

it rose to my hand held at the other end to the same height above it and in the same manner.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the most that can be said of the case of Stainton Moses is that whilst a rational man could hardly found a belief in paranormal phenomena upon it, it is in some respects supplementary and in others complementary to the far more puzzling case of D. D. Home. Moses' phenomena, if less well attested than Home's, are strikingly similar to them; and whereas Home, though not exactly a professional medium, owed his social successes largely to his mediumship, Stainton Moses was a private citizen who 'went very little into Society', and at first published under a pseudonym. However, these two cases, whether or not they buttressed each other were, merely on account of their pastness, likely to carry conviction only to the convinced. What was needed, if any firm and positive conclusions were to be reached, was a case currently active, a case whose genuineness could be incontrovertibly established by competent observers and scientific methods.

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.P.R.* IX (1894), pp. 259-60.

## X *Eusapia*

EGLINTON SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN the only physical medium of whom the Sidgwick group organised an extensive investigation between 1878 and 1894. There were of course occasional flashes in the pan; but none which led to any conflagration. The most curious was a gentleman who figures in the correspondence as 'Mr. D. of Barton-on-Humber'.<sup>1</sup> Some time in 1890 Sidgwick learned that a near relation of a friend of his had discovered himself to be a physical medium, and could lift up and carry around a table with his hands touching the upper surface only. This gentleman was a professional man of good social status and a well-known amateur *savant* in the directions of philology, anthropology and ancient astronomy. In November 1890 Myers went up to Barton-on-Humber to observe the marvels, and was shortly joined there by Mrs. Sidgwick. Sidgwick himself also paid a visit to Mr. D. at some period. Mr. D.'s *pièce de résistance* was to walk around in subdued light carrying a table apparently suspended from his finger-tips; once he held it up for fifteen seconds by the light of a duplex lamp and two candles, being the while within four feet of Myers and Mrs. Sidgwick. There were other phenomena: movement of the table without contact; removal of paper from a closed box; and alleged direct writing and drawing upon the paper.

Myers and Mrs. Sidgwick were impressed; the authenticity of the phenomena depended entirely upon Mr. D.'s word; but Mr. D. was, as Myers put it in a letter to Lodge, 'quite of our own standing socially, morally & intellectually'. An issue of *Proceedings* dealing with Mr. D.'s phenomena was contemplated.

<sup>1</sup> I am almost certain that 'Mr. D.' was Mr. Robert Brown, Jr., F.S.A., a solicitor of Barton-on-Humber.

But early in 1891 Mrs. Sidgwick received a letter from a lady who had been present at some of the sittings. During a seance this lady had twice glimpsed a rod concealed under Mr. D.'s wrist, and 'His right hand was not raised as completely from the table as the left hand was . . . also two of the middle fingers were kept close together on the table . . . On both occasions of the table going up the cuff was tightly strained to the arm.'

Mr. D.'s position was such that it was hardly possible to condemn him on the basis of one such doubtful piece of information; and furthermore he succeeded in demonstrating the phenomenon with bared arms. However, in the autumn of 1891 another lady sitter informed Mrs. Sidgwick that Mr. D. had told her that he wished to test Mrs. Sidgwick's powers of observation, and had asked her to assist him in levitating the table by fraudulent means. She complied; but when she heard that Mr. D. had signed a declaration that the phenomena had not been produced by normal means she felt obliged to reveal what she knew.

The Sidgwicks, out of regard for others, determined not to publish Mr. D.'s name but, in Sidgwick's ominous phrase, 'took effectual means to prevent a repetition of his trickery'. Sidgwick told the story at a general meeting of the S.P.R. on 13th July 1894, and concluded with the following words:

The experience that I have narrated certainly shows that a professional man of good social position and intellectual interests may carry on systematic deception for years, with no apparent motive except (I suppose) the pleasure of exciting the wonder of his deceived friends, and the pleasure of laughing in his sleeve at their credulity. But here the resemblance ends. Mr. [D.] (1) never professed to regard his 'phenomena' as a possible basis for religious or philosophical conclusions, or to take a serious interest in the scientific investigation of them: and (2) he consistently refused to publish any account of them in his own name. How entirely different Mr. Stainton Moses' behaviour was in both respects has been amply shown in Mr. Myers' article.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it was because of the sad affair of Mr. D., and of the further cases of 'disinterested deception' at which Podmore darkly hints,<sup>2</sup> that nothing found its way into print concerning

<sup>1</sup> *J.S.P.R.* VI (1894), p. 278.

<sup>2</sup> *Podmore* II, p. 292.

the curious physical phenomena which, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Myers thought he had found among his own friends. He briefly mentions these phenomena in various letters. For instance, on 8th October 1892 he wrote to Charles Richet:<sup>1</sup>

I have lately had table go up in air—in dark—but with only trusted friends present—viz. (1) Hon. A. Yorke, whom I think you know—a friend of 20 years' standing, Equerry to the Queen,—through whose mediumship I think the thing took place (2) Lady Kenmore (3) Miss Wingfield (4) Miss M. Wingfield—(5) FWHM. Also lots of intelligent raps & several very good *diagnoses*.

Again on 8th December 1892 he wrote to Richet:

There have been some physical phenomena obtained at Lord Radnor's place, Longford Castle, by Miss Wingfield and the Hon. *Alec Yorke*. I forget whether you know him—he is a very old friend of mine, & I have always known that he had *gifts*; but he is a *courtier* by profession—being Equerry to the Queen,—so he has been unwilling to take the thing up or to be connected with it . . .

They had a luminous matchbox (i.e. painted with luminous paint) carried about the room, & similar physical phenomena.

Myers continued to sit with Miss Wingfield at intervals for the rest of his life; though as far as I know he never published any of his results.<sup>2</sup>

Of all the physical mediums or alleged physical mediums who came the way of the Sidgwick group before the year 1900 the most interesting was undoubtedly a Neapolitan lady named Eusapia Palladino.<sup>3</sup> Eusapia's origins are very obscure—there are various conflicting and even romantic accounts of them. By

<sup>1</sup> Professor of physiology in the Faculty of Medicine at Paris. Gurney and Myers had met Richet during visits to the Continent to study hypnosis, in which Richet was interested.

<sup>2</sup> He mentions the raps which he witnessed in Miss Wingfield's presence, *Human Personality* II, p. 208.

<sup>3</sup> The best short account of Eusapia is by E. J. Dingwall, *Very Peculiar People*, London, n.d., pp. 178–217, which has a very useful bibliography. See also H. Carrington, *Eusapia Palladino and Her Phenomena*, London, 1909. The most extended work on her is E. Morselli, *Psicologia e 'Spiritismo'*, 2 vols., Turin, 1908. On her early days see G. Damiani in *Human Nature* VI (1872), pp. 272–4; and the same writer's letter in *The Spiritualist*, 15th March 1873.

1872, under the patronage of a certain Signor Damiani, she was beginning to obtain celebrity as a medium in the Naples district. The phenomena which took place in her presence, so Damiani said, included table levitations, the breakage of crockery, the appearance of mysterious lights, and detonations like pistol shots. Unfortunately these spiritual manifestations were not matched by any corresponding spirituality in Eusapia's character. She was vulgar, earthy, and addicted to bad company. There are even hints that during the seances sitters' purses and other valuables were rather too liable to dematerialise. It was clear that she was afflicted by a band of evil spirits, and British Spiritualists offered their advice to Signor Damiani in the columns of *The Spiritualist*. Miss Florence Cook of Hackney undertook a clairvoyant diagnosis of Eusapia's condition.<sup>1</sup> Miss Cook perceived that Eusapia kept low company, and was followed by an undesirable man; and there is every indication that Miss Cook was right.

For the next sixteen years or so Eusapia seems to have operated for the most part in and around Naples. She then came rather suddenly to the notice of the learned world as a result of two seances which Lombroso, the noted alienist, had with her in 1890. A somewhat remarkable incident occurred at the end of the second seance after the lights had been turned up. Eusapia, tied to her chair with strips of linen, was sitting in front of a curtained-off alcove. Inside the alcove, about one metre distant from the medium, was a small table. While the observers were discussing the seance, a noise was heard in the alcove, and from it there emerged the little table moving slowly towards Eusapia. An instant search revealed neither strings nor confederate.

Lombroso had long been known as a determined sceptic, and as a result of his conversion to belief in the phenomena a number of scientists held a series of seventeen sittings with Eusapia in Milan late in 1892.<sup>2</sup> The sitters included Lombroso himself; Schiaparelli, the astronomer; and Charles Richet.

<sup>1</sup> *Spiritualist*, 1st Aug. 1873.

<sup>2</sup> See summaries by F. Podmore, *P.S.P.R.* IX (1893-4), pp. 218-25; G. and C. Bell, *Bulletin of the Psychological Section of the Medico-Legal Society*, New York, 1893, pp. 18-29. Richet's accounts are in *Annales des Sciences Psychiques* III (1893), pp. 1-31. I have not seen the original report which was published in Supplement No. 883 of the *Italia del Popolo* (Dingwall, *op. cit.*, p. 215).

They witnessed a number of curious events. For instance, one side of a small table (weighing 20 lb.), the side nearest Eusapia, was tilted up in light which clearly illuminated the regions above and below it; it remained tilted for several minutes, whilst Eusapia's hands, her sleeves rolled up to the elbow, were visibly clear of it, and her feet were beating time against each other. Some photographs were taken. However, the conditions under which most of the phenomena took place were not very satisfactory (though they satisfied all the sitters except Richet); and it was noticed that levitations of the table occurred only if Eusapia's skirt puffed out to meet the table and she held her hands above it. The most interesting things took place during the later sittings, at which the seance room was divided into two halves by curtains. Eusapia was placed facing the sitters on a chair at the junction of the curtains, which were then joined over her head. Her front was dimly illuminated by a lantern with red glass slides, and her hands and feet were visibly held. Under these conditions the sitters obtained occasional tantalising glimpses of extra hands which were thrust out between the curtains. Sitters were also touched or grasped through the curtains; and one sitter, Aksakov, put his hand through the curtains above the medium's head, where it was touched by another hand. It was then seized and pulled inside, and a chair from behind the curtain was pushed into it.

Richet was the only member of the Milan committee who did not sign the report endorsing the genuineness of the phenomena. He felt that too many possibilities of fraud remained. None the less he was immensely intrigued, and in 1894 he arranged that Eusapia should visit him at an island which he owned off the south coast of France—the Île Roubaud, near Hyères. The only house on the island was Richet's own; and at least it seemed impossible that Eusapia could introduce a confederate.

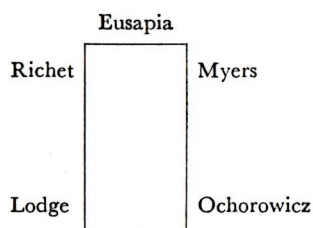
Richet invited Myers and Lodge to join the party, and they arrived on 21st July 1894. Lodge has left an extended description of their stay.<sup>1</sup> They seemed to have had a delightful time—at least if one sets aside some trifling inconvenience from mosquitoes and flies. The heat was such that during the day Myers and Lodge roamed the island in pyjamas, swimming periodically; Richet spent his mornings fishing from a small boat to

<sup>1</sup> *Past Years*, London, 1931, pp. 292-306.

obtain food for the party. In the evenings they held seances in a sitting-room on the ground floor. During the seances the door of this room was normally locked, and the shutters of its two windows were fastened without being quite closed. A note-taker (either Richet's secretary, M. Bellier, or a Polish investigator, J. Ochorowicz) sat outside a window and took down all that those in the room called out to him. The sitters, including Eusapia, would group themselves round a table; at the beginning of a seance they would sit by lamp-light, later in the dim light that came through the shutters from the note-taker's lamp and from the moon. They witnessed a fair cross-section of Eusapia's phenomena—table levitations, grasps, touches, lights; materialised hands, billowing of curtains, raps, the movements of objects, the playing of musical instruments, the precipitation of scents, and supposed direct writing—all, it should be emphasised, when the medium seemed to be well controlled. As illustrations I shall now quote extracts from the published accounts of the first sitting, and the fourth and last sitting, those of 21st and 26th July 1894.<sup>1</sup> It was not thought necessary to print the accounts of later sittings in such detail as that of the first.

*First Sitting, July 21st, 1894*

. . . 12.35—Sittings at the small table were now resumed, with a change of position. The table was moved considerably further



from the window and positions were as shewn. The shutter was more widely opened so as to admit light from the bright moon outside. The candle of the recorder also gave some little light, but the lamp inside the room was not lighted. R. held both arms and one hand of E., while M. held both feet and her

other arm. R. then felt a hand move over his head and rest on his mouth for some seconds, during which he spoke to us with his voice muffled. The round table now approached. R.'s head was stroked behind. R. held both E.'s knees, still retaining one hand while M. held the other, and the round table continued to approach in violent jerks.

<sup>1</sup> From *J.S.P.R.* VI (1894), pp. 350-1, 355-7.

12.49.—A small cigar box fell on our table, and a sound was heard in the air as of something rattling. R. was holding head and right hand; M., holding left hand, raised it in the air holding it lightly by the tips of its fingers, but with part of his own hand free. A saucer containing small shot (from another part of the room), was then put into this hand of M. in the air. A covered wire of the electric battery came on to the table and wrapped itself round R.'s and E.'s heads, and was pulled till E. called out. Henceforth R. held her head and body, M. kept one hand and both feet, while L. held the other hand, and in this position E. made several spasmodic movements, each of which was accompanied or followed by violent movements of the neighbouring round table.

12.57.—The accordion which was on the round table got on to the floor somehow, and began to play single notes. Bellier counted 26 of them and then ceased counting. While the accordion played, E.'s fingers made movements in the hands of both M. and L. in accord with the notes as if she were playing them at a distance with difficulty. The lightly-touched quick notes were also thus felt by L. with singular precision. Sometimes the touch failed to elicit a response, and this failure was usually succeeded by an interval of silence and rest.

1.5.—E. being well held, M. heard a noise on the round table at his side, and turning to look saw a white object detach itself from the table and move slowly through the clear space between his own head and E.'s, visibly crossing the painted stripes of colour on the wall of the room. L. now saw the object coming past M.'s head and settling on the table. It was the lamp-shade coming white side first.

1.10.—The round table was moved further off and blows came upon it. L. was touched on the back, while R. saw both E.'s hands (which were still, as always, being held), and her body was also visible.

1.17.—The 'châlet', [musical-box] which was on the round table, now began to play, and then visibly approached, being seen both by M. and L. coming through the air, and settled on our table against M.'s chest. Shortly afterwards it moved away from M.'s chest on to the middle of our table and played there. Then it got on the floor between R. and E., and R. said 'enough of that music.' It stopped, probably because run down. M. was repeatedly and vigorously pushed on the back while L. was trying to see what was touching him [changing places with O. for the purpose]. L. could see M.'s back readily, but could not see anything upon it, though M. kept on calling out that he

they agreed to do. To James Bryce Sidgwick wrote on 8th August 1894:

. . . the call of duty has descended on us in connexion with the S.P.R.—in whose affairs a crisis is impending. Three chief members of our group of investigators: F. Myers, O. J. Lodge, and Richet, (Professor of Physiology in Paris) have convinced themselves of the truth of the physical phenomena of Spiritualism . . . we have read the notes taken from day to day of the experiments, and it is certainly difficult to see how the results recorded can have been produced by ordinary physical means.

At the same time as the S.P.R. has now for some years acquired a reputation for *comparative* sanity and intelligence by detecting and exposing the frauds of mediums; and as Eusapia's 'phenomena' are similar [in] kind to the frauds we have exposed, it will be a rather sharp turn in our public career if our most representative men come forward as believers. Consequently we both feel bound to accept Richet's invitation and go for ten days or a fortnight to the 'Île Roubaud', and if possible, obtain personal experience. It will be rather a bore, and, I fear, tiring to my wife: but we both feel that it has to be done.<sup>1</sup>

The Sidgwicks' reluctance to investigate further instances of supposed physical phenomena is quite understandable in view of their previous unhappy and uncomfortable experiences; and equally understandable is their concern for the public reputation of the Society of which they were the principal representatives. None the less their distaste for physical phenomena and their tenderness for the S.P.R.'s public image were leading causes of the unfortunate *Affaire Eusapia*.

For the time being however all seemed to go well. Towards the end of August Lodge and the Sidgwicks set off for the south of France. Eusapia was now at Richet's château at Carqueiranne, near Toulon. They had half a dozen sittings in a cosmopolitan assembly which for part of the time included Ochorowicz, Schrenck-Notzing of Munich, and Dr. Ségard, chief medical officer of the French Mediterranean fleet. (Lodge was most impressed by Mrs. Sidgwick's ability to speak alternately French with most of the company, English with himself, German with Schrenck-Notzing, and Italian with Eusapia.) Phenomena took place mostly in the dark, or in very dim light,

<sup>1</sup> Bodleian, MS Bryce 15 fol. 83.

and were hence not so impressive as those which Lodge and Myers had witnessed in July. None the less at their very first sitting, Sunday, 19th August 1894, the Sidgwicks obtained phenomena which they regarded at the time, and in the discussion afterwards, as conclusively supernormal. Mrs. Sidgwick controlled Eusapia's left hand, constantly verifying that there had been no substitution; Sidgwick similarly controlled the right hand. Ochorowicz lay underneath the table and held Eusapia's feet. Under these conditions Mrs. Sidgwick felt mysterious touches and pushes and was embraced by an unaccountable hand and arm; and Sidgwick felt a hand placed on his head. Later seances followed much the same pattern. Whilst Eusapia was supposedly well controlled, sitters would be touched, grasped or prodded as if by hands; sometimes hands would actually be seen. There were occasional movements of objects in the room. For instance, at the Sidgwick's final sitting, on 4th September, during which—according to Mrs. Sidgwick—'it was never completely dark, and sometimes the light was very fair', a melon and a small wicker table were brought from behind the medium and placed on the table round which the company sat. The most curious phenomenon was perhaps the occasional sounding of notes on a piano behind Eusapia and seemingly out of her reach. Mrs. Sidgwick's unpublished notes (still in the S.P.R. archives) of one such incident at the seance of 21st August go as follows:

The final sounding of notes occurred at the end of séance and when the light had been partially turned up so that key board of piano could be seen. R. had both E.'s hands—her arms stretched across the table to him. I had my left foot without shoe on her right foot and my right foot more or less in contact with her left foot, but the foot moved a good deal and I could not answer for contact all the time. If E. did the piano at all it must have been with her *right* foot and it would almost certainly have been seen.

At a meeting of the S.P.R. on 26th October 1894 Lodge gave an account of his experiences. He stated his definite conclusion that some at any rate of the phenomena were undisputably genuine. He averred that the sitters were perfectly calm and cool, not susceptible to hypnosis, and well aware of the necessity for careful control of the medium—control which they

aided by 'continually calling out to each other as to the security or otherwise of that portion of the body of the medium which they had in trust'. Collusion on the part of the sitters was unthinkable. The remote and uninhabited nature of the island would have rendered the introduction of a confederate impossible, even apart from the fact that Lodge himself had prepared the seance room beforehand and locked it during sittings. Lodge was particularly struck by the fact that when effects were produced upon a distant object Eusapia would often make sympathetic movements:

When the accordion is being played, the fingers of the medium are moving in a thoroughly appropriate manner, and the process reminds one of the twitching of a dog's legs when he is supposed to be dreaming that he is chasing a hare. It is as if Eusapia were dreaming that she was fingering an instrument, and dreaming it so vividly that the instrument is actually played. It is as if a dog dreamt of the chase with such energy that a distant hare was really captured and killed, as by a phantom dog.<sup>1</sup>

At the same meeting of the Society Mrs. Sidgwick gave a short account of her own and her husband's experiences at Carqueiranne, and Sidgwick said that 'although he kept his mind open to suggestions as to methods of producing an illusory belief that a medium's hand was being held when it was in fact free, he felt bound to say that none of the methods of this kind that were known to him appeared to him to afford an admissible explanation in the present case'.<sup>2</sup>

Hodgson however was not similarly convinced of the authenticity even of the most striking phenomena. When he read Lodge's account in manuscript he cabled to Myers (23rd November 1894) in an attempt to prevent its publication. Myers said to Lodge in a letter of the same date that he felt inclined to reply to Hodgson as the Delphic Apollo did to the Locrians: 'If you who have never seen the cattle-bearing Libya know it better than I who have, I greatly admire your cleverness.' Hodgson did not succeed in preventing publication, but in the April 1895 *S.P.R. Journal* he printed a strong criticism of the sittings on the island. His principal points were these:

1. The accounts of the seances are not sufficiently specific as

<sup>1</sup> *J.S.P.R.* VI (1894), p. 333.

<sup>2</sup> *J.S.P.R.* VI (1894), p. 345.

to the exact way in which the hands and feet of the medium were secured. Previous records showed that during sittings Eusapia habitually indulged in violent spasmodic movements, as a result of which she might manage to persuade both controllers to hold the same hand, or might even be able to replace a hand or a foot with a dummy. We are entitled to assume that the same movements occurred at the island; and also that Eusapia as usual managed to dictate the conditions of holding so that, e.g., her hand or foot rested on top of that of the person 'controlling' her. In no case is it clear that one investigator was controlling *both* hands at a crucial juncture, thus ensuring that one hand was not doing duty for two. One freed hand would be sufficient to produce most of the phenomena reported.

2. Various table levitations might be explained if Eusapia had had a strap looped round her chest and shoulders under her blouse, with a hook hanging down from it at the front. She could have attached the hook to the table, and then have raised the table by leaning backwards, even keeping it level by pressing against a leg.

3. The cases of observed movements, and of appearance of hands, at a distance from the medium can be accounted for on the supposition that she had a rod concealed about her, perhaps with a dummy hand at its end, or had rigged up secret cords or threads in the seance room beforehand. She was not searched before sittings, and slender cords or rods would have escaped the notice of the investigators in dim light.

In private Hodgson expressed himself even more strongly. In a letter to Mrs. Sidgwick dated 1st February 189[5] he announced that Richet, in common with all previous investigators of Eusapia, was entirely ignorant of methods of trickery.

Lodge's conviction [Hodgson went on] I do not regard as of special value, partly because, as I recall (rightly or wrongly) [wrongly—see *J.S.P.R.* II, p. 290] he was impressed by Eglinton, but chiefly because of the *detailed notes*, wh., *pace* Myers & Lodge—I cannot think of without a shudder. *Myers* (bless his dear soul!) *can* be as sceptical as anyone about some individual person or thing, but if he once gets his sympathies enlisted,—his evidence isn't worth 2 straws. This is part and parcel of his big, poetic divine genuine soul, & he can't help it!

Myers, Lodge, Richet and Ochorowicz were not convinced by Hodgson's arguments, and each of them wrote a reply.<sup>1</sup> Hodgson, they remarked, had made unjustified inferences about the inadequacy of their hand and foot controls by trading on the fact that details are not given in the reports, and even by interpreting words pedantically. Three of the investigators were very experienced sitters—Myers observed that he had had 367 seances before the S.P.R. was founded, and that if, after so much practice, he could not be certain of his hand-holds, he had better stop sitting or else take a back seat. All were fully aware of the stock ways in which fraudulent mediums could free a hand. They held Eusapia's hands right across the palms and fingers, frequently the thumbs too, and there was no room for another sitter's hand to grasp it as well. Myers remarked that furthermore it would have been impossible for him to mistake Lodge's massive and muscular hand for Eusapia's small one, or to mistake the quivering and perspiring hand of Eusapia for a stuffed glove. Eusapia did not writhe spasmodically or appear to be trying to free herself; during some phenomena she was visibly held; sometimes both her hands *were* held by one person. There were on some occasions even phenomena when both hands were held by one person and both feet by another. Once a large table (48 lb.), visible to the sitters, was raised, moved and overturned when Myers was between Eusapia and it. It was four feet from Myers' back, and Eusapia was tightly wedged between Lodge and Myers. Her movements, or rather lack of them, could be distinctly seen.

It could, I think, not be said that Hodgson emerged clearly victorious from these arguments; though he certainly emerged undaunted. It was arranged that the matter should be put to further test in the summer. Eusapia was invited for a protracted stay at Myers' house in Cambridge. Careful preparations were made for her reception and investigation. A practice sitting was held at which, to Myers' amusement, Sidgwick threw himself under the table, his long white beard trailing on the floor, to practise holding Eusapia's legs. Eusapia arrived at Cambridge on 30th July 1895, and at first things seemed promising. At 7.30 p.m. on the evening of the next day, Wednesday, 31st July, while it was still daylight, she gave an

<sup>1</sup> *J.S.P.R.* VII (1895), pp. 55-79.

impromptu sitting to Myers and his wife. Myers' contemporary notes (now in the S.P.R. archives) are as follows:

After getting raps at two deal tables in turn, we sat at a small deal table, and EM secured Eusapia as follows, at Eusapia's request. E's foot on Eusapia's two feet—steadily kept there throughout what follows—E's right hand on Eusapia's knees [and again steadily kept there]. Eusapia's two hands fully in sight, during some of the levitations resting on EM's left hand & arm, wh. lay on the table, in daylight, about 18 inches from my eyes. During other levitations I held Eu's right hand well up in the air & E held her left hand on top of or an inch or two above the table—no thumb or part of hand of Eu's under table—

From my position I cd. always see Eu's body to waist & her arms & hands, & when table was up in air I cd. see her whole body, knees with EM's hand on, & feet with EM's foot on; thin plain deal leg of table being an insignificant obstacle to my view.

Under these circumstances the table rose in the air with all feet off the ground five or six times during about ten minutes. We had time between the elevations to discuss our *positions*, wh. we decided that we could not improve. Table rose about six or eight inches, & remained in the air from one to four seconds. We were of course on the look out especially for this phenomenon, & each rise was precluded by swaying and agitation of the table, so that our attention was each time fully on the alert. The séance being impromptu, we had no note-paper & cannot be certain as to the *number* of elevations. On each occasion it appeared to us that no known force cd. have raised & sustained the table as we in fact saw it raised & sustained.

Unfortunately the remaining twenty sittings were of nothing like this level of interest, the phenomena being, on the whole, distinctly less impressive than those witnessed at Carqueiranne by the Sidgwicks. This was all the more unfortunate because various famous scientists—Lord Rayleigh, J. J. Thomson, Francis Darwin—were persuaded to attend some of the sittings; to say nothing of the Maskelynes, father and son, and of Richet and Lodge, all of whom attended at least once. The conditions under which most of the sittings were held were these. The party sat round a table in the spacious drawing-room of Leckhampton House, Eusapia's hands being controlled by the sitters on either side of her and her feet either by those sitters

or by someone lying under the table. One of the sitters (usually Miss Alice Johnson) sat at a separate table, often in a part of the room separated from the rest by curtains, and took down the sitters' comments by the light of a shaded lamp or candle.<sup>1</sup> Eusapia's staple phenomena—table levitations, touches and grasps of the sitters, and movements of small articles or pieces of furniture not too far from her—were fairly frequent. The light was generally dim or non-existent, but those who held Eusapia's hands and feet felt, on the whole, comparatively certain that they had not lost control. However, some suspicious circumstances were noticed quite early on. Eusapia was very difficult over the controls she would permit. She would generally not allow one sitter to control both hands (which would, of course, have made substitution of one hand for two difficult) and she frequently insisted on laying her hand on top of the controller's. She refused to be tied in any way and sometimes objected to her legs being held. At the second sitting, on 3rd August, Mrs. H. M. Stanley (Myers' sister-in-law and wife of the explorer), who had Eusapia's right hand resting on hers, noted that during phenomena the hand seemed to be narrowed or partially withdrawn. After this sitting Mrs. Sidgwick recorded her conviction that Eusapia executed the touches with a freed hand; a view which she found grounds for expressing again after various subsequent sittings.

However, not all the phenomena which occurred could be explained on any such simple hypothesis. There were, for instance, the curious protuberances from Eusapia's body which some sitters occasionally observed. At one point the third sitting, 4th August 1895, Eusapia was standing up; one of her hands was held by Myers, the other by Miss Johnson. Mrs. Myers sat on the floor and held the feet. Under these conditions Myers and Miss Johnson were touched. They raised Eusapia's hands in the air, and again Miss Johnson was pushed from behind, and a nearby chair was moved a number of times. Looking upwards, Mrs. Myers could see against the ceiling, which was illuminated by light from the note-taker's candle, several kinds of protrusion from Eusapia's body. She listed them as follows, in a statement preserved in the S.P.R. archives:

<sup>1</sup> These notes are in the S.P.R. archives and I have drawn upon them in what follows.

I. An arm exactly like Eusapia's in which I saw even the place where the sleeve ends with the thickening of the outline & wrinkles of the sleeve & edge of under cuff (which is white). This projection had hand & fingers and held the chair. II. Two long simultaneous prolongations—like neck of swan; one of which I saw prod Mr. Myers on the back three times with force—but without visible hand—the other went round to Miss Johnson & was lost to my view—III. A kind of stump linked to the body by a narrower neck coming from about the hips or flank which struck Mr. Myers in the lower ribs (he says). This I think also struck me—I was struck on the thigh—but I could not see in the low shadow what it *was* that struck me. No bending of the medium's body visible to me—no movement of legs or feet.

Mrs. Myers and Mrs. Stanley changed places, and Mrs. Stanley saw a hand growing out of Eusapia's back and touching Myers' back. After the sitting Mrs. Myers helped Eusapia to undress, and folded up her clothes for her. There was no sign of any machinery. Other sitters, for instance Lord Rayleigh, perceived similar, though somewhat less spectacular, effects at later sittings.

Another extremely curious phenomenon which took place in several sittings was a billowing out of the window curtains. Thus at the end of the fourth sitting, when Eusapia was no longer held, Miss Alice Johnson brought in the photographic lamp and put it on the table, unshaded, but with its back to Eusapia. Eusapia was now sitting at a little distance from the table, with her back towards, but clear of, the curtains of a large window. Richet was sitting on her left, Rayleigh on her right. A curtain (not one in front of an open pane) swelled out behind Lord Rayleigh several times, on some occasions as much as 2½ feet, Professor Thomson thought. Eusapia was clearly visible to all, and so were the curtain movements. Lord Rayleigh put his head up against the curtain and felt it pressing against him several times as it moved. He put his hand between Eusapia's back and the curtain and felt along the floor between her and it, but found nothing. The movement was as if the curtain were blown out by a wind. It did not, however, bulge out from the top, but from some distance down.

The situation after the series of sittings had progressed some way was thus ambiguous. There were on the one hand clear



case. No doubt Eusapia was kindly treated at Cambridge, and no doubt she hugely enjoyed the croquet, shopping and other fuss. But that she found the investigators congenial as persons I find it hard to believe; for what points of contact could there possibly have been between the ignorant and earthy Eusapia, who was liable upon awakening from her trances to throw herself into the arms of the nearest male sitter with unmistakable intent, and a group of earnest and highly educated enquirers into the inmost secrets of the Cosmos? And it is certainly not true that Hodgson was the first to describe Eusapia's methods of trickery; nor is it true that it was only after Hodgson's discoveries that continental investigators noted Eusapia's propensity to cheat if she could when power was low. As a matter of fact this had been pointed out by Ochorowicz (from personal experience) in the *S.P.R. Journal* for April 1895.<sup>1</sup> It would of course have been quite reasonable for Hodgson to have relaxed control had his intention simply been to find what modes of trickery Eusapia generally employed and to improve control at later sittings. But Eusapia's trickery, which was of a simple and well-known kind, and certainly not such as could have produced more than a fraction of the phenomena at the Île Roubaud, was in fact used to brand all her phenomena as imposture, and herself as merely a vulgar cheat. Lodge 'did not see eye to eye with Hodgson in the matter':<sup>2</sup> and I am inclined to see eye to eye with Lodge.

In the *S.P.R. Journal* for April 1896 Sidgwick wrote sternly that a full account of the Cambridge sittings had not been printed because

. . . it has not been the practice of the S.P.R. to direct attention to the performances of any so-called 'medium' who has been proved guilty of systematic fraud . . . In accordance, therefore, with our established custom, I propose to ignore her performances for the future, as I ignore those of other persons engaged in the same mischievous trade.

And when, a year or two later, Myers wished to re-open investigations because of startling reports from the continent, Sidgwick squashed him by remarking: 'I cannot see any reason

<sup>1</sup> *J.S.P.R.* VII (1895), p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Lord Rayleigh (the younger) 14th Nov. 1924 in the *S.P.R.* archives.

for departing from our deliberate decision to have nothing further to do with any medium whom we might find guilty of intentional and systematic fraud.<sup>1</sup>

Richet however did not accept Sidgwick's and Hodgson's view of the matter. He continued to experiment with Eusapia and became absolutely convinced that at times she produced genuine phenomena. He wrote to Lodge on 28th October 1898 that he had seen extra hands in half-light whilst Eusapia's hands were visibly held. He had once grasped and held one of these supernumerary hands for 25 seconds. Late in 1898 he persuaded Myers who, though disgusted with Eusapia, had, like Lodge, never completely lost faith in the phenomena, to come to his house at Paris where Eusapia had been giving some remarkable sittings. Myers attended two sittings, on 1st and 3rd December 1898; the other sitters were Richet, Th. Flournoy (a distinguished Swiss psychologist), the Duc and Duchesse de Montebello (the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg and his wife), Emil Boirac (present at the second sitting only), and Mme Richet, who acted as note-taker.<sup>2</sup> In the first sitting the light was better than Myers had ever seen it with Eusapia—a duplex lamp, unscreened though turned low, a fire, and moon-light coming through a window. It was 'light enough to see every finger of Eusapia; every feature; every detail of her dress'. Eusapia's hands were always far apart, and during all important phenomena both were visible; both her feet were held at all important times by an observer underneath the table. She made no attempt to juggle her hands or her feet. Under these conditions a zither, which had been placed in a curtained-off window recess behind the medium (the window being shuttered and bolted) was moved and played. It was then taken from the recess, brought round behind the sitters (so that they were between it and Eusapia), played again, and brought over Myers' shoulder on to the table. An amorphous and cloudy-looking projection emerged from behind the window curtains, raised the zither, struck eight or ten notes upon it, and then disappeared. While both of Eusapia's hands were visibly held,

<sup>1</sup> *P.S.P.R.* XLV (1938), p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Flournoy's account of the first sitting will be found in his *Esprits et Mediums*, Geneva, 1911, pp. 405-6; Boirac's account of the second sitting in his *Psychic Science*, London, 1918, pp. 311-14. Madame Richet's Notes, seemingly edited and translated by Myers, are in the *S.P.R.* archives.

Myers put his hand inside the curtains; it was there grasped by another hand. Amongst other phenomena which occurred were billowing of the heavy window curtains and touchings of the sitters.

At the second sitting similar phenomena took place. The light was somewhat lower, but Eusapia was still visibly controlled. One of the sitters held the zither behind the curtain. It was seized, played upon, and carried to the table. Myers was grasped through the curtain by a strong hand.

Myers was fully convinced, and when he returned to England he proposed to publish an account of his experiences. Hodgson was at that time editor of the S.P.R.'s *Journal and Proceedings*. He seems to have felt it his duty to prosecute a sort of Holy War against fraudulent mediums, and had been planning to sponsor an article by J. G. Smith which should constitute 'some definite classing' of Eusapia 'amongst the ranks of tricksters'. He was distinctly put out by Myers' reconversion. 'All my plans would have gone smoothly as a bell,' he wrote on 17th January 1899, perhaps to Miss Alice Johnson, 'and would have redounded to the credit of the S.P.R. so far as I can see, but I am quite open to call for criticisms of my intentions. Now however . . . the situation has changed.' Myers' notes (or Mme Richet's notes, rather) he described as 'worthless' (and they are indeed on the abbreviated side); he was himself 'absolutely convinced that Eusapia is a trickster from beginning to end'. In the upshot all that was published was a letter from Myers stating that as a result of recent experiences he had once again been converted to belief in Eusapia's phenomena.<sup>1</sup> No further action was taken. This was, it seems to me, a very great pity. By the time that the S.P.R., in consequence of further reports from the continent, at last got round to publishing a lengthy paper about Eusapia<sup>2</sup> she was almost at the end of her career, and ten years had been lost in which the experimental ingenuity of Lodge or Rayleigh might just possibly have resolved some puzzles which still remain. Though, indeed I very much doubt whether the Sidgwick group's

<sup>1</sup> *J.S.P.R.* IX (1899), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> The Hon. Everard Feilding, W. W. Baggally, and Hereward Carrington, 'Report on a Series of Sittings with Eusapia Palladino', *P.S.P.R.* XXIII (1909), pp. 309-569.

otherworldly interests would have been furthered by the investigations.

That there are very considerable puzzles about these phenomena appears to me undoubted, even on the basis of such tiny portions of the evidence as I have been able to mention. And in the particular case of Eusapia the puzzles were highlighted by the 1909 paper mentioned above. The principal sitters—the Hon. Everard Feilding, Hereward Carrington, and W. W. Baggally—had as thorough a knowledge and experience of trick methods as any trio of investigators ever assembled; they visited Eusapia at Naples on her home terrain; and as persons they were far more congenial to her than the Cambridge intellectuals. In eleven sittings held in the middle one of the three adjacent hotel rooms which they occupied they obtained the most astounding phenomena, sometimes in good light, almost always in a light sufficient for adequate visual checking. The minute by minute account of phenomena and conditions of control which they dictated to a stenographer is without doubt the most interesting record of its kind ever published. Objects were moved, and an accordion played, inside a cabinet (a corner of the room which had been curtained off) while the medium was visibly and securely held outside it; objects were carried out of the cabinet and placed on the table; the sitters were touched and gripped by hands visible and invisible which sometimes melted away in their grasp; amorphous heads, things like primitive cabbages on stalks, and other knobbly excrescences were extruded between the curtains of the cabinet; the table round which the sitters were grouped was completely levitated many times; and a small footstool in the room was several times moved along the floor in clear view and certainly not attached to any strings.

These sittings took place outside the period with which this book is concerned, and I cannot give a full account of them. The following year, after a disastrous visit to the United States, Eusapia's powers, whatever they were, seem to have faded completely. She died in 1918.

It would be unwise to generalise too widely on the basis of the career of this somewhat doubtful character. None the less my own feeling is that those who might be called the die-hard members of the Sidgwick group—especially Richard Hodgson

and Miss Alice Johnson—were unduly impressed by the early demonstrations of the possibilities of malobservations and errors of memory in reports of seances.

The early demonstrations and illustrations of malobservation and errors of memory seemed to establish these points:

1. That even in good light, and under conditions favourable to observation, an intelligent sitter can be so distracted and misled that a piece of legerdemain which will lead to the subsequent production of a *fait accompli* (let us say some writing on a slate) can be carried out under his very eyes.

2. That in darkness it is similarly almost impossible even for an intelligent and alert sitter to maintain continuous tactual observation of a medium's hands, etc., and so assure himself that the phenomena (which he does not *see* in progress) are not fraudulent.

3. That in dim light, emotional or credulous sitters may grossly misinterpret phenomena which they actually witness; may, e.g., mistake a mask and some muslin drapery for a deceased person known to them.

In the case of Eusapia Palladino (not to mention that of Home) phenomena—and ones which I do not think that any conjurer has ever duplicated under comparable conditions—were at times actually *seen in progress* in fair light by competent and seemingly balanced observers; and it is not at all obvious (at least to me) that it is reasonable to set these phenomena unceremoniously aside (which Hodgson and Miss Johnson wanted to do) on the pretext that the witnesses of them are bound to have been hopelessly misled. In 1908 Everard Feilding became so exasperated by Miss Alice Johnson's armchair scepticism about the Naples sittings that he exclaimed in a letter to her dated 6th December 1908: 'I wish to goodness you had come out when I wired so that instead of sniffing at us when we return you might be sniffed at yourself by Podmore.'<sup>1</sup>

The rectitude of those not exposed to temptation can be very annoying. However, in fairness to Miss Johnson it must be added that she was as willing to impugn her own powers of observation as those of others. Nothing in the whole Eusapia story is odder than the document<sup>2</sup> in which Miss Johnson, writing about the Cambridge sittings some years after their

<sup>1</sup> S.P.R. archives.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 239n above.

occurrence, tries to convince herself that on the occasion when Mrs. Myers had seen protrusions from Eusapia's body, whilst Myers controlled Eusapia's right arm and Miss Johnson her left, she (Miss Johnson) had lost control of herself in the excitement of the moment and suffered from an hallucination.

I believe that at an early stage of the sitting I let Eusapia's left arm go without knowing it, and that my impression of holding it the rest of the time was what may be described as a hallucinatory after-image of my actual holding at the beginning. It is possible that she substituted some other object, which produced on me the illusion of an arm, but I am more inclined to think that it was an actual hallucination on my part.

There is a certain appealing humility about this statement. Had Hodgson been in Miss Johnson's place he would almost certainly have alleged that it was Myers who was led astray.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The case of Eusapia Palladino affords, of course, splendid opportunities to *esprits forts*; their usual approach to the 1908 sittings is to recount her well-known methods of eluding control (which have already been mentioned), and to suppose that such was the investigators' 'will to believe' that they allowed her to put them into practice. See, e.g., D. H. Rawcliffe, *Illusions and Delusions of the Supernatural and the Occult*, New York, 1959, pp. 320–32. But the 1908 trio of investigators, as is quite apparent from their report, were well aware of Eusapia's little ways and, if they suffered from a 'will to believe', they had at any rate managed to suppress it until 1908.

Podmore suggested (*J.S.P.R.* XIV (1909), pp. 172–6, and *The Newer Spiritualism*, London, 1910, pp. 114–44) that most of the phenomena in the more exciting 1908 sittings could be explained if one assumed that Eusapia had deceived Baggally into letting go of the hand or foot which he was controlling; Baggally's reply (*J.S.P.R.* XIV (1909), pp. 213–38) is to the effect that Podmore simply ignores phenomena which do not fit into his theory. Baggally appears to me to be right. C.E.M. Hansel, *E.S.P.: A Scientific Evaluation*, New York, 1966, p. 212, gives several reasons why the conditions under which Eusapia sat in Naples were 'highly favourable' to illusion; but they stray almost as far from the facts as his criticism of Mrs. Piper (see below, Appendix B).