

PSYPIONEER

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THOUGHTS OF MURIEL HANKEY

No persons, however distinguished in their own fields of accomplishment, should ever embark upon experiments with mediums without first having had experience in the seance room, and having learnt something of the living material with which they intend to work.

Muriel Hankey

In April 1920 James Hewat McKenzie founded the original British College of Psychic Science, headquartered in a twenty-five room house at 59 Holland Park in London. (Author's *note*: The present College of Psychic Studies was not a part of this College, but assumed the name "College of Psychic Science" in 1956, having previously been the London Spiritualist Alliance established in 1884. In 1970, it became the College of Psychic Studies.).

The College was a center of psychical investigation and experiment. A major concern of the College was the subject of survival and trance mediumship.

Prior to the College's founding, in 1915 McKenzie hired Muriel Hankey as his secretary. From McKenzie Muriel learned to cast a compassionate, knowledgeable and critical eye at psychics and methods of research. From her experiences during those early days a serious and almost intuitive insight into the many problems of

mediumship and all manifestations of phenomena was stamped upon this devoted employee's mind.

McKenzie was a hard taskmaster who imposed strict disciplines upon the training of his psychics. One of his students was Eileen Garrett, who felt a close attachment to McKenzie and his training until she died in 1970. Under McKenzie's tutelage Muriel observed, acted as organizational secretary, and even acted as a "proxy sitter" (i.e., serving as a substitute for someone who seeks communication through a medium) countless times until she emerged as an investigator in her own right.

In 1930 she became Organizing Secretary of the original College, and from 1952 to 1960 she served as Principal and Secretary of the now more familiar College located at 16 Queensberry Place. She was a frequent lecturer and contributor to publications devoted to psychical research, was a commandant in the British Red Cross from 1939 to 1947, served as secretary to the Ladies' Army and Navy Club from 1937 to 1939, and was a personal friend to numerous mediums and researchers.

Muriel Hankey was a well-preserved woman with a demure face, a quick smile, and sudden flashes of a captivating personality. She also possessed a deep serious quality that saw immediately what really was, but for gracious reasons often chose to save her opinion until later when all pertinent facts had been gathered. This insight was invaluable when she dealt with mediums.

Muriel was born in Putney, and in later life lived there in a flat near Putney Bridge. When I visited her at her home in London on June 30, 1971 she was sitting in a green velvet print chair in her sitting room. An oriental tapestry hung on the wall, and a variety of plants on the windowsill provided warmth to the room. It was a kind of reunion, for we had previously met and talked in 1966 when she was handling correspondence for Eileen Garrett at her parapsychology conference in the South of France. Now several weeks after my visit Muriel was scheduled to lecture on Eileen Garrett at the College. I wondered as we talked if Muriel started out as a believer in the reality of psychic phenomena ... so I asked her:

Q.

How did you find your way to this subject?

A. When I was twenty years old, Bill, I wanted to find a job and earn pocket money. My family thought I should just be a daughter at home. I went ahead and looked in the papers for job notices. I answered an advertisement. It was during the War in May 1915. The person who sent me a telegram to come for an interview was Mr. J. Hewat McKenzie. I received that telegram on a Friday. I was engaged to start the following Monday. Without my parents' knowledge I

had attended night classes and learned shorthand. I was his secretary from 1915 to 1925.

Q. What did your parents think?

A. I went home and told my mother, who immediately telephoned my father in the north of England. He took a night train down and came to London on a Saturday to find out just what I was up to.

Q. What was the outcome?

A. He went with me to McKenzie for a second interview, and became interested. My father then took me home and told my mother that the job was all right and not to worry -- that I was too sensible ever to fall for the kind of nonsense that the material I was to work with involved, and that I would never be a spiritualist. He felt there was no harm in my working and earning a little money. That was the beginning.

Q. Did you ever think you would believe?

A. No, I thought I would never believe. It was just a job in 1915. When McKenzie took me to the first sitting to take notes, I found that I had to take notes for myself and the medium was Gladys Osborne Leonard.

Q. What did you think of her as you looked and listened?

A. She was a little older than I, but she was young. I was a little frightened because I didn't know exactly what I was in for. I was only 20, and I did not have much life for her to gather, but I have never seen anyone like her either in or out of trance.

Q. Did you have to pay for the sitting?

A. We were asked half a crown for the fee, and I didn't have half a crown. I have often said that my first sitting cost me five lunches. About six pence a day was my allowance for lunch in those days. McKenzie said, "You'll pay your fee yourself." I replied that I could not afford it. He said, "You'll never do anything in this life at somebody else's expense. If you want anything, you'll pay for it." I didn't want that sitting, but I had it, and that was my first introduction. It was a good one, although she wasn't giving me exactly communication. She went into trance, and she had really only then just become professional, and half a crown was the fee.

Q. Did you come to know her well?

A. Oh, very well indeed, and also her husband. She was one of the most honorable people, a very charming Christian woman, but she did not speak very much about religion. She was mostly interested in her garden, which was beautifully kept.

Q. Since there was no center at that time, you then had to go to the mediums' homes for the sittings?

A. Yes, we went to peoples' houses and we had to watch for the police who would sometimes come anonymously for sittings and then haul off the poor sensitive to court for telling fortunes.

Q. Did you know the Rev. Charles Drayton Thomas who was associated in researching the mediumship of Mrs. Leonard?

A. Yes, I knew him very well indeed. He came into the picture because of McKenzie. Mr. McKenzie had many interests, and he was a businessman. He was certainly no fool, and he did have property. All that he had was always connected in some way with his psychic interests, and his love for the subject. He decided that people weren't hearing enough about the truth of psychic matters. He especially felt this in respect to the churches' interest. In 1915 he hired the Queen's Hall to give an address. He then hired it a second time and invited 1,500 clergymen to attend! I had to be there to hand out the programs. About 300 actually attended. His opening remark was, "I'm out to smash the churches," which caused everyone to sit up. Among those present was the Rev. Charles Drayton Thomas.

Q. Did he show any interest?

A. He was a Methodist, and as a result of that meeting and through the McKenzie's he went to see Mrs. Leonard. It was that experience that started him on his own explorations and the eventual writing of his books. My interest was growing all the time, and by the time the College was started anything that had to be done I would do it. We could not even get any workmen, and so I literally helped to even make some of the drains in the building and prepare the floors. I know the whole history of the College from the beginning.

Q. What do you think this subject has done for you?

A. It gave me an interest in living. Before I was such a miserable person. It changed my whole life. I was unhappy. I thought life was so empty. McKenzie knocked some sense into me. The world opened up. Actually Mrs. McKenzie was his secretary when the College opened, and I was just the librarian and taking the money - - and also a stenographer. My shorthand was very high speed in those days.

Q. Is there something more you remember about Mrs. Leonard?

A. She was a dedicated woman. I did two years of doing nothing but reporting for sittings. In this capacity I did get to know the mediums. I would sit for myself, somebody else as a proxy, or take down a reading for a sitter. I remember an instance in regard to a sitting Mrs. Leonard gave when something about shoes came up. The sitter could not remember anything about shoes and said so. The remark was, "It was a very good sitting, Mrs. Leonard, but you kept talking about shoes, and my relation had nothing to do with it." Mrs. Leonard later, thinking about it, remembered that she took a walk every morning to an area where there was an isolated group of houses, and a very few shops. She would walk as far as the shoe shop and look at the shoes and leave. She thought that was the last thing she would see or do before she went into trance. It taught her to be aware of what she said in her own mind -- and after that

experience she would never even open a newspaper in the morning until she had finished her sitting in case something she had read came out through the sitting. I respected her very much for this. She was very dedicated. She never worked with any one group - always at home.

Q. Since you were present in a sitting of Eileen Garrett when the "control" Uvani first manifested, and watched McKenzie work to educate the entity, what was his view of the personalities Uvani and Abdul Latif?

A. He accepted them, and not as mere facets of her multiple personality.

Q. What was your impression of Eileen Garrett in those early days?

A. I thought she was rather flamboyant. She was also a very, very warm person. Sometimes on Friday evenings these sittings of hers would take four hours, including the conversation before and after. She was very willing to cooperate, and she was certainly a guinea pig for the early days of research. During the day she would go on with her ordinary life. She had a tea shop. She often said, "When I knew you first I was living in one room -- and if I get back to one room, what the hell." That was typical of her. You knew she would say that.

Q. How did her appearance impress you?

A. She was a beautiful woman because she had very regular features and fine brown eyes. She was not so heavy then. She had a fairly substantial build, but she was not heavy. She put weight on later. She was very bright and gay and always brought a laugh, and most especially if there were young men about. She loved parties.

Q. Did you attend her parties?

A. Oh yes, I did -- I went to many of them. They were not quiet parties. When you would look for her she would be sitting around the corner of the stairs with the most handsome gentlemen.

Q. Did you think she had a magnetic quality?

A. Yes, she did. She was gregarious and always entertaining people. One thing I liked was her compassion for young people. Perhaps she was too compassionate. She would always listen to their troubles and woes.

Q. How did she look upon Mr. McKenzie?

A. She did what he said, and was a very obedient pupil, but then again I have heard her extol him and denigrate him severely to others. She was complex.

Q. Did she miss him later on?

A. Yes. She would say, "We shall never see his like again," and I would say, "No, thank God." Then we would laugh because we both knew he was a hard taskmaster. The reason for my book about him was to give him the benefit of his quality. He was very precise, truthful, and exact about things.

Q. Would you say Eileen Garrett was any more a believer in her mediumship in the early days than later on?

A. If you look at Eileen she was like a many-faceted diamond. She would believe one thing one moment, and disbelieve it another. You could not hold upon her, nor could she hold for herself a set belief or opinion.

Q. Would you call her a moody person?

A. She was a very moody, but not a morose, person. She was so many faceted. She was loving and giving, critical and dictatorial. She could be everything, which was for her a contradictory virtue, and of course you didn't know at any time when she was going to turn on you next! It could be as quick as that.

There was an instance at one of the conferences in America. She had an interview with a scholarly gentleman who was denigrating the validity of the McKenzie history and all else. Eileen was completely agreeing with him. It was over and he had gone, but immediately after she walked into her office with me where there was a picture of McKenzie on the wall, she turned to me and said: "Do you think he approves of our work now, Muriel?" Well, I said, "Eileen, you ask a strange question. I just heard you say you didn't believe in him. Do you believe that he persists, or that he is aware of what you are doing?" She replied: "How can I not believe?" Now that is indicative of Mrs. Garrett's temperament. It took me a long time to come to grips with her mysterious mind.

Q. What did you learn from Eileen Garrett?

A. I learned all about personality. I learned about her mediumship, but you couldn't apply that generally to other mediums because she was truly a unique person all by herself.

Q. Did you have an opportunity to observe the work of Ena Twigg before she was so well known?

A. Yes. Way back when I was the person who recommended her to speak on the radio when the BBC asked for the name of a medium. I also recommended her to appear on television. Ena was a very cooperative sensitive. I did what I could for her, and I always recommended those having sittings that they take notes. For a time my daughter would go to the College and take shorthand for sitters.

Q. Do you consider that essential?

A. Yes. They should bring a tape recorder rather than sit without any secretary or some way of taking it down. I have known people to have a sitting and term it completely wrong and misrepresent it or misquote it or make it better than it was or put a different aspect to it which is not valid. Ena was very good. She was charming with her clients, and got better and better at her work. I observed her improve so much, and she became first class.

Q. Has your own faith been strengthened by your experiences?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you believe that you will survive death?

A. I do, but in what manner I cannot say.

Q. Are you attracted to the Easter story?

A. Yes, it has added to my faith and just illustrated it.

Q. What would you say to a young person who inquired of you, "I have no faith at all. I don't believe in anything, but I am interested in psychical research and ESP"?

A. I would welcome him. I think psychical research would open a door for him.

Q. Did McKenzie believe that he would survive the experience of death?

A. Yes, he was quite certain.

.....

Muriel Hankey died in 1978. Her memoirs, along with her many experiences and insights, are documented in her book titled *James Hewat McKenzie: Pioneer of Psychical Research* (Aquarian Press, London: 1963)

My personal memories of Muriel include reflections on her delightful personality, and learning valuable insights from her on the life of Eileen Garrett - all of this information shared with me over the inevitable British cup of tea.

The College continued to flourish until McKenzie's death in 1929 when it is recorded that it "continued under the chairmanship of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle with Mrs. Champion de Crespigny as principal, and with the collaboration of Mrs. McKenzie. In 1939 the College combined with the International Institute for Psychical Investigation but in 1947 the College closed.

It is interesting to note that during the later years Muriel's daughter Denise (Iredell) also transcribed sittings by mediums and psychics. Like her mother, Denise attended events at Mrs. Garrett's European headquarters at Le Piol, St. Paul de Vence in the south of France. Her involvement in Psychical Research remains to this day.

HISTORY OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE HARMONIAL PHILOSOPHY INTO GERMANY. (second and concluding part from last month)

compiled by Mary F. Davis.

While these events were transpiring in America, inspirations were ripening to purposes in a European mind, which were destined to bring great results. In distant Russia, a lonely student, "a child of that great Slavonian race, which is so highly distinguished for its mystical tendencies, and its fondness for spiritual facts and questions," was earnestly seeking avenues for the promulgation of spiritual truth, and longing for association with kindred minds. This was Alexander Aksakof, a nobleman of St. Petersburg. The following letter, which failed of its destination, but of which a copy has been lately received, will show better than any description some of the beautiful qualities and divine impulses of this truth-inspired nature

LETTER FROM ALEXANDER AKSAKOF.

Moscow, April 12, 1864:

MR. ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS:

MY WELL-BELOVED BROTHER AND FRIEND :-You wish to obtain the name, residence, and occupation of every individual who identifies himself, in public and practice, with the cause of spiritual and material progress. (Progressive Annual, 1862, page 43.)

I could not satisfy your demand before, for I obtained that Annual only in January, 1864. Since my youth, I always felt attracted to researches of truth concerning the internal nature of man; or, in other words, Philosophy and Theology were studies of my decided predilection. In 1851, at nineteen years of age, having completed my studies at the Imperial Lyceum, at St. Petersburg, I became acquainted with the doctrines of Swedenborg, your guide and friend in the spirit-world. Dazzled by the light of his writings, and young yet, I accepted his doctrines with grateful enthusiasm, for they were to me the highest expression of religion. To perfect myself in the science of correspondences, I studied Hebrew, occupying myself afterward to read the internal, spiritual sense of the Evangel of St. John. A work resulting therefrom was published in 1864, at Leipsic, under the title " Five Chapters of the Evangel of St. John, with an Exposition of the Spiritual Sense, according to the Science of Correspondences."

But the study of Hebrew was only a philosophical recreation but no progress; and the more I advanced in the exegesis of St. John, the more weaknesses I perceived; that is to say, the poverty and arbitrariness of the internal sense by correspondences became more and more apparent. Following my researches in the domain of unknown forces in Nature, I occupied myself with assiduity in homeopathy and magnetism, and in order to use to better advantage the attained convictions, I studied medicine and kindred sciences. At this time, I translated into Russian the "Magneto-therapy" of Count Szapary, which was published at St. Petersburg, in 1860.

The great news of the facts of American Spiritualism did not find me skeptical or indifferent. Notwithstanding the difficulties caused by the Russian Censure, I obtained the majority of the books and journals that treated of the great question. I read the "Principles of Nature" in 1855, and afterward all your other works as fast as I obtained them. I enjoyed with delight the perfume of truth. I had loved Swedenborg. I had much studied him. I had made him disciples that became my friends. But in proportion as I studied your writings the weak sides of his doctrines came more and more to light; by degrees the rest of religious dogmatism left me, and to-day I belong with body and soul to Spiritualism and the Harmonial Philosophy.

After ten years of study I got ready for the work. But how was I to act? What was to be done? You know that we have here no freedom of the press -no public speech!

In 1860, I made a voyage to Paris. I hastened to make the acquaintance of the French Spiritualists, but found myself greatly disappointed. The accredited system was the Spiritism of Mr. Kardec, that teaches the reincarnation of the soul. Their researches went more after facts than for doctrine; and respecting the things that transpired outside of France, they were simply not informed. Poverty in facts, in science, and in ideas-this is what I found in Paris. They knew your name, it is true, but nobody had read your works. I knew that their translation in Russian was forbidden at home, but as French books can circulate there with more facility, I resolved to publish in Paris a French translation of your works, popularizing your doctrine in France, I expected to transplant them to my own country. I found a good translator, but could not procure a single copy of the works, either in Paris or in London! I had to return to Russia, finding myself compelled to abandon my project. At the present time, Miss Guerin, in Paris, and Mr. Petters, at Frond, in Belgium, are occupied in translating you into French.

After my return to Russia, I resolved to print a Russian translation that I had made of Swedenborg's "Heaven and Hell." This being a very systematic and nearly orthodox book, I thought it useful to serve as a transition to the novel ideas. The book was published, 1863, in Leipsic, with a preface that contained a rapid glance at Spiritualism and its doctrines. I presented Swedenborg in it, not as the founder of a Church, but as a Spiritualist and medium. Among other things, I said in that Preface, "that modern facts have proved the truth, though relatively, of his revelations to the world, and therefore his work, 'Heaven and Hell,' can be read to-day with so much the more confidence and profit." You must remember that the works of Swedenborg are forbidden here. My translation experienced the same fate. It circulates through my hands, but the public at large can not obtain it. The printing of the work has, therefore, not given me any result whatever. Its Preface directed against me the most violent recriminations from the small number of New Jerusalemites that live here, who did imagine that I had thrown stones against Swedenborg; that I had poisoned his book; that I gave myself over to Satan, &c.; and some that called themselves my friends did abandon me. I had to endure, in the circle of my intimate affections, very painful sacrifices.

*During this winter, I have written a **critique** of Swedenborg's system. In the shape of objections and contradictions, I have exposed not only the weak sides of his doctrines respecting the origin of evil and the freedom of man, but also the*

internal sense of the word as a proof of his divine inspiration. By this means I hope to revive the research for truth. If the disciples of Swedenborg begin to doubt the infallibility of their master, they may, perhaps, leave that enchanting circle which blocks up their intellectual progress and leads them to fanaticism.

But as this critique is but a polemical work, it is only negative, and can not produce much positive good. A system can only be assailed by a system, and evil should be overcome by good.

In view of all this the translation of your writings into Russian has the greatest interest for me. You know that Russia is just now on the highway to reform, and we may soon get even the freedom of the Press! (Remark in 1867: this hope has not been realized.) The materialism of the German school, preached by Voigt and Buckner, makes, under the garb of science, rapid progress here. Lately the English book "Vestiges of Creation "-has been translated into Russian. I will try to use it as a kind of pedestal to introduce the translation of the "Principles of Nature." Next winter I expect to go to work. Meanwhile the publication of your works in French or German is of equal interest to me. In the Annual of 1863, you say, page 74, " Several volumes of the Harmonial Philosophy have been already translated in Germany, and await the advent of a publisher." Inform me of the name and address of the translator, and I will immediately open correspondence with him, proposing with pleasure to be the editor of his translations. It is partly this news that prompted me to address you to-day. The Revue Spirite of 1861, page 153, announces nearly the same fact, naming Mr. Wittig, of Breslau. I have written under that direction, but no such person has been found. Mr. Hornung (who wrote the German book. "New Secrets of the Day," on Spiritualism) whom I saw in Berlin, in 1862, and who died since, could not tell me any thing positive respecting a German translation of your works.

In general, Spiritualism is very little known in Russia. The few that claim it received it as the Spiritism of Kardec, which fact explains itself, as the French literature being so poor on the subject leaves only the books of Kardec. I am not aware of a single person here who occupies himself with Spiritualism as a means of reform and progress. From the bookstores of Moscow and St. Petersburg I know that I am the only person that received your books and others of the spiritualistic literature of America. Thus in this immense country I am alone studying and loving your doctrines- alone in this large field of labor, hoping for better days when freedom of press and speech shall prevail.....

You will greatly oblige me by answering this in the columns of the Herald; but not being very sure of always receiving it, it would make me very happy indeed to have your direct answer. I thank you from the depth of my soul for all the good, moral and intellectual, that you have done me, and for the freedom that I attained through you. I greet you as a brother and friend.

ALEXANDER AKSAKOF.

Unfortunately, as the above communication miscarried, the writer was for two years longer baffled in his efforts to find the devoted Wittig. At last, however, the following

letter reached the translator, and opened the way to welcome association, mutual interest, and joint fraternal labors for the advancement and elevation of Humanity:-

*FROM ALEXANDER AKSAKOF TO G. C. WITTIG.
DRESDEN, SAXONY, January 15, 1866.*

DEAR Sir: -From the Journal Psyche, edited by Dr. C. A. Berthelen, at Zettau, a German publication devoted to science and spiritual knowledge, and from the editor's letters to me, I learn that you have translated three volumes of A. J. Davis's "Great Harmonia," without finding a publisher for them. I am a Russian Spiritualist, and an admirer of Mr. Davis's writings. I perceive with great satisfaction that Germany will soon have facilities for becoming acquainted with the Philosophy of Spiritualism.

*Please inform me what you have already translated, what you are going to take in hand, and what the prospects of publication are. I am connected with the publisher, Franz Wagner, in Leipsic, who issued my Russian translation of Swedenborg's "Heaven and Hell," in 1863, and will shortly publish my translations of Hare's and Edmonds's works. It might be arranged that Mr. Wagner would also publish your translations. Please inform me what conditions you propose for it. Inform me, also, respecting Professor Nees von Esenbeek, who translated, with you, some of Mr. Davis's writings. Have you the third volume of "Great Harmonia," the "Seer," completely and literally translated, or merely parts of it? Expecting your earliest answer, I remain, with much esteem,
A. AKSAKOF*

New hope thrilled the heart of the translator on the reception of this letter. He had placed the precious manuscripts, over which he had so long and patiently toiled, in the hands of a publisher. But the results of red-handed war were pressing on the American people. Contributions for the "European Publishing Fund" came in slowly, and enthusiasm declined when the *Herald of Progress* was no more. Then came from a distant, despotic realm, a liberty-loving, truth-adoring Brother, who, in the spirit of noblest beneficence, pledged his pecuniary aid for the publishing of all the German translations! Alexander Aksakof became the bosom friend and wise counselor of the loving-hearted, noble-minded Wittig. The manuscripts were rescued, much defaced and mutilated, from the publishing office where first deposited, revised, and placed in the hands of Franz Wagner, of Leipsic, Mr. Aksakof's faithful publisher.

In the Religio-Philosophical Journal of August 4.1866, appeared the following communication from Mr. Schlarbaum, announcing these changes and encouraging prospects:

MR. SCHLARBAUM'S REPORT.

MANY of your readers will remember the attempt made in 1862, by the Herald of Progress, to raise funds for the publication of Harmonial works in German. A number of noble souls responded to the calls made, and contributions were handed over to the Treasurer of the German Publishing Fund, by which the committee was enabled to assist the translator of Mr. A. J. Davis's works in his arduous labors. The amounts raised were not sufficient, however, to go forward very energetically, mainly,

perhaps, on account of our war, which disheartened and encumbered so many of us'; and when, finally, the Herald of Progress was discontinued, the Fund lost its organ, and the committee was compelled to restrict its labors to what little it could do. All the funds, however, have been sacredly devoted to the ends contemplated by the donors.

Encouraged and strengthened by the assistance from America, Mr. Wittig, in Breslau, in Prussia, the translator, has persevered in his exertions for the good cause. He has lately had the good fortune to become acquainted with a Russian gentleman of wealth and distinction, a true nobleman, who could not help making the Harmonial Philosophy his own in word and action, and with his munificent help the publication of all of Davis's works seems now to be secured to the German nation. The first eight proof-sheets of the fourth volume (The Reformer) of the Great Harmonia, printed at Leipsic, by Wagner, are in my hands.

Our German friends concluded to begin with this fourth volume, as being better calculated to secure the attention of the German people. "The Magic Staff," adorned with Mr. Davis's steel engraving, the "Divine Revelations of Nature," and all the other parts of the "Great Harmonia," will follow in quick succession, being ready for the printer these last three years. Steps are now being taken to secure the extensive sale of this German edition here. If many educated Germans residing among us felt attracted to the principles of the Harmonial Philosophy, even if presented to them in the dress of the English language, the ability to bring it home to their searching minds in their own mother tongue will greatly facilitate the widest dissemination of it.

The peculiar organization of the German book-trade will serve a like end. All the publishers in the "Fatherland" are united in a certain manner, and whatever book is published in any large or, small German city is sent broadcast all over the land "for inspection," and finds its way to the study of every inquiring mind, before even a purchase of the book is made. This German publication will do a great deal for the proper appreciation of Harmonial views in Europe; and just now, this time of commotion, war, and future reconstruction, seems to be the best moment for it.

H. SCHLABRAUM

It is with wonder and admiration that we trace the life lines of these two European Reformers, now united to the vanguard of progress in this country by all spiritual and imperishable ties. Each struggled in loneliness for many years, hemmed in by obstacles that would have been insurmountable to many but heroic souls. To both heaven sent on inestimable blessing in the sympathy, kindred faith, and loving co-operation of those who bear the sacred name of wife: but aside from that, each toiled on in utter social isolation, until the happy moment came which united their lofty endeavors.

We who have the utmost freedom of expression by tongue and pen; who have unlimited access to books, periodicals, and free platforms; who have the advantage of gathering en masse for free Conventions; and who enjoy the high privilege of social converse with multitudes possessing kindred ideas and faith, may well summon our powers anew when we behold the moral energy, love, patience, trust, and devotion of these transatlantic brethren under the weight of social and governmental restrictions.

The following letter, received during the past year, shows the present animus of the movement:

ALEXANDER AKSAKOF TO A. J. DAVIS.
No. 6 NEVSKY PROSPECT,
ST. PETERSBURG, October 13, 1867.
H. SCHLARBAUM.

BELOVED BROTHER AND FRIEND:-I am happy that I have now a letter from you, doubly happy at the idea that it will not be the last one, and that a more or less animated correspondence may be established between us. All my past efforts to reach you have failed. In 1858 I wrote you my first letter, dated from Nizney Novgorod; in 1864 I dated my second from Moscow, and here now I am writing my third, which I am sure will reach you sooner or later.

Your letter of July 26, N. Y., reached me September 16; nearly on the borders of Asia, at the City of the Department, Alexandrooka, where, having an estate near Bougoulma (Government of Samara), I ordinarily spend my summers. I did not come home to St. Petersburg till September 30, which explains the lateness of my answer. Now, my friend, as my words finally have reached you, let me press you to my heart; let me thank you from the bottom of my soul for the good that you have done me. You have made me free in the whole immense signification of this word, by teaching me how I was not free. You have taught me to make my peace with myself and my fellow-man. You made it impossible for me to complain against Providence, by giving me an understanding of the stern justice of the cause and its effect. I learned from you what evil is, and how to enjoy the present day. I have experienced heavenly joys and earthly griefs also. After many temptations and defeats, happy days, days of glory have come; and Truth, after having commenced on me its work of redemption, brings me every day new joys and consolations.

As Swedenborg had formerly effected his work of intellectual and moral emancipation in me -having translated his works, prompted by a feeling of deep thankfulness and an ardent desire to let all humanity participate in the boon of possessing truth- so it is in the present days. While, to my present convictions, the Harmonial Philosophy comes nearest to the truth, I feel myself prompted by the same desire to return my tribute of thankfulness by disseminating its teachings, if not in my own country, at least among another European people. I try to be free from illusions. I do not expect to see, while I live here, that enthusiasm in others which I have for the source of happiness-the adequate solution of the profoundest aspirations of my soul. I know very well that the negative side of your teachings may not be quite new for the German rationalist, while the positive side of them, connecting the external intuition with the internal, and thus reconstructing a system of natural religion that might be called a spiritualistic rationalism, will be treated by men of science with sarcasm and disdain, almost as if they were offended by speaking of their own immortality. But this does not intimidate me.

Happily we have to do, not alone with men of science, but with men in general; we offer them not a new science alone, but a new life; and if among them there is found

one single soul that understands and heeds your writing s- a soul that derives the same amount of good from them as I have done, and is thus born to new life, my efforts will be amply rewarded, and I shall have the consolation of not having been egoiste in my happiness.

No, my friend, I will not hesitate to pursue the work that we have begun. What is commenced we expect to finish at an early day; for, although yet young, my health is not firm, and I dislike to close my existence here without the conviction of having been of some good on earth.

It is sad, that, in serving the cause of Spiritualism and the Harmonial Philosophy, I have to operate on a foreign soil. All that treats of Spiritualism, including your works, is proscribed here; the books of Kardec alone enjoy an exception. Thus all my efforts in this line are in vain. But I do not lose courage. I understand very well that the state of affairs in Russia does not accord with the publication of the religious and philosophical works of Spiritualism. As a movement of general reform it is too radical; it can only have its right "to be" in a free country. Our public press, and speech, and action, being under the control of the Government, it can not take root, nor have any effect whatsoever. I submit to these circumstances, seeing clearly that it would be labor lost to act in opposition to the conditions of time.

But there is no reason, I think, why the phenomenal part of Spiritualism should remain unknown. The sensuous demonstration of the immortality of the human soul, this decisive victory won over materialism, is a fact that can not but do service to any Christian doctrine. From this point of view, I will continue to battle against all opposition, using every effort to give the deserved publicity at least to the facts of Spiritualism. After the defense of the doctrine, the history of the doctrine can and should be known also.

In 1865, I laid before the public censors the manuscript of my translation of the experimental part of Prof. Hare's work. but they forbade the printing of it. In 1866, I had it printed at Leipsic, in Germany, and did all that lay in my power to enter it into the Russian book-trade, but all in vain. They found in it a few sentences which Russian Orthodoxy could not tolerate. But I will repeat my efforts with Hare's, Edmonds's, and De Morgan's works, taking care to dwell strictly on facts, without entering at all the domain of doctrine.

Do you approve, dear friend, my reasoning and projects? Could you advise me how to serve our cause in any other way in a country that is strictly orthodox, and void of all public freedom? What I painfully regret, besides, is that I am quite alone here in my interest for Spiritualism and its works. We have, it is true, a small number of Spiritists, of A. Kardec's school, but I am very little acquainted with them, and, besides, Spiritism differs from Spiritualism, and still more from the Harmonial Philosophy?

Among the members of that circle, I met but one person who reads and understands English. What chances, then, are left me to be united with others, or to live and act in this community, while all my interests concentrate in the grand movement of universal reform in America? Among men of science, I know only the Professor of Philosophy of the University of Moscow, who is interested in the subject. He

understands the whole bearing of this Spiritualistic movement, and takes the most lively interest in the publication of your works, being fully impressed with their full value. He is the only person with whom I may seriously speak on the subject, and yet, all he has read is the "Reformer," in German.

Accept, my friend, the sentiments of deep gratitude, esteem, and affection, which unite me to you.

ALEXANDER AKSAKOF.

The "Reformer" and the "Magic Staff" have been issued in excellent style, in the German language, by the enterprising publisher, Wagner; and Mr. Wittig writes, under date of December, 1867, from St. Petersburg, where he was enjoying a visit with Mr. Aksakof

"With the greatest satisfaction I am enabled to send you the joyful news that the munificence of our friend will help along the publication of 'Nature's Divine Revelations' in such a wise, that the printing will begin soon after my return."

The Spiritualists of America will enshrine in their heart of hearts the names of those who have proclaimed to the German nation the "glad tidings of great joy," thus opening for the European continent the golden gateway to Light, Love, Wisdom, and Liberty.

THE END.

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IT WAS PERCY WOT WON IT.

The legalisation of mediumship in 1951 owed much to National Spiritualist Percy Wilson. This is apparent from his obituary in "The London Spiritualist" June 1977 written by Bill Harrison of Balham.

Harrison recalled " His way of putting forward the case for the recognition of Spiritualism as a religion earned the respect of those in the seats of power which was a big factor in the passing of the Fraudulent Mediums Act of 1951, which gave us our religious freedom. Much of his work in this respect was done behind the scenes and entailed endless meetings." (P.9)

Harrison and Wilson, (then a senior civil servant) met in 1943 when there was a threatened prosecution after a psychometry demonstration at Balham Spiritualist Church. This particular case was dropped after the two policewomen witnesses left the force in connection with an unrelated offence by them. Wilson and Harrison later served on the London District Council of the SNU, and then in 1950 Wilson became SNU national president for three years.

" He came from a family of Spiritualist pioneers, his father, grandfather and uncle were all active workers in the movement, and as a young man, he commenced to carry on the family tradition. " added Harrison

Not mentioned in the obituary is a complication which might prevent Wilson even being a member of the SNU today. Because the Wilson family were active in the Unitarian Church this would make him not a " Real Spiritualist" in the eyes of some orthodox Spiritualists, as well as not a " Real Christian" in the eyes of orthodox Christians. (reprinted from now defunct www.psypioneer.com)

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ORIGIN OF THE CHURCHES' FELLOWSHIP FOR PSYCHICAL STUDY

(In 2003 was celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies (originally the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical Study). Previous attempts to form such bodies floundered, and it is an important historical question why the others failed, and this one succeeded. To help answer it, we are presenting a regular series of reports on the history of the Fellowship)

The following extract is from a book published by George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. 1956. Pages 129-133, entitled "Towards the Hereafter, with a Special Inquiry into Spiritual Healing" by Reginald M. Lester. It forms the opening pages of ch. XI "The Churches' Fellowship and Absent Healing".

I have touched very briefly so far on the very remarkable and far-reaching subject of Absent Healing. I did not however, come into personal experience of this until the development of a body named the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical Study, which I was responsible for founding in the early part of 1954.

The story of how this came about is of some interest. After the publication of my last book (In Search of the Hereafter, Harrap 1952") so many individual clergymen and ministers of all denominations wrote to me on the matter. The main theme that ran through most of their letters was that they accepted the truth and value of spirit communication as proof of survival, and realized its importance in strengthening Christian beliefs, but they were afraid to acknowledge it openly or support it in their sermons, for fear of the disapproval of their bishops and in many cases of their congregations also.*

There were also many letters from orthodox-Church worshippers, who wrote to say they could not derive any comfort about the Hereafter from their own churches, but hesitated to participate in any psychic activities for fear of the disapproval of their ministers.

So there seemed to be a vicious circle preventing the spread of this great truth. There was one obvious solution, and that was to form a body to pursue the subject within the Churches themselves. I realized this would meet with opposition in some of the most orthodox and rigid circles, but nevertheless I proceeded to take steps to put it into effect.

First of all I approached several leading churchmen whom I knew were sympathetic to the subject, and who themselves had a good deal of experience in it, and invited them to a

*preliminary meeting at my Kensington home. I was most fortunate in these early contacts, and have not the slightest doubt that I was led from the Other Side to my selection. They included the Rev. Maurice Elliott, then vicar of two parishes at Chichester, Sussex, who for very many years had been struggling to persuade the Church to accept these truths; Canon Pakenham-Walsh, who had had some remarkable personal psychic experiences, and had written that delightful little booklet, *The Communion of Saints*; the Rev. Pearce-Higgins, former Chaplain to the Forces and then Vicar of Putney, London, a very sincere and forthright man; the Rev. Charles Harrington, Vicar of All Saints, Nottingham; the Rev. F. S. W. Simpson, Vicar of three churches at Shoreham-on-Sea, Sussex; and Canon A. F. Webling, who is the author of several excellent psychic books.*

*I realized that all these were Church of England clergy, and that it would be essential to include all Christian denominations in such a Fellowship. This was done at our first meeting, and we subsequently succeeded in recruiting such well known ministers as Dr Leslie Weatherhead, of the City Temple; the Rev. Selwyn Roberts, the Congregationalist; and the Rev. Dr R. J. Campbell, among many others. We formed our Standing Committee and drew up our aims and objects, at the same time publishing a letter setting these forth in the columns of *The Times* and other national and ecclesiastical papers.*

This letter was signed by the President, Chairman, and members of the Committee. Some deliberation had been necessary regarding the election of a President, and it was finally decided this should be a layman, as it might be invidious to select a minister of one particular denomination in a body that was clearly interdenominational. The well known former High Court Judge, Sir Cyril Atkinson, was invited and accepted the Presidency, and the Rev. Maurice Elliott agreed to take on the very onerous job of Hon. Secretary. We were also able to announce we had the support of Dr Matthews, Dean of St Paul's, and later of Canon Carpenter, Westminster Abbey, who came to speak on our platform, and joined us as honorary vice-presidents.

But we had not foreseen the work for which we had let ourselves in! During those first few weeks applications for membership came in at the rate of something like a hundred a day, which necessitated Maurice Elliott and myself burning much midnight oil. One interesting fact was that the greater proportion of applications were from people who had never before taken any interest in the subject, or who had even been antagonistic to it.

The reactions from different quarters were somewhat amusing. Some of the spiritualist organizations were at first suspicious, and expressed the fear that we might be 'stealing their thunder.' This opposition, however, quickly melted away when it was realized that the ultimate effect was to remove the one obstacle that had been preventing the spread of spirit communication—namely, the prejudice of the orthodox Churches.

*With one exception no official opposition came from the Churches themselves. That one exception was a particularly bad case of suppression of opinion through the Press. We had received in all other directions an exceedingly good Press—both secular and ecclesiastical—but *The Church Times* alone refused any mention of the Fellowship and would not publish the letter sent to them for publication by the President and the widely representative clergy who signed it.*

*Subsequently, after a big public meeting at Caxton Hall, Westminster, and the wide Press publicity that ensued, *The Church Times* was unable to ignore the matter any longer. The editor called by appointment to see me, and for nearly an hour I carefully explained the aims and objects of the Fellowship. The following week a full-page article appeared by an anonymous contributor who called himself "Catholic Expert," making a very ill-informed attack on the Fellowship's work; but not a word was published on the real aims and objects as outlined by me to the editor at our interview.*

The Rev. Pearce Higgins, on behalf of our Committee, then wrote a reply article to The Church Times, which after some delay brought an acknowledgment from the editor to the effect that it could not be published, and all that could be considered was a letter of limited length for the correspondence columns. This letter was subsequently published, in its much abbreviated form, but immediately underneath was a reply from Catholic Expert (having been given the opportunity of seeing it and replying to it in the same issue) adversely criticizing the points raised therein.

In the next two weeks' issues a selection of adverse letters was published, with a further adverse editorial, but all letters submitted from clergy and others commending the work of the Fellowship were suppressed. These included letters from our President, Sir Cyril Atkinson, and from Canon Pakenham-Walsh.

I quote this case as an example of the misconceived prejudice that still exists in some quarters on a subject that should receive the support of all Christian people, and how a leading organ of the established Church will go out of its way to place material interests first, and make every effort to keep the fundamental truths from its readers.

This isolated opposition, however, was more than countered by the widespread support that came in from innumerable directions all over the country, and the Fellowship's aims and objects were generally highly commended. These included:

the holding of meetings, both large and small, in halls, drawing-rooms, etc., all such meetings to be opened by prayer, the objects being to enlighten the general public and to form branches of the Fellowship in cities, towns, and villages throughout the country; the creation and circulation of psychical literature on the highest level of spiritual, intellectual and scientific integrity; the care and development of psychic gifts; the stressing of the importance of the element of Communion with the Unseen World in Public worship and united prayer; and affording the opportunity for members to consult tested, trusted Christian sensitives dedicated to God for this purpose.

The following pronouncement was also made on all literature issued by the Fellowship:

This Fellowship of clergy, ministers and lay-people of all Christian denominations has been formed to encourage the study, within the Churches, of the known facts of psychic science.

The Fellowship believes that the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church, which is the "blessed company of all faithful people," are meant to be permanent and exercised to-day (see I Cor. 12); and that `seers' and `sensitives' are with us to-day and that their gifts should be dedicated to the service of God and mankind.

It was only to be expected that the question of healing would soon be raised by members, as well as by those outside.....

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This is the primary account of the founding of the Fellowship, and will be supplemented with other accounts by Col. Lester and other pioneers. Students should obtain the official history: Barbara Bunce "So Many Witnesses" (CFPSS 1993), sold through Amazon as well as by CFPSS itself.

Why did Lester place the foundation in 1954, when the Fellowship itself celebrated 50 years in 2003? The first business meeting was held on 10 November 1953, but the first membership subscription was recorded on 1 March 1954. General Secretary Julian Drewitt adds “ The CFPS was to have been called the Churches’ Fellowship for Psychic Investigation at its first meeting but at its second meeting it was changed to Churches’ Fellowship for Psychological Study. “

In a forthcoming issue, we will return to 1954 and to the pages of “ Church Times” and identify “ Catholic expert”

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SPIRITUALISM REACHES LONDON

In PP3 p.21-22, we printed a letter about early Spiritualist activity in Keighley, Yorkshire. More material will follow about northern pioneers, as we intensify our efforts to identify who were the first Spiritualists in Britain. Through the kindness of Dr Michael Coleman, we are now able to reprint the 1852 editorial introduction to the London edition of Adin Ballou’s “ Spirit Manifestations”, and an associated leaflet.

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR.

THE work now introduced for the first time to the British public has been read with much interest amongst all classes of persons in America, and in re-producing it here, it is hoped that it may not only direct attention to the wonderful and well authenticated facts which the author has recorded, but throw some light on the real nature of the extraordinary phenomena they present.

In the United States these Spiritual Manifestations are exciting great attention, and inducing earnest investigation. During the last four years, they have been constantly exhibited in the presence of many thousands of persons, indiscriminately, and often accidentally attracted into their presence, and although it is not to be denied, that they are scoffed at and ridiculed by some-as all glorious manifestations of an unusual order always are-they have been, by the great majority of the intellectual and enquiring men who have witnessed them, regarded with profound astonishment, and confessed to be altogether beyond the reach of mere human agency. Many an unbeliever has stood rebuked; many a jester has become serious in the presence of these spiritual intelligences, and in numberless instances,

“ He who went to scoff, remained to pray”

(an echo of a line in the poem “ The Deserted Village” by Oliver Goldsmith- PP.)

My attention was first attracted to these Manifestations in the spring of 1850, in the city of Montreal, they being, at that time, confined to the circle of two or three families in the State of New York. Like the majority of those who had heard anything of them, I regarded the statements put forth with considerable suspicion-so utterly opposed to all my previous notions as to the boundaries which separate the spiritual world from the material, and the laws which regulate the actions of disembodied

Spirits, especially in their intercourse with mortality, were the phenomena alleged to be evolved, that, for a time, I held them to be without any claim to serious enquiry. They seemed so like the vagaries of diseased minds, or so like the feats of practised tricksters, that they excited pity or contempt, rather than rational curiosity.

After a time, however, as the spheres of the alleged phenomena became multiplied, and the number of witnesses augmented, as attention was excited, and discussion provoked, I, in common with many others, who had hitherto given the subject no serious thought, felt my curiosity excited, and at length a desire to examine into the alleged supernaturalism of the Manifestations. At that time, however, I was on the eve of departure for England,, to introduce the Biological Experiments I have had the honor of exhibiting to the British public, and the arrangements I had already made precluded the opportunity of my entering upon the investigation, for which I then felt desirous. I left the States for England, where I became so fully absorbed in my Biological Mission, that the Spirit Manifestations were almost wholly lost sight of.

The interest of the subject was revived in my mind by the receipt of a letter from my friend, Mr. W. R. Hayden, then Editor of a Boston Paper, with whom I was in the habit of communicating, in which I was informed that he had not only become greatly interested in these spiritual phenomena, but was a firm believer in them. He depicted the strange things of which he had been an eye-witness, and declared that no description he could give would convey an idea of the wonder they excited. Knowing as I did his previous scepticism in all things partaking of the marvellous, and especially in regard to the so-called " Spirit Rappings," I became anxious to ascertain all that was taking place in my own country, in relation to these singular occurrences; and my curiosity was not a little increased when I was afterwards informed that the wife of my friend had become a Medium, through whom the Manifestations were taking place in their own house, not only in the presence of their own family; but in that of friends and strangers.

I resolved as soon as circumstances would permit, to return to America, observe for myself, and revisit England, with a medium, to demonstrate the phenomena here. I made this intention known to Mr. Hayden, who at once offered to join me in the demonstrations, and with Mrs. Hayden to come over to England.

It occurred to me, however, that the proofs he could adduce, might not suffice to convince the English people, whereupon I resolved to go to the States, see, hear, investigate, and judge for myself. In July last, I left England, and upon my arrival in Boston, proceeded at once to the house of Mr. Hayden, and there I witnessed in utter astonishment the various phenomena of which I had heard so much. I found my friends willing to submit to every test that I could suggest, and I was soon satisfied that the Spirit Manifestations were realities, and even more interesting and important than I had anticipated.

Being thus convinced myself, and wishing to ascertain whether such proofs could' be given of their reality, as I deemed necessary for the purpose, I requested Mrs. Hayden to accompany me with several other persons to a house in Boston, which I was certain she had never previously entered. To this she assented, and there I witnessed similar Manifestations to those I had previously seen, thus proving beyond all doubt, that no mechanism was employed to produce the effects. I may

mention one among the Manifestations I witnessed at her house that of a centre table, of ordinary size, being thrown with much force completely over upon the floor, without the slightest human agency. I soon found that new Mediums were almost every day being discovered in different parts of the country, some of them being gentlemen of the highest respectability, and one of them no less a person than Judge Edmons (i.e. Edmonds – PP) , of the Supreme Court of New York. They may be found of all ages and of both sexes, and in all conditions of life.

Possessing these facts and proofs, I deemed myself justified in making an attempt to introduce the phenomena to the notice and enquiry of the people of England; and with the assistance of Mrs. Hayden I am now prepared to exhibit to the scientific and the enquiring world, and to the public generally, those things which I will not attempt to explain, or in any way to account for. This I leave to others who may witness and examine for themselves; all I ask is, that they will first investigate and then decide. We have already had the honor of several seances with some of the most illustrious, as well as with some of the most erudite of English society, whose astonishment at what they witnessed seemed to be unbounded. I hope for even more than this, however. These are phenomena worthy the investigation of the philosopher and the devout mind.

“-----What is a man,
If his chief good, and market of his time,
Are but to sleep and feed, a beast, no more?
Since He that made us, with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and God-Like reason
To fust in us unused-----“

(quotation from Hamlet soliloquy - PP.)

G. W. STONE.
22, Queen Ann (sic –PP) Street,
Cavendish Square.

The above pages are reprinted from:

*AN EXPOSITION of views respecting the principal facts, causes and peculiarities involved in SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS. by ADIN BALLOU.
Published by H. BAILLIERE, 219, REGENT STREET, LONDON. 1852.*

At the same time, the following leaflet was produced:

RULES TO BE OBSERVED
AT THE
SEANCES.

LADIES and GENTLEMEN desirous to witness the Manifestations through the Medium are respectfully requested to notice the following regulations: -

FIRST.-That the greatest number that can be allowed to be present at one time is ten persons besides the Medium.

SECOND.-

Perfect harmony should exist among those present, and no interruption take place while one of the party is receiving communications, as by so doing mistakes may occur, and unsatisfactory answers be given.

THIRD.-It is requisite that the Medium should not be disconcerted by any undue levity with the subject, or trifling with that which we believe to be spiritual, but the investigation should be carried on in a straight-forward, candid manner, which will enable the *Medium* to give such facts as we hope will satisfy and convince those who may honor us with a visit.

FOURTH.-One hour will be allowed each party consisting of less than five persons, and not exceeding two hours when a larger number is present.

TERMS.-At the Medium's Residence, One Guinea each person; *Séance* at a Gentleman's Residence, Five Guineas.

Hours at Home from 12 to 3, and from 4 to 6.

Mrs. W. R. HAYDEN, Medium, 22, Queen Anne Street.

N.B. Just Published, a TREATISE UPON SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS, together with Instructions how to become a Medium. 8vo. bound in Cloth, price 3s. 6d., to be had at the Medium's Residence. This work will be found highly interesting and instructive, being a complete exposition of facts relating to these wonderful phenomena.

MR. G.W. STONE

Also begs to announce that he will treat Biologically all diseases of the Nervous System, having as is well known performed some of the most astonishing cures in cases that had been considered incurable by medical men. Address

22, QUEEN ANNE STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

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These fees were extremely high. It is not easy to compare today's prices with those of 1852, but a guinea could translate into £80 or more today, more than the annual income of most English people. One might view Mr Stone's introduction as part of a wider business venture to launch in London a lucrative American innovation. It is certainly a world away from the mainly self-help Spiritualism of the north.

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AUSTRALIA'S LOST RESEARCHER

In 1878, Richard Hodgson (born 1855) left Melbourne to enter St John's College, Cambridge, England, never to return to Australia. He was already an M.A. and L.L.D. of Melbourne University.

Soon after the formation of the SPR in 1882, he became their investigator of Madame Blavatsky and Theosophical phenomena in India; on his return he cooperated with Mr S.J. Davey in some experiments which showed that observers at seances were not

reliable.(P SPR 1886-7). These experiments can still be studied with profit today, but it may be doubted if they are. The argument about the phenomena of Eglinton, prominent in that debate, was so bitter that it led to a split between some Spiritualists (such as Stanton Moses) and the SPR, which was not healed for a century,

Hodgson removed to the United States where he was the mainstay of the infant American SPR, which was soon amalgamated with the original SPR, and he became the leading investigator of Mrs Piper’s mediumship. She ultimately convinced him of survival, though her own view of her phenomena was agnostic. Hodgson also intervened in the study of other mediums such as Eusapia and Mrs Thompson, always expressing scepticism about physical phenomena.

Our view of Hodgson depends largely on our estimate of his major work. If we broadly accept his assessment of Madame Blavatsky, then we are likely to see this 1884-5 expose as one of the great achievements of the SPR- certainly its most famous case. But as we all know (except for the new DNB) Dr Vernon Harrison and others have cast doubt on the 1885 report, and would see Hodgson’s involvement as contributing to a serious wrong turn by the infant SPR.

Yet new evidence on this case is still coming in. John Patrick Deveney contributed “ The travels of H.P. Blavatsky and the chronology of Albert Leighton Rawson : an unsatisfying investigation into HPB’s whereabouts in the early 1850s.” to Theosophical History X No. 4 (October 2004). This showed that Rawson, an important witness to her alleged travels may not have been with her in the orient, but may have been in jail in America.

Similarly, if we regard Mrs Piper as the most important and most carefully studied medium in history, then we may be disposed to value Hodgson’s contribution highly, despite some doubts about his record-keeping and his evidential precautions expressed by James Munves in JSPR.. The Piper case remains part of the most recent assessment of the survival question by Stephen Braude” Immortal Remains “ (2003).

Although Hodgson features in the standard histories of psychical research, the only biography of him came from Psychic Press in 1949; A.T. Baird “ Richard Hodgson: the story of a psychical researcher and his times”. (Thus a Spiritualist publisher published a sympathetic account of a researcher who would have rejected many mediums.).The time is surely ripe for another attempt at a full biography though the material is widely scattered in Australia, Britain and the USA..

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How to obtain this Newsletter

The Psypioneer newsletter is at present available on the web site www.woodlandway.org and we are greatly indebted to our Australian friends. You can obtain it free and direct by sending an e-mail entitled “ Subscribe” to psypioneersub@aol.com or “ Unsubscribe” to discontinue. **Assistant editor- Paul J. Gaunt.**