

Back From Jerusalem:

The Life and Times of
Emma Hardinge Britten,
Spiritualist Propagandist

Marc Demarest
The Emma Hardinge Britten Archive

Version 2.1
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Module 6

1865-1872

Transatlantic Notoriety

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- Emma and Ann Sophia are in England by early September of 1865
- The “legacy which has been left [Ann] by a relative” seems to have occupied the time of the family, now including Margaret, until December of 1865
 - Bromfields near Tiverton?
- At that time Emma is introduced to the London Spiritualists by Benjamin Coleman, whom Emma met when Coleman came to the US in 1860 to investigate spiritualism, and fell in with... Elizabeth J. French
- (She is not the first US medium in England, but she is early....)
- And she is now becoming... irregularly... Miss or Mrs. Hardinge

Personal Intelligence.

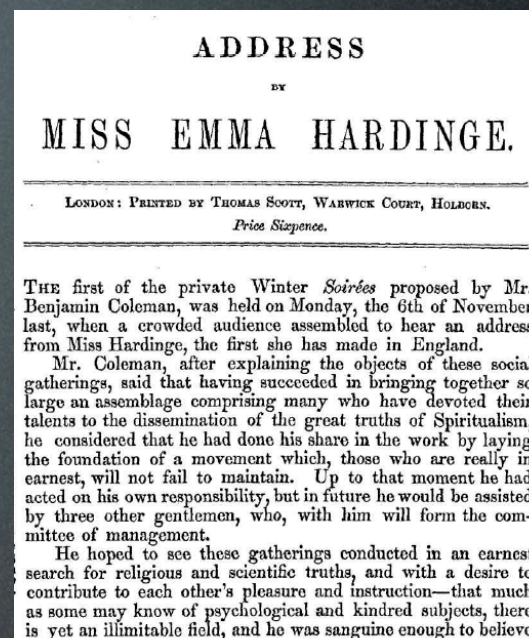
Secretary Harlan and family, Washington; Mrs. Commodore Levy, John J. Cisco, Daniel Drew and family, Wm. H. Livingston and family, Mayor Gunther and family, New York; E. S. Sandford and family, Philadelphia; Wm. G. Fargo and family, Buffalo; H. Bartlett and family, Boston, are among the guests of the Union Hotel, Saratoga.

Among the passengers by the steamer City of London, which left for Europe on Saturday of last week, were Miss Emma Hardinge and her mother, the latter of whom goes to England for the purpose of looking after a legacy which has been left her by a relative. Miss Hardinge has been very favorably known in this country and California for the past ten years, having devoted her life and best energies for the benefit of different benevolent and charitable enterprises, chief among which was the establishment of reformatories for fallen women, and latterly she has become prominent as a lecturer and writer upon political subjects. She travelled through California during the last political campaign, ardently espousing the Union cause, and doing much toward the reelection of President Lincoln. She also undoubtedly set the ball in motion on the far Pacific coast which rolled up that \$100,000 for the Sanitary Commission, and her friends claim for her the credit of having by her personal exertions added much to that useful fund. She originated the famous bag of flour sale, which was so remarkably successful in aiding the sick and wounded of the Union army in the hospital and on the field. She is a writer and speaker, who has done and is calculated to do good in the world. For many years she has been devoted to the promulgation of the spiritual doctrine, in which she is undoubtedly a firm believer, and she has put all her strength, mind and soul into what she has said and written upon the subject. In fact, she always does that, whatever her theme; and her theme has generally a worthy object in view. Her reformatory enterprise will yet prove a success. The large fund raised by her in different cities of the Union by her lectures and the sale of her works, is in the hands of trustees, and must eventually be used for its intended beneficent and praiseworthy purpose. It is expected that Miss Hardinge may soon return to America and personally attend to the consummation of her life labor—the salvation of at least a portion of the fallen and unfortunate of her own sex. Miss Hardinge came to this country from England, August 22, 1855, having already attained some reputation as an actress; but shortly after her appearance at the Broadway theatre she gave up that profession, from some disagreement with her employers, and soon afterwards came out as the advocate of the spiritualistic doctrine. The fallen women, whom she saw existed to so large an extent in all our cities, also early claimed her best attention. Should the good wishes of her friends of the First Spiritual Society of this city meet fruition she will be successful in whatever she may undertake.

New York Herald, August 7, 1865
Not one whiff of Spiritualism.

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- The Winter Soiree Lectures: November 1865-February of 1866
 - “In What Particulars are the Teachings of Christianity and the Facts Recorded in the Gospels Elucidated and Confirmed by Spiritualism?”
 - “It has been alleged that Modern Spiritualism is the witchcraft or necromancy referred to in the Old and New Testaments: will you be good enough to define the difference between them?”
- Attended by a who’s-who of English Spiritualism, mesmerism and occultism at the time
- And Emma is recognized as Miss Emma Harding, the actress...



Among the late reinforcements to the army of female speech-makers is an Englishwoman, calling herself "Miss Emma Hardinge", about whom there has been some interesting discussion in the newspapers. The World, editorially alluding to Miss Hardinge some few days since, stated that common rumour affirmed that she first made her appearance in public as a ballet-dancer in a London theatre, which provoked a sharp reply from the offended Emma, denying the assertion, so far as it related to dancing in public, but admitting that she "was educated as an opera-singer, and in process of training for her professional duties became an actress at the Royal Adelphi Theatre, London.

Liverpool Mercury. April 1, 1866

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- Benjamin Coleman is a significant figure at the time, inside and outside of Spiritualist circles -- notably for his attack on a corrupt railway company in the late 1850s and early 1860s
- A merchant, financier and controversialist, he is actively promoting Emma, while simultaneously conducting a pitched battle in the courts with Edwin Askew Sothern, a US medium/museum performer/actor who is actively 'debunking' Spiritualism, while involved in a very public divorce action as a co-respondent...and who acted with Emma in the Broadway Theatre company in 1855/6
- Emma is almost certainly feeling at-risk, personally and professionally

SPIRITUALISM.

PROFESSOR SOLFERINO,
CHAMPION MEDIUM & SPIRITUALIST,

Begs to return his sincere thanks to the nobility, gentry, &c.
He has constantly in stock a large assortment of

TRICK HANDCUFFS, COFFINS, ROPES, GUITARS,
MECHANICAL TABLES, &c.

His celebrated Davenport Noiseless Boots still continue to give
great satisfaction.

PROFESSOR SOLFERINO also offers to Ladies, his celebrated Marshall Genuflection Crinoline, especially adapted for Table Rapping, concealing mechanism, knocking down china, &c., in the dark. Used in connexion with his Loaded Kid Boots, the most startling effects can be produced on weak-minded people without fear of detection.

Persons of the highest respectability constantly on hand, prepared to swear and testify to anything required of them. Moderate swearing, 2s. 6d. per hour. Very hard swearing, 5s. (oaths extra.)

Graveyards and Tombstones thoroughly searched and examined.

Sole Agent for Mustapha's far-famed Phincoen Vanishing Fluid, 32s. 6d. per quart bottle; Grimshawe's Patent Eye-Corroding Powder, for non-believers, 15s. 6d. per pound packet.

Apply at the Blue-tailed Fly, after Three.

Portion of Coleman's expose of Sothern, in Spiritual Magazine
for February 1866

THE WINTER SOIREEs.

MISS HARDINGE has delivered seven Addresses at these private gatherings, which have been attended by the leading Spiritualists and others, who have been attracted to the full extent of the accommodation which the Rooms could afford, to hear this noble and highly-gifted woman. Each successive Address has only created a higher interest in the unparalleled beauty and force of Miss Hardinge's eloquence. The last Address on "Hades" was a masterpiece of touching pathos and powerful illustration.

Miss Hardinge is to speak for the first time in public on Saturday, the 13th January, at 3 o'clock, in the Great Hall at St. James's, Regent-street, when we hope there will be a large attendance to welcome her.

Spiritual Magazine, January 1866

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- While she is lecturing to the Spiritualists, she is also, it seems to me, testing the waters for a career as a secular lecturer on American topics, in London
- She ran the experiment until March of 1866, but...
- Her secular lectures were not well-received, either in content or in form of delivery
- And she's being confused with the Confederate spy Belle Boyd, who's married a Hardinge and is living in London
- By mid-year, she's back to Spiritualist topics, solely...

MISS EMMA HARDINGE,
THE
GREAT EXTEMPORANEOUS ORATOR,
WILL MAKE HER FIRST
PUBLIC ADDRESS
IN ENGLAND, AT THE
ST. JAMES'S HALL,
On SATURDAY, the 13th of JANUARY, 1866,
At Three o'Clock, p.m.
Subject.
AMERICA: ITS SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS, AND
POLITICAL CONDITION.

The Second and Third Public Addresses will be delivered at St. James's Hall, on Saturdays, January 20th and 27th, at 3 o'Clock, p.m.

MISS EMMA HARDINGE.—The Flaneur of the *Star* announces that Miss EMMA HARDINGE, "the celebrated extemporaneous lecturer, who has resided for the last ten years in the United States," is announced to deliver an oration on America in St. James's Hall next Saturday afternoon. Says the advertisement:—

"Miss HARDINGE has been lecturing in the United States on the great political, social, and other questions of the day, and has been everywhere greeted by vast and most enthusiastic audiences. During the campaign for the re-election of President LINCOLN Miss HARDINGE delivered thirty-two orations in thirty-eight days. She also spoke the famous New York oration on Mr. LINCOLN's death. She speaks entirely extemporaneously, and is pronounced by the American press to be "the most wonderfully gifted and eloquent of living orators." Is this lady identical with a pretty actress of the same name who played at the Adelphi some dozen years ago, and was said to possess considerable powers of authorship?

We believe that Miss HARDINGE is better known to the American public as an itinerant spiritualist lecturer than as an imitator of Miss ANNA DICKENSON.

"The Flaneur" is Edmund Yates

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- After June of 1866, Emma disappears, for the most part, from the US and UK press
- Emma leaves the UK (alone?) in October of 1866, returns to the US, and is lecturing in the US through March of 1867, based in NY
- She is talking up “a history of Spiritualism in America, which will be published in two volumes” -- this information is picked up by US papers from NY to Galveston to Salt Lake City
- Some time in April of 1867, she returns to England, and for the next two years, lives a largely private life, working on what will become Modern American Spiritualism
- She does appear in reminiscences of this period, often as a presiding or attending medium in private Spiritualist circles, in the UK

The séance commenced by the reading of a chapter from the New Testament by Mr. O'Sullivan, after which Mrs. Emma Hardinge rose and offered up a beautiful prayer. Loud raps followed, and the table moved towards Mrs. Everitt. We then sang, “I will arise.” The paper tube was taken up by the spirits and several of the sitters touched with it; it was then placed in my hands. A spirit voice said, “Good evening, Mr. Shorter!—good evening, dear Emma Hardinge! I know you and our medium are harmonious spirits; I am so pleased you are here.”

Question—“Could you tell us your wife's name?”

Answer—“Yes. Her name is Mercia, or Mercy. She left your world before she had any life in it. She left it at the age of six months, and is a pure spirit.”

Mrs. Hardinge here related a curious vision that appeared to her a few weeks previous, of an immense ship arriving in this country from America, bringing a number of American spirits.

The tube was then taken from me and placed in the hands of Mrs. Everitt and Mrs. Cooper. The spirit “John Watt” then addressing Mrs. Cooper, said, “I like to be near you; there is sympathy and affinity between us. You are something like my wife;—and there is my dear old mother” (addressing Mrs. Floyd).

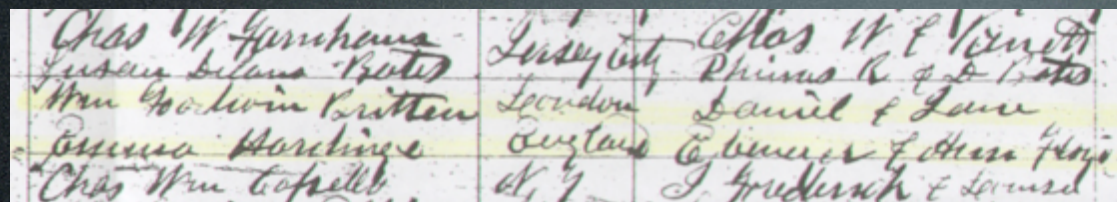
Question—“May she sit nearer the medium, as she is rather deaf and cannot hear you?”

Answer—“No ; I will speak louder presently: she looks so comfortable where she is.”

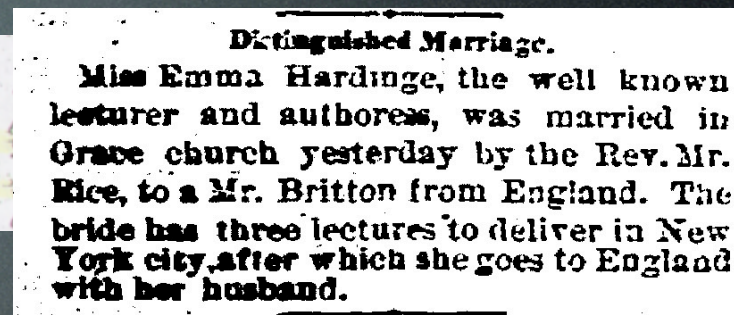
Catherine Berry, My Experiences in Spiritualism (1876)

Emma Hardinge and Thomas Shorter at a seance.

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety



Emma and William's Marriage Record - She is a widow, not a spinster



Jersey City (NJ) Gazette, October 13, 1870

- From 1867 until the end of 1869, Emma is traveling in Spiritual circles in and around London -- does she meet Marie, Duchesse de Pomar at this time?
- Emma returns to the US again, in late 1869, and is lecturing continually in the East through 1870
- The general belief has always been that she's moving back and forth across the Atlantic to arrange publication of Modern American Spiritualism...but she has an agent, Charles Edwards Lester, doing that for her....
- Her dedication for the first edition is dated December 15th, 1869, from "New York City, 229 East 60th Street"
- I suspect there was a more...powerful...reason for Emma's trips back and forth between England and the US during this period

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- William Godwin Britten
 - Born in London to Daniel, a goldsmith and his wife Elizabeth (Jane?), who named their son after a radical English philosopher
 - Came to the US in September of 1858, as a “gentleman” in cabin class on the steamer City of Washington
 - Became almost immediately involved in the Hatch scandal (rescuing Cora from BFH?)
 - May have worked in logistics during the 1860s in the US
- “William the Cipher” (Paul Johnson)



William Britten (1826-1894), photo circa 1878 (?)

Why does Emma marry William, at age 47?
And why in an Episcopal church?

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- Modern American Spiritualism was self-published, with high production values in the first edition, and went through between 6 and 12 printings between 1870 and 1872 -- perhaps 10,000 to 15,000 copies, in various states, with and without plates
- Distribution of the first edition in the US was through the Banner of Light, and her printer in NY, the American News Company
- In style, it was Emma through and through: “scissors and mucilage”
- Far and away, the most referenced of her work, and still treated as (accurate) history by many modern scholars



“Oress” by Henry Bielfeld (1802-1892),

WORKS BY EMMA HARDINGE.

MODERN AMERICAN SPIRITUALISM: a Twenty Years' Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of Spirits. In one volume, large octavo, of 600 pages, on fine toned paper. Bound in handsome cloth, bevelled edges. Superbly and profusely illustrated with fine portraits on steel, wood engravings, lithographs, &c. Price 15s.

Another edition on common paper and without steel portraits, with *Human Nature* for 1871. Both for 15s.

Another edition in 15 Numbers, price 10d. each. On common paper, but with all the plates and illustrations.

Various editions/states of MAS, offered in the UK in 1871

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

“Were we permitted to consider the volume before us as the veritable work of Mrs. Emma Hardinge, we should say that she was a lady of imperfect education, some cleverness, and a fine capacity for self-delusion....If we understand her, she professes that its pages have been inspired by [her] invisible guides. This being the case, we cannot but regret their deficiency in literary skill, and especially the art of coordination.”

The New York Times, January 24, 1870

“But if she is to be commended for the candour with which she admits the errors of indiscreet believers in Spiritualism and the warmth with which she denounces the impostures of knavish imitators of true mediums, Miss Hardinge is no less praiseworthy for the zeal with which she combats the infamous doctrine and abominable assertions of those blind leaders of the blind who delight in declaring that the blessed spirits, with all their elevations of tables and knocking at wainscots, never accomplish anything for the material advantage or any obvious good of humanity...”

The (London) Athenaeum, August 13, 1870

“It is a work which on many accounts we cannot recommend to the general reader....partly, no doubt, on account of the author’s style, which is but moderately attractive, partly on account of the lumbering and pretentious language in which it seems natural for spiritualistic writers to veil their conceptions, partly, again, from the great sameness which pervades the multitudinous manifestations which are recorded, and, once more, from the alternating monstrosity and childishness which characterizes these manifestations.”

The Month, October 1871

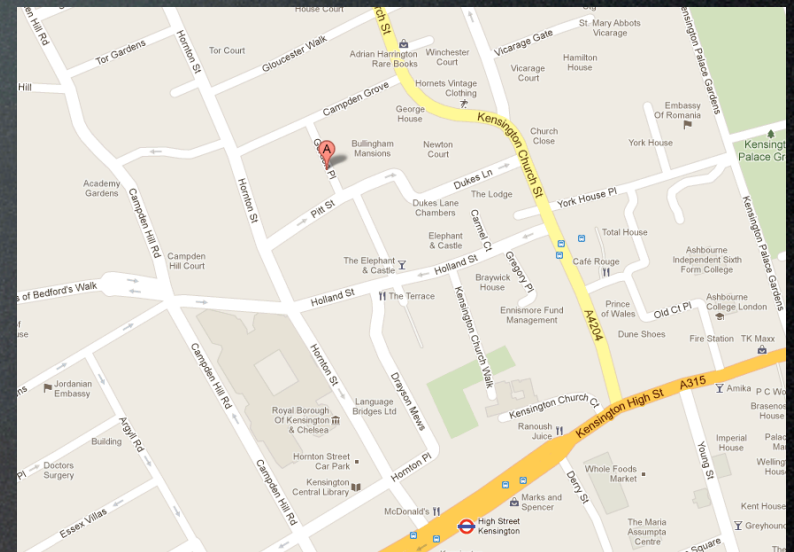
(ouch....)

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- On October 31, 1870, Emma gives a “farewell address” to the NY spiritualist community at Apollo Hall in NYC
- On 2 November 1870, EHB and WGB sail for England on the Abyssinia
- In the 1871 UK census, the extended menage is living in Kensington
 - Ann is the proper age -- as is Gilbert Wilkinson, Margaret’s husband -- but everyone else is telling fibs
 - Ann and William are “annuitants”, Emma is an “actress” (!!!)

251			Isabella Best	London	Ann	64
252	6 Vassal Ter	1	Ann & Floyd	Head	W	48
			Emma Britten	Daughter	Mar	38
			Margaret Wilkinson	Daughter	Mar	30
			William Britten	Son in law	Mar	40
			Gilbert Wilkinson	Son in law	Mar	48
			Harriet Ware	Serv	Mar	32

Extended family at 6 Vassal Terrace, in Kensington, in 1871 UK Census



Approximate location of Vassal Terrace

1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- From April through July of 1871, Emma is lecturing in the UK, on spiritualist topics
- On April 30, 1871, at Cleveland Hall, she delivers “The Creed of the Spirits, and the Influence of the Religion of Spiritualism”, which promulgates two of the founding dicta of organized Spiritualism: 10 Spiritual Commandments & 10 “Laws of Right”
- In July, Gerald Massey, JM Peebles and others bid farewell to Emma at St. George’s Hall, giving her some 300 pounds
- Her final lecture in the UK is in Liverpool, on **ancient magic and witchcraft**, on August 9, 1871

Ten Laws of Right

Temperance

Justice

Gentleness

Truth

Charity

Alms-Giving

Self-Sacrifice

Temperate Defense

Industry

Love



1865-1872: Transatlantic Notoriety

- Late 1871 to May of 1872 is a mystery period; William may be in school in Ohio with J. B. Campbell, but ASF is with them for at least part of this time
- Lecturing in Boston in May of 1872; public & Spiritualist; by early November of 1872, Emma is back in NY, lecturing before the NY Spiritualists at Apollo Hall, but she won't stay long
- In late November, she's in Boston, and lectures through January of 1873, then she's in Philadelphia where she lectures on physiology
- In April 1873, she delivers "Is Spiritualism A Failure?" at the Music Hall in Boston: implies she is leaving the movement
- Later in the year, an interesting set of advertisements begin to run in the Boston area papers



The old allies, practicing "electrical cranial diagnosis"

