Chapter 10: **He who has Twins**

**Story of Rev. Francis Ward Monck**

**- Nandor Fodor -**

          A MAN who divides like a cell, becomes two separate full-grown beings, and then reabsorb the divided portion without a trace - could any biologist ever conceive a wilder dream?

Unique miracles are hardly known in psychic annals, but this is one of them. Were it not for the solemn testimony of the Rev. Thomas Colley, Archdeacon of Natal and Rector of Stockton, a respected and fearless clergyman, the miracle would have remained unnoted in psychic history. But as the venerable Archdeacon has placed the experience on public record the chronicle of the life story of the Rev. Francis Ward Monck, one time Minister of the Baptist Chapel at Earls Barton, a professional medium of amazing capacities would not be complete if it were omitted.

The event took place in a materialization séance on September 28th, 1877. It was noted down by the Archdeacon the same evening as follows:

"Dr. Monck, under control of 'Samuel', was by the light of the lamp - the writer not being a yard away from him-seen by all to be the living gate for the extrusion of spirit forms from the realm of mind into this world of matter; for standing thus plainly before us, the psychic or Spirit form was seen to grow out of his left side. First, several faces one after another of great beauty appeared, and in amazement we saw - and as I was standing close up to the medium, even touching him, I saw most plainly - several times a perfect face and form of exquisite womanhood partially issue from Dr. Monck about the region of the heart. Then, after several attempts, a full-formed figure, in a nebulous condition at first, but growing more solid as it issued from the medium, left Dr. Monck, and stood a separate individuality, two or three feet off, bound to him by a slender attachment as of gossamer, which at my request Samuel, the control, severed with the medium's left hand, and there stood embodied a spirit form of unutterable loveliness, robed in attire spirit-spun - a meshy web-work from no mortal loom, of a fleeciness inimitable, and of transfiguration whiteness truly glistening."

This amazing testimony was made public to create an impression in favour of Monck. No one needed it more urgently than he did, for he had just been sentenced to three months' imprisonment for defrauding people by pretending to be a medium. The sentence might have been much more severe but for the appearance in court of Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, the famous naturalist. He deposed that he had seen Dr. Monck in a trance state "when there appeared a faint white patch on the left side of his coat, which increased in density and spread till it reached his shoulder; then there was a space gradually widening to six feet between it and his body; it became very distinct and had the outline of a woman in flowing white drapery. I was absolutely certain that it could not be produced by any possible trick."

Unfortunately there was unquestionable proof that in the instance under consideration Monck was fraudulent. At Huddersfield on November 3rd, 1876, a conjurer, named Lodge, suddenly demanded that the medium should be searched. Monck ran for safety, locked himself into his room upstairs and escaped through the window. The door was forced and a search was made. They found a pair of stuffed gloves which were apparently meant to serve as materialization paraphernalia. Nor was this the first case in which Monck was flagrantly caught in practising fraud. Sir William Barrett wrote of "a piece of white muslin on a wire frame with a black thread attached being used by the medium to simulate a partially materialized spirit".

With so incriminating a record against the accused it required considerable courage to come forward and state that a dreadful miscarriage of justice must have taken place. But this was precisely what Archdeacon Colley did.

He had just returned from India, too late to appear in court, but he had known Monck for years. He had lived with him, slept with him, and witnessed things that no mortal eyes had ever beheld; and he was so sure of his own observations that, in the course of a heated argument, he challenged J. N. Maskelyne and promised him a thousand pounds if he could duplicate Monck's materialization performance. Maskelyne accepted the challenge, but his performance was declared to be a travesty of what was seen in seances with Monck. Maskelyne did not admit this, and sued the Archdeacon for the money. Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace appeared in court once again. Mainly on his testimony judgment was entered against Maskelyne. The Archdeacon was awarded £75 and costs.

Had Monck a Jekyll and Hyde personality, the blending of an amazing medium and a brazen, unscrupulous trickster?

There is no doubt that the so-called physical phenomena of mediumship are of biological origin. Therefore, they need not be conditioned by morality. Further, mediumship as a profession is far less lucrative than conjuring. Yet there is not a single instance of a medium changing his role and setting himself up as a pastmaster of sleight-of-hand. (Nor has any magician ever claimed to be a medium.) This is a significant fact. It suggests that mediums are not captains of their ship, they cannot produce phenomena at will; their power is something which they do not understand. They cannot control it or direct it. They just lend themselves to it, to be used by it, more or less as simple instruments.

Monck was, in several respects, a unique medium. His materialization phenomena took place in bright daylight. In dark séances things were likely to happen of which he himself was afraid. Speaking before the Church Congress at Weymouth in October, 1903, Archdeacon Colley said:

"Often when I have been sleeping in the same bedroom with him for the near observation of casual phenomena during the night and, specially, that came through the dark I, on such occasions, would hold my hand over his mouth, and he would now and again be startled into wakefulness not unmixed with fear, for he could see the phantoms which I could not, when I had quietly put out the night-light - he would not sleep in the dark - which made him apprehensive of phenomena, physically powerful to an extraordinary degree."

Two years later the Archdeacon published a full account of his incredible experiences. He wrote:

"I publish these things for the first time, having meditated over them in silence for twenty-eight years, giving my word as clergyman for things which imperil my ecclesiastical position and my future advancement."

Under date of September 25th, 1877, he described the disappearance of "Lily", a beautiful spirit girl, as follows:

"As I brought my sweet companion close up to him (Monck), the gossamer filament again came into view; its attenuated and vanishing point being, as before, towards the heart. Greatly wondering, yet keen to observe, did I notice how, by means of this vapoury cord, the psychic figure was sucked back into the body of the medium. For like a waterspout at sea - funnel-shaped, or sand column such as I have seen in Egypthorizontal instead of vertical, the vital power of our medium appeared to absorb and draw in the spirit-form, but at my desire, so gradually that I was enabled quite leisurely thus closely to watch the process. For leaning against, and holding my friend with my left arm at his back and my left ear and cheek at his breast, his heart beating in an alarming way, I saw him receive back the lovely birth of the invisible spheres into his robust corporeal person. And as I gazed on the sweet face of the disintegrating spirit, within three or four inches of its features, I again marked the fair lineaments, eyes, hair and delicate complexion, and kissed the dainty hand as in process of absorption it dissolved and was drawn through the texture and substance of his black coat into our friend's bosom."

The Archdeacon once spoke to a materialized phantom before her extrusion was accomplished, and he saw recognition in her eyes and heard her whisper, during the psychic parturition, "So glad to see you."

On one occasion a minister friend of Monck materialized. By common consent the medium was carefully awakened. According to the Archdeacon:

"Dazed for a moment, and then most astonished, our aroused friend looked inquiringly at the materialized spirit form and jumping up from the sofa on which we had placed him, he excitedly rushed forward to his one-time fellow-student, shouting, 'Why, it is Sam,' and then there was handshaking and brotherly greetings between the two. When both friends were about to speak at once there was a momentary impasse and neither seemed able to articulate; the medium's breath appearing to be needed by Samuel when he essayed to speak, while the materialized form was also checked in his utterance when the medium began to speak."

Even most hardened spiritualists gasp at this story. Nor is the tale of "Mahedi", Monck's giant Egyptian phantom, less amazing. He was so strong and solid that, we learn, he could lift the Archdeacon from his chair to the level of his shoulders apparently without effort. He reminded the chronicler of a mummy of gigantic proportions he once saw in some museum. On his first appearance through Monck, the Mahedi wore a kind of "metal skull cap, with an emblem in front which trembled and quivered and glistened, overhanging the brow. I was allowed to feel it, but there was little resistance to my fingers, and it seemed to melt away like a snow-flake under my touch, and to grow apparently solid again the moment after. For once (February 18th, 1878), by daylight, it was arranged as a most dangerous experiment that I should grasp the white-attired Egyptian and try to keep him from getting back to invisibility through the body of the medium. I was, by an invisible force, levitated at it seemed instantly some eighteen or twenty feet from my drawing-room door right up to where the medium stood whom, strangely and suddenly, wearing white muslin over his black coat, I found in my arms just as I had held the Mahedi. The materialized form had gone, and the psychic clothing that evolved with him from the left side of my friend must also have gone the same way with the speed of thought back to invisibility through the medium. But whence its substituted draper's stuff now on the body of our friend not wearing it an instant before?"

Here is material evidence which would have convicted Monck in court once again for fraud. But what about the story that goes with it? Colley was not quite the simpleton, miracle-monger and easy dupe that one would like to think him to be. Or was he dishonest? William Eglinton, another famous medium of the day, had no reason to think so, for the Archdeacon openly accused him of fraud when, having cut a piece of the robe and beard of a materialized figure, he found them fitting to perfection the muslin and beard which he discovered in Eglinton's portmanteau.

Even if Archdeacon Colley's case is put out of court as an unsolved mystery, what about the others? For a year Monck was retained for exclusive study by Hensleigh Wedgewood, the brother-in-law of Darwin, Stainton Moses, an Anglican clergyman-medium, and others interested in psychical research. Were these people all hypnotized? If so, what was the origin of the paraffin moulds of hands and feet which the phantoms left behind in William Oxley's experiments in Manchester in 1876?

And Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, co-discoverer with Darwin of the principle of natural selection, a man whose scientific fame was built on powers of observation, was he also a poor, deluded fool?

Listen to this account of his experiences described in a letter to the *Spectator*, October 6th, 1877, of a sitting in a private house with Monck:

Two slates, examined, cleaned and tied together by him were on the table, never out of sight. Monck asked the scientist to name a word he wished to be written on the slate inside. He named the word "God". Monck then asked how it should be written. He replied: "Lengthways of the slate and with a capital G." In a very short time the writing was heard on the slate. The medium's hands were convulsively withdrawn, Alfred Russel Wallace himself untied the cord and on opening the slates, found on the lower one the word in the manner he asked for.

Slate-writing is a doubtful phenomenon. There are at least a hundred ways to produce writing between slates by sleight-of-hand. But it is easier to suspect than to prove. And Dr. Wallace's experience was certified by E. T. Bennett, the Assistant Secretary of the Society for Psychical Research.

What are we then to conclude? We need not come to any conclusion at all. Most of these mediumistic mysteries have tried and baffled the best brains of the last and present century. Another Newton will have to come to illuminate with the light of his genius the hidden depths of the human soul and existence.