

**Noble Pioneer:
The Life Story Of Emma Hardinge Britten**

Author: James Robertson

An Edited, Annotated Edition

Published by The Emma Hardinge Britten Archive

www.ehbritten.org/text/annotated/2009-01-01-2.pdf

EHB Archive # 2009.01.01.3

This edition of the text is published under the terms of a Creative Commons license.



You are free:



to Share — to copy, distribute, display, and perform the work



to Remix — to make derivative works

Under the following conditions:



Attribution. You must attribute the work in the manner specified by the author or licensor (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work).



Noncommercial. You may not use this work for commercial purposes.



Share Alike. If you alter, transform, or build upon this work, you may distribute the resulting work only under the same or similar license to this one.

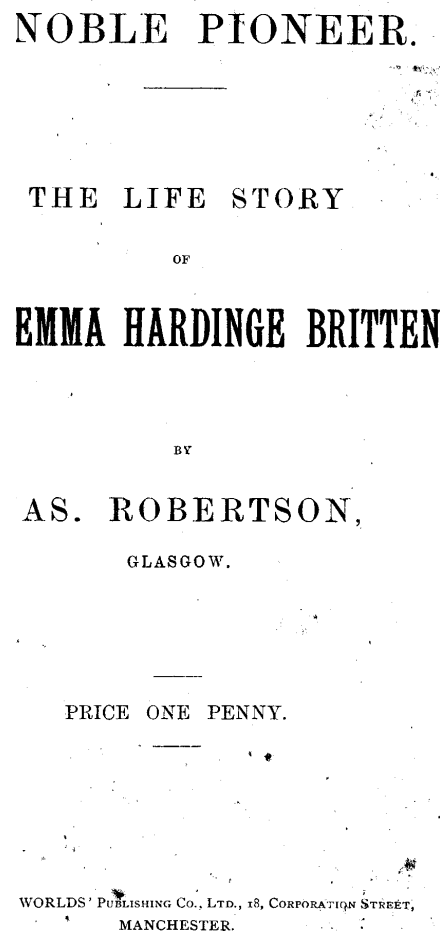
- For any reuse or distribution, you must make clear to others the license terms of this work. The best way to do this is with a link to this web page.
- Any of the above conditions can be waived if you get permission from the copyright holder.
- Apart from the remix rights granted under this license, nothing in this license impairs or restricts the author's moral rights.

About This Text

This edited and annotated text of this document was reproduced from an Acrobat PDF of the work, the original of which is held in the collection of the National Library of Australia (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn858850>), using OmniPage Pro and a Canon LiDE scanner. The resulting machine-readable text was corrected, by hand, against the physical original, with house-style punctuation being normalized, and non-significant typesetting errors and incorrect spellings being, in most cases, silently amended. Pagination has been removed, and scholarly attributions requiring original pagination will of necessity need to be made based on the photofacsimile edition.

The physical version of this text exists in only a few repository libraries, and as far as is known, in only one state. As described by the National Library of Australia, the physical text is a roughly 11 by 8 inch, 16 page pamphlet.

The title page of the original is as follows (damage in original):



Page structure is indicated in the example below.

8

Ten years had passed since Mrs. Britten had left her native land, when the cry came from England, 'Come over and help us,' and at once she responded to the request. In 1865 Spiritualism had made a deep impression amongst many of the cultured classes. The *Cornhill Magazine*, under the editorship of Thackeray, in 1860, had opened its pages to the article, 'Truth Stranger than Fiction,' in which the phenomena that took place in the presence of D. D. Home were set down. Wm. and Mary Howitt, who then held a prominent position in literature, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, Robt. Chambers, and many others were believers. Dr. Elliotson, the Dr. Goodenough of Thackeray's novels, after fierce opposition to the very thought of spirits, was also convinced of the truth. The first invitation Mrs. Britten received on her arrival was from Dr. Elliotson, now an old man, and unable to visit. He welcomed her as a warm and devoted Spiritualist.

It is difficult at this distance of time to call back the furore which she made on her visit to London. Strong and courageous men stood on her platform, and the press did for Spiritualism more than it has done since. Columns were devoted to reporting her lectures, the *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Daily News*, *Standard* alike noticing the new wonder. Many of her addresses were on the subject of America, Lincoln, etc., and all wondered at such brilliance delivered extempore, with all the perfection of logic. An odd sneer of course came now and then, that she was a cardinal humbug and not a thoughtful and wise teacher.

The power, the purity, the beauty of her speech sunk into many hearts—a veritable shower of refreshing consolation. A new star had arisen in the firmament, which brought not only light, but healing. She was a destroyer of the old blasphemies, and at the same time was also the revealer of grander conceptions of the Most High. Religion and reason were joined together in such fashion as had never been heard before.

Wm. Howitt in the press wrote of her as one of the most striking personalities of the age, and said if she did not lecture on the most unpopular of subjects—a subject which the public abhors because it is suffering under the hallucinations of priestcraft and sciencecraft—she would be the enthusiasm of the day. Had she come to uphold the favourite notions of the times, did she cant on evangelism, or preach materialism, or show that mammon is the most wise of devils, all London, all England would have run after her—she would have been incensed by the press, and killed by lionising.

There are many more details concerning her work which I have not the time to transcribe, but the closing words of Wm.

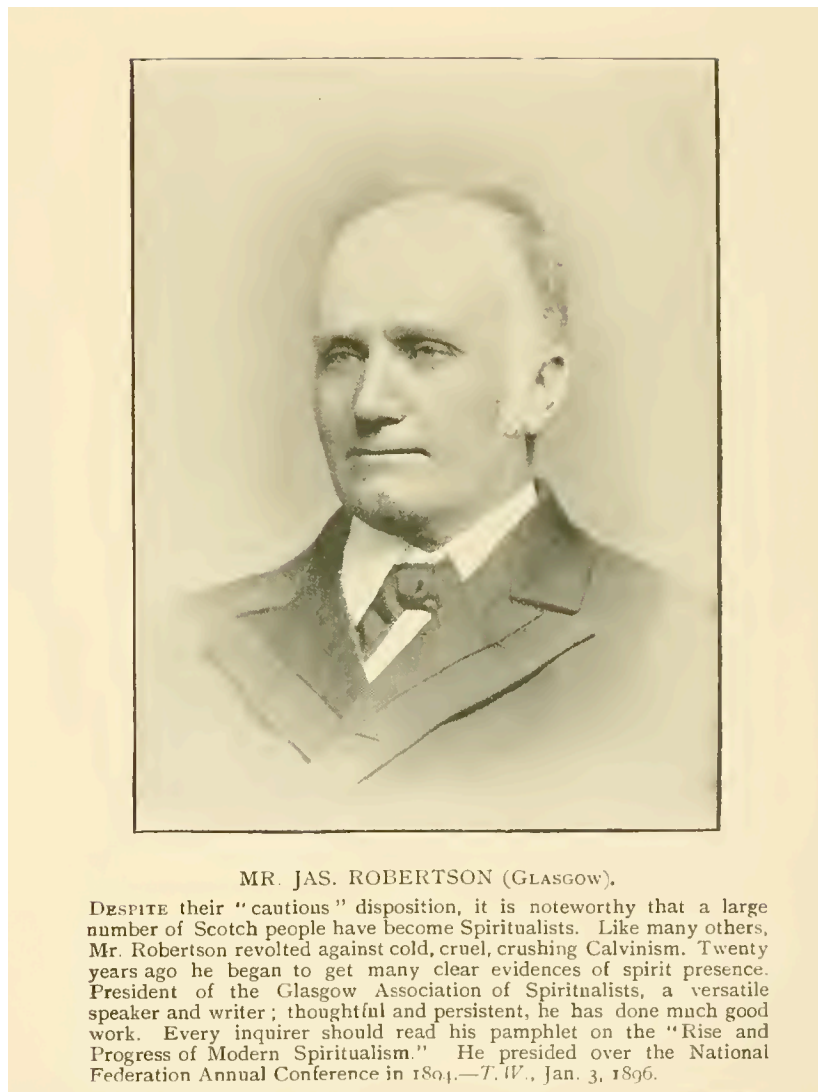
Machine-readable and photofacsimile versions of this text are also available at the Emma Hardinge Britten Archive site (www.ehbritten.org).

This text is released under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 3.0 License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA. Abide by the terms of this license when using this document.

Introduction

James Robertson was a Glasgow¹ manufacturer and Spiritualist speaker and writer active at the end of the nineteenth century and after, who left behind two accounts of Emma Hardinge Britten: this text, and a set of similar reminiscences in his *Spiritualism: The Open Door To The Unseen Universe* (London: L. N. Fowler & Co., 1908).

In *The Two Worlds Album* (n.d., produced some time between late 1894 and 1899), Robertson's entry appears as follows:



¹ Little can be found on Robertson's life beyond his own writing. Robertson was a sufficiently close colleague of Gerald Massey to have run a drive to collect a fund for Massey's widow and children (http://gerald-massey.org.uk/massey/cbiog_part_08.htm). And David Duguid, the automatic drawing medium, was employed in Robertson's bicycle works for some 20 years. At one time (for the curious), Robertson's address in Glasgow was: 5 Granby Terrace, Hillhead.

Robertson's sections on EHB in *Spiritualism*, of some length, are worth including here, for perspective:

It was in 1881, at the house of Mrs Hammerbom, afterwards Mrs. Kersey, who has recently passed on, that I first came into touch with one of the most striking figures in the movement, Emma Hardinge Britten, whose voice had been sounded in all continents, and who stood forth as one of the most cultured and eloquent exponents of our Cause. Her career had been a long series of triumphs. Originally an actress, she had gone to New York to fulfill an engagement, when she heard of spirits making their presence known to some of her friends. She ridiculed the idea, and laughed to scorn the message which was given her at a seance, that she was a great medium, who would devote herself to Spiritualistic work. She resisted for long the strong spiritual power which was brought to bear upon her, but ultimately became one of the most powerful of inspired advocates. The story of her life, the brave struggles she made, the fearless spirit with which she preached the new gospel, are all set down in her interesting biography, edited by her devoted sister, Mrs. Margaret Wilkinson. When once she heard the spirits' message, no circumstance was strong enough to hold her back.

On her first visit to London, after her conversion, she stirred all hearts. Literary persons like William Howitt were amazed at the sweet grace of diction, the continual flow of lofty and inspiring thought given forth without preparation or effort. Alfred Russel Wallace gives quotations from one of her addresses in *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, calling attention to their high eloquence and moral beauty, and asking whether the philosopher or the man of science could picture a more perfect ideal than she portrays as to a future state. Gerald Massey, who had taken the chair at one of her meetings, amongst other fine utterances, said : "All hail and all honour to her who has so chivalrously devoted herself to the service of others in fulfilment of the Father's bidding. If she has not found her kingdom, she will have helped to found one—the kingdom of freer thought and clearer light, and sweeter charities and nobler life." She has penned histories of American Spiritualism and of Nineteenth Century Miracles, also a valuable volume, *Faiths, Facts, and Frauds of Religious History*. What a delight it was to me to come into contact with such a great figure, about whom I had read so much! What rich stores of wisdom she poured out! What graphic pictures she gave of Victor Hugo, the French poet, and Sardou, the dramatist, Andrew Jackson Davis, and others, whom she knew well. Dr Elliotson, the friend of Thackeray, to whom he dedicated *Pendennis*, and who is the Dr Goodenough of his novels, met her when she came to London, and welcomed her as a warm and devoted Spiritualist.

Mrs Britten was certainly one of the most brilliant women I have ever met. A storehouse of rich knowledge came to her from her friends in the unseen. She gave us some graphic pictures of a visit to Monte Carlo, which showed how real was obsession even in our day, and which made the stories in the New Testament

of such occurrences look like actual facts. With her clairvoyant vision she had seen the ghosts of those who had gone out of life standing by the victims of gambling, luring them on. So dramatic was her speech that one could almost see the scene as it occurred.

Spirit photography was also first brought to my notice at this interview. She had a large collection of pictures of great interest, each of which had a story of spirit identity. She had known Abraham Lincoln intimately, and had a portrait which his widow had obtained when she went unknown and disguised to a spirit photographer, a real portrait of the murdered President, differing from any that had ever been taken. Her own experiences of this phase of spirit phenomena had been most varied. She told the story of how, in the early days of her mediumship, Beethoven, the composer, had come to her, and as she doubted the reality of his presence, he told her he would give her three tests. One came to pass the next day about a musical criticism she was writing ; another at the house of S. C. Hall, the aged *litterateur*, where one of Beethoven's symphonies was played by spirit hands ; and the third when, with a friend, she went to a photographer in Boston, herself having no intention of sitting. The photographer, however, insisted on taking her picture without payment, and there appeared upon the plate, beside her, the form of Beethoven, with a lyre formed of flowers.

The man or woman who reads statements like these for the first time will naturally say, " Nonsense ; such things cannot be, or the great ones of earth would have testified to their reality," and yet, in spite of such speech, they are scientific realities, if science be an accumulation of facts which have been verified. As Gerald Massey has said, "Spiritualism fears no truth that can be dug out of the earth or drawn down from the heavens." Truths fall into place quite naturally, just as Darwin's *Origin of Species* fitted into the universal law of evolution of which Herbert Spencer had already caught a glimpse.

Wide was the field of thought which I traversed with Mrs Britten. The Salvation Army, and the value of Colonel Ingersoll's writings were amongst the many topics we discussed. It was after midnight when I left her presence, excited at the many strange experiences she told me of, and at the almost encyclopedic knowledge of which she was the repository. (pp. 135-8)

...

I paid many visits to London and Manchester in 1893. When at the former place I had some long interviews with Mrs Emma Harding° Britten, who had by this time retired from the control of *The Two Worlds*, and had begun a monthly magazine called *The Unseen Universe*. How pleasant it was to sit and converse with one who had such an interesting history ! In all lands and by the most prominent people she was held in esteem. I recollect how she told me the story of "Sir John Franklin" coming to her, and of how she knew for a certainty of his death when the first search parties were sent out to follow his trail in the Arctic regions ; how "Sir John"

stood for his portrait to a poor unknown lad called Wella Anderson, who ruined the features, but did not know what to do with the picture when finished. The spirit, however, told him to send it to Mrs. Britten, who at the time was resident In New York. Mrs Britten was quite a stranger to Anderson, who resided in the Far West. "My joy was full," said Mrs. Britten, pointing to the picture on the wall, "when I received the portrait of my long familiar control in this strange way." Some Spiritualists fail to appreciate to the full the many tests of identity which reach them : they are like *Oliver Twist*, ever asking for more ; and though they know spirit return is perfectly true, with outsiders they fail to speak of its reality in a positive tone. Mrs. Britten was of another stamp. She lived on the communion, and could not contain herself regarding its power and beauty. She gave added strength to one's own conviction, and made gratitude spring up in the heart at being the recipient of so much choice blessing. (pp. 320-1).

Robertson was clearly a member of EHB's Two Worlds publishing family; he was by his own account a frequent contribution to *The Two Worlds* under both EHB's and E. W. Wallis' editorship, he features in the late 1980's Two Worlds vanity album, and this essay reads, to the editor at least, as a Two Worlds promotional piece aimed deliberately at introducing EHB to a Scottish audience.

Robertson's texts are noteworthy for supplying us with a number of assertions² missing from EHB's *Autobiography* (in particular, the name of her music master in London during her early years), and for possibly presenting a tantalizing glimpse of several albums of material used by Margaret Wilkinson during her preparation of the *Autobiography*, and subsequently lost or stored in an undocumented location (?). Additionally, Robertson's essay and reminiscences clearly represent artifacts of the process EHB was embarked upon, in the 1890s, to produce a canonical version of her life.

² Elsewhere in his *Spiritualism*, Robertson enumerates several of the historical figures, beyond Beethoven and Sir John Franklin, whom Emma had as controls during her life . In general, Robertson's text deserves more scrutiny than it has had to date as a history of the twilight of Modern Spiritualism in the United Kingdom.

**Noble Pioneer I The Life Story Of Emma Hardinge Britten I By Jas. Robertson,
Glasgow I Price One Penny I Two Worlds Publishing Co. Ltd. 18 Corporation
Street I Manchester I (n.d., c. 1901)**

Someone has said the great person is invariably hid from his contemporaries, and likewise it may be stated that the movements which are going to change the currents of human life are rarely seen in their inception and early workings. Two thousand years ago those who looked at the carpenter's son toiling with his fellows could not have conceived the possibility of this stripling becoming the greatest figure in human history, and that his words would reverberate in all lands, be called sacred, and be worshipped as the Almighty God. No contemporary saw anything of this. Some fishermen, no doubt, caught the charm of his magnetic presence and loved him, but the upper classes knew little of his personality till he became a seditious orator, as they considered him. So little is ever seen or known of great people or great movements that we are only able to look at them when myth has woven around them much that is untrue. With the advent of the printing press myths do not congregate to the same extent, but even the most enlightened have sometimes a tendency even now to place a halo on what is out of sight.

Each age has its prominent men and important movements, but the new generation comes along, and fails to notice some of these so-called great men and important movements, finding in some forgotten character or obscure movement the really important which is going to stand the test of time. Men have fought with all the tenacity of their being, for a something which they believed the world could not do without, and the new generation looks back and says, "What wasted energy." In Oliver Wendell Holmes' words :

Alas! how much that seemed immortal truth,
That heroes fought for, martyrs died to save,
Reveals its earth-born lineage growing old,
And, limping in its march, its wings unplumed,
Its heavenly semblance faded like a dream.³

While some noisy movement is being cheered and worshipped, some obscure worker, buffeted by circumstances, is slowly, painfully, working out the problems that will redeem the world. In all the literary histories what names of post laureates are forgot, while the man who walked behind his plough and scattered melodies of hope and joy gathers

³ The poem in question is called "Truth".

fame with each succeeding age. The names of the great of Burns' day⁴ recede backward, while his fame gathers all the time.

Lately I have been reading MacVey Napier's Letters⁵ and The Story of Wm. Blackwood and his Sons.⁶ The great men of the Edinburgh Review are all forgotten except Macaulay and Carlyle, the latter's contributions being barely tolerated, and oftentimes cut and carved in such fashion as caused him pain. The men who made Blackwood's Magazine are also forgotten. Christopher North⁷ and John Gibson Lockart⁸ are faint memories, while of the writers for the house, the great and immortal were to be Sir Archibald Alison⁹ and Samuel Warren¹⁰, whose works nowadays are rarely read, and only fill corners of our bookcases. One man here and there may see the star that is going to arise, but till it is in its zenith the great crowd know it not.

Modern Spiritualism is one of the movements which has passed through the furnace of obloquy, been treated with more contempt than any religious system that has claimed to have a message, and now is beginning to give some glimpses of evidence that it was "not for an age but for all time." Each year it rears its head more steadily than ever, bears the assaults of its revilers, and reviles not back again. It has had its heroes and martyrs who have not looked for the plaudits of men, but have found the highest satisfaction in becoming servants and fellow-workers with the denizens of the spirit world. Its real strength and power has come from the unseen, hence its tenacity and vitality. Its teachers and prophets have leaned not on books or systems, but on what their eyes have seen and their ears heard from the visitors from the spiritual country.

⁴ Here begins the invocation of great Scottish writers that leads one to conclude this piece was explicitly written to introduce EHB to a Scottish audience -- as the invocation has no relationship to the rest of the text, thematically or otherwise.

⁵ (1776-1847). Scottish editor of the fifth and seventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. It is possible that Robertson is referring to *Selections from The Correspondence of the Late Macvey Napier*, which was published in 1879.

⁶ William Blackwood (1776-1834), Scottish magazine editor and publisher. Blackwood's Magazine was known as *Maga*, and was a significant Victorian taste-making publication. This reference is probably to Magaret Oliphant's *Annals of A Publishing House* (1897), about Blackwood, his family, the press and the magazine. Oliphant was a novelist of repute in her own right, and her husband was a student of the occult, mentioned, among other places, in C.G Harrison's occult lectures of 1893.

⁷ Pseudonym of John Wilson (1785-1854), single most influential writer for Blackwood's Magazine.

⁸ 1794-1854. Scottish writer.

⁹ Reads "Sir Archibald Allison" in the original. Son of a Scottish writer of the same name, he wrote *A Modern History of Europe from the French Revolution to the Fall of Napoleon* (1833-42), and was satirized as Mister Wordy in Disraeli's *Coningsby*.

¹⁰ Possibly Samuel Warren (1807-1877), English novelist and graduate of the school of medicine at Edinburgh. His inclusion with Sir Archibald Alison, whose claim to Scottishness is somewhat diluted, and probably not accidental. Warren's novel *Ten Thousand A Year* (1839) was, in its time, a sensation.

The story of some of these modern worthies is as sacred and as important as the travels of St. Paul or Timothy, while the message which they bear is a fuller unfoldment of the infinite providence of God.

Amongst the greatest of these was an English woman, who, when the summons came to arise and go forth, accepted the mission, and never swerved from its purpose. The light came to her without any long preparation¹¹ ; to-day Spiritualism seemed something unholy, to-morrow she recognised it as one of the choicest gifts of God to man. The outside world as yet knows her not, but future ages will have enrolled amongst the great teachers the name of Emma Hardinge Britten. I have it borne in upon me to say something regarding her life and work, from the fact that her surviving sister, Mrs. Wilkinson, herself putting on the cloak of readiness for the spiritual country, has placed in my hands a quantity of papers in which are embedded many incidents of Mrs. Britten's career not noticed perhaps in the autobiography which was issued by the devoted sister. My difficulty will be in one address to tell clearly what should be known of this marked person, whom it was my privilege to know for many years.

These albums from which I have taken my notes tell pretty well all her career in America, Australia, and this country. One of the books in which the scraps are pasted was gifted by Alaric A. Watts¹², the poet, and his wife, the daughter of William Howitt, one of the well-known workers of a past generation. There are notes amongst them, one enclosing a review of some work from her friend, the Countess of Caithness¹³, on which that lady writes these words— "By the merest accident (if there be such a thing) I discovered this review in a paper which we do not take, and I never read a review on principle, as they are always so unfair, yet I stumbled over this one. Did I ever tell you that I went by appointment to meet Queen Mary, at midnight, in the chapel at Holyrood, and in her lone apartments. It was most mystic. I wish I had your pen to describe it ; only that could do it justice."

¹¹ This positioning -- that EHB was unprepared for her first exposure to Spiritualism in New York in the late 1850s -- is shared by this text and the *Autobiography*, but flies in the face of the idea that EHB was, as a teenaged girl, the lucide, or clairvoyante subject, for a circle of occult practitioners. In the *Autobiography*, both statements are made, and the contradiction allowed to stand.

¹² Alaric Alfred Watts (1825-1901), (and not his father, Alaric Alexander Watts), a writer and friend of EHB (he wrote a preface to the second edition of one or more of her Soiree lectures), who was married to Anna Maria Howitt, the daughter of one of the deans of English Spiritualism, William Howitt. It is not clear from the wording whether Watts gave EHB an empty scrapbook, or a book of clippings he had collected.

¹³ Marie or Maria, Countess of Caithness, (also known as the Duchess of Pomar, a title from her first (?) husband), author of *Old Truths In A New Light* (1876), another of the 'deep continuity' school of Spiritualism, a friend of EHB, and a friend of The Two Worlds Publishing Co., Ltd. Like, EHB, she was an advocate of eletrotherapeutics and galvanic medicine. The Countess was an active Theosophist, may have bankrolled Madame Blavatsky in the US, and perhaps one of the links between EHB and European occultist circles. Certainly she must have been an accomplished diplomat to retain close relations with Blavatsky and EHB, as she certainly did (making it into the Two Worlds album in a prominent position).

But to get briefly at the story of this great woman's life. She was born in London, and was educated in the quiet seclusion of her home¹⁴. From her childhood she was devoted to music, and amongst the pictures which I find in her scrap books is a portrait of Mr. T. Welsh¹⁵, of His Majesty's Chapels Royal, over which she has written 'My childhood's singing master.' There is no home from which someone is not carried out, and so the noble father to whom she was devoted left the earth¹⁶ when she was but a girl of twelve. She had to go out into the world, like so many brave souls who conquer

¹⁴ Consistent with our understanding that her father, Ebenezer, was at the time of her birth employed as a schoolmaster.

¹⁵ The single most significant assertion, in the editor's estimation, in the entire text. This is almost without doubt Thomas Welsh (1780-1848), actor, singer and music master. Welsh (known publicly as T. Welsh) was a partner in the Royal Harmonic Institution, also known as the Argyll Rooms or Old Argyll Rooms (in modern day Regent Street), one of the premiere concert venues of the period. He was a reasonably frequent actor on the London stage early in his career before turning to music: writing, performing, producing and -- most importantly -- teaching young children, and particularly young women, in preparation for the musical and dramatic stage, a regimen which included recitals in the Argyll Rooms. By way of illustration, this, from The Literary Gazette of 1829:

"On Monday last (Saturday, June 15, 1829), Mr. T. Welsh took his benefit at (the Argyll Rooms). From an individual of his tact and professional experience, we had expected a better selection of vocal music. A drowsy duet by tame tenors, or a fly-away solo by a capering soprano, are not sufficient to support a concert. We name no one -- Mr. Welsh will, doubtless, understand us: and we only regret, for his own sake, that he did not think it proper to avail himself of our former advice with respect to getting up concerted pieces. We think it injudicious in Mademoiselle Sontag to allow Miss Nina yet to venture on a sola. Name may do a great deal with Mister and Mrs. Bill; but we agree with Ollapod, that "name's nothing, merit's all -- rhubarb's rhubarb, call it what you will," We throw this out as a friendly hint to the blue-eyed siren."

Welsh was a playwright and composer, had strong connections with Covent Garden (where he had his work performed, and where he was known to place students -- for example, Jane Shirreff, Catherine Stephens -- and to Sir Michael Costa. Perhaps his most famous pupil, Charles E. Horn, was associated with the Princess's Theatre, where Emma worked (from 1842?) until her move to Sadler's Wells following its re-opening in mid-1844.

The Argyll Rooms, in their heyday, hosted top-tier performers from both Paris and Milan regularly. If EHB's assertion, in her *Autobiography*, that she was sent out as a musical pupil-teacher (to learn and earn), is accurate, and she was sent to work for Thomas Welsh, her claims to time in Paris (in the *Autobiography*) and Milan (elsewhere in her correspondence) gain a new plausibility.

Welsh routinely article'd poorer students, and participated in their earnings stream for the duration of the articles (usually, either 3 or 7 years).

¹⁶ Inconsistent with EHB's statement in her *Autobiography* that Ebenezer died when she was 11. "Twelve" would place his death before 2 May 1835. The "father to whom she was devoted" theme is EHB's of course. Not only did she claim, in the *Autobiography*, that the spirit of her father kept her from committing suicide by jumping in the river Avon at Bristol just after his death, but EHB also claims Ebenezer was her control at various points in her career.

circumstances, and at first became a teacher in a school¹⁷. Her gifts were most marked, and in time she revealed a voice which Sir Michael Costa¹⁸ and others thought one of the finest in Europe. She was also a gifted pianist and composer¹⁹. Her early life was passed in hard musical study, singing at concerts and operas. She lost, however, her singing voice, as there were chronic difficulties with her throat²⁰ which forced her to make the drama and not the opera her profession. She remained at one of the London theatres, the Adelphi²¹, for seven years, and had in that arduous work neither time nor taste to look at books or study theologies.

¹⁷ Consistent with her statement in the *Autobiography* that: "With a breaking heart, I, a little eleven-years-old child, was sent out to earn my bread as a pupil-teacher of music." This would be 1834 or 35. The Argyll Rooms have closed by this time (destroyed by fire in 1830), and Thomas Welsh is running a music school. It's likely that EHB was the primary bread-winner for the family, which may have included Thomas until 1841, when he joined the crew of the HMS Vixen, but probably did not include either Frances, the eldest child, or young Margaret, who were likely living together elsewhere. By the time we catch up with the family in the 1851 census (at 12 Tufton Street in Westminster), the family has dwindled to Ann Sophia and Emma. But by that time Emma was sufficiently successful as an actress to afford a housekeeper, Ann Rawling.

¹⁸ Swiss/Italian, 1810-1884, knighted in 1869. Worked in England (1828-1837), Paris (1837 - ?), and London again, where he was successively conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra (1846), and the Royal Italian Opera Covent Garden (1848-1869). EHB alleges a personal relationship with Costa in the *Autobiography*. Connecting EHB with Sir Michael Costa solidly would go a long way toward recovering the details of her time in the London music/concert scene.

¹⁹ In fact, her first known published work was a piece of music. Mathiesen says EHB wrote musical criticism under the name Ernest Reinhold before going on the stage, but to my knowledge none of that criticism has been recovered.

²⁰ The throat complaints, their origin, their cure and the motive force they provided for EHB's first trip to the United States are one of the most differently-told elements of her (auto)biography. A separate essay on this topic is in process at time of writing.

²¹ The Adelphi Theatre, in the Strand, London. With the Haymarket Theatre, one of the top two venues for comedy, farce and burlesque in London at the time. The Adelphi catered to a younger, urban, male audience, attracting salaried clerks of barristers and solicitors in particular. We have records of a Miss Emma Harding performing at the Princess's Theatre, the Theatre Royal at Sadler's Wells, the Haymarket, and the Adelphi for the years 1842 (?) through 1854 inclusive, and the only known image of "Miss Emma Harding" the English actress shows her in the costume she wore for an Adelphi performance of a romantic ballet. If "Miss Emma Harding" and "Emma Hardinge" and "Emma Hardinge Britten" are the same person -- as her London contemporaries believed, and as I believe, but some modern students of EHB dispute -- this makes EHB's actual tenure at the Adelphi alone slightly more or less than a decade (with a period of diversion to the Haymarket, for reasons that have yet to be determined, but which may be nothing more than a relocation of the Adelphi company due to theatre renovations). The year "Miss Emma Harding" began at the Adelphi, Charles Dickens had a play produced there (*The Chimes*), as he did in several subsequent years, and Mark Lemon, Dicken's collaborator, was a frequent contributor to the Adelphi's lineup, making it probable (given a record of their correspondence) that EHB met Dickens at the Adelphi.

In the after years, when she filled London with wonder by her electrical eloquence, the Rev. Dr. Maurice Davis²², author of 'Heterodox and Orthodox London,'²³ one who was more a litterateur than a clergyman, was invited to hear her, and was surprised to see one whom he had known as an actress at the Adelphi years before. He writes : 'The fact was that sixteen years before, Miss Emma Hardinge, then a very young actress, was playing at the Adelphi with Wright, Paul Bedford²⁴, Mrs. Frank Matthews²⁵, and other veterans in the profession, who delighted to gag, and often threw this young lady into utter confusion, for she could not depart one iota from her lines. How was I to accept her as an inspirational speaker who would discourse on any subject, however recondite, that might be proposed, and got "under control," as it was called? I recollect to this hour my amazement when I heard long fluent discourses on such subjects as "Hades" and "Mystery " delivered without a moment's pause or hesitation, and of necessity impromptu. It so happened that during this time I met Mrs. Frank Matthews, and related my experiences to her. "What!" she exclaimed, "Emma Hardinge an inspirationalist! I never knew a girl so utterly destitute of the power to put ten words together." But this is somewhat of a digression.²⁶

The throat affection again began to trouble Emma Hardinge, and an engagement having been offered her in New York²⁷ during 1855, she set sail along with her mother,

²² Charles Maurice Davies, DD.

²³ Two books, actually. Charles Maurice Davies. *Heterodox London: Or, Phases of Free Thought In The Metropolis*. 2 vols. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874, and Charles Maurice Davies. *Orthodox London: Or, Phases of Religious Life in the Church of England*. London: Tinsley Brothers, 1875. On page 42 of *Heterodox London*, CMD writes: "I once heard a plain-spoken old gentleman, the late Professor Donovan, say in public and in the presence of (a spiritualist, that) he really did not think much of (inspirational speaking or trance mediumship), 'because,' he added, 'it required no ghost to come from the dead to make a lady talk.'" That was in reference to Mrs. Emma Hardinge, who was, I believe, the first Inspirational Speaker we had in England. She came to London in 1866), and when I was taken by Mr. Benjamin Coleman to hear her at the Beethoven Rooms, I at once recognized her, and remembered her name, as an actress at the Adelphi Theatre in 1850-51." CMD goes on, shortly thereafter, to quote Mrs. Frank Matthews as indicated by Robertson.

²⁴ It now seems probable that she met Paul Bedford at the Princess's Theatre in the 1842-1844 time period.

²⁵ Mrs. Frank Matthews and Miss Emma Harding appeared in perhaps a dozen productions together at the Adelphi in the late 1840s and early 1850s.

²⁶ In fact, not so much of a digression. The number of English performers and writers who recognized Emma Hardinge, the spiritualist lecturer, in 1865 and after, as Miss Emma Harding, the former stage performer, are numerous. All of them noted that she had, in effect, moved from "bit role" to "leading lady" in the transformation to Spiritualism lecturer. The fact that Emma may have had a limited capability, as an actress, to ad lib would tend to lend credence to the notion that she gave her lectures "under direction" or "under guidance."

²⁷ We know, with some certainty, that the engagement was offered to her by the manager of the Broadway Theatre, in the wake of a disastrous staging of Shakespeare by the Wallack Company, of which she was a member, in Paris in early 1855. Elsewhere, EHB claims he was in the audience at the Wallack Company's performance, and offered her work immediately afterwards, backstage.

who was her close companion²⁸. She had only intended remaining in America about six months²⁹, but before the close of that period she had heard of Spiritualism, and, like all the world, thought it was impossible to have access to those who had departed, and therefore it must be some new form of fraud. 'A very shallow imposture,' say those who stand on the outside, but when they come near their surprise is great to land on a deep truth. At first her theological scruples were upset, because she heard something 'seemingly at variance with the Bible. Like others, for a time, she flew, from the subject, only to be drawn back again. She did not see that great truths are never in danger, that every blow levelled against a rock must be of stronger material than the rock before it can touch it. On her second venture to look at the subject she met with the statement from the spirits that she was a great medium, and would have an important work to do. Weeks of patient, earnest investigation followed, and she became developed as a test medium, personating people once in the body, seeing and hearing spirits, and giving forth their messages.³⁰

Some people receive the news that the spirit-world has come to earth as a circumstance of little importance. Miss Hardinge, however, was filled with a sense of deep wonder and gratitude. Much of her earlier life, which had caused her to be called a strange child, now became clear³¹. She gave herself up unreservedly to become a missionary of the new gospel. She used her musical gifts in earning a living for herself and her mother, and at certain hours gave her spiritual gifts to all who needed consolation. The spirits were able to do much valuable work through her. She had given twelve months of her time freely to the work of test mediumship, when she felt that some more remunerative employment than that of music teacher must be found, as her name becoming linked to the subject of Spiritualism caused her pupils to fall off³². Her

²⁸ A Mrs Harding (age 45) and a Miss Harding (age 25) arrived in New York, from Liverpool, on the steamship Pacific (which would figure prominently in EHB's early life as a medium), on 22 August 1855. This is consistent with information in the *Autobiography*, and noteworthy because (a) Ann Sophia Floyd, EHB's mother, is traveling under her daughter's stage name, (b) Emma is Miss and (c) there is no 'e' in Harding.

²⁹ Nine months, according to the *Autobiography* -- the term of her engagement at the Broadway Theatre, from roughly September of 1855 to May of 1856. EHB appears first as Miss Bracegirdle in *The Tragedy Queen* (in September), and ends her stint as Azurine in *King Charming* (in mid-1856). The *Records of the New York Stage* (written in 1867) spell her name Hardinge, and note that the actress "has since been widely known as a public lecturer and spiritualistic medium," making it of dubious evidentiary value for identifying when she became Miss or Mrs. Hardinge. Edgett's *Edward Loomis Davenport: A Biography* (1901) transcribes a contemporary newspaper report of Davenport playing with "Miss Emma Harding, late of the Haymarket Theatre, London." That transcription goes on to note that the stage manager is "late of Wallack's and Burton's" which tends to underpin EHB's assertion in the *Autobiography* that she was recruited to the Broadway during the disastrous Wallack production of Shakespeare, in the Theatre des Italiens in Paris in 1855.

³⁰ Consistent with the account in the *Autobiography*

³¹ Inconsistent with the account in the *Autobiography*, in the editor's estimation.

³² More detail is provided in the *Autobiography*, but she is by this time working -- as a test medium, music teacher and editor -- at the offices of the Society for Diffusion of Spiritualist Knowledge.

spirit friends now told her that she had been destined from a child to become a teacher of the Spiritualist religion, and that to earn money in this way was as legitimate as in any other direction. She shrank, however, from undertaking the work of a public teacher, and to get rid of the pressing claims which kindly friends made upon her to speak publicly, she inserted an advertisement in a New York paper offering her own services as a teacher of music in a family where her mother might also be boarded.

Amongst those who answered her advertisement was a General Bullard³³, who wanted a music teacher and companion for his young wife, and who also arranged that her mother might be engaged as a paid housekeeper. The matter was settled, when there walked into the room entranced Mrs. French³⁴, a clairvoyant, who spoke to the General. Mrs. Britten stood aghast, feeling that her chance of the post would be gone, but the medium turned and told the General he was a devoted Spiritualist, and that he had been sent there purposely by the spirit-world to urge upon Mrs. Britten to enter upon a public career. The medium spoke enthusiastically of her spiritual powers, prophesied a wonderful future, and ended by urging the General to make arrangements for her to appear as an inspirational speaker.

To Mrs. Britten all this appeared as so much insane talk. She could not make a reply, and her silence was taken for consent. The next days were to her most miserable. She began writing out something, when the spirits said, 'You will not read them, we will take away your sight.' She next tried to commit her ideas to memory, but the spirits said, 'We will take away your memory.' On the Sunday she was led on to the platform holding a Bible in her hand, resolved as a last resort to read a chapter. Her last clear remembrance was hearing the singing of the choir, and then a dim perception that she was standing by the side of her dead father, who was addressing somehow her second self, which imbibed and repeated all the thrilling words he uttered. And thus the great work was begun which was carried over all English-speaking lands.

This lecture at Troy was given on July 5th, 1857³⁵, and till then, in spite of her medial powers, she had clung to the orthodox faith in which she had been reared. The spirits had promised her that she would hear every word of her next lecture, and her own conversion from the myths called Christian was brought round by the words which fell from her own lips. Henceforth she was done with priestcraft, and accepted the faith of personal responsibility.

³³ This would tend to link Emma to Troy, NY, site of her first public trance address. General Bullard, a Troy attorney who appears to have no first name in the readily-available historical record, is mentioned in *Modern American Spiritualism* (p. 77), and in McCabe's *Spiritualism: A Popular History From 1847* (p. 52), and in other places.

³⁴ Elizabeth J. French, with whom EHB and her mother would live, and who would introduce EHB to galvanic medicine.

³⁵ No record of this lecture has yet been found.

For the next two years she was the regular speaker in New York³⁶, and all the notable workers, those brave pioneers that did so much to plant the seed, stood around her— Judge Edmonds³⁷, Dr. Gray³⁸, Professor Mapes³⁹, Andrew Jackson Davis—names that future generations will honour even as the past has revered the early Christian Martyrs. A wonderful light had arisen. Religion was made rational and real. It seemed as if some bright angel used her lips to inspire the world to a nobler life, and side by side with this winged speech there were for the first time facts to point at which corroborated the utterance. A reverent devotion, a strong sense of justice, and an unswerving faith in Him who doeth all things well inspired her soul. Not spiritual topics alone did she handle. Those spirit friends of hers spoke on many topics outside the spiritual— Napoleon, Egypt, the Arctic regions—no subject was beyond their ken, and the grandeur of some of those addresses was so marked that newspapers opposed to her spiritual faith had a good word for her.⁴⁰

Speaking of her lecture on “The Arctic Regions,” the New York Times said: “Whether regarded as an inspired revelation or a poet's rhapsody, it was one of the most magnificent specimens of word-painting ever heard.”⁴¹ A large- minded, noble-hearted woman she proved herself. Whatever time could be spared was given for the purpose of founding an institution for the rescue, reform, and instruction of fallen women⁴². She went through many States, and with her electrical eloquence roused many, and raised many thousand dollars for the object she had in view. When Lincoln stood for the Presidency she delivered addresses all over the Union, and did much to bring about

³⁶ At Dodsworth's Hall, primarily, which was the major gathering place for the New York spiritualists. She arranged and wrote music, led the choir, and lectured. Several contemporary newspaper accounts of her lectures exist.

³⁷ John Worth Edmonds, 1799-1874. Lawyer, politician and judge. Converted to spiritualism in 1851, and became a leading spokesperson and defender of the movement in 1853. His name was often conjured with by Spiritualist apologists. See his *Letters and Tracts On Spiritualism* (London: 1874).

³⁸ Dr. John F. Gray, physician and founder of the New York Circle of spiritualists with which EHB was associated. Converted by his encounter with the Fox sisters in 1850, he became their “counselor.” See, for example, Ann Leah Underhill, *The Missing Link In Modern Spiritualism*, pp. 257-9. It is probably under Gray's tutelage that Emma becomes first familiar with homeopathy, given the snippet quoted on p. 457 of *NCM*.

³⁹ James J. Mapes. Chemist and Spiritualism investigator. Also H. S. Oscott's chemistry teacher (according to Oscott). Known for his investigation of the Davenport brothers. His daughter was Mabel Mapes Dodge, the writer.

⁴⁰ Many New York newspaper reviewers focused on EHB's physical beauty and presence, saying little about her subject matter, and that mockingly.

⁴¹ This piece has not yet been located in the New York Times' online archive, despite repeated searches for particular phrases in the text.

⁴² Versions of her plan for this charitable institution can be found in *Six Lectures On Theology and Nature* (as an appendix) and on the Archive web site. EHB was, in public forums, passionate about this cause, and received as much press as a philanthropist, in the early 1860s, as she did as a Spiritualist. No such institute was ever founded.

that great man's successful triumph⁴³. When Lincoln was shot, to the grief of all the world, she delivered the funeral oration over him at Cooper's Institute⁴⁴, New York, in the presence of over 3,000 people, and this striking address was afterwards printed and circulated all over America⁴⁵. Not only her voice was heard, but her pen poured forth contributions on all subjects. She made little in the way of arrangements, but went wherever the spirits bade her, often entering upon ground where the opposition was fierce, and successfully overcoming all who opposed⁴⁶.

Ten years had passed since Mrs. Britten had left her native land, when the cry came from England, 'Come over and help us,' and at once she responded to the request. In 1865 Spiritualism had made a deep impression amongst many of the cultured classes. ⁴⁷The Cornhill Magazine, under the editorship of Thackeray, in 1860, had opened its pages to the article, "Truth Stranger than Fiction," in which the phenomena that took place in the presence of D. D. Home⁴⁸ were set down. Wm. and Mary Howitt⁴⁹, who then held a prominent position in literature, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, Robt. Chambers⁵⁰,

⁴³ No record of her involvement in Lincoln's campaign has yet been found, although there are two tantalizing newspaper references (one in the New York Times and one in a Colorado paper) that suggest the statement is, at some level, true.

⁴⁴ Now Cooper Union.

⁴⁵ THE GREAT | FUNERAL ORATION | ON | ABRAHAM LINCOLN, | BY | MISS EMMA HARDINGE. | DELIVERED SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 1865, AT COOPER INSTITUTE, | NEW YORK, BEFORE UPWARDS OF THREE | THOUSAND PERSONS. | NEW YORK: AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY | NASSAU STREET. TWENTY-FIVE CENTS. Available from the Emma Hardinge Britten Archive.

⁴⁶ The first statement -- that she made no arrangements -- is probably not true. She seems to have moved across the US from Spiritualist to Spiritualist, bypassing larger towns for smaller ones, and often by invitation. The second statement -- that she didn't shrink from controversy -- is decidedly accurate.

⁴⁷ Emma arrived in the winter of 1867, and almost immediately began delivering trance lectures.

⁴⁸ D. D. Home, perhaps one of three mediums who (arguably) were not exposed by contemporary investigators. EHB knew D. D. Home in the United States (as "Dan"), before he returned to England, and attended seances of Home's (with her mother, on occasion) in London and elsewhere. Home is one of the gateway figures in EHB's social network, as his connections with the Master of Lindsay and other figures offers one path by which EHB may have become involved with western occultism.

⁴⁹ William Howitt (1792-1879), writer, originally Quaker, intimate of the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, early gold-rush pioneer in Australia. Lived the life of a working man of letters until 1847, when Howitt became one of the first higher-profile converts to Spiritualism, writing his *The History of the Super-natural in all Ages and Nations, and in all Churches, Christian and Pagan, demonstrating a Universal Faith*, in 1867. Howitt's burial in the cemetery at Monte Testaccio in Rome may tend to suggest a loss of faith in the Spiritualism movement or a turn to Rome late in his life, and Mary, his wife, also an accomplished writer and a Spiritualist, ended her life as a Catholic.

⁵⁰ Whether Chambers was a believer, or merely sympathetic, is an open question.

and many others were believers. Dr. Elliotson⁵¹, the Dr. Goodenough of Thackeray's novels, after fierce opposition to the very thought of spirits, was also convinced of the truth. The first invitation Mrs. Britten received on her arrival was from Dr. Elliotson, now an old man, and unable to visit. He welcomed her as a warm and devoted Spiritualist.

It is difficult at this distance of time to call back the furore which she made on her visit to London. Strong and courageous men stood on her platform, and the press did for Spiritualism more than it has done since. Columns were devoted to reporting her lectures, the Times, Telegraph, Daily News, Standard alike noticing the new wonder. Many of her addresses were on the subject of America, Lincoln⁵², etc., and all wondered at such brilliance delivered extempore, with all the perfection of logic. An odd sneer of course came now and then, that she was a cardinal humbug⁵³ and not a thoughtful and wise teacher⁵⁴.

The power, the purity, the beauty of her speech sunk into many hearts—a veritable shower of refreshing consolation. A new star had arisen in the firmament, which brought not only light, but healing. She was a destroyer of the old blasphemies, and at the same time was also the revealer of grander conceptions of the Most High. Religion and reason were joined together in such fashion as had never been heard before.

Wm. Howitt in the press wrote of her as one of the most striking personalities of the age, and said if she did not lecture on the most unpopular of subjects—a subject which the public abhors because it is suffering under the hallucinations of priestcraft and sciencecraft—she would be the enthusiasm of the day⁵⁵. Had she come to uphold the favourite notions of the times, did she cant on evangelism, or preach materialism, or show that mammon is the most wise of devils, all London, all England would have run after her—she would have been incensed by the press, and killed by lionising.

⁵¹ John Elliotson (1761-1868), Edinburg-educated physician. proponent of phrenology and mesmerism, anti-Spiritualist (for all or most of his life, depending on one's source) and editor of the *Zoist*, an influential publication.

⁵² EHB's funeral oration for Abraham Lincoln is probably her most widely-known work outside spiritualist circles.

⁵³ "Humbug" was indeed the word most often used by critics and doubters to describe Emma's trance lectures. I do not know whether she attributed her trance lectures to specific controls early in her career, but in her later career, she flatly refused, when questioned, to divulge any details on her 'inspiration' to her audience, when questioned. This necessarily led to accusations of fraud.

⁵⁴ Unfortunately, EHB's typical stance -- that she was far too busy, as a child, for school, and therefore her apparently erudite lectures could not be attributed to her learning -- invited the skeptical to examine her work closely in an attempt to discover whether or not "contemporary" sources could be found for her erudition. Those examinations in turn led to many kinds of criticisms, including garbling, scissors-and-paste scholarship, undigested learning, and (with *Art Magic*, at least) plagiarism.

⁵⁵ Howitt's remarks are reported by the London correspondent of the New York Times in its April 6, 1866 issue.

There are many more details concerning her work which, I have not the time to transcribe, but the closing words of Wm. Howitt mark with what power she must have spoken in those days : "If England has an orator who can stand on the same platform and deliver instantaneously on any given subject, let him come forth, for we don't know of him." It was indeed a triumphal march. Her winged words were a source of strength and delight to thousands.

The year before she came to London, Alfred Russel Wallace⁵⁶, after 25 years of scepticism regarding the possibility of being resurrected out of the earthly condition, and who never contemplated that such matters as were related by Spiritualists could be true, was brought face to face with the facts, and amongst the striking things he met with were those charming addresses which he deals with in *The Moral Teachings of Spiritualism*⁵⁷. "Could the philosopher or the man of science," he asks, "picture to himself a more perfect ideal of a future state?" All her discourses, he says, were characterised by high eloquence and moral beauty, and his volume, *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*⁵⁸, gives some apt quotations.⁵⁹

I notice that amongst those close friends who were attracted by her rare gifts, and defended her in the press, the name of one who had some connection with my own city of Glasgow—Mr. J. G. Crawford, who presented the statue of Burns which adorns the Thames Embankment, and who also donated to Glasgow the beautiful group of statuary, 'The Lioness and Her Cub,' which adorns our West End Park. Mr. Crawford was a cultured and broadminded man, whose *Thoughts on Theism* I read with delight in the days before Spiritualism opened to me the new and radiant world which I now believe in.⁶⁰

Mrs. Britten came to Glasgow in 1867, and spoke in the Merchants' Hall, Hutcheson-street⁶¹, now the Small Debt Court, and also in the City Hall, where she gave an oration on Garibaldi, Rev. Dr. Hatley Waddell⁶² being chairman. Extended notices appeared in the Herald and Mail, wonder being expressed at her flood of eloquence, delivered without notes. Her presence here did something to establish the movement, and her name was a sweet memory to the Spiritualists when I came amongst them in 1873.

⁵⁶ The co-discoverer of evolutionary theory.

⁵⁷ Published in 1874.

⁵⁸ Published in 1875.

⁵⁹ See <http://www.wku.edu/%7Esmithch/index1.htm> for an extensive discussion of Wallace and EHB.

⁶⁰ I cannot find a text concerning theism by J. G. Crawford, nor can I find much biographical information on Crawford. But Crawford, usually referred to in the press as a "retired Glasgow merchant," was apparently a great erector of statues, offering at one point to erect a statue of Burns on the Embankment.

⁶¹ I believe this is the lecture at which EHB first elaborated the rules for the formation of spiritualist circles.

⁶² Probably the Reverend P. Hatley Waddell. Biographer and editor of Burns, editor of Scott, Ossian researcher.

Soon she returned to America, and again from State to State she travelled, preaching the gospel and gaining new adherents. In Canada, in New Orleans alike she kindled a fire. An editor in New Orleans wrote, 'That to report such addresses would require an immortal stenographer, as poor mortals had enough to do to drink in the inspiration.'⁶³

Mrs. Britten's work was principally carried on in America for several years. In 1869 she published *Modern American Spiritualism*, a work undertaken at the command of the spirits, and executed under their supervision. In Boston in 1872 she published a paper called *The Western Star*⁶⁴, which was followed by a residence in New York, where she occupied herself with translating and editing a work called *Art Magic*, a book which has been highly lauded and greatly abused⁶⁵. It deals largely with occultism, and might be called the forerunner of what is called 'Theosophy.' M.A. (Oxon)⁶⁶ wrote most laudatory notices regarding it, but A. J. Davis has words of condemnation⁶⁷. An air of mystery surrounds the authorship, many attributing the work entirely to Mrs. Britten. Davis speaks in one of his volumes of "the talented and widely-popular author of *Art Magic*, Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten. Some years after, in my own dining-room, I was conversing with Mrs. Britten, and *Art Magic* came into our talk. I said, According to Andrew Jackson Davis, the author sits there," but she repudiated the statement with all the sincerity of her nature.⁶⁸

The Theosophical Society was founded immediately after the publication of the book.⁶⁹ The first meeting of the society where Colonel Olcott and Madame Blavatsky attended was held in the house of Mrs. Britten. Soon there was some divergence. Mrs. Britten, with all her knowledge of the occult, was a Spiritualist, and had no sympathy with the

⁶³ She records travels in the southern US, but no contemporary newspaper accounts of her lectures have yet been located.

⁶⁴ July-December 1872.

⁶⁵ The question of EHB's role in *Art Magic* and its successor *Ghost Land* are by no means clear. She was advertised variously as the editor and/or translator of the works, but may have authored some or all of the text as well.

⁶⁶ The pseudonym of the Reverend William Stainton Moses (1839-1892), viewed by many as the pinnacle of English mediumship, author of several influential works on spiritualism (including *Higher Aspects of Spiritualism*, in 1880), and one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research. Stainton Moses specialized in automatic writing, and levitation. His controls were of a completely different sort than the historical or personal figures mediums were usually controlled by, and later may have become Mrs. Piper's controls.

⁶⁷ In, among other places, his autobiography. See next note.

⁶⁸ I cannot locate this quotation in any of Davis' works. In his autobiographical *Beyond The Valley* (1885), Davis has interesting things to say about the ways in which both EHB and Blavatsky have damaged what he sees as "the movement" and reiterates his rather harsh criticisms of both *Art Magic* and *Ghost Land*.

⁶⁹ Actually, the first founding of the Theosophical Society occurred before publication of *Art Magic*. See, for example, H. S. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, Chapter 12 (passim).

doctrine of reincarnation⁷⁰, while Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott wandered from simple Spiritualism into the realms of dreamland. This is not the place, however, to chronicle the new departure from Spiritualism which brought forward the doctrine of shells⁷¹ and other absurdities.

The scraps with which I have been dealing give many glimpses of great souls now gone on who found in Spiritualism the pearl of great price. Robert Dale Owen, whose books, *The Boundary between the Two Worlds*⁷² and *The Debateable Land*, are priceless supports to the Cause, was amongst her closest friends. I see that he spoke from her platform and proclaimed the faith that was with him, saying that that day he had had a communication from Theodore Parker⁷³, his old friend, whose message was "There is immortality for all."

Her marriage to Dr. Britten took place in October, 1870⁷⁴, and was followed by another visit to England, where she was met with all the old fervour, all gladly welcoming the most eloquent teacher since the days of Hypatia.

The most notable incident in connection with this visit was the appearance of Gerald Massey as her chairman at a farewell meeting in St. George's Hall, London, on July 28th, 1871. Here she was presented by her admirers with an illuminated address and a cheque for 130 pounds⁷⁵. Gerald Massey's address⁷⁶, which is full of brilliant speech, was afterwards extended by him, and formed the little work *Concerning Spiritualism*, which I hope will one day be reprinted⁷⁷, as it contains some of the most powerful arguments ever penned. His concluding words are full of brilliance and worthy of his subject : "All hail and all honour to those who bear the banner in the front of the battle. All hail and all honour to her who is our guest of to-night, and who has chivalrously devoted herself to the service of others, in fulfilment of the Father's bidding. If our friend

⁷⁰ This was certainly one of the points of later divergence between EHB and EPB.

⁷¹ See, for example, http://www.anna-kingsford.com/english/Works_by_Anna_Kingsford_and_Maitland/Texts/05-OAKM-I-CREDO/OAKM-I-Credo-010-web.htm as a counterpoint.

⁷² Possibly *Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World* (1859).

⁷³ 1810-1860. Unitarian minister, Transcendentalist and abolitionist. A remarkable speaker, he often gave addresses at the Melodeon in Boston, where EHB spoke early in her career.

⁷⁴ In Grace Church Rectory, in Jersey City, New Jersey, 11 September 1870. New Jersey State Archives, Marriage Records, Volume BJ, page 408.

⁷⁵ £130 in original.

⁷⁶ See http://gerald-massey.org.uk/massey/cnr_hardinge_address.htm

⁷⁷ It is at time of writing available from a reprinter.

has not found her kingdom, she will have helped to found one—the kingdom of freer thought, larger life, clearer light, sweeter charities, and nobler love.”⁷⁸

During this visit the *Christian World*, ever the most liberal of sectarian organs, had a most laudatory notice of her addresses, saying, “Christian teachers cannot wisely treat the whole thing as a delusion. The greatest folly that mankind can be guilty of is to shut their eyes to facts and go on in the dark.”⁷⁹

In 1878 Mrs. Britten, along with her husband, paid a visit to Australia and New Zealand, where she spent some 14 months in active work, and thus did noble service to the Cause. At times, in the Melbourne Theatre, she had audiences of 3,000, and from many Australians I have had reminiscences of the wonderful enthusiasm which her presence created. Here she published her *Faiths, Facts, and Frauds of Religious Beliefs*⁸⁰ a volume which many have read and been filled with the conviction that truth is its main source.⁸¹

It was in December, 1881⁸², at Newcastle that I first had the privilege of coming into touch with the great woman about whom I had heard so much. My diary of that date sets down the impression created at the interview, which lasted over five hours, hours of radiant speech, which will ever live in the archives of memory.

⁷⁸ We do not find the quoted text in the farewell address. It does appear in Massey’s *Concerning Spiritualism* (1872) but not in direct reference to EHB.

⁷⁹ While I have not been able to locate a copy of this particular edition of the *Christian World*, its text -- as excerpted in the pages of *The Spiritual Magazine* for January of 1871 expressed a significantly different opinion (p. 41) about EH’s teachings from that which Robertson portrays here. The passage reads: “He must be a far-seeing man who can say where all these upheavals of mind are leading us, and whether their issue will be for good or evil; but as Christian journalists it is clearly our duty to acquaint the Churches, and especially their teachers, with all these signs of the times, in order that they may consider their own duty in relation to them, for the greatest folly of which mankind can be guilty is to shut their eyes to facts, and go on in the dark”. EH as a harbinger of the end-times (she is referred to, earlier, as a “priestess” in a derogatory way) is hardly a ringing endorsement. This and other slightly-off quotations in this document tend to suggest that Robertson was working from clippings, and not from the texts.

⁸⁰ *The Faiths, Facts And Frauds Of Religious History: A Treatise In Ten Sections*. Melbourne: George Robertson, 1879

⁸¹ EHB was in Australia and New Zealand from late February or early March of 1878 to December of 1879, and did in fact cause a significant sensation in Sydney, Melbourne and the South Island of New Zealand.

⁸² It seems, from the thus-far-scant evidentiary record, that EHB and William Britten were living a peripatetic existence in 1881. The 1881 British census finds them living as “visitors” at the Wilkinsons’ house on Clarendon Street, in Manchester. In June, Light lists EHB’s address as 31 Derby Terrace, Upper Moss Bank, Cheetham Hill (after listed her address merely as “San Francisco, USA” for months prior to that; in July that address becomes the familiar one: The Limes, Humphrey Road, Cheetham Hill. Piecing together her schedule from advertisements in Light, one gets a picture of fairless ceaseless travel for EHB on the northern lecture circuit throughout 1881, and into early 1882. As far as can be determined at time of writing, EHB was not in Newcastle in December of 1881, though she was there in February of 1882.

All the great names I had heard in connection with Spiritualism were familiar to her — Victor Hugo, Victorien Sardou⁸³, etc. She gave me truly some graphic pictures of Monaco and its gambling. She described her own sensations and the people there ; how the old Duchess of Montrose⁸⁴, amongst others, was engrossed with the game, and how the ghosts of gamblers were there luring on their dupes. I felt that gambling was a terrible disease to be consumed by. The fever in the air of Monte Carlo was dramatically pictured— the broken-down men and women, with ghastly faces, going out into the world to destroy themselves when all was lost— a literal hell⁸⁵. I had pictures also of dear Hudson Tuttle⁸⁶ working on his farm, full of kindness, and the victim of every begging impostor, of A. J. Davis, of Judge Edmonds, R. D. Owen, and other heroes.

She had with her many specimens of spirit photographs, around which was some story of the spirit's kindly influence. One was very marked, on which beside herself stood the form of Beethoven, with a lyre made up of flowers artistically grouped⁸⁷. She told the story of how it came to her, that one day, accompanying a friend who wanted a picture, she went to Mumler⁸⁸, the photographer, a man who had to submit to the same fierce

⁸³ Sardou (1831-1908) was a French playwright of significant contemporary repute, now largely known for having written the play on which Puccini's opera *Tosca* is based. Sardou's work did not get significant airing until April of 1854; it is possible that EHB met Sardou during her time as an actress in Paris in 1855. Camille Flammarion's *Unknown Natural Forces* (aka *Mysterious Psychic Forces*) does discuss Sardou-as-medium and as a spiritual investigator (of Eusapia Paladino) extensively, and reproduces positively comic drawings of "life on Jupiter" that are credited to Sardou.

⁸⁴ Probably Violet Hermione Graham (d. 1940), or her mother-in-law Caroline Agnes Beresford (d. 16 November 1894). Possibly Beresford's mother-in-law. Any would have been known, at the appropriate time, as the Duchess of Montrose. Theosophical Society records record a sitting between HPB and a "Duchess of Montrose". Little else has been uncovered to date.

⁸⁵ EHB has, on more than one occasion, invoked similar images of gambling at Monte Carlo in her addresses. One gets a sense of *The Rake's Progress* from those descriptions. EHB would certainly have passed through Monte Carlo on her way to Milan, if, as she claims in the 1870s, she studied there as well as in Paris in the late 1830s or early 1840s (?).

⁸⁶ Hudson Tuttle (b. 1836) and his wife Emma Rood Tuttle, were prolific American Spiritualist writers. Tuttle's most well-known text was perhaps his *Arcana of Nature* (1859), but I at least have always wanted to read his *Clair: A Tale Of Mormon Perfidy* (1881), given American Spiritualism's ambiguous stance on the Church of Latter-Day Saints.

⁸⁷ Copies of this photograph, by Mumler (described on p. 422 of *Nineteenth Century Miracles* in nearly identical terms) exist, and surface from time to time. The photograph was reproduced (p. 29) in James Coates. *Photographing The Invisible*. London: LN Fowler, 1911.

⁸⁸ "William H. Mumler, Spirit Photographic Medium, No. 630 Broadway, N.Y." as his business card read. Famously prosecuted in March of 1869 for "obtaining money by trick and device". EHB was a staunch defender of Mumler. Michael Leja has an excellent account of Mumler's difficulties in his *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp*.

calumnies that have assailed Bournsell⁸⁹, of London, David Duguid⁹⁰, of Glasgow, and other instruments for this phase of evidence. Mr. Mumler, to whom the ladies were entirely unknown, said it was rather late, and wanted to make an appointment for some other day, but the lady friend pressed him and gained her point. When he had photographed her he said he would like to take Mrs. Britten's picture without fee, as there was such a strong spiritual influence present. Thus urged, she consented. While seated in front of the camera, she heard the voice of the spirit Beethoven saying to her, 'I have come to give you the third test.' And, sure enough, when the negative was withdrawn there was the portrait of the great composer, so she explained to me how this came to be the third test, as follows. Years before she had been engaged in writing a series of musical articles⁹¹, and while working at them she was asked to write an analysis of Beethoven's C Minor Symphony. While engaged on this Beethoven appeared to her, and said, When I am gone you will have doubts that really I have been with you. I will give you three convincing proofs of my guardianship. The first is that the publishers will accept your article, and declare it is the best you have ever written on the subject.' This came true — her article was spoken of by the publisher in the most laudatory terms. The next night she was present at the home of S. C. Hall⁹², a well-known litterateur of the past generation, D. D. Home, the medium, being also there⁹³. During the manifestations, Beethoven again appeared to her, and she heard from him the words, 'I have come to give you the second test.' She was relating to the company what she had seen and heard, and also the significance of the visit, when an accordion lying on the table was lifted by unseen hands, and played a very prominent passage in the C Minor Symphony, this being the second test. The third proof was the spirit's appearance upon the photographic plate during the next year when she had returned to Boston.

⁸⁹ Robert Bournsell, English spirit photographer.

⁹⁰ David Duguid, perhaps the most famous automatic drawing medium, and another favorite of EHB (e.g., *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, p. 164). Duguid was employed by James Robertson in Robertson's bicycle works for some 20 years.

⁹¹ Under the name Ernest Reinhold, for *The Musical World* and *The Court Gazette*, according to Richard Mathiesen in his *The Unseen Worlds Of Emma Hardinge Britten: Some Chapters In The History Of Western Occultism*. I have been unable, to date, to locate any of these articles.

⁹² Samuel Carter Hall (1800-1889), poet, editor of *The Art Journal* (a revolutionary publication in its day, for use of illustration technology), and compiler of *The Book of British Ballads* (1842), which while unrelated to Spiritualism had a profound effect on English poetry. His *The Uses Of Spiritualism* (1884) was widely read in its time.

⁹³ For those readers interested in the possibility of a connection between EHB and Edward Bulwer Lytton, it is worth noting that Lytton had many sittings with Home and SC Hall. Here, Robertson is probably working from the same article from the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* that EHB uses in *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (p. 480).

The following night at Newcastle⁹⁴ I heard Mrs. Britten speak publicly for the first time, Alderman Barkas⁹⁵ being her chairman. The singular dramatic power, the free flow of striking images, the graceful touch of light and shade charmed me as few things had ever done. I remember it all. 'What new truth has Spiritualism given to the world?' was her subject. She showed the new pages which had been opened up in psychology, in acoustics, in optics, chemistry, etc. It was a great scientific discourse, yet varied with passages of sweet tenderness.

The years were now gathering over her head, and she became a permanent resident in Manchester at The Lindens, Cheetham Hill. Here it was always a pleasure to meet with her and talk of her wonderful life, filled with incidents of spirit guidance. She had given herself up to the spirits' work, and at all times leaned on them with absolute confidence.

It was an inspiration to listen to her chapter of marvels. Sir John Franklin in spirit life had for long been one of her faithful guides, and the wonderful addresses on the Arctic Regions which the press had lauded so highly were no doubt prompted by the Arctic explorer⁹⁶. She had told the story of his death years before the voyages of discovery were undertaken. She pointed to a fine drawing of Sir John Franklin, and told the story of how an uncultivated artisan of medial gifts in the backwoods of America was prompted to draw the portrait of a spirit which stood beside him⁹⁷. How, when it was finished, the spirit told him to send it to Mrs. Britten in New York, whom he had never heard of, and how its arrival had been to her a source of satisfaction, making certain Franklin's deep interest in her career. Her life was filled with pages of Franklin's spirit ministry, and when she would read the lines by Tennyson, on the cenotaph in Westminster Abbey,

⁹⁴ I cannot date this lecture at time of writing. EHB references Sir John Franklin in her Winter Soiree address of January 15, 1866.

⁹⁵ Probably Thomas. P. Barkas, FGS, former Chartist leader, Spiritualist lecturer and promoter. Author of *Outlines Of Ten Years' Investigations Into The Phenomena of Modern Spiritualism* (1862). The cross-over from Chartism to Spiritualism has yet to receive the attention due it. Massey, Barkas and John Frost are three notable examples, and in general there seems to be an open boundary between radical political thought and spiritualism in the mid-nineteenth century that deserves exploration as something more complex than a reaction to "materialism."

⁹⁶ See, for example, *Ghost Land* (p. 396) -- "Look to the north when the pencilled glory of the Boreal lights are flaming through the evening skies! Look to the silent finger of the magnetic compass pointing out the mariner's path through the boundless wastes of ocean, yet ever faithful to the invisible polar brain of the earth, fixed in the Arctic regions!"

⁹⁷ Compare with Robertson's treatment of this incident in his *Spiritualism*. There, he names the painter: Wella Anderson. And he indicates Anderson was a stranger to EHB, "residing in the Far West." Joseph Citro, in his *Green Mountains, Dark Tales* (p. 10), notes that Wella Anderson and his wife Pet had settled down in New York City by 1868, where Wella produced paintings of deceased historical figures on demand. J. J. Morse, in his *Leaves From My Life*, mentions (p. 57) meeting Wella Anderson in NY, and quotes extensively from a letter from Anderson (p. 60), the text of which does not suggest Anderson was illiterate or uneducated, or Westerners. The Andersons are at that time living at 302 West 11th Street, and the year is 1875. I have yet to check museum collections for Anderson's work.

Not here; the White North has thy bones; and thou, heroic sailor soul,
Art passing on thine happier voyage now toward no earthly pole,⁹⁸

she must have felt the rare privilege of being the mouthpiece of such a man.

While resident in Manchester she issued the large volume, *Nineteenth Century Miracles; or, Spirits and Their Work in Every Country of the Earth*, a book which will one day perhaps be prized more than it has yet been.⁹⁹

To her Spiritualism was the mightiest work, and she felt that the days of its inception should be chronicled, so that future ages might know of the early struggles to foster it. Over seventeen years ago she set agoing *The Two Worlds*¹⁰⁰, of which for long she was editor. On her retiral from this position she carried on the magazine, *The Unseen Universe*.¹⁰¹

Glasgow was favoured with a visit from her in the autumn of 1888, when she spoke before a large audience in the Waterloo Rooms. Many of the older generation of Spiritualists were brought out again to hear the voice of one whose name had been so long honoured amongst them.

I had a pleasant outing with her on the river Clyde. She was deeply interested in Port Glasgow, in which had originated the spiritual movement which gradually found its way to London and culminated in the church of Edward Irving. She, was anxious that I should gather all the information possible, and I was able shortly after to write for her an article on 'The Gift of Tongues,' which appeared in *The Two Worlds*.

The Clyde and its beauties charmed her, and in Rothesay¹⁰² she compared the scene before her with some she had witnessed in Australia. Paying a visit to Rothesay Castle, and sitting on the trunk of a tree there, she became entranced, and related visions of the past, scenes and incidents which had transpired. To her the place was peopled again. Altogether it was a rare experience, and it has been brought vividly back again after reading of a similar experience she once had at Hampton Court. A sweet memory is this visit. Press people interviewed her, and some stir was created in the city.

⁹⁸ In Tennyson's *Poetical Works* (1899), the poem reads "Not here! the white North has thy bones; and thou, I Heroic sailor-soul, I Are passing on thine happier voyage now I Toward no earthly pole."

⁹⁹ A reflection of the contemporary reception of *Nineteenth Century Miracles*, which many reviewers found to be little more than a "mucilage and scissors job," as one reviewer wrote.

¹⁰⁰ EHB edited *The Two Worlds* from 1887 until 1892.

¹⁰¹ EHB edited *The Unseen Universe* for its entire run, from April of 1892 until March of 1893.

¹⁰² On the Isle of Bute.

In all lands wherever Spiritualism is known the name of Mrs. Britten is held in the highest reverence. She inspired many persons who had lost the Eternal Hope and could not think there was a future life. Even as old Secularists talk of the sweetness and influence of Robert Owen, so is her name esteemed. To the close of her earthly career this gifted, thoughtful, and wise teacher sought to fulfill her mission. Ofttimes from the bed of pain she forced herself to go out on Sundays and speak the joyous message, in all circumstances 'loving herself last.'

On October 2nd, 1899, the gates were opened for her, and she passed into the land regarding which she had so long spoken. For a year before promotion came to her, there was a total collapse of health and energy, but she saw all the time into that other realm, and was sustained by its inhabitants, many of whom would say, with all sincerity, 'Well done, good and faithful one, enter into the fuller possession.' She left a great gap in the lives of many, to whom she had been for long an inspiration.

She was indeed one who gave to the children of earth the words of ministering angels, which fall like manna from heaven. Had she been a worker in the popular movements of the day, the populace would have shouted their huzzas, but she was content to work for the truth's sake alone. What she had discovered must needs be shared with her fellows. She knew that Spiritualism, with its abundant evidence so readily seen by all who were honest and patient in the search, would give a new colour to life, greater moral force, and more of true religious happiness. She knew the full meaning of the revelation, and its power to uphold and bless.

To her the glad tidings of spirit return were beyond all peradventure and the most important of any that had reached the earth. She discerned the day when all the world would acknowledge the magnificent gift of God. Her life was free from all trimming, never striving to steep the new religion in some solution of old dogmatic phraseology whereby it might be coloured for popular acceptance. Some thought she laid her hand too roughly on old beliefs when she published her *Faiths, Facts, and Frauds of Religion*. If she broke with tradition, it was only to rear a nobler temple in which would be enshrined all things truly sacred in heaven and earth.

She had the main quality that is needed to-day—sincerity, dealing fearlessly with all things, with all themes, in a lucid way. In churches to-day there is the presentation of a conventional semi-orthodoxy given forth for the concealment of convictions which should be expressed. It should be known what these teachers really think in their heart of hearts; if they have doubts, so have their hearers. 'The Higher Criticism'¹⁰³, 'so-called, is only an advance of some yards, when the critics really know there are miles ahead. Men keep to themselves ideas on the pretext that the time is not ripe, and men's minds

¹⁰³ Devastating, largely German but later English, critique of the Bible's historical accuracy and the bibliographical history of the Old and New Testament texts themselves. Generally speaking, the higher criticism had a greater impact on the 'faith' of the Victorian intellectual than did Spiritualism, but the two movements shared both aims -- the deconstruction of Protestantism -- and agents, among them EHB and Moses Hull (1836-1906). Hull, unlike EHB, was lured onto the side of the 'free love' Spiritualists in the 1870s.

not prepared. This is part of the practical Atheism which is abroad. As Theodore Parker has nobly said, 'Let me know a thing is true, I know it has the omnipotence of God on its side, and I fear no more for it than I fear for God.'

Mrs. Britten saw that Spiritualism alone could destroy the scepticism that was taking root. The words of Longfellow applied to Theodore Parker might well be applied to her"

Skilful alike with tongue and pen,
She preached to all men everywhere
The Gospel of the Golden Rule—
The New Commandment given to men.
Thinking the deed, and not the creed,
Would help us in our utmost need,
With reverent feet the earth she trod,
Nor banished nature from the plan,
But studied still with deep research
To build the Universal Church
Lofty as is the love of God,
And ample as the wants of man.¹⁰⁴

Andrew Jackson Davis in *The Arabula* has gathered together a new collection of gospels, and there are several chapters entitled "The Gospel According to St. Emma"¹⁰⁵, which are as full of the spirit of prophecy and inspiration as anything to be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. You feel as if she was one of the Isaiahs come again to strengthen hearts and ennoble lives. That she has gone onward has not lessened her interest nor slackened her work in the cause she loved so well. Much as I owed her while a resident in the body, I owe perhaps more to her since the translation. Ofttimes have I been conscious of her presence, an.. been encouraged thereby. In days of stress and trouble, when care has sat heavy upon me, I have felt her ministering influence always preaching the message of hope.

One night, when the shadows were dark and heavy, and no light seemed to come from any quarter, she wrote a message through my own hand, of what would be in the hereafter. I did not credit the truth of it, feeling that it might only have been sent to dispel the gloom. The fulfillment of the prophecy seemed of all likely things the most unlikely, and although she signed her name to the communication, and called herself my loving friend and helper, I could only doubt. It was written on my birthday, Nov 16th, 1901, and in a footnote I am again implored to trust the message. "Your natal day," it says. "Our birthday gift and consolation. Believe it, for truth prompts the messenger, and the message will be borne out." In the promised hour twelve months afterwards all came true ; the shadow was removed, and once again the loving spirits' power to me made clear.

¹⁰⁴ "Prelude" to *Tales Of A Wayside Inn* (1863).

¹⁰⁵ Available from the Archive in machine-readable and photofacsimile form.

Do not wonder that I stand here and speak for Spiritualism, and that I hold in reverence and honour the name of her who did so much to prove that ministering spirits he found a pathway to earth. I close with Gerald Massey's words, "She has helped to found the kingdom of flier thought, larger life, clearer light, sweeter charities, and nobler love."

/END OF ORIGINAL TEXT/

About The Emma Hardinge Britten Archive (www.ehbritten.org)

The Emma Hardinge Britten archive is an open source scholarship site for people working on aspects of the life of Emma Hardinge, and the Spiritualist movement of the 19th century.

Materials on the site include chronologies, biographical and bibliographical information on EHB, photofacsimile and machine-readable versions of EHB's work, and various short papers on topics related to EHB.

The site is free, and privately financed. Contributions toward its upkeep and extension are welcome.

The curator of the Archive can be reached at [curator at ehbritten dot org](mailto:curator@ehbritten.org).