

## 51. Professes To Be Coming World Religion

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### A. "World Federation of Spiritualistic Christendom"

Spiritualism boldly asserts that the basic reason for the divisions of Christendom has been man's failure to maintain the Early Church communication with the "spirit-world."

Thus Johannes Greber, a former Catholic priest, asserts that a spirit gave him the following message:

"Since the time when communication with God's spirit-world as the sole road to truth was dispensed with, errors of the most varied and far-reaching nature have crept into Christianity." [1]

The most conspicuous division in Christendom is doubt less the historic split between Protestantism and Catholicism, which breach has thus far remained unhealed. This breach Spiritualism aspires to heal.

### 1. SPIRIT MESSAGES CALL FOR "RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION."

Recent Spiritualist spokesmen assure us that Spiritualism's doctrines alone "represent the true teachings" of the Early Church. They therefore hold that a return to the guidance of Spiritualism provides the sole remedy for these divisions. Spirit guidance, they insist, constitutes the primary source of truth—for the spirits, they avow, are the "messengers of God." This comports with the previously noted assertions of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle that the spirits are bringing

1. Johannes Greber, *Communication, With the Spirit World*, pp. 358, 359.

a "new revelation" from the "other side" that calls for a radical "reconstruction" of traditional Christianity. In other words, Spiritualism professes to provide the basis for World Federation of Christendom, under an all embracing "spirit-synthesis" of religion. Thus Protestantism and Catholicism can be reunited by, and upon, a spiritistic platform—a universal religion of "scientifically demonstrated" "survival." Such is Spiritualism's frank objective. It is a three fold union.

### 2. AUDACIOUS CLAIMS FOR SPIRITISM AS HUMANITY'S SAVIOR.

As indicated, Conan Doyle contends that Spiritualism is actually the "central teaching" of Christianity itself, the "most powerful ally" of all the creeds. Spiritualism is thus set forth as an angel of light, a Saviour of humanity. It is even asserted that the results of Pentecost will pale into insignificance in comparison with what Modern Spiritualism is prepared to bring to pass.

Spiritualism envisions converting Christian churches into seance chambers for the demonstration of life after death, with materialized "direct-voice" spirit teachers and preachers. [2] Shaw Desmond goes so far as to predict that "the Atomic World will be riddled with the psychic, steered by the psychic." [3]

2. Shaw Desmond, *Psychic Pitfalls*, p. 269.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

### 3. SCIENTIFIC "SPIRIT CONTACT" THROUGH ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS.

Some psychic experimenters are now seeking to so harness "supersonic" rays, or vibrations, as to establish electronic communication with the spirit world on the "Other Side." Some in the Spirit Electronic Communications Society envision a "super-ray" so sensitive that it will pick up the "spoken-word" vibrations in the "etheric sound-waves," in order that one may tune in on spirit conversations without a medium, much as one tunes in on a radio or television conversation from a broadcast station. This device they call an "electroencephalograph" (not to be confused with the medical instrument of the same name), which they hope will develop into an "etheric speech microphone." [4] That is one of the current "scientific" anticipations.

This is similar to the radical "new outlook" envisioned by Ernest Thompson—"scientific spirit communication" uniting humanity with spirit beings much as radio now unites the Eastern and Western hemispheres. [5] Such are the avowed goals of current psychical scientism and its fantastic experiments.

**B. Claims 1848 Ushered in New Era for Human Race**

Mrs. M. E. Cadwallader (d. 1934), one of the organizers of the National Spiritualist Association in 1893, erected a stone marker in Hydesville, New York, designating the exact spot where the Fox cottage stood at the time of the Hydesville raps of 1848. She was likewise largely responsible for erecting the shrine placed by the Spiritualists of the world in the Churchyard of the Plymouth Spiritualist Church in Rochester, New York. [6] Author of Hydesville in History, she was also editor of the Spiritualist journal The Progressive Thinker. She therefore speaks with some authority. She here discusses some points not often understood as to actual positions of Spiritualism.

4. Reginald M. Lester, In Search of the Hereafter, p. 213.

5. Ernest Thompson, quoted in Lester, op. cit., p 216.

6. The National Spiritualist, February, 1935; Centennial Book, p. 216.

**1. CLAIMS CHRISTIANITY BASED ON SPIRITISTIC PHENOMENA.**

In a widely quoted editorial, "There Is No Death—There Are No Dead," in her Progressive Thinker, Mrs. Cadwallader wrote of how the various "Bibles [sacred books] of the ages" show that "belief in spirits is the foundation of all religions of the world," and declared that the centuries have been "filled with manifestations of the spirit." Then she boldly states:

"A medium foretold the birth of Jesus whose brief life on earth was filled with the performance of many so-called miracles which in reality were spiritualistic phenomena." [7]

**2. MARCH 31 (1848) IS BIRTH DAY OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM.**

Among Spiritualists, she says: "By common acceptance March 31, 1848, is the date that has officially been celebrated as the day when the raps at Hydesville, New York, in the home of the Fox Family, heralded to the world the stupendous message:

"There is no death; there are no dead." [8]

Just as millions of Christians celebrate the natal day of Jesus, so, Mrs. Cadwallader declares:

"March 31 is the day when Spiritualists celebrate the dawn of a new era—which has changed the thought of the world: when they celebrate the anniversary of the rappings at Hydesville, which told the world that death is but a change from the physical to the spiritual world; that the personality still persists in the world of spirit; that those who have left the scene of their earthly labours can return to those still on earth." [9]

That, she adds, is "why we jubilate," "why we celebrate." To the Spiritualist 1848 is a division point in history.

**3. SPIRITUALISM THE "COMING UNIVERSAL RELIGION."**

Referring to Modern Spiritualism as "one of the greatest Movements the world has ever known," she remarks: "We are struck with the magnitude of the Movement which in less than a century has attained such gigantic proportions." [10] She again emphasizes the significance of March 31, 1848:

"March 31, 1848 ushered in a new era for the human race, an era which had its beginning with the tiny raps at Hydesville and will culminate only in the distant cycles of the future." [11]

And she adds that with the first public Spiritualist meeting in Corinthian Hall, Rochester, New York, in 1849, Spiritualism entered upon "the beginning of a world-wide investigation by prominent people everywhere." [12] Then comes this prediction: "Spiritualism is the coming universal religion. It is the life blood of Christianity; in fact, it is Christianity plus." [13]

7. Reprinted in Centennial Book. p. 68.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 69.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

She states, significantly, "We are spirit here and now, a part of God." This too is a constantly recurring claim.

**4. NEW DISPENSATION BORN IN 1848.**

With this declaration regarding 1848, Spiritualist Dr. B. F. Clark agrees: "From this [the phenomena at the Fox home in 1848] a new dispensation was born." [14] And he likewise adds that the movement spread from Hydesville to Corinthian Hall in Rochester in 1849, followed by a conference in 1851. The United States Congress was petitioned by fifteen thousand in 1854 to appoint a commission to investigate Modern Spiritualism. [15] Then he appends a roster of illustrious adherents and stresses its remarkable growth. Such are Spiritualism's claims.

**5. BATTERY OF PERIODICALS SPANS FIRST CENTURY.**

A large number of Spiritualist periodicals marked its first century (1848-1948), beginning in 1849 with The Present Age and Spirit Messenger. Then came the Spiritual Telegraph in 1852, followed by Spiritual Age, The Spiritual Clarion, The Spiritual Universe, The American Spiritualist, Banner of Light (1857), and the Progressive Age, edited by Moses Hull; also The Spiritual Scientist, The Light of Truth, The Progressive Thinker, The National Spiritualist, official organ of the National Spiritualist Association (1919), The Lyceum Spotlight, and The Psychic Observer. [16]

A paralleling battery of British publications included the British Spiritual Telegraph (1857), Spiritual Messenger (1858), Spiritual Magazine (1860), Spiritual Times, Spiritual Notes (1878), official organ of the British National Association of Spiritualists, Light, The Two Worlds, Borderland, Spiritualist Review, Spiritualist Quarterly Magazine, and Psychic News. These were but part of the list. And there were Continental journals as well. [17]

14. B. F. Clark, "Special Events," in Centennial Book, p. 98.

15. Ibid.

16. Sarah Parker Thompson, "Spiritualist Publications 1847-1947," in Centennial Book, p. 66.

17. Ibid., p. 67.

**C. Typical Service in a Spiritualist "Church"****1. ROBERTS OUTLINES FEATURES OF TYPICAL SERVICE.**

How Spiritualism operates in its churchly role is told by C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, in The Truth About Spiritualism. Here he describes a typical Spiritualist service, with its Spiritualist hymn (such as "Home in the Spirit-Land"), prayer, offering, and address, stressing the point that at last the "barrier" of death has been broken and spirits have returned to tell of the fuller life in the Spirit-Land—a "truth" that is to "revolutionize the world." Finally, the public clairvoyant brings "messages" from the "spirits" to various persons in the audience, identifying the individuals by describing them. Then the chair man calls upon the audience to rejoice over this further example of "spirit" intervention, and prays that eyes may be opened to see the great "truths" of Spiritualism, to bless the mediums who communicate the messages and to "hasten the day when Spiritualism shall triumph throughout the earth." [18]

**2. EARLY SPIRITUALIST HYMNALS STRESS "SPIRIT" CONCEPTS.**

As to hymns, one of the early Spiritualist hymnals was Spiritual Songs for the Use of Circles, Camp Meetings, and Other Spiritualist Gatherings, compiled by Mattie E. Hull, wife of Moses Hull. It affords a clear picture of the predominant note. Here are typical hymn titles: "Death's Stream Bridged"; "Beautiful Shore"; "Spirit Greetings"; "Sweetly Falls the Spirit's Message"; "Light Ahead"; "To Our Risen Friends"; "Rap, Rap, Rap" (to the tune of "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp"); "In the Still Hours of Night"; "Sweet Spirit Land"; "There's a Good Time Coming"; "I Cannot Trace the Way"; and "The Angels' Presence." And there was a perverted doxology, appealing for spirit guidance:

"O, blessed Ones from upper Spheres  
Now as we separate, draw near.  
Guide us while in earth's path we rove,  
And bind our souls in perfect love."

18. C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, The Truth About Spiritualism, pp. 18-22.

In another collection, The Golden Echoes, with words and music by S. W. Tucker, appear such other hymn titles as "Angel Visitants"; "Beyond the Weeping"; "Heavenly Portals"; "My Spirit Home"; "The Homeward Voyage"; "The Unseen City."

**3. OFFICIAL HYMNAL MAINTAINS SPIRITUALIST CONCEPTS.**

The current official Spiritualist Hymnal, of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches of the United States of America [19] includes the following, which sustain the typical Spiritualist contention:

"Beautiful, Beckoning Hands"; "Come, Gentle Spirits"; "Come, Thou All Transforming Spirit"; "Hand in Hand With Angels"; "He Heals Me! O Blessed Thought"; "Make Channels for the Streams"; "Message From the Spirit Land"; "O Life That Makes All

Things New"; "O Spirit, Source of Light"; "Spirit Calls Us"; "Sweetly Falls the Spirit Message"; "The Great Over Soul"; "The Other World"; "There Is No Death"; "Till I See Death's Lifted Curtain"; "Trust in the Spirit"; "Under the Guidance of Angels"; "What Is Death?"; "Whisper to Us of Spirit Life."

Outside the named Spiritualist circles there is widespread dabbling into the occult in every strata of society. Curiosity is often the motive, or adventure into the mystic. Those who thus tamper with the commonly known phenomena of Spiritualism may not come to any conclusion as to origins, but they are usually left wondering whether valid communication with those who have "gone beyond" is a possibility. Here is a case in point.

19. The inside front cover contains the Declaration of Principles" of the National Spiritualist Association has a "Prayer for Spiritual Healing" to be used daily at 8 o'clock in the evening for all members of the N.S.A.

#### **D. Occult Episodes in Booth Tarkington Household**

For years reputable journals have periodically published articles from well-known men—such as novelist Booth Tarkington—bearing on the occult. In a "Where Do We Go From Here?" recital, appearing in The Saturday Evening Post for August 9, 1941, as one in a series of reminiscences, Tarkington tells of a teen-ager episode in the family household where a "force unknown" began to operate. It is a casual recital, detached in tone, but it is significant.

##### **1. HEAVY MAHOGANY TABLE MOVES MYSTERIOUSLY.**

The family had all scoffed at "table tipplings and inexplicable rappings on walls and tables," and "ghost stories." And Tarkington states that he had been the "loudest in scorn of all spectral bugaboos." But, just as a prank, a group of six young people one day thought they would see if they could "make a table move" in the Tarkington drawing room—by the finger-tips-on-the-edge technique. They took their places, standing around the heavy mahogany table. Before long it began to move slowly but erratically, zigzagging several feet at a time across the thick Brussels carpet. Young Tarkington, only four teen, was merely looking on.

Removing their finger tips, one person at a time, in order to discover which one was the "sensitive," they found that it was Booth's frail sister. When her fingers were withdrawn the movement stopped. But when she replaced them, the table moved against her, pushing her backward. They simply looked upon it as something "queer," for the sister was weakly, and never of herself could have moved the heavy table. But the table did move. Later she several times caused it to move in the same way.

##### **2. CODE OF COMMUNICATION WITH "SPIRITS."**

Then came "tapping and thumping" developments from its smooth surface—and there were no drawers or any loose parts. Grand father and Grandmother Booth were watching the developments intently. Then Tarkington's father worked out a "code of communication" as they contacted the "ghost" of Hum Riley who had died young. There were loud thumping, and young Tarkington was annoyed. People would think them crazy.

Later, Booth's "dead uncles, Walter and Lucian," allegedly manifested themselves as "supposedly with us." None could explain the phenomenon—"unless they served to establish the tremendous fact that the dead were present" and "were leading interesting lives." There were many similar episodes, with friends and relatives present. Family secrets were revealed, and many became convinced that they were "communicating with the dead." "What else can it be?" they asked.

##### **3. GRANDFATHER TARKINGTON AFFIRMS IT IS "FROM THE DEVIL."**

The one disbelieving exception was Grandfather Tarkington, who "didn't think the dead made the raps." But he thought "something else did." The family had come from orthodox Episcopalian, Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian backgrounds, but now few any longer believed in a "personal Satan." The "old orthodoxies were fading." Had these happenings established "A Bridge to Eternity"? Booth's father inquired of his own Methodist preacher father, the Reverend Joseph Tarkington. In response he drove forty miles to see what was happening. After sitting sternly throughout "an hour of afternoon rapping," he declared flatly: "Those sounds are not made by human trickery, but they cannot be from spirits in heaven. There is no countenance for them in the Bible. They are from the Devil." And, Booth added, "One didn't argue with Grandfather Tarkington."

##### **4. REMAINS THE GREAT UNSETTLED QUESTION.**

Nevertheless, these sittings continued for about three years in the Tarkington household. Sometimes the "raps did freakish things," resounding thumps coming from the walls and floor and ceiling of Grandmother Booth's room. Even voices were heard. The household sought to penetrate behind the veil to the "life beyond," but were told they "couldn't possibly understand." These phenomena likewise seemed to centre about the sister, and affected her to the extent that her mother took her to the family physician. But in time, after her marriage, the raps passed and the "apparent communications with the dead," the "unseen visitors," ceased.

The episodes remained unexplained. The Tarkingtons never tried to settle the question. It always remained the great "perhaps"—"If perhaps there is no death." But Tarkington adds that this "perhaps" was "to be with us the rest of our lives." That was all. He tells it nonchalantly, just as a tale in his life. He hadn't participated in it. However, it indicates how such episodes have occurred in respected circles. [20]

### **E. Current "Spiritualist Camp" Inducements**

The best-known American "Spiritualist Camp" is at Lilydale, New York, near Hydesville, but a close runner-up is the Chesterfield (Indiana) Camp, which claims that it is the "largest phenomenal centre in the world," the "Hub of World Spiritualism," and "a fine religious centre." [21] The descriptive brochures, publicizing recent annual convocations, which have continued for seventy-five years, yield the following data: The main attractions listed are the Art Gallery, Cathedral of the Woods, Garden of Prayer, Congress of Religions shrine, a Grotto—"where you can go into silence and feel the touch of the vanished hand." You can allegedly gain "understanding of immortality" as you visit with the mediums. A seminary is also conducted. There is a bookshop, selling books on "Theosophy and allied subjects." "Special Summer School Classes" are listed for "those who are aspiring to be mediums," [22] and a lyceum for children. The seminary offers "courses in Spiritualism, Mediumship and its Development, Bible History and Interpretation, Public Speaking, Spiritual Healing, Metaphysics, Occultism and Allied Subjects." [23]

20. Booth Tarkington. "As I Seem to Me," in *The Saturday Evening Post*, August 9, 1941, pp. 27, 48-51.

21. Chesterfield Spiritualist Camp (1961), front and back of cover.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

24. *Ibid.*

These are "taught by a distinguished faculty." [24] Here at the camp is offered alleged "proof of survival" through "positive demonstration." [25] That is the scope. In 1959 there were twenty-seven staff mediums at the camp—"Direct Voice, Clairvoyant, and Materialization"—as well as "healers," and instructors in the production of "spirit pictures" and "spirit card writing," along with "materialization mediums" and "apport mediums." [26]

25. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

26. *Ibid.* (1959), pp. 5, 6.

Here Are Housed Portrayals of the Return of Spirit, Examples of Alleged Spirit Paintings by the Bangs Sisters, Lizzie and May, Relics of the Fox Sisters, and Exhibits of Psychic Art, Including Spirit Photography.

### **1. CATHEDRAL OF THE WOODS.**

The covering description of the Cathedral of the Woods states that "inside its walls is the most holy of holies where Angel voices are heard." [27] Here the "philosophy" of the "religion of Spiritualism is given." [28] And the camp in general is described as the "hallowed spot where spirit communion is found," where "Heaven and earth join together." [29] "The Thinker sees that star of hope that reveals, man lives on forever." [30]

27. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

28. *Ibid.* (1961), p. 5.

29. *Ibid.* (1959), inside first cover.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

### **2. CHESTERFIELD SPIRITUALIST ART GALLERY.**

The "East," or "Biblical Room" of the Art Gallery boasts "life size paintings that portray the return of Spirit found in the Christian Bible." These are declared to have come into being "through the mediumship of the old prophets." The centre room displays "spirit paintings" by the "famous Bangs sisters," relics of the Fox family and Andrew Jackson Davis, and other noted mediums and speakers. The West Room contains samples of alleged "Psychic art." [31]

31. *Ibid.* (1959), p. 15; (1961), p. 3..

One of the descriptive captions in the West Room states that the sitter brings a package of photographic paper. The lights are dimmed. Then the individual holding the packet feels an agitation within the packet. Upon completion of the process the "spirit" signals by raps. A 50-watt red light is used in developing, as in customary photographic manner. Usually the faces and messages are said to be recognized by the sitter.

**3. BANGS SISTERS' "PRECIPITATION" PAINTINGS COLLECTION.**

According to an article by Art Gallery Curator Ralph Hicock, in the "psychic monthly" Chimes, for July, 1963, the Chesterfield Gallery houses twenty-six Bangs sisters' "precipitation" paintings allegedly produced by "Spirit Artists." [32]

These are set forth as "evidence for survival." Lizzie and May Bangs operated around the turn of the century, having been mediums since "early childhood." This early period, it is claimed, was marked by "spirit raps, voices, and the moving of pieces of furniture," as well as the "materialization of hands," and "automatic writing," followed by automatic typewriter writing—the customary phenomena. In 1894 the sisters became "staff mediums" at the Chesterfield Spiritualist Camp, where they "demonstrated" the "wonderful truth of Spirit return." [33]

According to claim, in precipitation painting the canvas was tacked to a wooden frame, as for ordinary portraits. This was placed in a locked box in "darkness," to "prove there had been no tampering with the canvas." Later the work was done in broad daylight. Within fifteen to forty-five minutes the "finished portrait" of "one who had walked on the earth in a vehicle of flesh" [34] would allegedly appear upon the canvas. Here is Hicock's recital of the alleged procedure:

32 Ralph Hicock, "Spirit Portraits of the Bangs Sisters," Chimes, July, 1963  
("22d year of continuous publication"), pp. 34, 6. 7.

33 Ibid., p. 6.

34. Ibid.

"The canvas to be used always was selected by the sitter, then placed on a small table before a well-lighted window. The room was shaded sufficiently to cause all the light from the window to pass through the rear of the canvas, enabling the sitter to witness the progress of the portrait minutely and to detect the slightest change. The sisters placed themselves on each side of the table facing the sitter, placing their hands lightly on the edge of the frame holding the canvas. No two sittings were exactly alike. The outer edges of the canvas would become shadowed; different coloured lines would appear until the full outline of the shoulders and head would be seen. At times these lines would disappear, then re appear as though the unseen artist were making a preliminary sketch. The space within the outline would be a clear white, gradually changing to natural flesh tints, meanwhile forming small shadow spots for the ears, nose, and mouth. In many cases the eyes would be the last to be completed, then gradually they would open before the startled gaze of the beholder. Needless to say, this never failed to present most life-like realism. It is safe to state this is without parallel in all the annals of material art, contemporary or otherwise." [35]

This, it is stressed, was all offered as "proof of survival." The prices charged by the Bangs sisters for the exercise of their "sacred spiritual gift" ranged from \$30 to \$50, and the size of the paintings ranged from "life-size bust to seven feet." The sisters, who lived in Chicago, appeared before "crowned heads, investigative scientific societies and diverse groups."

Specimens of their work were taken to England by Admiral Moore of the British Admiralty, Hicock states, as "evidential results of this marvellous proof of the continuity of life." Moore was leader of the British Psychical Research Society. [36] The paintings were the alleged production of "Spirit Artists." So the Camp Chesterfield Gallery "has become a Mecca to those in search of survival." [37] (See page 1083.)

Such are some of the current claims of contemporary "phenomenal" Spiritualism, along with the retention of the "religious" and "philosophy" phases, paralleling the contemporary scientific emphasis in other environs. Thus the older materialistic contentions continue, along with the newer and more subtle approaches. The undercover operations, that are increasingly effective today, are described elsewhere. Thus Spiritualism adapts itself to all classes, clients, and conditions.

35. Ibid., p. 7.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 34.

**F. Strange Life and Tragic End of Fox Sisters**

We close this chapter on a sombre note, but one that must be considered. Despite charges of fraud and trickery, the Fox sisters were looked upon as the most highly gifted of the early mediumistic fraternity. But it is incumbent upon us to look a little more closely into the lives and public declarations of the three Fox sisters—Leah, Margaretta, and Katie. Leah (after ward Mrs. Underbill) was the oldest of the three. Katie, the youngest, continued uninterruptedly in her medium-ship for some thirty years. On the contrary, Margaretta (afterward Mrs. Kane) gave no sittings from about 1856 to 1867." [38]

**1. MARGARETTA'S OSCILLATING CAREER AS SPIRITUALIST.**

Margaretta had married Dr. Elisha Kane, an Arctic explorer. But after his death she turned away from Spiritualism for a time, and in August, 1858, joined the Roman Catholic Church. [39] However, she continued to associate occasionally with the Spiritualists.



And, "pressed by the spirits," after a while she stood again before the world with undiminished powers as a spirit medium. [40] English Spiritualist James Burns, editor of *The Medium*, after Margaretta's tragic death in 1893, referred to a— "twofold spiritual spectacle; we have a woman giving spiritual manifestations to others, while within herself she is spiritually lost and misdirected. All moral sense, and control of mind and desire were gone. But when the medium makes a trade of it and puffs the thing up as a commodity for sale, then farewell to all that might elevate or instruct in the subject." [41]

## **2. WARNING ADMONITION FROM DR. KANE TO MARGARETTA.**

One of the early warnings against the degrading influence of the Spiritistic phenomena of the Fox sisters was penned by none other than Dr. Kane, Arctic explorer husband of Margaretta, in his intimate letters to her, inspired by his

38. C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, op. cit., p. 47.

39. *The Love-Life of Dr. Kane*, p. 284; Herbert Thurston, *The Church in Spiritualism*, pp. 33, 34.

40. *Spiritual Magazine*, July, 1867.

41. James Burns, in *The Medium and Daybreak*, April 28, 1893, p. 258.

love and concern for her. After his death Margaretta published these letters in *The Love-Life of Dr. Kane*—a book now exceedingly rare. In these missives these pertinent appeals and admonitions from the doctor appear:

"Oh, Maggie, are you never tired of this weary, weary sameness of continual deceit? Are you doomed thus to spend your days, doomed never to rise to better things?"

"Do avoid "spirits." I cannot bear to think of you as engaged in a course of wickedness and deception. Maggie, you have no friend but me whose interest in you is disconnected from this cursed rapping. Pardon my saying so; but is it not deceit even to listen when others are deceived?" [42]

## **3. MARGARETTA PURPOSES TO EXPOSE SPIRITUALISM IN 1888.**

In 1888 something sensational happened. For weeks there had been rumours of a forthcoming exposure of the frauds of Spiritualism. When Margaretta Fox Kane returned to New York from Europe she indicated to an interviewer her intention of exposing the whole Spiritistic fabrication. She had had a bitter quarrel with her older sister, Leah, who had shortly before published a book entitled *The Missing Link in Modern Spiritualism* (1885). This purported to be a history of the early manifestations at Hydesville and Rochester, in which the three sisters were at first concerned.

Margaretta had by this time come to despise Spiritualism, and had decided to denounce it. Her intense feelings were expressed in the *New York Herald* of September 24, 1888.

There she declared that she was going to lay bare the very foundations of Spiritualism. For some years she had contemplated this action, and had now come to "loathe" Spiritualism and all it stood for. She had said to those urging her to conduct seances, "You are driving me to hell." She had also sought to drown her troubles in drink, but to no avail. She remained bitter toward Leah, who, she said, made her and Katie "tools" so as to make money for her.

42. Quoted in C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, op. cit., pp. 47, 48.

## **4. JOINED BY KATIE IN DRAMATIC EXPOSURE.**

About the same time Katie (Mrs. Jencken) also returned from Europe. She too told a reporter that she would take part in the exposure. Here are Katie's words:

"I regard Spiritualism as one of the greatest curses that the world has ever known. The worst of them all (the Spiritualists) is my eldest sister Leah, the wife of Daniel Underbill. I don't know why it is, she has always been jealous of Maggie and me; I suppose because we could do things in Spiritualism that she couldn't." [43]

On October 21, in a large assembly in the New York Academy of Music, after a Dr. Richmond had, by sleight of hand, successfully imitated the slate writing and thought reading of the seance room, Margaretta Fox Kane arose and, in her sister's presence, read a statement repudiating their whole super normal phenomena. In this she said:

"That I have been chiefly instrumental in perpetrating the fraud of Spiritualism upon a too-confiding public, most of you doubtless know. "

"The greatest sorrow in my life has been that this is true, and though it has come late in my day, I am now prepared to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God! "

"I am here tonight as one of the founders of Spiritualism to denounce it as an absolute falsehood from beginning to end, as the flimsiest of superstitions, the most wicked blasphemy known to the world." [44]

The New York Herald reported:

"By throwing life and enthusiasm into her big toe Mrs. Margaret Fox Kane produced loud spirit-rapping in the Academy of Music last night and dealt a death-blow to Spiritualism, that huge and world-wide fraud which she and her sister Katie founded in 1848. Both sisters were present and both denounced Spiritualism as a monstrous imposition and a cheat.

"The great building was crowded and the wildest excitement prevailed at times. Hundreds of spiritualists had come to see the originators of their faith destroy it at one stroke. They were greatly agitated at times and hissed fiercely. Take it all in all, it was a most remarkable and dramatic spectacle." [45]

### **5. RECANTS FORMER DENUNCIATION IN 1889.**

Notwithstanding all this, a year later, in the home of Henry J. Newton, prominent New York Spiritualist, Margaretta made a formal recantation of her previous denunciation, declaring that it had no foundation in fact, and asserted, "Those charges were false in every particular." [46] Katie likewise, in a way, repudiated her share in the "exposure" by a letter to the Spiritualist journal Light.

43. New York Herald, October 9, 1888.

44. R. B. Davenport, *The Deathblow to Spiritualism*, p. 76;

See also the New York Herald and the New York Daily Tribune, for October 22;  
New York World, October 21, 1888.

45. New York Herald, October 22, 1888.

### **6. BOTH SISTERS DIE AS ALCOHOLICS.**

But there was a tragic finale. Dark shadows marked the closing years of both Fox sisters. Katie (Mrs. Jencken) died of alcoholic excesses in June, 1892. And Margaretta (Mrs. Kane), last survivor of the sisters, had a pitiable and tragic end in March, 1893. She too died a confirmed inebriate. Here is the dismal record:

"The tenement house of No. 456 West 57th Street, New York, is deserted now, except one room, from cellar to roof. The room is occupied by a woman nearly 60 years of life, an object of charity, a mental and physical wreck, whose appetite is only for intoxicating liquors. The face, though marked by age and dissipation, shows unmistakably that the woman was once beautiful.

"This wreck of womankind has been a guest in palaces and courts. The powers of mind, now almost imbecile, were the wonder and study of scientific men in America, Europe, and Australia. Her name was eulogized, sung, and ridiculed in a dozen languages. The lips that utter little else now than profanity once promulgated the doctrine of a new religion which still numbers its tens of thousands of enthusiastic believers." [47]

The moral degradation of Spiritualists Margaretta and Katie Fox stand on record for all time.

Thus there was confession of fraud, followed by retraction within a year. What is the explanation? Spiritualism was riddled with imposture. But it was not all trickery. It was not all fraud. There were genuine manifestations of actual "spirit" contacts that could not be gainsaid. But of what "spirits"? That is the crucial question. And that will be examined later.

46. The account of this incident, with facsimile of signature of Mrs. Kane and witnesses, appeared in *The Medium and Daybreak*, December 27, 1889. Cf. *Light*, December 20, 1889, p. 614.

47. *Washington Daily Star*. March 7, 1893; see also *The Medium and Daybreak*, April 7, 1893, p. 212.

### **7. NOT TROUBLED OVER "RESPECTABILITY OF ORIGINS."**

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in his *History of Spiritualism* (1926), sought to "palliate the stigma" that the tainted careers of Margaretta and Katie had placed upon Spiritualism.

He did not believe their statements. His theory was that "Maggie's raps" were caused by the protrusion, from some part of her person, of a long rod of "ectoplasm," a substance invisible to the eye but capable of so conducting energy as to make sounds and strike blows at a distance. But neither Conan Doyle nor Oliver Lodge, scholars that they were, troubled themselves about the "respectability of origins." Doyle did, however, say that "the entities with which the Fox circle were at first in contact were not of the highest order." [48] But "to this day the Fox sisters are spoken of by ardent Spiritualists in the highest term and are regarded by them as endowed with a special mission to humanity." [49]

Henry J. Newton, president of The First Spiritual Society of New York, said:



"Nothing that she [Margaretta] could say in that regard would in the least change my opinion, nor would it that of anyone else who had become profoundly convinced that there is an occult influence connecting us with an invisible world. [50]

48. Quoted in Thurston, op. cit., p. 44.

49. C. E. Bechhofer Roberts, op. cit., p. 48.

50. Quoted in John Mulholland, *Beware Familiar Spirits*, p. 283.

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