

PSYPIONEER

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It was one of the most celebrated cases in twentieth century Spiritualism - the return of Arthur Conan Doyle through the medium Grace Cooke, The latest edition of the standard book on the case has just been published by White Eagle Lodge Yet there are mysteries here to baffle even the creator of Sherlock Holmes himself.

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THE FINAL CONAN DOYLE MYSTERY

Conan Doyle, the most vigorous campaigner for Spiritualism, passed over in 1930. Grace Cooke, an experienced platform worker in the movement, was brought into contact with his family (though not Conan Doyle himself) shortly before this, and Conan Doyle began to communicate through her to them in 1931.

But he made it clear that he wanted to deliver a special message, and this was received in a series of sittings from 1931-2. The result was published in a book by the medium's husband Ivan Cooke "Thy Kingdom Come." (1933). (The Conan Doyle family may not have fully endorsed these new teachings.)

The material was re-edited by Ivan Cooke in "The Return of Arthur Conan Doyle" (1956), though I have known students who prefer the first edition. Then in 1994, Colum Hayward, the historian of White Eagle Lodge, produced a new version "Arthur Conan Doyle's Book of the Beyond" with a valuable historical introduction that faced some of the mysteries.

Conan Doyle was assisted in communication by the medium's guide, known as White Eagle (W.E.). But, as Ivan Cooke recorded, the guide did not live entirely in the spirit world. He lived on a mountain in the east, from where he controlled his medium. He continued to do this as late as the publication of Grace Cooke's book "Meditation" (1956). However, still later, W.E. messages appeared to place him fully in the spirit world.

So was White Eagle a living communicator, which have been known in the psychic field at least since the time of Emma Hardinge Britten? Or did he just move easily between different planes as work made necessary?

There was another famous channel who professed to be directed by living men in the East, and that was Madame Blavatsky (1831-1891). The best known used the initials M and K.H., and they were, incidentally, very dismissive of Spiritualism. A later Theosophist, Alice Bailey, the instrument of another brother, D.K., was less negative about Spiritualism.

There is a relationship between these Theosophical masters and White Eagle, for we find in the W.E. books occasional references to masters in general and to the Master R in particular, who was much in evidence when Annie Besant was president of the Adyar-based Theosophical Society, which in that era had flourishing ritual affiliates such as Co-Masonry.

The White Eagle Lodge, which was founded in 1936, has some affinity with Theosophy, including calling its local groups "lodges", and having an esoteric section.

Though it does not encourage its members to have contact with other mediums, it does not deny its Spiritualist heritage, and has played a part in Spiritualist ecumenical activity.

But if White Eagle lived in a mountain in the East, what of Red Cloud and Silver Birch, and the other "high" guides? Perhaps there is more to them than Spiritualists generally suppose. And what of those discarnate teachers, increasingly common today, who claim to be from outer space?

The Conan Doyle communications were also facilitated by a Continental occult group called the Polaires. Such contacts between Spiritualists and occultists are by no means common, as the latter often look down on the former! The Polaires had access to a special method of numerical divination called the Force Astrale, and were directed by an Esoteric Rosicrucian Centre in the Himalayas. The White Eagle Lodge was to start life as a branch of the Polaires.

The Polaires split, and indeed do not appear to have survived the Nazi occupation of France, although some right-wingers had an interest in lost civilisations around the North Pole. (See Joscelyn Godwin "Arktos – the Polar Myth" 1993)

When Arthur Conan Doyle returned through Grace Cooke he reported difficulty in spirit communication, afflicting even him. He had discovered generally that many mediums were at times transmitting thought forms, and not genuine messages.

Having tried, while on earth, to get the SNU to recognise the leadership of Jesus Christ (the so-called Eighth Principle), he found after death that there was some truth even in the concept of Atonement, some value in ritual, and that the Christ Spirit, expressed through Jesus, was an overriding reality. After exploring the various spheres, he even claimed that some people at least, reincarnated on earth.

All this he transmitted within a few months of his arrival. Even allowing for his eagerness to correct any mistaken emphases in his earthly teaching, and his exceptional soul, this is rather quick for a new resident, and could only be possible as part of a special plan.

Needless to say, his criticism of orthodox Spiritualism did not go down well in the Movement. It was largely ignored. In 1933, many Spiritualists were about to read the series of books by Arthur Findlay pulverising Christianity, and to them Christ was not an acceptable theme. Another substantial body was to follow Winifred Moyes and set up scores of popular Christian Spiritualist churches.

Almost the entire movement was to endorse the no war prophecies of 1938-9, including White Eagle. They are alluded to in Ivan Cooke's commentary, but remain a conundrum.

Meanwhile the White Eagle Lodge spread steadily. Outwardly, it was what sociologists call a cult, based around a single family – inwardly it was a mystery school. By 1980 it had more individual members than the SNU had class B members, but kept a lower profile. The White Eagle Publishing Trust, created in 1953, produced books of a higher production quality than any Spiritualist publisher.

The message of White Eagle was warm, devotional and inclusive, fostering a personal relationship with a father-mother God, the Christ Spirit, Jesus and other masters, and White Eagle himself. The communications from Arthur Conan Doyle were part of its foundation story.

To understand the White Eagle Lodge, some help can come from the many books it has produced, and from its nutritious magazine “Stella Polaris”. Another wide perspective can be found in the writings of a member Paul Beard, who later became president of the College of Psychic Studies. The post-mortem message of Conan Doyle influenced him greatly, and Beard, drawing on a wide experience of mediumship and the literature of psychical research, placed White Eagle with other discarnate teachers.

Every student of the psychic world should read this book. Supposing Conan Doyle was right? Supposing that as early as 1930 he had diagnosed some profound faults in popular Spiritualism? How ironic that he, who had preached the truth of communication, should himself be doubted and ignored when he returned with a word of warning.

Leslie Price

“Arthur Conan Doyle’s Book of the Beyond” (2nd edition, with corrections and additions, 2003) is published by the White Eagle Publishing Trust, Liss, Hampshire, £7.95.

Postscript

In the course of a profound account of life after death, the returning Doyle makes some controversial statements.

On communication (p158.)

Oh the difficulty of coming into touch with the earth plane! It is all so different from what I anticipated. The true conception of the life of spirit has yet to dawn on man.”

Why Spiritualism is weak (p.215)

The astral planes are not planes of accomplishment. For this reason Spiritualism lacks in some degree the power which enfolds and binds those of other faiths. We, by this fresh influx of knowledge, hope to restore power because we endeavour to link Spiritualism to actual spheres of power. Remember it is not from the astral, but from the celestial that the attracting force is drawn....”

The work of Christ (p217.)

The vicarious atonement remains still a sad stumbling block to Spiritualists. They have yet to realize, as I now realize, the spirit behind the words. Men still stumble over the wording rather than seek the deep occult meaning lying behind the words of the Master.” LP.

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Mrs Britten versus Mr George Spriggs

For Australian Spiritualism, the traditional historical account was in Emma Hardinge Britten’s “Nineteenth Century Miracles.” (1884) pages 227- 261. This book, which is worth around £100 in the second hand market, has just been reprinted by Kessinger, and gives an invaluable country by country account of Spiritualism. Emma had the advantage of having actually visited Australia and New Zealand. In her historical work, Emma usually offers many compliments to the pioneers featured, but she is somewhat cool towards George Spriggs, the materialization medium, whom she calls the latest sensation in Australia (p.245-7). This may be because she was not a physical medium herself, and also because he was non-professional and money had been a sore point for her there. Yet she could not reject him, since his seances had been arranged with W.H. Terry (editor of “The Harbinger of Light” newspaper) and reported by her friend Hugh Junor Browne.

But she could put him in speech marks, calling him “for some years the non-professional medium of “The Circle of Light” held at Cardiff, South Wales, from whence the remarkable manifestations of “Spiritual materializations,” alleged to be produced in this gentleman’s presence, have been reported...”She noted “Mr Spriggs did not appear to have been known by name in England, nor to have given sittings outside the Cardiff circle.”

She made it clear that she was including his Australian phenomena “Not on account of their rarity or novelty, but as a matter of history”, and she was lukewarm about the tests to which he submitted.

The Emergence of Dr Davis

In the United States, it is not uncommon to style mediums and healers " Doctor". But A.J. Davis was one of the few who actually qualified as a medical doctor. He told the story in his second volume of autobiography " Beyond the Valley" (1885) ch. XX111 & XXXV.

Davis had been somewhat unpopular in December 1878 when he delivered an inaugural address in New York to the first Harmonial Society and criticised the Spiritualist emphasis on mediums, seances and messages. But in Autumn 1879 he became the regular speaker at Steck Hall in that city. In Spring 1880 he asked them to financially support a chair in Psychological Science and Magnetic Therapeutics at the United States Medical College (the College had already agreed to create one.) It was decided by the congregation and the Society that Alexander Wilder should fill this post. Davis was already a trustee of college and a personal friend was president. It may be doubted if this post was advertised!

In his letter of acceptance of July 23 1880, written from Newark, Wilder noted that this was the first example in the country of a medical institution including psychological science and especially human magnetism in the curriculum. Since his letter also mentioned Swedenborg, the Kabala and Paracelsus it can be seen that his interpretation of psychology was wide.

Davis had emphasised to his congregation that human magnetism was important in healing. But in the State of New York, orthodox doctors (often called Allopathic because their remedies were different from diseases) had secured a law which threatened with imprisonment, healing mediums, clairvoyant physicians and "magnetists".

An orthodox medical diploma offered protection to mediums and healers, and Davis urged them to obtain one from the College. Davis joined them as a student too, paying fees of \$80 for 1880-1. There were twelve professors, six of whom lectured for an hour daily.

Wilder was the favourite lecturer of Davis, and Davis gives an enthusiastic description of his wide and not always relevant learning. This knowledge, incidentally, also impressed Madame Blavatsky and his input can be seen in the early pages of her books " Isis Unveiled" and " Key to Theosophy".

The medical establishment attempted to close the Medical College, and it was refused the bodies of paupers in hospital for dissection. The College president sought the help of Davis, who had a prophetic vision, in which he saw and recognised two men who could help them, one an ex-judge. Together they took legal action to secure the bodies needed.

The New York County Medical Society then tried to have the legal basis of the medical college declared invalid, and they won their case. Should the College seek to challenge this at each level of the courts? Davis had another vision on July 4 1883, in which he was assured he could save the college. Immediately he went to see a man

who had featured in the vision (the college dean) who passed to him some papers that showed Davis the way ahead.

David devoted himself to raising funds to seek a new charter for the college from the State, and money to buy their building from the existing college, so that it should not be forfeit on the invalidation of the former charter.

The Board of Regents of the State, influenced by the Medical Society, rejected their request for a new charter, on the grounds of insufficient funds. This meant that existing graduates would find their degrees of no legal standing. So the college arranged to have a bill introduced into the State legislature to legalise their degrees, should their court appeals fail.

At this point, Davis received a communication from his deceased friend William Green, warning that the Regents would never grant a charter, and advising instead the taking forward of the bill in the state legislature to reconstitute the College. This was done successfully and the Governor signed the bill on 23 May 1884. Needless to say that Davis did not tell his colleagues the source of Mr Green's advice. " I was, perhaps, the only full-blooded, thorough-bred Spiritualist connected with the College..." (" Beyond the Valley" p.235)

" The true physician" concluded Davis" is born. He is not made by either college or legislature." Nevertheless, his 1883 license to practise medicine is preserved among the Davis papers at Virginia Beach.

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Before the Fellowship (2)

(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 prehistory of the Fellowship.)

MAURICE ELLIOTT TESTIMONIAL

The " testimonial " dinner for the Rev. G. Maurice Elliott was a great success and promised well as a preliminary to the raising of a testimonial fund. It was held at Frascati's Restaurant, Oxford Street, London last Saturday evening, and was attended by about 160 people, including many well-known Mediums and representative Spiritualists. Mrs St. Clair Stobart – wearing dark glasses because of eye-trouble - was in the chair; and with Mr Elliott were his wife and daughter. For each of the guests there was provided a blank cheque-form; and it was hoped that many of these, filled up in favour of the fund, will in due course be returned to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr Louis Goldschmidt, the Nook, Windsor Terrace, London N.W.3, to whom other sympathisers are asked to send their donations.

The speakers, in order of their call from the chair, were Messrs. Maurice Barbanell, H. Boddington, Ernest Hunt, Shaw Desmond and Hannen Swaffer. Mr Ernest Oaten, who had been announced as one of the speakers, was unable to be present, and Mr G.H. Lethem was called on to take his place.

Each of the speakers had something to say in praise of the courage and loyalty to conscience of Mr Elliott in resigning his living (that of St. Peter's, Cricklewood, London) because he was debarred by his Bishop's order from making use of what he described as "the Pentecostal gifts" in connection with his Church work, and because he could not conscientiously make the required use of some parts of the Prayer Book.

Mrs Stobart spoke at some length of the work Mr Elliott had done- and is still doing – in connection with the Confraternity movement, which aims at securing the practical co-operation of Clergy and Spiritualists in proclaiming the certainty of Survival. Together, she and Mr Elliott had spoken at many meetings throughout the country; and they now had the names of some hundreds of clergymen who are sympathetic to the movement. Mr Elliott, in his reply, said his conscience left him no option but to resign his living, but he was not leaving the Church nor retiring from Holy Orders. (LIGHT January 28 1937)

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EMMA MYSTERY DEEPENS

Emma Hardinge Britten (born Emma Floyd) was perhaps second only to Stainton Moses in her influence on Victorian Spiritualism. She was founder editor of Two Worlds newspaper (still published today), and other short-lived journals; a great historian; and godmother of church-based National Spiritualism. However she was not only a Spiritualist and a medium - she was also active in a wider occultism from childhood. During the past decade, immense light has been thrown on her background.

In a learned but readable classic Joscelyn Godwin described the work of many eighteenth and nineteenth century esoteric thinkers on the origin of religion and life in "The Theosophical Enlightenment" (1994). Here, for example, the French scholars whom EHB briefly cites in "Faiths, Facts and Frauds" are placed in context. (FFF is otherwise almost unreadable.) The Theosophical Society itself, of which Emma was a founder member in 1875, emerged as part of a much wider stream of knowledge.

In 1996, J.P. Deveney published "Paschal Beverly Randolph: a Nineteenth Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian and Sex Magician" (SUNY Press) which used both British and American Spiritualist papers to reveal an occult culture of which EHB was part, however much she may have repudiated some of his views. Deveney also issued "Astral Projection or Liberation of the Double and the work of the early Theosophical Society" (Theosophical History Occasional Papers VI.) This documented the discussion among Spiritualists about doubles and living communicators, and left no doubt that the early Theosophists were privately attempting to train as occultists. Deveney excavated some autobiographical articles by Emma which gave contradictory details of her early life.

Then in 2001 came Robert Mathiesen "The Unseen Worlds of Emma Hardinge Britten: some chapters in the history of Western Occultism" (Theosophical History Occasional Paper IX). Mathiesen identified her earliest work as a medium with Dr E. Hardinge, to whom she may have been married. He revealed the mysterious Chevalier Louis (whose material she had edited in two books) as Ernest de Bunsen, himself a writer on esoteric religion (though none of his books, nor those of Crawford, have yet been found in the Britten Library Index- LP). Mathiesen

suggested that Emma, as much as Madame Blavatsky, was in a position to offer occult training in the infant TS, on the lines outlined for her proposed "School of Prophets."

Meanwhile Paul Gaunt (see PP1) had been led to examine the traditional story of Emma's part in the receipt of the SNU Seven Principles. Earlier versions of the principles were traced by him. In 2004, the SNU announced that a committee was re-examining the origin of the principles, and promised a report to their 2004 conference.

Duncan Gascoyne, who had revived the Britten Museum at Stansted before becoming SNU president, has now made a dramatic discovery . By referring to the first regularly published UK Spiritualist periodical, he found new information on Emma presumed movements if she separated from Dr Hardinge. He reported on 13 .6.03 .

Dr Hardinge writes to the editor of the Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph on the 15th October 1855 from his address at 5 Tabernacle Walk, Finsbury Square, London stating that 'he would have communicated with them earlier, had not our circle been broken in consequence of the long and protracted illness of my dear and valuable partner. etc etc'

"Mrs Hardinge has been used as a writing medium for the last three years, and much, very much of important information have we received through her hand. She is now being developed as a speaking medium. Lectures or discourses, occupying from fifteen to sixty minutes, have been delivered through her.

On Sunday evening, when she passed into the state of trance, it was requested by the Spirits that, for the future, one of the company should propose a subject, and then a lecture would be delivered upon it through her, providing the subject was one calculated to benefit the whole human family.

We have in progress, by the Spirit of Cowper, 'Lines upon the Mormons' (See the "Unseen World of Emma Hardinge Britten" top of page 8) This reference to Mormons ties in with the fact that the medium herself was to take the sixth lecture in which she would give an account of a conversation which the medium had with a company of Mormonites.

If this is correct then Emma cannot have arrived in America on 22nd August 1855 as it would appear that she was still in London. (See page 12 "Emma Hardinge Britten")

A communication dated 28th December 1855 to the Yorkshire Spiritual Telegraph appears to indicate by the statement that they are gathering new enquirers around us, that Emma has departed and that there has been a change in circumstances.

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This discovery in the YST suggests that Emma was already engaged in one of her most characteristic mediumship feats- the entranced address - by 1855.

At the end of his monograph, Robert Mathiesen sketched a programme of work "What remains to be done". We invite readers to study Emma's life and work, so that the next decade is as fertile as the past one.