

Back From Jerusalem:

The Life and Times of  
Emma Hardinge Britten,  
Spiritualist Propagandist

Marc Demarest  
The Emma Hardinge Britten Archive

Version 2.1  
January 2012



# Module 11

1892-1899

Rewriting A Life



# 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- March 1893: The Unseen Universe folds after twelve issues
- November 24, 1894: William dies
- October 2, 1899: Emma dies
- This is another period of local, organizing activity in Emma's life, punctuated by the announcement of The Spiritualist Encyclopedia, the publication of the The Two Worlds Album, and Emma's last crusade: the School for Prophets
- She is publishing (in Light and in The Two Worlds) and lecturing regularly: on fraudulent mediums, the effects of mediumship on health, and her occult topics

"The Lyceum manual." Compiled by Emma **Hardinge-Britten**, A. Kitson, and H. A. Kersey. Newcastle-on-Tyne: H. A. Kersey. A bright and lively book of hymns and "exercises" for spiritualists' societies; mainly for the young. People who are not spiritualists might profitably copy much that is in it.

The Coming Day, January 1895

TUESDAY EVENING.—Chairman, Mr. John Lamont (Liverpool). At 7 o'clock. Our Duty with regard to acting upon Information given, Advice offered, or Requests made, in Spirit Messages. Introduced by J. J. Morse (London), Editor of *The Lyceum Banner*. At 8.30. Answers to written questions from the audience on Spiritualism, Religion, and Reform. By Mrs. **Hardinge Britten** (Manchester).

Emma at the General Conference of Spiritualists, in London, in May of 1895 (as reported in Borderland)

... is too often terribly suggestive of deception.  
The inaugural meeting of the newly-formed "Birmingham Spiritualist Evidence Society" (of which Mrs. **Hardinge Britten**, the talented lecturer, is the president, and Mr. Brian Hodgson the indefatigable secretary) was held on September 22nd, when Mr. Brian Hodgson exhibited some lantern views of "spirit photographs." A long and fair report appeared next day in the *Birmingham Daily Post*, together with a letter from the pen of Dr. Hall-Edwards, who had been present at the meeting. Dr. Hall-Edwards, in the course of his letter, said :—  
"I have always contended that the scientific application of photography to the investigation of spiritualistic phenomena would at once and for ever prove or disprove the assertions of believers. From the lantern-slides exhibited it would be very difficult to make positive statements, nor should I venture to do so had I not carefully examined the photographic prints from which a number of these slides were prepared. I have no hesi-

Photographic News, October 9, 1896

Jubilee of Modern Spiritualism.—The jubilee of modern spiritualism was celebrated at the beginning of April in Manchester. Mrs. **E. H. Britten**, of Manchester, described as a "notable apostle of spiritualism," opened a four-days' jubilee bazaar and international fancy fair, the object of which was to raise £2,000—a very material agent—toward a propaganda fund to promote the spread of spiritual knowledge and enable those who sit in the valley of shadow, in fear



# 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- William's Death

1894.	
<b>BRITTA</b>	John Goodworth of 9 Prospect-road Scarborough bricklayer died 28 December 1893 Administration <b>York</b> 23 January to John Goodworth Brittain insurance inspector and Henry Brittain bookkeeper Effects £471 15s. 6d.
<b>BRITTA</b>	Joseph of 27 Alexandra-road Winhill Derbyshire cooper died 21 March 1894 at Burntwood asylum Staffordshire Administration <b>Derby</b> 10 October to William Brittain borough collector Effects £738 2s. 2d.
<b>BRITTA</b>	Thomas of the Cloughs Newcastle-under-Lyme Staffordshire esquire died 25 October 1894 Probate <b>Lichfield</b> 7 December to Joseph Cecil Clay gentleman Mary Brittain spinster and Thomas Arthur Brittain gentleman Effects £131708 16s. 1d.
<b>BRITTA</b>	Alfred of Albion-chambers Bristol and of Failand hill Failand Somerset gentleman died 22 June 1894 at Failand hill Probate <b>Bristol</b> 23 July to Georgiana Maxwell Brittan widow Effects £80796 0s. 11d.
<b>BRITTA</b>	John of Glencoe Torquay gentleman died 8 April 1894 Administration (with Will) <b>Exeter</b> 11 May to Charlotte Brittan spinster Effects £137 1s. 10d.
<b>BRITTE</b>	Edward Horsnett of 18 New-Elvet Durham died 22 March 1894 at the Durham county hospital Durham Probate <b>Durham</b> 23 May to Robert Cole cashier and James Moyes brewer Effects £228 19s.
<b>BRITTE</b>	Lois Harrison of 42 Lower-High-street Wednesbury Staffordshire (wife of Charles Britten) died 27 September 1896 Administration <b>Lichfield</b> 21 May to the said Charles Britten printer and stationer Effects £368 2s. 3d.
<b>BRITTE</b>	William of 1 Humphrey-street Crumpsall Manchester gentleman died 24 November 1894 Administration <b>Manchester</b> 12 December to Emma Hardinge Britten widow Effects £109 2s. 3d.
<b>BRITTE</b>	John of Lower Gornal Staffordshire grocer died 4 December 1893 Probate <b>Lichfield</b> 6 March to Thomas Share labourer Effects £18.
<b>BRITTON</b>	Anthony of Low Close Forcett Yorkshire farmer died 13 October 1893 Probate <b>York</b> 19 January to Mary Ann Britton widow and Anthony Britton farmer Effects £373 5s.
<b>BRITTON</b>	Elizabeth of 115 Gillott-road Edgbaston Birmingham (wife of Thomas Britton) died 5 October 1894 Probate <b>Birmingham</b> 30 November to Emily Frances Woolf (wife of Henry Woolf) Elizabeth Beatrice Britton spinster and William Hillman solicitor's clerk Effects £1550 19s. 6d.

- To the end, a cipher -- Emma's parrot gets more treatment in the Autobiography than does William (who gave it to her)
- 100 pounds and change: William's estate is meagre, at best -- working class men who died in the same year left their heirs more robust estates than William left Emma



# 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- The Encyclopedia of Spiritualism
  - Not a new idea of Emma's
  - Likely planned as a recycling of previously published material
  - Likely a subscription publishing
  - But without Emma's papers, we will never know, for sure

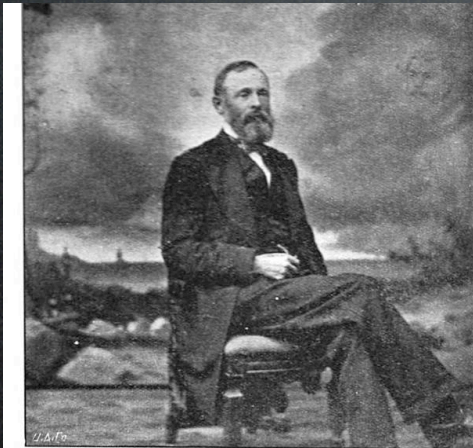


FIG. 29.—Photograph of Mr F. Rice, Greigsville, Livingston Co., New York State, U.S.A., with several psychic portraits, showing the advance made from Mumler's time. Mr Rice was a friend of the late Mrs Emma Hardinge Britten. The above was intended for the *Encyclopedia of Spiritualism* which that lady prepared for publication. Mrs Wilkinson, of Strexford, Mrs Britten's surviving sister, presented it for this work. I put it in for her sake. The photograph is credited to Mr Frank Foster.

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*Yearbook of Spiritualism, 1871*



# 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- The “Two Worlds” Portrait Album
  - Emma featured prominently, but perhaps not her work - in a letter to TTW, Emma treats it as Wallis’ work
  - A wonderful collection of workers-in-the-field at the time, without any interest to those not included, I would guess
  - A boundary marking the decline of the first generations of Spiritualists, and the fragmentation of what might have been an international movement

THE “TWO WORLDS”

**.: PORTRAIT ALBUM :.**

OF

SPIRITUAL MEDIUMS, WORKERS, AND CELEBRITIES.

WITH

BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.

MANCHESTER:

PRINTED FOR THE “TWO WORLDS” PUBLISHING CO. LIMITED, 18, CORPORATION STREET,  
BY THE LABOUR PRESS SOCIETY LIMITED, 57 AND 59, TIB STREET.

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**PRESS NOTICES**

**IDA ELLIS,**  
AS A  
**PSYCHOMETRIST.**

*The Advancing Journal.*  
“Ida Ellis is a lady who possesses great communicative ability.”

*Blackpool Times*, April, 1891.  
After describing several test cases the Times says:—“On the whole there seems to be strong evidence that Mrs. Ellis has made some remarkable diagnosis of character.”

*Phrenological Magazine*, February, 1892.  
“She possesses more than average courage and force of mind.”

*Blackpool*, April, 1892.  
“A pair of gloves reached us on Thursday and with a request that we would send them to two different Psychometrists. The request is so far as I am concerned, as I am in the habit of sending one to Mrs. Ellis, as our point of view is perhaps the strongest I have yet met with.”

*American Human Nature*, November, 1892.  
“Her test is like a photograph: the place is a random impression like a flash.”

Permanent Address—  
**KENT ROAD, BLACKPOOL**

IDA ELLIS,  
**PSYCHOMETRIST.**

FEE: 2S. 6D. AND 5S.

Ida Ellis’ full-page advert in the back of The Two Worlds Album. Ida, her brothers and her husband were in the business, running a correspondence school, among other things.

Ida deserves a biographer. Any takers?

Emma made the world safe for the likes of Ida.



# 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- 1895: The School for Prophets
  - Proposed in Light in 1895, and widely re-reported
  - Not a new idea for her -- explicitly suggested in Art Magic
  - As it seemed to Emma, the only method of ensuring orthodoxy, and limiting exposure of the movement by rogue media
  - Associated with “old age homes” for retiring workers in the field, much along the lines of Masonic homes being built during this period -- a topic that must have been on Emma’s mind at the time

## WANTED A COLLEGE FOR MEDIUMS.

Mrs. **HARDINGE BRITTEN** has been appealing to the Spiritualists, through the columns of their weekly organ, for support to found a College for Mediums. She says :—

The first pre-requisite for this proposed Training College is a commodious house, with, if possible, some ground attached, and, here let me say, it can scarcely be doubted that there are some rich property owners, spiritually inclined enough to devote a house and lands to the *experiment, at least, of the noble purpose* under consideration. The house required should be large enough to accommodate from twelve to twenty young persons (we will say in the first instance of the female sex), together with a good motherly matron or housekeeper, a well-informed governess competent to teach the scholars various branches of literature and art (especially music), and a highly mediumistic person who, by aid of experience and study, should be able to organize the circles and devote herself, in a manner somewhat analogous to the ordinary spiritual Lyceum exercises, especially to the moral as well as spiritual culture of the scholars. Besides these permanent officials there should be a council of interested managers, who should meet at stated periods and aid in drawing up rules and superintending their practical application. At least three circles should be held each week for the purpose of unfolding and practising the mediumistic powers of the inmates, and regular services should be given every Sunday, attended by such members of the council and their friends as could be present. The scholars qualified for admission should be persons endowed with some mediumistic gift, and recommended by, or known to, members of the council, who could vouch alike for their capacity and worth. Whilst it is essential and right that the matron, governess, and mediumistic controller should be

A house, land, and some endowment, and gifts or subscriptions enough to pay officials and maintain the grand experiment, for at least one year, should surely be forthcoming from those whose wealth could meet the demand, and whose knowledge must assure them that their stewardship of that very wealth will determine their happiness or misery when they themselves become spirits.

The Editor of *Light*, commenting on this proposal, says :—

We should be very glad if Mrs. Hardinge Britten’s proposal for a kind of training school for mediums could be carried out. It is only a question of funds. In the meantime, we could quite easily try a few “rest homes” of a simple and private kind. Are there six wise and kindly families that would give a welcome, for a few weeks or more, to young mediums whose friends are vexed at their “gift,” and who themselves do not understand it or are half frightened at it? We are persuaded that in this direction, of private sympathy and guidance, much, very much, good might be done. In time, this might give us the steady supply of disciplined mediums, so urgently needed.



# 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- 1898: The Republication of Art Magic and Ghost Land by JR Francis at The Progressive Thinker, as a premium
- New editions, new type, new titles, new errors -- Emma's involvement was marginal, and it is not clear that she received any compensation from the new editions

## Art Magic

OR MUNDANE, SUB-MUNDANE AND SUPER-MUNDANE SPIRITISM—A TREATISE IN THREE SECTIONS

360 pages in all—descriptive of Art Magic, Spiritism, the different orders of spirits in the Universe, known to be related to or in communication with man; together with directions for working, controlling and discharging spirits, and the uses and abuses, dangers and possibilities of Magical Art. There has been for several years a great demand for this work, as high as \$25 being paid for a single copy. Having permission of Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, we republished the work, thus giving to the many what was only possessed by the few.

Price, \$1.50; postage, 15 cents.

Progressive Thinker advertisement



The **Progressive Thinker** excels in everything that pertains to Spiritualism. It is unique in some respects, is aggressive and always enterprising and interesting. One can not well keep posted in Occult and Spiritualistic matters without reading it weekly. The price at which it furnishes its premium books was never equalled in this country or Europe. Each year we furnish one book to our subscribers at less than actual cost to us. In pursuing this plan we have been instrumental in establishing the nucleus of a library in thousands of homes. The premium books we send out are especially valuable in Spiritualistic and Occult Knowledge; in fact they cannot be excelled for real intrinsic worth by any other equal number of books in the libraries of the world. Address all orders to **J. R. FRANCIS**, 40 Loomis St., Chicago, Ill.

A new kind of marketing is taking root in occult circles.



Corrupted front cover image of Progressive Thinker edition of Ghost Land: the rose cross gone, the cipher garbled



## 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- The Autobiography (1900)
  - Clearly a work-in-progress for years, out of the famous lost scrapbooks
  - Not clear that it was withheld until after her death (or that there was any reason for withholding it)
  - Very uneven, as autobiography
  - Speaks explicitly and implicitly of a huge body of primary material “behind it” that other people (James Robertson for example) saw as well

MEMORIAL EDITION.

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT.

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The Autobiography of  
Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

---

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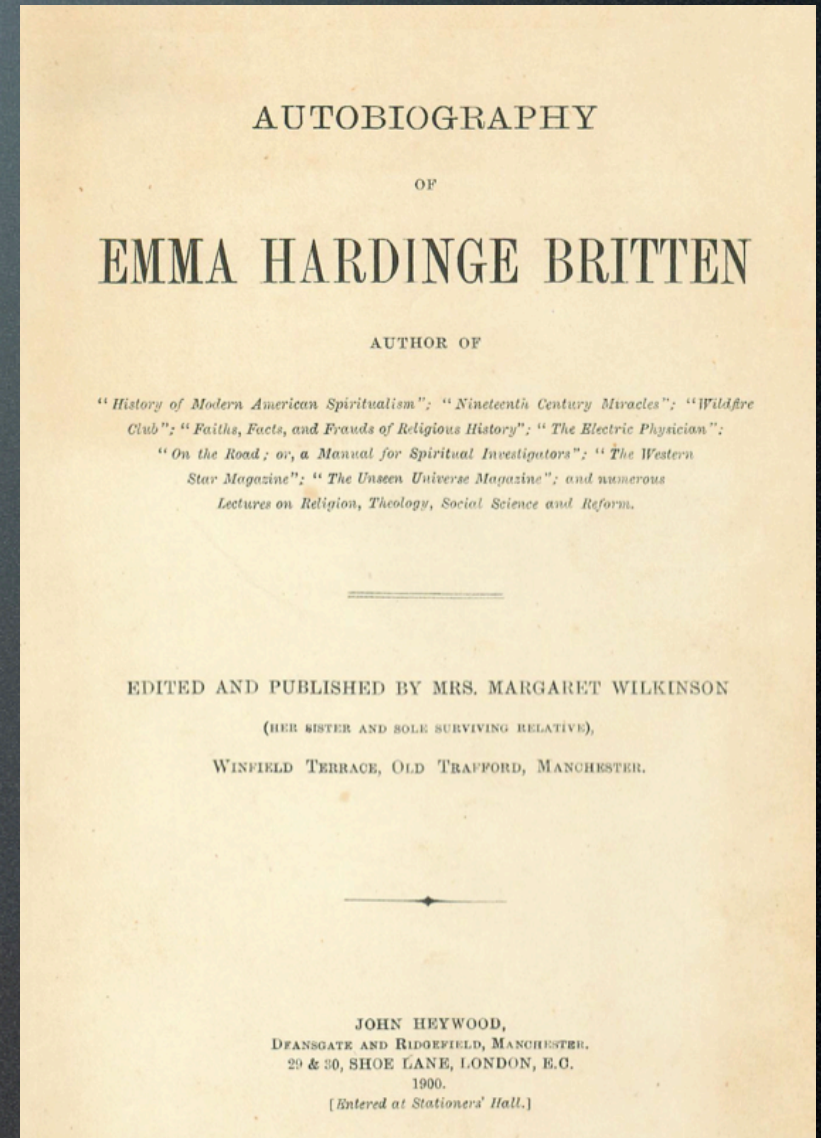
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# 1892-1899: Rewriting A Life

- The Autobiography has 21 chapters
  - Chapter 1 covers 1823-1855
  - 2-17 cover 1855-1865
  - 18 covers 1865-67
  - 19 covers 1867-1872
  - 20 covers the Australian tour, largely the resuscitation of the Hatch scandal
  - 21 covers New Zealand, the trip home, Joey (10 paragraphs), and William's death (1 paragraph)
- Is this authorial intent, or an indication of where she was stopped, by her death?



Where is The Two Worlds? Art Magic? Ghost Land?

"Religion, Theology, Social Science and Reform"