

## LOUISE LATEAU AND HER STIGMATA

Louise Lateau (1850-83) was a Belgian woman who suffered from abscesses following an accident and bleeding in the throat. The Bleeding Mind has been consulted for this examination of her claims.

In 1869, Louise began to manifest the stigmata. She is important for she was thoroughly investigated by the medical science of the time. The doctors who examined her said that it seemed that she was not a fraud (page 39). She had blisters on the front and back of her hands which bled (page 37). They put leather gloves on the hands to see if the wounds would bleed without her being able to pierce them. It was found to be possible that she was hitting her gloved hands against something to break the skin inside the gloves so a new test was created. One arm was sealed inside a glass cylinder. One end was sealed round her upper arm and the other had a mesh to let the air in but which was considered too fine to let any sharp instrument in. Louise might have put oil on her arm to prevent the adhesive from sticking to her so that she could get her arm out without damaging the seals and the delicate adhesive. Escapologists tense their muscles when they are subjected to something the same and the item is tightened around the expanded muscles so when the muscles relax the leg or arm or body can be freed. The wound that appeared in the apparatus was made of small clots suggesting she found some way to jab herself with a thorn or needle that was palmed before she put her arm in. It was found that Louise bled under bandages but pinpricks of blood were on the bandages that may have been indications that she had been able to stab her hands with a pin (Ref Joe Nickell, Investigative Files). So if her hand was in or out she could have faked her stigmata.

Louise claimed that she did not eat or drink in seven years and her doctor, Doctor Imbert, who lived too far away was unable to check on her well enough (The Bleeding Mind, page 114). What was the cupboard full of fruit and bread doing in her room if she didn't eat? If she lied about her inedia then she probably faked her stigmata. Her weight went up and down like an elevator when she was supposedly no longer eating (page 143).

Imbert testified to the reality of the miracles relating to the stigmatist, Palma Materelli, but Pius IX had the evidence of her tricks and how she performed them in his desk in the Vatican and said she was a fake. The doctor apparently realised what she was and expunged a lot of the glowing reports he made about her in a previous edition of his book on stigmata from his 1894 edition. He never got his book on her reprinted. Reliable wasn't he? Palma did more dramatic and impressive things than Louise which makes it all worse. Louise kept up her pretence for years but she was an anorexic and could have been a person who liked to torture herself.

The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism says that she never had any real flesh wounds but just bleeding (page 55).

Louise gives us little confidence in her miracle wounds.