

Light:

A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research.

"WHATEVER DOTHS MAKE MANIFEST IS LIGHT."—Paul.

"LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!"—Goethe.

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HOW AND WHAT TO OBSERVE IN RELATION TO SLATE-WRITING PHENOMENA.

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(From the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research.)

Having for some years made a special study of the subject of Natural Magic and of the methods of conjurers, I have been requested (as an expert, and in a quasi-professional capacity) to read and criticise a series of reports (appearing in the *Journal* of the Society for June) of sittings with Mr. Eglinton. I am asked to say whether, and to what extent, the phenomena described are consistent with trickery, and to indicate any points wherein the observation of the witnesses is likely to have been defective or misdirected.

It seems to me, however, that a paper confined strictly within the above lines would be too speculative to be of much practical value. Upon the hypothesis of trickery, these accounts must be taken to represent (as do all descriptions of conjuring effects by uninitiated persons) not what the witnesses actually saw, but what they believe they saw, which is a very different matter. The main outlines of each narrative are probably correct; but if the description could be compared with the reality, it would be found that there was a little omission here, a little inaccuracy there; here a circumstance that was not noticed, there another that has been forgotten. I am not seeking to disparage either the good faith or the general acuteness of the witnesses, but merely stating a defect which is inseparable from all descriptions of conjuring tricks of which the secret is not known to the describer. I myself claim no exception from the rule. For the last quarter of a century I have taken every available opportunity of witnessing conjuring performances, and have made a practice of immediately afterwards taking a careful note of any novel combination or effect. In so doing I frequently find the greatest possible difficulty (even where the general working of the trick has been clear to me) in recalling *exactly* what was done—the precise sequence of given movements, and the like. Very often a second visit has shown that my first impression was wrong in material particulars. If such is the experience of a person practically familiar with conjuring, and able to make a pretty close guess at the *modus operandi* of the trick, what chance has an outsider, however acute, of giving a precisely accurate description? It must be borne in mind that the observation of the witness has been *ex hypothesi* intentionally misled, it being the main aim and art of the conjurer to lead the attention of the spectator away from material points, and to direct it upon unimportant matters. I have frequently been favoured by friends with descriptions of magical feats they have witnessed, and, knowing the real facts, have been intensely amused at the wide discrepancy between the romance and the reality. Upon the hypothesis of trickery, therefore, it may safely be assumed that even the most accurate of these accounts vary more or less from the actual facts; but, on the other hand, it would be obviously absurd for any person not an eye-witness to profess to say

precisely how far they are accurate, or to pronounce dogmatically on any given point that the *soi-disant* eye-witness was mistaken, and that the true fact was so and so.

It seems to me that I shall best serve the end in view by offering investigators a little practical counsel as to how and what to observe in relation to slate-writing generally, calling attention to the possible means of deception, and illustrating my remarks, where practicable, by reference to the series of reports before mentioned.

It must be taken that the sole point at issue for the purpose of the present paper is simply whether the effects seen are produced by human artifice or not. If not, there is still room for considerable difference of opinion as to the agency by which they are produced; but this is a branch of the question with which I have at present no concern. My observations will be directed solely to the best means of sifting wheat from chaff, and detecting trickery, if any such be employed.

In the first place, in order to have a fair chance of detecting the *modus operandi* of a conjuring trick, it is necessary to see it several times repeated. The keenest expert will often be puzzled by a new trick, the first time of seeing it. But on a second visit he will note that some slight and apparently accidental movement, say the mere dropping of a handkerchief or slate, or the turning aside to a table to pick up some object, which occurred (and attracted no particular notice) on the first occasion, is again repeated. It is a reasonable inference that this supposed accident is in reality of the essence of the trick. Having got thus far, his next inquiry will be, What is the object of this particular movement? It may take two or three more visits satisfactorily to answer this question, but at each additional visit a little more of the veil will be lifted, the inferences drawn will be more certain and more precise, till at last the whole process becomes clear to the patient observer.

The same process should be applied to the examination of alleged Spiritualistic phenomena. It cannot be too strongly insisted on that any single manifestation, however startling and apparently inexplicable, is inconclusive in a scientific sense. If, however, the same phenomenon is again and again repeated at short intervals before the same witnesses, each successive repetition increases the likelihood of detection, if the effect is produced by trickery. If, in the course of several repetitions, no suspicious circumstance has been noted, the probability of the genuineness of the manifestation may be said to increase in geometrical progression. The first items of advice, therefore, that I should give to investigators would be:—

1. Sit repeatedly, and at short intervals.
2. Try over and over again for the same kind of manifestation.
3. Note if any apparently accidental circumstance has a tendency to repeat itself; and if so, fix your attention keenly on that circumstance, and find out what it covers.

The chief advantage of the expert over the outsider in such a matter is that the former, from his knowledge of the general principles of conjuring, knows better what form of trickery is likely to be used, and is less liable to overlook seeming trifles. In the case of slate-writing produced by trickery there are five alternatives, which practically cover the whole ground.

1. The writing may be there and then executed by the medium.
2. A slate, on which writing already exists, may be substituted for the one first shown.
3. The slate used may already have writing upon it, but at the outset invisible, and rendered visible either by the application of some chemical re-agent, or, as in the case of marks made by an agate stylus, rendered invisible by washing, but again becoming visible as the surface dries.
4. A slate may be used with a movable face, which may be discarded at pleasure, and reveal a written surface beneath it. In the case of a folding slate, the movable portion may be made

to drop from the one side into the other ; leaving two new faces exposed.

5. The characters may be "printed" by the medium from some prepared surface. This may be done in the act of drying the newly-sponged slate with blotting paper, the characters being previously written thereon, reversed, with a special description of chalk. This on the white surface of the paper attracts no attention.*

It will be observed that the four last alternatives are dependent upon previous preparation, and these may, therefore, be disregarded, where an answer indicating special knowledge (not a mere "yes" or "no" or other answer of general application) is obtained to a question not previously known to the medium. Similarly in the case of a given word written in reply to a request made by the observer, on the spur of the moment, for that particular word. In such cases, therefore, the whole vigilance of the spectator may be directed to one point, viz., to ensure that the characters are not then and there written by the medium himself. Such writing may be effected in various ways :—

(1) By a minute piece of slate pencil or crayon inserted under the thumb or finger-nail.

(2) By a sort of thimble, carrying pencil or crayon, and slipped on the end of the thumb or finger.

(3) By a point of pencil or crayon attached by wax or other means to the under surface of the table, the slate being moved against such point in order to produce the writing.

If there is an honest desire to exclude all these possibilities, the best plan, assuming that the slate must be placed under the table at all (as to which I shall have more to say hereafter) is to attach it firmly, by means of screws or screw-clamps, to the under surface of the flap. This does not in the least interfere with the medium's making contact with the slate in the usual manner, while on the other hand it is obvious that it must save him much fatigue.† The slate should be attached and removed by the investigator himself, and the question to be answered or word to be written should not be stated until the slate is actually attached as above. It is as well in all cases that the slate used should be the investigator's own property.

In the case of a "long message" filling the slate, the precautions to be adopted are of a different character. Here it may be taken for granted that the message will *not* be written by the medium under the eyes of the witnesses, and the vigilance of the spectators must be directed against the use of an already prepared slate. The best way to exclude this is to insist on the use of the spectator's own slate, coming direct from his own custody, and so unmistakably marked as to render it absolutely impossible that any other could be, even temporarily, substituted for it without attracting instant attention.

With these few hints for the general guidance of investigators, I pass to the consideration of the body of evidence before us, and in the first place, I would pause to remark upon a fact to which, I think, the experience of most inquirers will testify—indeed, it is repeatedly noticed in these reports. Where a single word is actually written in response to request, or an answer of two or three words is given to some question formulated on the spot, it usually occupies a very peculiar position on the slate, namely, *close to the frame, and with the tops of the letters towards the medium.* (See diagram of slate in the case of Messrs. Bennett and Vicars, p. 320.) Now this at first sight would appear to be a proof of non-intervention on the part of the medium. It might be argued, with some show of reason, that, even if he produced the writing himself, he could hardly do so at the remote end of the slate, and still less upside down. Granted, but if he turned the slate round in its own plane (by no means a difficult matter), then wrote the words, and once more reversed the slate, that is precisely the position they would occupy.‡ Again, the single word or short message is generally in a weak, scrawly, scarcely legible handwriting. This was the case with the only word which has ever been written in my own presence (see p.

* This is the method adopted by a well-known French conjurer.

† At my two last sittings with Mr. Eglinton, I attached the slate in this manner, Mr. E. assuring me, in reply to a question, that the so doing would not at all affect the conditions. But if so, why is not such a very convenient arrangement (not merely as a test, but in the interest of the medium himself) always adopted?

‡ In the report of Professor Lodge and Mr. Gurney (p. 291) it will be noted that at the first sitting the writing was "at the end of the slate furthest from Mr. Eglinton, and upside down in relation to him," but at the subsequent sitting (p. 292) where the slate was attached by a string to Professor Lodge's middle finger throughout (and the slate therefore could not possibly be turned round as suggested) "the writing was at the end of the slate nearest Mr. Eglinton, and was turned towards him."

328), and in the "I do like you" written by "Joey" in compliment to Miss Symons (p. 312) it is stated to have been uncertain whether the second word was "do" or "did," a tolerably clear indication as to the general character of the writing. Now this feeble, struggling sort of writing is just what we should expect if the words were written by the medium himself, under the obvious difficulties of having with the same hand to support the slate, and at the same time to conceal the fact that he is writing. On the other hand, where one of the long messages, filling the slate, is produced, in which case it may be safely inferred that the writing is *not* then and there produced by the medium himself, two points are usually noticeable. First, the wording of the message is of a vague, general character, having no special reference to the immediate circumstances of the case, "a sort of general treatise on Spiritualism" (pp. 293 and 314); and, secondly, it is in a bold, flowing hand, with none of the weakness and effort perceptible in the shorter communications.* These two characteristics are exactly what one would expect in a message written at leisure beforehand, and either rendered visible by chemical means, or exchanged bodily for the slate previously in use.

Another point which strikes an expert in conjuring as suspicious is the request to sitters to talk of indifferent matters, and *not* specially to fix their minds on the work in hand. If, as suggested, the writing be the work of some intelligence gathering power from the surplus force of the sitters, it would seem that the result would be likely to be promoted by a fair degree of concentration, if not active exertion of will, on their part. On the other hand, the greater part of a conjurer's power lies in the misdirection of attention, and if the object were to divert the notice of the sitters from any personal manoeuvres of the medium, the request to talk and think about indifferent matters would be readily intelligible.

In this connection I may pause to remark on an assumption which runs through the majority of these reports, and which is habitually accepted by casual inquirers, namely, that the writing, as a matter of course, *takes place when the sound of writing is heard.* To the mind of an expert in conjuring the assumption should rather be the other way. Writing on a slate can be effected without any appreciable sound, and on the hypothesis of trickery the supposed sound of writing would probably not be audible until the necessary manipulations were concluded, and it became desirable to call attention to the writing as then proceeding. This observation suggests a possible explanation of a class of cases which have hitherto seemed to me more than ordinarily "staggering"; those, namely, in which writing is said to have been produced between two slates while laid, not under, but upon the table. To the production of writing on a slate simply held by the medium under a table, I should attach very small importance, such production being, I should say, with practice, within the reach of any conjurer; but when I have been told by credible witnesses of writing being produced between two clean slates held between the medium and another person in full light above the surface of the table, I have hitherto been compelled to own myself unable to suggest any natural solution of the phenomenon. I note, however, in the present series of reports, that in one or two instances the witnesses mention that the joined slates were held under the table for some time (professedly with no effect), and being afterwards brought into full view, the sound of writing was heard, and on examination writing was found upon them.

Now why, in the cases referred to, were the two slates put under the table at all? The placing of an uncovered slate in that position (at all times a suspicious and unsatisfactory proceeding from a scientific point of view) is justified by the supposed necessity of producing a certain amount of darkness. But in this case two slates are placed one upon the other. The space between them is already dark and shielded from observation; the placing of the slates under the table adds absolutely nothing in these particulars, and the writing is professedly produced, *not* while the slates are under the table, but after they have been again brought into full view above it. Why then, if not to facilitate trickery, were the slates placed under the table at all? I have sought in vain for any satisfactory answer to this question. On the hypothesis of fraud, the placing the slates under the table is intelligible enough. It may be

* In the account given by Mr. Murray (p. 296) he says, "All writing except Answer 8 was in one style, i.e., the same hand. No. 8 was different." All save No. 8, it will be found, were short messages. As to No. 8, Mr. Murray says, "Two slates held on upper surface of table. Mr. Eglinton asked for 'some communication of interest.' The slate was filled with writing in less than one and a-half minutes."

reasonably supposed that the writing is really executed while the slates are under the table, the spectator being deceived by the sound subsequently produced into believing that it is executed at the later period. This view of the case seems to have suggested itself to Messrs. Hodgson and Hogg (p. 290); but it is one which would certainly not strike the majority of unskilled observers, and it is conceivable that in many of the cases in which writing is alleged to have been produced between joined slates in full view, the fact that the same slates have been previously held under the table for a time has been suppressed, in perfect good faith, by the witnesses, either from forgetfulness, or from regarding the circumstance as unimportant, seeing that, in their belief, nothing took place until after the slates had again been brought into view.

Any Spiritualist who is honestly desirous (as I am persuaded the majority are) of excluding the possibility of trickery, will do well to insist that all slate-writing manifestations shall be produced with the slate on the table, turned face downwards if needs be, or covered with another slate, but never, even temporarily, placed under the table. This is not making any inadmissible demand, for Spiritualists assert that writing is frequently procured under the circumstances named. If so, let them abandon altogether a more than doubtful class of manifestations, and stick to conditions under which fraud is, if not impossible, at any rate infinitely less likely.

With regard to the class of cases in which a given word of a certain book (page, line, and number of word being chosen haphazard) is written on the slate, they scarcely carry conviction to the mind of an expert in conjuring. I pass over the familiar conjuring expedients for "forcing" the choice of a given page or word, as I think there is tolerable evidence that no such expedient was here employed; but the table, again, plays a very suspicious part in connection with all these cases. The book is laid upon the slate, and the slate placed out of sight under the table. Robert Houdin was able, in full view of his audience, and using his left hand only, to open a borrowed watch, read the number, and again close it without attracting suspicion. It would surely be a less difficult feat, under cover of the table, to open the book (usually, be it remarked, a light and thin one) at the given page, and note the word demanded. If the medium can do this, the elaborate precautions with which the word is selected are obviously immaterial. In every case in which the "book test" appears in these reports Mr. Eglinton was avowedly cognisant of the page, line, &c., demanded, and, therefore, the marvel in these cases reduces itself simply to the issue, "Could he, without the knowledge of the sitters, have got a sly peep at the required word?"* Mrs. Brietzke (p. 296) and Messrs. Smith and Murray (p. 301) are quite sure that he could not, but it is proverbially a difficult matter to prove a negative; and the evidence in reality simply amounts to this—that they did not see him look at the page, and do not believe he did. But the book was under the table, on the side next to Mr. Eglinton, and even a momentary diversion of attention on the part of the witnesses might suffice to give the necessary opportunity. We may take it for granted that if Mr. Eglinton did take a peep, he did not do so while the witnesses were looking straight at him. The exact time during which the slate (with the book on it) was held, apparently without result, is not noted, and it might well be that the extreme vigilance, which the witnesses are so sure that they exercised, really began after the necessary information was in fact obtained.

An incident related to me by a gentleman who sat for this same "book test" is rather suggestive. A page, word, and

* Since writing the above, my attention has been called to the report of the Russian Professors (pp. 329-331), which was not before me in the first instance. Here, if the report of the witnesses is correct, Mr. Eglinton was not cognisant of the page or number demanded. It is, however, to be remarked that this is merely the report of a single sitting, not confirmed by repetition of the experiment, and as I have already stated, even an expert in conjuring cannot fairly expect to detect a new trick on first exhibition.

I note by the way a rather curious circumstance in connection with this report. The answer is produced between two *papier mâché* slates, without frames, tightly screwed together (with a piece of pencil between) at the diagonal corners with a pair of small brass thumb-screws. The pencil must therefore have been jammed tightly between the two slates, but an answer is nevertheless procured. "The crumb of pencil on examination was found to be worn at one corner, and the lower surface of the upper slate, pressed as it was upon the pencil, was without a mark of any description." Surely the obvious inference is that the writing was somehow effected before the slates were joined together, and, if so, the learned Professors were a little hasty in their somewhat effusive "conclusion."

line were chosen after the usual elaborate manner. The book, a small pamphlet, was laid on the slate, and the "spirits" were invited to write down the chosen word. The reply was, "The page is not cut," which was found to be the case. This reply merits careful consideration. The theory of the Spiritualists is that the book, though laid on the slate, is never opened; and, obviously spirits, claiming to possess a clairvoyant faculty, have no need to open a book in order to look at a given page. The fact of the pages being uncut should, therefore, be quite immaterial to them. If, on the other hand, the word is read by the medium's own eye, and written by the medium's own hand, it is obvious that the fact of the page being uncut would present a very serious difficulty, and that the above is just the answer that might be expected.

The failure to write down the number of Mr. Wedgwood's or Mr. Bennett's watch, though the number of a railway ticket was revealed without difficulty, is open to a similar observation; the latter feat demanding much less personal dexterity than the former, though to anyone possessing a genuine clairvoyant faculty the one should have been as easy as the other.

To render this class of experiments scientifically valuable, the book used should in the first place be either placed in a sealed envelope, or encircled by cross ligatures of string or gummed paper, in such a manner as to exclude all possibility of a peep within. This done, the page, line, and word should be selected. The best way to do this, to exclude all possibility of trickery, is that each sitter should privately write down a number at pleasure, the total of the numbers so written down being then divided by the number of sitters in order to fix the page; the same plan (with any variation that may suggest itself) being repeated in order to decide on the line and word. The expedient of taking a number of bits of pencil, wax lights, or the like, though apparently excluding the possibility of prearrangement, is capable of a good deal of "management" in skilful hands.

I now pass to a class of cases of a still more startling character, namely, the alleged passage of matter through matter. It is noteworthy that in the only cases, in the present batch of reports, in which this is alleged to have taken place, the receptacle from which, and the receptacle to which, the change is made, are in every case Mr. Eglinton's own property, which fact, from a conjurer's point of view, is quite sufficient to deprive the incident of any "miraculous" character. Miss Symons (p. 309) wishes coins removed from her own sealed box, but the "power" is not adequate to do this. Mr. Wedgwood (p. 312) brings his own slates, fastened together; but nothing can be done with these. A card, however, disappears from Mr. Eglinton's own folding slate (locked, and with a slip of paper gummed across the opening), and appears in another piece of apparatus, a box with glass sides, prepared ostensibly for a different purpose. This celebrated "folding-slate," which figures in so many accounts of séances with Mr. Eglinton, is one of his most familiar "properties." On the first occasion of my visiting him it was lying on the table, and I have seen it probably on half-a-dozen subsequent occasions. I have taken it up and examined it (as I have no doubt nine out of ten sitters do), and I believe it (*i.e.*, the slate I saw) to be a perfectly honest, straightforward slate, innocent of any special mechanism or preparation. But the freedom with which it is left (not to say placed) in the way of inspection is, to the prestidigitatorial mind, a little suggestive. What if there be in Mr. Eglinton's possession a twin-brother, not quite so honest, of this very honest slate; and what if the very honest slate, of whose good faith the visitor has assured himself at half-a-dozen visits, is on a given occasion replaced by the twin-brother, exactly like it in appearance, but having some secret speciality designed to facilitate trickery. Suppose, for instance, that the slate used on the occasions spoken of by Miss Symons and Mr. Wedgwood, were so adapted (as any conjuring trick-maker could readily adapt it), to open at the hinges, as well as in the ordinary way. The card is placed therein, and the slates closed, a slip of paper being gummed across the opening. This ensures that the slates shall not be opened in the ordinary way, but does not affect the hinged side. The pressure of a spring or some similar expedient may make the slates open sufficiently to let the card drop into the performer's hand, whence to slip it into a glass box with a sliding lid (it is not stated that this was sealed or secured in any way) would scarcely present even a nominal difficulty. The reproduction of Mr. Wedgwood's penknife (embezzled by the "spirits" on a childish pretext at a previous materialisation

séance) within the folding-slate, and the disappearance of a piece of paper therefrom may be explainable in like manner.

In the cases last mentioned the specially adapted folding slate (if any) may have been introduced at the commencement of the sitting, but in others, as, for instance, where a long message has been produced professedly on the folding slate, the slate first shown may have been exchanged for another of similar appearance during the actual course of the sitting. The fact of the slates being every now and then held under the table, and the occasional dropping and picking up of a slate, a fact mentioned by many of the witnesses, would tend greatly to facilitate such an exchange. The dropping of a slate is a perfectly natural accident, and may frequently occur in the most honest and unintentional way, but for this very reason it would be the more likely to be made use of as a conjurer's artifice, to facilitate a desired "change."

There are some few incidents in this series of reports—as indeed in many which I have read and heard—for which, as described, I can offer no plausible explanation. The value of these cases will depend on the precise accuracy of the witnesses' testimony. For instance, the multiplication of two unknown figures by another number (as described on p. 294) seems, on the assumption that Mr. Eglinton did not know what numbers had been written down, inexplicable on any natural principles. It is, however, noteworthy that Mr. Eglinton himself indicated the multiplier, and that the celebrated folding slate was used. A good deal might turn, therefore, on the possibility of Mr. Eglinton's knowing, or being able to discover, the numbers to be multiplied, and the narrator is not a very accurate witness. At the outset of her report (p. 293) she says that she took to the séance a *folding slate* of her own. Two lines later she speaks of "the slate," presumably the same. Two lines later "*the slates* having been cleaned, and a chip of pencil put *between two*," the spirits are asked, "Will you write on Mrs.——'s slate by-and-by?" A lady who introduces so much confusion into half-a-dozen lines of her narrative is hardly to be depended on as a witness in a scientific matter. In the report of Miss Symons and Mrs. L. (p. 308) they speak of an answer to a question, unknown to Mr. Eglinton, being procured on his locked slate, without the slate being "removed from the table or out of sight for a single instant. Mr. Eglinton merely rested one hand upon it." If the ladies are correct in their account of the incident I can suggest no explanation which will meet the case. The account given by Mr. Wedgwood of writing produced between two slates hermetically attached together seems equally incapable of explanation, save that it is noteworthy that an interval of some months appears to have elapsed between the first and second attempts. The slates seem to have remained sealed up, for Mr. Wedgwood says that he took them "as they were." It would be very desirable to know where and in what condition the slates were in the meantime, and whether there was any possibility of their having been tampered with by any person. On the other hand, Mr. Wedgwood's account of writing produced on a card in a book, *identified by a corner torn off it*, looks very like a new version of a familiar conjuring trick, and it is possible that some little circumstance may have been, in perfect good faith, omitted from the respective accounts of the more startling experiences which would give them a different complexion.*

Having thus examined the evidence from a prestidigitatorial point of view, and indicated to the best of my ability certain items in which the effect deposed to may reasonably be supposed to have been produced by trick, I feel that I ought not to shirk the question whether it is likely that *the whole* of the facts alleged by this numerous body of witnesses are explainable on that hypothesis. Candidly speaking, I entertain a very grave doubt on the subject. I think there is a great deal to suggest that trickery is now and then employed (*pro re nata*, as the doctors say). I find many circumstances which would tend to favour its employment, and some for which it is difficult to account on any other hypothesis. On the other hand, I do not believe the cleverest conjurer could, under the same conditions, use trickery

* As an instance of the possibility of the medium's now and then acquiring a little useful knowledge without the cognisance of the spectators, I may refer to Mr. Harold Murray's testimony at p. 297. A twofold question is written. Mr. Murray says: "Mr. Eglinton asked aloud, after two to three minutes, 'Will you kindly give us an answer to this question?' Directly afterwards he dropped the slate on the floor; he picked it up and replaced it under flap of table. I watched him narrowly, but could not see him look at the message. However, after complaining of the weight of the slate he repeated his request for an answer, but modified his words, 'Will you kindly give us an answer to these questions?' And the questions were answered accordingly."

in the wholesale way necessary to produce all these phenomena, without exposing himself to perpetual risk of detection. Many of the witnesses have fulfilled the condition which I have indicated as the most important towards the discovery of trickery. They have sat repeatedly, at short intervals, with their attention turned particularly in the direction of the expected phenomenon, and the effects sought have been again and again repeated. No conjuring trick, however well disguised, will stand frequent repetition before the same spectators, and if conjuring were the *only* explanation of the slate-writing phenomena, I should certainly have expected that their secret would long since have become public property.

I regret exceedingly not to have been enabled to form a distinct personal conviction on the subject, but my experience has been unfortunate. I have had in all twelve sittings (the last ten as an expert on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research) with Mr. Eglinton. No one could possibly have commenced an investigation with a more open mind; indeed, I had heard so many startling accounts from persons on whose assurance in other matters I should not hesitate to rely, that I was quite prepared for the occurrence of remarkable phenomena, and disposed to investigate them in the most impartial spirit. I sat, in every case save the first, with gentlemen in whose presence Spiritualistic manifestations had previously occurred with freedom. We had a series of extremely pleasant séances, conducted on the most amicable footing, but the spirits obstinately declined to manifest. I cannot charge myself with the failure. I made no difficulties, dictated no embarrassing conditions. We used Mr. Eglinton's own slates, held under the table in his ordinary manner, and on each occasion only asked for the writing of a *single word*, named by myself on the spur of the moment. The first nine sittings were absolutely blank. At the tenth (an afternoon sitting), just as the daylight was failing, a single word was written—*how*, I do not pretend to say. I had not detected Mr. Eglinton in any suspicious movement. He had shortly before dropped the slate, but I do not attach any significance to the fact in this instance, and save for the peculiar position of the word on the slate (to which I have already adverted), there was nothing to suggest trickery, but from the circumstance of the imperfect light the manifestation was of no value in a scientific sense. Having thus made a beginning, I hoped for further manifestations, but was determined that any future success should be of a character to constitute really reliable evidence, and accordingly at our two next sittings, I used my own slate, clamped to the table as I have described. Again a single word was asked for, but no result was obtained, and I at last gave up the investigation in despair. I may truthfully claim that I was not an unfriendly inquirer, and it would therefore seem that my conjuring knowledge was, in some shape or other, the bar to my obtaining any satisfactory evidence.

Meanwhile, however, two gentlemen of my acquaintance, Dr. Herschell and Mr. Sachs, both skilled amateur conjurers, paid a visit to Mr. Eglinton. He was not aware, to the best of my belief, of their prestidigitatorial knowledge, and they were therefore the more favourably placed for detecting trickery, if any were used. Writing was repeatedly produced, and no trickery was detected by either of the witnesses, who came away completely staggered, and subsequent visits have, I am informed, confirmed them in the belief that at any rate the greater part of the manifestations they saw were not produced by any trick, but were really the work of some unknown force.

I may here anticipate a possible question. Why, it may fairly be asked, if there are such things as genuine Spiritualistic manifestations, should any medium take the trouble, or run the risk, of using trickery? A little reflection will show, however, that the two things are by no means incompatible. It is admitted, indeed asserted, by Spiritualists themselves that the phenomena are irregular and uncertain. On the other hand, the reputation and emoluments of a professional medium depend upon the comparative certainty and regularity with which they are produced under his mediumship. There must therefore be a constant temptation, when genuine phenomena run short (and the sitters are not too vigilant), to supplement them by a few conjuring tricks. It is not safe to assume, be it remembered, that what has happened once happens always. Both sides are too apt to fall into this error. The sceptic, hearing that a particular medium has been detected in trickery, is confirmed in the belief that *all* Spiritualistic manifestations are necessarily produced by dishonest means. The average believer, on the other hand, having once witnessed what he regards as unmis-

takably genuine manifestations, is thenceforth prepared to accept all similar phenomena as genuine. The logic is bad in both cases. The fact that A. was caught yesterday *in flagrante delicto* does not prove that B. is an impostor, nor is it even conclusive proof that A.'s manifestation of to-day is produced by a trick. The fact that C. has produced writing without human intervention to-day does not at all preclude his employing a little hanky-panky to-morrow. It is quite possible for one-half of the alleged phenomena of Spiritualism to be genuine, and for the other half to be produced by the grossest possible trickery. I was much struck by an observation made some time ago in my presence by a well-known and leading Spiritualist, to the effect that, in his belief, there was not a single professional medium before the public who would not use trickery when occasion offered. Such a declaration, made by a gentleman of high culture and trained acuteness, who, after much patient investigation, is still fully convinced of the genuineness of a great part of the Spiritualistic phenomena, carries a two-fold lesson to inquirers:—in the first place, to bring a fair and judicial spirit to their task—not claiming *à priori* to decide what is possible and what is not,—and in the second to accept nothing as *proof* save the most absolute and conclusive evidence, fenced about by such conditions as to render fraud not merely improbable, but impossible.

ANGELO J. LEWIS.

P.S.—Since the above paper was originally drafted, my attention has been called to the reports of Mr. Gurney and Professor Lodge (pp. 290-292), an additional report by Mrs. Brietzke (pp. 294-295), the report of Mr. Murray (p. 296), that of Messrs. Smith and Templeton (pp. 297-304), and that of the Russian Professors (pp. 329-331), which were not included in the "proof" series originally submitted to me. I have revised the paper so as, where necessary, to touch upon these cases. I have also had the opportunity of reading in the *Journal* for June the conclusions of Mrs. Sidgwick in relation to the matter. I cordially agree with her as to the extreme difficulty of continuous observation, and the desirability of adopting such conditions as shall tend to obviate the necessity for unremitting personal watchfulness; but it will be seen that I do not go so far as Mrs. Sidgwick in asserting that the whole of the manifestations are attributable to conjuring. I have indicated certain points which seem to me to suggest the employment of trickery, and bearing these in mind, and using the safeguards I have suggested, it should be the easier for investigators to prevent or detect its use. If I have put a wrong interpretation upon innocent circumstances, the fact that I have shown them capable of such interpretation should put the honest Spiritualist on his mettle to avoid, by the precautions indicated, even the possibility of such misconstruction for the future.—A. J. L.

CORRESPONDENCE.

[It is preferable that correspondents should append their names and addresses to communications. In any case, however, these must be supplied to the Editor as a guarantee of good faith.]

A Suggested Experiment in Psychography.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—Your readers may be interested in knowing that the experiment of using a sealed glass tube for psychography, with precautions such as those described by Mrs. Sidgwick in her letter, printed in your last number, is being tried.

Whether her description refers to the particular tube prepared by me I do not know, but, as I gave a pretty full account of it several months ago to an active member of the Council of the Society for Psychical Research, this may very well be the case.

I have had three séances (all unsuccessful) with Mr. Eglinton; the tube being placed on the table at the two last. At the conclusion, Mr. Eglinton was good enough to promise me that he would frequently place the tube on the table at his séances with the object of getting writing inside it; but it was understood that it was only at my wish, and "on my responsibility" that he undertook the experiment. Not having heard anything more, I presume that it has not yet succeeded; but the holiday-making season has probably diminished the opportunities for trying it.

Though my own personal experience has been quite unfavourable, I cannot help thinking, on a review of the general body of evidence for psychography, that abnormal writing must from time to time have occurred.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES J. TAYLOR

Toppsfield Rectory, Halstead, Essex.
13th September, 1886.

GOING HOME.

[The following poem was found by the widow of the late Seymour B. Snow (brother of Herman Snow, formerly of San Francisco), in a pocket-book after his decease. It is believed that it was his intention to mention to his wife, before he died, the presence of the poem in his pocket-book, but he was too weak to converse. It was no doubt his desire that the language of the poet should be applied to her, as a tribute to her devotion.—N. Y. *Home Journal*.]

Kiss me when my spirit flies—
Let the beauty of your eyes
Beam along the waves of death
While I draw my parting breath,
And am borne to yonder shore
Where the billows beat no more,
And the notes of endless spring
Through the groves immortal ring.

I am going home to-night,
Out of blindness into sight,
Out of weakness, war and pain
Into power, peace, and gain,
Out of winter gale and gloom
Into summer breath and bloom;
From the wanderings of the past
I am going home at last.

Kiss my lips and let me go—
Nearer swells the solemn flow
Of the wondrous stream that rolls
By the border-land of souls—
I can catch sweet strains of songs
Floating down from distant throngs,
And can feel the touch of hands
Reaching out from angel bands.

Anger's frown and envy's thrust,
Friendship chilled by cold distrust,
Sleepless night and weary morn,
Toil in fruitless land forlorn,
Aching head and breaking heart,
Love destroyed by slander's dart,
Drifting ship and darkened sea,
Over there will righted be.

Sing in numbers low and sweet,
Let the song of two worlds meet—
We shall not be sundered long—
Like the fragments of a song,
Like the branches of a rill
Parted by the rock or hill,
We shall bend in tune and time,
Loving on in perfect rhyme.

When the noon tide of your days
Yields to twilight's silver haze,
Ere the world recedes in space,
Heavenward lift your tender face,
Let your dear eyes homeward shine,
Let your spirit call for mine,
And my own will answer you
From the deep and boundless blue.

Swifter than the sunbeam's flight
I will cleave the gloom of night,
And will guide you to the land
Where our loved ones waiting stand,
And the legions of the blest
There shall welcome you to rest—
They will know you when your eyes
On the isles of glory rise.

When the parted streams of life
Join beyond all jarring strife,
And the flowers that withered lay
Blossom in immortal May—
When the voices hushed and dear
Thrill once more the raptured ear,
We shall feel and know and see
God knew better far than we.

—JAMES G. CLARK.

OFFICE OF "LIGHT,"
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Light :

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18TH, 1886.

THE LAW OF HEREDITY.

Nothing illustrates more strikingly the unvarying law of heredity than the condition and characteristics of the reigning families of Europe. Marrying in-and-in accounts for a great share of each. Take the occupants of the Spanish throne for a century past, or the French princes whose banishment has recently caused such general comment, or the Hanoverian family as it has developed in England; and one will be at no loss to understand how unvarying and how stern is the law of heredity, which includes everyone of us in its active operations.

It is the man who has a knowledge of this law who is best qualified, by the serviceableness of that very knowledge, to enter upon the conflict of life and has a right to be more hopeful of success. He knows his qualifications and endowments, and is able largely to bend circumstances to himself instead of being bent wholly by them. "He who does not resemble his parents," says Aristotle, "is a sort of monster; for in him Nature departs from her specific form. This is the first step in degeneration." Says the Bible, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The great fact of heredity is impressed on everything human.

A profoundly intelligent writer in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, in discussing this subject, remarks that physiological heredity extends to all the elements and functions of the organism—its external and internal structure, maladies, special characteristics, and acquired modifications. It determines the size of bones and organs, qualities of nerve tissue, the proportions of the nervous system, general dimensions of the brain, and size and form of the cerebral convolution. The physical exerts a permanent influence upon the moral by means of infinitesimal but constantly renewed acts; there is a necessary correlation between body and soul; and thus, as a permanent physiological state implies a correspondent psychological state, physiological heredity implies psychological heredity.

And when, adds the writer, we remember that the laws of heredity are charged with the destinies of mankind, it becomes of the highest moment that the contracting parties to a marriage should be possessed of that physical and mental health which promises the well-being of the offspring. Certain families have certain characteristics. Physical strength gives courage; weakness produces timidity. Length of life is the result of a principle of vitality received at birth. It survives all climatic and deleterious influences. Fecundity is likewise is likewise transmitted. Large hands are the inheritance of the labouring classes; small hands, of the educated; and the peculiarity of being left-handed, as also ambidexterity, is hereditary. Habit, an acquired disposition, is often trans-

mitted. Peculiarities of writing are often inherited. The creative power, imagination and memory are all transmissible.

The two Senecas were famed for their memory. Coleridge had two sons and a daughter, all well known. The talent for painting is hereditary among the Landseers in England, and the Bonheurs in France; and in the Titian family were nine painters of merit. The Bach family for 200 years produced artists of the first rank, among them twenty-nine musicians. Beethoven's father and grandfather, sister, and two sons. Heredity among philosophers is somewhat rare, as few marry, and some of those who do leave no posterity. Bacon's parents and brothers were all distinguished. Erasmus Darwin had two sons who were physicians of note, and his grandson, Charles, was the celebrated author of the "Origin of Species."

Special environment and education (which is moral environment) produce modifications of hereditary tendencies. But education is only a veneer, which may break at the slightest shock. Carlyle says civilisation is only a covering, beneath which the savage nature of man burns like an infernal fire. We all know how alcoholism is transmitted, and how many who have that madness in the blood strive against it in vain. So, too, in respect to insanity, gluttony, avarice, gambling, suicidal and homicidal mania, kleptomania, and all criminal characteristics. Multitudes of human beings come into the world fettered by a fate against which they have neither the power nor the will to contend. No one escapes the thralldom of his organisation, or avoids the destiny that is innate in him and shapes his ends. Individuals though we are, we are creatures of gifts and limitations from beginning to end.—*Banner of Light.*

PSYCHICAL CAUSE OF STIGMATA.

(FROM THE *Revue Spirite.*)

In the July number of the *Revue* we quoted from the *Journal des Débats* certain experiments in hypnotism by Dr. Zocachon. His further experiments in the same line have given results which will be new even to veteran magnetisers; they throw a light, as Dr. Zocachon says, upon the question of Stigmata.

One of the subjects for his experiments is an unmarried woman aged thirty-nine, whom he characterises as a hystero-epileptic (sensitive), whose malady is set down by him as "congestion of the nerve-centres." Having put this patient into the somnambulatory state, he operated upon her mind by suggestion; he told her that in order to remove the chronic congestion which caused her troubles, he should establish on her upper arm a small wound, as big as a sixpence, which should open and close according to his wish, and that it should discharge such a quantity of blood as he might prescribe.

He then applied a thin transverse section of marsh-mallow root, quite unirritating, to the arm, and fixed it in its place with a piece of simple diachylon plaster. At the end of sixty hours a wound was found to be formed, well defined,* with a red aureole round it.

Before recalling her to the ordinary state, Dr. Z. told her to report herself at the first symptoms of congestion appearing. In two days she came. "Now," writes the correspondent, "Dr. Z. found the wound still well-defined. Having put the patient into the somnambulatory state, he suggested to her that in order that the congestive phenomena, which were wearing her out, should cease, the wound should now discharge a certain quantity of blood. Within fifteen minutes blood flowed from the wound, by drops, to the quantity of a small teaspoonful; and then, at Dr. Z.'s suggestion, it ceased to flow. Since then the wound discharges or closes at his bare suggestion."

LONDON SPIRITUALIST ALLIANCE ADDRESSES.—Attention is directed to the announcement in another column respecting the addresses delivered at the *Conversazioni* of the London Spiritualist Alliance.

* In an experiment subsequently upon another subject, instead of a slice of marsh-mallow root, a circular piece of ordinary gummed paper was used, with a like result.

A LEARNED LADY'S LOGIC.

By "V."

I hope the letter of Mrs. Sidgwick, which appeared in "LIGHT" of last week, will be noticed and answered by persons much more competent for the task than myself. I feel, however, impelled to make a few remarks upon it by the fact that in it Mrs. Sidgwick seems to deny the faculty of accurate observation and the power of giving a correct account of their experiences to any other persons except herself. I own I find it rather difficult to understand exactly what she means by "evidence independent of continuity of observation or accuracy of recollection," but I gather from the whole gist of her remarks that she means to say that no experience of psychography with Mr. Eglinton has been recorded by experimenters in which continuous observation has been absolutely proved. Now this assertion is so utterly unfounded that one almost doubts whether the writer can have read the mass of evidence on the subject contributed in the pages of "LIGHT," and elsewhere, by persons of position, character, and ability, certainly not inferior to that of Mrs. Sidgwick herself. I will leave such persons to speak for themselves, which they can do much better than I could, and merely refer to my own evidence, which I have from time to time contributed in "LIGHT." First, however, I must say a few words respecting the unscrupulous attack Mrs. Sidgwick has made upon Mr. Eglinton's character, without adducing one syllable of evidence in support of it. Such an attack upon a defenceless man seems to me as deficient in good taste as it is cowardly, and to show an amount of animus which surprises me in a lady of Mrs. Sidgwick's powers of mind. I use the words "defenceless man" advisedly, for Mrs. Sidgwick knows perfectly well that it would be worse than hopeless for a *professional medium* to bring an action against her for libel in a court of justice, the popular prejudice against mediums and indeed against Spiritualism itself being so great that the case would be prejudged before it was tried, and no public medium could hope for a verdict in his favour. I have known Mr. Eglinton little more than two years, but the opinion I have formed of him as an honourable and upright gentleman will not be in the least affected by these malicious slanders.

And now let us see what Mrs. Sidgwick would probably say in support of the assertion she has made, to the evidence I have given as to the genuineness of psychography occurring in Mr. Eglinton's presence. I doubt if she has read my evidence, but I will imagine someone laying it before her as follows:—"This lady says that she has had during the past two years over fifty sésances for direct writing with Mr. Eglinton, that the accounts she has given of them were *not from memory*, but were copied from notes which she took of them *immediately* afterwards; that is, within an hour or two of her return home. That at these sésances she had varying results, but never an absolutely blank sésance, generally, however, they were very successful; that she received writing both on slates and on paper in a great variety of ways, detailed in the aforementioned accounts; that she frequently wrote questions in ink on a sheet of paper before leaving home, which sheet of paper was laid downwards on a slate held under the table by the medium, and the answer written to it in coloured chalk or pencil, which she selected, on the same sheet of paper; that on one occasion she took such a sheet out of her bag, laid it face downwards on the table by her side, it having been neither seen nor touched by Mr. Eglinton; that she then asked a preliminary question verbally, and almost before the words were out of her mouth she heard writing take place on the slate, and on the medium giving it to her to read, she found a long answer to the question written on the paper which was still close to her side; that besides these ordinary slate-writings she has received upwards of forty letters, which, with the exception of the first two, are written on paper, from, as she believes, the same spirit friend; that these letters, some short, others containing over 800 words, are in his style, and the hand-writing, especially as his power grew stronger, exactly resembled his in earth-life; that one of these letters was written in German (his native language), and in the German character, and was evidently written by the same hand as all the others; the signature and proper names introduced being written in the Latin character, as is usual with Germans, and corresponding exactly to those in the other letters; that in these other letters are frequently quotations in German (a language of which the medium knows scarcely anything), and that the writer's identity

was proved over and over again by references to subjects only known to himself and his friend."

Now I think I can imagine pretty accurately the answer Mrs. Sidgwick would make to this. She would say "All these evidences would very likely be satisfactory to a person of ordinary mind that the writing was not produced by conjuring. I am not a person of ordinary mind. This lady has never received a single word written on a piece of paper inserted with pencil in a hermetically-sealed glass tube, which is the only true test; therefore her evidence is, in my mind, absolutely worthless." Such appears to me to be the logic of this learned lady!

Mrs. Sidgwick seems to have formed the opinion that Mr. Eglinton's psychography is produced by conjuring principally through the performances she has witnessed of a friend of hers, who has devoted his leisure time during the last two or three years to the imitating of Spiritual direct writing by means of trickery and conjuring. In December of 1884 I received several letters from a Mr. Davey, of Beckenham—whom I have never seen—referring to accounts which I had contributed to "LIGHT" of sésances I had had with Mr. Eglinton. In them he begged for further details, and I answered him candidly and fully, giving him such information as I felt competent to do. He told me that he himself had mediumistic power, and was sitting with his home circle hoping to obtain automatic writing. He expressed great admiration for Mr. Eglinton as a medium, and said that he wished to collect evidence regarding him, which he intended at some future time to publish, to prove that "Eglinton was the most wonderful medium of the nineteenth century." In his third letter he went a little too far, and asked me to send him a specimen of my spirit friend's hand-writing. I therefore wrote shortly and civilly, of course declining to comply with his request; and a few lines of apology from him finished the correspondence, which had so completely passed from my mind that even the initials "S. J. D.," so frequently appearing recently in "LIGHT," awakened no reminiscences, till I saw, to my intense astonishment, that "S. J. D." was none other than my whilom correspondent, Mr. Davey, of Beckenham. I wonder, now, if the letters he addressed to me were really written in good faith, or whether they were a trap set for me; his confession that he was, even at that time, practising the art of simulating slate-writing by means of conjuring, seems to favour the latter view, but I charitably incline to the former, and have very little doubt that he really had (and probably still has) some mediumistic power, a much more common possession than is usually imagined; what is more rare is the patience and perseverance required for its development; * and, finding doubtless, sitting for development a very slow amusement, he devoted himself instead with ardour to his conjuring tricks, by which he hoped to obtain the applause and admiration of an admiring circle of friends, including Mrs. Sidgwick. I have hesitated some time before mentioning this correspondence, but the notoriety which is now attached to Mr. Davey's name in connection with Mr. Eglinton and Spiritualism does, I think, not only justify but require me to state the facts I have here mentioned in the interest of truth and justice. I notice that Mr. Davey has not answered in "LIGHT" Mr. Eglinton's question as to whether the twitches or convulsive movements he himself said he was subject to when sitting for development were genuine or simulated, for it is impossible they could be produced by any trickery on the part of his co-sitters.

SOMETIMES, in musing upon genius in its simpler manifestations, it seems as if the greatest human culture consisted chiefly in preserving the glow and freshness of the heart.—HENRY T. TUCKERMAN.

SPIRITUALISM AND CONJURING.—Through the courtesy of Mr. E. Gurney, we this week reprint from the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research a very temperate article by Professor Hoffmann on some of the aspects of Spiritualism *v.* Conjuring. Much evidence for Psychography of the nature he desiderates is already on record; only the Society Psychical Research in this matter appears to ignore it because, we believe, by some fiction it is not regarded as "before the court" owing to its not having been sent in the first instance direct to the Society. Still for all that it is on record; and we further believe that the experience of many of our friends bears upon the exact points raised by Mr. Lewis. We shall be pleased, therefore, if correspondents will send us testimony of the nature indicated.

* I sat myself for thirteen months before I obtained a word in automatic writing, though during that time I developed another phase of mediumship.

THE LITTLE PROPHETS OF THE CEVENNES.*

By "V."

In a recent number of the *Contemporary Review* is an article called "The Little Prophets of the Cevennes," by Richard Heath. The writer commences by giving a very interesting account of the trials and persecutions endured by the French Protestants or Huguenots, towards the close of the seventeenth century, in the reign of Louis XIV. These unfortunate people were not only forced, at the edge of the sword and by threats of all sorts of penalties to themselves as well as to their helpless children, to abjure the faith they loved and venerated, but their pastors and teachers were driven away from them, and they were utterly deprived of the spiritual nourishment their souls thirsted for. "They" (the pastors) "were to quit the kingdom in a fortnight, and all the temples were to be closed," while the poor Huguenots "starving for a bit of spiritual food, sought the heights of the mountains and the depths of the ravines that the mere sight of each other's faces, the mere words of friendly greeting, might strengthen their resolve to live and die in the Reformed faith." Such pastors as braved these terrors were one after another seized, and nearly all executed.

It was at this juncture that an extraordinary phenomenon, or, as we Spiritualists would say, manifestation of spirit-power took place. "The first signs of the coming spiritual eruption were that people everywhere began to hear strange sounds in the air: the sound of a trumpet and a harmony of voices." Our author, later on, accounts for this by the wooden horns blown by the cowherds, and by the sound of numerous sheep-bells! This was only the prelude. "Suddenly, in various places, many persons, especially the young, were smitten with something which the historians call 'ecstasy.' They swooned, appeared without any feeling, then broke out into exhortations—fervent, eloquent, correct, well-chosen, appropriate, mostly in good French, which was not the language they ordinarily spoke, but which they knew through their Bibles and religious services." Later on he says that between the month of June, 1688, and the February following, as many as five or six hundred prophets of both sexes, mostly children or young people, arose in the Dauphiny and then in the Vivarais. These youthful preachers, or prophets, did not escape the persecutions which had deprived the people of their legitimate teachers and pastors, and several instances are cited of those who met with cruel deaths in consequence of their persistence in these manifestations, notably one of a young peasant, aged twenty-two, named Gabriel Astier, who was broken alive on the wheel in 1690. "The prophet fire was stamped upon, but not extinguished. In 1700 it burst out afresh, and soon again becoming universal, was as much distinguished as in 1688 for the extreme youth of its subjects." I must not quote any more passages, as the article itself will well repay the perusal of the reader, but I will proceed to the question, to what cause does the writer attribute this singular manifestation?

In the first place he does not in any way question the fact that these occurrences really took place, though we soon see that he does not believe in the spiritual and simple hypothesis. He says that the priesthood were much troubled by this movement, that physicians examined the children and found they were in good health and clearly not lunatics. The priests, therefore, suggested demoniacal possession, but "this was a little too much for men of science in the days of Newton and Leibnitz."

Now, what explanation does the writer himself give of this wonderful manifestation? We will quote his own words:

"Is this extraordinary condition of things capable of

any natural explanation? I think I am on the right track in saying that it was due to a preternatural excitement of the faculty of memory, not simply of memory personal and individual, but of that unconscious memory which we receive from our ancestors." The concluding pages of this article are occupied in amplifying the above theory and advancing reasons for the author's belief in it, one of which is that the discourses and exhortations uttered by these young prophets, while in a state of trance, some of which occupied several hours in the delivery, though far beyond their own powers, were such as might have been delivered by their dead and gone ancestors who were preachers of the Reformed faith. An argument against this, if one were required, might lie in the fact that most of these youthful preachers were of peasant extraction, though presumably not all; but the idea that a child should repeat from unconscious *memory* the verbal discourses, word for word, of an ancestor who had died long before he was born, or (as the saying is) thought of, seems more difficult of belief than any of the wondrous theories advanced to cover the facts which can no longer be denied. Perhaps after swallowing the theories of "unconscious cerebration" and of the "unconscious secondary self," not to mention Von Hartmann's "masked somnambulism," by means of which he accounts for all the phenomena we simple-minded people attribute to spirits, such a hypothesis as this latter one may be easy of digestion to the men of enlightenment (Hellenbach's "Aufgeklärten") and their disciples; but to Spiritualists, especially to such as, possessing mediumistic power, are able to communicate with the inhabitants of another world, the belief in such an astounding hypothesis seems to argue an amount of credulity and want of common-sense truly astonishing, and reminds them of a man who, searching earnestly after a treasure which he knows is hidden in a room, despising the light of day and the help of his own good eyesight, closes the shutters, puts on a pair of smoked scientific spectacles, and by the aid of a farthing rushlight makes the most astonishing discoveries.

The explanation which Spiritualists would give of these wonderful manifestations is in accordance with the traditions and beliefs of all times and nations through the inhabited globe, since its creation. It is that a wave of spiritual influence and power, such as those which periodically have passed over mankind, did at this period flow over the portion of France in which these wonderful but not supernatural events took place—not supernatural, because they are in accordance with natural law in the world of spirit, of which in our sphere we can know but little. This manifestation was very similar to some of those which take place in our own day, when, as in the last forty years, a fresh spiritual wave has been passing over Europe and America, and it exactly resembles the utterances of trance-speakers at the present time. It seems more than probable that, in pity to the spiritual destitution existing among the unhappy French Protestants at that period, bravely striving to uphold a purer faith, life, and doctrine than that of the Romish Church, which in France then was but a cloak for license and intolerance, this movement was organised among the higher powers of the heavenly spheres, who despatched a band of missionary spirits to speak words of comfort, exhortation, and in some cases of prophecy through the mouths of babes and sucklings (so to speak), to those who were perishing of hunger and thirst for want of spiritual sustenance. These missionary spirits may very probably have been in many cases those of good and pious preachers, who had been taken from the evil to come, and their discourses need not necessarily have been superior in composition to those they had uttered in their earth-life, though the circumstances under which they were heard and the fervour with which they were delivered must have much enhanced their value. This simple explanation would no doubt appear mere superstitious folly to the "en-

* "The Little Prophets of the Cevennes." By Richard Heath. *Contemporary Review*, January, 1886.

lightened" scientific world and their followers, who, like Sir David Brewster, declare that "spirit is the last thing they will give in to." Let them, therefore, continue to invent wondrous and ingenious theories to account for the facts which they are obliged to acknowledge, and let us rejoice that we are the recipients and possessors of a truth that nothing can do away with.

GHOSTS.

"And what are ghosts?" a child voice asks.

We do not know,
They may be something like the masks
That hide a foe;
They may be something like the smile
That sheds a grace
Of helpful beauty, for a while,
Upon a face.

They rise, at times, strange fading things,
To test a heart;
Across our roadway on light wings
We see them dart.
We know not surely if they be
Of good import,
A warning, guide, an enemy,
Or fairy sport.

What may we know? Our nearest need
Is to be shown
The right and wrong of word or deed,
Our own, our own.
And ghosts? 'Tis not for us to say
Or whence or why
They do appear upon our way
And then go by.

Perhaps there are no ghosts. The wise
Would have us find
Them a deception of the eyes
Or of the mind.
But somehow, still, I like to think
My own can come
As visions back from Death's dark brink
To lead me home;
Or those vast hopes and sunlit dreams
That did not stay,
May rise again to fill with gleams
A clouded day.
My child, your question is too deep
For a reply.
If there be ghosts—'tis not to keep
A trouble nigh.

—*Boston Transcript.*

TIME sheds a softness on remote objects or events, as local distance imparts to the landscape a smoothness and mellowness which disappears on a nearer approach.—W. B. CLULOW.

ALL culture must begin at home. Begin by a reconstruction of yourself. If you feel that you are superior to others, disabuse yourself of that idea at once. In arrogance there is no growth of the soul.

KNOW, that the great art to love your enemy consists in never losing sight of *man* in him; humanity has power over all that is human; the most inhuman man still remains man, and never can throw off all taste for what belongs to man—but you must learn to wait.—LAVATER.

UTTER poverty often kills the affection, but a deep, constant, and common feeling of this world's hardships, and an equal participation in all those struggles by which they may be softened, unite husband and wife, parents and children in thought and subdued tenderness making them happy.—JOHN WILSON.

MATTER becomes beautiful to us when it seems to lose its material aspect, its inertness, finiteness, and grossness, and by the ethereal lightness of its forms and motions seems to approach spirit; when it imagines to us pure and gentle affections; when it spreads out into a vastness which is a shadow of the Infinite.—CHANNING.

LET no man extend his thoughts or let his hopes wander toward future and far-distant events and accidental contingencies. This day is mine and yours, but ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For he that by a present and a constant holiness secures the present, and makes it useful to his noblest purposes, he turns his condition to his best advantage.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

PSYCHOGRAPHIC EXPERIMENTS WITH MR. EGLINTON.

Experiment 1.—A certain evening in March, 1884, several ladies and gentlemen met at Mr. Eglinton's private rooms at Old Quebec-street, W., to witness certain Spiritual phenomena which usually occur in this medium's presence. Some startling physical phenomena had been obtained during this séance and it was not supposed that more modern miracles would be witnessed that night. The gas, which had been lowered to a pleasant twilight, was now fully turned on and conversation ensued, chiefly concerning the events just experienced. Mr. Eglinton did not join the conversation but walked thoughtfully up and down the room. Turning towards the circle, still seated around a large table, he said he wanted to try another experiment, and asked me to select a book from the book-shelves or the table near the window. I took one from an adjacent chess table. None present had the slightest idea what kind of experiment Mr. Eglinton intended to try, because it had been previously arranged that a series of sittings would be held, and that each evening should be devoted to a separate class of manifestations—psychography being the next on the list. Whilst I handled and examined the book, Mr. Eglinton threw a handful of small square pieces of white Bristol-board on the table and asked some of the sitters to select one each, to examine the surfaces and tear off a corner—the torn-off piece to remain in possession of the investigator for subsequent verification. I took one of these pieces of Bristol board (or cards), placed it between the leaves of the book (a royal 8vo. of some 400 pages, with thick board covers), and noticed the pages between which I placed the card; Eglinton put a fragment of black pencil on it, and I then closed the book, which I placed before me on the table, and laid both hands on it. E. stood at my left, and partly behind the chair I occupied; he placed his hands on mine, and gently pressed them down, extending his fingers a little to the outward in order to prevent my hands slipping off. After some five or six seconds his hands began to tremble, and I felt a strange prickling sensation throughout my hands and forearms.* At first no other sensation but the strange prickling was perceptible, yet I now began to feel a distinct vibratory movement *inside* the book, beginning at my left, then travelling to the right and back again to my left. I felt certain that writing was taking place. Three audible ticks were now heard underneath the table (or, perhaps, underneath the book, for I could not possibly ascertain the exact localisation of these ticks). The book was opened by myself; the card was still between the same pages I placed it some minutes before; on it was a message addressed to me by, I believe, Ernest (one of the medium's guides), but it was not signed. The message was to the effect that I would be assisted, by the "invisibles," in carrying out my plans to illustrate the different stages of development in the phenomenon called materialisation—a promise which, some days after, was carefully kept on the part of the "invisible" (though then perfectly visible) spirit. N.B.—The book had never left my hands from the very first, when I placed the card inside, until the message was found written. The written card was taken out of the book by myself. No set-off was visible on the page of the book facing the writing. Other sitters obtained somewhat similar results.

Experiment 2.—On another occasion, being one of the guests invited by Mr. Eglinton to spend the afternoon at his house, a short séance by way of *passé-temps* was proposed by our host. Several ladies and gentlemen present formed the circle. Slates were taken from a pile stored in the séance-room. Each slate was carefully washed with a sponge. Sometimes the slates were held underneath the table, part of the medium's hand remaining visible; sometimes one slate was covered by a second, and once, a folding slate was held on the top of a lady's head; and invariably writing followed within a few seconds. It was mostly of a private nature, and addressed to each party holding the slate or requesting a message. Some experiments were made by disconnecting and re-establishing the chain of linked hands—and always the well known results were obtained. There was nothing especially noteworthy in any of the writings or the conditions under which they were obtained. (I mean to those present; all being thoroughly familiar with, and convinced

* The sensation was not caused by mere pressure. I have on several occasions made the experiment of having my hands pressed whilst on a book, and in a like manner as with E., but the result was totally different. A similar sensation was felt by me on a certain occasion when Slade put his finger on the upper part of my right hand.—J. G. K.

of the reality of the phenomenon of psychography.) Yet it appeared to me that on more than one occasion the number of scratchings, audible whilst the writing seemed to be done, and the quantity of letters contained in the message were not quite in accord; there being far less scratching than the writing—if done in the usual way or by mortal hands—would necessitate. One message in particular (and one which might have been considered as a specimen of fair caligraphy) contained even more words than the number of scratchings heard during its apparent production. On examining the slate I found that some of the words were joined. On the other hand, when Joey was the invisible operator, the number of letters forming the words could be almost ascertained by listening to the scratchings outside the slate. I must also remark that the same fact—which to some might seem a discrepancy—was noted on subsequent occasions, and that during an experiment with Slade (May last) I found that the number of sounds corresponded exactly with that of the words actually written, each word being, so to speak, produced by one (apparent) single scratching sound.

Further, the other case with Slade, to which I have before called the attention of Mr. Eglinton and other Spiritualists—viz., that of the three apparent straight lines drawn by a slate-pencil gently resting between his thumb and forefinger, and the production of which sounded like three continued, though single, scratchings, but which nevertheless formed three lines of eleven or twelve distinct words—seems likewise to indicate that the writing may, in some cases, be so rapidly performed as to appear, to our mortal ears, like but one single stroke. If the truth of this rapid movement can be demonstrated by further experiment, the mystery of slates being found covered with writing in but a few seconds time (a very usual occurrence) may be so far explained.

J. G. KEULEMANS.

A PREPARATORY SCHOOL OF SPIRITUALISM.

An intelligent correspondent labours with us to show the inconsistencies of modern creeds, and contends that the proper gravitation point of Spiritualism is opposition to Christianity. The gravitation point of a positive truth cannot be in negation, and organised opposition to Christianity would be the most sublime folly. Why oppose anything which performs a good work, however imperfectly it may be done? Christianity is largely the preparatory school of Spiritualism, and it is certain that thousands of good Christians have been transformed into excellent Spiritualists. To make this change it is not necessary for man or woman to renounce religious belief, for Christ and John and Paul were among the best spiritual mediums that ever lived, and the religion which fully recognises them must be essentially Spiritualistic, provided it is true to its best teachings. No evidence of the truth of Spiritualism equal to that recorded in the New Testament Scripture can possibly address itself to the Christian mind unacquainted with modern Spiritualistic phenomena. The doctrines of Jesus are sublime truths; the Christ-principle is the embodiment of love and good-will to humanity.

These, by whatsoever name they may be called, cannot be safely discarded. Both Christian and Spiritualist bring evidence of the life beyond, and paint the joys of immortality in terms which do not necessarily disagree. Their ideals of mercy, purity, humility, long-suffering and self-denial are the same, and their hopes of eternal life seem equally well founded. No; we have no quarrel with Christianity. Divorce it from the rash interpolations of human ignorance, folly, and superstition, and it will be found good enough for anybody.—G. H. ROMAINE, in *Cincinnati Inquirer*.

MEETING IN DREAMS.

It may be, since we meet, with no surprise,
Our loved in dreams, and feel their living breath,
Nor think how once we closed their precious eyes,
That the soul's language has no word for death.

It may be that we like to spirits are,
When work-day strivings into slumber fall,
And thus our loved appear not passed afar,
For 'tis continuance rather than recall.

—GEORGE H. COOMER.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE, AND THE LAW OF IT.

A recent discourse on the above subject, by James Freeman Clarke, of the Church of the Disciples in this city, was so prolific of spiritual suggestions as to deserve more than the passing remark made on the customary discourse. The real purpose of the venerable preacher was to contrast the law of the spirit of life with the law of sin and death. Standing as man does between two worlds—the outward world perceived through the senses, and the inward world perceived through the consciousness—he sees innumerable facts as he looks outward, and he finds in his reason the power which brings these facts under the law, as he looks inward. It is thought alone that discovers the laws which co-ordinate all phenomena. The mighty maze of nature gradually becomes a majestic harmony, a cosmos of order and beauty.

It is reason's work, said the preacher, to subject all phenomena to law, and spiritual phenomena with the rest. The soul of man is moved according to law. Sin has its laws, and so has goodness. Each works according to an order of its own. The Spirit of God in the soul works according to law; and the power of evil within us also works in accordance with the law. And the law of the spirit of life is able to make us free from the law of sin and death. Mankind has insight, as well as sight. Knowledge flows into the soul from above, as well as through the five senses. We are always in intimate nearness with God the Father. Prayer is communion with a being close at hand, and not one afar off. Outside of Christendom there have been many nations that believed in inspiration. It is natural, said Mr. Clarke, for man to believe in spiritual influence, in the action of higher powers on the human soul, in divination, vaticination, and prophecy. And Christianity is in full accord with the best philosophy, and with universal religion, in teaching a doctrine of spiritual influence. It chiefly differs from other systems in this respect, that it shows more clearly the laws and conditions of inspiration, and makes it in harmony with all other human experience.

The preacher described inspiration as a mysterious power flowing in through some hidden channel, giving comfort, peace, insight to the receiver of it. And it is in harmony with all other inspiration—that of the painter, the artist, the poet, and the inventor. It descends into the mind and spirit from some unknown source. In respect to its method, it is in accordance with universal law. If all human life is to be made holy, then we need this heavenly help always. We need the Spirit of God for all good things; other kinds of inspiration are for special objects, but this is for all objects whatsoever. Christianity gives to inspiration greater depth, extent and fullness, assuring us that we may live in the spirit and walk in it. It is not extravagant, does not produce mere dreamers or enthusiasts, but is in harmony with all things sober, rational, and wise. It comes to guide us into truth. It is all the discovery of the highest truths, the revelation of great principles, and their application to the needs of common life.

Not a single truth, or class of truths, only are the result of this larger and deeper and fuller inspiration, but all truth, which is of God. And the peculiarity of this inspiration is that it is sent to every human soul. In other religions, remarked the preacher, the inspiration came to prophets, priests, saints, and sybils, but in Christianity it comes to all. The belief among the Jews in a universal inspiration was only a hope of what would come in the last days. "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith the Lord, that I will pour out My spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on My servants and on My handmaidens I shall pour out My spirit, saith the Lord." This holy inspiration does not come to great saints and mighty prophets alone, but to every sinner who wishes to repent, to every struggling soul which seeks to rise above its evil habits, to old men on the verge of life, and to little children praying by their mother's knee. All are thus called to be saints, invited to come to God and His love, welcomed to the Church universal, of the broadest humanity. No special conversion is needed to receive this love of God.

Christian inspiration, too, is constant, not intermittent. It is continuous. "The Spirit dwelleth in you," a fountain of life that never dries up, a perpetual inspiration, the daily bread given for the sustenance of mind and heart. And it comes to us in all places and at all times. There are no holy places, as in other religions; no pilgrimages, no sacred shrines. "Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father." The house of God and the gate of Heaven is the place where a man offers a sincere prayer or does a righteous action. Wherever a single soul looks up to God for strength to do right, there is hallowed ground. This inspiration does not drive, but leads; it is like the Eastern shepherd who goes before his flocks, and they follow him. It does not come to change human nature, but help it to unfold naturally, in all directions. It comes not to repress, but to develop human nature; not to constrain, but to guide; not to be a master, but a friend. The preacher said he could not wish a better blessing for any one, young or old, than to believe in this ever-present Spirit of God. There is no day, no hour, when we do not need its influence; nothing we can engage in that would not be made light by feeling that God's thought is in our heart to cheer us.—*Banner of Light*.

WHAT IS SAID OF PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA.

PROFESSORS TORNEBOM AND EDLAND, THE SWEDISH PHYSICISTS.—“Only those deny the reality of spirit phenomena who have never examined them, but profound study alone can explain them. We do not know, where we may be led by the discovery of the cause of these, as it seems, trivial occurrences, or to what new spheres of Nature's kingdom they may open the way; but that they will bring forward important results is already made clear to us by the revelations of natural history in all ages.”—*Aftonblad* (Stockholm), October 30th, 1879.

BARON CARL DU PREL (Munich) in *Nord und Sud*.—“One thing is clear; that is, that psychography must be ascribed to a transcendental origin. We shall find: (1) That the hypothesis of prepared slates is inadmissible. (2) The place on which the writing is found is quite inaccessible to the hands of the medium. In some cases the double slate is securely locked, leaving only room inside for the tiny morsel of slate-pencil. (3) That the writing is actually done at the time. (4) That the medium is not writing. (5) The writing must be actually done with the morsel of slate or lead-pencil. (6) The writing is done by an intelligent being, since the answers are exactly pertinent to the questions. (7) This being can read, write, and understand the language of human beings, frequently such as is unknown to the medium. (8) It strongly resembles a human being, as well in the degree of its intelligence as in the mistakes sometimes made. These beings are therefore, although invisible, of human nature or species. It is no use whatever to fight against this proposition. (9) If these beings speak, they do so in human language. (10) If they are asked who they are, they answer that they are beings who have left this world. (11) When these appearances become partly visible, perhaps only their hands, the hands seen are of human form. (12) When these things become entirely visible, they show the human form and countenance. . . . Spiritualism must be investigated by science. I should look upon myself as a coward if I did not openly express my convictions.”

J. H. FICHTE, THE GERMAN PHILOSOPHER AND AUTHOR.—“Notwithstanding my age (83) and my exemption from the controversies of the day, I feel it my duty to bear testimony to the great fact of Spiritualism. No one should keep silent.”

PROFESSOR DE MORGAN, PRESIDENT OF THE MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.—“I am perfectly convinced that I have both seen and heard, in a manner which should make unbelief impossible, things called spiritual, which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence, or mistake. So far I feel the ground firm under me.”

DR. ROBERT CHAMBERS.—“I have for many years known that these phenomena are real, as distinguished from impostures; and it is not of yesterday that I concluded they were calculated to explain much that has been doubtful in the past; and, when fully accepted, revolutionise the whole frame of human opinion on many important matters.”—*Extract from a Letter to A. Russel Wallace*.

PROFESSOR HARE, EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF CHEMISTRY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.—“Far from abating my confidence in the inferences respecting the agencies of the spirits of deceased mortals, in the manifestations of which I have given an account in my work, I have, within the last nine months (this was written in 1858), had more striking evidences of that agency than those given in the work in question.”

PROFESSOR CHALLIS, THE LATE PLUMBERIAN PROFESSOR OF ASTRONOMY AT CAMBRIDGE.—“I have been unable to resist the large amount of testimony to such facts, which has come from many independent sources, and from a vast number of witnesses. . . . In short, the testimony has been so abundant and consentaneous, that either the facts must be admitted to be such as are reported, or the possibility of certifying facts by human testimony must be given up.”—*Clerical Journal*, June, 1862.

PROFESSOR GREGORY, F.R.S.E.—“The essential question is this. What are the proofs of the agency of departed spirits? Although I cannot say that I yet feel the sure and firm conviction on this point which I feel on some others, I am bound to say that the higher phenomena, recorded by so many truthful and honourable men, appear to me to render the spiritual hypothesis almost certain. . . . I believe that if I could myself see the higher phenomena alluded to I should be satisfied, as are all those who have had the best means of judging of the truth of the spiritual theory.”

LORD BROUGHAM.—“There is but one question I would ask the author. Is the Spiritualism of this work foreign to our materialistic, manufacturing age? No; for amidst the varieties of mind which divers circumstances produce are found those who cultivate man's highest faculties; to these the author addresses himself. But even in the most cloudless skies of scepticism I see a rain-cloud, if it be no bigger than a man's hand; it is modern Spiritualism.”—*Preface by Lord Brougham to "The Book of Nature."* By C. O. Groom Napier, F.C.S.

THE LONDON DIALECTICAL COMMITTEE reported: “1. That sounds of a very varied character, apparently proceeding from articles of furniture, the floor and walls of the room—the vibrations accompanying which sounds are often distinctly perceptible to the touch—occur, without being produced by muscular action or mechanical contrivance. 2. That movements of heavy bodies take place without mechanical contrivance of any kind, or adequate exertion of muscular force by those present, and frequently without contact or connection with any person. 3. That these sounds and movements often, occur at the time and in the manner asked for by persons present, and, by means of a simple code of signals answer questions and spell out coherent communications.”

CAMILLE FLAMMARION, THE FRENCH ASTRONOMER, AND MEMBER OF THE ACADEMIE FRANCAISE.—“I do not hesitate to affirm my conviction, based on personal examination of the subject, that any scientific man who declares the phenomena denominated ‘magnetic,’ ‘somnambule,’ ‘mediumic,’ and others not yet explained by science to be ‘impossible,’ is one who speaks without knowing what he is talking about; and also any man accustomed, by his professional avocations, to scientific observation—provided that his mind be not biased by pre-conceived opinions, nor his mental vision blinded by that opposite kind of illusion, unhappily too common in the learned world, which consists in imagining that the laws of Nature are already known to us, and that everything which appears to overstep the limit of our present formulas is impossible—may acquire a radical and absolute certainty of the reality of the facts alluded to.”

CHROMWELL F. VARLEY, F.R.S.—“Twenty-five years ago I was a hard-headed unbeliever. . . . Spiritual phenomena, however, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, were soon after developed in my own family. . . . This led me to inquire and to try numerous experiments in such a way as to preclude, as much as circumstances would permit, the possibility of trickery and self-deception. . . . He then details various phases of the phenomena which had come within the range of his personal experience, and continues: “Other and numerous phenomena have occurred, proving the existence (a) of forces unknown to science; (b) the power of instantly reading my thoughts; (c) the presence of some intelligence or intelligences controlling those powers. That the phenomena occur there is overwhelming evidence, and it is too late now to deny their existence.”

“ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE, F.G.S.—“My position, therefore, is that the phenomena of Spiritualism in their entirety do not require further confirmation. They are proved, quite as well as any facts are proved in other sciences, and it is not denial or quibbling that can disprove any of them, but only fresh facts and accurate deductions from those facts. When the opponents of Spiritualism can give a record of their researches approaching in duration and completeness to those of its advocates; and when they can discover and show in detail, either how the phenomena are produced or how the many sane and able men here referred to have been deluded into a coincident belief that they have witnessed them; and when they can prove the correctness of their theory by producing a like belief in a body of equally sane and able unbelievers—then, and not till then, will it be necessary for Spiritualists to produce fresh confirmation of facts which are, and always have been, sufficiently real and indisputable to satisfy any honest and persevering inquirer.”—*Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*.

DR. LOCKHART ROBERTSON.—“The writer” (i.e., Dr. L. Robertson) “can now no more doubt the physical manifestations of so-called Spiritualism than he would any other fact, as for example, the fall of the apple to the ground, of which his senses informed him. As stated above, there was no place or chance of any legerdemain, or fraud, in these physical manifestations. He is aware, even from recent experience of the impossibility of convincing anyone, by a

mere narrative of events apparently so out of harmony with all our knowledge of the laws which govern the physical world, and he places these facts on record rather as an act of justice due to those whose similar statements he had elsewhere doubted and denied, than with either the desire or hope of convincing others. Yet he cannot doubt the ultimate recognition of facts of the truth of which he is so thoroughly convinced. Admit these physical manifestations, and a strange and wide world of research is opened to our inquiry. This field is new to the materialist mind of the last two centuries, which, even in the writings of divines of the English Church, doubts and denies all spiritual manifestations and agencies, be they good or evil.”—From a letter by Dr. Lockhart Robertson, published in the *Dialectical Society's Report on Spiritualism*, p. 24.

NASSAU WILLIAM SENIOR.—“No one can doubt that phenomena like these (Phenology, Homeopathy, and Mesmerism) deserve to be observed, recorded, and arranged; and whether we call by the name of mesmerism, or by any other name, the science which proposes to do this, is a mere question of nomenclature. Among those who profess this science there may be careless observers, prejudiced recorders, and rash systematisers; their errors and defects may impede the progress of knowledge, but they will not stop it. And we have no doubt that, before the end of this century, the wonders which perplex almost equally those who accept and those who reject modern mesmerism will be distributed into defined classes, and found subject to ascertained laws—in other words, will become the subjects of a science.” These views will prepare us for the following statement, made in the *Spiritual Magazine*, 1864, p. 336: “We have only to add, as a further tribute to the attainments and honours of Mr. Senior, that he was by long inquiry and experience a firm believer in spiritual power and manifestations. Mr. Home was his frequent guest, and Mr. Senior made no secret of his belief among his friends. He it was who recommended the publication of Mr. Home's recent work by Messrs. Longmans, and he authorised the publication, under initials, of one of the striking incidents there given, which happened to a dear and near member of his family.”

CONJURERS AND PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA.

Mediums who are the instruments of an external agency, have more than once been confronted with conjurers who deceive by sleight of hand; and in the same manner that no man of science who has thoroughly and fairly investigated the phenomena has failed to become convinced of their reality, so no conjurer who has been confronted with the same facts has been able to explain their occurrence by prestidigitation. Houdin, Jacobs, Bellachini, Hermann, Kellar, and others have already confessed their powerlessness to produce under the same conditions what occurs without human intervention in the presence of a medium. We give the testimony of one of them:—

HARRY KELLAR, a distinguished professor of legerdemain, investigated the slate-writing phenomena which occurred in the presence of Mr. Eglinton, at Calcutta, regarding which he said:—

“In conclusion, let me state that after a most stringent trial and strict scrutiny of these wonderful experiences I can arrive at no other conclusion than that there was no trace of trickery in any form; nor was there in the room any mechanism or machinery by which could be produced the phenomena which had taken place. The ordinary mode by which Maskelyne and other conjurers imitate levitation or the floating test could not possibly be done in the room in which we were assembled.”

ADVICE TO INQUIRERS.

The Conduct of Circles.—By “M.A. (Oxon.)”

If you wish to see whether Spiritualism is really only jugglery and imposture, try it by personal experiment.

If you can get an introduction to some experienced Spiritualist on whose good faith you can rely, ask him for advice; and, if he is holding private circles, seek permission to attend one to see how to conduct sances, and what to expect.

There is, however, difficulty in obtaining access to private circles, and, in any case, you must rely chiefly on experiences in your own family circle, or amongst your own friends, all strangers being excluded. The bulk of Spiritualists have gained conviction thus.

Form a circle of from four to eight persons, half, or at least two, of negative, passive temperament and preferably of the female sex, the rest of a more positive type.

Sit, positive and negative alternately, secure against disturbance, in subdued light, and in comfortable and unconstrained positions, round an uncovered table of convenient size. Place the palms of the hands flat upon its upper surface. The hands of each sitter need not touch those of his neighbour, though the practice is frequently adopted.

Do not concentrate attention too fixedly on the expected manifestations. Engage in cheerful but not frivolous conversation. Avoid dispute or argument. Scepticism has no deterrent effect, but a bitter spirit of opposition in a person of determined will may totally stop or decidedly impede manifestations. If conversation flags, music is a great help, if it be agreeable to all, and not of a kind to irritate the sensitive ear. Patience is essential, and it may be necessary to meet ten or twelve times at short intervals, before anything occurs. If after such a trial you still fail, form a fresh circle. Guess at the reason of your failure, eliminate the inharmonious elements, and introduce others. An hour should be the limit of an unsuccessful sance.

The first indications of success usually are a cold breeze passing over the hands, with involuntary twitchings of the hands and arms of some of the sitters, and a sensation of throbbing in the table. These indications, at first so slight as to cause doubt as to their reality will usually develop with more or less rapidity.

If the table moves, let your pressure be so gentle on its surface that you are sure you are not aiding its motions. After some time you will probably find that the movement will continue if your hands are held over, but not in contact with it. Do not, however, try this until the movement is assured, and be in no hurry to get messages.

When you think that the time has come, let some one take command of the circle and act as spokesman. Explain to the unseen Intelligence that an agreed code of signals is desirable, and ask that a tilt may be given as the alphabet is slowly repeated at the several letters which form the word that the Intelligence wishes to spell. It is convenient to use a single tilt for No, three for Yes, and two to express doubt or uncertainty.

When a satisfactory communication has been established, ask if you are rightly placed, and if not, what order you should take. After this ask the Intelligence purports to be, which of the company is the medium, and such relevant questions. If confusion occurs, ascribe it to the difficulty that exists in directing the movements at first with exactitude. Patience will remedy this, if there be a real desire on the part of the Intelligence to speak with you. If you only satisfy yourself at first that it is possible to speak with an Intelligence separate from that of any person present, you will have gained much.

The signals may take the form of raps. If so, use the same code of signals, and ask as the raps become clear that they may be made on the table, or in a part of the room where they are demonstrably not produced by any natural means, but avoid any vexatious imposition of restrictions on free communication. Let the Intelligence use its own means; if the attempt to communicate deserves your attention, it probably has something to say to you, and will resent being hampered by useless interference. It rests greatly with the sitters to make the manifestations elevating or frivolous and even tricky.

Should an attempt be made to enhance the medium, or to manifest by any violent methods, or by means of form manifestations, ask that the attempt may be deferred till you can secure the presence of some experienced Spiritualist. If this request is not heeded, discontinue the sitting. The process of developing a trance-medium is one that might disconcert an inexperienced inquirer. Increased light will check noisy manifestations.

Lastly, try the results you get by the Light of Reason. Maintain a level head and a clear judgment. Do not believe everything you are told, for though the great unseen world contains many a wise and discerning spirit, it also has in it the accumulation of human folly, vanity, and error; and this lies nearer to the surface than that which is wise and good. Distrust the free use of great names. Never for a moment abandon the use of your reason. Do not enter into a very solemn investigation in a spirit of idle curiosity or frivolity. Cultivate a reverent desire for what is pure, good and true. You will be repaid if you gain only a well-grounded conviction that there is a life after death, for which a pure and good life before death is the best and wisest preparation.

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