

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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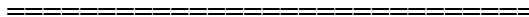


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## Volume 12, No. 1: January – February 2016



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# Bertha Harris Located



In Maurice Leonard's biography *Battling Bertha* (1975) it is stated:

"Nobody is quite sure exactly how long ago she was born as Bertha does not have a birth certificate; her father who was a surveyor for the Post Office, never had time to register her. But it was well over seventy years ago".

We are told however that she born in Chester, and that her parents were Arthur and Agnes Hughes. There were 3 children and Bertha, the only girl, was in the middle. Cyril was 4 years younger and Basil 3 years older.

Both Cyril and his father Arthur allegedly died during 1917, though not war-related. Bertha married Robert Harris apparently in October 1918, according to Meek.

I was involved in that earlier biography of Bertha instigated by George Meek, and published in the UK in *From Seance to Science* (1973). George thought my transcribed tapes of my interviews with Bertha dull, and made the

draft more lively, using only a little of the text in an American book *From Enigma to Science* that dealt mainly with psychical research.

I was not able to reach a conclusion on how true Bertha's accounts of her experiences were. But one story told by Maurice cannot be quite right. He speaks on p.54 of how Bertha travelled with Lady Lodge to Edinburgh, and Oliver Lodge communicated, proving his survival. But Lady Lodge died in 1929 and Sir Oliver in 1940. Could this be a confusion with Lady Barrett, who certainly survived Sir William Barrett?

Bertha was lonely in her old age and felt neglected by the Movement.

We are reprinting below an early account of Bertha's work.<sup>1</sup> There's no doubt that through the British College of Psychic Science, Bertha met some eminent people. It is plausible to me that she could have been consulted by De Gaulle, as Maurice Leonard claimed, but Churchill had less time on his hands, was not very interested in mediumship, and his movements were closely recorded.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from *Quarterly Transactions of the British College of Psychic Science* Vol.XVII No.2 July 1938 pages 100-102.

## A FAMOUS BRITISH MEDIUM

By MRS. HEWAT MCKENZIE.

Bertha Harris, of Chester, whose portrait, by the kindness of the well-known photographer and friend of the College, Dora Head, we present to our readers in this issue, needs no introduction to College members, for she has visited the College at regular intervals since 1935. I made her acquaintance first at a Spiritualist Conference at Llanberis and invited her to visit London, where she was practically unknown, although her fine gifts were already fully recognized among Spiritualists in the North of England and in Scotland. She soon became a prime favourite amongst us, securing immediate attention by her pleasant easy personality and by the excellence of her demonstrations both in public and private.

During her London visits she is one of the most acceptable psychics on the Queen's Hall and Spiritualist Community platforms, demonstrating to an audience of many hundreds as easily and convincingly as to a roomful of friends. Her private sittings are arranged at the College, and these are eminently satisfactory to the members and strangers who see, that when she is at the College, she has little free time. While in her public work she seems to be normal, it has been frequently noticed that her frame and features seem to undergo subtle changes and express something more than her usual personality. She claims as her chief "control" an Egyptian, 'Angelōs,' and it may be that there is overshadowing by this 'guide' at certain moments. One reporter in describing her at work, speaks of, "This tall medium with an impelling personality."

In her private sittings a trance condition is more evident. Often "direct control" by a communicator operates. As one sitter wrote, after such an experience, "A dead man, my father, had returned, and was talking to me as intimately as in life." Full names, incidents, intimate things only applicable to the one communicating, sometimes predictions, come in a quick flow which starts almost as soon as the sitter comes into her presence, and her gift has given evidence of survival to thousands. Our critics who have never looked into the matter are not aware of the spate of power, continually flowing through good mediums, and offering evidence of surviving personality. Godfrey Winn in the *Daily Mirror* for Dec. 1st, 1937, reports a group séance at the College, at which he arrived as a stranger. After receiving a recognized description and message from Bertha Harris, he comments, "Immediately a wall was knocked down between us, because you see, the only person who could want to talk with me from the other side was, as described, savaged by asthma all her life." This from a hard-boiled journalist, who goes on to describe the evidence also handed out to others in the same group.

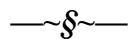
During a visit to Edinburgh, as reported in the *Evening Dispatch* of March 24th, 1936, by a well-known journalist, Mrs. Harris was asked to visit a haunted house. Her findings on the site were in harmony with long-buried history, quite unknown to her. She is an expert psychometrist and has also made a study of the human aura as a means of detecting personal characteristics, health conditions, etc. She likes to speak on this subject and can express herself clearly and logically when she does so. It is interesting to know that her husband is a good trance-speaker, and at week-ends, when free from business, is often in request by societies in the North.

Bertha Harris seems to be what is called a "natural" medium, that is, one who has always been aware of unseen presences. In an account of her psychic life, which appeared some time ago in the *Two Worlds*, she speaks of often as a child seeing fairies, or "the little people." Her

parents regarded her as an *imaginative* child and though her “seeing” sometimes got her into trouble they seem to have taken her unusual faculty as a matter of course. At the age of seven she one day declared that she had seen her uncle, believed to be at the time in South Africa, on board a ship; that he had a pretty dolly in his arms, which was thrown into the sea. Shortly afterwards the uncle arrived in England unexpectedly, and it was made known that at the time of her vision his wife had given birth to a child who died, and was buried at sea. The following incident is amusing. She often played chess with her father and often won. When asked how she did it, she said, “Oh, a big hand with finger-ends gone, points, and shows me where to move.” It turned out that her great-grandfather, known to her father as a boy, had his finger-ends cut off by a threshing machine. There were no more games of chess.

It was only after the passing of a brother, whom she *saw* after his death, that she began to connect her visions with the idea of survival, and determined to use her gifts to prove this to others. She has continued to do so with the consciousness of being guarded and helped by spirit friends. “I am often asked, she says, “if my work tires me; people are amazed at the vitality I possess, though I am not naturally strong. The work does not tire me, rather I feel that as I work and use my gift I become stronger and more energetic; I never experience an ache or pain as a result of my mediumship.” And again, “It is a highway of adventure on which I meet with unexpected people and circumstances, my outlook on life is larger and fuller and I am able to deal with my own problems and receive direct help and guidance and rejoice in the life of service and helpfulness to others that has been opened to me.”

It is good to meet a sensitive with such robust faith in her gift, and through its right exercise Bertha Harris is able to secure conviction through good evidence, and gives confidence through her personality, to the many who constantly seek her help.



On the family background of Bertha, Lis Warwood comments:

Just to be doubly sure of her date of birth I checked some other sources. Bertha Amelia Hughes was baptised 1 Sep 1889 Barrow, Cheshire. The Cheshire School Records also confirm born August 1889 – she attended the school in Victoria Road, Chester, when the family were residing in Hoole, Cheshire.

Bertha Amelia Hughes daughter of Arthur Hindle Hughes and Agnes Brewster, was born 1 August 1889 (GRO Births Dec Q Chester 8a 375). Her parents married June Q 1886 Wolverhampton 6b 713. Agnes Brewster was born in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, while Arthur Hindle Hughes was born in Cheshire.

Bertha's siblings: Basil Victor Hughes was born 1887 (GRO Births June Q 1887 Chester 8a 208); Arthur Cyril Hughes was born 1892 (GRO Births Mar Q 1892 Chester 8a 403)

Bertha's father did not die in 1917, nor did Arthur Cyril.

GRO Deaths Sep Q 1910 Chester 8a 208 Hughes Arthur H aged 49. (Arthur Hindle Hughes, Postman, died at 31 Lightfoot Street, Hoole, Cheshire on 14 August 1910. Probate 5 Oct 1910 Chester. Administration to Widow Agnes Hughes).

GRO Deaths Mar Q 1908 Chester 8a 292 Hughes Arthur Cyril age 16.

Bertha Amelia Hughes married Robert Harris Dec Q 1918 Chester 8a 713. Bertha Amelia (Hughes) Harris died age 91 in 1981 (GRO Deaths Mar 1981 Islington 13 1774).

Bertha's father was not, as far as the census records go a Surveyor for the Post office; he was however a Postman.

1891 Census: 1 Kynaston Street, Chester  
Arthur H Hughes Head 29 Postman b. Chester Barrow  
Agnes Hughes Wife 30 b. Staffordshire Wolverhampton  
Basil V Hughes Son 4 b. Cheshire Chester  
Bertha A Hughes Daur 1 b. Cheshire Chester

1901 Census 56 Philip Street, Hoole, Cheshire  
Arthur Hughes Head 38 Postman b. Chester Cheshire  
Agnes Hughes Wife 38 b. Staffs. Wolverhampton  
Basil Hughes Son 13 Telegraph Messenger b. Chester Cheshire  
Bertha Hughes Daur 11 b. Cheshire Chester  
Cyril Hughes Son 9 b. Cheshire Chester

1911 Census 31 Lightfoot Street, Hoole, Cheshire  
Agnes Hughes Head 49 Widow (married 24 years) Children born 3, Living 2, Died 1, b. Wolverhampton Cheshire  
Basil Victor Hughes Son 23 Single Printer b. Chester Cheshire  
Bertha Amelia Hughes Daur 21 Single At Home b. Chester Cheshire.

Paul Gaunt notes in his Britten Memorial Museum booklet "Silver Birch".<sup>2</sup>

"The veteran medium Bertha Harris' most treasured possession was a painting of her famous guide (various spellings and pronunciations) "Angelo", "Angelus" or "Angelos". She was at The International Institute for Psychic Investigation,<sup>3</sup> when the secretary called her into the office and she found that Poncin had left a painting of her guide; Harris did not meet the artist."

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<sup>2</sup> Britten Memorial Museum Booklets: <http://www.shop.snu.org.uk/new.html>

<sup>3</sup> This name for the IIPR came into use in 1939 when the BCPS and the IIPR amalgamated – see Psypioneer (Feb 2011).

## Profile ... By Philip Paul

This later account of Bertha was published in the *Two Worlds*, May 14th 1955:



LIKE many “natural” psychics, Bertha Harris found the early years of her mediumship a trial. When interviewed the other day, she pondered the problem of how many times in childhood she was sent supperless to bed for disturbing her parents with uncannily-accurate remarks about family affairs of which she knew nothing, or for putting forward prognostications which were considered outrageous at the time and yet always came true.

The life as a sensitive is not an easy road is underlined by these early sufferings and by certain gloomy forewarnings of domestic tragedy that sometimes descended upon the diminutive medium.

### FATHER’S DEATH SEEN

One such sombre prophecy concerned the death of her father, a civil servant. Then aged 17, she saw, clairvoyantly, a burial tablet which bore her parent’s name and date.

Horried by the revelation, she was nonetheless impelled to write the details in a place of concealment behind a picture in her bedroom. Thereafter, she fell to constant prayer that, for once, her unearthly inspirers would be proven wrong.

**Her petitions went unanswered. Her father met with a bicycle accident and, three days later, died—exactly on the date foreshadowed in her vision. The tablet prepared in his memory was precisely the shape and design of the one she had “seen.”**

### TUMBLING INTO TROUGH

A less tragic happening also centred upon her father’s cycling. Out for a ride one day, he failed to return home. Her mother became anxious, but Bertha reassured her, saying, “Father has fallen into a big black bath and now they have him locked up.”

Next day, they learned that his brakes had failed and he had tumbled into a horse trough. Twenty-five miles from home and soaking wet, he called at a police station, where a kindly sergeant allowed him to spend the night in the only unoccupied accommodation they had—a cell!

Bertha addressed her first Spiritualist meeting in her native Chester 43 years ago. Professionally, she followed a musical career and was, at one time, the youngest organist in England—“only because I had long legs to reach the pedals,” she says modestly.

## **“KNEW” HIS FATE**

She met her husband through music. At first, her psychic abilities went unmentioned, but he discovered the facts when they were engaged. After joining Bertha at circles, he developed an outstanding trance mediumship.

Following their wedding in Chester in 1918—the bridegroom, Robert, was on leave from the Border Regiment and returned to France after a brief honeymoon—Bertha obtained the same extraordinary “inspirations” about her husband as she did about other members of her family.

Soon after his return to the front, she was officially informed that he was missing. “But I knew he was all right and that I should have a bundle of letters from him,” says Bertha. It proved true, two months later.

## **ENDED BY BOMBS**

When Robert was serving with the Army of Occupation at Bonn, Bertha suddenly sensed he had had an accident. Again it was true—he was injured by a horse and was ill for some months.

**Their married life ended in the midst of another war, when Robert died while German bombs rained around their Golders Green home. She was preserved from death in that conflagration when she was “prompted” to alight from a bus before reaching her destination. Moments later, bus and passengers were destroyed by a direct hit.**

Bertha came to London as a professional medium in 1932 and worked at the newly – founded British College of Psychic Science, the International Institute of Psychical Research, the Spiritualist Community, and the Marylebone Spiritualist Association.

## **HER FAME ABROAD**

Since then, she had become famous in many countries. She has demonstrated and spoken in Belgium, Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Spain, Denmark, Finland and South Africa. Her clairvoyance has been translated into the languages of those counties, plus Icelandic.

Her inspirers do not desert her, even in the matter of tongues. “Though I do not know the words the translators use, the spirit people tell me immediately if they are not being properly interpreted,” she says. Then, woe betide the interpreter!

She is booked for demonstrations in Germany, Switzerland and France in the autumn, there is the possibility of another South African tour, and she has been invited to visit Australia and New Zealand.

One of Spiritualism’s most-travelled ambassadors, she remembers as her most thrilling experience – with a solitary exception which she is keeping for her speech at the *Two Worlds* “Tribute to Our Mediums” dinner on May 14—the fact that her work in Denmark and Finland was followed by an unprecedented rush for membership of local Spiritualist societies.

Tall, grey-haired Bertha's international achievements are all the more remarkable for the fact that most of them have been attained despite physical infirmities that many people would regard as crippling.

### **GUIDE PROVED RIGHT**

The year after her husband's passing, she was blown into a wall by a flying bomb. Concussed and internally injured, she went to a nursing home at Midhurst, Sussex. There she met silver-haired Miss Ethel Robertson, now her secretary-companion.

There was an operation at the London Clinic. When a spinal injury made itself felt, paralysis attacked her. Strapped to a board in University College Hospital, she told Miss Robertson, "I do not think I shall work again." But a few minutes later a guide controlled her and said she would work on "and sail the seven seas."

### **SHE NEVER COMPLAINS**

Two years passed before she was able to walk again, but at last she regained her feet. It is a state of health in which she was to wear a steel spinal jacket and consider every movement with care. But there is never any complaint and rarely as much as a hint that she is in any way physically out of the ordinary.

This indomitable spirit shows itself in her outlook towards British Spiritualism. "I feel we are apt to undervalue our efforts. We have a higher standard than that in any other country. But there is a crying need for more good mediumship."



# KATHLEEN M. GOLDNEY, M.B.E.

**Note by LP:** Regular attenders at the SPR office and lectures a generation ago would encounter the still formidable Mrs Goldney.<sup>4</sup> In her contribution to the excellent series in *LIGHT* (then edited by Dr V.P. Underwood) about how people came into the psychic field she gave some thoughtful advice to Spiritualists and psychical researchers alike. Published in *LIGHT* LXXXII No.3450 April, 1962 pages 11-12



THE instinct behind all pursuit of knowledge is said to be curiosity, and curiosity was, I suppose, the main drive behind my original interest in psychical research; a curiosity to know just how much material of worth there might be in this most important of all, yet most difficult and baffling of subjects. Coupled with this curiosity were the fortuitous circumstances which brought me into contact with the psychical research laboratory of Harry Price

I cannot remember exactly how I came in the first instance to visit his lab. At that time I was living in India, but with frequent visits to England; it was during one such leave that I visited the “National Laboratory”. Harry Price had many faults, but they certainly did not include apathy or a lack of welcome to anybody who had anything to offer which might be useful to him in his investigations. And so it came about that in ten minutes’ conversation he elicited not only a keen interest and curiosity on my part, but learnt that I had a knowledge of typing and shorthand and some medical experience. He could use all these! and within a matter of days I was drawn right into the high-speed activity of his research centre.

What “fun” we had there! There seemed always to be an aura of high spirits and joking, in the meetings with friendly and well-known personalities, surrounding the more serious business in hand—an atmosphere created by the fantastic, if not ludicrous, nature of some of the phenomena we were called upon to examine. Price had an extraordinary knack, by no means only governed by monetary inducements, of attracting mediums of all sorts: there were sometimes two and three really fascinating investigations going on at the same time. More particularly come to my mind the prolonged investigations of Rudi Schneider and Marion, those of Helen Duncan, Erto, and many others. In addition there were trips with a small group of friends to the Continent for the investigation of well-known Continental mediums, and all the “fun” thrown in of sightseeing in foreign cities, the hospitality of University professors in continental towns, travel in lovely scenery.

But more seriously, I was to learn more of lasting value in a short time at Price’s lab than I could have done anywhere else. I had the opportunity to learn how *not* to investigate mediums as well as how to do so; how much of value could be lost or thrown away for lack of painstaking follow-up work. Price, like the early Ford car, “got you there” in the quickest possible time, but he lacked the painstaking, laborious, and often tedious approach necessary

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<sup>4</sup> Goldney, Kathleen Mary Hervey: <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3403801965.html> Lis Warwood notes: Kathleen Mary (“Mollie”) Goldney was born in Karwar, Bombay, India, on 23 July 1894, according to her death record. I believe she was the daughter of Hamilton Law HERVEY and his wife Edith Kathleen BAYLEY. She was baptised in Bombay 15 November 1894, and again her birth date is listed in the Indian Baptismal Records as 23 July 1894.

for true study in this subject. And so it was that I came, more or less at the same time, to join the Society for Psychical Research and to find in its care and caution and in its wonderful literature all those necessary qualities which Price lacked.

I do not think people have sufficiently realized or benefited from the extraordinary interest to be found in the Reports published in the *SPR Proceedings*. Some of them are as exciting as any detective story; there are some sixteen major Reports on the mediumship of Mrs. Piper alone, extending over 36 years; the Presidential Addresses are from men of international renown and indicate the successive fields of interest which have claimed the attention of those actively engaged in research. To me it seems obvious that, in a scientific age, scientific methods of research are the only ones likely to bear good fruit and the only ones likely to bring wide recognition of such truths as patient research may glean in this difficult area. No other organization can approach the Society for Psychical Research in what it has achieved in this respect. Attack is often the best form of defence, and when the SPR is attacked, as it so often is, we should look carefully to see whether those who attack do not do so from hidden fear that their own particular predilections might be set aside. It requires courage to “go where the evidence leads”, for in this subject we must surely *all* have a strong bias to reckon with.

How often one hears that “mediums won’t go to the SPR” (“and very rightly, too” is the implication). But a study of the *Proceedings* will show that this statement is just not true, and that the best mediums of all—Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Leonard, “Mrs. Willett”, Eusapia, Rudi Schneider, to mention some of them—have placed themselves, often over very long periods, in the hands of SPR investigators, and there has been no abrupt termination of experiments on the part of sensitives to indicate dissatisfaction, or any harm to them from the methods of control used. So this sort of accusation against the SPR is not only palpably untrue but, in the circumstances, stupid.

Of course, the SPR has its very bad faults, too! “The SPR” is only a group of human, fallible people. But co-operation with other organizations possessing different gifts should help to overcome these faults, no doubt, and greater co-operation in this field is the goal we should aim at and which alone, I think, can get us further (as is being realized in so many other fields, political and economic, as well). Here is where the College of Psychic Science has an important role to play, I think; and while my own main interest, as is known, has always lain with the SPR and its scientific aspirations, I am happy and interested to be not only a member of the CPS but also of its Research Committee. There is much misunderstanding to be overcome, and I end with the plea that we look into causes of dissatisfaction more accurately, and with the hope of that cooperation which I believe essential. We all want truth to prevail. That should be our common starting point and our joint incentive.



# Mae West<sup>5</sup> Came Up To See Me

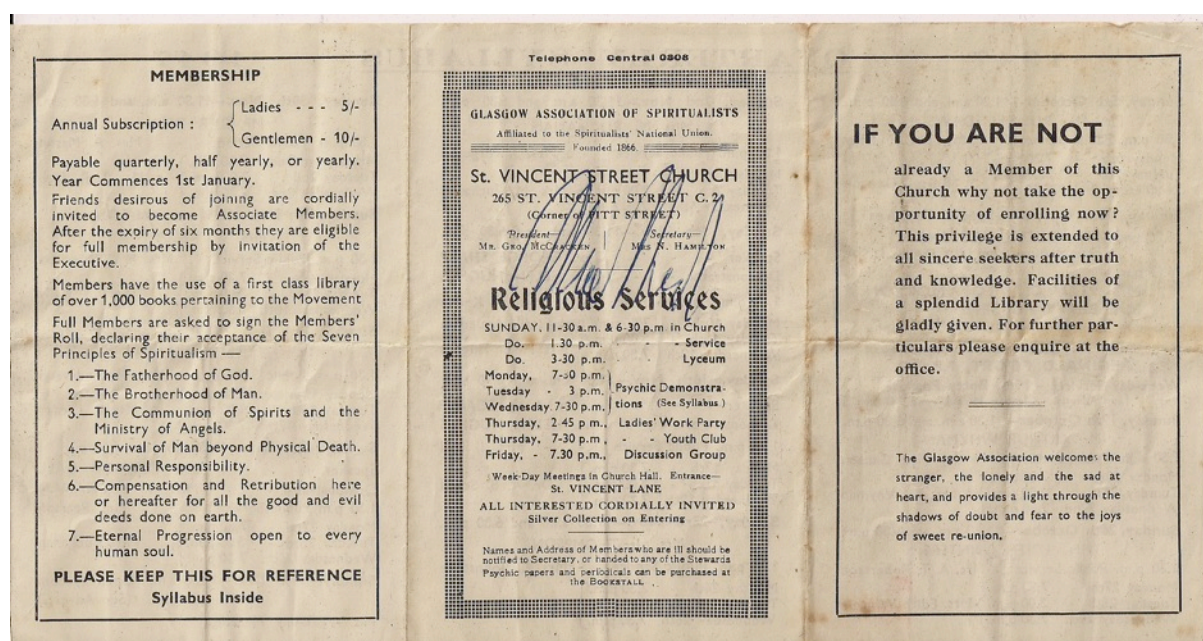
By Garth Willey



"You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough."

— Mae West

A little treasure given to me by my wife's Aunt Eileen (now deceased) in 2003 is this 1947 October-December Quarterly Syllabus for the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists' St Vincent Street Church. And it had been given to Aunt Eileen after she had given her friend a copy of my 2002 Woodlands Sanctuary Foundation's Christmas Candle Lighting Service 'orisons.' The friend told her she had been present when Mae West visited the St Vincent Street Church – and was presumably one of many who got their Syllabus autographed.



<sup>5</sup> AKA Mary Jane West, born 17 Aug, 1883, died 22 Nov, 1980: screen legend and erotic icon famous for her voluptuous figure, sexy innuendos, – e.g. "Come up and see me sometime" – and irrepressible wit.  
<http://www.ndb.com/people/828/000031735/>

1947	QUARTERLY SYLLABUS	1947
<b>Sunday, 5th October</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Mr. W. RUSSELL DAWSON 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mr. J. C. Murray Monday 6th - 7.30 p.m. } Mr. W. Tuesday 7th - 3.00 p.m. } Russell Dawson Wednesday 8th 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 12th October</b> —Special Features 11.30 a.m.—Mrs. BETTY POSSEHL Voice Medium from LILY DALE, U.S.A. 6.30 p.m.— <b>Mrs. JEAN CLAYTON MORTON &amp; Mrs. BETTY POSSEHL</b> 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. Margt. Murray Mon. 13th - 7.30 p.m. Special Engagement of <b>REGINALD FOORT, F.R.C.O.</b> Week-day Services - Mrs. Betty Possehl [See Adverts. "Glasgow Herald" and "Citizen." <b>Sunday, 19th October</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Mr. ARTHUR WHYMAN 1.30 p.m. Public Service - - Mrs. Ganson Monday 20th - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 21st - 3.00 p.m. } Mr. A. Whyman Wednesday 22nd 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 26th October</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Mrs. EDITH WINTERS 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. A. T. Robertson Monday 27th - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 28th - 3.00 p.m. } Mrs. Edith Winters Wednesday 29th 7.30 p.m. }	<b>Sunday, 2nd Nov.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Miss M. BUCHANAN 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. J. Ferguson Monday 3rd - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 4th - 3.00 p.m. } Mrs. M. Buchanan Wednesday 5th, 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 9th Nov.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Speaker - - - Rev. GEORGE SHARP Demonstrator - - Mrs. HELEN HUGHES 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. K. Kedda Monday 10th - 7.30 p.m. Mrs. Estelle Anderson Tuesday 11th - 3.00 p.m. } Wednesday 12th 7.30 p.m. } Mrs. Helen Hughes <b>Sunday, 16th Nov.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Speaker - - - Dr. A. B. SCARFF Demonstrator - - Mrs. HELEN HUGHES 1.30 p.m. Public Service - - Mrs. I. Bell Monday 17th - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 18th - 3.00 p.m. } Dr. A. B. Scarff Wednesday 19th 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 23rd Nov.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Mrs. J. THOMPSON 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. C. Johnstone Monday 24th - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 25th - 3.00 p.m. } Mrs. J. Thompson Wednesday 26th 7.30 p.m. }	<b>Sunday, 30th Nov.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Mr. C. R. DELL 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. A. Mason Monday 1st Dec. 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 2nd 3.00 p.m. } Mr. C. R. Dell Wednesday 3rd 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 7th Dec.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Mrs. M. KELLY 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. M. S. Morrison Monday 8th - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 9th - 3.00 p.m. } Mrs. M. Kelly Wednesday 10th 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 14th Dec.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Mrs. JENNIE LARDER 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mr. R. Anderson Monday 15th - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 16th - 3.00 p.m. } Mrs. J. Larder Wednesday 17th 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 21st Dec.</b> —11.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. Speaker - - - Mr. EDWARD GALL Demonstrator - - Miss M. BUCHANAN 1.30 p.m. Public Service - Mrs. Pearson Monday 22nd - 7.30 p.m. } Tuesday 23rd - 3.00 p.m. } Miss Buchanan Wednesday 24th, 7.30 p.m. } <b>Sunday, 28th Dec.</b> —11.30 a.m.—Open Lyceum 6.30 p.m. (See Advert.) No Week-day Meetings

Not being familiar with Glasgow, I Googled "St Vincent Street Church" and found on the Discover Glasgow website<sup>6</sup>

This church is the last of Thomson's to remain intact; the Caledonia Road Church lies in ruin, while the Queen's Park Church was destroyed by a German incendiary bomb in 1943.

The St. Vincent Street Church was built in 1859, to rehouse the Gordon Street United Presbyterian congregation. Alexander, along with his brother George, persuaded the churchgoers to sell them their former church, which was located where the Grosvenor Building is now on Gordon Street. With the profits of the sale, they built the new church. The congregation



dissolved in 1934, and may have fallen into similar disrepair as the Caledonia Road Church had it not been occupied by the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists. In the 1960s, it was bought over by the Glasgow City Council, and after much restorative work it was granted a category A-listed status. Further restoration was needed in the late 1990s, funded by donations from the

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.discoverglasgow.org/thomson-st-vincent-street-c/4573055877>

World Monuments Watch. It has been let to the Free Church of Scotland since 1971.

While it is believed to be a collaborative effort between the two brothers, the detailed design is clearly Alexander's. The stone carving was carried out by John Mossman, who had worked with the firm on various projects in the past. Daniel Cottier, a favourite of Thomson, was responsible for the interior decoration. If Cottier's name is familiar to you, it may be from the Cottier Theatre. Housed in the former Dowanhill Church designed by William Leiper, it too was decorated by Cottier, and was named after him when changing uses.

So, an interesting bit of history unfolds: and what a magnificent venue the Glasgow Association of Spiritualists once tenanted. The actual years of occupation are not revealed on the website but presumably the numbers of active Spiritualists during and after the Second World War did justice to the size of the church.

Not finished at that, I then Googled "Mae West Spiritualism." This search revealed Mae West to have been an 'ardent spiritualist' and by all accounts, she was a very gifted trance medium, even though her religion is shown as Protestant in her profile on the NNDB website<sup>7</sup>.

At the extreme, the puritanical and self-righteous *Good Fight Ministries* website<sup>8</sup> would have readers believe that she was in league with Satan: That she used her gifts to call upon Satan to generate scripts for her highly sexual movies, among other things! It rings bells of the Aleister Crowley kind of mystical explorations having been practised. But the harshly critical tone is moderated in the closing paragraph by the statement that "*Our society has sinfully progressed to such levels of tolerable acceptance that West's movies would be tame [today].*"

There is much to find about the spiritual(ist) life of Mae West from a Google search, the best probably being an article *The Psychic World of Kenny Kingston: Mae West* on the *Bellespirit Magazine* website.<sup>9</sup>

GAW.



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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nndb.com/people/828/000031735/>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.goodfight.org/a\\_v\\_west\\_mae.html](http://www.goodfight.org/a_v_west_mae.html)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.bellesprit.com/the-psychic-world-of-kenny-kingston-mae-west/>

# 300 PARSONS WANT TO KNOW

## “ENQUIRY” TO START IN EVERY DIOCESE

### BISHOP OF LONDON APPROVES

*Introductory Note by LP: All Souls Langham Place, next to Broadcasting House in London became an informal “cathedral” of Anglican Evangelicals when John Stott ministered there – he arrived there as a curate in 1945, and was rector 1950-1975. But as this story in an early issue of Psychic News shows, an interest in souls there previously took a different form. Below is taken from July 2nd 1932 front page:*

Unknown to many people, three hundred clergymen of the Church of England are making an enquiry into Spiritualism.

For many years, clergymen of all kinds denounced Spiritualism from their pulpits. It was evil, it was un-Christian, it was un-Biblical, they used to say need to say. Now they have been forced to give way before the forward march of truth. Here and there a brave parson made his own enquiry and came out with the facts.

It was not easy, for they had to face the opposition, not only of their unenlightened congregations but often of bigoted clergymen.

**There are still scores of clergymen who know Spiritualism to be true, yet they are afraid to preach it.**

When Spiritualist services were started at the Queen’s Hall by the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, the Rev. Arthur Buxton,<sup>10</sup> of All Souls’, Langham Place, wondered how he could get into his church those who were attending the Queen’s Hall services.

Shortly afterwards, a Spiritualist called to see him and told him he ought to have services for Spiritualists. They discussed the matter at length, but Buxton could not do anything without the permission of his Bishop.

The Bishop of Willesden was consulted, but as he was only the Suffragan Bishop, he in turn had to obtain permission from the Bishop of London, who, after consideration, gave his consent.

A meeting was called on January 15th last year at the Church of All Souls’, with the Rev. Arthur Buxton in the chair.

Its purpose was “to discuss the fact of survival, the possibility of verbal communication with the spirit world and its bearing upon Christian teaching.”

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<sup>10</sup> For more information about Arthur Buxton, see the Buxton family history:  
<http://www.allnations.ac.uk/downloadlibrary/The%20Buxtons%20of%20Easneye.pdf>

## EFFECT ON THE CLERGY

The Rev. G. Vale Owen was invited to read a paper, but he was ill, dying of cancer. His address was read to the assembled clergymen.

It was a very moving one and was listened to with rapt attention. The church room was crowded. Dozens of parsons were unable to gain admittance.

**Vale Owen's address was discussed at great length. Some objected to it. They were bitterly opposed to the Church taking any part in an enquiry into Spiritualism.** The majority, however, were in favour of pursuing their investigations. A committee was formed and representative clergymen have been addressed from that day, sometimes by Spiritualist speakers. On other occasions they have listened to clairvoyance.

Buxton had to face the troubles that confront all pioneers. He had to deal with criticisms of those who were not so bold. Some members of his congregation were annoyed. One Sunday morning he had to preach twice in order to make his position clear to them.

Interest in this clerical enquiry has now spread beyond London.

An attempt is now being made to establish headquarters for this new activity, which is called the "Psychic Evidence Society." The society hopes eventually, to have a branch in every diocese in the country.

They even believe that in time they will establish a "School of Prophets" where the gifts of the spirit may be developed under wise and experienced guidance and control, and where the healing of bodily and spiritual ills may be effected by the application of those same gifts.

Yes, the clergy are now getting back to the foundation on which their religion was built. In the past, the Church was led by the individual who had so developed his psychic gifts that he was an instrument of inspiration from the world of spirit.

Then came theology and dogmas and creeds.

Now we are getting back to the fundamentals of religion, which are based upon revelations which come when the spirit moves.



# MRS. OSBORNE LEONARD

## BEREAVED

*Introductory Note by LP: The work of Mrs Leonard is important for survival research, and we recommend study of two papers by her friend Donald Nickelson which we reprinted in 2010.<sup>11</sup> The note below about Mr Leonard reminds us of the important part played by the partners of mediums in their work. Reprinted from LIGHT February 28th 1935 page 133:*



MANY friends of Mrs. Osborne Leonard will learn with sympathetic interest of the passing of her husband, Mr. Frederick Leonard, on the 18th February, after a long and trying illness. Mr. Leonard was an actor by profession, but a severe illness many years ago incapacitated him from pursuing this, and, incidentally, this circumstance turned Mrs. Leonard's mind more seriously to the thought of professional mediumship. During her years of development, and the subsequent and increasing claims upon her, her husband proved the most loyal comrade, guarding her from annoyance, and making it his boast that no interference or interruption was ever allowed during the lengthy duration of Mrs. Leonard's trance sittings. Mrs. Leonard's large circle of sitters owe him more than can be expressed for this wise care.

He was a genial and intelligent man, and had himself mediumistic powers, although these were only experienced occasionally among personal friends.

The funeral took place at Golder's Green Crematorium on Friday, 22nd inst., when a large company gathered to pay their respects. The Rev. C. Drayton Thomas conducted the service. Our sincerest sympathy is extended to Mrs. Osborne Leonard.

Mrs. Helen MacGregor writes as follows from Florence, Italy:

"Few people realize what a great deal the late Mr. F. Osborne Leonard has done for the cause of Spiritualism. It is largely due to him that Mrs. Osborne Leonard has been able to develop her gift to such a high standard of excellence. When Mrs. Leonard first began to develop her powers she did not show signs of great mediumship, but had a great desire to develop, and in this she was wonderfully helped by her husband. With his consent they refused work in the provinces which was well paid, and remained on in

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<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Osborne Leonard – Her life and Mediumship & The Mediumship of Mrs Osborne Leonard – Later Years: New Facts and Factors: <http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.5.May2010.pdf> The image is taken from *Psychic News*, October 6<sup>th</sup> 1945 page 3:– "This crayon sketch does justice to Gladys Osborne Leonard, who has been called "Queen of English mediums." It was drawn by A. G. Grinling. Lodge sat with her—and returned through her."

London in great poverty, so that she could continue to sit with the same friends for development. From the time when Mrs. Leonard first began to use her gift, he arranged their lives so that that should be the first consideration. His unselfishness proved him to be a Spiritualist in the highest sense of the word. I should like here to express my heartfelt gratitude to him, and feel sure that many others would like to join with me in doing so. To Mrs. Osborne Leonard we send our deepest sympathy.”



## Transference of Mediumistic Control – Miss Francis

**Introductory Note by LP:** One of the most interesting aspects of mediumship is the appearance of the same control in different mediums, either around the same time, or successively. This case, involving one of Mrs Garrett’s controls, is of particular significance. Below is taken from *Psychic Science*, the quarterly transactions British College of Psychic Science Vol. XVII No.2 July 1938 pages 61-63:

### RETIREMENT OF “MISS FRANCIS”

The enforced retirement, for reasons of health, of one of the most valued mediums on the College staff, “Miss Francis,” Miss Nina de Verthier, is a heavy blow to the work, for such sensitives are rare and their gift only reaches the stage of wide accepted general appreciation as the result of the most devoted attention to its care and development on their part. Miss de Verthier was one of the very early members of the College, and took full advantage of its courses of study and also attended a development class. She had at this time the faculty of receiving messages by means of the ‘glass and letter’ method. It was not till some years later that, after an illness which made a break in her work as a teacher of French, she made the important decision to undertake serious psychic development, and, if successful, to use this for the benefit of humanity. Mr. Hewat McKenzie, then Hon. Principal, gave her all the assistance he could by regular sittings, to induce the trance state, and ‘Lucio,’ her well-known guide, was soon able to use her with excellent results. She became a member of the College staff and during ten years has remained solely associated with the College. Her work has been exclusively for private sitters who found in ‘Lucio’ a wise friend, able to help them in their personal problems and also to guide them in deeper philosophical matters. The late Mr. G. R. S. Mead, of the Quest Society, had a special regard for ‘Lucio’s’ erudition and enjoyed many conversations with him through the mediumship.

A gift, sincerely and carefully used under good conditions and with serious sitters, is bound to develop. Sometime in 1930 I was with Miss Francis and noticed to my astonishment a most remarkable, and perfect as to shape and colouring, development in the region of her solar plexus. At the time she was not entranced, merely concentrated on the sensitivity of one of the pupils of her developing circle, a task which she undertook with great acceptance for a period.

I verified by continued observation that this psychic appearance related to her exclusively as she stood behind her pupil making some magnetic passes. When the test was over I asked

whether she had been developing any new powers. Not that she was aware was the reply, but she felt her powers were now well established. I described the appearance, and later, sketched the form and colours I had seen, which I found coincided perfectly with the drawings of the solar plexus “centre” in C. W. Leadbeater’s well-known book *The Chakras*, drawn from clairvoyant visions with sensitives. (I had not looked in this book for a considerable period and my experience of development in mental mediumship would not have led me to expect to see anything of the kind in this region.) I remarked at the time that it looked as if she was due for some new development of a very powerful kind, it might be on physical lines, though I felt that Miss Francis’ inclinations did not lie in that direction. There the matter was left between ourselves, and as I was then leaving the College on Mrs. de Crespigny’s taking office, I was a little out of touch with the medium for a time. But I was not surprised to hear, within a few months, that she had developed a fine gift for diagnosis under the guidance of the control ‘Abduhl Latif’ who had hitherto been associated with Eileen Garrett. At her request, when she had to leave for the States, ‘Abduhl’ agreed to see whether he could use Miss Francis to continue his medical work. Apparently he found her completely ready for him, for the work began in power almost at once, and I still think that, months before, I saw the psychic organ ready for use. If this contact with ‘Abduhl’ had not been made, some other use for the developed centre would have been found. The power of diagnosis and healing has often been found in association with physical mediumship.

‘Lucio’ still remained the chief guide, and worked harmoniously with ‘Abduhl,’ recognizing that in his own particular line he was a Master.<sup>12</sup> More and more during the past few years ‘Abduhl’ was called upon and many healers began to bring groups of cases to him for diagnosis. I would not call him infallible, for conditions were not always perfect, but in a large majority of cases, simply from the reading of a letter, which often contained little or no information but only a cry for help, the trouble was pointed out and described with accuracy, and advice was given for treatment and was efficacious in hundreds of cases. Previous to the appearance of this ‘control,’ Miss Francis had no such gift. It was in such work that the medium became the focus of help to many lives, and if in doing it she has somewhat worn out a naturally delicate constitution, we need not be sorry for that. Nor is she herself, for there has been given her a work of the greatest uniqueness to do in the service of others, and who can ask for more!

But there is more work to be done. She requires a period of rest, which she is now taking at her home in the country and then hopes to do quiet work, without the strain of journeys to town and the regular demands which a Society must make upon its staff. She speaks with gratitude of the happiness of her years of work at the College, of the excellent conditions provided for her and of the many friends whom she has made among its members.

The medium’s personality was most attractive to her sitters and greatly assisted her work and made for success. Of French birth, of good family and education, her charm and courtesousness evoked a ready response from others. She has sometimes the gaiety of a child with a deep love of Nature and of simple pleasures, and again she has the seriousness of an old soul seeking wisdom among others. With such a natural gamut she has been able to meet the long stretch of human need which sought her help through her fine natural psychic powers, powers which always make use of all the resources the personality of the seer can provide.

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<sup>12</sup> In *Prediction* for there is an interesting article on Miss Francis and her control, Abduhl Latif.

The College Council has expressed to Miss Francis its high appreciation of her services and the steady loyal work she has given on its behalf. With such and many other good wishes surrounding her, we may hope that very soon her health may be completely restored.

B. McK.



## XMAS Quiz Results

Here are the answers to last month's quiz about our 2015 issues. During the year, copies went from monthly to once every other month, alternating with our sister publication the SNU's *Pioneer*, but as before the questions follow the sequence of Psypioneer issues.

- 1) What Spiritualist official was arrested in a police raid, and appeared in court in 1928?

Miss Mercy Phillimore, secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, together with an LSA medium Mrs Cantlon.

- 2) Where and why did the N.E. England materialisation medium Miss Wood pass away?

From typhoid, North Adelaide Private Hospital, Australia, Thursday December 11, 1884, age 32.

- 3) Is it true that William Mumler was the first spirit photographer?

He was the first to commercialise the phenomenon, but there had been reports of spirit images on photographs before this.

- 4) Who is the only Theosophist who claimed to have been threatened by a werewolf?

C.W. Leadbeater. His account is consistent with those in stories.

- 5) What was the best Spiritualist art exhibition of the year 2015?

"Believe not every Spirit", Monash University, Australia – presenting the work of Georgiana Houghton.<sup>13</sup>

- 6) Which physical medium used to end up with scent on his head at séances?

Stainton Moses. We would be interested to know of other persons who experienced this phenomenon on their head.

- 7) Whose painting of the guide Zodiac hangs at Greater World headquarters in London?

Mary Winefride Slater; note however in the same article Ida Dixon painted the first image of "Zodiac", which shows him as a younger man, and as a scribe in the Temple at Jerusalem." More research is needed into these paintings.

LP.

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<sup>13</sup> Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits: <https://monash.edu/muma/exhibitions/2015/believe-not-the-spirits.html>

# THE SECRET OF MISS LIND-AF-HAGEBY

**Introductory Note by LP:** In 1935 the LSA council elected its first woman president. She is probably best remembered today as a campaigner for animal welfare. It was not until after her passing that the inspiration for that work was revealed in LIGHT, as can be seen from the obituary which we reprint after the announcement of her election. Below is taken from LIGHT February 7th 1935 page 88:

## MISS LIND-AF-HAGEBY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE L.S.A.

MISS LIND-AF-HAGEBY, responding to the unanimous Invitation of the Council, has accepted the Presidency of the London Spiritualist Alliance.

Miss Lind-af-Hageby's association with Spiritualism extends over some thirty years. Impelled by personal experience which came early in life and which has influenced her many-sided humanitarian activities, she became a keen student of the intellectual and spiritual aspects of psychic science. She is widely known as an exponent of the philosophy and science of Spiritualism, and her many lectures, in London and the provinces, have covered a wide range of thought. She has maintained close contact with the London Spiritualist Alliance, has been for some years an Honorary Vice-President of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association, and is an Hon. Member of the British College of Psychic Science. She was a member of the Committee of the International Club for Psychic Research.



Her first experimental investigations of Spiritualism were undertaken in 1900, and later, in 1903, she studied its physical phenomena in circles which included Felicia Scatcherd, Sir Alfred Turner, and Gambler Bolton. In 1911, she took part in the séances arranged by W. T. Stead in Cambridge House, and obtained striking evidential messages. She was a delegate to the International Spiritualist Congress in Paris in 1925, when she spoke on the psychology of mediumship and the need for legal recognition and protection. At that time, together with the Duchess of Hamilton and Miss Scatcherd, she gave a reception in Paris which was attended by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the delegates to the Congress. Speeches relating personal experiences were given by a number of delegates.

In 1916, at an At Home given by Miss Lind-af-Hageby in London, she expounded the idea of founding an Institute in London which should devote itself to the study of mediumship (then spoken of as a "College of Light"), and Mr. Hewat McKenzie described his advanced plan for the foundation of a new organisation. Mr. A. P. Sinnett and Mrs. McKenzie took part in the discussion.

On many occasions Miss Lind-af-Hageby has given addresses in defence of mediumship, notably in 1917 when she spoke on the Witchcraft and Vagrancy Acts at the South Place Institute. In 1919, she delivered a lecture on "Mediumship, its Nature and Meaning," at the Steinway Hall; and in her addresses in London, Manchester, Glasgow, and other towns she has stressed the need of legislative change.

### **HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES**

Her humanitarian activities include work for children, prison reform, women's enfranchisement, peace and animal protection. During the war she founded a hospital in the south of France for wounded French and Serbian soldiers, and three veterinary hospitals for wounded horses of the French Army, working under the authority and with the co-operation of the French War Office. She was awarded the Diplome d'Honneur of the French Red Cross, and the War Medal and Allied Victory Medal. For ten years she maintained a hospital for children, suffering from tuberculous diseases, from the devastated parts of France. The hospital was awarded the Grand Prix and the Diplome d'Honneur of the French Ministry of Health. She founded, in 1928, the International Humanitarian Bureau in Geneva, with which some 1,600 humanitarian societies have associated themselves.

She is the author of *August Strindberg: the Spirit of Revolt, and Mountain Meditations*, and numerous publications on humanitarian subjects, and is a member of the P.E.N. Club. She has undertaken four lecture tours in the U.S.A., and has lectured in France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria, and the Scandinavian countries. In the course of lecture tours in recent years with the Duchess of Hamilton, she has been received by Mussolini, President Coolidge, Herr Miklas (President of Austria), the King of Norway, etc.

Of Swedish birth, a member of a noble family, Miss Lind-af-Hageby became a naturalised British subject in 1912. She was educated at Stockholm and at Cheltenham College. In 1913 she conducted in the Law Courts her own case as plaintiff in a libel action. It is recorded that for sixteen days she held her own against some of the ablest counsel at the Bar, and that, although she lost the case on a technical point, "her astonishing ability won her the admiration of the judge, Mr. Justice Bucknill, and of the lawyers, and the case, which excited the greatest interest in the Press, won for her the title of the Modern Portia."

## ***Obituary***

LIGHT Spring 1964:

### **Emilie Augusta Louise Lind-af-Hageby**

It is with pleasure that I recall a few memories of Miss Lind-af-Hageby whose death occurred on Dec. 26 1963, at the age of 85. Though born a Swede, the greater part of a lifetime spent in this country made her virtually an Englishwoman.

Miss Lind was no waverer in her support of the Spiritualist movement. She was a popular public speaker, generous with her time in addressing large propaganda meetings for all sections of the movement. She was President of the London Spiritualist Alliance from 1935 to 1943, having joined its Council in 1930.

Her complete conviction of individual survival of death was drawn partly from experience with the most successful mediums, but more particularly from her own personal form of

mediumship, which was only used privately among her most intimate friends.

Animal Welfare and Anti-Vivisection called forth her greatest efforts. She was Founder and President of the Animal Defence League, and in logical compliance with her opinion—I think it correct to say, with her knowledge—she was a vegetarian.

The welfare of children was also close to her heart, and for some years she was responsible for the care of needful children at a beautiful property at Carcassonne, in France, in the conduct of which she followed enlightened modern theories.

In all her public work Miss Lind was enthusiastically supported by the late Duchess of Hamilton and two other ladies. The four enjoyed an ideal friendship: each one participating in the work had her own special department. The other three, though younger, predeceased Miss Lind, and one can realise with sympathy a certain loneliness in her closing years.

Now that all have passed on, it may be permissible to mention that Miss Lind's psychic gifts were used in company with those devoted co-workers with the object of receiving inspiration for their combined work. Miss Lind believed herself to be in close association with Anna Kingsford, the famous Victorian anti-vivisectionist who herself spent some years in the study of medicine in order to combat the practice of vivisection. This identity of interest, together with the friends' practice of keeping their circle entirely private, favoured truer communication. Such a claim, which raises eyebrows among unbelievers, must be judged in the light of the intelligence and achievement of those concerned. Probably those who knew Miss Lind and understood the significance of psychic activity as a dynamic experience supporting faith in survival will be ready to accept this claim from a courageous woman who faced much obloquy throughout her life because of her chosen work.

MERCY PHILLIMORE





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Paul has an extensive knowledge of the history of Spiritualism and has been involved with  
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subject material is available**

[curator@snu.org.uk](mailto:curator@snu.org.uk)

**\* Additional costs if required:**

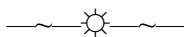
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# Francis Ward Monck



**Introductory Note by LP:** Through the kindness of Marc Demarest, a copy of a rare pamphlet by John Walker, sub-editor of the Blackburn Times, Lancashire, was recently made available to us. The medium Dr Monck is of some importance in psychic history as being the first medium convicted under the Vagrancy Act in 1876; after appeals, he was jailed in 1877. A more sympathetic account of his career was given by John Randall in an October 2003 JSPR paper “Francis Ward Monck and the problems of physical mediumship”, to which Michael Coleman sceptically responded. On January 1 2014 in his blog “Chasing Down Emma” Marc Demarest provided some details of his later American career, and Lis Warwood there added some family data.<sup>14</sup>

The pamphlet reprinted below is a hostile press account, and may be compared with the remarkable phenomena reported by sympathetic observers, and cited by John Randall.

When did these events occur? Lis Warwood writes:

“I note in *Medium & Daybreak* No. 192 Vol. IV Dec 5, 1873 p. 569 that Monck was to be in Blackburn Dec 6 to Dec 11, 1873, so that confirms Walker’s pamphlet is relating to séances held in Blackburn at that time. Presumably it was printed shortly after – either in December 1873 or early 1874.”

She adds:

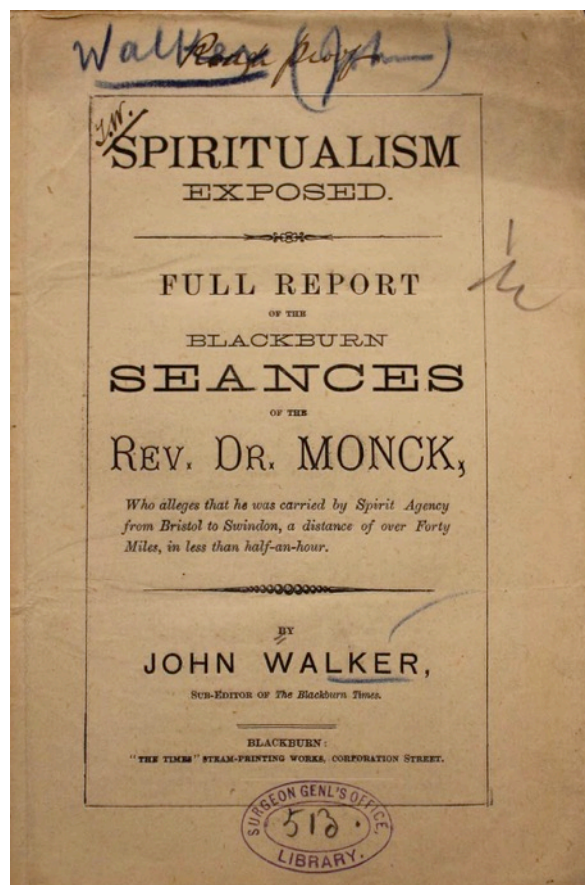
“I note on p. 11 of the pamphlet an alleged communication from ‘Samuel’ Monck’s guide regarding the death of a Margaret Marsh, who had died on December 7, 1873, and on p. 12 it is recorded *the séance was held on the Wednesday following, three days after the poor woman had ‘passed away.* . . So it would seem that the séances in question took place in December 1873.”

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<sup>14</sup> Some notes on the life of Francis Ward Monck (1835-1896?): <http://ehbritten.blogspot.co.uk/2014/01/some-notes-on-life-of-francis-ward.html>

# THE REV. DR. MONCK'S SEANCES

Spiritualism has been on its trial for some time in Blackburn; and there does not appear to have been any desire on the part of the jury of investigators to give a verdict until the strongest evidence obtainable was laid before them. Mr. Morse's manifestations as a trance medium were pronounced by spiritualists themselves to be altogether insufficient for the support of their theory. They were disappointed at not seeing any evidence of an intelligence other than what the medium might himself possess; and rightly determined to follow the question up by securing, if possible, the services of the Rev. Dr. Monck, known in spiritual circles as "the most wonderful medium in the world." What the minnow could not do, the triton might accomplish; and it was only fair before rejecting the new doctrine to witness the manifestations of the leviathan Doctor. Hence the visit to Darwen, Blackburn, and Accrington during the past week; and hence—speaking from the results—"hence these tears."



There have been two séances in Blackburn—both utter failures as furnishing proof of Spiritualism. The first was held in the Exchange News-room on Tuesday night, after the lecture by Dr. Monck. During some conversation which preceded the sitting in circle, it was suggested by a representative of the press that some person deputed by the company should accompany the Doctor whilst walking about the room, so that he might be in a position, if circumstances gave such a warrant, to testify that nothing was done by the medium to produce the phenomena by natural agency. This proposition was pressed because it was felt at the Darwen seance that the sitters were placed in an awkward predicament in being confined to the table while the great Spiritualist was left to roam about at his own sweet will. Dr. Monck objected to the proposal; it would interfere with conditions, he said; it would break the circle, and they would then have no manifestations. The spirits sometimes directed that he should be tied; and he should not be unwilling to submit to that operation. The Doctor was reminded that it was regarded as a trivial performance to release oneself under such circumstances; it had been done many a time in our own Market-place, in broad daylight, and in a very short space of time. Would he consent to be fastened with leglocks and a pair of handcuffs; the Press had provided these articles for that purpose; and would take it as an extraordinary phenomenon if the spirits came and released him. But the rev. gentleman was sensitive on his head, and, let us add, that he was prudent, too. He was a "gentleman, and would never, no never! submit to such an indignity." The company were prepared to respect his delicacy; but being only Blackburnians they themselves were less particular; one of them was quite willing to be locked up, legs and hands, on consideration that the medium should bring the spirits to release him. The Doctor declined this test also; the spirits would only act

through the medium, and it was absurd to expect manifestation unless the proper conditions were observed.

With a view, then, to getting conditions, the company adjourned from the hotel to the Exchange News-room, where a number of people were already seated, having previously obtained tickets for the seance. Altogether some forty or fifty persons were brought together, including a sprinkling of Eve's inquisitive daughters. The greater number of those present took seats at the table; and the rest were disposed by the Doctor at the east end of the room, the other portion being, it may be presumed kept clear for the working of the spirits. A good hour was occupied in tying the hands of every person in the room—excepting Dr. Monck. Councillor Beads suggested that this was a ridiculous performance; it was the medium who ought to be tied, and not the sitters. He should press upon the Doctor the necessity of submitting to the handcuff test, if he wished people to be satisfied that the phenomena were spiritualistic. This was the brewing of a small storm. Dr. Monck said he was being insulted; and threatened to leave the room, if the gentleman who had just spoken was permitted to remain. A dozen persons spoke at once—some suggesting on thing, some another. Fortunately a good deal of oil was poured on the troubled waters, and a calm succeeded. It should be stated that in the tying of the hands, there was a play in each case of about half-a-yard of twine; and that the only thing attained by it was that it prevented every person leaving his neighbour, except Dr. Monck. That gentleman himself tied up the last person in the circle; after which he took a seat at the end of the two tables, and the light was turned out. Immediately the table at which we were seated began to move; and was raised up at every end except our end. Ultimately it moved at this end also, and so grateful was the Doctor for this “manifestation” that he openly expressed his thanks to the spirits. Touching on this, it should be stated that one gentleman afterwards confessed to having with his knee raised the table at the end where proof was supposed to be most required. Thus we have the most wonderful medium in the world “thanking the spirits” for something they never did; while the spirits—if they are present—coolly lay the flattering unction to their souls, and allow the error to go forth without making any sort of “communication.” Had they “impressed” the Doctor with the truth, or obliged him with a scrap of spirit writing at this critical moment,—why, *that* might have been taken as something extraordinary.

Later on, a young man sitting on the opposite side of the table to the Dr, set up a scream, and exclaimed that he had felt something at his legs as if a dog was biting him. It is worthy of note that no one else claimed to such an experience; and let us add that several gentlemen expressed a conviction before leaving the room that the young man in question was a questionable young man—that he was in their opinion connected, in some way, with Dr. Monck. As some little light could be discerned to come from the windows, there was a suspension of the sitting until they had been covered with druggeting, and all light, as far as possible excluded. The medium during a great part of the night left his chair, and walked about the room, declaring that he could see spirit lights, and spirit hands, and went so far as to describe one spirit which took the form of a beautiful woman. Other persons admitted that they could see lights; but the source of one particular gleam which appeared and disappeared in one particular corner was found to be in a beam of rays from a window, whilst its erratic vanishing was caused by a sitter's body now and again coming between other sitters and supposed spirit flame. The ex-Mayor said he had been touched by a hand several times; and another gentleman also said he had been touched, but he noticed that an arm was attached to the hand. The Doctor's explanation was that spirit hands often had spirit arms to them; but they are disposed to accept the testimony of Mr. Councillor Beads, who publicly acknowledged that he touched the ex-Mayor and the other gentleman by way of testing the

phenomena of Spiritualism. One feature of the medium's "controlled" movements was, that he was continually giving forth a disagreeable stertorous sound, which may be described as something between the heavings of the "gone coon" lover who sighs like a furnace, and the vigorous "f-fhists" of an outraged cat.

Coming to the alleged spirit phenomena, it is to be noted that a child's trumpet-horn, a whistle, a tambourine, and an accordian<sup>15</sup> were the instruments brought into play. The accordian was tied by a reporter; and so securely that no person who tried could bring a sound from it. When the Dr., however, held it, sounds were heard which *seemed* like those of an a One gentleman asked for a half note; but no half note could be produced by the spirits; and several profane persons consequently went so far as to conclude that the sounds might come from a mouth harmonica, or some other instrument which the medium might have about him. The accordian, by the by, was found tied at the close exactly as at the beginning of the seance. The horn was in use for a short time only. The Dr. blew it several times loudly; and then asserted that it was being taken from him by the spirits. Now he had it; and then it was gone; and anon he could see it floating about the room,—so he *said*. No one else could see it; but, as he pledged "his honour as a gentleman," who shall doubt him?

Several times after the trumpet had been blown, a somewhat similar sound was heard at the other side of the room. We say *somewhat* similar, because the tone was thinner, and more like the squeak of a penny trumpet as compared with a two-penny toy. The spirits, it was said, had their lips to it when the sound was heard away from the medium; but there are others who think it was caused by another horn at the lips of the unknown young man. A singular circumstance we may mention which shows the horn performance in a curious light. The horn is said to have dropped during the night near a gentleman who kept his foot on it for the rest of the seance—kept his foot on it, in fact, when sounds were heard which were alleged to be produced by the spirits and by that identical horn. Of the whistle there is little to say. The sound of a whistle was certainly heard when the medium and another gentleman had each two fingers upon it; but whether the shrill note came from the whistle held, or a similar one, we do not pretend to say. The tambourine was of still less use. The spirits are charged with having carried it about the room, but it was not so much as laid to their door that they ever tried a tune upon it.

The Unknown, the imaginative young man afflicted early in the evening with the dog-bite disease, had an attack, about an hour afterwards, of another kind. His chair, he said, was being pulled from under him; and presently a noise was heard, as if the chair had received a push and then tumbled over. Dr. Monck was at this time at the other side of the room; and failed not to make that fact known to the company. A light was produced, and there the chair was—lying on its back about a yard and a-half from the Unknown. We come next to the great feat of the evening—the levitation of the medium. Dr. Monck declared that the spirits had been carrying him across a considerable space in the room; and presently a noise was heard, as of a foot slipping off a chair. Immediately afterwards, Dr. Monck announced that he was on the table, having been lifted there by the spirits. He moved about one end of the table for a short time, and was next heard on the floor again. Now we do not say that Dr. Monck was not levitated by spiritual agency on to the table, but we do say the "performance" under such circumstances was not regarded as satisfactory even by his Blackburn committee. We say further that several gentlemen declared that they saw in the extremely faint light that he came

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<sup>15</sup> The spelling 'accordian' is consistently followed. LP.

on and went off the table at the point where the Unknown was sitting; and that the gentleman who sat next to the Unknown asserts that he felt Dr. Monck's hand on his shoulder the moment before he was known to be on the table. There must surely be better evidence that this of spirit manifestation, or there will be needed ere long, if the doctrine spreads, an increase of lunatic asylums.

It was nearly three o'clock when the seance closed, but there was a warm debate for a short time upon the questionable phenomena. Dr. Monck, at his own request, was searched by a representative of the press; but nothing of moment was found upon him. The company then formed groups of debaters; and it was suggested that the Unknown should be searched; but he was not to be found. The inquirer declared that he was in the room when he commenced to speak; and he did not hesitate to declare his belief that Dr. Monck knew more about the young man that he cared to admit. This stirred the ire of the wonder-worker; for he left the room, loudly protesting against any imputation, and declaring that he was not being treated as "a gentleman." It was a grave thing to suggest confederacy in a matter of this kind; but we are in possession of facts which do not reflect creditably on the Unknown; and will publish them next week when we have completed our inquiries concerning him. We must reserve, too, our report of a special seance given to the Press which lasted until four o'clock on Thursday morning, concluding for the present with the remark that the phenomena were such as Professor Greenwood, the Easter Fair conjuror, would be ashamed to present to those who visit him in his Penny show.

The Rev. Dr. Monck, who came to Blackburn to astonish the natives with his "wonderful" mediumistic powers, announced at his first seance that he had a special mission to convert the Press to the "truth" of Spiritualism. Convert the Press, and in Dr. Monck's eyes, it were an easy matter to convince the public. We don't know what the rev. gentleman's experience has been; but he would not be far wrong in concluding that it was more difficult to "convert" one reporter than a hundred and one mortals who are not in the habit of peeping behind the scenes. It is an easy thing for the sweet little cherubs that sit up aloft to yield to the horrors of a stage storm; but the Pressman who has seen property-men flash lightning from a shovel and roll thunder from a big tea-tray,—well, *he* doesn't go about with the "spit-fire, spout-rain" frenzy of King Lear upon him. Dr. Monck came and saw, but he did not conquer; the flesh was certainly willing, but the "spirits" were weak; and as matters stand there is need of another mission to convert the Press. We say convert the *Press*, because some others have been "converted," several *quondam* spiritualists having, within the past few days, been heard to declare it as a *new* article of their faith that the whole thing is a combination of trickery and humbug. We don't say that that is our conclusion, *nor do we say it isn't*. To borrow the rev. Dr.'s favourite argument, the receipt of counterfeit coin is proof of the existence of genuine cash. We have had Morse and Monck, "and yet we are not happy;" but let it not be supposed if we receive two had florins that there is no such thing as a good two-shilling piece.

It was urged at the first sitting in Blackburn with Dr. Monck that the circle was much too large, and of a too miscellaneous character. The medium felt that no good could come of it; the conditions were altogether unfavourable; and he did not fail to forward the Press that they, like him, would go away disgusted with the manifestations. It would be gathered from the report in our last issue that the Dr. was in this particular a true prophet; the Press did go away disgusted, being fully determined to have no more of it under such "conditions." The "conditions," ay, there's the rub. The "most wonderful medium in the word" must have his conditions observed, or he would leave Blackburn, and say hard things of the stiff-necked people who would have their own way, and do nothing as he wished them. And then the

Press; his mission was to the Press; so the Press wrote him on Wednesday noon, saying that the representatives of the various local journals would be glad to meet Dr. Monck that afternoon at a private seance. No answer was received to this epistle, but it was made known after the lecture that the interesting event would come off that night or early on the following morning.

The lions and lambs of politics were accordingly brought together soon after eleven o'clock on Wednesday night, in a small room above the north entrance of the Exchange. It was remarked that there was no fire in the place, and there were sundry expressions of a fear of rheumatic twinges and bronchial coughs; but faith stepped in and gave momentary ease in the reflection that, if the reverend Dr. should be preserved from cold, while lying out among the night dews with little more than the sky for a covering, it was reasonable to suppose the spirits would protect a body of gentlemen who had forsaken their warm beds in order to report them. It was about half-past eleven when Dr. Monck arrived, along with the gentleman who had been chairman at his lecture. He had with him the accordeon, tambourine, and child's horn-trumpet of the previous evening; and these he laid on the table, along with a length of tolerably strong twine. He wished it to be understood that he had objected to any spiritualist being present, so that it could not be suggested that he received assistance in the production of phenomena. As further proof of his sincerity, he called upon a gentleman present to search him. A search was forthwith made, the Dr. quite taking to the "indignity;" but nothing was observed that could be regarded as indicative of a "hanky-panky" performance. So far so good; everything seemed fair and above board on the part of the medium; and those present had no hesitation, on the other hand, in "pledging their honour as gentlemen" (the Dr.'s favourite oath) not to strike a light, play tricks, in the way of producing "manifestations," or do anything which would tend to disturb "conditions," or interfere with the harmony of the circle.

Dr. Monck now took a seat at the table, and the light was slowly lowered. Inviting those present to indulge their taste who like tobacco, he himself lighted a cigar, blew a cloud with the lordliness of a pacha, and pronounced "conditions" favourable. An hour was spent in pleasant chat, the medium proving, apart from his spirit theory, a jolly companion in the witching hour of the night. The "confab" was enlivened occasionally by the Dr. starting suddenly and declaring that he could hear someone sobbing in the room. No one else ever heard the sound; and it must, we presume, be concluded that it was the "spirits," for hearing whom the Dr. says he has a particular faculty. It would, of course have been much more likely to lead to a conversion, if this "sobbing" could have been heard by the whole circle; but let it not be forgotten that the spirits can only do what they can do. Later on, the medium, whose special gift of sight would seem to be as wonderful as that of his hearing, said he could see a stream of aura running round the circle and collecting behind a reporter who sat opposite. Instantly there was straining of eyes, but no one—always excepting the Dr.—could see anything of the aura. But it was there, said the medium, and now it took the form of man—a spirit form bending over and looking affectionately at the favoured reporter. How provoking to know that a spirit should be so near and yet so far—be visible only to one out of nine persons! It is nothing to the purpose for the eight to be sceptical; for is it not said that a pig can see the wind? and if your "wisdom," like Weller's, is limited, why should you cast a doubt on the experience of the pig?

Dr. Monck next stated that his guardian spirit Samuel was present; and proceeded to go through some spasmodic writing with a piece of lead pencil, his eyes meanwhile being turned upwards, as though gazing at the graceful smoke-wreaths from his six-penny cigar. It was patent to the sitters, who were favoured with a fair light, that Dr. Monck's fingers held the pencil, and that Dr. Monck was the writer; and so he said he was—that is, the instrument of the spirit Samuel, who wrote through him as follows: —

M. M, December 7th, 1873. Sl.

Margaret Marsh, passed away Dec. 7th, 1873, aged 36. Sl.

She appears to be short and stout. Complexion seems dark. Sl.

She wishes you to find her friends, and say she is happy, and they need not grieve over her as lost. Sl.

There is a farmer here who wants to communicate with his friends. His name is Gorse. He says he used to live at Hole House. Sl.

I will give you more communication to-morrow. Don't let medium go until you've had another sitting. Sl.

There are two of three Johns here. They cannot do much, and power is not strong enough till second sitting. Sl.

There are two or three *Johns* here. Sl.

A person who was sexton to one of your chapels is here. Sl.

He was sexton at Chapel-street Chapel. Sl.

He says he went a short but pleasant way to the spheres. Sl.

Tie my medium and darken. Sl.

"Sl.," it is to be noted, is a contraction for the celebrated "Samuel," who had doubtless got tired of scrawling his name in full. Touching the "communications," we may say that one reporter was "struck" for the moment with the thought that he had an aunt named Margaret Marsh; but the communication as he quickly observed, could not refer to her, as she was considerably more than 36, and, what was more to the point, she was still alive. He was clearly off the scent, but we will put the reader on the track by asking him to turn to our obituary for last Saturday, and there he will see the record of the death of Margaret Marsh of Snig-brook, aged 56 years,—not 36, as reported by the spirits. We may add, too that she died on Sunday, the 7th inst., as given in the "communication;" but, as the seance was held on the Wednesday following, three days after the poor woman had "passed away," we may say with Horatio—"There needs no ghost come from the grave, my lord, to tell us this." The same remark applies to the alleged communication from the farmer Gorse, of Hole House. It was known that he was dead to two, at least, of the circle; and the sceptic will say that it might be known also to Dr. Monck. The reference to the "sexton of Chapel-street Chapel" is so vague as to be almost meaningless. The allusion to the Johns, however, is definite enough, but, unfortunately, the "spirits" were in error, as, singular as it may seem, there was only one John present. Really, the great apostle of Spiritualism must have better "intelligence" than this, or his "mission" to the Press will be an utter failure.

Some time before the receipt of the last "communication," the light was put out with a view of giving the spirits the best possible opportunity of manifesting themselves. The Dr. immediately left his seat and commenced to blow the trumpet in a style which made the sitters ill to hear. The rev. gentleman himself confessed that it was really most ludicrous; but he couldn't help it; he was compelled to do it. It is worthy of note that the horn never once sounded as if away from the medium,—and this, possibly, because the Unknown was not present, as on the previous night, to lend his "influence." The accordeon was made to do duty

as before—that is to say, it was tied up, and a note was heard as of the accordeon, whilst the instrument was held by the writer and the spirit medium. There was no whistling; but in lieu thereof a light was seen several times, which was about the size of a match-box. It was always seen near where the Dr. was known to be standing; and the believer will say that that was because he was the medium. The lights were said to be spirit lights, and who shall say they were not, although they had every appearance of phosphorus?

The small hours were growing larger—it was after three o'clock in the morning when Dr. Monck received the communication which required that he should be tied. The piece of twine which he had brought with him was used for the purpose; and he was bound very securely to the chair on which he was sitting. The Dr. suggested that no mention should be made of the tying, as it was somewhat undignified; but, as he himself at Accrington gave an account of the incident, we feel at liberty to state the facts. To proceed, then, the company re-formed in circle, after seeing the medium tied. Careful note was taken of the seconds finger of each watch (for it was thought that the spirits might release their favourite in—say a second and three-quarters) and then the light was put out. One, two, three, four minutes passed and still the medium was heard struggling in the chair. Next came a crack like the breaking of a string; a dead pause succeeded; and, following upon this, was heard the voice of the Dr. who declared that he had been entranced; that he had been at liberty; and that the “spirits” were tying him up again. They were hurting him, he said, he was choking, and wished to be released. At this serious juncture, that gas was re-lit, and there was “the most wonderful medium in the world,” still tied in the chair; and looking as grave in his foolish position as “the learned doctor of Padua.” He demanded that the cord should be cut instantly; and this was done before much scrutiny could be made. The only change in his position was that his hands, instead of being tied apart as they were originally, were seen bound together at the front—a feat which could be readily accomplished, after once breaking the cord, without the aid of spirits. Another thing, when watches came to be looked to it was found that the Dr. had been in a “parlous state” for fully fifteen minutes—a much longer time than it takes most performers to release themselves from an awkward tie. It was now four o'clock, and the sitters deemed it time to disperse, each going away so far a believer in Spiritualism as to wish, within the next half-hour, to be “entranced” between the sheets.

A few lines in conclusion about the unknown gentleman who was suspected at the first seance of being Dr. Monck's confederate. When asked at the circle to give his name to the Secretary of the Blackburn Committee, he declined to give either name or address. Next day the Secretary pounced on him near the Market, told him of the suspicion that attached to him, and brought him to the office of this journal. The Unknown professed utter astonishment at the idea that he had anything to do with Dr. Monck. He was a commercial traveller, he said, living in Manchester, and represented a tea firm—Messrs. Phillips and Co., of London. Although a “commercial,” he had no card, but gave his name on a slip of paper as Reuben A. Walters. He had been in the town four days, soliciting orders; but had no list of the persons he had called on and could not remember a single firm. Ultimately he pitched upon two firms (when they were suggested to him) as being amongst those he had solicited. He had been staying, he added, at Duxbury's Temperance Hotel; but slept on the previous night at Wilkinson's Hotel—through its being so very late when the seance closed.

The Unknown was then permitted to depart without further questioning; but we at once proceeded to test his statements, and found that they were for the most part utterly untrue. The two local tea dealers knew nothing of him; for he had paid them no visit. Phillips and Co., of London, are also innocent of his acquaintance; since in a note from them, which is

lying beside us as we write, they say they have no knowledge of such a person, nor do they ever send out travellers in the country. Further, Mr. Duxbury states that the Unknown stayed at his hotel one night only; he wrote out his name as W. Alfred Rollings; and represented himself as commissioned by the London Lodge of Good Templars to spend ten days in Lancashire, advocating the cause, and opening new lodges, previous to being sent to Palestine for the same object. We may add that we have compared the penmanship of the two different names, and observe indisputable signs of their having been written by one and the same person. The Unknown went so far as to state that he was to lecture at the Halifax on Tuesday night, at the very hour when he was afterwards found listening, at Blackburn, to Dr. Monck. We do not saddle the Good Templars with the mysterious doings of this Man in the Iron Mask; for we have reason to know that they are guiltless of his so-called commission to Lancashire. It will be evident to everyone that the Unknown has a misleading, if playful, way of mixing fact and fancy; and we have addition instance of it in his telling another hotel proprietor on Wednesday morning that he had come all the way from Manchester with the sole object of seeing and hearing the Rev. Dr. Monck. And this is the susceptible individual who was troubled with something like a dog bit at the Dr.'s seance; who stated that his chair was dragged from under him by a spiritual power; who tried to make honest men believe that he knew nothing of the mode of levitation when the medium was found on the table suspiciously near him; who had supper on Tuesday night at the Dr.'s expense; and who, finally, was found to have removed his quarters, and slept, on Wednesday morning, at the hotel at which the Dr. happened to stay.

We have already stated that the Unknown is believed by many persons to have been a confederate; we express no opinion of the matter ourselves; we give the facts, and leave our readers to their own conclusions.



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