

The Indescribable Phenomenon by Barry Wiley (Anna Eva Fay Bio) - Book

She was one of the most famous and successful mediums and mentalists of the twentieth century. She fooled the best minds of her time. She was, in the words of J. N. Maskelyne...

"...a fascinating little blonde."

After devoting twenty-eight years of research to her, Barry Wiley has written a biography that is both highly entertaining and thoroughly documented, weaving a story that includes a cast of magicians, mind readers, mediums, scientists, private detectives, frauds, suicides and murderous autopsies. It is a chapter of magic's history not to be missed.

On March 31, 1848, a new religion called Spiritualism was born. Less than three years later saw another birth, that of Ann Eliza Heathman to a simple cobbler in Southington, Ohio. While still a child, Annie was told she was a medium for the spirits of the dead, and from that point on she never looked back.

Her ability to make people believe she could summon the shades of the departed brought her to the attention of H. Melville Fay, an unscrupulous fraudulent medium (or exposé of fraudulent mediums--whichever was paying best at the time). Under his guidance, Annie conquered America and then Europe, becoming Anna Eva Fay, the girl who baffled William Crookes, one of the most respected scientists of the age.

When the star of Spiritualism finally waned, Anna adapted, conjuring thoughts, rather than ghosts, from the minds of theater audiences, to become one of the most famous and successful stage mentalists of the twentieth century. Barry Wiley has spent twenty-eight years researching the astonishing life and career of Anna Eva Fay, and chronicles it with the touch of an experienced storyteller, while fully documenting his tale, the nature of which might otherwise be doubted. Along the way, he uncovers facts about other famous mediums and mystery performers of the heyday of Spiritualism, including the story behind how Washington Irving Bishop, one of America's greatest "muscle readers", got the nickname "petticoat Bishop", and how Charles H. Foster, the famous billet-reading medium, met a face-to-face challenge from Bishop on a New York stage and beat him in a battle of dueling frauds. Wiley trots out long-buried facts,

explodes fables, and leads the reader through the exploits of a cast of characters worthy of Dickens. From the underbelly of Spiritualism to the peak of the world's stages, he follows Anna Eva Fay and a lifetime of strange acquaintances. She was a celebrity, an enemy of J. N. Maskelyne, a close friend of Houdini, Kellar and Karl Germain, and one of the last century's greatest mind-readers. She was "The Indescribable Phenomenon" and this is her story.

A quality hardcover, 454 pages, printed on coated paper, including two sections of color plates.