

Biography of Emily S. French (1831-1912)

A resident of Rochester, New York for most of her adult life, Emily French (1831 to June 22, 1912) was a gifted direct-voice medium through whom much apparent wisdom was communicated. She was investigated primarily by Edward C. Randall, a prominent Buffalo trail lawyer, who sat with her more than 700 times over a 20-year period and wrote several books about her mediumship, and also by Dr. Isaac Funk and Professor James Hyslop.

Randall first sat with French in 1892 when a friend asked him to accompany him. "This was an unexplored world to me," Randall wrote. "I went, and found there two others, both men of national reputation. We sat in a dark room for two hours, and heard what purported to be voices, though they were only faint whispers. We were not at all satisfied, but could not condemn, because we did not understand...We did not then believe that the whispers came from the great beyond, but, mystified, we determined to know what they were."¹

After satisfying himself that Mrs. French was a genuine medium and that he was hearing from "spirit people," including his mother and father, Randall began having Mrs. French sit in his (Randall's) home in order to rule out any kind of trickery. He was told that a spirit engineer must magnetize his room before he and the others present could hear their voices. "In my investigations, covering many years, in the room in my own home devoted to such work, thousands of men whom I have known personally have talked with me, using their own tongues," Randall offered. "I have recognized their voices; they have recalled and related countless facts and incidents of their daily life and have proved beyond question their identity."²



The whispers became loud voices as Mrs. French developed over the next few years, the loudest one being that of her primary control, an American Indian known as Red Jacket. Randall pointed out that each voice had individuality and sometimes spoke in a foreign tongue. "When new spirits come for the first time and take on the condition of vocalization, there is often a similarity in tone quality, but this soon passes away, as they grow accustomed to using their voices in this way," he continued his explanation. "The voices of those accustomed to speak never change, and are easily recognized. There is no similarity of thought or words."³ Randall further mentioned that the strength of the voices varied greatly, much as they do in earth life.

"As I shut out the light, seating myself opposite Mrs. French, clouds within the room for a moment seemed to form and roll like smoke from a great fire," Randall described one sitting. "Soon they passed away, and non-luminous points of light became apparent and slowly floated. Then there appeared above my head the ribbon or bar of magnetic substance that is always

present when the conditions are right for speech with those beyond. Mrs. French, through her psychic sight saw a great number of people passing and repassing, while chemists manipulated the etheric and physical material into the exact condition for use in speech.”⁴

Randall went on to explain that in a moment he could hear the voices and they could hear him. “I should speak to them and they to me. They would see me perfectly, though I could not see them.”⁵ He added that because Mrs. French was deaf, she often did not hear what the spirits had to say.

While many of the early messages were of the evidential type, Randall considered them a waste of time as he was more interested in the “new philosophy,” including information on the meaning of life, the nature of the afterlife, spiritual evolution, and other higher truths. Thus, his books about Mrs. French are mostly devoid of the usual evidential messages documented by other researchers. He mentions that his father communicated with him, but does not comment as to whether the communication was veridical. Likewise, when Dr. Funk discusses Mrs. French in his book, *The Psychic Riddle*, Funk stated that the father of one of the sitters communicated, but made no mention of whether the voice was recognized as that of the father or whether the father communicated evidential information. Both Randall and Funk appear to have been satisfied with the fact that they ruled out all possible methods of fraud, including confederates inside or outside the circle, ventriloquism, hidden megaphones, hypnotism, and collective hallucinations. Both continually mentioned the feeble voice of Mrs. French and the strong, masculine voices of Red Jacket and other communicators. It was also noted that Mrs. French did not accept payment for her sittings and that she was deaf.

Funk arranged for Mrs. French to travel to New York City and be observed by him and some friends under strict test conditions. At one sitting, they heard a strange, loud laugh which seemed to emanate about six to eight feet from the medium.

Funk described it as a deep basso to almost a treble and noted that the location of the voice seemed to change to different parts of the room. Red Jacket explained that it was for their benefit in ruling out ventriloquism, the theory most advanced by skeptics. Funk also had Mrs. French hold water in her mouth during some of the voices to further rule out that possibility. He also asked her to laugh at the same time as they heard the strange laughs and noted there was no resemblance.

“We live,” Red Jacket communicated, “as real lives, more real – on this side than we did when on earth. The laws that govern life are the same here as with you. In fact, everything here so real that many who come over here – die as you call it – do not know for a long time that they are dead. A great part of the work to be done here is to instruct the dead in the true science of progress. To the circles held by this medium we often bring dazed and earthbound spirits, so as to be able to reach their consciousness through earth surroundings.”⁶

One evening Randall and the others sitting with Mrs. French heard from a stranger who said he was a physician living in Philadelphia. He was apparently brought in by other spirits who said that the doctor was having trouble separating from his physical body. “When he finally became fully conscious, he told his name, the number of his residence, and much more about himself,” Randall recorded. “The papers the next morning had a full account of his death early the evening before.”⁷

Much of Randall’s work was involved in “rescuing” these souls who did not comprehend the fact that they had left the earth vibration. “Some are in such a state that the helpers in the higher life cannot reach them, and it is only by uniting our forces and working together that these poor souls are brought to consciousness and shown how they can develop and progress,” he explained. “Those earthbound ones are the spirit people who need our help.”⁸

At one sitting with Funk, nothing was heard for a long time. Finally, when Red Jacket spoke, he explained that the band of spirit involved in effecting the mediumship was occupied with something else. Red Jacket admonished Funk for his suspicious nature. "Now, this may seem easy to you, and I do not know how to make you understand that any act of suspicion like that increases manifold the difficulty that we have of holding the medium's strength," Red Jacket told Funk and the other sitters at a June 5, 1905 sitting.⁹

At an earlier sitting, Red Jacket explained why the direct voice, also called the independent voice, is rare. "You understand the mind works though the brain," Red Jacket stated. "But to the mental force is added what may be called the vital force which is more closely connected with the entire nervous system.. These forces produce what may be called electro-magnetism. Follow me closely. Now, we have found that there are some mortals born with a double spinal cord. This is very rarely a fact. This second spinal cord generates the force we need for our particular purpose, that is, to produce the vibrations which you call 'voices.' So delicate and important is the force produced by this second spinal cord, that a medicine man stands behind this medium all the time we use this force, and brings a pressure to bear at the end of the cord, near the base of the brain. This explains why this medium says she feels a tapping going on at the base of her brain while we are talking."¹⁰

In addition to Red Jacket, a frequent communicator was a "Dr. Hossack," said to be the same Dr. David Hossack who attended Alexander Hamilton after his fatal duel with Aaron Burr.

Randall put many questions to Hossack. At one sitting, Randall asked Dr. Hossack to explain the spirit body. "There is an inner, etheric body, composed of minute particles, of such substance that it can, and does, pass into spirit life," Dr. Hossack replied. "Your outer bodies are too gross and material to effect the change. The inner body is but the mind, the thought, the soul of the person. It is in the semblance of the material body, but whether beautiful or ugly, strong or weak, depends upon the inner life of the person to whom belongs that particular spark of the great radiance called life, or God."¹¹

Randall wrote that in addition to Red Jacket and Dr. Hossack, he was lectured by Channing, Beecher, Tallmadge, Ingersoll, Hough, Segoyewatha, and hundreds of others. "Lectures from such men, speaking in their own independent voices, materialized for the time, leaves no doubt as to what follows death," he stated. "I have never heard such matchless oratory, such sermons, such thought expressed by the living as I have from the so-called dead. They tell me that we are as much spirit to-day as we will ever be. We are not all that we can become, but there will be no sudden acquisition. Death itself will add little to present knowledge, nor will it enlarge our opportunities to any marked degree."¹²



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See biography of Edward C. Randall for more information on Emily S. French

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- ¹ Heagerty, N. Riley, *The French Revelation*, Morris Publishing, 2000, p. 29
- ² Randall, Edward C. *The Dead Have Never Died*, Alfred A. Knopf., 1919, p. 147
- ³ Randall, Edward C. *Frontiers of the After-Life*, Alfred A. Knopf., 1922, p. 72
- ⁴ Randall, *The Dead*. p. 86
- ⁵ _____, pp. 86-87.
- ⁶ _____, p. 104
- ⁷ _____, p. 73
- ⁸ Heagerty, p. 81
- ⁹ Funk, Isaac, *The Psychic Riddle*, Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1907, p. 138
- ¹⁰ _____, p. 124
- ¹¹ Randall, *Frontiers*, p. 28
- ¹² Heagerty, p. 33