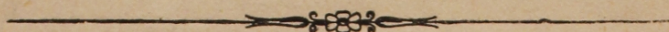


*Walt Page (proof)*

*J.W.*

# SPIRITUALISM EXPOSED.

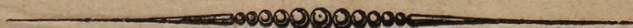


## FULL REPORT OF THE BLACKBURN SEANCES

OF THE

REV. DR. MONCK,

*Who alleges that he was carried by Spirit Agency  
from Bristol to Swindon, a distance of over Forty  
Miles, in less than half-an-hour.*



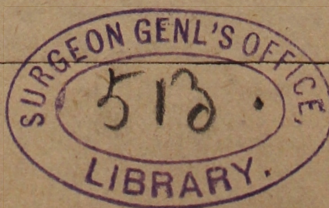
BY

JOHN WALKER,

SUB-EDITOR OF *The Blackburn Times*.

BLACKBURN:

"THE TIMES" STEAM-PRINTING WORKS, CORPORATION STREET.





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SECOND EDITION

BY

JOHN WALKER,

STATIONER OF THE BLACKBURN PRESS

BLACKBURN

"THE TIMES" LITHO-PRINTING WORKS, CORPORAION STREET



## 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 seances 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 this 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 could only act through a medium, and it was absurd to expect manifestations 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 these 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 one 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 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 the 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 we 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 accordeon were the instruments brought into play. The accordeon 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 accordeon. 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 accordeon, 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 he 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 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 than 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 than 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 is 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 reverend 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 didn't 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 that 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 bad 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 forewarn 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 world" 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 the 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 only 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 slightly lowered. Inviting those present to indulge their taste who liked 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 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 a 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 "vision," 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 Hou-e. Sl.

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

There are two or 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 has 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 a 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 an 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; but 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, the 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 young 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 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 an additional 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 bite 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 on the matter ourselves; we give the facts, and leave our readers to their own conclusions.





