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Book Review by Paul J. Gaunt: -

MRS MILLER'S GIFT

By

Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison

ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0

In the October 2007 issue of Psypioneer, page 224 ¹ we published the Introduction to a new book by Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison:- *'Mrs Miller's Gift' - A Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library.*

From the formation in 1852 of the First Association of Spiritualists of Philadelphia ², societies, associations, and organised bodies have been the backbone of progression

¹ Introduction to *Mrs Miller's Gift*: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.10October07..pdf>

² In brief: - a group of people met at the house of a well known Quaker Aaron Comfort. Those who attended the first circle for the investigation of "The Rochester Knockings" in October 1850 were later called the 'Harmonial Benevolent Association' which immediately preceded the 'First Association of Spiritualists'. It is interesting to note that the investigative group followed the instruction of Andrew Jackson Davis, whose books had been studied by them. After receiving many communications of evidential value a committee was formed and became an organised association in 1852.

and protection to workers in Modern Spiritualism. In PsyPioneer 2.12 December 2006 we published *The story of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association 1872-1928* ³, one of the earliest societies in London.

Gerald O'Hara and Anne Harrison in *Mrs Miller's Gift*, tell the story of the 'Edinburgh Psychic College & Library', its progression from its beginnings to the present day.

The book starts with background information on the Miller family, their establishment of an iron foundry in Edinburgh, 1867, and the donated premises of the original site of the Edinburgh Psychic College and Library (the College). Ethel Maud Miller née Hansen (1876–1946), financed the elegant Georgian premises in Heriot Row, Edinburgh. The authors learn from their research, that Mrs. Miller had intended the College to be a memorial to her late husband Robert Ernest Miller.

This well illustrated book with its many photographs, clippings and visitors book entries, etc., gives an interesting insight into the workings and achievements throughout the 75 years of the 'Edinburgh College of Parapsychology' ⁴ as it is now known.

The early days of the college saw Catherine Mowat as Mrs. Miller's secretary, as well as assistant secretary to the College Principal and Secretary, and it is this lady to whom we can be grateful for the notes she kept, giving us fuller historical accounts. For example, Miller's new college absorbed an earlier organisation 'The Scottish Psychic Society' (S.P.S) p. 39.

As to Mrs Miller's own personal opinion on psychic matters, only one statement was found: - "*Mrs Miller's great desire was that mediumship should be regarded as a divine gift and all possessing it should be given every facility for its expression under the best conditions*" page 39.

The College was, and is today, free from any religious commitment and remains as was intended, for the continuous and sustained study of mediumship. The authors bring to light an interesting comparison from Catherine Mowat's account; that Mrs. Miller was urged by the spirits to model her college on the 'British College of Psychic Science' (BCPS) in London, which was founded by James Hewat McKenzie ⁵ and his wife Barbara in April 1920. In 1939 ⁶ the BCPS amalgamated with the 'International Institute for Psychical Research.'

³ The story of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association 1872-1928: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.12December06..pdf>

⁴ Edinburgh College of Parapsychology: - <http://www.parapsychology.org.uk/>

⁵ See: - A Knight Errant of Psychic Science James Hewat McKenzie by Barbara McKenzie. <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.8August07..pdf>

⁶ Some reports states that the merger took place between December 1938 – January 1939 see: - Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology (Shepard) 3rd 1991. See also for International Institute for Psychical Research: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/17.PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

The advice was followed and the 'Edinburgh Psychic College & Library' was closely modelled on BCPS. Ethel Miller was helped greatly by the experienced Barbara McKenzie, as well as Mr. John B. McIndoe, S.N.U. president (1930-38); (see College opening address by McIndoe, page 4 of this issue), he became an active committee member, and both he and Barbara McKenzie became trustees of the Edinburgh College.

Like the McKenzies at BCPS, Mrs Miller would constantly seek out the best physical and mental mediums and public speakers. She also sought the best environment for the workers, which would mean sufficient intervals, not to be over worked and a fair fixed payment (later becoming flexible).

I have touched on but a few of the many interesting points that are raised in this book; the College visitors' books show a veritable Who's Who of Spiritualism. In the impressive list are included speakers like: - Rev. Maurice Elliott, Marie St Clair Stobart, Richard Boddington (see page 7 of this issue), Hannen Swaffer, Arthur Findlay, Maurice Barbanell and Ernest Oaten. In later years came Paul Beard, Dr. John Beloff, and Prof. Archie Roy.

One of the most engaged speakers of the College was the mental medium Helen Hughes. Hughes' fee in 1938 was raised so she would receive the same fee in Edinburgh as she was accustomed to in London, 10/-, which meant a College member would pay 15/- and a non-member 17/6 at the door (p. 66).

It is interesting to note that it was cheaper to sit with Helen Duncan than attend a Helen Hughes demonstration. Duncan gave regular séances at the College for eight years from 1932-1940, according to the reference: - "*Materialisation séances, - Mrs Helen Duncan of Edinburgh will conduct group séances at the college once or twice per week at the College whenever she is available. Members, 10s 6d and non-members 12s 6d*" page 68; Duncan was paid 2 guineas for the sitting (p. 65).

We learn (p.67) that, in 1938 a transcription service was offered at the College; a typewriter was purchased and a charge of 5/- was made for a transcript of one's sitting. While researching this book, the authors found three of a set of five 78rpm records of a Helen Duncan séance in the College archives. These may have been used to provide a transcript for the sitters?

Whilst not part of the book, I would like to add an interesting reference. Muriel Hankey in September 1949 was invited to act as Principal of the 'Edinburgh Psychic College and Library' whilst its Principal (Catherine Allan) was on a sabbatical. Mrs Hankey had been personal secretary to James Hewat McKenzie, writing his biography, "*James Hewat McKenzie, Pioneer of Psychical Research*" (London, Aquarian Press, 1963).

Muriel Hankey and her daughter Denise (later Mrs Iredell) sat at the college with Helen Duncan. Denise, who sat with Duncan on two occasions, is one of a handful of people that can recall what she witnessed. Members of the SPR can read her letter ⁷

⁷ Ref: - SPR. JSPR Vol. 53. No 804 page 401 correspondences.

online, giving details of the séance she and her mother attended at the Edinburgh College in 1949.

As previously stated, I have only highlighted a few points in the College's history. The authors Gerald O'Hara and Ann Harrison have thoroughly researched and tell an impressively important story of how '*Mrs Miller's Gift*' started and matured over the seventy five years of its existence. Part of Ethel Miller's vision for the College was for a library to study and research, so much so that she insisted on the word library being incorporated in the original College title. It is uplifting to note that the College still has a fine library with some 3,000 books on its shelves.

For those interested in the history of the spiritualist movement, this is indeed a worthy book for your shelf!

This book is available through PsyPioneer @ £7.50 + Pp see page 24.

The Opening of the Edinburgh Psychic Centre College and Library on Thursday 8th September 1932

Maurice Barbanell in his newly founded paper '*Psychic News*'⁸ gave little coverage on the opening of the 'The Edinburgh Psychic Centre College and Library' on Thursday 8th September 1932. But below is what '*Light*' printed on September 16th 1932 page 448: -

EDINBURGH'S NEW PSYCHIC CENTRE OPENED

UNDER the happiest auspices and with a gathering so numerous that it overflowed the lecture hall, the Edinburgh Psychic College and Library was opened on Thursday last (8th inst,) by the Rev. Charles Drayton Thomas who, with other London friends, travelled to Edinburgh for the event.

The new Society has its headquarters at 30 Heriot Row, a neighbourhood steeped in the atmosphere of old-time literature and learning – a classic street. The house was purchased and equipped through the munificence of a lady who, for the present, modestly desires to remain anonymous, although she is well known in Edinburgh psychic circles. The place has been repainted and decorated throughout, and contains some twelve rooms which will be devoted to the uses of the College and its members and visitors.

⁸ 1st issue of '*Psychic News*' was on Saturday May 28th 1932 priced at 2p

The renovation was not quite complete on the opening day but those who inspected the place were loud in their admiration of the fine equipment. Lecture-hall, lounge, library, seance-rooms, bedrooms for Mediums and lecturers coming from a distance are included. There is also a healing room, where Mr. Burn Callander, of The Seekers (29 Queen's Gate, London, S.W.7), will treat patients.

Many Scottish friends well known to readers of LIGHT are interested in the new venture and are supporting the effort to found a centre, the need for which has been long felt. It will be governed by a Council of four persons and the secretary (*pro tem*) is Miss Scott, to whom inquiries should be addressed at 30 Heriot Row.

At the opening service, Mr. Drayton Thomas gave an address of a breezy, practical kind, and yet intensely earnest and reverent as he offered a prayer that the new institution might supply the spiritual needs of those to whom it was designed to minister. He gave some of his own experiences, which applied instructively to the new work, emphasising the need for providing accurate knowledge of survival amongst the multitudes now inquiring into the evidences and sadly in need of guidance from those with more experience of mediumship and its peculiar qualities.

Mr. J. B. M'Indoe, ⁹ President of the S.N.U., presided, and his remarks were highly appreciated, as he outlined the relations between official science (especially in regard to biology and physics) and the new knowledge now being brought into the world by Spiritualism and Psychical Research.

HOSTILITY OF THE CHURCH AND SCIENCE

Mr. M'Indoe, in the course of his address, said it was a matter of amazement for many who had studied the subject to see the indifference or hostility displayed by the Church. That hostility was passing. It was also a matter for wonder that scientists should have been so reluctant to take up the study of the subject – although one could understand the early scientists, accustomed to things happening in accordance with well-understood laws, being very unwilling to bother about experiences which so frequently did not occur when they were desired to occur, or which indicated the intrusion of some intelligence over which the scientist had no control whatever. They had also to take into account that so many of these phenomena were directly opposed to what scientists called first principles. They should always remember, however, that these first principles, these so-called laws of Nature, were not laws laid down by God, or the Creator; they were merely man's interpretation of nature arrived at by his own limited conception. The understanding of those laws in physical science itself was undergoing transformation. No one thought of them in terms of twenty or thirty years ago.

⁹ Is the name: - M'Indoe misspelt in the '*Light*' article? Should it read as: - McIndoe (who was S.N.U., president 1930–1938). I have noted that in other publications i.e., 'Manual and Who's Who of Spiritualism and Psychical Research' edited by James Leigh 1936, Encyclopedia of Occultism & Parapsychology (Shepard) 3rd 1991, and various journals that the name is spelt M'Indoe!

The SNU always spell it McIndoe, does the SNU have the incorrect spelling for their former president? Or are they correct?

Fifty years ago, Huxley refused to investigate the phenomena of consciousness, because, he said, it was merely an epi-phenomenon. It was merely a shadow attached to the real phenomenon. To-day they found physicists like Eddington declaring that we must recognise that the physical universe was entirely an abstraction apart from its linking to consciousness, thereby restoring consciousness to a fundamental position instead of regarding it as something connected with matter in its later stage of evolutionary development. Psychic phenomena came in to help the average man to realise that this physical world, which was so real to us, was but the glimmering shadow of something beyond. Psychic phenomena enabled them to realise that there was something apart from the human body, that there were unseen powers at work which science was unable to measure or estimate, which could operate matter in a super-normal way, which could control energy, and, most of all, give man evidence of survival of death. It was of the utmost importance to the men and women of to-day that they should have some personal knowledge of psychic phenomena.

Mrs. Grace Cooke followed in a pleasant little speech in which she spoke of the power of love in psychic communication, instancing the case of a lady who always gained astonishing evidence, her secret being that she gave the unseen communicators a loving greeting, her affection seeming to melt away those obstructions to free communication which so many people find as the result of a wrong attitude of mind.

Mrs. Grace Cooke remains at the College until the 16th and is to be followed successively by Mrs. Annie Johnson and Mr. A. Vout Peters.

LIGHT, in congratulating the founder of the new College, and the friends engaged in the work, offers its best wishes for the future prosperity of the institution. There are always certain perils at the beginning of new ventures, but these can be overcome by strong and capable guidance.

Amongst the visitors from London were Mrs. Drayton Thomas, Mrs. Archibald, Mrs. Ford (of the London Spiritualist Alliance and the British College of Psychic Science), Miss Evelyn Bremner, and Mr. David Gow (of LIGHT).

AQUARIAN GOSPEL DOUBTS, AS FILM IS PLANNED

Serious questions have been posed about the inspirationally received “Aquarian Gospel” (1909) of Levi, following an investigation by Dr John Buescher, a leading American historian of Spiritualism.

The sixty page monograph “Aquarian Evangelist: the Age of Aquarius as it dawned in the mind of Levi Dowling” was published in January 2008 by “Theosophical History” (www.theohistory.org). Its preparation was first revealed in an interview with Dr Buescher in Psypioneer May 2005¹⁰, and there was a preview in Psypioneer October 2007¹¹ as part of our own investigation of “Florence” who was influenced by Levi.

The analysis suggests that the gospel drew upon common motifs in the New Thought “Jesus” literature of the time. Los Angeles, where Dowling was based, was already a fruitful centre for such enterprises.

Today the New Age market is many times larger, and it has recently been announced that a film of book is in preparation, featuring the alleged journeys to the East of Jesus. A female actress will play the love interest, and a reunion with the Magi (or wise men) is planned. See: - <http://religionnews.com/ArticleofWeek010308.html>

**PsyPioneer is acting as the UK bookseller for the
‘Aquarian Evangelist’
Available @ £14.50 including, first class postage,
See page 24**

¹⁰ In the Historian’s Chair Dr. John Buescher: - http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP13.pdf

¹¹ Who was Florence? By Leslie Price: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.10October07..pdf>

RICHARD BODDINGTON

A PIONEER LOOKS BACK

For over a century the name Boddington has been well associated with Modern Spiritualism and the S.N.U. Harry Boddington is well known for 'The University of Spiritualism' (his work in general being for study-educational purposes). This was serialised in *Psychic News* starting in 1932. Later published in book form (1947), the title has gone through numerous editions and is again presently available.

More recently his niece Muriel Boddington (1900 – 1989) *Honorary Vice President of the S.N.U.* founded the Lyceum Union Museum: - See "The Muriel Boddington Spiritualists' Lyceum Museum and Library Union"¹². This is to be found at Darlington S.N.U., Church, The Old Chapel, Denmark Street, Darlington, Co. Durham. Research and study can be arranged.

Harry Boddington's brother, Muriel's father Richard, was also a pioneering spiritualist of some standing. According to the S.N.U., website¹³ Richard Boddington's wife Emily, (nee-Small), died in 1901 at only 24 years, just a year after Muriel's birth who was then cared for by her Grandparents.

Psypioneer in 2008 will be looking at the early developments of 'Organisation' in the birth of the S.N.U.

Below is taken from 'Psychic News' 23rd July 1932 page 11: -

THE DAYS WHEN IT WAS DIFFICULT

A PIONEER LOOKS BACK

There are still living today many Spiritualists who can remember the days when great sacrifices had to be made when you became a Spiritualist – when it meant the facing of derision, unemployment, sometimes, yes, and sometimes personal violence.

Richard Boddington, who can remember these days and who must now be counted as one of Spiritualism's pioneers, has watched the progress of Spiritualism in the last forty years. Here are extracts from his reminiscences in the "National Spiritualist"

¹² <http://www.snu.org.uk/lyceum/museum.htm>

¹³ <http://www.snu.org.uk/lyceum/pioneers.htm>

THE OLD DAYS

“In 1893 there were in London three organised societies – today the number would be nearer fifty-three – Stratford, meeting at the Old Workman's Hall, Marylebone, meeting in a drawing room, and the South London Spiritualist Mission, meeting in a private house.

“We were not troubled then by the question of itinerant speakers. Each society had to fill its own platform as best it could. Was Mrs. E. H. Britten coming to London, then the local town or other large hall was booked, the meagre membership forming a guarantee fund for the rent of same – and our optimism and faith never failed us.

STEAD'S FIRST APPEARANCE

“J. J. Morse was holding meetings at his house in Osnaburgh Street. E. W. Wallis was at that time editing the ‘Two Worlds.’ My own earliest encouragement came from these two latter gentlemen, and I use that word in its best sense, for throughout their long service to Spiritualism, never a scandal, or suggestion of it, attached to their names.

“Mr. W. E. Long was in the early years of his thirty years' service as resident speaker of the Church of the Spirit. In East London, Mr. and Mrs. Weedemeyer and Mr. R. Wortley were gradually introducing the fact of spirit life and communion. My first National Conference visit was at Laisterdyke in 1904, where I was to meet men who had been battling for our truths for many years. How the names rise in memory's backward glance-J. J. Parr, W. Harrison, J. Swindlehurst, W. Johnson, or “Sledge Hammer,” as they used to call him.

“In 1898 was held the first really big International Conference in London, the old St. James's Hall and the Portman Rooms being utilised. It was here that W. T. Stead first identified himself publicly with our movement.

“I remember he presided at one session where my old friend, Alfred Kitson, read a paper upon ‘The Education of the Child.’ When he sat down, W. T. went for him and his paper in a very unchairmanlike way and reduced Kitson to tears! And why? Because in the whole of his paper he had *not* mentioned the Lord Jesus!!! I fancy W. T. S. was wiser, ere the Titanic sank.

“At the reception, famous men and women, Jesse Shepard, Mrs. Cadwallader, Cora Richmond, Professor Aksakof, Alfred Russel Wallace, Stainton Moses, David Gow, then like myself a youngster, seeking items of news for ‘Light’ office in Duke St., Adelphi. This conference was organised by the London Spiritualist Alliance, Dawson Rogers, Senr., having succeeded Stainton Moses as president.

“I received the honour of election to the National Council in 1907. Shortly after my London colleague, George Taylor Gwinn, also joined the board. Frank Hepworth, Pa Knight, John Venables, John Page Hopps, Mr. Macdonald, Geo. P. Young, all had a word of encouragement for the Young Councillor of the S.N.U. And what journeys, and what economics!

“What travel by midnight excursion trains to save the Union's funds. But it was worth it, the fine feeling of fellowship, the sure and certain knowledge that the unity of the churches was gradually being achieved.

“About this time I lectured in Bournemouth. John Walker I found a typical pioneer of the spirit, his convert, F. T. Blake, ably keeps the flag flying. About 1898 a young fellow named Alfred Vout Peters¹⁴ visited three or four London churches in the effort to decide the significance of his visions.' My sister-in-law and my brother Harry had started simultaneously with myself, and there is no question in my mind but that the democratic aspect of Spiritualistic church work in London dates from the founding of the Battersea church in Doddington Grove, and soon after-wards of the London Union.”

CFPSS FACES HISTORIC DECISIONS

At the annual general meeting of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (CFPSS), in September 2007 it was announced that Canon Michael Perry would retire as president in 2008.

Only four men, all Anglican, have been president of the ecumenical fellowship since it was conceived in 1953. They are Sir Cyril Atkinson... (1953-63) a retired judge, Rev. Chancellor E. Garth Moore (1963-1983) an ecclesiastical lawyer; Rev. Dr Martin Israel, a pathologist and retreat conductor (1983-98) and Dr Perry (from 1998)

Michael Perry is one of the few SPR members to have joined over 50 years ago; his reminiscences appeared in Paranormal Review (April 2003 available on line to SPR members). He wrote the standard English-language treatment of the Resurrection in the light of psychical research (“The Easter Enigma” 1959); an assessment of the Christian hope (“The Resurrection of Man” 1974) and a general introduction to Christian Parapsychology (“Psychical and Spiritual” 2003).

Dr Perry was an establishment figure in the Church of England, serving at various times as chief publisher of SPCK, secretary of the Doctrine Commission, editor of the Lambeth Conference, archdeacon of Durham and chaplain to the Bishop of Durham.

Where is CFPSS to find a president who holds such a respected position in both Christian parapsychology and the Church, and who is willing to take an interest in its work? In 1963, the fellowship asked the Archbishop of Canterbury for help, and he in turn called on the Chancellor.

¹⁴ Alfred Vout Peters will feature in next month's issue.

Dr Perry is also retiring as editor of The Christian Parapsychologist, with thirty years of service from 1978; before that he was book review editor, His position in the church and the field has facilitated the recruitment of distinguished writers.

In recent decades, CFPSS has achieved wide acceptance within the mainstream churches in the UK (a sister organisation is active in Scotland.) Fellowship members will be praying that wise leadership will again emerge to take them forward.

LP.

(The Fellowship has a new web site: - www.churchesfellowship.org.uk)

A Century-Old Writings about Mediumship

By
Carlos S. Alvarado

[**Note by PsyPioneer:** - Dr. Carlos S. Alvarado¹⁵ is Assistant Professor of Research in Psychiatry and Neurobehavioral Sciences at the University of Virginia,¹⁶ and Chairman of Domestic and International Programs at the Parapsychology Foundation.¹⁷]

Mediumship has been a topic of continuous interest in psychical research since the old days of the field. Nonetheless, the literature of the past shows that psychical researchers paid more attention to the phenomena of mental and physical mediumship than they do today, at least in terms of formal published research reports. In this short paper I present examples of this literature published a hundred years ago in 1907 in the spiritualist and psychical research literatures.

American philosopher and psychical researcher James H. Hyslop (1854-1920) published important research with mental mediums. One of his reports was about a medium named Mrs. Smead (pseudonym of Willis M. Cleaveland), who was the wife of a clergyman. She practised automatic writing in her family circle, but never in public. Some of the communications supposedly coming from spirits of the dead referred to aspects of the planet Mars, but these are not the topic of the present report. Writing about other aspects of Mrs. Smead's scripts, Hyslop (1907d) said:

¹⁵ Check out other valuable contributions by Carlos S. Alvarado on Psypioneer search engine: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/> Psypioneer News.

¹⁶ <http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/personalitystudies/Carlosbio.cfm>

¹⁷ www.parapsychology.org

The sittings . . . are quite unequal. Some are entire failures and some are notable successes There are all grades of excellence from the non-evidential to the completely evidential incidents, including those which strongly suggest or exhibit the influence of the medium's mind upon the 'messages' and those which are on the borderline of proof. In other words, the record shows that variation which we should most naturally expect on the assumption of its real psychological importance in so complicated a problem (p. 535).

Hyslop also referred to the fragmentary nature of the communications. In his view: "It is apparent that all the communications, evidential and non-evidential alike, do not represent normally systematic control of the motor organism" (p. 587). Furthermore, Hyslop also discussed problems in communications in a series of papers that summarized séances held with Mrs. Leonora E. Piper (1857-1950) in which the deceased psychical researcher Richard Hodgson (1855-1905) was supposedly communicating (Hyslop, 1907a, 1907b, 1907c). The papers presented many incidents and references, some of them trivial, which suggested veridical information given by Hodgson. In the last paper in the series Hyslop (1907c) discussed possible causes for the triviality and confusion found in some mediumistic messages. One of these was the possibility that the communicating spirit did not have a clear mental state, being in an altered state akin to dreaming or somnambulism. Another problem discussed were obstacles in the communication process coming from the trance condition of the medium. As Hyslop wrote:

Trance is but a name for an exceedingly fluctuating condition and that is not exactly the same in different mediums. The effect of this condition on messages intromitted into the psychic's mind will vary with the nature of that trance. If the medium remains normally conscious the first question to be raised would be whether the cleavage between the supraliminal or ordinarily normal consciousness and the subliminal or subconscious mental activities is great enough to exclude the normal interpreting and other processes from modifying the thoughts introduced into the mind from the outside. In some cases the messages enter the normal consciousness either as a condition of their delivery or as an incident of it. In others they are delivered without any apparent knowledge of their coming or of their nature. On the other hand if the supraliminal consciousness is suspended the subconscious action of the mind may reproduce all the influences of the normal mind except its memory of their occurrence or of the messages. Only when the trance extends to the subconscious process can we expect the removal of the interpreting action of the mind through which messages otherwise come. Even then we generally or always find the existence of limitations determined by the habits and experience of the medium, such as the spelling, style of writing, and even the use of terms All these when they occur show unmistakable influences from the mind of the medium upon messages intromitted into it. All that remains after the admission of the fact of this influence is the determination of the extent of it by the study of actual and concrete instances (Hyslop, 1907c, pp. 218-219).

Similarly, French astronomer Camille Flammarion (1842-1925) wrote in his book *Mysterious Psychic Forces* (1907), first published in French in the same year, about confusions during automatic writing: "The subject treated follows the lines of our own customary thoughts; the language employed is our native tongue, and, if we are uncertain about the spelling of certain words, errors will appear. Furthermore, so

intimately are our own mental processes mingled with what is being written that, if we allow our thoughts to wander to another topic, the hand either stops writing or produces incoherent words and scrawls” (p. 29).

Flammarion once belonged to one of Allan Kardec’s (pseudonym of Hippolyte-Léon Denizard Rivail, 1804-1869) early groups that produced written communications from alleged spirits. In fact, Flammarion himself acted as a medium, writing messages that were signed as “Galileo.” After about two years of these writing seances, Flammarion wrote: “I came to the positive conclusion that not only are the signatures of these papers not authentic, but that the intervention of another mind from the spirit world is not proved at all, the fact being that we ourselves are the more or less conscious authors of the communications by some cerebral process which yet remains to be investigated” (p. 28). Writing in *Light*, Laura Finch (1907), herself a medium, discussed a variety of features of mediumship in a multi-part paper. She believed that mediumship was not connected with particular physical attributes. However, she wrote that “almost every medium presents a certain physical characteristic, almost pathological, consisting in momentary losses of memory, that is, partial amnesia which, however, we must guard against confounding with hysteria” (p. 247). She admitted that there could be the appearance of hysteria, but without having such diagnosis.

A clearly pathological view of mediumship was expressed by Pierre Janet (1859-1947), the well-known French student of dissociation. In a letter Janet sent to James H. Hyslop he suggested that investigations of mediums should include “his deceptions, his unconscious mistakes, and the nervous and mental conditions which accompany the phenomena” (Janet, 1907, p. 86). He argued further: “The people who act as mediums are more than variations from the normal: they are very often actually demented” (p. 87). But Janet also wrote that investigation could take a different course once pathology had been ruled out: “Later we may be able to prove that genuine mediums can be distinguished by the fact that they are what we know as neurotic subjects” (p. 87).

Another French worker, physician and critic Joseph Grasset (1849-1918), conceptualized mediumship as a form of dissociation (Grasset, 1907). In his view several internal mental centers of the medium, which he called polygons, collaborated and shared resources to produce romances and stories of all sorts, as well as motor phenomena producing writing and table turning. The medium, a person whose polygons exteriorized easily, could work in collaboration with the polygons of the sitters to produce phenomena.

Other authors focused on physical mediumship. Hereward Carrington (1880-1958) was active discussing mediumistic fraud. In *The Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism* (1907b), he wrote about techniques to produce such phenomena as, slate writing, spirit photography, table turning and levitations, and telekinesis, and how to escape all kinds of controls such as rope tying (there were also discussion of how to fake mental phenomena such as billet reading and veridical communications). This first part of the book—“The Fraudulent”—became a standard reference source for the discussion of mediumistic trickery. In the book Carrington was not convinced of the genuineness of Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918), something that changed after he sat with her at Naples in 1908 (Feilding, Baggally, & Carrington, 1909). Nonetheless, it must be

remembered that Carrington was not a complete skeptic. In the second part of the book—"The Genuine"—he was favourably disposed to some phenomena, including the mediumship of D.D. Home (1833-1886) and Leonora E. Piper. In fact, he wrote in the first page of his book: "It is *because* I believe that such phenomena do occasionally occur, that I am anxious to expose the fraud connected with the subject, - - since it is only by so doing that we can ever hope to reach the genuine phenomena which are to be studied" (p. vii).

Carrington also published an analysis of the testimony for an incident of dematerialization of the body of Elizabeth D'Esperance (pseudonym of Elizabeth Hope Reed, 1855-1919; Aksakow, 1896). He found the evidence for this claim unconvincing (Carrington, 1907a). While Carrington was skeptical of Palladino in 1907, many others were convinced of the genuineness of her phenomena (Aggazzotti, Foà, Foà & Herlitzka, 1907; Bottazzi, 1907; Flammarion, 1907; Scotti, 1907). A typical account of a Palladino séance read as follows:

The seance began in full light, and whilst the medium was still quite conscious, movements at first slight, then stronger, began in the seance table, which raised three of its feet. In full light the slight outward movements of the curtain on the left were observed. The medium asked by means of the table (five raps) that the light might be lessened; this was done rather slowly, and the strong red light . . . fell directly on to the medium's eyes, which occasioned in her a fit of hysteria; she wept and cried out as if demented, hitting her face repeatedly with her fists. This was a genuine fit of hysteria When the attack was over, Eusapia was no longer in her normal state of consciousness, and no longer spoke in the first person; she spoke as if she were John King In the meanwhile, the table on which the toys had been placed, and which we call No. 1, made a noise in the interior of the cabinet, from which it at last came out completely. Then there began to arrive on the seance table many objects from table No. 1: a sheet of paper, a little wooden sheep and a mandoline; the latter was accompanied by the curtain which covered the handle; the curtain . . . came back and covered the handle of the mandoline, and a hand, which was not that of the medium or of the sitters, pulled the hair of the person who had pushed back the curtain. At the same time we heard a scratching on the strings of the mandoline (Aggazzotti, Foà, Foà & Herlitzka, 1907, pp. 366-368).

A particularly interesting and important study of Palladino was that reported by Italian physiologist Filippo Bottazzi (1867-1941). He conducted a series of seances in which recording instruments were used (Bottazzi, 1907). Another Italian researcher, psychiatrist Enrico Morselli (1852-1929), published an interesting two-part paper about the medium entitled "Eusapia Palladino and the Genuineness of Her Phenomena," in which he classified the phenomena she produced, and discussed the different explanations offered to explain them (Morselli, 1907). His classification of the medium's phenomena, which I present below, reminds us she also produced mental phenomena. I have included some parenthetical comments to clarify what Morselli meant:

SUBJECTIVE PHENOMENA

1. Modification in the state of consciousness (clear or unclear).
2. The state of auto-hypnosis (trance).
3. Suggestibility.
4. Oniric or dream phenomena (physical phenomena connected to the medium's "activity during sleep").
5. Personifications.
6. Communications and messages in Italian.
7. Communications in foreign languages.
8. Divination of thought and mental suggestion.
9. Lucidity and clairvoyance.
10. Externalization of sensibility (tactile sensation projected from the body).

OBJECTIVE PHENOMENA

Mechanical Phenomena Where the Medium's Body Had Contact with the Objects Affected

1. Oscillation and movements of the table without significance (no intellectual content).
2. Movements and beating of the table having significance (such as answering questions).
3. Complete lifting of the table.
4. Movements of various objects as soon as touched by the hands or body of the medium.
5. Movements, undulations, and swellings of the curtains of the cabinet.
6. Movements and swellings out of the medium's clothes.

Mechanical Effects Without Contact with the Medium

7. Oscillations and movements of the table without contact.
8. Independent liftings of the table.
9. Undulations, swellings and movements of the curtain of the cabinet.
10. Movement occasioned in material objects by the hands being voluntarily turned towards them, but at a distance.
11. Spontaneous movement and displacement of different objects at various distances from the medium.
12. Bringing of distant object on the table.
13. Displacement of the seats of the experimenters.
14. Movements of operation of mechanical instruments placed at a distance.

Alteration of the Weight of Bodies

15. Spontaneous changes in weight in a scale.
16. Change of weight in the body of the medium.
17. Raising the medium's body in the air.

Thermal Radiation

18. Wind from the cabinet.
19. Intense cold.
20. Radiations from the head and body of the medium.

Acoustic Phenomena

21. Blows, raps, and other sounds in the table.
22. Blows and raps at a distance.
23. Sounds of musical instruments.
24. Sounds of hands, feet, etc.
25. Sounds of human voices.

Lasting Effects on Inert Matter

26. Mysterious signs left at a distance.
27. Direct writing.
28. Impressions on plastic substances (imprints of limbs and faces on plaster).
29. Apports.

Materializations

30. Touching, feeling, and grasping by invisible hands.
31. Organization of solid forms having the character of members of the human body.
- 31A. Organization of hands, naked and distinguishable to the touch.
32. Complicated actions of materialized forms, tangible but invisible.

Luminous Phenomena

33. Appearance of luminous points.
34. Appearance of whitish clouds or mists.

Visible Materializations

35. Formation of dark prolongation of the body of the medium.
36. Forms having the appearance of arms and hands coming out of the cabinet.
37. Appearance of hands.
38. Appearance of obscure forms of undeterminate character or not very evident.
39. Appearances of forms having determinate and personal character.

To explain the phenomena of Palladino, and other physical mediums, many observers speculated about the exteriorization of a vital force related to the body, a concept that precedes Spiritualism (Alvarado, 2006). Flammarion (1907) speculated as to the nature of the force behind physical mediumship:

We must therefore admit, first of all, this prolongation of the muscular and nervous force of the subject This prolongation is real, and only extends to a certain distance from the medium We are forced to admit that this prolongation, usually invisible, and impalpable, may become visible and palpable; take, especially, the form

of an articulated hand, with flesh and muscles; and reveal the exact form of a head or a body. The fact is incomprehensible; but after so many different observations, it seems to me impossible to see in this curious phenomenon only trickery or hallucination A fluidic and condensable double has therefore the power of gliding momentarily out from the body of the medium How can this double, this fluidic body have the consistency of flesh and of muscles? We do not understand it (pp. 424-425).

These are but a few of the discussions about mediumship published in 1907. The examples selected show some of the features of phenomena, as well as ideas developed at the time to account for them. The material clearly illustrates the richness of this literature, one that deserves historical discussion in the context of the careers of mediums, their investigators, and the wider theoretical framework of Spiritualism and psychical research.

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We are indeed grateful for this valuable contribution from Dr. Carlos S. Alvarado.

Dr. Alvarado has kindly submitted to PsyPioneer another four papers which will be published over the next four issues starting with: - *Further Notes on Historical Ideas of Human Radiations: Part1, On Electricity and Other Forces.*

Notes by the Way:-

BOOKS TESTS, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW THEM

When a book on the history of psychical research is published how do we evaluate it? Here are some tests which you won't find in the parapsychology text books.

The Myers Test: This involves checking if the author of the book can spell. Some authors, for example, think the first name of Myers is Frederick not Frederic. Other pitfalls are the Roman Catholic investigator, Feilding (not Fielding.) and the co-discoverer of evolution, Alfred Russel (not Russell) Wallace. Deborah Blum's new work "Ghost Hunters- William James and the Search for Scientific Proof of life after death" (2007) spells these right. (Another problem is the SPR apparition expert Tyrrell. The SPR web site has a useful page on their web site listing past presidents, where he appeared as Tyrell.)

The Dawson Rogers test: As readers of this newsletter from issue one know, the SPR was conceived by Edmund Dawson Rogers, a Spiritualist journalist, and its first meeting was chaired in London by the man in whom he confided, Professor William Barrett of Dublin. Although Blum cites Alan Gauld's " The Founders of Psychical Research" (1968) she says of Sidgwick "And in 1882, he would found, along with two friends, Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney, the British Society for Psychical Research." (p.40). Later she has a discussion about the first meeting (p.73-4) but does not say in which city they met, or name the chairman or the other parent, Rogers.

The Blavatsky Test: The most famous investigation of the SPR (1884-5) was of Madame Blavatsky and led by Dr Richard Hodgson. Not everyone was convinced by

this, notably in recent times, a senior SPR member, Dr Vernon Harrison. A historian should allow room, if only in a footnote, for these doubts; after all, Harrison was a professional scientist countering forgery for a bank note company. Blum simply accepts Hodgson's perspective ("fraud" "handwriting experts" "confession" "forgeries" – see p.91).

She is right on one thing however "It was hard to imagine even the most accredited scientist doing a better job of demolishing a medium's reputation." (p.92) Even today, no academic damages their reputation by attacking Blavatsky, and it is not necessary to read what she wrote before doing so. (For a recent informed assessment, however, based on actual analysis of her writings, see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke's anthology "Helena Petrovna Blavatsky".) .

The Fox Sisters Test: Two of the Fox sisters in later penury confessed to faking their phenomena, so does this mean there is no problem explaining everything that happened around them? Raps have always been a staple of poltergeist phenomena, and a considerable number of psychical researchers have personally experienced them. A dismissive attitude to the sisters from the beginning, and to those around them trying to make sense of the phenomena, is not to be recommended. One can always just tell the story in historical perspective, as did Barbara Weisberg in "Talking to the Dead." (2004) ¹⁸, a book one would have liked to have seen cited on Blum p.330.

The Swedenborg Test: As Blum points out in the notes to her book, "Swedenborg's life is explored to varying degree in the general books on spiritualism listed in the introduction to this section" (p.329). Blum continues "In addition, there is an excellent short biography of the Swedish mystic in Eric Dingwall, 'Some Human Oddities: Studies in the Queer, the Uncanny, and the Fanatical' (Hyde Park, N.Y: University Books, 1962), 11-68, which was my primary source for the description of Swedenborg's fire vision as investigated by Immanuel Kant."

Dingwall's book first appeared in 1947, and to those in England who knew him, it was typical Ding, replete with curious learning, but not necessarily a balanced treatment. Historians should now, one would suggest, use longer biographies of Swedenborg, such as Ernst Benz "Emanuel Swedenborg: Visionary Savant in the Age of Reason" (ET 2002) or Lars Bergquist "Swedenborg's Secret." (2005) ¹⁹. There's much valuable material from Swedenborgian publishers, such as <http://www.swedenborg.org.uk/bookshop/index.htm>

Naturally, having handed down these tests, we do not always pass them ourselves, and have our errors and omissions!

LP.

¹⁸ References to Barbara Weisberg's 'Talking to the Dead' can be found in PsyPioneer on the Search Engine see: - www.woodlandway.org/ - PsyPioneer news.

¹⁹ See *The Problem of Swedenborg* by Leslie Price issue 2.5 May 2006 page 102: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/2.5%20PSYPIONEERFoundedbyLesliePrice.pdf>

[**Note by PsyPioneer:** - Money and over work had always been an issue with Helen Duncan. Over a long period Maurice Barbanell warned Duncan of these dangers. Note that in this 1932 Barbanell report (printed below) of her mediumship that she was earning between £5 and £6 per séance, whereas in PsyPioneer's book review of *'Mrs Miller's Gift'* (Edinburgh College) (p.1) at around this same period it is reported she was earning two guineas per séance.

Prior to this in October 1930 Duncan started a series of gruelling test séances for the 'London Spiritualist Alliance' (LSA). She conducted over 50 sittings, reports of these were published in *'Light'*. Between May - June 1931 Duncan also sat with Harry Price in this period she gave 5 séances and Price paid her around £50.00, Price claimed that the LSA had spent hundreds of pounds for the Duncan sittings. More on Helen Duncan see: - *'Helen Duncan the Mystery show trial'* by Robert Hartley, PsyPioneer book review: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>]

Below is taken from *'Psychic News'* July 2nd 1932.

**PLAIN FACTS ABOUT THE DUNCAN
MEDIUMSHIP
"EXPOSED"- BUT PROVED GENUINE
By MAURICE BARBANELL**

Although I have been a Spiritualist for thirteen years, I learned a new lesson last week at a sitting with Mrs. Duncan. I realised the futility of trying to convince those not yet ready for conviction.

To this sitting, several sceptics had been invited, two of them being medical men. Albert, the guide of Mrs. Duncan who usually takes charge of her seances, said at the beginning there were some obstacles he could not get over.

He asked me to bend down to-wards the cabinet and told me: "I cannot do anything to-night. This atmosphere does not interest me. Sit later on without the sceptics. One of them brings an atmosphere I do not like."

All that happened was, we saw a thin mass of ectoplasm covering part of the medium. It was very weak and did not compare with the solidly built-up forms I had seen several times through her mediumship.

When the sceptics had gone we sat again. The phenomena was extra-ordinary. Albert showed himself and the medium standing side by side quite clearly. He led the medium out of the cabinet. He even brought her close to me whilst he stood at her side, and he touched me with his foot.

SEPARATE ENTITIES

Mrs. Duncan was made to move about in the cabinet whilst Albert walked up and down outside within two or three inches of the sitters, who sat in one row facing the cabinet.

He brought Mrs. Duncan out of the cabinet again and asked Mrs. Hirst²⁰, one of the sitters, to shake hands with her. While they were shaking hands, Albert stood beside them and spoke to Mrs. Hirst, giving positive proof that Albert and Mrs. Duncan were two totally different beings.

Two other spirits materialised and spoke, one in Russian, and the other in Swedish. Yet, a half-hour before-hand, Albert could do little with the sceptics present.

I am sure the spirit world is not interested in convincing sceptics against their will, until they have reached the stage when they are fit to touch the Spirit world.

Psychical research has tied up mediums and invented devices to make sure of their genuineness. No one sees that the sitters are genuine, in the sense that they are ready for the phenomena of Spiritualism.

Mrs. Duncan's visit to London has made me realise the difficulties of a professional medium.

In her, we have one of the most powerful physical mediums this century has produced. Yet, she has had to face hostility, accusations of fraud, the indignities of being searched, the submission to rigorous medical examination, in order to prove her powers.

Harry Price claimed to expose her, but Mrs. Duncan's position to-day is stronger than ever it was. She has proved she is a medium with extra-ordinary gifts. But now, a great difficulty confronts the Spiritualist movement.

I speak as a personal friend of Mrs. Duncan. After J. B. McIndoe, I have done more to rehabilitate her than anybody else I know. During her last visit to London, I arranged several sittings with prominent Spiritualists of all the London organisations, the result of which has been to create a demand for her services. Now what is the result of this?

THE PURSUIT BEGINS

She came to London to give a series of eight sittings for the Spiritualist Community. She has been told that she ought not to sit more than three times a week.

²⁰ Reference to Mrs Hirst (who became a medium around 1929) has previously been made to her in Psypioneer in 'A Surprising Jesuit' see: - <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP2.9September06.pdf>

She has been sitting every night for three weeks. The temptation is, of course, the money. From a household which used to depend on the comparatively small earnings of Mr. Duncan, of possibly £4 to £5 a week, she has been receiving £5 and £6 for each sitting.

Is it any wonder that she has been tempted to sit too often?

She has been pursued by Spiritualists, all eager to see the phenomena of materialisation. She has been over-sitting, and if it continues her powers are bound to deteriorate.

“Protect your mediums,” said Doyle, a few weeks ago²¹. Yes, we must protect them. Even if we have to hurt their feelings a little, as I am sorry to do with these frank statements.

Mrs. Duncan has great gifts.

Our present economic system forces her to charge fees. She must have money. But I want to warn Mrs. Duncan that her gifts must not be treated as a commercial proposition.

They should be guarded and watched, and carefully cultivated. She should not sit more than three times a week. She should put herself in the hands of experienced Spiritualists, wherever she goes.

Then she will be rendering a greater service to the spirit world and humanity.

One of the sceptics that are referred to in this article was Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward, better known as Sax Rohmer (1883 – 1959) the famous novelist which included well known work *Dr. Fu Manchu*. Rohmer in an earlier interview with Barbanell published in P.N., May 28th 1932 considered spiritualism to be dangerous: - “Spiritualism is Sorcery”.

Referring to the above séance with Helen Duncan, Sax Rohmer made this (edited) response in P.N., July 16th 1932: -

As one of the “sceptics” referred to, may I make a few comments?

I had attended a previous seance of Mrs. Duncan's, at which Lady Segrave and Mr. Hannen Swaffer were present. I formed the opinion that “Albert” was a particularly poor impersonation of a masculine voice by a female mimic limited by the knowledge of good English. Clarice Mayne could have done it far better.

Twice I had my foot on the “ectoplasm,” but owing to the fact that “Albert” had requested us to sit further back, I was unable to hold it down.

²¹ This is referring to Doyle speaking by direct voice in a private sitting of twenty people including Lady Doyle and her family, Estelle Roberts was the direct voice medium. *Psychic News* June 18th 1932.

The other "spirit," whose name I forget, was a very feeble imitation of a child. Having formed a theory respecting the "ectoplasm" and its place of concealment, my party, at the second seance referred to in the article, included two medical men of special experience who requested that they should be allowed to examine Mrs. Duncan.

On the ground that we were late-a fact-this examination was avoided.

In view of these circumstances, the editorial remarks quoted above explain themselves. The session was unsatisfactory. But, since a large banana was thrown in the dark-and with uncommonly good aim-at one of the sitters, it could not justly be termed unfruitful. No medical examination took place. The "sceptics" departed. Later in your article you say Mrs. Duncan has great gifts. So far, these "gifts" have not been revealed to me-if I exclude the banana.

SAX ROHMER

Barbanell remarked: - We expected a "distinguished author" to show more intelligence - and more wit.

An Australian Spiritualist and Theosophist

Officially, Modern Spiritualism and Modern Theosophy are opposed. We could quote some scorching remarks from Mesdames Blavatsky and Britten to support that. But there have been some practitioners who have earned a living in both arenas.

Berkshire born, English exponent Vivian (later Vyvyan) Deacon (1895-1938) attempted this precariously after arriving in Australia about 1912. He joined the International Order of the Star in the East on 9 October 1912, and lectured to the Besant Lodge of the Theosophical Society in Melbourne on 21 May 1913 on "Reincarnation in Robert Browning's Poetry". He often traded on his connection with the poet's family.

But in May 1920, Deacon sailed for New Zealand, where he frequently lectured at Spiritualist Churches (though he also developed a persona as "Frater Memnon" of the "Rosicrucian Order of Freemasons".) Deacon was even elected vice-president of the national association of Spiritualists; W.C. Nation was president.

In 1922, Deacon returned to Australia. Here he resumed his Theosophical links, hearing a lecture by Jinarajadasa, and meeting Annie Besant, and C.W. Leadbeater. However Deacon was also learning how to conduct direct voice seances (as Vivienne Browning reports in her biography of her father "The Uncommon Medium" (Skoob, 1993), p.98.)

Eventually it was the mediumship side of Deacon which was to become his predominant activity; this was probably for economic reasons. It was as medium that Deacon became chiefly known, after his return to England in 1930. More about that mediumship soon.

LP...

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<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.6June07..pdf>

*'Magical Spiritualism a warning address given in 1878 to mark thirty years of Modern Spiritualism'*, Andrew Jackson Davis Published May 2000 by Psychic Pioneer Publications, this is a small booklet 7pp £2.00 Inc U.K., postage (please add 20% for airmail).

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