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Etta Wriedt (1859-1942)

Throughout the pages of spiritualisms history, there have been a number of physical mediums who have been able to produce the phenomena of direct voice. All forms of mediumship are a very special gift. Trance, Clairvoyance, Clairaudience, automatic writing give considerable and valuable testimony to the workings of spirit. Materialisation, if it ever comes back into the light would be fantastic. But today we have what is probably the most magnificent manifestation in the form of Independent Direct Voice.

There are few mediums to-day who are able to produce this phenomenon. But, at the turn of the 20th century there were quite a number. Mrs. Everitt, Mr. Cecil Husk, Mr. CE Williams and George Spriggs, but to name a few but the one that stands out was Mrs. Etta Wriedt.

Etta Wriedt was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1859 and died 3 July 1942 aged 83 years. Etta was a professional medium who ever only charged one dollar for a successful séance. She would never sit in a cabinet and never went into trance. Quite often she joined in the conversation with those from the world of spirit who were communicating.

The Control of Mrs. Wriedt was a spirit called Dr. John Sharp, who professes to having been born in Glasgow, in the 18th century but lived all his life in the United States as an apothecary farmer. He died in Evansville, Indiana.

Another control of Etta Wriedt during some of the five trips she made to Great Britain was that of the famous "John King" or better known as "Sir Henry Morgan" of 250 years ago. King at that time was the control of Mr. Husk a blind medium who used to manage Mrs. Wriedt's séances whilst in England. He explained that he was better acquainted with English people than Sharp, and he would be able to obtain better results from the English sitters. However Sharp, was always in the background, and on visits to Scotland, Sharp took over control again.

Mrs. Wriedt came to Britain for the first time in at the invitation of WT Stead in 1911, (then editor of a psychic journal "*Borderland*") she was then at the age of 51. (Stead, died the following year, 1912, on the Titanic). She came again in 1912 and 1913 when Admiral W. Usbourne Moore made the arrangements. Again in 1915 and 1919 but during this time her sittings were mainly confined to Scotland.

During the sittings in Britain, for which John King claimed responsibility of all the phenomenon, flowers were taken from vases and handed to sitters, invisible fingers often touched the sitters who were also rapped by the trumpet to urge a reply when a person hesitated to answer promptly after being spoken to. Luminous discs as bright as the moon were seen to move around the inside of the circle. Sitters were often sprinkled with drops of water, wafted with cool air and heavy objects around the room displaced. Stead frequently communicated and gave many particulars of his death. He said he was struck on the head and never felt the actual sensation of drowning.

Mrs. Wriedt could clairvoyantly read names that were shown to her. When she called out the name and if it was recognised by one of the sitters, it would immediately be heard in the trumpet. If a name met with no recognition, John King's voice would break the silence saying. "You had better clear out, my friend, nobody knows you."

Sir William Barrett heard voices simultaneously with Mrs. Wriedt. Professor Henry Sidgwick came through.

"Mrs Wriedt," writes Barrett, "doubtless had heard the professors name, but he died before she visited England, and I doubt if she, or many others who knew him by name, were aware that he stammered badly. So I asked the voice; 'Are you all right now?' not referring to his stammering. Immediately the voice replied; 'You mean the impediment in my speech, but I do not stutter now.' I went to Mrs. Wriedt's séances in a somewhat sceptical spirit, but I came to the conclusion that she was a genuine and remarkable medium, and has given abundant proof to others, beside myself that the voices and the contents of the messages given are wholly beyond the range of trickery or collusion".

Mr William Jeffrey, a merchant from Glasgow, became so interested in Mrs. Wriedt's mediumship, that he invited her to a number of séances in his own home.

The first voice that was heard was that of Mr. Jeffries wife, who welcomed all there to her house, addressing several by name including Mr. Galloway, Mrs. Birrell, and a visitor from London. Her voice, which was quite clear, said: "O Willie, I'm awfu' glad to be here, an' speak in my home to you and all these friends." My wife addressed us in her earnest, homely and rapid way, "I trust you will have a pleasant evening." Then she went round the room and spoke to

each member of the family. The voice never altered when talking to a Bella or Sally in a loving way, or prefixed 'Mr.' or 'Mrs.', to a persons whom my wife would have addressed in that way.

Fifteen of the Seventeen sitters received a message, I think they were satisfied and many were delighted. Owing to my wife being able to manifest through Mrs. Coates some months previously, I had looked for her to make herself known according to her promise on that occasion. Yet, what took place was beyond my wildest anticipations. It was simply marvelous. The medium Mrs. Wriedt was a stranger, whom I met for the first time that morning. The séance was hurriedly convened by wire and phone, and took place in a room hastily prepared for the purpose. If the results are not evidence for spirit return, then I am at a loss to know what could be more valuable or important.

Mrs Wriedt was the proof of her own genuineness. She was never in trance and talked naturally through all of her séances, often giving the names and descriptions of spirit visitors, and indicating for whom they have come to communicate with. While talking she was often interrupted by a spirit voice, and the two would talk simultaneously. Then the voice can be heard in full light as well as in the darkness, though, for obvious reasons the latter condition is best. Two voices were often heard speaking at the same moment about matters unknown to the medium or each other. Sometimes three, and on very rare occasions four. A voice has been heard to sing whilst another one talked. One gentleman was reported to have heard it when the medium was downstairs in the drawing room, forty feet in distance, with the séance room door locked.

Mrs Wriedt, who spoke only her natural language of Yankee, not even proper English, yet spirits have been heard to speak Arabic, Croatian, Serbian, Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Hindustani, Spanish, Italian, Norwegian, Welsh, Scotch and Gaelic.

An attempt to throw discredit on Mrs. Wriedt's mediumship was made in Christiania in August, 1912, by professor Birkenhead and state chemist L. Schmeick. They reported that the noises in the trumpet were caused by Lycopodium, a mildly inflammable powder, used by druggists to coat pills. The facts however, were very thin and other chemists held the report to ridicule, it was also discovered that Professor Birkenhead was extremely deaf and was unable to judge voices at all.

Sources (With modifications)
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