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*Psypioneer would like to extend its best wishes to
all its readers and contributors for the festive
season and the coming New Year*



Conan Doyle, Houdini, Rinn, Geller And ‘Paranormal Powers’

By Garth Willey

This article began with reconsideration of an occasionally contemplated study by the Psypioneer team of the historic origins of “The Psychic Press” and an attempt to follow not only the baton of proprietorship but also the publications made under its banner and imprints. The current owner is the J.V. Trust. And the first proprietor of the name The Psychic Press was, of course, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (ACD) when he set it up as the publishing house aspect of his Psychic Bookshop, Library and Museum: but once one enters that portal, there is a wealth of trails and intrigue to side-track the interloper!

On 9 December 1925 ACD had occasion to write the following letter to the editor of The Daily News¹ regarding criticism which had been levelled at the authenticity of the physical phenomenon behind the of production of ‘wax gloves’² on display in the then recently opened Museum below the Bookshop:

The Psychic Museum

SIR, – The article by your representative upon this museum is so genial that I should be churlish indeed if I were to take serious exception to it.

In it he couples my name with Sherlock Holmes, and I presume that since I am the only begetter of that over-rated character I must have some strand of my nature which corresponds with him. Let me assume this. In that case I would say (and you may file the saying for reference) that of all the feats of clear thinking which Holmes ever performed by far the greatest was when he saw that a despised and ridiculed subject was in very truth a great new revelation and an epoch-making event in the world’s history.

There are many more now who would subscribe to this opinion than a few years ago, and I am convinced that a very short time, at the rate of its present progress will bring about the considered comprehension of it on the part of the whole human race.

¹ Letters to the Press, Arthur Conan Doyle, 1986, edited and introduced by Gibson & Green, pp312-4.

² SNU Britten Memorial Museum, Booklet I, *Spirit Wax Moulds*, Paul J Gaunt, 2012: What are Spirit Wax Moulds? “If a hand or foot is dipped into melted paraffin-wax and withdrawn, a thin layer of wax adheres to the appendage and creates a thin glove-like waxen mould. The thickness of the mould is increased by repeated alternate paraffin-wax and cold water immersions. It was generally claimed by Spiritualists that a human hand or foot cannot be withdrawn from the waxen mould without distorting and rupturing it, especially if fingers are crossed or interwoven. Spiritualist mediums have demonstrated that a full or partially formed materialised spirit could produce such a mould by using their ectoplasmic limbs. Once the mould was complete, the appendage could simply be removed by dematerialising it; thus leaving a fragile, but detailed mould of their hand or foot.

My great difficulty with inquirers who come to my museum is that often they know nothing of the subject – worse than nothing in many cases, for they may be filled with prejudices and misrepresentations. Then in a few minutes I have to try and convey to them the elements of a great science. Fancy a man coming to a geological museum who knew nothing of the science and imagined that he was competent to correct the curator upon the order of the fossils. That is a fair analogy to what is a constant experience.

To show the untenable nature of the views which they put forward I will take those of your correspondent concerning the experiment which produced the original Geley gloves. Let us take the facts as recorded in the Journal of the Institut Metapsychique, which is the organ of that body – a scientific and not a spiritualistic institution in Paris.

First of all we will take the fact that the report of what occurred was signed by Charles Richet, Professor of Physiology at the University of Paris, Gustav Geley, who was the head of the Institute, and of European reputation, finally by the Count de Grammont, an experienced investigator, none of the three a professed Spiritualist.

They observed what occurred under a fair red light, and all were agreed as to their observation. Their scientific reputation depended upon the truth of their statement. Now I ask your representative for a fair answer to this question. Were these three men deliberately and senselessly lying? I will assume, as he is a sane man, that his answer is no.

Then the only alternative is that they were deceived. Let us see if this is credible. They had locked the door, and as the room was their own (I know it well, and it is in a basement) there was no secret entrance.

When Kluski, who is a Polish banker, had sunk into a trance, and when the ectoplasmic figure was formed from him in a fashion already recorded and photographed on many occasions with other mediums, it was asked to dip its hand into a pail which contained warm paraffin. All the observers saw it do so, and controlled the medium at the same time.

When the wax had encrusted the hands of the phantom it was asked to disappear. It did so, leaving the wax gloves which had formed over its hands upon the table.

And now comes the point which your correspondent has overlooked, and which is fatal to his theory of impersonation. The wax gloves, as anyone can see for themselves, are in one solid piece, and are much narrower at the wrist than across the hand. How, then, could the hand have been withdrawn save by dematerialisation inside the glove. No one has ever yet suggested any feasible way in which this could have been done.

To show the care taken by the researchers, Geley had put cholesterine in the pail of wax. An independent chemist analysed a portion of the glove and

reported cholesterine. This, of course, is proof positive that the glove was not brought ready-made into the room.

Impressions were taken of the spirit hand and of that of the medium, with the result that a certificate was obtained from M. Bayle, of the Paris police, that there was no resemblance.

The experiment was repeated with various sitters, Mr. and Mrs. Hewat McKenzie being among those who obtained the gloves at the Psychic Museum. Some 28 impressions were taken in all on different occasions. Is it to be supposed that in every case these observant circles were unable in a red light to see that a stranger had come through the locked door and was walking about the room?

It is a foolish thing to be too credulous, and it is an equally foolish thing to be too incredulous. The balanced judgment holds its poise between.

I can well understand that a reporter may find it impossible to attain in half an hour the experience and knowledge which 38 years of work have given to me. That is natural. But it is not natural or reasonable that a novice who was not present should ascribe to fraud or folly events which were observed and guaranteed by some of the first intellects of Europe.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

—\$—

Harry Houdini, in ACD's presence in America in 1923, had proclaimed that he could do anything which a medium had ever done. I don't know of any public attempt Houdini may have made to replicate the phenomenon of 'wax gloves,' but he certainly made a valiant attempt to find a way to do so... at least to be able to replicate the exhibition of wax gloves, let alone replicate the physical phenomenon of producing them before reliable witnesses. Houdini's long-time pal and fellow (amateur) conjurer/magician, Joseph F Rinn,³ wrote of it many years later.⁴

The following is the 2 page chapter⁵ he wrote regarding the production of wax gloves:

WHILE Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was lecturing here in 1922, Houdini paid me a visit and, in the course of our conversation, said: "In talking with Doyle about the wax gloves mentioned by Richet and others as having been produced at

³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Rinn and <http://www.skeptic.com/eskeptic/13-01-30/> He was born in New York 31 July, 1868 of Irish parents and his year of death is shown in Wikipedia as 1952, but both as 1962 and as 13th October 1952 on another website

http://www.geniimagazine.com/magicpedia/Joseph_Rinn Presumably he died 1962 since *Searchlight* was published 1954. He was born 1868 so he was either 84 or 94 when he died (and we are still working on ascertaining which date is correct). Comparatively, Houdini was born 1874 – 6 years Rinn's junior – and died 1926, aged 52.

⁴ *Searchlight on Psychical Research*, by Joseph F Rinn. London, Rider & Co, 1954 (revised edition of footnote 6).

⁵ *Searchlight* Chapter 36, pp278, 279.

séances through psychic power, I asserted that they had been produced through fraud. Doyle challenged my statement and dared me or any other magician to produce similar hands by trickery."

"Doyle is quite gullible," I replied.



Joseph F Rinn

"I'm not so sure of that when it comes to the wax hands," said Houdini in a serious tone. "I've tried and failed to make them. What do you know about that stunt?"

"About everything necessary to produce them, Harry," I replied, as I led him into a laboratory I had in my office.

"Well, I tried at first to make one by putting my hand in heated wax—and look at my hand," said Houdini ruefully.

"I'll bet you put your hand in the wax without soaping it," I said laughing.

"Yes," said Houdini, "I did, but I know better now. I tried tying a cord to my finger and pulling it through the wax on the back of my hand, but I could never get my hand out of the cast without breaking it."

"Well, Harry, forget those old methods; they're not used now. They produce wax casts now with rubber gloves."

"With rubber gloves, eh?" said Houdini, as he looked at his burnt skin. "I wish I had known that."

"I was going to make a wax hand for you, as, fearing I might some day be challenged to do the trick, I have all the paraphernalia here, but I had better explain the method to you and let you practise making them. The rubber glove must be filled with air to duplicate a hand. Fill in the part of the glove at the wrist with a solid piece of wood with a hole in it, so that with a bicycle pump you can fill it with air. Put a peg in the hole to keep the air in. Dip the glove in the hot wax several times to give it a body, so that it will not collapse when you dip it in cold water, and let the air out of the glove."



"But such a cast would be a straight hand," said Houdini, after a moment's thought, "and Doyle's pictures show a clenched fist."

"Oh, that's easy also," I said. "Instead of filling the glove with air, use a syringe and fill it with hot water. Then, after dipping the glove in the hot wax several times, let the hot water out, and while the wax cast is still soft, you can press the wax fingers into any position you wish. After that, dip it in cold water, and you are all set with a perfect cast of a clenched fist."

"I can fool Doyle easily with that stunt," Houdini replied. "Oh, no I can't," he added despondently, "for Doyle had photographs of many unclenched hands that showed perfect finger-prints of the spirit or medium."

"Well, what of that? I know that Albert Welde, a Chicago engraver, had perfected a method of engraving whereby he can duplicate the fingerprints of anybody perfectly."

"But nobody could fake finger-prints on a wax cast," protested Houdini.

"For a mystery man, Harry, you're quite dumb," I replied, with a laugh. "If you make a mould of a hand in dental wax or in plaster of paris, it can easily be transferred to a wax cast."

"But you couldn't get your hand out of such a mould without breaking it," protested Houdini.

"You could if you made a mould of half your hand at a time, first the palm side and then the back-of-the-hand side. Join the two halves together and seal the cracks. With that mould any rubber manufacturer could make you a rubber glove having on it all the finger-prints."

"I get you. What a medium you'd make!" said Houdini admiringly. "Just wait until Doyle gets back, and I'll have the laugh on him. He certainly is an easy mark for any trickster. Sir Arthur still believes what Dr. Crawford wrote about Kathleen Goligher's psychic powers, in spite of the fact that Dr. Fournier d'Albe exposed her as a fraud. I met him in England in 1920 and had a letter from him to-day. I brought you a copy, as it may be of use to you some day when that business of yours permits you to find time to write about your experiences with psychic fakers."

Dr. Fournier d'Albe's letter read as follows:

"Kingston-on-Thames,
Oct. 10,
1922.

Dear Houdini,

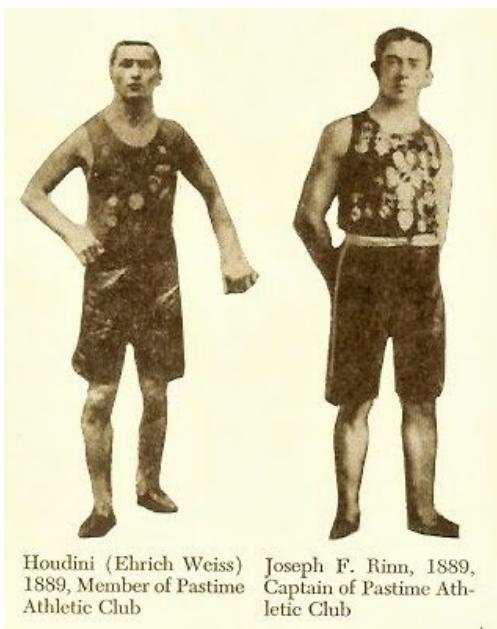
Yours of the 26th ult. just received. Yes, the Goligher legend has lost its glamour. I must say I was greatly surprised at Crawford's blindness.

Sincerely yours,
D'ALBE."

"When was the nearest time in your career, Harry," I inquired, "that you were close to being defeated?"

A grim look appeared on Houdini's face and he replied: "I'll never forget the agony I went through in one test in Europe. A group of locksmiths got together in an endeavour to trip me up. They constructed a lock without a keyhole, and it could not be opened with any jemmy I possessed. They had me sweating for hours trying to get out of my bonds, and I thought I was licked. Sometimes a performer gets a lucky break, and that time I got mine. In my struggle to release myself, the lock, without any help from me, sprung open. Of course I got credit for opening it."

—§—



Houdini (Ehrich Weiss)
1889, Member of Pastime
Athletic Club

Joseph F. Rinn, 1889,
Captain of Pastime Ath-
letic Club

Rinn had struck up a friendship with Ehrich Weiss (a.k.a. Houdini) when they met in 1889 as members of the Pastime Athletic Club in New York City. Rinn, being Captain of the Club, its champion sprint runner and 6 years Houdini's senior, undoubtedly would have mentored (as we would refer to it these days) the talented 15/16 year old. And, apart from personal fitness and strength, they both had an interest in magic.

Rinn had witnessed many of the spiritualistic 'goings on' – good and bad mediumship and the shenanigans of fraudsters – of the 1880s era, including the declining years of the Fox sisters; and he would have broadened Houdini's awareness of these matters.

Amongst the extensive documentation of Rinn's experiences and views given in "Searchlight" – he was an inveterate diary-keeper and scrapbook-er of documents, newspaper cuttings, photos, etc. – there is a wealth of information relevant to the development of the American Spiritualist Movement. It is well worth reading, but with a rather jaundiced eye to Rinn's scepticism!

It will also be observed that Joseph Rinn was an earnest but egotistical and arrogant fellow. In an SPR Review of an earlier edition of Searchlight,⁶ W H Salter gave a pretty good assessment of Rinn's character and how he became so disenchanted by all that he witnessed that he became extremely cynical. I've no doubt Rinn's character rubbed off onto Houdini who himself also became not only most egotistical and arrogant, too, but an enigmatically complex character to say the least!

Rinn's vernacular account (above) of how he helped Houdini with his attempts to reproduce the wax gloves phenomenon demonstrates his personality and clearly shows

⁶ *Sixty Years of Psychical Research: Houdini and I among the Spiritualists*, by Joseph F Rinn, New York, Truth Seeker Company, 1950. Reviewed in 1951 JSR pp 431-438 by W. H. S.

he continued as a friend and confidant for Houdini through 37 years until Houdini's death.

The final statements of the Searchlight Chapter given above, whilst not at all relevant to wax gloves, have been left in because the last disclosure is an interesting circumstantial indicator that Houdini had paranormal powers – as strongly suspected by ACD and Hewat McKenzie.⁷ Compare that last paragraph with words written by Uri Geller in his 1975 autobiography:⁸

There was a bicycle in our garage that my stepfather promised to give me as a bar mitzvah present when I became thirteen. I used to long for it, to be able at least to cycle around the big parking lot next to the hotel, where there were no cars and I would be close enough to the hotel to be safe. But there was a big combination lock on the bike, and I was not allowed to ride it.

But the temptation was too strong. One day, I said to myself: 'If I can bend keys and tell what my mother is thinking or has done, or move watches or clocks, I'll bet I can open that lock!' It was an exciting thought. I couldn't resist it. I tried the lock several times, but it wouldn't open. Then I concentrated very hard on the lock for about two minutes. I tried it again. It immediately opened. I still remember the feeling of pulling the lock open it was amazing.

I sneaked the bike out of the garage and tried to ride it. I must have fallen fifty times, but I finally got the knack, and I had this wonderful feeling of freedom. Of course, it wasn't long before my stepfather found out I had opened the lock and was using the bicycle. He was absolutely amazed that I had found the combination for the lock. He didn't ask me how I did it; He just said, "Well, I don't know how you opened it, but as long as you have, you can have the bicycle."

I guess I was lucky to have such tolerant parents. This was perhaps the first time that I had put the powers, whatever they were, to what you might call a practical use, as mischievous as it was. There was much more of this to come—sometimes, as with the bicycle lock, when I tried deliberately to do something, and other times when I would have no intention of making things happen, but they would anyway. In either case, I would be reminded of the fact that things were happening that were very far from normal, and this was a condition that was to stay with me for the rest of my life.⁹

Could Houdini, whilst not having conventional psychic gifts, particularly those regarded as physical phenomena mediumship, have had paranormal powers similar to Geller's?

⁷ J Hewat McKenzie: *Spirit Intercourse – Its Theory & Practice*, 1916, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton Kent & Co, pp 86-7.

⁸ Autobiography *Uri Geller: My Story*, 1976 edition, Hamlyn Publishing Group, p115.

⁹ Autobiography *Uri Geller: My Story*, 1976 edition, Hamlyn Publishing Group, p115.

“The Magician Annual, 1909-10” contained an autobiographical article “Harry Houdini” by Harry Houdini – and about 10 years ago, I found that article available on the internet... but regrettably I cannot find it there now. However I did take a few notes and extracts for a paper I was doing on Houdini at the time. My notes concerning his early life from that autobiographical article were:

Worked as a ‘Jack of all trades’ and became apprenticed to a locksmith.

Police brought man in handcuffs with key broken off in lock. Locksmith could not get open and told Ehrich (Harry) to cut them off. After breaking half a dozen hack-saw blades, Harry picked the lock (how could he with a broken off key stuck in it?) – using a *“basic principle which I employed in opening handcuffs all over the world. Not with a duplicate key, which seems to have been the only way others had of duplicating my performance.”*

In other words, is he saying they could not employ his method because the “basic principle” he used was of a mental concentration nature: i.e. paranormal powers which others did not seem to have?

1893, at age 19, he acted the part of an old man in a play. During rehearsal, he was unable to remember a single line; but when the show opened:

“strange to relate, I was the only one who knew his part perfectly!”

Did he have help from ‘other sources’, perhaps not recognising it as such?

That year in St Louis, cold and with no money, he saw a discarded packing case in a crowded street:

“no police officer would permit me to break it apart in so crowded a thoroughfare, so I conceived a method of taking it noiselessly apart, and used this same method when I presented the packing-case mystery for the first time.”

This was a year or two later when, after escaping from a jail (using his padlock trick) they laughingly roped and nailed him into a linen packing case and challenged him to escape – which he did. No pre arranged confederates or even practice, planning other than the method he had used to noiselessly dismantle his firewood box!and so commenced his reputation.

Did magic, clowning and a ‘second sight act’ with Mrs Houdini through until 1900 when his trunk trick eventually brought him his first fame and fortune. He had offered to do his handcuff trick for £1 per week extra but it had been rejected. Why??? Maybe because they suspected genuine paranormal phenomena!!! But Houdini’s blinkered mind could not accept that it was not HE, HIMSELF, performing the feat.

The normal modus operandi when Houdini performed his escape stunts precluded the audience from seeing what he was doing; he was inside a crate, a tank or behind a curtain or an illusory trick was employed. But, in contrast, one occasion when he

opened a padlock in full view is narrated by Conan Doyle in a paragraph from his “The Riddle of Houdini”¹⁰:

Handcuffs might have been made of jelly, so easily did his limbs pass through them. He was heavily manacled at Scotland Yard, and placed behind a screen from over which a shower of manacles began to fall until he stepped out a free man. These things he could do in an instant. When I was lecturing at the Carnegie Hall in New York, my wife and Houdini walked down some side corridor after the lecture in order to rejoin me. They came to a padlocked door, and my wife was about to turn back. To her amazement, her companion put out his hand and picked off the locked padlock as one picks a plum from a tree. Was that a trick, or are all these talks about sleight of hand what Houdini himself would call “bunk” or “hokum”?

And the last accusation of “hokum” – goes to Conan Doyle! As he concluded after 38 pages of building his case in “The Riddle of Houdini”:

Be his mystery what it may, Houdini was one of the most remarkable men of whom we have any record... He had many outstanding qualities, and the world is poorer for his loss. As matters stand, no one can say positively and finally that his powers were abnormal, but... there is a case to be answered.

GW

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Harry Houdini and Arthur Conan Doyle

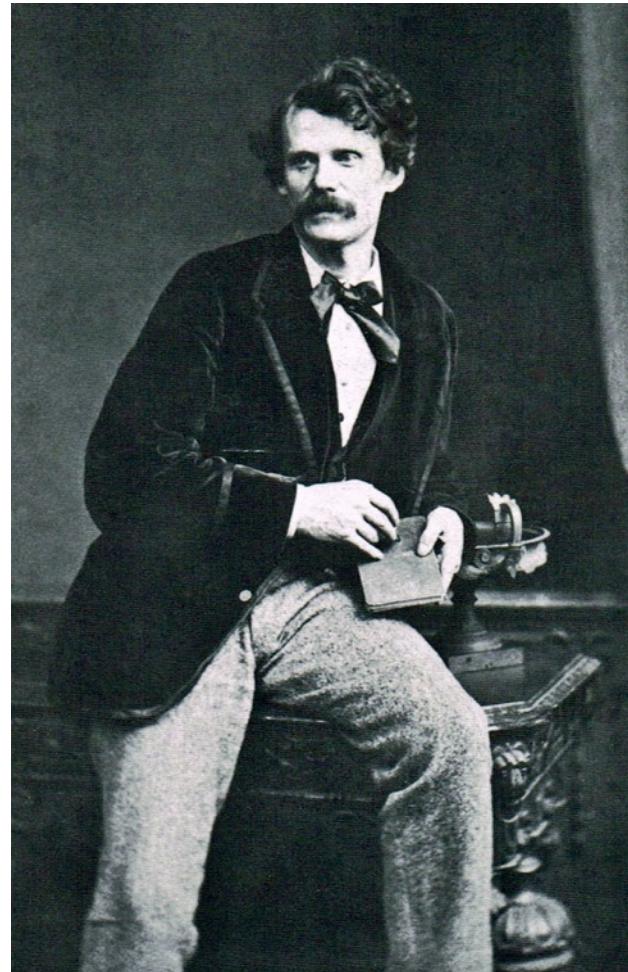
¹⁰ *The Edge of the Unknown – The Riddle of Houdini*. John Murray, 1930, October 1930 reprint pp 24-25

D. D. Home and Darkness

Introductory Note by LP: David Fontana, who died in October 2010, made many contributions to psychical research. The remarks below appeared in his response to a book review in the Journal of Parapsychology.

Correspondence – David Fontana – JP Spring 2006 vol. 70:

Home seems to have been without parallel, but the point is often ignored that semidarkness did in fact play a significant part in his work. In virtually all the Home séances reported by Crookes in the SPR Proceedings and in his papers in the SPR archives, the sittings were held in the evening and by candlelight and firelight (see, e.g., the collection of Crookes's reports compiled by Medhurst, Goldney, & Barrington, 1972). The Home sitting that Crookes described as "the most exciting and satisfactory meeting . . . I have ever known" (p. 157 – that of April 12, 1871) took place in complete darkness. The same emphasis upon semidarkness is true of the Home sittings reported by Lord Adare (later the Earl of Dunraven; Dunraven, 1924) in which details of lighting are given. In addition, the Home materialisations reported by Lord Adare all occurred at night and in the absence of artificial light. Speculations as to why darkness or semidarkness appears to assist the production of physical phenomena abound but without clear conclusions, although it is perhaps worth noting that some of the activities in nature — such as the germination of certain seeds — also require darkness.



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Fairies Should Be Seen But Not Heard of

Nandor Fodor.¹¹

Had Arthur Conan Doyle heeded the advice that fairies should be seen but not spoken of, he would have saved his reputation from the reflection that the fantastic story of the Cottingley fairies cast upon it. In folklore or in romantic stories fairies cut wonderful figures and the Fairy Godmother—whether considered a Jungian archetype or not—is beloved by all of us, but try to prove that fairies really exist and millions of people will shake their heads in compassion. The author of *Sherlock Holmes* did make such a try in the Christmas number of the *Strand Magazine*, of London, in 1920 and in a subsequent book, *The Coming of the Fairies*, in 1922. He boldly stated that the series of incidents set forth in his book “either represent the most elaborate and ingenious hoax ever played upon the public or else they constitute an event in human history which may in the future appear to have been epoch making in its character.”



Nandor Fodor

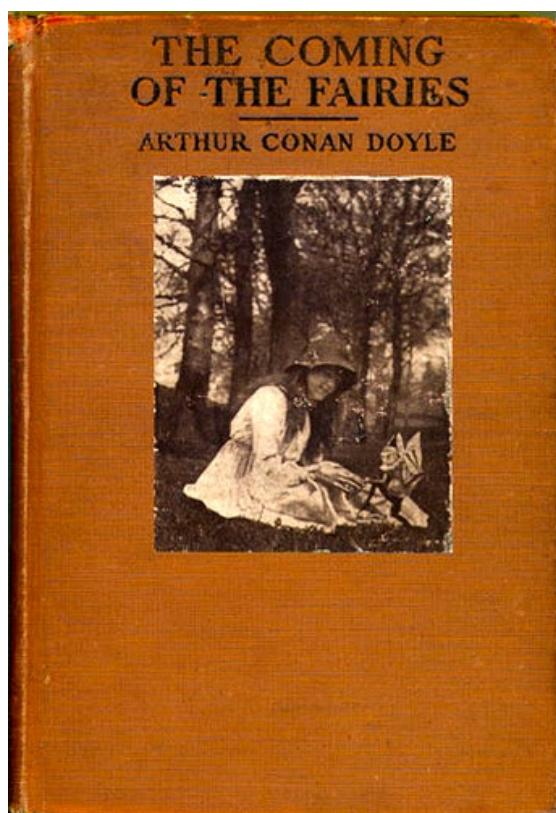
A heroic declaration, indeed! The background was furnished by two children, 10-year-old Elsie Wright and Frances Griffith, 6, in a small village called Cottingley in the summer of 1917.¹² The two girls consistently claimed that they were seeing fairies and gnomes in the woods. Borrowing their father’s camera they took two snapshots in the woods, allegedly for the first time in their life, and got some astonishing photographic support of their stories.

The first photograph showed Frances with a group of four fairies dancing in the air before her. The next showed Elsie, seated on the grass, with a quaint gnome dancing beside her. The fairies appear to be a compound of the human and of the butterfly, while the gnome looks more like a moth. Under

¹¹ Quoted from *Between Two Worlds* first published 1964 pages 190-194.

¹² Cottingley Fairies & images see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cottingley_Fairies

magnifying glass, the hands of the fairies seem to be fin-like and the beard of the gnome is an insect-like appendage.



The publication of these photographs created a sensation, promptly followed by the accusation that they were faked. However, expert examination could discover no positive evidence of tampering with the negative. When Edward L. Gardner, of the Theosophic Society of London (who first called Conan Doyle's attention to the story), presented the girls with a good camera, some more pictures were obtained of leaping, flying fairies and a fairy bower. The latter—something between a cocoon and an open chrysalis lightly suspended amid the grass with several fairy forms about—was declared to be beyond the possibility of faking. But attempts to secure more photographs at a subsequent period resulted in failure. Elsie Wright passed the pubertal age and with that, it was said, she lost the

power that may have helped the fairies to “materialize” in her presence.

Conan Doyle thought that the fairies represent a separate line of evolution and noted that children often claim to see them; which was factually established by Dr. Evans-Wentz in *Fairy Faith in Celtic Countries*, in 1912, 10 years before Conan Doyle's book, by a record of 102 first-hand cases in which living individuals claimed to have seen these legendary creatures.

I can subscribe to fairy visions both from my analytic and my parapsychological experience. One of my patients from Boise, Idaho, stated in all earnestness that she had seen fairies in her childhood. They were tiny people, running up her extended palm, dressed like human creatures. She took them for granted and used to tell them all she learned in school that day. Nothing could persuade her in later life that the experience was not real.

In England I used to have a friend who organized a Faery Investigation Society.¹³ He was the late Capt. Quentin C. A. Crauford, R.N., a man of considerable scientific acumen combined with a mystic disposition. Lady Molesworth was the President, and the program of the society was to accumulate knowledge and to classify the various orders of nature spirits. According to Crauford, research of this kind was much like making friends with the wild creatures of the woods.

¹³ Later known as the Fairy Investigation Society. Relaunched in 2014, with a new survey of fairy experiences planned. See: – <http://www.fairyist.com/>

A spiritualistic touch could be added here from a statement of "Feda," the child control (infantile regression?) of Mrs. Osborn [sic] Leonard,¹⁴ a famous trance medium:

Yes, they do exist. They are the nature spirits and there are many classes of fairies. Clairvoyance is needed to see them. They belong to another vibration. They don't have quite the same soul as we do. But they have spirits. All forms of life are used again. Nature spirits don't die like us. Some are created out of earth or fire or friction. They are all activity and movement.

The honorary secretary of the Faery Investigation Society was herself a trance medium by the name of Mrs. Claire Cantlon.¹⁵ I have interviewed her in my journalistic days for the Sunday Despatch and she picked for me out of the amazing letters that the society had received this priceless statement:

I was staying at an old house in Gloucester, and the garden at the back ended in the forest of Birdlip Beeches which covers part of the Cotswold Hills. It was before the days of the "shingle," and I had washed my hair and was drying it in the sunshine in the forest, out of sight of the house. Suddenly, I felt something tugging at my hair and I turned to look.

A most extraordinary sight met my eyes. He was about nine inches high, and the most dreadfully ugly, dreadfully misshapen, most wrinkled and tiniest mannikin I have ever seen.

He was the color of dead aspen leaves, sort of yellow brown—with a high, squeaky voice. He was caught in the strands of my hair. He was struggling to escape, and he grumbled and complained all the time, telling me I had no right to be there, troubling honest folk, and that I might have strangled him with my hair. Finally, he freed himself and disappeared.

I mentioned my experience afterwards to a professor of Bristol University. He was not surprised and told me that Birdlip Beeches was one of the few places left where there were fairies, and no one could go there because of it.

I enjoyed the story and was even more delighted when Mrs. Cantlon added:

I need not go to strangers for testimony. My house and garden in Putney are overrun by fairies and gnomes. The other day, Robin, my boy of ten, ran to me in great fright. He thought there was a pig in the room. It

¹⁴ Should be *Osborne* Leonard.

¹⁵ In the January issue we will be looking at Claire Frances Cantlon who was accused under the Vagrancy Act of "professing to tell fortunes", and Miss Mercy Phillimore, secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, for "aiding and abetting". Sir Oliver Lodge, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle along with Dr. Hector Munro gave evidence in support of the facts of psychic science.

was a fat gnome, sitting on the chair, looking very cross and grunting. A few days after I heard the noise myself. It was a blend between the growling of a dog and grunting of a pig. I thought it was the dog going at the cat. Last week I saw the gnome. Just as I was putting out the light, I noticed a queer shape trying to climb up the blind cord and fall with a fearful flop. He glared at me, for I had an impulse to laugh, and vanished.

June, my 11-year-old daughter, who is very psychic, saw some little time ago a gnome in a circle of light, sitting on the knob of a bedpost and hammering at a ring. He wore a cloak and had a long, white beard.

Needless to say, I was fascinated by this extraordinary story. I thought of Andrew Lang who considered fairy belief “a complex matter from which tradition, with its memory of earth-dwellers, is not wholly absent,” though he was more inclined to consider the survival of fairy belief to “old imaginings of a world not yet dispeopled of its dreams.”

So let us have more of these dreams.

Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, musician, singer, elocutionist, later a well known inspirational speaker and medium, quotes in her *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (New York, 1884) a compatriot of mine, Mr. Kalozdy, a Hungarian author on mineralogy and teacher in the Hungarian School of Mines.¹⁶ He was a kind of folklorist and had collected many narratives of knockings in Hungarian and Bohemian mines. He and his pupils often heard these knockings. The miners take them for signals of the *kobolds*, a warning not to work in a certain direction. The materialized appearance of these *kobolds* was seen by Mme. Kalozdy, an authoress, in the hut of a peasant called Michael Engelbrecht. Lights the size of a cheese plate suddenly emerged; surrounding each one was the dim outline of small human figures, black and grotesque, flitting about in a wavering dance and then vanishing one by one. Such visits were announced to Engelbrecht by knockings in the mine.

A pretty story, with the suggestion of a psychic element. Going back further into the past, we come across increasingly great wonders. The great authority on fairies was Robert Kirk, M.A., whose MSS, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Forum and Fairies*, is dated 1692. In a 1933 edition we read of women who had been taken away to nurse fairy children. The prize story, however, is that of a midwife from Sweden. Her husband, Peter Rahm, a Swedish clergyman, made a legal declaration on April 12, 1671 that a little man, swarthy of face and clad in grey, begged for help for his wife in labor. Peter Rahm recognized him as a troll, blessed his wife and begged her in God’s name to go with the stranger.¹⁷ “She seemed to be borne along by the

¹⁶ See Psypioneer: Volume 5. No 12: December 2009: Spirits of the Mines – Emma Hardinge Britten: – <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5%20December09.pdf>

¹⁷ Peter Rahm story is repeated: Readers will excuse the repetition here and later in the two accounts quoted from Fodor.

wind. After her task was accomplished . . . she was borne home in the same manner as she had gone.”¹⁸

This story takes us back right into the mediaeval lore of fairies that were said to be responsible for teleporting people, kidnapping them and holding them prisoners in a fairy mound and permitting them, finally, to escape after a supernatural lapse of time.

Hartland suspects that the idea of the supernatural lapse of time in Fairy Land was invented by the Catholic Church to frighten people from unhallowed contacts. I have written a chapter, *Kidnapped by Fairies*, in my book, *Mind Over Space*. In it I developed a totally different idea. It is based on the symbolism of the Fairy Mound or Fairy Ring. I consider it an excellent representation of the pregnant uterus. He who is teleported by the diminutive creatures living in the underground kingdom, is reduced to their size, which is anywhere within the size of the fetus. The enduring feasting, dancing and merry-making in which he joins is also descriptive of the life of the unborn, for whom everything is provided bountifully and without effort on its part. Time does not exist in the womb. It is a postnatal concept. The unborn, at the very best, could feel the rate of its own growth as a form of biological time. Hence, the supernatural lapse of time in Fairy Land is a fetal characteristic, and the motive for fairy fantasies is a psychological one: projection of strength unto the weak (the Little People) whom, in our inadequacy, we wish to dominate, and use thereafter as substitutes for the fulfilment of unattainable dreams of power.

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Picking up on Fodor’s reference in his book, *Mind Over Space* – “Kidnapped by Fairies”:

In mediaeval Ireland and Scotland fairies had a strong hold on human imagination. Accordingly, whoever rose up in the air or was mysteriously carried away had a perfectly acceptable explanation. He had only to claim that he accidentally fell in with fairies, spied on them or for some reason inspired their enmity. Since such things were believed to happen, he succeeded in safeguarding his own reason and avoiding accusations of being in league with the Devil.

The Rev. Joseph Glanville cites a typical case of levitation attributed to fairies which does justice to the spirit of scientific inquiry by naming some of the parties concerned:

A butler of a gentleman unnamed, who lived near Lord Orrery’s seat in Ireland, fell in one day with the good people, or fairies, sitting at a feast. The fairies, therefore, endeavoured to spirit him away, as later they carried off Mr. Kirk, Minister of Aberfoyle, in 1692. Lord Orrery, most kindly, gave the butler security of his castle where the poor man was kept “under

¹⁸ From *The Science of Fairy Tales*, by Edwin Sidney Hartland, London, 1891, p. 39.

police protection" and watched, in a large room. Among the spectators were Mr. Greatrakes himself, and two bishops . . . Late in the afternoon the butler was perceived "to rise from the ground, whereupon Mr. Greatrakes and another lusty man clapped their hands over his shoulders, one of them before and the other behind, and weighed him down with all their strength, but he was forcibly taken up from them; for a considerable time he was carried in the air to and fro over their heads, several of the company still running under him to prevent him receiving hurt if he should fall."¹⁹

This case shows a good deal of agreement with ecclesiastic levitations. For transportation let us quote Robert Kirk, M.A., the great authority on fairies. Writing of a man with second sight, he says:

His neibours often perceaved this man to disappear at a certane Place, and about one Hour after to become visible, and discover himself near a Bow-shot from the first Place. It was in that Place where he became invisible, said he, that the Subterraneans did encounter and combate with him.²⁰

John Aubrey gives the magic word which accomplishes the miracle. A predecessor of Lord Duffus was transported to the French King's cellar and was found there asleep with a silver cup in his hand. Brought to the king, he told the story that the day before he was walking near his house in the Shire of Murray when

he heard the noise of a whirlwind, and of voices crying *Horse and Hattock* (this is the word which the fairies are said to use when they remove from any place) whereupon he cried *Horse and Hattock* also, and was immediately caught up and transported through the air by fairies to that place where, after he had drunk heartily, he fell asleep and before he awoke the rest of the company were gone, and had left him in the posture wherein he was found. It is said the King gave him the cup which was found in his hand, and dismissed him.

The correspondent who sent the story to Aubrey interviewed Lord Duffus and was told that

there has been, and is such a tradition, but that he thinks it is fabulous, and this account of it His Lordship had from his father, the present Lord's Grandfather. There is yet an old silver cup in his Lordship's possession still, which is called the Fairy Cup, but has nothing engraven upon it except the Arms of the Family.²¹

¹⁹ *Sadducismus Triumphatus*, 1668 p. 131.

²⁰ *The Secret Commonwealth of Eves, Fauns and Fairies*. Ms. dated 1692, 1933 edition.

²¹ *Miscellanies*, 1721. P. 158.

Robert Kirk writes of having spoken to several women who claimed that they had been taken away to nurse fairy children in Fairy Land. From Sweden comes a remarkable account of such a case. According to a legal declaration by Peter Rahm, a Swedish clergyman and husband of a midwife, made on April 12, 1671,

a little man, swart of face and clad in grey, begged for help for his wife in labor. Peter Rahm recognized him as a Troll, blessed his wife and begged her in God's name to go with the stranger. "She seemed to be borne along by the wind. After her task was accomplished . . . she was borne home in the same manner as she had gone."²²

Glanville mentions that Robert Kirk, the chronicler of the fairies, himself was, in the end, carried away by them. Kirk died in 1692 at the age of 51. His tomb, in Sir Walter Scott's time, was to be seen in the east end of the churchyard of Aberfoyle, but his body was said to be absent. According to the story told by his successor, the Rev. Dr. Grahame, in his *Sketches of Picturesque Scenery*, Kirk was walking on a dun-shi, or fairy hill, and fell down in a swoon which was taken for death. After the ceremony of a seeming funeral

the form of the Rev. Robert Kirk appeared to a relation, and commanded him to go to Grahame of Duchray. "Say to Duchray, who is my cousin as well as your own, that I am not dead, but a captive in Fairyland; and only one chance remains for my liberation. When the posthumous child, of which my wife has been delivered since my disappearance, shall be brought to baptism, I will appear in the room, when, if Duchray shall throw over my head the knife or dirk which he holds in his hand, I may be restored to society; but if this is neglected, I am lost forever." True to his tryst Mr. Kirk did appear at the christening and was "visibly seen"; but Duchray was so astonished that he did not throw his dirk over the head of the appearance, and so to society Mr. Kirk has not yet been restored.²³

The fairies also are said to be responsible for the vanishing of Merlin, the wizard, said to have been the son of an elf or fairy, and of King Arthur. Neither of them was to see death.

Thomas of Erceldoune, called the Rhymer, a 13th century Scottish poet, is the hero of a similar legend. His romance with the elf queen apparently is based on a poem which may have been his genuine work but, according to the most widely accepted opinion, is a translation of a French original. At any rate, the story grew into a legend, according to which Thomas encountered the fairy queen under the Eildon Tree, which stood on the easternmost of the three Eildon Hills.

²² Edwin Sidney Hartland: *The Science of Fairy Tales*, London, 1891, p. 39.

²³ Sir Walter Scott: *Demonology and Witchcraft*, pp. 21-22.

Having got him into her power, she took him down with her into Fairy Land, where he abode, as he deemed, for three days, but in reality for three years. At the end of that time the lady carries him back to the Eildon Tree and bids him farewell. He asks her for some token whereby he may say that he has been with her; and she bestows on him a prophetic tongue that cannot lie, and leaves him with a promise to meet him again on Hauntley Banks.

Here both the old ballads and the older romance desert us; but if we may trust Sir Walter Scott's report of the tradition current in the neighborhood, Thomas was under an obligation to return to Fairyland whenever he was summoned. Accordingly,

while Thomas was making merry with his friends in the tower of Erceldoune, a person came running in, and told, with marks of fear and astonishment, that a hart and hind had left the neighborhood forest and were, composedly and slowly, parading the street of the village. The prophet instantly arose, left his habitation, and followed the wonderful animals into the forest, whence he was never seen to return.²⁴

No supernatural lapse of time is noticed between the disappearance and reappearance of a person experiencing transportation. But things are different in Fairy Land. There universal tradition permits such a lapse. The effect is as if the transported person were shifted in space and time simultaneously. Instead of being deposited at a distance in the present, he is deposited in a future time.

How did this idea of supernatural lapse of time in Fairy Land arise? Hartland's view is that it is a penalty invented by the Church to frighten people from unhallowed contacts. My own View is that journeys into Fairy Land are fantasies of return into the maternal womb in search of Eve, the bisexual component which Adam had lost in the Garden of Eden when out of his rib God fashioned a female companion for him.²⁵

The Fairy Mound or Fairy Ring is an excellent symbol for the pregnant uterus. He who is transported by the diminutive creatures living in this underground kingdom is reduced to their size, which is anywhere within the size of the fetus. The enduring feasting, dancing and merry-making in which he joins also is descriptive of the life of the unborn for whom everything is provided bountifully and without effort on its part.

Fairies have no power over iron. That is why Kirk's apparition requested the throwing of a knife or dirk over his head. The prohibition in the Old Testament that in erecting an altar of stone to Jehovah no iron tools should be

²⁴ Child: Thomas of Erceldoune, Vol. 1, p. 318, quoted in Edwin Sidney Hartland: *The Science of Fairy Tales*, pp. 203-204.

²⁵ *The Search for the Beloved*, Hermitage Press, New York, pp. 276-280.

employed upon it (a prohibition which was observed in the building of King Solomon's Temple) originated, in my view, in an unconscious symbolization by the altar or the temple of the maternal womb, the Holy of Holies of human generation. In the silence and peace of the womb no instruments are used for the building of the human body. Hence the use of iron in fairy lore breaks the prenatal spell, and the captive of the fairies automatically is restored (re-transported) to human society.

That he is unaware of the passage of time during his captivity is to be anticipated. Time does not exist in the womb. It is a postnatal concept. The unborn, at the very best, could feel the rate of its own growth as a form of biological time. Hence, the supernatural lapse of time in Fairy Land also may be a fetal element, while the romance with the fairy queen is a fitting representation of a union with the Beloved whom we lost at that remote evolutionary period in which the separation of the sexes in the proto-human had taken place.

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THE COLLEGE OF PSYCHIC SCIENCE – CHANGE OF NAME.

Introductory Note by LP: In his book *Spiritualism a Critical Survey*, (1966) Simeon Edmunds included a critique of the College of Psychic Science.²⁶

Simeon wrote:

“The London Spiritualist Alliance ceased to exist as such in 1955, when it became the College of Psychic Science.²⁷ The exact reason for the change is somewhat obscure....”

In fact, an explanation had appeared in their journal LIGHT at the time, signed by the president, Brigadier Roy Firebrace. We reprint this below from *Light* March 1955 LXXV No. 3419:

Editorial:

Psychic Science

ON the proposition of the Council of the London Spiritualist Alliance, an Extraordinary General Meeting of the members has by an overwhelming majority of votes passed a resolution changing the title of the Alliance to that of the “College of Psychic Science.” A further resolution, amending an article of our Memorandum of Association to include a definite provision that the aims of the Society should include the study of the subject of survival after bodily death, was carried unanimously.

It is a big step to change the name of an old Society but it was only taken with the object of improving the work and of enlisting further members to the study of psychic phenomena and their meaning.



BRIGADIER R. C. FIREBRACE, C.B.E.

The word “Spiritualist” has in the eyes of many taken on a religious significance, a standpoint which was never adopted by the old Alliance. The passing of the recent Fraudulent Mediums Act seemed to confirm in many

²⁶ Psypioneer: Volume 10. No. 03: March 2014: *The College on the Eve of Paul Beard's Presidency – Simeon Edmunds*:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP10.3March2014.pdf>

²⁷ Under that name, the College had only a short existence; it became the College of Psychic Studies in 1970.

ways this implication. Members of the Alliance have not in general been Spiritualists in this sense, although there are some who profess Spiritualism as a religion. Membership has thus always been open to all, and will continue to be so. We need the help of all men of good will who are anxious to investigate both psychic and spiritualistic phenomena, to study them and to find out the laws under which they work.

Our justification for the use of the term "Science" in connection with psychic phenomena is that we are convinced that these manifestations are indeed subject to Law, even though they do not follow the laws of physical science as known today, but rather belong either to a different order of being or are in themselves an extension of existing laws. The interest in these phenomena has greatly grown in recent years and there are men of science now engaged seriously in their exploration. There is, however, a regrettable tendency to seek a physical and materialistic explanation for all phenomena, a disposition towards a mental blackout when investigation produces evidence, which can be explained on a spiritualistic basis more readily and understandably than on a purely materialistic basis. In plain language the spiritualistic concept of survival and communication with the discarnate does not always receive the full consideration by some investigators which the evidence warrants.

The College, following on the traditions of the Alliance, holds the opinion that many cases confirm the belief that the spiritualistic hypothesis is deserving of equal consideration with the materialistic when psychic phenomena are being investigated. These phenomena should be studied with an open mind without the *a priori* assumption that certain things are impossible or, to put it another way, "antecedently improbable". The task of the College will be to afford facilities for an individual or a collective investigation of psychic phenomena to place before enquirers such facts as are known, so as to enable them to determine according to their own judgement in which direction the evidence points.

The College recognises that many phenomena can be rightly explained on the hypothesis of interaction between incarnate minds and does not claim that it is necessary in all cases of evidence through mediumship to claim discarnate intervention. The phenomena are many and varied and it is not necessary to invoke one explanation to cover all of them. True to our aims, however, we shall seek, by an examination of existing evidence and by research for new, to study the subject of Survival and Communication, which is so intimately bound up with any open-minded work in the field of psychic science.

R.C.F.

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A request from Spiritualist author Gerald O'Hara see page 364 "Books we have reviewed":

Physical Mediums in the USA 1950 to 1996

The readership of this Journal is amongst the most knowledgeable in the field of Physical Mediumship; and yet I see you scratching your heads? Yes, you will have heard of Ethel Post Parrish and Keith Reinhardt but who else?

The Reverend Dorothy Flexer 1914 to 1996 for one. Dorothy was the founder of the Sarasota Fl, Shrine of the Master (now the Sarasota Centre of Light) and an independent Direct Voice Medium of 40 years experience. But who were her "Great Contemporaries"? An intriguing book by Jeanette Strack - Zanghi called *I Walked with Spirits* (pub. Createspace) gives accounts of her Mother's and Father's (Gerda and Eddy Slater) sittings at Camp Chesterfield, Maple Grove and Camp Silver Belle with a number of powerful Physical Mediums. Mediums, of whom it has to be said, are unknown outside the USA. The sittings took place as recently as 1974 to 1992.

In 1972, Dorothy Flexer was able to have built at the Sarasota Shrine a circular séance room without windows! I am asked to write the biography of Dorothy Flexer for the 20th anniversary of her passing and I am looking to place Dorothy in the context of other mediums of her standard.

Can any reader direct me to information on the following, William (Bill) Donnelly, a Materialising Medium, Warren Smith a Trumpet Medium and another Trumpet Medium Rev. Virginia Falls. There was Rev Gladys Strohme a Materialising Medium. There were two Sisters Mildred Curran and Mamie Brown who were Direct Voice Mediums. To continue, Direct Voice and Trumpet Medium Sally Jones and the same with a Harold Abrens and again the same phenomena is reported with Rev Stoelting. There was a Materialising Medium, Ray Browning. An Apport Trumpet Medium Bill English. Another Trumpet Medium was Evelyn Bennett and again Direct Voice and Trumpet Medium Doris James. The names flow on Jim Delbert (Materialisation), Joe Riley (Trumpet), Ernest Cole (Materialisation) and Franklin Roberts (Trumpet) and finally Apport Medium Ann Keith.

I have personal connections with the Sarasota Centre Florida and can voucher for the truth of Dorothy Flexer's Mediumship; can anyone help throw light on the twenty one named mediums above? Any information would be appreciated, I would be most grateful, you can contact me on gohar2702@gmail.com

Yours truly

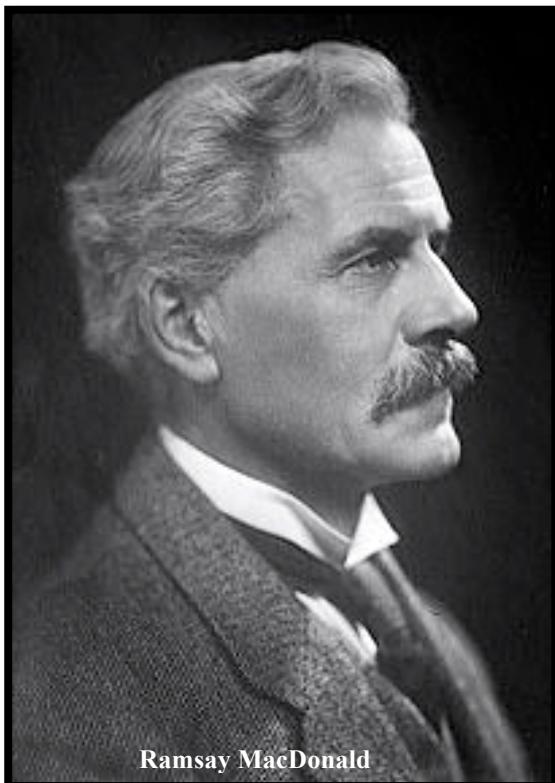
Gerald O'Hara B.Sc.

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THE PRIME MINISTER

Grace Cooke.²⁸

Introductory Note by Leslie Price:



Ramsay MacDonald

Many years ago I read somewhere that David Marquand was writing a biography of Ramsay Macdonald, so I wrote to him about *Plumed Serpent*. He replied with great interest, and went to see Mrs Cooke. In his book *Ramsay Macdonald* (1977), the author quotes *Plumed Serpent* and says "her account has the ring of truth" (p.692).

It seems possible that Macdonald was himself psychically sensitive. He and Margaret had also lost their youngest son in 1910, to diphtheria. In 1933, Macdonald writes in his diary "I wandered over Lossie roads holding the hand of my little boy in his dark blue jersey. Very saddening." This was not some senile delusion, for in 1910 he had written "Constantly since he died my little boy has been my companion. He comes and sits with me especially on my railway journeys & I feel his little warm hand in mine." (Marquand, p.131.)

Unfortunately the present whereabouts of the Macdonald correspondence with Grace Cooke are not known. We must hope they will turn up in the archives of the White Eagle Lodge.

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WOULD that I were able to tell in vivid words one of the most moving experiences which have been given to me from the heaven world. Earthly minds are crude and harsh sometimes when depicting a man's character, perhaps because the opportunity is not given to many people to see behind the scenes. The public concentrates upon one angle of the life of a public man, and this is often distorted out of all proportion to truth by political, religious or intellectual bias.

Although I did not meet Mr. MacDonald in life—earth-life—I once made a beautiful and unexpected contact with him on the higher planes, which revealed to me a man of advanced spiritual evolution, a great gentleman. I pay this tribute, for it has been through him that I have been inspired to write for you memories of my other-world life. I hesitated a long time before deciding to make this story public, and do so now hoping that it will be sympathetically received and reverently regarded. May it be the means of helping thousands to

²⁸. – Taken from the *Plumed Serpent* by Grace Cooke: Chapter XVII pages 69-80 Published Rider & Co, London 1942.

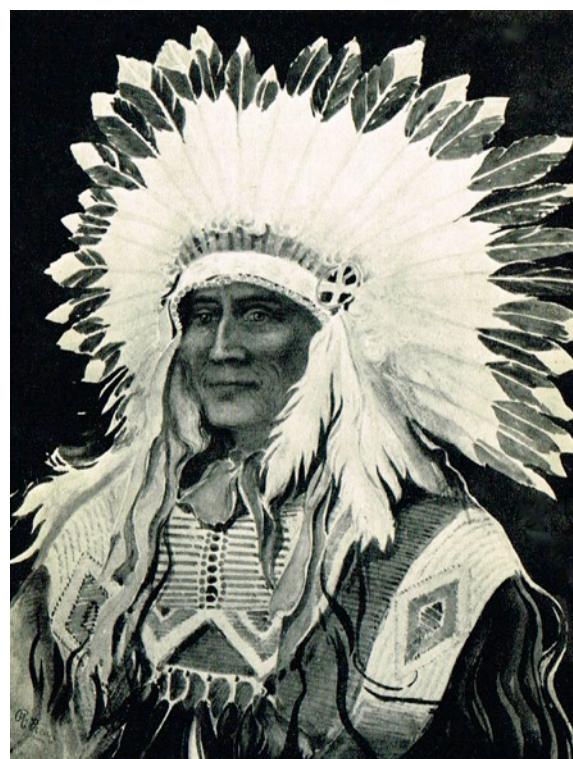
catch a glimpse of the possibility of the loving help and lasting companionship from those who have passed into the great beyond.

What I have to tell reveals Mr. MacDonald as possessing a deep perception of the reality of life beyond the grave. It was not so much what he said in his letters to me which reveal his understanding, but rather his trust and confidence in the truth and sincerity of the message. He responded to the appeal of the Higher Self, and always acknowledged my correspondence with courtesy and appreciation. So many men in a similar position would have feared to risk the misinterpretation of the public.

From the time the Labour Government took office, following the boom years of 1928 and 1929, England was faced with some perplexing economic problems. It was indeed a stormy sea on which the Labour Government had embarked, and most of the responsibility and much criticism fell upon the shoulders of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. Undoubtedly he was the man chosen by God to demonstrate to the people of Great Britain certain vital lessons in the economic life of a country, perhaps the one man who possessed qualities of character essential for the particular burden Great Britain was destined to shoulder.

When the great slump of 1930 was approaching, it was a shock to most of our countrymen to learn of the declining value of the English pound sterling. I remember being on a holiday in the French Pyrénées in July 1930, and hearing with blank amazement the hotel clerk say that they had received information that the English pound was regarded as so unstable that they must be extremely cautious. I felt outraged and incredulous—the English currency, which we had always regarded as impregnable as the Rock of Gibraltar, could not possibly be unstable or unsound!

One Saturday evening early in August 1930, when the Labour Government was in power, I was entertaining some close friends at home. We were indulging in the usual political speculation when suddenly, and inexplicably, a hush fell upon the party and we all felt the presence of an invisible guest. In the same manner as on former occasions I felt the gentle influence of White Eagle like a radiance filling my soul as I surrendered myself to the spirit messenger, who had come to speak of grave happenings in our country. "The Labour Government is crumbling," he said; "great changes are about to come. A new Government will be formed, of a character your country



ARTIST'S PORTRAIT OF WHITE EAGLE

has not yet known. It will be neither a Liberal, nor Conservative, nor Coalition Government, but will be National, composed of chosen representatives of the people. Ramsay MacDonald will continue as the Prime Minister, and be given the strength to save your country. Look towards him for wisdom and guidance, for he is chosen by God and is being inspired by a group of Spiritual Beings, advanced Souls, known as the White Brotherhood." Here the voice ceased. All was quiet, and the party sat on in amazed contemplation of the grave words they had heard.

In the late news on the following day (Sunday) the country was electrified by an announcement that the King had suddenly left Balmoral for London, to consult with the Prime Minister on matters of grave urgency. The country waited in suspense for the news which followed. England stood on the verge of the gravest financial crisis for centuries, and the Labour Government was faced with the unpalatable task of straightening out the confusion.

To restore financial equilibrium it seemed the Labour Government had to impose heavy additional taxation and effect substantial economies. It must tax people, both rich and poor, and by so doing denounce the principles and policy upon which it took office. Alternatively, the Government might resign, and this was the course of action the majority decided upon. It seemed the only course open to men whose conscience guided them to adhere to the principles of their party. But to Mr. MacDonald the crisis and the need of his fellow countrymen, irrespective of party or politics, had the greater claim. His mission was now beyond the limitations of any party. His country needed all the wisdom, all the courage and strength of action which was his to give, and braving the condemnation and criticism of his party he faced the situation.

With courage and determination Mr. MacDonald, together with a few remaining colleagues, set to work.

Many who before had criticized and condemned were now ready to applaud—such is the way of men; others, formerly his friends, now called him a traitor to his party, and hurled the cruellest accusations. He became the object of bitter attack. Even those compelled to respect his courage and strength during such a crisis gave very grudgingly of their approval. Some of his old colleagues deserted him. What bitterness must he have tasted as the result of the position in which his conscience had placed him, amidst the condemnation of the very party he had given his life to build up and save! His position was, to say the least, most unenviable. As the Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain said in Birmingham when he was Premier, it is the man with the knowledge and the responsibility who has to act, and endure the criticism of the irresponsible and ignorant.

On August 24th, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was entrusted with the formation of the National Government, a fortnight after such a Government had been predicted by White Eagle! Mr. MacDonald saw where his course lay and without hesitation took the helm, steering clear of the rocks ahead which threatened the stability of Great Britain. During those fateful hours he stood

above either praise or blame. These are events known to all and are only restated here because the public memory is short.

To come to more personal matters. During the first week of September 1931 I was awakened one morning by the presence of a beautiful spirit woman standing at my bedside. I remained silent and as still as possible, waiting for her to speak.

"I am Margaret," she said. "I want to communicate with my husband."

"Margaret who?" I asked, still ignorant of her identity.

"Margaret MacDonald," she replied, "and I particularly wish to get into communication with my husband. He so needs my help and comfort. My Guides on this side of the veil have told me that you will help. Please do as I ask, and write to him as I dictate."

I was simply nonplussed. In the first place I doubted if a letter from an unknown like myself would ever reach the Prime Minister, guarded as he was by secretaries. At that time he must have been the recipient of literally thousands of letters each week. He would, I thought, have no inclination to read letters purporting to come from his wife, who had died over twenty years before. Moreover, up to this time I had been very little interested in politics and politicians. J. Ramsay MacDonald was to me little more than a name. I was vaguely aware that he was a widower and had a daughter, or daughters, and that was all. However, she earnestly begged me to consider her wishes, said she would return again when I had had time to adjust my mind to the idea.

I thought long and hard, for it seemed a tremendous task. I was far, far outside the magic circle and had no political, or any other kind of influence. How could I, a nonentity, approach the Prime Minister of England on such an errand? What would he think? Or, worse still, would the letter ever pass secretaries who would probably hold up such letters as mine, and who might jeer at that which to me was sacred! And then a curious incident turned the balance. Quite accidentally, apparently, I switched on the wireless one evening soon after the visit of Margaret to hear the announcement that the Prime Minister was about to make what was subsequently regarded as an historic speech. It was shortly after the formation of the National Government. As I sat listening, his voice, and the personality of the man conveyed by that voice, seemed to strike a queer note of harmony and affection in my heart. I lost sight of the fact that he was the Prime Minister, and only recognized him as a man, a very human person like myself—as someone who had known deep sorrow, great disappointment and, possibly, disillusionment and who was very, very lonely. I felt that he was a man determined to do his duty, and that position and place held no attraction for him. It was then that I became aware of the same beautiful woman standing beside me.

"Do please write," she urged. "Write as I dictate."

I could withstand her urgent entreaties no longer. I seized pen and paper and wrote just as she dictated, page after page of an intimate and sacred letter. My pen seemed to fly across the paper. The wording was not mine, nor should I have expressed myself as did she. The words were so tender, so intimate, so intensely for his eyes alone that I felt no copy should be kept by me. I was no more than her channel, her means of expression, much as a telephone may convey a vital message. I cannot tell what proof lay in those written words. There was no attempt to give proof or tests as to identity, as far as I could see. The proof lay in the intrinsic value of her message—the quality or sufficiency of Margaret herself which it contained. The truth and validity of her message depended on how much of her personality, traits of thought and modes of expression it conveyed to her husband. . . factors which only he could verify. Nor is it words alone which can convey truth to a soul, but sometimes a subtle spiritual quality read or sensed between the lines of the written word which carries its own conviction to the recipient. I could hardly bear to read the words as I wrote them, for they were not for my eyes. . . .

When at last it was finished I felt spiritually spent. A great power had overshadowed me, and now had left me; I knew that a mighty effort had been made to get that letter written. It was passed through to me as a sacred trust. In spite of my own reluctance, I knew that it must be sent. I prayed for further guidance and was told to write a short personal note to Mr. MacDonald explaining how the message had been written, saying that I wrote to him as from one human soul to another, hoping he would understand and accept the letter in the spirit in which it was sent. I was further instructed how to address the envelope, so that the letter would reach him safely and be unopened by anyone other than himself. In passing, and as a point of interest, I understand that the letter reached him on or about a special anniversary in his private life, but this I did not know until afterwards. Had I been he, truly it would have seemed like a letter from heaven, sent to one who perhaps needed sympathy and help more than anyone could know; else why had the effort been made from the beyond?

Then the letter was posted with a prayer that he would receive it safely. I hardly hoped for an acknowledgment. However, it came without delay . . . a kindly, appreciative letter, not typewritten, but in the Prime Minister's own handwriting, written from Chequers, Princes Risborough, on September 13th, 1931. The letter said that he (the writer) was greatly obliged to me for both my letter and the messages; he knew but little about these things, and therefore to them he could say neither yea nor nay. His mind, was, however, open and receptive. He was prepared to believe, and in any case he confessed to receiving with happiness everything that made him feel the benign and helpful presence of the dead. He was grateful, the letter concluded, to those who in sincerity and in friendliness afforded him that experience.

This was no formal or stereotyped letter of acknowledgment by some secretary. Mr. MacDonald himself had written. I was at that time blissfully unaware of what that precious little note meant, beset as he was by a thousand worries and responsibilities, but on maturer thought I began to realize its full significance. A link had been established between those behind the veil and

those still in the darkness of earth. He had said that he was very happy to receive that communication from Margaret at a time when he needed her confidence and companionship. The communicating door had been opened by the Christ love which dwells deep in the heart of every man—that spirit of Christ which is the common denominator of life, making crooked places straight and rending the veil of the life beyond. By his letter Mr. MacDonald had shown a gentleness, simplicity and courtesy which helped in the building of a bridge between the two worlds, thereby enabling the contact—which Margaret MacDonald had so earnestly sought—to be established for the remaining years of her husband's life on earth.

She continued at intervals to send him the messages, and each time they were received and acknowledged kindly—one might almost add, gratefully. It is not permissible to quote, even in part, any of these messages, for they were wholly private; but, as was subsequently proved by events, they were always timed to give help and inspiration through difficult periods.

The text of Mr. MacDonald's letters to me might seem both restrained and cautiously worded. But I always realized that much more lay behind them than was apparent. I remembered he was first a Scotsman, a man of exceptional reserve, unlikely in any circumstances to commit himself by admitting frankly what his own private views were on such a subject. Nevertheless, I felt strongly from his letters an unexpressed appreciation and acceptance of both the messages and my own sincerity. I realized also that he held a position of enormous responsibility, and one which called for unsleeping discretion and discrimination. I think that the very fact that he often wrote personally, penning the letters himself, revealed an understanding of my motive and his happy acceptance of the messages. Sometimes I wish that I had kept careful copies of all Margaret said, because prophecies and points of remarkable evidence were often contained in her later letters, which points I checked up afterwards from items of news in the daily press. It never, however, occurred to me at the time that the correspondence would ever be used to help others and, as before stated, I felt the communications were of so private a nature that they were hardly my property.

Looking back now on the correspondence, I suppose it would have made interesting copy for some newspaper. Had it been published then it might have done grave harm. Mr. MacDonald himself was doubtless aware of this. It indicated a great faith in the integrity of the writer that he so far committed himself as to write so kindly and appreciatively. This I always knew. Because I wanted to justify his trust in me I have mentioned this correspondence to very few people, and indeed many years passed before I agreed to write this story. I do so now believing that it is by desire of my two friends on the other side of death (Mr. and Mrs. J. Ramsay MacDonald), and that it may bring inspiration and hope into the lives of many who are lonely and searching for light.

During the Election of 1931, when the country was in an uproar and doubts were strong as to whether the Prime Minister would be returned by his former

constituency, Margaret sent a reassuring message. The general opinion was that while the country acclaimed the Prime Minister's courage in attempting to retain a Labour stronghold, his chance of success was meagre. The Election was one of the wildest and most stormy. Margaret's message was that he would be returned, but only by a small majority: as events showed, he held his seat. Even during the overwhelmingly busy period of the election he found time to pen a postcard of acknowledgment, written from his constituency, and forwarded *via* Downing Street. Mr. MacDonald thanked me for my letter, and asked me to excuse the brevity of his reply, as he was in the full stress and burden of the Election. The card was signed J. R. M.

Some months passed, and with sorrow I learnt that the great responsibilities and labours the Premier had undergone were undermining his health. His eyes were giving trouble. There were, if I remember, several operations, after one of which he went away to recuperate. His destination was not revealed. In the following February I wrote to Mr. MacDonald at Margaret's request, when he was convalescing at some unknown seaside resort, to ask if he would let me know where he was, so that I could send to him direct a message which had come to him from Margaret. I promptly received a reply addressed from the Headland Hotel, Newquay, Cornwall, saying that although the writer was still under doctor's orders and supposed to see no letters for the present, if I sent my message to him at the address given, marking it "Private and Confidential", he would receive it safely and unopened.

When the message was sent I received a friendly and appreciative picture postcard from Cornwall. Quite obviously the message had pleased him, and I venture to hope that Mrs. MacDonald's letters brought help and comfort in his illness and partial blindness. I think it was a striking demonstration of God's love that just at this critical time of his life, as also of the country's history, the gateway between earth and heaven was opened and a messenger sent to give both consolation and inspiration to the man, and perhaps help to the country. I write this because the later messages contained many predictions about world affairs which have since proved correct. They foretold, if my memory is reliable, the war between the Yellow races, the outcome of the Indian question, the alliance which would come between England and America, now in process of fulfilment. A message would nearly always precede some crisis which called for special effort on the part of the recipient, indicating that the powers on the other side of death were cognizant of the progress, or otherwise, of the affairs of the world. I remember how a particularly fine message was sent to Mr. MacDonald just before he went to Geneva for some crucial conference in April 1932.

Miss Rose Rosenberg, the Prime Minister's secretary, wrote saying that Mr. MacDonald had asked her to acknowledge the safe arrival of my letter and its message, and to thank me for it. My letter had arrived just as the Prime Minister was leaving for the Conference at Geneva.

A kindly thought, do you not think, to acknowledge my letter at all at such a juncture?

Many family affairs were referred to in the messages, concerning things impossible for me to have known at the time but which were subsequently proved correct by announcements made in the newspapers.

Our correspondence continued for several years.

In November 1931 the Prime Minister's secretary wrote again to acknowledge and to thank me very cordially for my letter and its message, which he was glad to receive.

Some eleven months later Mr. MacDonald himself wrote, saying that after some delay my letter had followed him to Dunrobin Castle, Sutherland. He thanked me for writing, and expressed his appreciation of the messages and his understanding of my purpose and sincerity in thus sending them on to him.

During the years 1933 and 1934 we were receiving teaching from the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle regarding his experiences in the beyond. In March 1934 a certain message came through from Sir Arthur which is printed on page 204 of *Thy Kingdom Come*.²⁹ Referring to J. Ramsay MacDonald, Sir Arthur said:

In passing through earth life the ego is, according to his capacity, linked by a fine "thread" to every phase and plane of spiritual life. We mean this when we talk of the Harmony of the Spheres, not only the harmony of the spheres discarnate, but the harmony of *all* spheres of existence. According to capacity, so man absorbs from these spheres of spiritual being knowledge—Wisdom (I prefer the word "wisdom" to "knowledge"), Power and Love, the three fundamental Creative Life Forces. As man by life and choice aspires, so he becomes linked to the particular plane or sphere of spiritual activity wherefrom he receives his food, his sustenance. It is as the child in the mother's womb draws life and growth through the umbilical cord; so also is the spirit of man attached to these centres of spiritual sustenance and draws his power to think, to act and to be.

To have knowledge of this opens to man's mind a light to illumine the darkness of his earthly way.

For instance: I have in mind a politician in the British Government, destined to accomplish a very important work. His way can be made easy or remain difficult according to his freewill choice. The choice has been given to open his mind to the knowledge that he is being revivified and inspired from that plane of spiritual activity, already described to you as the first plane of mental being—the "Halls of Wisdom". He is shown how he is linked consciously with that Hall of Wisdom. If he choose to accept this light, his

²⁹ For more information see Psypioneer: Volume 1. No 5. September 2004:—*The Final Conan Doyle Mystery*:—http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP5.pdf

pathway, instead of being beset by anxiety, fear and difficulty, will be illumined by the light of the Cosmic Christ, and he will accomplish, not through struggle, bitterness and difficulty, but with ease, with poise and joy, that work which it is his destiny to fulfil.

So it is with every individual, according to his capacity to receive. So God helps His children.

After some thought I sent to Mr. MacDonald a copy of this book, with the passages marked, together with a long personal message to him from his wife. Mr. MacDonald replied from Downing Street, thanking me for my letter and the enclosure, and expressing appreciation of my consideration in thus sending the messages. The letter acknowledged the safe arrival of the book, which the writer would certainly read; the letter concluded, and was signed "Yours very sincerely, J. Ramsay MacDonald."

I grew to appreciate these brief and kindly letters and to read into them the real warmth and feeling I believed their sender meant them to contain. I never failed to realize the restraint which his position and responsibility enforced.

The story of my experiences with the late Prime Minister would be incomplete without reference to the work which the Group known as the White Brotherhood is doing to help forward the cause of peace and goodwill amongst the nations. A later chapter deals more fully with this subject. For some years these Groups have been devoted to service for humanity. They are trained to receive, concentrate and project the power of the Christ Love to selected men in high political circles, so that the latter may be helped and inspired by the White Light of Christ to work for the promotion of peace and goodwill at home and abroad. I wrote to Mr. MacDonald and explained about the work of the White Brotherhood, so that he could consciously open his mind to the spiritual rays of power then being directed to him. Mr. MacDonald answered from Downing Street, thanking me for my letter, saying how much he always appreciated what I wrote to him and how he hoped that all good would attend the work which we had just commenced.

I shall always be glad that I acceded to the request of Margaret MacDonald and sent that first letter. Years afterwards I read a beautiful book written (for private circulation) by J.R.M. as a tribute to his late wife, and realized how splendid a wife and woman she had been. But then I never doubted that. My contact with her had shown me her quality, much as the response of the recipient of her messages showed to me *his* qualities.

So the years wore on. I watched with a sad heart the tremendous responsibilities and labour entailed by J.R.M.'s office gradually wearing down his health and strength, and I was glad when he was able to relinquish office. My life also had become busier and more strained, so that towards the end Margaret's messages became fewer, but never lacked, I believe, affection and sympathy. In her last message was one sentence which stands out in my memory: "*I shall be waiting for you,*" she wrote, "*... at your journeys end.*"

Little did I realize when sending this message how near the journey's end the weary traveller had drawn. Nor did this foreboding strike those who read in the press of James Ramsay MacDonald's retirement, and learnt that he had refused all honours or acknowledgment of his great services to his country—surely a sufficient answer to those critics who had so often asserted that honour and praise alone had incited him to abandon his former party. We read that James Ramsay MacDonald had gone for a long sea voyage, "seeking for rest", he had said, "for I am greatly tired . . . seeking for rest!" We read of his sudden seizure, his sudden death.

Then indeed I remembered. "*I shall be waiting for you,*" Margaret MacDonald had said, "*at the end of your journey.*" True: at the end of the journey. May it be that this wearied man who, I believe, has truly spent health and strength and finally life itself for his country as any soldier on the battlefield, found a blest and wondrous reunion in the life beyond.

A few weeks ago I went to my desk and took out a bundle of letters, already yellowed by time. When I re-read them they brought back so much to me. I remembered the timidity and even fearfulness with which I had posted that first letter to the Great Unknown, the Prime Minister—and the joy his letter of acknowledgment, written by his own hand, brought to me. Thenceforward he was no longer the Prime Minister to me, but a lonely and bereft man—perhaps a man terribly lonely, to whom my letters—or rather Margaret's messages—meant more than anyone can realize.

I re-read the letters one by one, noting how the early "Dear Madam" with which they commenced, and the "Yours faithfully" ending them gave place to more friendly and appreciative terms. I noted a sincerity, warmth and friendliness in those letters—brief as they are—which reveals much to me in these later days. There are several picture postcards also, views of Lossiemouth or of the seaside resort to which Mr. MacDonald went to recuperate after an operation to his eyes. The Lossiemouth cards usually brought New Year greetings to me. Certainly they were brave letters to be sent to a stranger whom he had never met, of whom he knew nothing, and who might have published Margaret's letters and his replies in the press while he held office, and thus given his political foes yet another weapon. Of course such a thing is unthinkable! Only with heart-searchings and after much thought do I give this to my readers, because I feel that Mr. MacDonald would wish it done now that it can harm no one and may help many.

Some of my readers may criticize me for making this story public, and to these I would reply: If the added impetus of a great name can drive home the message of truth with greater force, then this fact is the reason why the power of God drew Ramsay MacDonald into the picture.



SEASONAL QUIZ

As in previous years, there is one question for each issue, but only eleven questions this year because of a joint monthly issue.

January

Which Spiritualist organisation was overrun by cats?

February

Who considered Harry Price a first class public entertainer?

March

Who suggested Helen Duncan had a secondary personality who misbehaved?

April

Which medium's troubles abroad were raised in the House of Commons?

May

What distinguished five motor ambulances in the Great War?

June

Why did a Dutch Spiritualist group call itself Oromase?

July

What was unusual about a recording of Conan Doyle speaking at Camp Chesterfield, Indiana?

August

Who was the other founder of the Link besides Noah Zerdin; and why is he otherwise celebrated?

September/October

In what sense did Psypioneer make a new beginning for this issue?

November

What became of the Newcastle Psychological Society, England?

December

What medium's home in Putney was over run by fairies and gnomes?

Answers in the January 2015 issue of Psypioneer.

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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>

Dead Men's Embers, by Gerald O'Hara, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2006. Large Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9514534-6-9, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 1-2:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

Mrs Miller's Gift' – a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library, by Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1-4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

Mrs Miller's Gift CD:—Helen Duncan Séance, Ernest Oaten and Harry Edwards, Written and produced by Gerald O'Hara B.Sc. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 106-107:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

The Indescribable Phenomena – The Life and Mysteries of Anna Eva Fay, by Barry H. Wiley published by Hermetic Press, Inc., Seattle Washington 2005. ISBN: 0-945296-50-9, available at:—http://www.hermeticpress.com/product_info.php?products_id=45 Psypioneer references by Leslie Price pages 39-42:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

Immortal Longings – FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death, by Trevor Hamilton published by Imprint Academic in Exeter, U.K (also VA, U.S.A) 2009. ISBN: 9-781845- 401238 H.B, 9-781845-402488 PB, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 157-148:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

Talking to the Dead – Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism, by Barbara Weisberg published by HarperSanFrancisco New York 2004. Hardback ISBN: 0-06-056667-1, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 9-10:—http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP2.pdf



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Paul J. Gaunt

