

# A TABLE TILTING COLLECTION

By **William E. Stoney**

The examples cited are provided as a relatively quick way to become acquainted with the table tilting field, or as I like to think of it, the best documented evidence available for the ability of the mind to move large pieces of matter without the use of hands or feet, i.e., macro psychokinesis or macro PK, for short.

The unconscious or conscious use of the hands or feet is the current explanation of all such accounts by the few skeptics who have even heard of table tilting phenomena. Table tilting is regarded as one of the by-products of the turn of the century's fascination with Spiritualism, which seemed to disappear as a result of the exposure of some of the most famous physical mediums as merely clever magicians. I believe that these examples show that explaining away all accounts of table tilting as fraudulent is precluded by the sheer number of accounts of the phenomena at "home circles" where no professional mediums were present, and that the sheer scale and variety of the table movements recorded precludes the unconscious muscle movement hypothesis that is the standard explanation for the movement. Similar movements have been reported for Ouija boards, pendulums and automatic writing. These phenomena also demonstrate that table tilting did not end with the Victorians.

1. *Psychokinesis: Mental Energy That Moves Matter*, by Michael H. Brown (1976). This is a rather extensive example. It is one of the most recent accounts and it covers relatively recent events, including the Philip experiments. It features Philip Jordan, who had an amazing ability with tables. It also includes pictures of table levitations by SORRAT, a group that operated until 1981. This group produced very pronounced table movements, including levitation to the ceiling. In contrast to Philip, they assumed they were dealing with spirits and some of the communications received appeared to confirm that assumption. I contacted the author, who claimed that while he was very young (24) when he wrote the book, the events he described happened just as he said.

2. Philip Jordan newspaper account by Michael Brown, April 7, 1975. I was able to find Brown's article on Jordan at the Binghamton newspaper. Its pictures and text add quite a bit to the section about him in the book.

3. *The Philip Story*, (Mid 1970s). This is a collection in itself, which contains several accounts of the Philip experiment by the people who conducted the tests. Philip is important because the table movements and rappings occurred in full light, were recorded and filmed, and were carried out every Thursday night for four years. Philip is the name of the imaginary ghost supposedly moving the table. Because the group invented Philip, the phenomena can reasonably be interpreted as the result of the integrated effect of the minds in the group over the table (and occasionally on the walls of the room around them) without resorting to the presence of spiritual entities.

4. *The Limits of Influence: Psychokinesis and the Philosophy of Science*, by Stephen E. Braude (1986). The book reviews the whole spectrum of physical effects produced by the turn of the century mediums. Braude points out that such phenomena were simply too well tested and documented to allow their offhand rejection by the scientific community as the product of fraud and the culpability of naive observers. The book includes in depth discussions of D.D. Home and Eusapia Paladino who were the all-time virtuosos of table tilting. The best example is found in the chapter on Kathleen Goligher. A very persistent and measurement-oriented engineer who focused his efforts on attempting to measure where the forces lifting the table originated as well as their magnitude investigated her over many years. He placed the medium on a scale and found that her weight increased by almost the weight of the table when the table levitated. He attributed the difference to be the increase in the unmeasured weights of the other members of the circle. He and the group assumed that they were dealing with spirit entities, but he made no claim of having proved this.

5. *Mysterious Psychic Forces*, by Camille Flammarion (1909). Flammarion was a famous French astronomer with an intense interest in psychical phenomena. He studied and tested the big name psychical mediums of the day and was in contact with the principal academic scientists in England and Europe who were similarly engaged. The relevant excerpts are focused on the table events, but it is impossible to dip into Flammarion without receiving information about the whole range of psychic phenomena as well as Flammarion's opinions on the necessity for the scientific establishment to deal with the problems raised by the very fact of their existence. The relevant excerpts are found in

- ..... 1. His chapter "Unknown Psychic Forces" focuses on some of his experiments with Eusapia Paladino and includes flash photographs of a completely levitated table.
- ..... 2. Parts of his chapter 'My First Experiments' deals with both the physical table phenomena and with mental phenomena, i.e., the messages obtained from table tiltings and rappings.
- ..... 3. The experiments of Count de Gasparin: He obtained total table levitation with a 191-pound man on it as well as rotations and levitations without any contact of hands. He noted that the table "must be handled cheerfully, lightly, and deftly, with confidence and authority, but without passion" to get the desired effects.
- ..... 4. The experiments and attempted explanations of Professor Thury. Thury was a fellow astronomer who concluded that the phenomena are positive facts; that an unknown substance produces them; and that the spirit hypothesis is not absurd.
- ..... 5. The Report of the Dialectical Society of London: The report contains the descriptions of the many séances that included table tilting and levitations. It is a most remarkable document that contains many confirmations of PK and other psychic phenomena. It includes one session in which all the people present turned their chairs around and knelt on them with their hands extending over the chair backs toward, but not touching the table. The table moved half a foot several times in both directions. The report contained such strong statements affirming the reality of the PK events that the Society that commissioned the study refused to print it. The committees published their own report.
- ..... 6. Sundry Experiments and Observations. This is a mixture of Flammarion's own experiments and collected stories. It includes much on table rappings and a flash photo of a levitated table produced by the medium Auguste Politi.
6. *Raymond, or Life and Death*, by Sir Oliver Lodge (1916). Many of the communications between members of the Lodge family and Oliver Lodge's deceased son Raymond came by means of home table sessions in which the table would respond to questions by tapping one leg when the correct letter was read from the alphabet. This certainly makes a case for the participation of spirits in table activities. Several of the sittings Lodge reported included considerable movement of the table. In one case, the table tilted against a ledge and then raised the other legs off the ground. When Lodge tried to press it down he "could not - [and experienced] a curious feeling like pressing on a pillar of air."
7. *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, by Alfred Russell Wallace (1874). Wallace's formulation of the theory of evolution by natural selection predated Darwin's publication, which, added to many other accomplishments, placed him high in the company of the advanced thinkers of his time. He was also a contemporary of Flammarion. His interest in the psychic, initiated by a demonstration of hypnotism, prompted a series of personal investigations including home table tilting. He became an outspoken believer in Spiritualism.
8. *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years' Record of the Communion of Between the Earth and the World of Spirits*, by Emma Hardinge (1869). This book consists of table tilting stories from a leader in the Spiritualist movement who was herself a medium, but more active as a lecturer and historian of the whole movement in its earliest years.
9. *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, by Carl Sandburg (Vol. 3, pages 343-346). These pages are mentioned because of one line reporting a séance conducted in the White House at which Abe was present. "For some half hour the demonstrations were of a physical character - tables were moved, and the picture of Henry Clay was swayed more than a foot, and two candelabras were twice raised nearly to the ceiling". The communications, which followed from the entranced medium, would seemingly indicate that the phenomena were spiritually induced. Sandburg included this story as an example of Lincoln's propensity to be humorous and his lack of concern of what people would think of him, i.e., participating in a séance in the White House, and made no other comment on it. Times certainly do change.
10. *The Heyday of Spiritualism*, by Slater Brown (1970). Relevant excerpts within the book depict events that would require considerable physical force, forces that render the standard deception explanations untenable. "It never happened" would seem to be the only other way of rejecting the facts. Some will be impressed with the high achievement levels of the recorders, while others will point to their subsequent profession of belief in Spiritualism as reason enough to reject any testimony by them on spiritualistic phenomena.
11. *Table Moving*, published (written?) by John Wesley (1853). This is a contemporary description of the ubiquity of the table phenomena. It can only be described as a craze. The author ascribed table tilting to Animal Magnetism, an

outgrowth of Mesmer's activities, and ridicules those who attach it to the spirit world. His viewpoint would seem to have been in the minority at the time, but it is certainly interesting relative to the indications of the Philip experiment. His descriptions certainly show that fraud, at least the conscious kind, is not a tenable explanation. (I am very confused by the statement to the contrary on page two, which seems to be refuted by the article as a whole.)

12. Four pictures of table levitation produced during experiments by Dr. T. Glen Hamilton in the 1920s. These pictures are preserved on plates in a Canadian museum. They are flash pictures taken in totally dark séances. The lady medium is shown on the right with one hand usually on one side of the cabinet. The hand of another member of the circle can be seen on the opposite side of the cabinet. It is believed that the table was originally sitting on the floor of the cabinet out of reach of the medium or anyone else. Dr. Hamilton set off the flash when he was told or sensed that the table was in flight. He can be seen holding the flash cord in one of the pictures. These pictures were provided by Mr. Walter Myer zu Erpin, founder of the Institute for Survival Research of Canada. He is doing research on Dr. Hamilton's lifetime of psychic research.

13. "Physical Phenomena at a Private Circle", by William James (1909): This may be the only personal experience that James ever had with physical psychic phenomena. He witnessed the movement of an object when no one was touching it. He believed it was not a trick but noted that it so challenged his conception of reality that he was forced to mentally set it aside and noted that such extraordinary events could only make their way into the world's acceptance by being repeated many times, a bit different from his statement "It only takes one white crow."

14. "Table-Moving Tested and proved to be The Result Of Satanic Agency", by The Rev. N. S. Godfrey, S.C.L.(1853). This is the earliest citation entry in this collection. The paper contains biblical arguments "proving" the satanic origins of the phenomena. His descriptions of the table activity involve very complicated communications and do raise the issue of from whence the communications come.

15. "A Table Tilting In Victoria", by Joy and Bill Stoney (2000): This paper describes the only personal hands on experience I have had with the phenomena.

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