

“ A TEST *SÉANCE* WITH THE GOLIGHER CIRCLE ”

WE believe that it is very important that every effort should be made to check the late Dr. Crawford's researches on “physical” phenomena. We are therefore glad to publish the following account of a “test” *séance* which was recently held with the Goligher circle in Belfast.

We do not think it likely that even the most captious critic will suggest that Dr. Crawford's photographic results were due to fraudulent manipulation of the plates or cameras ; but even such remote possibilities are worth eliminating and there can be no doubt that this test *séance* does so. Criticism will more probably be concentrated upon the possibility of the medium, or some other member of the circle, concealing a quantity of white gauze or similar material about her or his person and arranging it in such a manner as to simulate the “psychic structures.” It will be noted in this case that all the members of the circle were carefully searched before the *séance*, that the medium had “not a shred of white fabric, whether clothing or otherwise, on her person,” and that one of the photographs was taken in a good red light. The last point is especially important ; it minimises the chance of the medium evading the search, extracting a quantity of fabric from its place of concealment and arranging it to simulate a mass of “plasma” during the period of darkness which usually precedes the taking of the photographs.—ED. *P.R.Q.*

“ AN ACCOUNT OF A TEST *SÉANCE* WITH THE GOLIGHER CIRCLE

“In accordance with the request of a friend, in whose charge the late Dr. W. J. Crawford left all his papers and unfinished psychic work, I recently paid a visit to Belfast for the purpose of going through Dr. Crawford's papers, and taking over on behalf of my friend all available material dealing with the scientific investigations of the phenomena occurring with Miss Kathleen Goligher which were carried out by Dr. Crawford during the last few years.

“In order to see whether it would be possible for a comparative stranger to get the same or similar photographic results as those obtained by Dr. Crawford, I arranged for a sitting of the Goligher Circle to take place at the late Dr. Crawford's house, 1, Brookvale Terrace, Park Avenue, Sydenham, Belfast, at 7.30 p.m. on Monday, September 6th, 1920.

“ It has been suggested to me that a description of the *séance* would be of interest to readers of the *Psychic Research Quarterly*. It has therefore been a pleasure to me to send an account ; as bald and accurate a statement as possible of the facts, with every detail.

“ On Sunday, September 5th, the day preceding the *séance*, I went to the home of the Goligher Circle in Belfast. It was then arranged that we should hold a preliminary sitting of the Circle at about 7 p.m. on that day for the purpose of learning the wishes of the ‘ operators ’ with regard to the procedure to be observed the next evening (I might say that Miss Kathleen Goligher, the medium, had only arrived in Belfast that morning from Scotland, where she had been staying for the past four or five weeks.) It is interesting to note that nothing is ever done without first asking the advice and following the directions of the ‘ operators ’—the unseen ‘ intelligence ’ responsible for the phenomenon. I remember Dr. Crawford telling me that he considered the success of his experiments was due to the fact that he always carried out the instructions of the ‘ operators ’—often against what he thought was his better judgment. I was soon to have this point demonstrated very clearly. I had already made up my mind that we would take photographs with five cameras simultaneously and make three exposures. I was told by members of the Circle that I must first ask the ‘ operators ’ how many exposures were to be made. So I said, ‘ Friends, I propose to make three exposures to-morrow night, will that be all right ? ’ Two distinct knocks on the floor signified ‘ No. ’ I then said, ‘ Are we to make only two exposures ? ’ Again two emphatic knocks sounded on the floor. I was rather taken back, and wondered whether we were going to be allowed to take any photographs at all. ‘ Do you mind saying how many exposures we are to make ? ’ was my next question. At once four distinct knocks on the floor came in reply. ‘ Do you mean that we are to make four exposures ? ’ I said. Three emphatic and rather impatient knocks signified ‘ Yes, ’ with a kind of ‘ Have we not already told you so ? ’ air about them.

“ It will be understood that the communication with the ‘ operators ’ is made by question and answer only—not by calling the alphabet ; they confine themselves to one, two, or three knocks, which are, however, very varied in character. Sometimes the knocks are very soft, sometimes so loud that they might have been made with a sledgehammer. They do not always come from one particular part of the room, but vary as far as position is concerned. About two and a half years ago, when I was at a *séance* with Dr. Crawford at the Golighers’ house, I sat on the table inside the circle at the Doctor’s request when three knocks were given on the sole of my boot. I also actually felt the plasma, which I can only describe as a clammy gripping substance. Another fact is that even the photographs cannot be taken until the

unseen 'operators' give the signal, which they do by giving three knocks on the floor. This led to a rather awkward dilemma on the Monday night. The curfew was in operation at Belfast. The last trams left at 9 p.m. Cabs were not to be had for love nor money, and thirteen people had to get to their homes in distant parts of the city before 10.30 p.m.; the alternative was to be arrested or shot. We had to remind our unseen friends on the Sunday that there was a curfew on in this city here below, but they would not be hurried. As we were waiting for the signal to take the last photograph the minutes were ticking away towards ten o'clock. It was with a feeling of relief that at last we heard the welcome three knocks. After the photograph was taken we still had to wait while they said good-night, which they do by giving three knocks for each separate person in the room in reply to their individual 'Good-night, friends.' Everything is under the absolute control of the unseen 'operators.' Without their co-operation nothing is possible.

"I was most anxious that results should be obtained in the visibility of a red light. For, so sensitive is the plasma to light, that it had been usual when taking the photographs by the flashlight process to allow two or three minutes' darkness before flashing. I was therefore delighted when, through the medium of the knocks on the floor, the 'unseen operators' gave me permission to make one exposure in the visibility of the red light. What is most important is the fact that they promised me a result under those conditions.

"I asked that the first exposure might be made in the red light. I was at once told that it must be the fourth. Their greater wisdom was proved by the fact that the first exposure was a failure—the only failure out of the four. By means of the knocks (three knocks signify 'yes,' two knocks 'no,' one knock 'doubtful') I was also told at which exposure a table was to be placed before the medium. I also received permission to stand beside the medium while the photographs were being taken, with the result that I saw with my own eyes the 'plasma' itself as portrayed on the photographs in each case. The photographs [not reproduced.—ED.] show me standing close to the medium.

"I will now describe the *séance*. On Monday, September 6th, we all assembled at the house of the late Dr. Crawford by about 7 p.m.

"As any reader of Dr. Crawford's book knows, the Goligher Circle consists of seven members, namely: Mr. Morrison, Mrs. Morrison, Miss Kathleen Goligher, Miss Lily Goligher, Miss Anna Goligher, Mr. Goligher, and Master Samuel Goligher. It is altogether a family affair, being composed of father, four daughters, son and son-in-law, for Mrs. Morrison is the sister of the medium. All the members are mediumistic to a greater or less degree. Miss Kathleen Goligher, the youngest of the four daughters, is, however, a medium of outstanding merit. On the occasion of this *séance* Miss Lily Goligher and Master

Goligher were unavoidably absent. Their places were taken by Mrs. Crawford (widow of the late Dr. Crawford) and a Mr. Keir, a friend of the Goligher family. In addition to the above there were present Mr. James Pollock, a well-known professional photographer of Belfast, two Bachelors of Medicine, a well-known artist of Belfast, and a surveyor from the north of Ireland. The names and addresses of all who were present are in the possession of the Editor of this paper. I may add that all those present at the *séance* are prepared to swear to the absolute truth of what I have written in this article.

“Two half-plate cameras and three hand cameras were used. The former were manipulated by Mr. Pollock, the professional photographer, and by Mr. S., the artist. They both used their own cameras. Mr. Pollock used a rock-crystal lens that was most kindly placed at my disposal by Mr. S. W. Woolley, of London. The three hand cameras were under the charge of Mr. Hunter, the surveyor from the north of Ireland. All five cameras were thoroughly inspected and overhauled by Mr. Pollock at his studio. In his dark-room I autographed the plates that were to be used, and after this neither the plates, films, nor cameras left my possession. For obvious reasons I was unable to autograph the films, but this is immaterial for, of course, the photographs taken simultaneously with the five cameras are identical.

“I am prepared to swear that no member of the Circle touched or even saw the plates or films. After the photographs were taken I had personal charge of the films and plates, which I locked away for the night. The next morning I took the plates and films to Mr. Pollock at his studio. He personally developed them straight away.

“The results were :

“First exposure : Nothing abnormal.

“Second exposure : A mass of plasma on the floor apparently proceeding from the medium’s ankle.

“Third exposure : A mass of plasma extending from the ankle to the underside of the table and more of it on the floor (like a huge muffler).

“Fourth exposure : A small mass of plasma resting on the medium’s lap.

“The lady members of the circle were thoroughly searched and examined by Dr. B. and Dr. M. before entering the *séance* room. The male members of the circle were searched by myself. I can go so far as to say that Miss Kathleen Goligher, the medium, had not a shred of white fabric, whether clothing or otherwise, on her person. This is vouched for by the two lady doctors. Before the photographs were taken the circle broke up, leaving the medium sitting in the chair with no one near her but myself. As previously stated, I saw the plasma with my own eyes three times as depicted in each photograph. It was

seen also by several others in the room. Dr. B. saw it once ; Dr. M. saw it twice ; others saw it as well.

“My sincere thanks are due to the two lady doctors and to Mr. Pollock, who came at much personal inconvenience ; also to Mr. S. and Mr. Hunter, the latter of whom took the trouble to make a special journey from the north of Ireland in order to be present. Last, but not least, my best thanks are due to each and every member of the Circle for their loyal co-operation.

“To anyone who has carefully followed the painstaking work of the late Dr. Crawford any confirmation of the truth of the results he obtained would appear to be both presumptuous and unnecessary ; but for the benefit of those sceptics who remain unconvinced I am glad to bring forward the above evidence which, I submit, is irrefutable.

“I am confident that no one who has attended such a *séance* as I have described can help feeling that they have been in the presence of an unseen intelligence with powers beyond our human understanding. I might point out one important fact, viz.—that one of the cameras used was fitted with a wide-angle lens. This camera was placed on the floor quite close to the feet of the medium for the purpose of giving a photograph of the ‘plasma’ at close quarters. In this photograph the mesh of the stockings is plainly visible, but the plasma shows no structure, nor can any be discovered on examining the negatives under the microscope or by other means.

“(Signed) F. McC. STEVENSON.”

[This last point is important ; it constitutes additional evidence against the possibility of the substance photographed being some kind of white fabric brought into the *séance* room and arranged by the medium.

We have in our possession a copy of a statement signed by Mr. Stevenson, Mr. S., Mr. Pollock, Mr. Hunter, Dr. E. G. B., and Dr. S. M. This statement testifies to the facts that “the members of the Goligher Circle were thoroughly searched by Dr. E. B., Dr. S. M., and Mr. Stevenson, that the precautions described above were taken to ensure that neither plates nor cameras were tampered with, and that “one exposure was made in a visibility clear enough to enable everyone in the room to detect any movement of either Miss Goligher or any member of the Circle, all of whom were sitting at some distance from the medium.”

[The statement concludes with the following words : “We unhesitatingly affirm that this *séance* has been conducted under strict test conditions ; that the phenomena we have seen, and the photographs that have been taken of the ‘plasma,’ are results which it is an absolute impossibility for any human being to have engineered or produced.”

We shall be glad to consider similarly careful records of investigation from others who are studying these subjects.—ED. P.R.Q.]