits are not material is to beg the question. Let their forms be ever so attenuated, according to our notions of tenuity, they are, nevertheless, tenuous.

This brings us to the question of why a medium? Baron Reichenbach over two generations ago obtained evidence of the reality of flames flowing from magnets and other articles. Clairvoyants have seen things utterly invisible to the normal eye.

The Baron's sensitives, the later somnambules, saw and see in the dark. Their "sight" is a verified fact, so we can accept the existence of forms and lights that are not visible to normal vision. The state in which these exist is about us, and we live in it; therefore, what forms, things, objects, or personalities may function all unseen to most of us right at our elbows, so to put it?

But this does not meet the particular case. The clairvoyant vision is a personal and largely a subjective experience. A "spirit" photograph is an objective presentation, a material fact, so far as the photographic plate is concerned. What sufficiently objectifies the "spirit" to enable the form to be impressed upon the plate behind the lens? The answer comes from the fact that we each radiate a personal sphere of so-called magnetism, an auric emanation, or set of emanations, drawn from all parts of body, mind, and psychic powers in us. This auric element is the nexus between us and the spirit-plane of our being. Certain portions of it are used by spirits when they manifest in the various methods they follow when they come into temporary active relation to this plane of life. Some people radiate a larger quantity of this auric surrounding than others; they, constitutionally, make the best mediums. According to the nature of the auric emanation so is the medium best suited to this, that, or the other purposes the spirits have in view in using them for the production of the phenomenal evidences upon which Modern Spiritualism has been erected. There seems, then, to be little doubt that in some cases the auric emanation of a medium is of such a character that spirit-workers can adapt such aura to the purpose of adding sufficient tenuity to the invisible form to enable it to reflect sufficient of the actinic rays of the spectrum to affect the photographic plate and produce the desired image. All psychic experiments are amenable to the mental and spiritual states of the experimentalists, and such states may prejudicially affect the results desired; may, in short, render results impossible. But the foregoing explanation may, suggestively, explain why so many of the "spirit" pictures appear so stupidly out of focus, for it may well be that the operators on the other side are not yet fully masters of the means at their disposal, and so cannot do better at the time.

OF NO REAL IMPORTANCE.

FURTHER back the remark was made that it was of no real importance whether the operator was followed up through all the processes or not, the statement being followed with a promise to explain its import later on. That no one shall seize upon the remark and unjustly twist it aside from its real meaning, let it now be said that the reason for writing it was this: IF THE SITTER OBTAINS A PHOTOGRAPH OF A DEPARTED PERSON, THE EXACT LIKE OF WHICH PICTURE NONE EVER EXISTED, OR, BETTER STILL, OF WHICH PERSON THERE NEVER WAS ANY OTHER PICTURE AT ALL, in the face of such a fact all suspicion is silenced, and all protections against fraud become valueless. It is not urged that all reasonable care should not be used, but one does not go into a shop and demand that the assistant at once submit to an open charge of being a swindler.

CUI BONO?

Granted all that is claimed on behalf of the photographing of “spirits” is true, says the critical reader, what is the good of it? A more fatuous remark is scarcely possible! Unless like “Punch’s” historic costermonger, who asked “What’s the good of anythink?” and who answered his inquiry with the comment, “Why, nuffink”; we, too, say nothing! But the pessimism of this atrabilious age is no interpreter of the old, old question, “If a man die, shall he live again?” Herein is the whole gist of the matter, if the photographing of the features of the departed can bring new life to the waning hopes of a materialistic age, dry the tears of the mourner, bring home to the sceptic the certainty of a beyond, and enlarge our boundaries of knowledge, faith, and practice, then there is much use in this matter of photographing spirits. It helps to translate despair into knowledge. It dethrones the hideous nightmare of the materialist that death ends all, for a demonstration of the reality of the next life, and its intimate relation to this, are things men languish for to-day. What is the good of it all—what is the good of the sun, the stars, the flowers, the tides, the purpled hills which raise their domes to the spangled silence glittering above them? They are each and all parts of that tremendous mystery we call Being, and whatsoever will prove that death is but a road along the eternities for all men, and a road to happiness and progress, is, without doubt, good—aye, blessed—in its effects upon mankind.

VALEDICTORY.

What was at first intended to be a little matter has grown to far larger dimensions than originally anticipated. The subject grew as it was worked upon. Even now much material has been cast aside for lack of space in which to utilise it. All that has been attempted is to set down as a “round, unvarnished tale” so much as is herein recorded of the history of the attempts made to obtain photographs of departed persons. At least, it can be claimed for the accounts presented that the narrators are persons of repute, who testify to what they have personally experienced. If human testimony is worth anything, the testimony offered in these pages is certainly worthy of respectful acceptance. If a Beattie in Bristol, a Mumler in America, a Boursnell in London, a Duguid in Glasgow, a Buguet in Paris can or could obtain these photographs the concensus of opinion is in favour of the possibility of such photographs being obtained elsewhere and by others. As a reasoned opinion, let it be said that to confine Spiritualism to either its mental phenomena or to its philosophical presentation and ignore its objective phenomena is to exhibit a singularly narrow outlook upon the recorded facts of the Movement; to show a deplorable misjudgment of the needs of the world today. When such mental attitude is exhibited by Spiritualists or mediums one can only wonder at the fact, for no explanation which one would like to state occurs.

The Spiritualist is not asking how these photographs can be simulated; he is quite aware of that possibility. What he is most concerned with is: Are there evidences that they are actually what they purport to be? The records contained in this account will surely supply an answer in the affirmative.

That we know so little, though often seeming to know so much, is but a truism all too trite for elaboration. The writer of these lines feels like Sir Isaac Newton, who said, apropos his admission of the limitations of even his expanded mind, “I

do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smooth pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.”

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BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

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

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

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

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

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