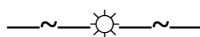




Volume 10, No. 3: 2023



The Pioneer (bi-monthly) is now part of the recommended reading for the Spiritualists' National Union's education courses.

This history journal is presented using original researched material wherever possible. Articles and quotes are taken from original sources as they were published at the time and reproduced by optical character recognition (OCR), the conversion of scanned images of handwritten, typewritten or printed text into machine-encoded text. This means that grammar, old English, spelling mistakes, etc. are not usually changed. However, long paragraphs are sometimes split for easier reading; any errors or explanations needed are noted in footnotes.

Special thanks to Charles Coulston for his work in sub-editing this issue

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**Mrs. Duncan's Mediumship–Adverse Report after Examination by London
Psychical Laboratory**

**Verbatim Report of Meeting Between Mr. Henry Duncan and the Council of the
National Laboratory**

**She was famous for producing ectoplasm which was proven to be made from
cheesecloth**

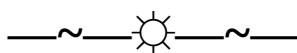
So, is regurgitation proved as claimed in these two reports?

What can be concluded?

129 – New SNU Pioneer Page

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pioneer@snu.org.uk**

All references to Psypioneer in this issue are archived at <http://psypioneer.iapsop.com/>



SPIRITUALISTS' NATIONAL UNION

Honours James Johnson Morse

(1848 - 1919)



J.J. Morse became Hon. President of the Spiritualists' National Union for his immense contribution to national organisation. This welcomed honour was given at the 121st SNU AGM by its President, Jackie Wright, at Norwich on July 15th, 2023.

Minister Jackie Wright in her Presidential speech stated of Morse

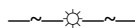
“... that he was called by W.T. Stead the Bishop of Spiritualism. Morse was well known for his exceptional trance mediumship, inspired orations and his work in forming our Union, and it is for his work in the formation and administration of the Union that we are appointing Morse to the position of Honorary President.

“Morse’s legacy deserves to be recognised, so today I am unveiling an annual award presented on the birthday of the Union, the 18th October, which will be awarded to the District Council which has been the most active in helping the churches and promoting the religion of Spiritualism in their individual area.”¹

James Morse’s final phase of his contributions to the Spiritualist movement included the following. In 1915 Morse was elected SNU Vice-President to Ernest Oaten, an office he held until his death in 1919. Further, during the war years, he was Secretary of the Exponents Committee (education) and was President of the Manchester and District Union. Morse became the editor of the Union’s flagship journal, the *Two Worlds*, in 1907 (until his death), for which he secured *free* space in the columns for SNU business, etc., and in 1916 for the Parliamentary Fund to aid those workers who fell foul of Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Preparations were in place to celebrate his 50 years’ anniversary within the Spiritualist movement but, sadly, on February 18th, 1919 he suffered an attack of influenza. Its effect on his heart was fatal and the following day he became unconscious and sank rapidly; at about 6:30pm he passed quietly away from this life.²

His great work was also done



¹ As a point of reference Morse stated: “After many months of anxious consideration and conscientious labour by all concerned the Spiritualists National Federation has achieved a Legal status. The body was duly Registered as ‘The Spiritualists’ National Union,’ on October 22nd, and the invaluable services of the Solicitor, Mr. J. T. Tallent-Bateman, greatly assisted the result recorded above.: Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 1: “National Federation to National Union”.

² A search through the Pioneer pdf booklet, “SNU History”, will bring home some of Morse’s contributions to National Spiritualism. For details please see the last page of this issue.

The early years to establish a national organisation

The first attempt at a national organisation began in 1865 at Darlington. At this period in our history Spiritualism was represented by the “Spiritual Magazine”, a Christian publication which dealt mainly with the facts but did not take any noticeable interest in the subject as a public movement. The early attempts at a national organisation were generally referred to as “Progressive Spiritualists”, mostly a non-Christian group of Spiritualists. Some references look upon these as failed attempts but nevertheless the various attempts at different locations leads us to the annual Conference of Spiritualists which was opened at Liverpool on Tuesday, August 5th, 1873, covering three days, in the rooms of the Psychological Society, Islington. It was here that a new and upcoming physical/trance medium, James J. Morse, made his feelings known on the future of a National Spiritualist movement:³

“Mr. Morse expressed himself strongly in favour of national organisation, by means of a union of all the existing associations; and he believed the thing to be feasible. Their work was to show that the cardinal fact of Spiritualism—communication between the two worlds—was absolutely true. There was a sufficient staff of mediums and speakers to do this work if they were organised, well used, and sufficiently paid. He was for avoiding theological and philosophical disputations, and would simply invite the people to come and judge for themselves. The function of the executive would be one of business rather than preaching or teaching. This would ensure a certain amount of harmony. There were reasons both for and against the use of the word “Progressive;” these reasons Mr. Morse placed fairly and forcibly before the Conference. He approved of locating the executive power in London, but the conferences should be movable. He moved:—



“That this Conference, being a representative one, do constitute itself into a permanent national association, and elect, either from itself or from representatives of other societies not present, or by both methods if desirable, an executive head, for the purpose of carrying out the objects decided upon by that body.”

Support for organisation was successful in persuading the Conference of the need for a national body, and it adopted the proposal of J. J. Morse that the conference should form itself into a National Association. An executive council was elected and given the task of drawing up the rules and constitution of the new association.⁴

There was naturally some opposition towards a central organisation which came from some prominent Spiritualists like James Burns.⁵ William Howitt suggested that there was no need for a national organisation, since Spiritualism had grown extensively and was still growing without the aid of any such body. Howitt and Enmore Jones, writing in “The Medium” and

³ Taken from the *Medium and Daybreak*, August 15th, 1873.

⁴ The sketch of James Johnson Morse is taken from the front page of the *Medium and Daybreak*, January 8, 1875.

⁵ A search through the Pioneer pdf booklet, “SNU History”, will bring information on James Burns (*Medium & Daybreak*). For details please see the last page of this issue.

“The Christian Spiritualist”, also interpreted it as an attack on the Christian elements in Spiritualism. The editor of the “Spiritual Magazine”⁶ was also opposed to attempts at central organisation; he pointed out that

“... all attempts at national organization whether in America or England have met little or no success, generally leading to a more complete disorganization, by bringing out more conspicuously the wide and fundamental differences on important subjects which divide spiritualists and which vitally affect their conceptions of the spirit and objects that should be aimed at in any movement for its more general diffusion”

“The new association hopes to escape the difficulty by avoiding theological discussion, disallowing collective responsibility for religious opinion or belief, but leaving its members and speakers free to express and advocate any views on the subject they may individually entertain”.

At a meeting of the National Association on October 20th, 1873 under the presidency of Thomas Everitt, held at 145, Gower Street, London WC, it was agreed to adopt the title “National Association of Spiritualists”; however, upon being constituted, the word “British” was substituted for “National”. The following month the weekly journal, the “Spiritualist”, November 21st edition, published the Rules and Constitution of the Association for the recommendation and adoption of the Council. Number one on the list was the proposed name of the Association: “The British National Association of Spiritualists” (BNAS); rather than substitute “British” for “National” they had decided to add the word “British” to the title. It appears that at some point in 1874 the new name was adopted; however, throughout its life it was still referred to in many reports as “The National Association of Spiritualists”.

In reality, it never became a representative national organisation; its focus was London, with comparatively few affiliated societies. However, in its publication, “Spiritual Notes”,⁷ which ran from July 1878 to December 1880, the reader was well informed of the progress of the Spiritualist movement, mainly in the Northern provinces. A series of “Notes by the Way—Spiritualism in the Provinces” was contributed specially for BNAS by James J. Morse.

In May 1882 “The British National Association of Spiritualists” decided to reconstitute the Association under a new constitution with the name “Central Association of Spiritualists”, taking over the membership and premises of BNAS.⁸

Later, at a meeting on October 25th, 1883, the Central Association of Spiritualists was dissolved. Stainton Moses moved for the foundation of a new society, subsequently to be called The London Spiritualist Alliance, (LSA). The name was changed to The College of Psychic Science on 31 January, 1955 and then to The College of Psychic Studies (CPS) in 1970, and remains so today.

The years 1865-1875 represent the first phase of attempts to build the foundations of a national movement of Spiritualists. James J. Morse’s paper, “The Nationalisation of

⁶ The “Spiritual Magazine” (1860-1877) was started in January 1860 under the editorship of Mr William Wilkinson, its originator and proprietor, with Mr Thomas Shorter, best known at the time by his *nom-de-plume* of Thomas Brevior (a Latinized version of his name), as sub-editor. William Howitt and Benjamin Coleman were well-known contributors. Later editors in the last years were Dr George Sexton, followed by J. Enmore Jones.

⁷ Prior to this, “The Spiritualist”, a weekly journal founded by William Harrison, which ran between 1869 and 1882, acted as the mouthpiece of the National Association.

⁸ The Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was founded on BNAS premises on January 5th and 6th, 1882. The conferences were held at the invitation of Professor Barrett (Dublin), resulting in the formation of the SPR, which was constituted on February 20th, 1882. Its appointed Council and committees were partly made up by BNA officers and Council members. Please see *Psypioneer*, Vol. 4, No. 10: “The grave of William Stainton Moses”, “The Society for Psychical Research, officers and council for 1882”.

Spiritualism”, read before the Spiritualists’ Debating Society at Corbridge’s Café, Manchester, on Tuesday, March 20th, 1894, stated: ⁹

“There have been some four distinct efforts that merit attention. These were national Conferences at Newcastle-on-Tyne, Darlington, Liverpool, and Manchester, all before 1878. The memories of these are all that remain, and even the memory of them is almost confined to the pamphlets and reports that published their proceedings. Of actual work, or effect upon either the country, or the cause, there are but few and faint traces to-day.”

The stimulus of organisation within the movement was always the North of England, as Morse reiterates in his abovementioned paper:

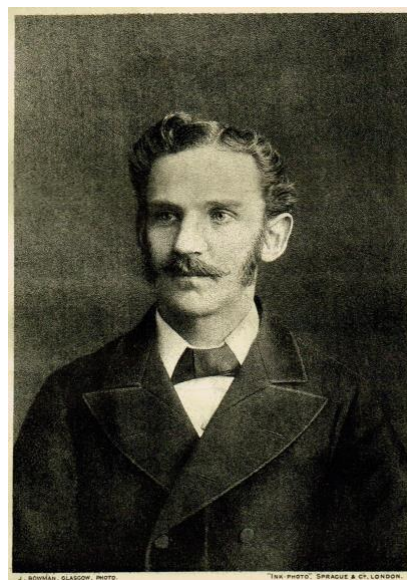
“The next, and as a working body, by far the most successful ever made, though distinctly local, instead of national, was the Lancashire District Committee, whose labours still bear fruit, while following, and upon similar, but not identical lines, is the Yorkshire Committee, now known as the Yorkshire Spiritual Union ...”

It was within the various District Committees that such immense work would be undertaken and upon the structures of good working relationships, the pooling of their best speakers and mediums, the setting up of “Guarantee Funds”, district representatives, and unrivalled dedication to the cause that foundations could be built for a future national organisation. The detailed history of these District Committees can only be found in interviews with those who were connected, reports of their progress and conference meetings in the various journals of the day. The original foundation of these District Committees was generated by the Lancashire Spiritualists:

“Organisation is the basis of all efficient movements, whether social or political. The Lancashire Spiritualists have determined that a more vigorous organising policy shall be commenced at once, for the purpose of enabling every town where there are a few Spiritualists only, to hold regular Sunday services and week-night classes for research and discussion in connection with the subject. There is scarcely a town or village in the district which the Lancashire Committee has not already visited, and sown the first seeds. Organisation would aid the progress of Spiritualism in these places.” ¹⁰

The “Lancashire District Committee” was the first district association to be formed, at a Conference at Bury in August, 1875. Its aim was to promote Spiritualism in new Districts, places of weak or non-existent Spiritualist activity, supply experienced speakers and distribute literature. As well as Morse’s editorial support he lectured widely; it can be noted that in June, 1879 Morse entered a second six months’ contract with the Lancashire District Committee to give ten lectures per month.

District Committees were being formed in other areas; for example, the “Midland District Committee” was started off by the trance medium Edward Wallis ¹¹ giving a series of successful mission meetings in the district. Later that year the Wallis family moved to Nottingham. Conferences were



⁹ Please see *Psypioneer*, Vol. 8, No. 8: “The Building of the Spiritualists’ National Union”, which is serialised, starting in this issue of 2012, which includes the article by James Morse, “The Nationalisation of Spiritualism”. A pdf is available of all five parts of the series on request.

¹⁰ The “Spiritualist Newspaper”, February 2nd, 1877.

¹¹ *Pioneer*, Vol. 5, No. 5: “Edward Walter Wallis (1855 - 1914)”, “A National Memorial Tribute to the Life and Work of Edward Walter Wallis”.

organised but not all would be successful; please see for further information “The Building of the Spiritualists’ National Union”, a five-part series published in Psypioneer during 2012. A pdf is available of all five parts of the series upon request.

On October 24th and 25th, 1880 the Lancashire District Committee held a “General Conference of British Spiritualists” at Manchester; all Spiritualists in the United Kingdom were invited to attend

“... with a view to take into consideration the state of the movement, and how its interests may be promoted, its adherents more closely united, and its working forces more efficiently utilised”.

The Executive Committee were Mr J. Lamont ¹² and Mr J. Chapman, Liverpool; Mr W. Johnson, Hyde; ¹³ Messrs Blundell and Fitton, Manchester; Mr C. Parsons and Mr J. Sutcliff, Rochdale, with Mr J.J. Morse, 22, Palatine Road, Stoke Newington, London, as Honorary Secretary. The subjects for discussion were interesting; on the agenda were: The Principles of Spiritualism, Is Spiritualism a Public Movement?, Are Paid Workers requisite for the promotion of Spiritualism?, Is a National Federation desirable?, The Future Work of Spiritualism, Mediums and how to use them, Trance Speaking: its Value, Evidences of Healing Mediumship, to name a few.

A paper was read before the General Conference of Spiritualists on October 25th from M.A. (Oxon) – Stainton Moses: “Proposed National Federation Amongst Spiritualists”, which urged the necessity of a national federation amongst Spiritualists.

“No society in this National Federation, should arrogate to itself any supremacy. There must be a head, and that head is naturally formed in London where the chief business would be transacted, but the governing body would be the Board of Delegates from the societies throughout Great Britain, and they would elect their president and officers. Such a Board would be national in its representation, and would have a right to act in the name of British Spiritualism, which, in my judgment, no existing society has.”

Emma Hardinge Britten announced in “Spiritual Notes”, March, 1879 “... her determination to return to England, and end her days in her native land.” “Spiritual Notes” commented: “Let us hope she will not become a recluse all at once on her return amongst us.”

Emma, at this time, would be on her Australian tour with her husband William and would soon be moving on to New Zealand, San Francisco, overland to New York and finally arriving in England in early 1881.¹⁴ On Emma’s arrival home in Manchester it may have looked as if she had retired from public service, as little was heard from her until September of this year. Then a passionate plea was made in the journal, “The Herald of Progress”, on September 16th, 1881: “Plea for The Revival of Spiritualism” to the English Spiritual Journals.

The full article is published in “The Building of the Spiritualists’ National Union”, as noted elsewhere in this article; owing to space below is given a short quote:

“Some eight months ago I returned from a long tour round the world, and many years of incessant labour, intending to devote one twelvemonth to rest and urgent family duties. With this view I refused to fulfil any of the numerous engagements to lecture tendered to me, and I now beg to state why I rescind this decision, and desire to give such service as my health and strength will permit, to the cause of spiritual propaganda

¹² Pioneer, Vol. 3, No. 3: “John Lamont”, “The Passing of John Lamont”.

¹³ Psypioneer Vol. 6, No. 5, May, 2010: “William Johnson”, “Another pioneer promoted - William Johnson”.

¹⁴ Emma and William arrived in London in January of 1881; by June of 1881 she was resident in Manchester, where she would be based for the rest of her life. A search through the Pioneer pdf booklets, primarily the “SNU History”, will bring up information on Emma Hardinge Britten. For details please see the last page of this issue.

for a brief period. From every side I heard of the many “disgraces” that “evil doers had put upon the cause,” and how many of the “best people” who had formerly graced its ranks had withdrawn from all public connexion with it.



“During my residence here, I have been a silent, but not uninterested, observer of this policy and its results.”

Emma concludes her article:

“Let the friends of the cause in the North of England, or within a combatable distance from my residence, understand, therefore, that I am ready, for a short time, to give lectures, as heretofore, on Spiritualism. Let them help me, as I will help them, to put our faith fairly before those who will come to listen, and it is quite possible that we may effect as much for the cause of truth as if the very “best people” were with us. Perhaps they will be; certainly we may rest assured the best spirits will be there, and in that faith I am now ready to receive applications as early as possible, addressed to “Emma Hardinge Britten, The Limes, Humphrey Street, Cheetham Hill, Manchester.

“Sept. 7th, 1881.”¹⁵

Shortly after this announcement Emma was back on the platform in the North of England.¹⁶ I have been unable to locate the actual date of the Second Annual Conference of the Yorkshire District Committee of Spiritualists¹⁷ but if the common sequence of dates applies it would have been in July, 1881. The “Herald of Progress” later published the paper given by its President, Mr B. Lees (Sowerby Bridge); it is quite a long report but gives a good overview of the then present state and problems within the District Committees. Again, the reader is directed to “The Building of the Spiritualists’ National Union”, where a pdf is available of all five parts of the series upon request.

The Lancashire Committee had done much of the missionary groundwork of spreading Spiritualism but uniting the societies in their districts with the supply of good speakers, literature, etc. appears to have taken a back seat since its calling of the 1880 General Conference in an attempt to form a national organisation. This had not yielded the wider influence hoped for when urging societies to form themselves into district committees, etc. The most prominent to continue in its strength was the Yorkshire District Spiritualists’ Committee, later renamed as the Yorkshire Spiritual Union.

Further, in January, 1882 the “Herald of Progress,” a provincial journal that started in and around July 1880, made this announcement:

To the Spiritualists of Great Britain, And All Who May Be Interested in the Spiritual Cause:

“A Convention is intended to be held in Newcastle-on-Tyne, commencing on Saturday, February 11th, and continued on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday

¹⁵ The image shows Emma on her return home in 1881 with her beloved parrot, “Joey”, a present from her husband William.

¹⁶ In September 1881, Emma (at age 58) was on a gruelling lecture schedule.

¹⁷ Later known as the “Yorkshire Spiritual Union”.

following, at which Mrs E Hardinge Britten will be present and take a prominent part in the proceedings.”

I have brought this Convention to notice mainly because it seems not to appear in any modern literature; it was held in the Newcastle-on-Tyne Spiritual Evidence Society at Weir’s Court. Its original purpose was to consider the best methods of spreading Spiritualism throughout Great Britain. However, disharmony soon arose in a letter from the Christian Spiritualist, John Enmore Jones, former and final editor of the Spiritual Magazine in 1877. Conflict was quick to ensue between Mr Jones and Emma Hardinge Britten; the reader is again referred to “The Building of the Spiritualists’ National Union” for more detailed information; for the context of the arguments a short quote is given below. Emma Hardinge Britten responded to Jones’ letter in “The Herald of Progress” (Feb 24, 1882, page 92) and it is printed below:

THE NEWCASTLE CONVENTION

As the plan of holding a Convention of Spiritualists at Newcastle for the sole and express purpose of endeavouring to unite in bonds of amity, charity, and union, the dissevered ranks of English Spiritualists originated with me, and I offered to give time and service to this work, to the utmost extent of my power. I have just read, with equal amazement and indignation, the following passage signed “Enmore Jones,” and printed in your last issue of Feb. 17th:

“When, however, I found that the Convention was to be used for the purpose of sanctioning a line of action principally, if not wholly, to fight the Churches on Church belief questions, which were only slightly connected with subjects touching the spiritual body; it was obvious to me, that my journey from London to Newcastle would be worse than useless, for such Convention could not be in any way suitable for the mighty task of uniting all sections of Spiritualists so to work as to be a power in the nation.”

My object in addressing you now, Mr Editor, is to require, through the columns of the paper that printed that libel on the “Convention” and its first promoters, the writer’s authority for the statement he has made.—I am, Gentlemen, faithfully yours,

EMMA HARDINGE BRITTEN.

The disagreement resulted in J. Enmore Jones organising a Conference at Newcastle on March 30th and 31st 1882, to coincide with the anniversary of the advent of Modern Spiritualism. A National Plan of action was introduced for the “Spirit Evidence Institute for Great Britain” and a set of Seven Principles was adopted, being referred to as “Our Principles”:

Belief: 1st—God is a Spirit..... Infinite

Knowledge: 2nd—Man is a Spirit.....Finite

3rd—Man has a Spiritual Body.....

4th—Man at Physical Death passes out of the physical a living intelligent substance—Perfect in form and individuality.

5th—That, under conditions, the spiritual body can be discerned, and its limited power over physical substances witnessed.

6th—Man under laws can and does, as an ethereal ministering spirit, assist in various ways, those he is connected with by ties of affection.

7th—Man is a spiritual being, responsible for his actions, be they good or bad; whether in the physical body or out of it.

It should be noted, to avoid confusion, that the meeting was held at the Newcastle-on-Tyne Spiritual Evidence Society's hall (Weir's Court), then under the presidency of John Mould. From this meeting the "Spirit Evidence Institute for Great Britain" was constituted. Jones had been well connected early in the movement through his friendship with Daniel D. Home; he was active in his defence of Dr Slade (1876) and well known to the Fox sisters.

However, the seven principles or basis of the new association did not appear to hold a Christian tone to them; the first principle received three dissentients, the others carried just one when Enmore Jones put them separately to the meeting. However, Enmore Jones gives the meaning: ¹⁸

Orthodox Christianity has in times past declared, and still declares boldly—fearlessly:—

1st, God is a Spirit. – 2nd, Ministering Spirits. – 3rd, Life after death. – 4th, Responsibility.

Orthodox Spiritualism, by the declaration of "Our Principles" at the 1882 Anniversary of the Advent of Modern Spiritualism, boldly and fearlessly affirm the same; thus:

1st, God is a Spirit. – 2nd, Ministering Spirits. – 3rd, Life after physical death. – 4th, Responsibility.¹⁹

The President of the Yorkshire District Committee, Mr B. Lees, took Enmore Jones to task on different points; one of these points was the new "Our Principles." A short quote from Lees' letter to the "The Herald of Progress", published on May 12th, 1882, is published below:

"Of course the report says that this great meeting of "officials," after much discussion, came to the conclusion that they should mutually agree about "Our Principles." Agree—1st, That there is a God; 2nd, That there is a future life; 3rd, That man is responsible for his actions. These are very important things to be agreed upon no doubt. But why urge this point so persistently, and print it in the report four or five times over, since every Spiritualist was agreed upon all the points long before Mr J. E. Jones discovered "Our Principles."

"Again, the President of Congress remarks in your last issue that " 'Our Principles' that now guide the North of England and are spreading Southward are so simple, so plain, so concise, that they *can* energise all people and nations." But it is not enough to say *can*, we want to know *how* this is to be done. Will you or Mr Jones kindly tell us the *how* in addition to the *can*."

However, creeds/principles would come and go – Emma Hardinge Britten would use variants of her principles/creeds and these would be seen throughout her life in her lectures, public debates, published works, and the laying of the cornerstone of the Oldham Spiritual Temple (April 9th, 1887). ²⁰

During the 1880s Emma would offer her principles to various Conferences, for example to the Conference of Spiritualists of Northumberland and Durham, held on Tuesday, July 31st, 1888 at 20, Nelson Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Again, she offered her principles to the meeting of a Provisional Spiritual Conference to consider the Future Formation of a Lancashire District Confederation of Spiritualists; this was on Sunday, August 19th, 1888 at a very large

¹⁸ "The Herald of Progress", May 12th, 1882, page 219.

¹⁹ Again, the reader is directed to "The Building of the Spiritualists' National Union", where a pdf is available of all five parts of the series upon request.

²⁰ The Pioneer pdf booklet, "SNU Seven Principles", is recommended reading. For details please see the last page of this issue.

gathering of Lancashire Spiritualists in the Assembly Room of the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Manchester. It would be the British Spiritualists' Lyceum Union (BSLU) which would use Emma's principles/creeds as given at Oldham in 1887.²¹

It has been noted that the Lancashire Committee had done much of the missionary groundwork of spreading Spiritualism in these early years; however, uniting the societies in their districts with the supply of good speakers, literature, etc., appears to have taken a back seat since their calling of the 1880 General Conference in an attempt to form a national organisation. This had not yielded the wider influence hoped for when urging societies to form themselves into district committees, etc. The most prominent to continue in its strength was the Yorkshire District Spiritualists' Committee.²²

With the start of a weekly journal, "The Two Worlds," on November 18th, 1887, the final momentum towards an organised national body of Spiritualists started to unfold.²³

In the pages of this new journal, on January 6th, 1888, James B. Tetlow (image)²⁴ began a series of discussions under the general title, "A Modern School of Prophets". This related to the development of mediumship – without mediumship Spiritualism cannot exist. This would of course raise questions of the need for a training college, education and organisation. Later in March the Two Worlds Directors started a "Prize Essay", with a prize of one guinea to be paid for the best essay on the subject, "The Best Means of Advancing the Cause of Spiritualism in England".²⁵



A committee from the Board of Directors was formed to decide on a winner. On April 19th, 1888 the committee unanimously chose out of twenty-six other submissions an essay by Phillip William Seymour of Nottingham, with his winning essay being published in the journal.²⁶ It is not surprising that the paper's directors and editor supported Seymour's outline of a national organisation: it was very similar to the ideas of James J. Morse and as propagated by the Lancashire and the Yorkshire district committees. A large percentage of the directors were directly and actively involved within these groups, as was the paper's editor, Emma Hardinge Britten.

Although Seymour's essay gave little more than a roundup of previous events, it, however, brought to public attention once again the need to have a central national body. Shortly after, in the Two Worlds, May 4th 1888, in Emma Hardinge Britten's editorial appeared the following:

²¹ In Manchester 1889 a committee was appointed to draw up a constitution for a proposed Lyceum Union, which included John Pemberton, Samuel Chiswell, W.H. Wheeler and Edward Wallis, with Alfred Kitson as Secretary. With forty delegates in attendance at the Oldham Conference on May 11th, 1890, under the presidency of Harry A. Kersey, the constitution for the Federation of Lyceums was formed.

²² In 1887 their committee meetings were being held at Scott's Dining Rooms, East Parade, Leeds Rd, Bradford; the corresponding Secretary was Mr J. Whitehead (Bradford).

²³ Psypioneer, Vol. 9, No. 5: After Forty Years – An Outline of the History of "The Two Worlds".

²⁴ Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 3: "2015 marks the Centenary Anniversary of the passing of two of the founding officers of the S.N.U.", "James Bronterre Tetlow Secretary: July 1890 - July 1893".

²⁵ This proved popular and the submission of essays on different subjects with the one guinea prize continued for some time.

²⁶ The Two Worlds, Vol. 1, No. 25, May 4th, 1888, pages 339-340.

Spiritualists, Awake!

In all and each of these points, it is perfectly evident that a great demand is felt, and that a general feeling of unity prevails. Perhaps it may not be amiss if the Editor at this point steps beyond the sphere of the impersonal, and attempts to answer, on her own account, the great and momentous query, as to *how* these many and valuable suggestions can be carried out?

It must be remembered that all reformatory as well as revolutionary movements are the result of growth; they may appear on the surface of life with sudden and startling rapidity, but they will invariably be found to have been germinating and growing out of the realm of causes, long before they become manifest in perfected form. Can we not follow out this hint from nature and history, and commence the grand desideratum of general reform, by taking one step at a time? Might not the preliminary step be *organization of a national conference*, to be held in the metropolis itself—to be a general gathering of delegates or representatives from all parts of the country—Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the Channel Islands, and different counties of England, and thus, by coming together in earnest and solemn conclave in a two, three, or four days' Pentecostal gathering, be prepared by mutual helpfulness, unity of feeling, and recognition of the worth of what we are labouring for, to determine that what we need, we are going to have—what we ought to do, we intend to accomplish; and whatever the obstacles in our way may be, we resolve to tread them down until our path is clear to the accomplishment of the best results we can devise.

We say the metropolis should be the central place of gathering, because we desire to start by sinking all local preferences or interests. We say commence with such a national conference, because we plead for the rights of the many, rather than appeal locally to the few. Let the voice of the majority be heard. Let us come together now, as of old, WITH “ONE ACCORD,” and if we do not feel the walls of bigotry, prejudice, and mental slavery shake, and hear the rushing sound of the mighty winds of spiritual inspiration on such an occasion, this writer will be ready to give up her belief in spirit power, presence, and guidance.

Friends in London, will you aid this work? In fact, according to the great and crying demands of the time, will you commence its inauguration? Words, writings, essays, are *nothing*, if they do not bear fruit in deeds. Spiritualism has been with us now for forty years, and still we are only scattered fragments, isolated individuals, or, at most, mere local groups. Nothing in the universe stands still, and that which does not move onward sinks downward. Death is as constant as life, and the death of great movements and great nations has only ensued because the people that composed them were not worthy of them. The hour has now come when spiritualists must arise, and do the work that spirits have hitherto wrought out for the world almost unaided. We can see with the eye of human experience, no less than of prophecy, the mighty cause trembling in the balance of progression or retrogression. Which shall it be? It is for the spiritualists of the PRESENT HOUR to determine.

We now await farther suggestions and plans of action from capable heads and willing hands, and these must decide whether the spiritualists of Great Britain mean to become a power in the world, or a memorial of golden opportunities lost to an effete and apathetic generation.

Emma noted:

The Editor and writer of the above article, being unwilling to incur the inevitable charge of seeking to be “a pope,” “bishop,” “Priest,” “dictator,” “leader,” or “self-seeker,” now leaves her suggestions in the hands of others, praying that some efficient and wholehearted men and women may be inspired to arise, face the foes of bigotry and selfishness both without and *within* our ranks, and dare to lead on the broken ranks of our noble cause to triumph over all opposition.—ED. T. W.

From this period onwards activity increased but it would continue primarily in the North of England, since the first impetus of the idea of a national organisation began in Darlington in 1865. As a result of the Two Worlds publication of articles, competition, etc., a ‘National Conference of Spiritualists’ was organised to be held at the same venue as Lancashire Spiritualists in August 1888 in the Assembly Room of the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Manchester. The agenda for the Conference, prepared by its *pro tem* committee, which was significantly made up of the Officers, Directors and the paper’s Editor of The Two Worlds Publishing Company Ltd, Manchester, was published in their weekly journal on June 20th, 1890, as given below:

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SPIRITUALISTS.

AT the last meeting of the Committee *pro tem*, on the general order of exercises deemed most desirable to be observed at the National Conference, SUNDAY, JULY 6TH, it was determined to add to the “*Agenda*” already published in this journal a copy of the principal resolutions which will be submitted to the Conference for consideration, together with such other matters as may be of interest to the friends who propose to attend or the societies sending delegates.

We shall again call attention to the *Agenda* to be carried out in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Manchester, Sunday, July 6th.

Order of Proceedings—

1. Chairman, Mr. Lamont. Call to order at 10-15 for 10-30.
2. Opening hymn and invocation.
3. Reading of letters received by the sub-committee.
4. Call for short written reports or suggestions from delegates, concerning the status of their societies
5. Collection.
6. Resolutions then in order, in speeches of not more than ten minutes’ duration. No speaker, except the mover of the resolution, to speak twice.
7. Adjourn at 12-30 for refreshments.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

1. Re-open at 2 o’clock.
2. Call to order by the Chairman.
3. Resolutions and ten minutes’ speeches.
4. Collection at 4 p.m.
5. Election of place, time, officers, and committee of management for next year’s conference.
6. Adjourn at 4-30.

EVENING SESSION.

1. Commencement at 6-30.
2. Hymn and invocation.
3. Chairman's remarks.
4. Short speeches from appointed speakers—among others, Mrs. Britten, Messrs. Morse, Wallis, Johnson, &c., &c.
5. Collection.
6. Hymn and benediction.

Sub-Committee to receive the delegates—Mrs. Wallis, Messrs. Morse and Boardman.

Arrangements will be inside for refreshments to be provided for visitors close by the hall, at moderate charges.

Societies who are in sympathy with this movement are kindly invited to send one or two delegates to the Conference, as representative of their views on the best means of advancing the cause of spiritualism.

The Committee have secured the able services of Mr. Smith, organist, of Collyhurst, for the musical portion of the services.

Those Societies intending to send delegates can receive written instructions concerning the location of the place of meeting, and means of reaching it from the various railways, &c., by addressing the secretary, Mr. J. B. Tallow, 46, Harrison Street, Pendleton, Manchester.

At the last meeting of the Committee of Management it was decided to draft and print, for the benefit of those who may attend the Conference, the following important and suggestive resolutions:—

(1) “That this assembly of representative spiritualists consider that an annual movable Conference of the spiritualists of Great Britain and Ireland is a necessity of the present position and importance of our movement.”—Moved by Mr. J. J. Morse.

(2) “That whilst we deem the phenomenal and religious aspects of our movement as of equal importance and essentially necessary each to the other, yet we strongly deprecate the habit of holding circles on Sunday evenings—a practice tending to draw off the interest of enquirers and spiritualists from the Sunday evening public services, thereby limiting the usefulness of Spiritual Societies’ efforts to present the religious and philosophical aspects of the cause.”—Moved by Mr. A. H. Kersey, of Newcastle-on-Tyne.

(3) “That the time has come for a greater unanimity of opinion concerning the fundamental basis of our philosophy, so that the terms spiritualism and spiritualists may be associated with an accepted and definite significance.”—Moved by Ms. Britten.

(4) “That the position of spiritual Societies and spiritual mediums before the law is unsatisfactory, and demands amendment.”—Moved by Mr. Johnson.

(5) “That considering the number and importance of Spiritualist societies now existing, their federal unity is desirable and expedient, but that such unity shall in *no case* involve a Sacrifice of *local self-government or freedom of action*.”—Moved by Mr. E. W. Wallis.

(6) “That the next year’s Conference Committee be requested to gather the opinions of societies, representative workers, and Spiritualists upon such subjects as are suggested in the foregoing resolutions, and report thereon at the next annual meeting.”—Moved by Mr. H. Boardman.

We beg to add, on behalf of the Committee *pro tem*, that though the expenses attending the origination and conduct of this meeting are quite considerable, especially when falling on the few, all contributions in aid of the work will be purely VOLUNTARY.

The Committee also take this opportunity of returning grateful thanks to a few kind and generous contributors who have already assisted them, but desire their names to be withheld.

Societies will send delegates at their own expense, and collections in aid of the undertaking will be in order at each meeting. This notice will be continued up to the date of the Conference.

Signed on behalf of the full Committee—

EMMA H. BRITTEN,
Humphrey Street, Cheetham Hill, Manchester.

MR. E. W. WALLIS,
10, Petworth Street, Cheetham, Manchester.

J. J. MORSE,
16, Stanley Street, Fairfield, Liverpool.

SUB-COMMITTEE on printing, announcements, agenda, &c.

The Two Worlds would play a significant part in the eventual success; the *pro tem* committee which was formed to arrange the inaugural Conference consisted of sixteen Spiritualists: ²⁷ Dr and Mrs Britten, Mr and Mrs Edward W. Wallis, Mrs Margaret Wilkinson, (Emma's sister); James J. Morse, William Johnson, J.B. Tetlow (secretary), H. Boardman, Peter Lee, Mr Rayner, Mr J. Gibson, Richard Fitton, Mr Thomas Brown, Mr [J]. Simkin (The original report has the incorrect initial and should read [T] (Thomas) Simkin, and Mr F. Tomlinson (treasurer). ²⁸

The following year, at a second Conference held at Bradford, this committee would serve as the first Executive Committee of the Spiritualists' National Federation, which was formally constituted at this Conference on 4th July, 1891. The Spiritualists' National Federation would continue until its thirteenth Conference, which met in Bootle on 5th and 6th July, 1902.

At this Conference the new legally constituted "Spiritualists' National Union Ltd" took over the property, rights and obligations of the Spiritualists' National Federation. It was decided at the meeting that the Officers of the Federation would be the first Officers of the Union (except James J. Morse, who had been engaged by the Victorian Association of Spiritualists of Melbourne). In July 1903 we see the first elected President and Council of the Spiritualists' National Union Ltd.

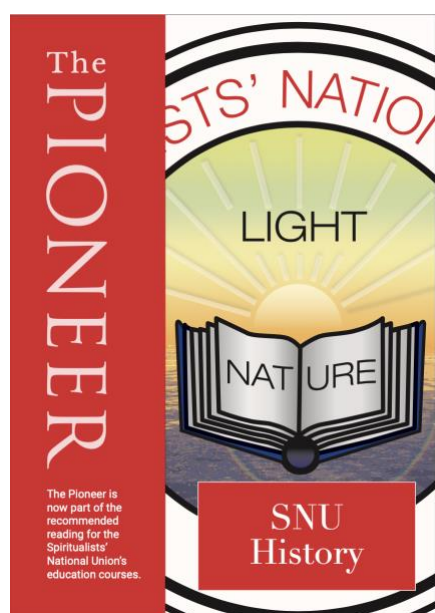
The legal problems which arose within the Spiritualists' National Federation, e.g. the election of a President, ²⁹ the inability to hold property gifted to the Federation, etc., led to a necessity for reconstitution which would in itself bring further stumbling-blocks; one potent

²⁷ It should be noted that in "100 Years of National Spiritualism", by Jean Bassett, 1990, Jean publishes the sixteen members of the *pro tem* committee but the name 'Williamson' should read 'Wilkinson'; in addition, the name 'Raynor' is incorrect: it should read 'Rayner'.

²⁸ Pioneer, Vol. 2, No. 3: "2015 marks the Centenary Anniversary of the passing of two of the founding officers of the S.N.U.", "Frederick Tomlinson Treasurer: July 1890 - July 1893".

²⁹ James J. Morse: "But the Federation founded upon what it is common to describe as 'democratic' lines has no President, and, one of the difficulties your speaker has had to contend against has been the frequent incorrect description of him as the 'President of the Federation,' though at all times he has endeavoured to avoid the appearance, even, of, using a designation to which he is not entitled." See Pioneer, Vol. 7, No. 2: "President or Chairman?"

point was that some members did not want to be governed by a set of Principles which would be required in becoming the Spiritualists' National Union Ltd. This move is well covered in Pioneer, Vol. 3, No.1: "National Federation to National Union".



THE HISTORY OF THE FEDERATION AND THE UNION IS WELL COVERED IN THE SNU "PIONEER"

Please see the last page of this issue for detail

At the time of this film the reconstitution of the Spiritualists' National Federation into the Spiritualists' National Union was nearing its final legal stages.³⁰

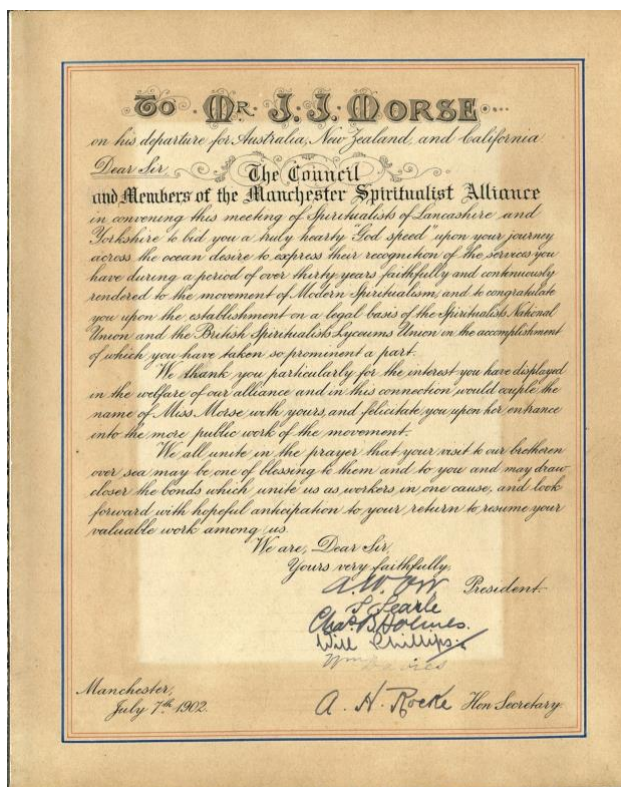
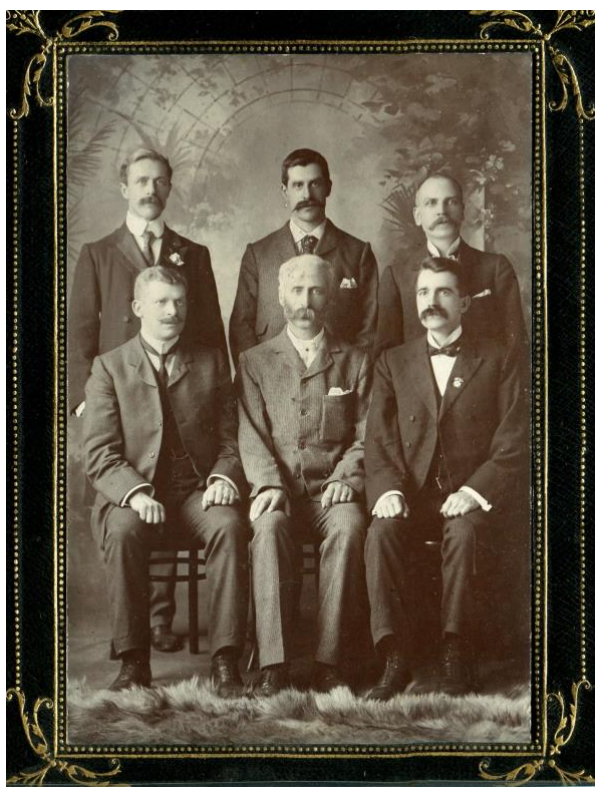
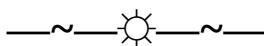
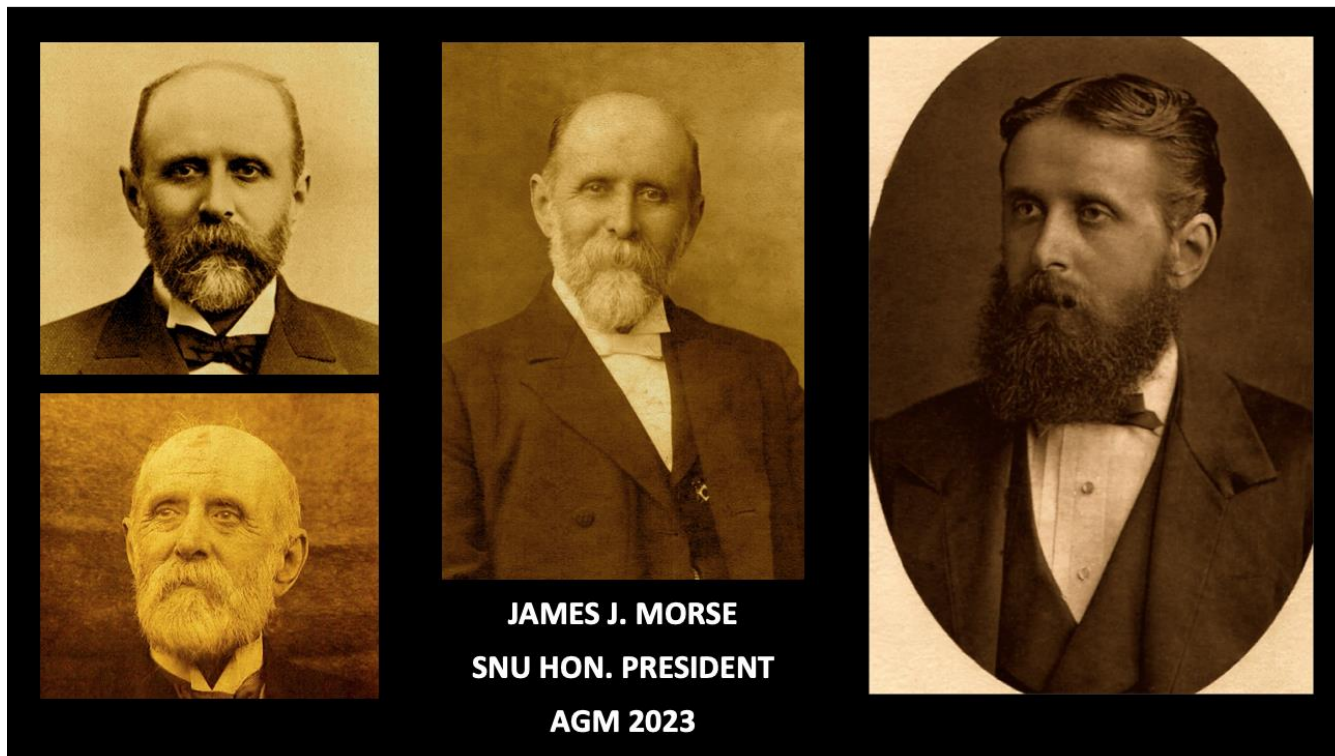


At the front on the left (facing) of the parade is James J. Morse, who had been fighting for a *National* Spiritualist movement, along with William Johnson (next to Morse), for over two decades.

³⁰ Pioneer, Vol. 8, No. 6: "1901 Manchester Lyceum Parade".

James Johnson Morse

SNU Honorary President



Testimonial to J.J Morse July 7th, 1902 from the Council and Members of the Manchester Spiritualist Alliance

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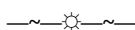
August 31st – September 7th 2024



Britten Museum & Library

This page also has a selection of downloadable important subjects from the history of the Spiritualists' National Union, designed to cover key topics for anyone studying one of our courses or for anyone looking to further their knowledge on the history of our movement.

Also, a link to all “Pspioneer” issues often referenced in Pioneer



HELEN DUNCAN

REGURGITATION

—~—☼~—~
by Paul J. Gaunt

Some researchers and critics claim that Helen Duncan used a cheesecloth-like material which she used to fake her materialisation séances. When we read the many *negative* websites, unresearched posts, articles and suchlike, the claim made is that she could produce the material by means of regurgitation. When these claims are challenged and more details are asked for, the general answer is simply quotes like this: “She was famous for producing ectoplasm which was proven to be made from cheesecloth.” When asked who *proved* it or where the *evidence* is and for further referenced details, most of the claims naturally more or less dry up: some may throw in the name of Harry Price for safe measure.



These sweeping statements are immature and hold little or no value for the earnest enquirer. If one cannot back up claims with reliable referenced materials and some basic knowledge of the foundation for the claims, it becomes pointless, misleading and scandalous.

Firstly, where did these claims of regurgitation originate from? The simple answer is jointly between:

The London Psychical Laboratory, which was the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd,³¹ and the National Laboratory of Psychical Research.

Naturally, to suggest that Helen Duncan regurgitated her *ectoplasm* in the form of a cheesecloth-like material requires conclusive proof to make a public statement to this effect; it requires that evidence is shown fully supporting this claim which will need to stand up to show that this was *actually* the case—that the researchers have proved it beyond reasonable doubt. Pioneer will publish the two reports from the two investigating parties which *publicly* brought forward the claim:

Helen Duncan used regurgitation

It will make this into a long article, but it will be seen how these two well-known professional research faculties arrived at their conclusions. The story starts with a series of séances which commenced late October 1930, later resulting in Helen, her husband Henry and their family temporarily moving to London from Scotland to undertake extensive, contractually controlled séances with the London Psychical Laboratory (LPL) (the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd (LSA)), starting on March 13th, 1931 and abruptly ending on June 12th, 1931.

To my knowledge the London Spiritualist Alliance’s Research Department, the London Psychical Laboratory, never made its full report public, only what is reported in its in-house journal, *Light*. The LSA’s publication, *Light*, for July 17th, 1931 published its Research Department’s conclusion on the mediumship of Mrs Duncan:

³¹ Today it still holds the same premises under the name of the “College of Psychic Studies” (CPS).

MRS. DUNCAN'S MEDIUMSHIP

ADVERSE REPORT AFTER EXAMINATION BY LONDON PSYCHICAL LABORATORY

INVESTIGATIONS into the mediumistic claims of Mrs. Duncan, of Dundee, have been completed by the London Psychical Laboratory (the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance) and the report states that on nearly all points the conclusions are disappointing to those interested in psychical research.

In consequence of representations received from Scotland, the London Psychical Laboratory invited Mrs. Duncan to come to London and to submit her mediumship for investigation. Mr. and Mrs. Duncan accordingly agreed and entered into a binding contract to sit exclusively for the London Psychical Laboratory for a period of eighteen months. This contract the Duncans had no scruple in breaking.

The most striking phenomenon which Mrs. Duncan claimed to produce was the exhibition of "ectoplasm" and the Committee—which included Dr. Robert Fielding-Ould, M.A., M.R.C.P., Lord Charles Hope, and Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P.,—concentrated attention on the nature of this substance and the means of its production. Careful analyses were from time to time made, chemical and microscopical, by three competent authorities, and at last the Committee were obliged to believe that the so-called "ectoplasm" was an artificial substance produced by the ingenuity of Mrs. Duncan herself.

"It was proved," says the report, "that the material was swallowed by Mrs. Duncan at some time previous to the sitting and subsequently regurgitated by her for the purpose of exhibition."

In all, five fragments of so-called "ectoplasm" were obtained—the fifth being cut off while it depended from the mouth of the Medium and received into a dish.

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

Two of these earlier specimens were submitted for analysis. One authority described the substance as resembling tissue paper with traces of bacteria. The second report (February 9, 1931) was as follows:

"We have made a very careful examination of the material which was submitted to us and we are of the opinion that it consists of paper, cloth, and such everyday materials mixed with an organic substance which is in every respect similar to coagulated white of egg."

The report on the fourth fragment (received in a prepared sterile container) was as follows:

"The specimen consisted of a piece of surgical gauze soaked in resinous fluid. The gauze consisted of typical cotton fibres. The resinous fluid had the odour of Canada Balsam or one of the pine resins." (April 10, 1931)

The report on the fifth fragment (April 15, 1931) was in similar terms.

The dried gauze, it is added, is in the possession of the Laboratory and can be seen by those interested, and a portion of the third fragment is still preserved hermetically sealed in pure spirit.

The report adds that on May 29, 1931, Mrs. Duncan left behind her in the dressing room a towel which was noticed to be made of a fabric resembling the third specimen of "ectoplasm." A piece was cut off and on comparison with the bottled specimen it was found to be identical in texture and pattern.

On May 29th the alleged control, "Albert," was asked if he would bring the Medium out of the cabinet under the red light and show the emergence and re-absorption of the "ectoplasm." The Medium came out to within about twelve inches of the red light while both her hands were held. She opened her mouth and "ectoplasm" was extruded by obvious movements of the mouth and throat muscles. It was about two inches wide and hung down about eight inches. After a few seconds the Medium, by movements of the lips and throat, sucked it back again. The material when extruded showed signs of having been folded by compression.

On June 12, the last of the sittings, Mrs. Duncan was asked to swallow a pill of sugar-coated methylene blue. She did so and had any so-called "ectoplasm" emerged which came from the stomach, it would have been coloured blue, but at this seance none appeared the single occasion during the whole series when there was a total absence of "ectoplasm."

"The Medium put out her tongue during the sitting," says the report, "and this was claimed by 'Albert' to be 'ectoplasm.' It was, however, only the Medium's tongue which was quite clearly seen."

Being aware that the Committee were anxious to discover the nature of "ectoplasm" and the means of its production, Mrs. Duncan stated that her urine was abnormally full of albumen, and suggested that that condition was a peculiar physiological condition related to her "ectoplasm." Several specimens were obtained for analysis and these, on being tested by acidifying and boiling, always coagulated and the total specimen solidified.

A medical report stated that Mrs. Duncan did at one time suffer from nephritis which was accompanied by the usual symptoms, namely, presence of albumen in the urine and high blood pressure. In London, during the sittings, her blood pressure was tested several times and found to be subnormal.

An opportunity was awaited for the verification of this abnormal physical state, and this opportunity presented itself when Mrs. Duncan was in St. Thomas's Hospital with a sceptic boil on the wrist. Her urine was tested and found to be normal. A signed medical report to this effect is in the possession of the Laboratory.

These facts and the appearance of the specimens supplied to the Committee suggest that these specimens were "faked" by the addition of white of egg.

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN

The report explains the precautions taken by the Committee in the way of examination of the Medium before the sitting. Stress is laid on the fact that from the beginning of the experiment, every care was taken to respect the feelings of Mrs. Duncan, and not to hasten too rigid test conditions which might be interpreted by her as a doubt of her genuineness. It was observed that as closer vigilance was exercised and the test conditions tightened, including hand and foot control, phenomena rapidly lessened and finally came to a complete cessation.

For the seances Mrs. Duncan wore a one-piece suit which clothed the whole body, including the feet. It had only one opening at the back from neck to waist, which was sewn before the sitting. Buckram fingerless gloves were introduced and sewn to the

wrist-bands. More than once, and apparently in trance, Mrs. Duncan got out of the dress, which was found apparently as it had been stitched on her before the sitting. Later, "code sewing" was used, and it was then found after the sitting that the original stitching had completely disappeared and that the opening had been re-stitched in a different manner.

"When so-called full forms appeared," says the report, "they were indistinct in outline, resembling masses of 'ectoplasm' draped over a structure of some kind, which suggested the human form."

On one occasion three hands were seen, two of which were identified as those of the Medium, and a third, of a dark and apparently solid character. "The only possible explanation," says the report, "is that Mrs. Duncan had previously secreted about her person a rubber glove which was used for the exhibition of the third hand."

The Committee record that Mr. Duncan, husband of the Medium, was always present at the sittings, but that he never approached the cabinet, and remained at the back of the sitters and manipulated the gramophone at least nine feet from the Medium's chair. On the morning of the last sitting, Friday, June 12, Mr. Duncan asked if he could interview the Research Committee, and, after the sitting, he made a statement to the effect that he had come to the conclusion that the "ectoplasm" was the result of regurgitation. He added that Mrs. Duncan was in the habit of "losing her will" for a time about three hours before a sitting, and said he believed that in a state of unconsciousness, resembling that of hypnosis, Mrs. Duncan secreted things in or about her person and that she could retain these things in her stomach and eat and digest food.

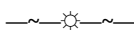
"At this interview," says the report, "Mr. Duncan anticipated the discoveries of the Committee . . . and to sum up, Mr. Duncan at all times tried to save his own face at the expense of his wife's reputation."

When the sittings were terminated, the Committee went beyond their legal obligations and at a cost exceeding £40 returned the Duncan family and their furniture to Edinburgh.

It should be observed that at the time of the publication of the first abridged report no phenomena were recorded which there was any justification at that time for assuming to be other than supernormal, having regard to the possibilities in such states as hypnosis and somnambulism.

At the time of the publication of the second abridged report (May 16th) the Committee were less united in their assent to the possibility of the *whole* of the manifestations being capable of supernormal interpretation, although nothing had occurred *upon which a definite accusation of deception* (conscious or unconscious) could be based.

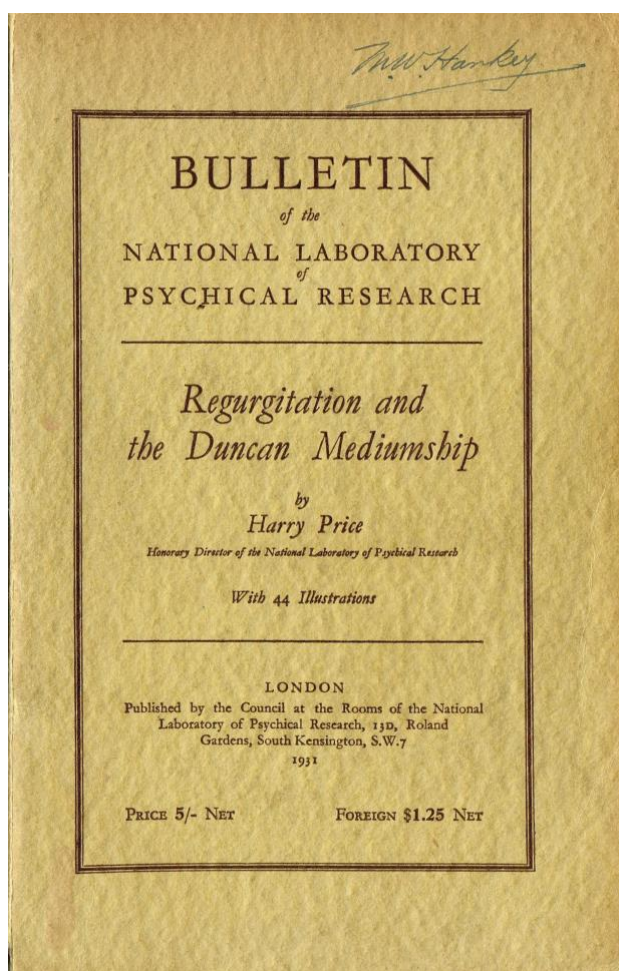
No paid sittings were held after the Committee agreed upon the final report.



The above article notes:

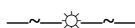
“Mr. and Mrs. Duncan accordingly agreed and entered into a binding contract to sit exclusively for the London Psychical Laboratory for a period of eighteen months. This contract the Duncans had no scruple in breaking.”

Indeed, the Duncans did break their signed contract, tempted by a financial reward from the National Laboratory of Psychical Research (NLPR), namely by its Honorary Director, Harry Price. As with the London Psychical Laboratory, their researchers were eminent men of the day such as Professor Dr William McDougall, Dr William Brown and Professor J.C. Flügel, to name but a few. Five experimental sésances were conducted under the NLPR’s chosen conditions. Once the London Spiritualist Alliance became aware of the Duncans breaking their contract giving them exclusive working for the LPL, it all came to an end. Hence their report quoted above.



The Council of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research published its full report, I believe, in July 1931, as shown in the photograph, which contains 116 pages plus illustrations. The first suggestion of regurgitation was mooted by Professor McDougall within the Council; this was after its first sésance on May 4th, 1931. The quote below is found in the Notes, Comments and Impressions of the first sésance, dated Saturday May 9th, 1931:

“Professor McDougall expressed the opinion, which was endorsed by members of the Research Council, that one of two hypotheses might account for the extraordinary manifestations which we had witnessed. These theories were (1) that the ‘teleplasm’ was really some fine fabric such as cheese cloth, capable of being compressed into a small compass and then secreted in the genital passages; and (2) that the medium possesses a false or secondary stomach (an *æsoophageal diverticulum*) like the *rumen* or first stomach of a ruminant, and that she is able to swallow sheets of some material and regurgitate it at leisure—like a cow with her cud.”



The National Laboratory of Psychical Research first published its claim of regurgitation in the “Morning Post” on July 14th, 1931. I do not have access to this article, so below is published Appendix B, pages 96-104, from its published report in the NLPR Bulletin, as previously indicated. It contains the full (complete) interview with Helen Duncan’s husband, Henry, and gives a rather in-depth insight into the investigation, its conclusions, the problems faced, etc.; I have also included some of the illustrations used in Henry’s interview:

APPENDIX B

VERBATIM REPORT OF MEETING BETWEEN MR. HENRY DUNCAN AND THE COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL LABORATORY, HELD ON THURSDAY, JUNE 11TH, 1931, AT 3.30 P.M.

Present: Mr. H. E. Dennis, Professor Dr. D. F. Fraser-Harris, Mr. Harry Price, Mr. I. C. Gröndahl, Mr. H. G. Bois, Mrs. J. G. Robertson, Mrs. Clarice Richards, Captain H. W. Seton-Karr, Mr. Henry Duncan. Miss Beenham recording in shorthand.



Mr. BOIS opened the proceedings by telling Mr. Duncan of our suspicions. He said: 'We are rather suspicious as to the genuineness of the phenomena, and we have had photographs taken, and in the photographs it appears that the material which was apparently extruded by the medium is of an exactly similar nature to butter muslin. Now there are two or three points shown in the photographs which I should like you to

explain: The threads of the weft and warp show very clearly—there are interlaced threads. Secondly, there are apparently holes. Thirdly, in one of the photographs it will appear that there is a dirty dust mark made, probably, through trailing on the floor, and last and by no means least, the substance appears to have a selvedge mark.³² Can you question these facts?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I cannot. This material which I have here' (taking hold of our piece of paper 'teleplasm') 'is, I would say, the first stage; the second stage is of pretty much the same nature, but there appear to be threads running through it, it is much the same in texture. The third stage is of muslin-like texture. I believe they have a piece at the L.S.A. Sometimes it is thick in places and at other times very thin, and it has the appearance, under the light, of being like muslin. On some occasions, I have witnessed what you refer to as a selvedge, and it appeared to be, when felt, like a curtain—rough.'

Mr. BOIS: 'Assuming this substance which is extruded is genuine, is it possible that it can take the form of butter-muslin and also appear like muslin to the sight and touch? At the last sitting there was no production of this butter-muslin, but a certain substance was extruded from the mouth of the medium. This substance was torn off by one of the medical men there, and on being shown to the expert analysts, they say it is paper and it is composed of vegetable fibre, and that it is 60% chemical and 40% mechanical wood pulp, and not only does it look like paper, *it is paper*. How do you explain that?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'God only knows. Now, Mr. Price, what was it that you had analysed?'

³² Taken from the fourth séance on May 28th, 1931: the second image (Stereogram 12) is an enlarged portion (a little darker to show the details) to indicate what Mr Bois is referring to—showing rents in the cloth, warp and weft, etc., and selvedge indicated.

Mr. PRICE: 'That, of course, was white of egg, and we have made up a similar substance which gives the same reaction to tests and reacts the same way. This "teleplasm" is wood-pulp.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Do you think for one moment that I would get Mrs. Duncan to come here and by some means or other (say Mrs. Macleod passed it to her) produce fraud? That I would allow her to come here and get you to test her? The whole idea is preposterous!'

Mr. PRICE: 'Yes, that is what is in your favour. But we cannot get away from the fact that this is a piece of paper folded over and glued—it is folded in the form of a concertina—or cracker.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Where do you think it could be secreted? I believe in automatism of the will. Previous to *séances*, two or three mediums seem to have gone into that hypnotic state, and it is quite possible that they would pick up something (I have seen it done with Mrs. Duncan). She might have done it.'

Mr. PRICE: 'But she was searched thoroughly and led into the cabinet. If she picked anything up, she must have secreted it.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, and these photographs. Well, in the first place in examining these photographs, it does look like threads; but the point is this, how in the name of anything, and after you have examined her, could she secrete this substance?'

Mr. PRICE: 'That is exactly what we want to know.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I do not know.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Also, there is an identical tear in the substance, seen in the photographs, which appeared at different *séances*.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I do not know. It is a complete puzzle to me. I know nothing about it. If you accept the evidence of your witnesses, I cannot say where she could possibly secrete it. There is about seven or eight feet of substance. That means bulk.'



Mr. PRICE: 'We have some of the identical stuff here, and it can be rolled up very small.'

Mr. BOIS: 'I confess that is the puzzle—where she has been able to secrete that stuff after the very thorough examination she has had.'

(Mr. Duncan looking at photographs.)

Mr. PRICE: 'That is frayed at the edge' (pointing to one of the photographs).³³

Mr. DUNCAN: 'To me, this hand looks like a glove' (he examines one of the photographs).

Mr. BOIS: 'To me, they look exactly like a surgeon's (very thin) rubber glove which has been blown out. It would have the same appearance.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'To me, these look different' (looking at some pictures of trailing cheese cloth).

³³ Fourth séance, May 28th, 1931, showing a frayed edge bottom of the right.

Mr. PRICE: 'That is merely the same roll of muslin twisted into a trail, but you do not get the criss-cross warp and weft as when spread out. It is very difficult to photograph, as the white stuff requires one-tenth the exposure the *séance* garment does.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, you do see the rents and tears. The curious fact is that you say that that was a rubber glove, then how is it held up straight like that?'

Mr. PRICE: 'Of course, that is what we want to know.'

Mr. BOIS: 'These gloves do stand up, in any case.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'You forget this, gentlemen. You would need to have a tube in it—to hold the glove out like that.'

CAPT. S.-K.: 'You would not need anything to support it. It would stand out when blown up.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'But there must be something in it to support it.'

Mr. PRICE: 'In two of these photographs there are distinctly safety-pins. These are in the "glove" pictures. They are in the stuff that is wrapped round the glove. Curiously enough, it has lost something by being enlarged, but in the stereoscope the pin is very distinct. In the other picture the pin is, of course, viewed from a different angle.'



Mr. DUNCAN: 'Did you say there was a pin in this one?' (picking up a 'glove' photo).

(Mr. Price points out the positions of the pins to Mr. Duncan.)

CAPT. S.-K.: 'The whole thing is quite easy. I have done these sort of things for years. You would only have to blow the glove out and it would be identical with the one in the photograph. The only question is where the stuff is hidden.'³⁴

Mr. PRICE: 'At the first *séance* we heard the stuff being jerked off the curtains. I won't say anything about the other pin that was found in the tuck of the *séance* garment.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'That is the substance here, is it not?' (pointing to a cheese cloth photo).

Mr. PRICE: 'I think it might possibly be thinner just there, as it is worn and torn and would show the black garment through more clearly; and perhaps it was not then dirty.'



³⁴ Two of the photographs showing the glove from the third *séance*, May 21st, 1931; the safety-pin on the top photo (hand hanging down) is the little dent on the left side just below the loose piece of the alleged teleplasm hanging down.

Mr. DUNCAN: 'You mean that mark down at the bottom?'

Mr. PRICE: 'Yes.'

Mr. BOIS: 'The real point is this: What is the explanation of all this?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'God knows. I do not. You are asking me a puzzle. In the first place, you say she was examined, and on two occasions I have examined her before she came up here. I have taken her into the bathroom and made her take all her clothes off, and I have on two occasions given her a vaginal examination. I have got the maid to look through her clothes and hand them to her one by one.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Is that necessary? Has she secreted things on other occasions?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I have told you. I call it "automatism". If that is butter muslin, how did she secrete it?'

Mr. BOIS: 'That is exactly why we have met here this afternoon.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'The same thing happened in the Eva C. *séances*.'

Mr. PRICE: 'There has been a great deal of controversy over those pictures. Not one person in a hundred accepted Eva C. as genuine. When Eva C. was at the London S.P.R., the "teleplasm" was proved to be chewed paper. By a strange coincidence the same analyst who analysed the Eva C. "teleplasm", analysed the piece of "teleplasm" I received from the piece cut from Mrs. Duncan soon after she arrived in London.'



Mr. BOIS: 'That is the whole trouble. I might say that teleplasm may take the form of paper or butter muslin; I might admit there may be holes in it; I might admit there may be dirt on it; but when it comes to having a selvedge, it is more than I can swallow. All these things are puzzling.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I understand.'³⁵

Mr. PRICE: 'Professor Fraser-Harris has made some slides of our piece of teleplasm, and I can even show you the machine marks on the wood pulp as it was passed through the machine. When the wood is cut up, it is treated (a) mechanically, or (b) chemically. Actually, as the analyst has told us, there is 60% chemical and 40% mechanical wood pulp. What are we to make of it?'

Mr. BOIS: 'Obviously this is paper' (pointing to our specimen).³⁶

Mr. DUNCAN: 'The point is this, gentlemen. It seems silly that anyone would come here and deliberately produce fraud.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Unless that person thought that he, or she, would run the risk.'

³⁵ Showing various rents/tears, warp and weft, fold or crease marks, and selvedge. The photo was taken at the second séance, May 14th, 1931.

³⁶ This is shown further in the article.

Mr. DUNCAN: 'But we allowed these photographs to be taken. You know I am not a spiritualist. Here is my explanation: I believe in an animistic theory that the idea has, through the ages, become impressed upon our minds that there is a god, and naturally then that there is a life after death. To support that theory—man has got into a groove with the result that some persons can easily go into an hypnotic trance, are open to suggestion, and the idea of immortality is so much impressed within that mind that the subconscious will do anything to prove it.'

PROF. F.-H.: 'But what has the production of the paper teleplasm to do with an afterlife?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'That is my idea. These ideas which are impressed within the mind of that subject will become an obsession, and that person will do anything towards gaining that end.'

Mr. BOIS: 'So the medium is quite prone to take any steps to back up her belief?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Not consciously.'

Mr. PRICE: "Then it is very difficult to say when the medium is acting subconsciously or consciously.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'This should be for further research work. It should be studied by every research worker.'

Mr. PRICE: 'The Hon. Everard Feilding wrote to me only the other day and quoted a case of a man swallowing frogs and goldfish and "God knows how much water".'

PROF. F.-H.: "What has this substance' (pointing to our 'teleplasm') 'to do with psychic powers?'

Mr. BOIS: 'It is to prove the existence of beings outside ourselves, and therefore the medium tries to back up her theory by producing something which she has already arranged normally.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'All mediums whom I have come in contact with have struck me as being of a very childish disposition. I would then say that under trance conditions the child mind comes to the surface. That is why we get so many childish pranks during a *séance*. And therefore that childish mind produces these things.'

Mrs. ROBERTSON: 'Where does she produce them from?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'God knows!'

Mr. PRICE: 'That X-rays incident the other night was very suspicious, and when it came to the X-rays, she broke down all our controls by rushing out of the house, and that afterwards she insisted upon the X-rays *after* she had been in the street with you. Also, you would not be searched. It is very suspicious.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, I admit that. But I told you about the diapers.'

Mrs. ROBERTSON: 'It is suspicious that Mrs. Goldney says that Mrs. Duncan was not unwell that night.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, but it was due for that night.'

Mrs. ROBERTSON: 'Were they soiled diapers you had on you?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'No, clean ones.'

Mr. BOIS: 'Well, what is the next step?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I think the best thing would be to hold another three *séances*.'

Mr. BOIS: 'But are we not wasting our time?'

Mr. DENNIS: 'Do you swear that you do not know where that stuff is concealed?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Of course, I do swear.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Of course, it is not an anatomical impossibility for her to conceal it in her body. I have seen a man swallow a watch and chain and regurgitate it two or three times. I mean that if regurgitation can be done several times a day for a living, there is no reason why it is impossible in this case. Especially if she has an œsophageal pouch.'

PROF. F.-H.: 'It could go into the real stomach.'

Mr. PRICE: 'That is where we think all these things are secreted.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'But you cannot get anything from the X-rays?'

Mr. PRICE: 'That is absolutely useless because she is so thick, and in any case, muslin or rubber gloves would not register.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'But if you gave her a bismuth meal or something like that?'

Mr. PRICE: 'Yes, but I do not think that it would do. It is possible that it would reveal a secondary stomach, but it is only a small chance.'

Mrs. RICHARDS: 'Has Mrs. Duncan ever had an operation where she was cut open?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, she has, but it is too far down. It would not show anything in the X-rays.'

Mrs. ROBERTSON: 'Do you believe that she is genuine?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Oh, yes. But I also believe in automatism of the will.'

Mr. BOIS: 'He thinks it is genuine sometimes, but that she is quite capable of humbugging. So far, to me, we have seen the humbugging.' (Pointing to the photographs and 'teleplasm'.) 'We cannot get away from these things. Is it worth our while to continue?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes. I should have two or three more *séances* under a physical control, the sitters going in the cabinet.'

Mr. PRICE: 'You very kindly offered us that first *séance*. I was very impressed by what I had been told by other sitters, and you did not come here with any idea of our showing you up. On the contrary, I had received such good reports from various people that I wanted to have you for a long period. But we simply *cannot* believe it now. We have been forced into this attitude owing to the evidence we have accumulated.'

Mr. BOIS: 'We will assume these things are secreted somewhere we do not know. Supposing she was immobilized so that she could not move hand or foot?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Just a minute. I asked you, Mr. Price, to immobilize her at the last sitting.'

Mr. PRICE: 'In any case, that would have been useless the other night, as the paper "teleplasm" could have been produced with a dozen people holding her. A funny thing,

but we all thought we were going to get that piece of “teleplasm”, because at previous *séances* we were promised it and you were always urging Albert to give us a piece. As this one was a test *séance*, I was sure that we should get it. Everybody had scissors, and it was a curious sight to see the glint of light shining on the steel. It reminded me of a sewing bee. Everybody was prepared to cut off the stuff in case Albert picked upon him or her.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘As far as I know, the doctor tore it off.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Yes, the scissors slipped.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘What about the bleeding?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘She could easily have knocked her nose.’

PROF. F.-H.: ‘The bleeding had nothing to do with the stuff being torn from her mouth.’

(Mr. Price explains how the piece of ‘teleplasm’ was torn.)

Mr. BOIS: ‘Assuming that the medium is tied hand and foot, is there any way of checking her from bringing up the substance normally?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Not the slightest. If you put a net over her head, it would only fall into the net. I think perhaps you might check part of it.’

Mrs. ROBERTSON: ‘Has she never produced it anywhere but from the mouth?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, the ear and the vagina.’

Mrs. RICHARDS: ‘But if we get a bit from the floor?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Yes, but that is not much use to prove that the medium has secreted it somewhere. You admit she does secrete it?’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, unknown to me.’

Mrs. RICHARDS: ‘How is it she got out of that suit?’ [At another society.]

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘God knows. Assuming that she could get out of it normally, how could she sew it up the back again?’

Mr. PRICE: ‘If she could secrete things, as obviously she can, such as rubber gloves, butter muslin, etc., she could easily secrete a needleful of cotton. It is admitted that the stitches are not the same at the end of a sitting as at the beginning.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Not every time. But on two occasions.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘Well, it is quite easy for her to get out of the thing.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘I do not mean that. Supposing she is tied up and the curtains are open and you see her tied up? ‘You can hear the tying up going on at the same time as the voice.’

Mr. PRICE: ‘But the talking is nothing. We have never heard Albert at the same time as we have seen the medium.’

Mr. DUNCAN: ‘Yes, but the talking and the tying going on at the same time. How could she tie herself up? It is impossible.’

Mr. PRICE: 'It is not. Tying up a medium is the worst possible form of control. But in any case we are talking about what we have seen.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, but the entities purport to tie her up. How a person tied at the back and sewn up from the waist and the tapes over the buckram gloves tied tightly, and the feet also tied and the chair screwed down to the floor, how is she able to tie herself up in such a manner?'

Mr. PRICE: 'You are asking me about something I have not seen. There are a number of mediums whom you can tie up as hard as you like and yet they can get out and back again into the ties. The tying up of a medium is the worst form of control.'

Mr. BOIS: 'You do not think it is possible to get out of surgical tapes?'

Mr. PRICE: 'No. The time we tied Mrs. Duncan up with surgical tapes, Albert said they were too tight and they had to be loosened. That is how they get away with it.'

Mr. BOIS: 'Supposing we get her tied up so as to immobilize her absolutely. Is that going to stop her regurgitating? We want something that will prevent her from doing it normally. Has teleplasm ever gone through a net?' ³⁷

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes. The point is, has it gone through or has it gone underneath the net? I think that it has gone underneath.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Mrs. Duncan has such a thick neck that it is impossible to tie the tapes tight enough to stop her putting her hand through the neck opening of the garment.'

Mr. BOIS: 'Supposing we hold her hands and feet, she can only get these substances from her inside by some power of regurgitating. If she could not use her hands, would that stop it at all?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Can you explain this to me? We have had an extrusion about six or seven feet long, which holds a trumpet up in the air and from which voices issue forth. The medium has been searched. How is it done?'

Mr. PRICE: 'We do not know. I have never seen such a thing done. We are not concerned with what we have not seen.'

Mr. BOIS: 'Are you referring to this having been done with Mrs. Duncan?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes, we have seen it done with Mrs. Duncan.'

Mrs. RICHARDS: 'Has that been done at the L.S.A.?''

Mr. DUNCAN: 'No, never.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Have the L.S.A. ever questioned the phenomena?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'No. But you are surely not suggesting that a person can swallow a rubber glove?'

PROF. F.-H.: 'Yes, it is quite possible.'

Mrs. ROBERTSON: 'Is it possible to regurgitate very silently?'

PROF. F.-H.: 'Yes. But it would need very long practice. Swallowing rubber gloves, paper, and muslin would not make a noise. It is the air that makes the noise.'

³⁷ See Pioneer, Vol. 10, No.1: "The "Substance" ".

Mr BOIS: 'I certainly have never heard any noise. What are we going to do? Shall we sit again with this net test, or shall we just leave it?'

Mr. PRICE: 'Mr. Duncan has suggested that if Mrs. Duncan produces the stuff normally, he is not aware of the fact.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'No.'

Mr. PRICE: 'And the fact that on two occasions Mr. Duncan has searched Mrs. Duncan.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Yes. I would not go by one sitting. I would like to impress upon you that for Heaven's sake do not want this and that at a sitting. I quite believe that she is in a trance. I think that the collective minds of the sitters impress the subconscious with the thought that she is doing it normally; and she might not do it at that one sitting, but might try it the next time.'

Mr. BOIS: 'I am prepared to admit that this is a hypothesis, but what are we going to do? We do not want to go on in the same way.'

CAPT. S.-K.: 'We would not get any further evidence of its being normal if we had any more sittings.'

Mr. PRICE: 'Of course, the stuff is produced from a portion of her anatomy which is exceedingly difficult to control.'

Mr. BOIS: 'These things we are all agreed about. Would it be any use our having another sitting? If we get nothing, it would simply confirm our opinion that these things are secreted?'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'Now you have put these bad ideas into my mind, and she is likely to get them from my subconsciousness. I think I know as much about mediumship as anybody. I would say that that would not prove anything either for or against. After the first *séance*, you could see whether the control was all right or not. She is genuine sometimes. She has produced psychic phenomena under the best of controls. If this is butter muslin and has been all the time, how are we going to explain, unless on the supposition of my first hypothesis that the production of the so-called butter muslin is due to automatism of the mind? We get mental phenomena which is absolutely startling at times.'

Mr. PRICE: 'It is not a bit of good talking like that. In that case she might be a good mental medium, but not a physical one.'

Mr. BOIS: 'At the moment we are only talking about physical phenomena.'

Mr. PRICE: 'The whole thing is very interesting. But there is nobody who will accept these things as abnormal.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I am quite agreeable to any test. I want to know the truth. I am not a spiritualist.'

Mr. BOIS: 'Now, the thing is whether we are going to drop the whole thing or not.'

Mr. DUNCAN: 'I say if you can prove that these things are produced either by regurgitating or other fraudulent means, it proves that B. [mentioning a certain person] is right.'

Mr. PRICE: 'What has B. to do with it?'

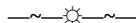
Mr. DUNCAN: 'He says that Margery, Eva C., and Rudi Schneider are frauds.'

Mr. PRICE: ‘No, that is wrong. Mrs. Duncan and Rudi Schneider are not in the same street. Rudi produced phenomena under electric control at a distance of several feet from him. I have never heard that he considers him to be a fraud, or that he knows anything at all about it.’

(It was decided to have another sitting on July 2nd, with the medium held by two persons, a net over her head, and taped to the chair.)

(Signed) ETHEL BEENHAM.

N.B.—Without informing the National Laboratory, the Duncans left for Leith on Tuesday, June 23rd, 1931.



On the surface, the reports with their conclusions of regurgitation appear to show rather damaging evidence; permission to take the samples of teleplasm/ectoplasm provided to both research laboratories was granted by Helen Duncan’s control, Albert Stewart, but were all found to be basic household materials. Even more damaging still is the photographic evidence of the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, for which the Duncans gave their full permission. In my opinion there is no doubt as to the authenticity of the testing which agencies used to break down the compounds of the said teleplasm, being found in general to be paper, etc., and in the photographic evidence published.

Helen MacFarlane and Henry Duncan married on May 27th, 1916. Henry was interested in psychical research but, as he stated in his interview with the National Laboratory, he was not a Spiritualist. He appears to have accepted the many questions presented to him in the interview by the NLPR Council philosophically. Mr Duncan did not particularly question what was shown to him in *their* evidence, for example the paper-made teleplasm, the photographic evidence showing the cheesecloth-like material with clear indication of the rents, the cloth’s warp, weft, frayed edge, the selvedge, the rubber gloves, etc. The following day after the interview (June 12th) the NLPR Council told Henry Duncan that they had concluded that the effects they had witnessed over their investigations were caused by regurgitation; on the same day, possibly in anticipation that the London Psychical Laboratory had also reached similar conclusions, Mr. Duncan asked if he could interview the Research Committee, where he made a statement to the effect that he had come to the conclusion that the “ectoplasm” was the result of regurgitation.



However, does the above body of *proof* from the two laboratories conclusively prove regurgitation as the means and the method employed by Helen Duncan to provide her with her required séance materials, as is concluded by the two investigating authorities? From this point onwards the stigma of regurgitation will follow her for the ensuing decades of her mediumship:

“She was famous for producing ectoplasm which was proven to be made from cheesecloth.”

So, is regurgitation proved as claimed in these two reports?

Starting with the first report in this article by the London Psychical Laboratory, the Research Department of the London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd, in the first place, it can hardly be taken as a report covering its investigations of the fifty or so controlled séances in the periods given elsewhere in this article by the same committee. The article quotes from an unpublished report by the London Psychical Laboratory, giving very little or no information and no mention of the earlier *positive* results it had previously had, stating:

“... on nearly all points the conclusions are disappointing to those interested in psychical research.”

Leading researchers Dr. Robert Fielding-Ould, Lord Charles Hope and Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P. concentrated their attention on the nature of this substance and the means of its production, resulting in the LPL’s conclusion:

“... the Committee were obliged to believe that the so-called “ectoplasm” was an artificial substance produced by the ingenuity of Mrs. Duncan herself.”

The report further stated:

“It was proved that the material was swallowed by Mrs. Duncan at some time previous to the sitting and subsequently regurgitated by her for the purpose of exhibition.”

Their claimed proof is all the five samples of ectoplasm taken from different séances over the time of their investigations that were made up from general household materials and put together by the medium, Mrs Duncan. This was then swallowed by the medium at some earlier time to be regurgitated at the séance when required. Her husband Henry Duncan’s statement was no doubt damaging by stating that his wife:

“... was in the habit of “losing her will” for a time about three hours before a sitting, and said he believed that in a state of unconsciousness, resembling that of hypnosis, Mrs. Duncan secreted things in or about her person and that she could retain these things in her stomach and eat and digest food.”

It further stated:

“... that he had come to the conclusion that the “ectoplasm” was the result of regurgitation.”

To my knowledge no photographs exist of any of their experiments, unlike those of the National Laboratory. One may consider, given the severity of their conclusion, why there was no hint or doubts of the possibility of fraud in all their published reports leading up to their conclusions, given that the first controlled séances started in October 1930, resulting in the London Psychical Laboratory (London Spiritualist Alliance) continuing their interest in the mediumship of Helen Duncan to the extent of eventually paying substantial costs in moving the Duncan family from Scotland to London, renting a house, employment of a maid and financial support for living costs, etc.!

In their conclusion, it is stated:

Two of these earlier specimens were submitted for analysis. One authority described the substance as resembling tissue paper with traces of bacteria. The second report (February 9, 1931) was as follows:

“We have made a very careful examination of the material which was submitted to us and we are of the opinion that it consists of paper, cloth, and such everyday

materials mixed with an organic substance which is in every respect similar to coagulated white of egg.”

It is clear that at the time these samples of the alleged ectoplasm were collected there was no or, at best, little doubt as to their authenticity, as this was prior to the removal of the Duncans to London, the contract not being signed until March 9th, 1931; surely any doubts at this time would be considered, as the contract was for potentially eighteen months! ³⁸

It was further stated in their conclusion as evidence:

“On May 29th the alleged control, “Albert,” was asked if he would bring the Medium out of the cabinet under the red light and show the emergence and re-absorption of the “ectoplasm.” The Medium came out to within about twelve inches of the red light while both her hands were held. She opened her mouth and “ectoplasm” was extruded by obvious movements of the mouth and throat muscles. It was about two inches wide and hung down about eight inches. After a few seconds the Medium, by movements of the lips and throat, sucked it back again. The material when extruded showed signs of having been folded by compression.”

Let the reader now compare this report with the above account, ³⁹ with an account published just thirteen days earlier in their journal, *Light*, May 16th, 1931:

“Sittings with Mrs. Duncan”

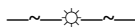
“The Medium came out of the cabinet with no “ectoplasm” showing and stood under the red light at a distance of about eighteen inches; the mouth opened and the substance was seen gradually forming on the tip of the tongue until it resembled a cherry. It afterwards swelled up in the mouth unfolded and hung down about eight inches from the mouth. The substance moved slightly and remained for about one minute; then it began to retreat into the mouth, and gradually disappeared until the mouth, wide open, was seen perfectly empty. The Medium, still in trance, then backed into the cabinet.

“It was clearly observed that, during the emergence and disappearance of the substance, no movement of the Medium’s throat, neck or body was apparent. No muscular contractions suggesting swallowing or vomiting occurred.

“It should also be realised that when the substance retreated into the mouth, it diminished at the tip of the tongue into the likeness of a cherry as it at first appeared.

“The cherry-like mass disappeared into a small point and finally vanished altogether. None of the substance appeared at any time in the pharynx.

“Sometimes, when large masses of the substance begin to lessen in bulk, it appears to melt away first at the edges.”



³⁸ The contract between the L.P.L. and Mrs. Duncan was from March 9th, 1931, for six months certain with the option on the part of the L.P.L. of renewal for a further year, eighteen months in all.

³⁹ However, it is stated: “At the time of the publication of the second abridged report (May 16th) the Committee were less united in their assent to the possibility of the *whole* of the manifestations being capable of supernormal interpretation, although nothing had occurred *upon which a definite accusation of deception* (conscious or unconscious) could be based.

If we look at the first abridged report published in *Light*, February 28th, 1931 by the Executive Committee of the London Psychical Laboratory, we note they:

“... have pleasure in submitting to the readers of *LIGHT* their first abridged Report on a series of sittings held under test conditions with Mrs. Duncan of Dundee.”

Pioneer publishes here the unedited account below:

The following were the conditions under which Mrs. Duncan sat:

All her clothing was removed in the presence of two witnesses. Her hair, ears, mouth and surface of body were examined. For the first three sittings a vest, pair of knickers and sateen overall were provided and reserved exclusively for seance work. Thus attired she was placed in a sack.

In preparation for the last four sittings, Mrs. Duncan was examined as before, and wore only one garment. This garment was made of fine black wool material in one piece; it formed a pyjama suit with coat and trousers all in one piece, the ends of the legs being fashioned as boots and with long sleeves fitting closely at wrists. The whole body except face, head and hands, was entirely covered. The only opening in the garment was in the centre of the back from the neck to the waist.

After Mrs. Duncan had stepped into this one-piece suit the back opening was strongly sewn up from neck to waist.

Attached to this garment were strong tapes at the neck, the wrists and the ankles.

Before leaving the dressing room for the seance room Mrs. Duncan's hands were controlled by those who stripped her. She was led to the seance room and had no opportunity of handling anything after she had been examined and dressed as described. She was then placed in the chair in the cabinet; the neck and wrist tapes attached to the garment were always tied to the chair and sealed. When time permitted, before the Medium fell into trance the feet were also tied and sealed. The hands and feet thus controlled retained a range of movement of three or four inches. At the end of each sitting the seals were examined and on every occasion were found intact.

At every sitting a good red light was maintained, of sufficient intensity to enable members of the circle to see each other plainly, and even to read the time by small wrist watches.

The sitters were arranged in a semi-circle in front of the cabinet. The Medium sat in the cabinet behind closed curtains. The curtains stretched from within a few inches of the ceiling down to the floor, being attached to curtain rings on a brass rod opening in the centre of the cabinet and at the sides adjoining the walls.

The “Cabinet” merely consists of a corner of the room enclosed by the curtains. There is no mechanical device for the control of the curtains. Gramophone records were played intermittently throughout the sitting; no singing was required except for an opening hymn as specially desired by the Medium.

It should be noted that ectoplasmic formations appeared, sometimes in the centre and sometimes at the sides of the curtains. It was therefore impossible for all sitters to witness every manifestation simultaneously. Each type of manifestation was however corroborated by two or more witnesses, and occasionally by all.

Among the various manifestations the following are the chief items briefly described. Complete detailed records and shorthand notes are filed. Two observers only attended all seven sittings. The average attendance was seven.

- 1) Invisible control and movements of heavy velvet cabinet curtains.
- 2) Quality of the “control’s” voice answering to the name of “Albert Stuart”; ⁴⁰ intelligence displayed by original observations and answers to questions.
- 3) Extrusion of “ectoplasm” in various masses, shapes, movements and texture.
- 4) Rapid and complete disappearance of ectoplasm after the Medium was hidden by the curtain; this was proved by her quick re-appearance either without ectoplasm or with a different formation of the material.
- 5) The appearance roughly resembling a human form, on one occasion over six feet high, on another not more than two feet high with a childish voice, swaying rhythmically with the music.
- 6) The detaching and depositing of ectoplasm for analysis subsequent to a promise by “Albert” that this would be done. At two later sittings further specimens were provided.

These specimens of ectoplasm were at first placed in distilled water at the request of “Albert” to prevent disintegration. At the time of writing they are still to be seen at 16, Queensberry Place, hermetically sealed and preserved in alcohol.

One of the most dramatic occurrences took place at the first of the sittings.

The Medium was dressed as described above and placed in a sack of strong material. A strong tape in slot opening at neck was attached, and a strong strand at each side at the line of the waist; the head only of the Medium protruded.

These tapes were tied to the chair and sealed. The tape at the neck was drawn as tightly as the Medium could conveniently bear, and carefully sealed.

During the sitting the Medium walked out of the cabinet in deep trance dressed in her special seance clothes but *without* the sack. She walked across the room trailing behind her a band of ectoplasm approximately four inches broad and three yards long. Walking close up to the light she paused for examination to be made within eight inches of the light in full view of everybody, and the substance was clearly seen to emanate from her nostrils.

The Medium did not return to the sack.

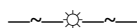
On examination the sack was found attached to the chair, each of the three seals unbroken, including the one at the neck.

At the end of two sittings the Medium was found securely bound by a rope, some four yards long, which had been provided. On one occasion it was found wound round the Medium’s neck with a running noose—twice round the waist with several knots—round the ankles and finally taken up the back and tied very tightly round the wrists, binding the back of one hand into the palm of the other. The manner of binding was so tight that rapid cutting was necessary in order to release the Medium from discomfort and pain.

⁴⁰ The correct spelling is Stewart.

Similar binding of the Medium on the other occasion occurred while the Medium was bodily enclosed in the sack with head only protruding. It had been lashed and knotted round the Medium's body inside the sack.

On examination the seals were found to be unbroken on each occasion.



The first, and the quotes from the second abridged reports above, compared to their conclusion on July 17th, 1931, a few months later, of fraud and regurgitation, without doubt raises many questions, as of course it did at the time, given the quote from the second report of May 16th, where it is clearly noted:

“It was clearly observed that, during the emergence and disappearance of the substance, no movement of the Medium's throat, neck or body was apparent. No muscular contractions suggesting swallowing or vomiting occurred.”

However, one of the charges against the medium is made on May 29th, less than two weeks later—a complete reversal:

“She opened her mouth and “ectoplasm” was extruded by obvious movements of the mouth and throat muscles”, “After a few seconds the Medium, by movements of the lips and throat, sucked it back again.”

Apart from Henry Duncan's claim of regurgitation one can understand the researcher's assumption and speculation as to how the results could be achieved by fraud, but nothing is mentioned. For example, the rather stringent restraints the research committee put into operation would not in themselves prevent regurgitation; however, the restrictions, for example, of the stiff buckram fingerless gauntlets⁴¹ would make it difficult for the medium if regurgitation was the case, as the large amount of substance (as the alleged control, Albert, sometimes called it), long lengths and up to a metre wide, would be needed to be made usable after being regurgitated, whereas various accounts record the quick production of ectoplasm of the commencement of the experimental séances, though no explanation is given.

Further still:

The February 28th report as published in this article states:

“She walked across the room trailing behind her a band of ectoplasm approximately four inches broad and three yards long. Walking close up to the light she paused for examination to be made within eight inches of the light in full view of everybody, and the substance was clearly seen to emanate from her nostrils.”

Regurgitation from the nostrils?

The numerous reports mention that ectoplasm is seen in reasonably good light; there is no indication mentioned of any rents, warp and weft, dirty marks and selvedge as recorded and indicated on the photographs by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research. However, the concluding report of the LPL on July 17th mentions at one séance on May 29th, 1931: “The material when extruded showed signs of having been folded by compression”; the NLPR mentions and photographed a fold/crease in the material. The London Psychical Laboratory's report in *Light*, May 16th, 1931 mentions the ectoplasm:

⁴¹ “Sittings with Mrs. Duncan”, a further abridged report by LPL in *Light* May 16th 1931: “A further restriction has, however, been added lately at both kinds of sittings, by the Medium's hands being encased in stiff buckram fingerless gauntlets which are sewn to the sleeves of her suit. These make it impossible for the Medium's fingers (even if the hands move) to grasp anything through them.

“The production of “ectoplasm” has taken place at all sittings but varies in quantity from time to time. The ectoplasmic emanations usually issue from the mouth of the Medium.

“The substance is as a rule white, but may be sometimes described as grey or slate colour, and a few times has appeared a dark brown. It is mobile and seems to possess a sort of vitality. It bunches, folds and unfolds, divides into portions and joins up again.

“The “ectoplasm” has been produced in such quantities that the Medium when standing up has been covered over the head, round the shoulders, and over the whole of the body down to the feet. On two occasions it was produced while the Medium stood under the light.”

Given the *claimed* composition of the alleged ectoplasm and the conclusion of the London Psychical Laboratory (LPL) that it was presented by means of regurgitation by Helen Duncan, it leaves a lot to be explained in their apparent contradictory reports, albeit one would hope that it was explained more fully in their own report. For example, the committee’s earlier report on the alleged ectoplasm:

“It is mobile and seems to possess a sort of vitality. It bunches, folds and unfolds, divides into portions and joins up again.”

Psypioneer published three of the First Series verbatim reports in Vol. 11, Nos. 10/11, and Vol. 12, Nos. 2 & 3. The second materialisation sitting was on October 30th, 1930 and one of the sitters was Sir Oliver Lodge; this is republished in Pioneer, Vol. 12, No. 2: “Notes of Second Materialization Sitting with Mrs Duncan on 30th October 1930 – LSA”.

Sir Oliver Lodge was permitted by the alleged control, Albert, to hold the substance:

Sir Oliver Lodge went up to the medium and held the substance in his hand, and he and the sitters saw it gradually with a slightly wriggling motion withdraw, sliding slowly over his hands towards the position of the medium [and] disappear while he was holding it.

Later he was asked to go inside the cabinet with the medium.

Sir Oliver goes to the cabinet and feels the head of the medium.

SIR O.L. She is just asleep, she is rather in a perspiration. I don’t see anything else about her. She was still completely enveloped in the sack.

Sir Oliver said that he saw no ectoplasm when he went to examine the medium.

ALBERT Ask Sir Oliver if he would like to come while the ectoplasm is here?

SIR O.L. Yes, I should.

ALBERT Well, I will prepare her.

Very heavy breathing is heard from the cabinet.

ALBERT (after a pause) You can come in now.

SIR O.L. (opening the curtain) I can see it coming from her mouth, it is like a bundle of strings. (Both times I felt it, it lay on my hand. The first time the visible part was about a foot long, the second time only a few inches. It was heavy, cold and clammy, its texture was like a number of the parallel threads forming the bundle two inches thick. It might have been separated out into strands. It was not like woven material but was stringy. A curiously unpleasant slight odour remained either on my hand or in my nostrils as an

occasional whiff for 12 hours afterwards. O.L.)

DR R. Warm? Clammy?

SIR O.L. No, it was drier than I expected.

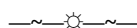
DR R. Do you notice any smell?

SIR O.L. Yes, a kind of smell, but I don't know how to describe it, it is just like a lot of threads, there is no formation in it at all. Now it is beginning to go back into the mouth, I think.

Dr. Rust closes the curtains again and the medium is heard to be breathing heavily and groaning. Gramophone is playing.

SIR O.L. It does not leave anything on the fingers, it is fairly dry.

Gramophone still playing and medium's groans and uneasy breathing still heard.

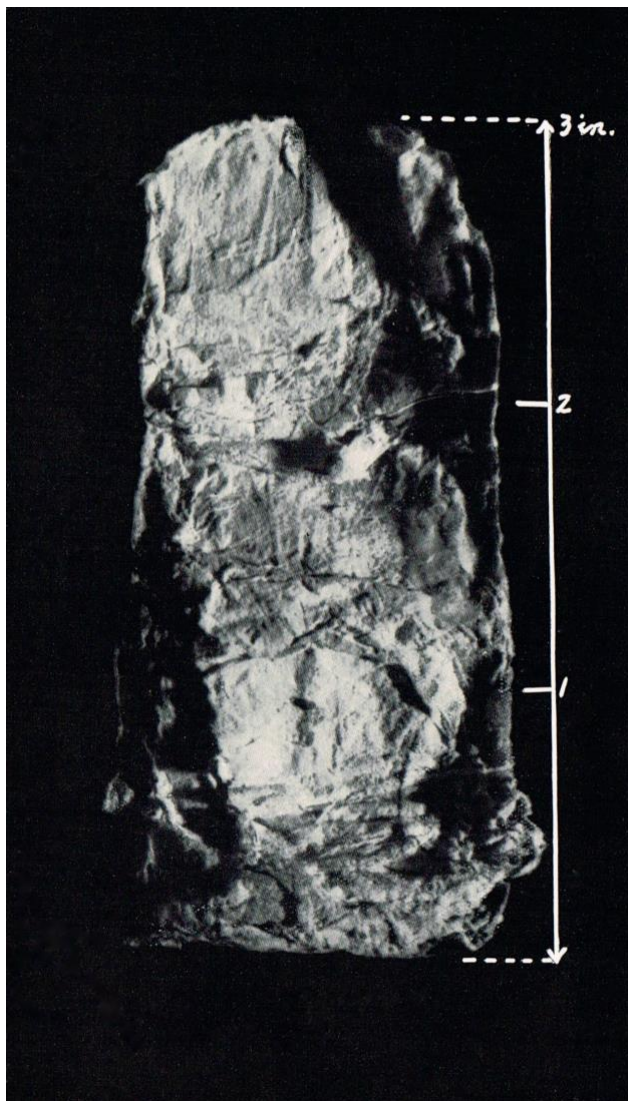


What can be concluded?

What can be concluded? The article has shown how the two independent research organisations viewed some of their evidence, and both concluded *independently* that all the phenomena they witnessed under their own full conditions were produced by *normal* means. They both concluded that the teleplasm/ectoplasm was made up by man-made materials and that this was produced from the medium, Helen Duncan, by means of regurgitation. However, it cannot be stated categorically despite their claims that it was proven conclusively by any means. The medium was not *actually* caught in the act of fraud; this was pure speculation due to the results of the various teleplasm/ectoplasm samples given to both parties and no doubt the frustration of both parties at the infringement by the medium; after the most stringent precautions were put in place by both laboratories *against* the possibility of fraud, even so the medium still produced the teleplasm/ectoplasm or the cheesecloth-type material which they could not *explain* the production of.

The London Spiritualist Alliance Ltd.'s Research Department, the London Psychical Laboratory, had given good, positive abridged reports, the last one published in their journal, *Light*, on May 16th, 1931, as quoted in this article. Their last sitting with Helen Duncan was on June 12th, 1931; it was on this day either before or after the final controlled séance with the medium that her husband, Henry Duncan, asked to interview the Research Committee. He had been informed that day by the National Laboratory of Psychical Research Council's conclusion: "...that the effects we had witnessed were caused by regurgitation..." I suspect that it was at this point that the London Psychical Laboratory became aware that their contract of the *exclusive* séances with Helen Duncan had been broken by the Duncans, given Henry's statement to them to the effect that he had come to the conclusion that the "ectoplasm" was the result of his wife's regurgitation (as previously quoted).

One can imagine the frustration at the breaking of the contract in this way and the fact that the National Laboratory's Honorary Director Harry Price was earlier denied to have sat with Helen Duncan by the London Psychical Laboratory. This must have caused understandable distaste and anger within the LPL, given this situation. The reader may consider that this in part, and along with Mr Duncan's statement, may have reflected on their damning report and its conclusion of regurgitation without any mention to their (at least on the surface) reported positive results—with no hint of fraud!



Both the London Psychical Laboratory and the National Laboratory of Psychical Research show similar results from the samples of teleplasm/ectoplasm taken at the various stages of their experimental controlled seances: their submitted specimens for analysis showed basic everyday materials mixed with organic substances, e.g. coagulated white of egg. The following is one of the reports published in the NLPR Bulletin referred to earlier in this article. The sample was obtained on June 4th, 1931 at the fifth and last séance, as shown in the image ⁴². In short, the teleplasm was cut off. Albert asked surgeon Dr X to perform the task but when Dr X made the cut the medium moved and the scissors slipped. Still firmly holding the teleplasm, Duncan moved her head again and the piece in his hand came away; it tore across and Duncan gave one or two little screams. The remainder went back into her mouth. Dr X explained: "It was exactly like tearing a wad of damp paper." He immediately dropped it into a jar of absolute alcohol – a tiny portion placed in water.

The official analysis was undertaken by Messrs Sindall and Bacon, Consulting Chemists, London. It was collected on June 9th from the National Laboratory by Mr William Brown; his preliminary remarks on collection were that it was folded layers of paper. On June 17th, 1931 it is noted on page 78 of the NLPR Bulletin:

ANALYST'S REPORT ON THE PAPER 'TELEPLASM'

June 17th, 1931

I have now received the official report from Messrs. Sindall and Bacon as to the analysis of the piece of 'teleplasm' which Mr. Bacon removed from the Laboratory.

Mr. Bacon confirms his preliminary opinion that the stuff is merely a cheap kind of paper containing 40 per cent. mechanical wood pulp, and 60 per cent. chemical wood pulp. As Mr. Bacon points out, the medullary rays can be seen in the microscopic slide he prepared of our specimen, and in the slide of a special paper he made up as a control slide to the original. Both of these slides are in the possession of the Laboratory. The medullary rays, I should add, are the vertical bands or plates of cellular (parenchymatous) tissue proceeding from the pith to the surface.

Mr. Bacon kindly prepared photomicrographs (x 120) from the slides of both our specimen and that of the wood pulp mixture which he produced as a 'control'. These photomicrographs are reproduced in Plate XXVII. To all intents and purposes, these photomicrographs are identical. The bonding used to stick the folds of paper together was egg albumen, i.e., white of egg. Here is Messrs. Sindall and Bacon's report:

⁴² "Length 75 mm (3 inches), Width at Base, 34 mm, Width at Top End, 30 mm, Thickness 1.5 mm., Average Weight, 36 Grains".

27, Walbrook,
London, E.C.4.
June 16th, 1931

HARRY Price, Esq.,

The National Laboratory of Psychical Research,
13^d, Roland Gardens, S.W.7.

Dear Sir,

Confirming the report that I made at your Laboratory on the 9th inst., the analysis of the sample of paper handed to me is as follows : —

Mechanical ground wood pulp 40%

Chemical wood pulp consisting of sulphite and soda wood 60%

I have had a sample made up approximating to the above composition for the purpose of having photomicrographs for comparison. The prints show the papers to be practically identical in character and medullary rays can be seen quite plainly in both specimens.

The sample of paper handed to me appeared to be of a class known as M.G. Cap Printing and the binding medium used to prevent the paper disintegrating when swallowed I find to be Egg Albumen.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) WILLIAM BACON.

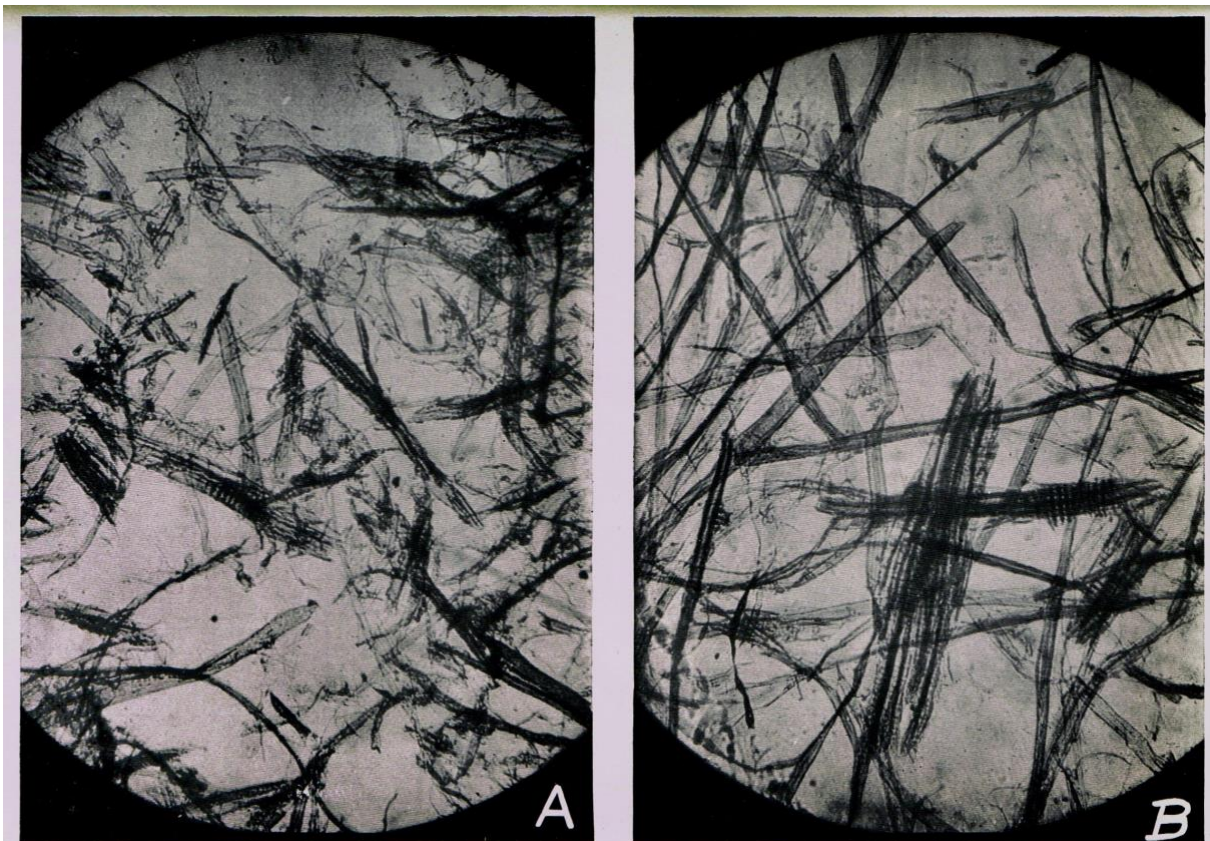
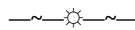


PLATE XXVII

Photomicrographs (x 120) of A, the paper 'teleplasm' secured from Mrs. Duncan on June 4th, 1931, and B, control mixture of 60% chemical and 40% mechanical wood pulp. The fibres, medullary rays, etc., are identical in both photographs

We can note in Mr Duncan's interview his possible explanations of the three types, or stages, of the ectoplasmic substance which exuded from his wife. The first is the *paper—wood pulp* type, as analysed by Sindall and Bacon, Consulting Chemists, London. The second was categorised by the National Laboratory as the *white-of-egg—albuminoid* type. The laboratory somehow obtained a sample from the London Psychical Laboratory at the conclusion of a séance. Mr Duncan stated that a damp object was between the medium's chest and the garment into which she had been sewn; this was verified by all who were present and this was removed with a pair of forceps. The portion of alleged teleplasm was in the form of a strip around five inches long, its appearance like some sort of tissue; it was placed in distilled water and afterwards cut into pieces.

The National Laboratory received the specimen on January 7th, 1931 in a two-ounce bottle and noted that it was a pity it had not been immediately immersed in absolute alcohol or a formalin solution. Harry Price, its Honorary Director, described the sample:

“In appearance the substance was amorphous, greyish-white tissue, apparently of a gelatinous nature, with many small fragments which had become detached from the mass. It appeared slightly fibrous. In size, it was roughly 20 mm. square and 3 mm. thick. It weighed, with the surface water adhering to it, 3.5 grams. To the touch it felt spongy and rather slimy, like hard-boiled white of egg.”

This was to be analysed by the National Laboratory, with Messrs. C. Baker, of Holborn, a well-known optical instrument manufacturer, and microscopists prepared slides of the substance. A portion was given to Dr X, a distinguished London consulting and analytical chemist, for analysis (not the same Dr X who cut off the teleplasm). The National Laboratory was not at liberty to reveal his name without permission, given the nature of the claimed teleplasm, and the chemist wanted no association with its connection. The bottom line of the report was:

“You will notice that I have found some facts, namely, the conjunction of protein, iron chloride, and sulphate, and I have given you some additional information as the properties of such mixtures. I do not say positively, however, that the protein in the specimen brought to me was white of egg.”⁴³

The National Laboratory, namely Mr Price, on page 95 of its Bulletin report gives details of how the Laboratory produced a strip of ‘synthetic teleplasm’ of *white-of-egg—albuminoid* type similar in appearance and makeup to the portion they had received from the Duncan séance. This was made up of the following substances in varying proportions: white of a new-laid egg, ferric chloride, phosphoric acid, stale urine thickened with Nelson's gelatin, and hot acid from olive oil. Any interested reader who wishes the full reports should contact me, as owing to space I cannot publish them in full here.

Very few specimens of any ectoplasmic substance have been obtained by researchers but, in the case of those whom I am aware of, the reports of its makeup are of similar composition, i.e. paper-based. There have been numerous decades of warnings by Spiritualists that it is dangerous for a medium to have ectoplasmic substance taken, and the said substance would disappear in white light as a general rule. The medium is said to be at high risk of serious injury and even death if the substance is grabbed or touched without permission from the spirit control, and the National Laboratory had a commendable general policy not to seize teleplasm without the medium's permission. The warning of death and/or serious injury to the medium dates back to a statement made by the alleged spirit Katie King circa 1873/4, whose

⁴³ I have noted in the article that the LPL had another specimen examined; the analyst report dated February 9th, 1931 states: “We have made a very careful examination of the material which was submitted to us and we are of the opinion that it consists of paper, cloth, and such everyday materials mixed with an organic substance which is in every respect similar to coagulated white of egg.”

materialisation through her medium, Florence Cook, was dramatically seized twice, as were other numerous famous mediums of the period, without any serious injury, etc.⁴⁴

The third stage of the teleplasm is the *cheesecloth* type or, as it was suggested by Mr Duncan:

“The third stage is of muslin-like texture. ... Sometimes it is thick in places and at other times very thin, and it has the appearance, under the light, of being like muslin. On some occasions, I have witnessed what you refer to as a selvedge, and it appeared to be, when felt, like a curtain—rough.”

It can be clearly noted that the first two so-called stages of the teleplasm (*paper—wood pulp*, then the spongy *white-of-egg—albuminoid*) were nothing like the appearance of the third stage (*cheese-cloth—muslin-like texture*). So we may ask how one accounts for Sir Oliver Lodge’s clear comments when he attended the séance at the LSA on 30th October, 1930; he noted:

SIR O.L. (opening the curtain) I can see it coming from her mouth, it is like a bundle of strings. (Both times I felt it, it lay on my hand. The first time the visible part was about a foot long, the second time only a few inches. It was heavy, cold and clammy, its texture was like a number of the parallel threads forming the bundle two inches thick. It might have been separated out into strands. It was not like woven material but was stringy. A curiously unpleasant slight odour remained either on my hand or in my nostrils as an occasional whiff for 12 hours afterwards.

DR R. Warm? Clammy?

SIR O.L. No, it was drier than I expected.

DR R. Do you notice any smell?

SIR O.L. Yes, a kind of smell, but I don’t know how to describe it, it is just like a lot of threads, there is no formation in it at all. Now it is beginning to go back into the mouth, I think.

As previously noted, Sir Oliver had nothing to do with Spiritualism, but he was an experienced psychical researcher along with the many eminent persons named in this article. It may be suggested, on the *positive* side, that the above quote is the start of the transformation from stage two to stage three in the structure of the plasm! Its formation in Lodge’s brief but detailed first-hand recorded description is in itself impressive and is not recorded in any positive light by either of the two laboratories’ conclusions.

After the first Duncan sitting at the National Laboratory on May 4th, 1931 its Notes, Comments and Impressions of the séance, dated May 9th, 1931, notes on pages 20-26:

The reader will see from the protocol that ‘teleplasm’ (this is a convenient name to call it—at present we do not know what it is) appeared after we had tied up the medium a second time. It likewise disappeared. A long stream of it was produced, like a bride’s veil twisted into a rope.

“The teleplasm appeared many times and in many shapes. It fell in a long festoon from the medium’s mouth and nostrils; it coiled itself and squirmed upon the floor; it entangled itself round the chair; it came out of the cabinet to my feet; it appeared like a large veil completely covering the bulky form of the medium except for a slit in front of the mouth; it shortened itself and lengthened itself; it twisted itself up into a short, thick rope, slightly damp and with an odour. Of course, all these transformations were caused

⁴⁴ See the Pioneer pdf booklet: “A Question of Fraud” (details on the last page of this issue).

by the medium who was manipulating it. Sometimes it appeared semi-transparent and with a sheen; sometimes it appeared opaque.”

“But the production of teleplasm was so frequent, and the stuff was in view for such long periods, that the exact timing of the various appearances was no longer a necessity. On and off, the substance was in view for one and a half hours.”⁴⁵



As with much of the reports there is little explanation as to *how this was done*. “Of course, all these transformations were caused by the medium who was manipulating it.” Was the medium *actually* caught doing this, seen by one or more of the researchers? It would be very doubtful, as it would have been no doubt in the conclusion’s report. But in the following paragraph the above quote is *further* downgraded:

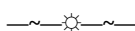
“In the protocol it is stated that the teleplasm was ‘issuing from her mouth’, ‘coming from her nostrils’, etc. This is a little misleading, and is of course what was dictated. Actually, we did *not* see it coming in a stream from the medium’s facial orifices as the protocol suggests. It was exactly as if it had been placed in the mouth and ends tucked into the nostrils.”

The photographs, some shown within this article, of the *cheesecloth*-type teleplasm or, as Mr Duncan put it, muslin-like texture, speak for themselves. The photographs were taken at the second, third and fourth sittings and it seems apparent that the same *cheesecloth*-type material was used

in two, if not all three, photographed sésances, together with the rubber glove, some form of tubing and safety-pins, which were all photographed. The problems of explanation were confronted with some amazement by the NLPR Council; it can be noted in their report:

Although we have concluded the investigation of the Duncan mediumship to our entire satisfaction, several things are still puzzling us. One is why these people ever came to the Laboratory at all, entirely of their own volition. Secondly, why did they allow us to photograph the series of cheese cloth *tableaux*? Thirdly, why did Albert hand us out a piece of egg bag or toilet paper and tell us it was teleplasm? Why were we permitted to photograph a safety-pin? And a rubber glove, complete with glint? And why did the medium *dare* to pirouette among us, in a bright light, with a teleplasmic tail trailing round our feet? We have been accused of being ‘too proud to pinch’—but even then, the medium ran a great risk of the stuff accidentally catching in something and finding herself back in the cabinet minus a yard or two of cheese cloth. It is all very puzzling.

A distinguished psychist who read the MS. of this Report said that it will put psychical research back fifty years. But I am sure he is mistaken—at least, I sincerely hope so. Every case must be judged on its merits, and certainly there has been no other mediumship quite like the Duncans’, which is destined to become classic.



⁴⁵ In the same report: “An amazing feature of Mrs. Duncan’s mediumship is the fact that, in the bright light I have described, the psychic comes out into the circle, with several feet of teleplasm trailing behind her, and the stuff never gets caught up in the sitters’ feet, and the medium never treads upon it. Even young *débutantes* have to be taught or coached how to carry their train; one would imagine that it would be no less difficult to manage a ‘train’ of teleplasm under all sorts of changing conditions.”

I have tried to put as much information into this article as possible, which has inevitably led to some of the points being repeated. But the surface, I believe, has been scratched well enough for the reader to gain some factual insight into, and knowledge of, the nine decades of the accusations that Helen Duncan used the artificial homemade teleplasm-ectoplasm which she would later regurgitate when required to materialise spirits. The so-called third stage process in the production of the *cheesecloth*-type teleplasm was not offered to the researchers of the NLPR as a sample for analysis by the alleged control, Albert Stewart.⁴⁶

However, the *physical* evidence of analysts and photographic material cannot be denied in itself—circumstantial evidence resulting in a roller-coaster of contradictions, speculation and assumptions made by some researchers, albeit we should be mindful of the extreme difficulties the investigators faced in the case of the Duncans. But is the claim of fraud justified? One may well presume their claim is unjust and is *not* proven, given that *no* items she is said to have *concealed* and used as props, e.g. yards of some cheesecloth-like material, rubber glove, etc. were recovered—nor could they satisfactorily explain how these were produced by *normal* means after all the controls imposed by the NLPR and the LPL, with Duncan stripped naked, full body searches, and the medium severely restricted in her movements. Is it not the researcher's duty presumably to prove beyond reasonable doubt the means of fraud rather than conjecture?

However, of course, in a court of law one can be found guilty with circumstantial evidence if it is overwhelming—I leave it to the reader to decide whether the evidence would be enough to prove regurgitation. One of the National Laboratory researchers was Professor William McDougall, an eminent British psychologist, who in a court of law would be regarded as a *sceptical* researcher; it was McDougall who suggested to the NLPR Council after the first séance the possibility of regurgitation by the medium. He attended two of the five séances and his impressions are without doubt: **a charge of fraud!**

The following was published in the NLPR Bulletin (Appendix F):

Having been present at two sittings with the medium, Mrs. Duncan, at the National Laboratory of Psychical Research, on the invitation of Mr. Harry Price, I record that my impression during and after the sittings was that the whole performance was fraudulent. The manner of secreting and producing, for exposure in red light, the material claimed as teleplasm was not clear to me.

On the first occasion I suspected an *œsophageal diverticulum*; on the second, Dr. William Brown's observations⁴⁷ led me to suppose the material might have been packed in the nostrils and nasal cavities.

My general comment is, that here is another case which justifies the general principle that, when the general procedure and circumstances demanded by the medium are such as

⁴⁶ The LPL reported some cotton fibres in their analysed report: "The report on the fourth fragment (received in a prepared sterile container) was as follows: "The specimen consisted of a piece of surgical gauze soaked in resinous fluid. The gauze consisted of typical cotton fibers. The resinous fluid had the odour of Canada Balsam or one of the pine resins." (April 10, 1931) - The report on the fifth fragment (April 15, 1931) was in similar terms."

⁴⁷ Dr. William Brown attended three of the Duncan séances and noted (Appendix G):

"I was able to take part in May and June last, I never for one moment felt that the phenomena she produced were supernormal.

The so-called 'ectoplasm' or 'teleplasm' which she seemed to produce (behind closed curtains) in the first two sittings was apparently a long strip of light fabric, which she may have previously swallowed and then regurgitated, or—more probably—have concealed during the previous search by clever prestidigitation. On the third and last occasion the preliminary search of the medium was exceptionally thorough, and on this occasion, as I anticipated, she produced nothing more than a very short piece of stuff which was probably regurgitated paper."

suggest fraud and favour fraud, the observer is justified in regarding the phenomena as fraudulent—even if he is not able to suggest any plausible explanation of the phenomena; and, still less, to demonstrate the truth of any hypothesis he may entertain as to the manner of their fraudulent production.

July 12th, 1931

(Signed) WILLIAM McDUGALL.

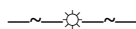
There is little here, I would suggest, to pronounce such a positive conclusion of fraud which could be responsibly made from these eminent men of science. It can be further noted at the first séance on May 4th, 1931 that Professor McDougall himself carefully examined the medium for any secreted items Mrs Duncan could use:

“The medium and her husband arrived punctually at 7.30 p.m., and were introduced to a number of our Research Council who were present, including Professor Dr. William McDougall, F.R.S., the distinguished psychologist, who was spending a long vacation in England after his strenuous work at Duke University, U.S.A.

“*Fore control.* —At her own suggestion, Mrs. Duncan offered to strip entirely nude and subject herself to any examination. This she did in my office in the presence of Mrs. A. Peel Goldney, a member of the National Laboratory Research Council (who has worked in a large midwifery hospital), Professor McDougall, and the present writer [Harry Price]. Mr. Duncan was not in the room during the examination.

Mrs. Duncan was thoroughly examined externally, and Professor McDougall (who holds a medical degree) very carefully examined her throat, mouth, and teeth. Everything appeared normal. Mrs. Goldney combed her (bobbed) hair in order to see that nothing was concealed there. No vaginal inspection was made, though I understood that the medium would have permitted this, had we expressed the desire.”

“Having thoroughly examined the medium’s body externally, we dressed her in a pair of black sateen knickers, a coat (like a man’s) made of the same material, and a pair of black stockings. These garments belonged to the medium, and were brought in case we had no similar clothes large enough. All these articles were minutely examined, turned inside out, and held up to the light. They were exactly what they purported to be. The medium donned them in our presence, consumed a glass of water, and was led into the *séance*-room by Professor McDougall and myself. The sitters (including Mr. Duncan) had already taken their places. We led her to the ‘cabinet’, placed her in an arm-chair in the recess, closed the curtains, and in fifteen seconds the medium was apparently asleep and quietly snoring.”



The sole purpose of this article is not to show whether or not Helen Duncan was genuine or a fraud but to give the reader an informed opinion of the long-standing allegations of regurgitation. We can see the long-standing Spiritualists’ claim that it was *all* down to Harry Price, but it was actually the opinion of two separate organisations, as well as the medium’s husband to some extent, which brought about the, albeit unproved, claim of regurgitation against the medium. It is true, however, that in the following years Harry Price would stick to this explanation and become the medium’s nemesis.

Of course, what is not taken into *any* consideration in these reports is the Spiritualists’ side of the story or hypothesising other possibilities of explanation. Given that we do not know the full makeup of what is generally referred to as ectoplasm, it has over many decades been referred to as semi-physical. Ectoplasm, for want of a generally accepted term, is taken *mostly* from the medium, an extension of their life-force—called psychic force in the days of William Crookes—in the process of materialisation, which demands possibly more fluids than other physical mediumship, and is, in part, said to be taken and added to from elsewhere.

The first full-form materialisation medium in Britain was Florence Cook. The spirit which is said to have materialised was Annie Morgan, better known as Katie King (Jr). At this early stage of this new phase of phenomena questions were put to the spirit on November 28th, 1873:⁴⁸

“Katie says she makes this draper out of mater obtained from the dresses of all the sitters in the circle. She says that when she is forming herself she materialises the drapery fist, and her own body afterwards: ...”

“When you dissolve, which part disappears the first, the body or the dress?” “The body, of course; it’s material power goes back to her and then the dress goes into the elements”

It is well established that materialisation mediums have, in the past, struggled to produce enough drapery; for example, Duncan’s materialisations generally had no feet, the bottom parts of the legs being missing. Another medium was the Polish physical medium, Franek Kluski, sometimes referred to as the “King of Mediums”. Born in Warsaw in 1873, he was unique. From around 1918 to 1925, he gave psychic science some of the most puzzling evidence on record with his wide spectrum of physical mediumship. He did not give public séances and never charged for private seances, and only sat for around 350 people, generally psychical researchers such as Professor Charles Richet, Dr Gustave Geley and Colonel Norbert Okolowicz, so there are records of his seances. His final period, 1921/1925, was his most powerful phase of physical mediumship—producing better materialisations of human spirits.⁴⁹

He was one of the first mediums to show ectoplasm coming from his body, unlike earlier mediums such as Florence Cook, Annie Mellon, Kate Woods, etc. It was reported that a “fluid” emanated from Kluski frequently like a stream, a metre wide, of human height; some of the materialisations looked like cardboard or made with rags and were preceded by sounds of rubbing cardboard or fabric, tearing of paper—but never a trace of paper, etc. was found after the séance. The forms would often have problems dressing themselves, rubbing various objects prior to full materialisation—transforming the “raw material” into what was required, e.g. an officer’s materialisation had a clearly detailed military cap but the uniform would be a blur, vaguely resembling the medium’s clothes. However, when attention was paid to the uniform the materialisation would grow one.

Officers in Russian uniforms appeared; the Officers present at the séance felt their epaulettes and buttons being rubbed and after the materialised forms buttons and epaulettes would shine. The materialised forms rubbed against the sitters, and Kluski in particular. After the séance, their clothes showed signs of wear; sometimes the figures approached the sitters and vigorously rubbed their shoulders and back, causing intense physical and mental exhaustion to the persons involved; the result of this, however, was the materialised form being very clear and fully visible. The materialised form would target the young, healthy sitters—avoiding the elderly and those who had consumed alcohol prior to the séance.

This is only a candid overview in my own words but it gives some idea of how Kluski’s drapery was formed, like Florence Cook, who would get her materials from this world to make the clothing! The researchers investigating Helen Duncan claimed her as a fraud on the grounds of the man-made ectoplasm/teleplasm, assuming that she secreted it on her body either externally or internally and then regurgitated it when required. However, apart from what the two research laboratories were given by Albert, naturally knowing that the

⁴⁸ Published in “The Spiritualist Newspaper”, dated December 12th, 1873; for the full account please see the Pioneer pdf booklet, “A Question of Fraud” (details are on the back page of this issue).

⁴⁹ See Pioneer, Vol. 6, No.3: “Franek Kluski”.

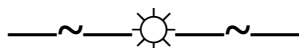
researchers would rigorously test the specimens, *not* a trace of the three categories of ectoplasm/teleplasm were found by the researchers!

Some readers may wonder why no full materialisations appeared in the investigations, given the report published in *Pioneer*, Vol. 2, No. 3: “Helen Duncan & John McIndoe – A Scots Materialising Medium”; the report was around a year prior to going to the London Spiritualists Alliance (LSA):

“Soon another voice is heard calling “Mother” and a young girl emerged from the curtains, came over and spoke to one of the new lady sitters, who recognised her as her daughter. She conversed with her in a low tone, apparently giving a comforting message, and handed her mother a rose, taken from a bunch placed in the cabinet.

“Then another girl form of different build took her place, coming from the other side of the cabinet, and was claimed as her sister by one of the ladies. She also brought a rose with her.”

It is not often realised that the alleged Albert Stewart was *not* then Duncan’s control (perhaps in the background but not named); there were around three before Albert, who appears to have taken over circa 1930. At the time of the 1930/31 investigations it appears that he was using the medium’s vocal cords, whereas later reports show that he was an independent materialisation with his own voice-box. Later, full materialisations would appear with Albert in full control; perhaps, on a *positive* note, the change of controls affected the intensive controlled séances.

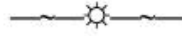


Victoria Helen McCrae Duncan
(née MacFarlane)

November 25th, 1897 – December 6th, 1956

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