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NEW MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES.

MEMBERS.

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GUNTON, REV. CHARLES FORSTER, Farlam Vicarage, Milton, Carlisle.

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STEEL, MISS, 33, Argyll Road, Kensington, London, W.

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MEETINGS OF COUNCIL.

At a Meeting of the Council held on the 3rd inst., the following Members were present :—Messrs. Edmund Gurney, Richard Hodgson, Frank Podmore, H. Arthur Smith and J. Herbert Stack. Mr. Stack was voted to the chair.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and signed as correct.

On the proposition of Mr. Edmund Gurney, Mr. J. Venn, D.Sc., F.R.S., of Petersfield House, Cambridge, was unanimously elected a Member of the Council in accordance with Rule 17.

Three new Members and ten new Associates, whose names and addresses are given in the preceding page, were elected.

Letters were read from two Members of Council, Mr. Alexander Calder and the Rev. W. Stainton Moses, resigning their official positions and withdrawing from the Society. Their resignations were accepted with expressions of regret.

Information was received with regret of the decease of Mr. John P. Turner, of Birmingham, an Associate.

Mr. Edmund Gurney was elected as a Member of the House and Finance Committee.

The Cash Account for the month of November was presented in the usual form.

Mention was made of the dissatisfaction that had been expressed on account of the Literary Committee not having examined the evidence for the "physical phenomena" of Spiritualism, and it was agreed to invite a report from the Literary Committee on the subject.

The next Meeting of the Council will be held on Friday, the 7th of January, 1887, unless it is found advisable to summon one earlier.

REJOINDER BY MRS. H. SIDGWICK TO MR. WEDGWOOD'S REPLY.

Mr. Wedgwood is quite right in supposing that the evidence which he brought before us in the November *Journal* was known to me, so far as it had then been published, when I wrote about Mr. Eglinton in June. And since the whole of this evidence was obtained with mediums who had been detected in trickery, he is also right in regarding me as prejudiced against it—if the term prejudice is to be applied to the assumption that persons who have once endeavoured to pass off trickery as mediumship must be assumed likely to do so again, and that consequently no evidence about their phenomena is worthy of consideration if it allows the slightest loophole for possible trickery. But as I regard this as an assumption that every reasonable person will make, I should not myself call it a prejudice.

Before proceeding to show that Mr. Wedgwood's cases abound in such loopholes, I must point out a curious confusion in his article. In a paper devoted to Mr. Eglinton in the *Journal* for June, 1886, and in remarks referring exclusively to him, I commented on the absence of satisfactory evidence that he had ever produced writing under conditions dispensing with the necessity for continuous observation on the part of the investigator. Mr. Wedgwood quotes some of these remarks, and in

order to prove that I am wrong in supposing that there is no such evidence in Mr. Eglinton's case, mentions several instances in which he thinks it has been obtained with Dr. Monck and Dr. Slade. But it is clearly irrelevant in a discussion about Mr. Eglinton to allude to superior performances by others, unless it be with a view to his disparagement, since it would not increase our confidence in Mr. Eglinton if we were to find that slate-writing could be obtained under satisfactory conditions through other mediums, but not through him.

However, I need not quarrel with Mr. Wedgwood about this, because he probably really meant to reply to a passage in my paper in *Proceedings X.*, pp. 70-72, in which I point out as regards Spiritualism generally, that the continued absence of really good evidence that experiments have ever succeeded which would have placed "the physical phenomena of Spiritualism beyond all question of conjuring, by eliminating the necessity for continuous observation and accurate recollection on the part of the investigator," is an increasingly serious reason for doubting whether such phenomena are ever genuine. The argument from the absence of such evidence has not the same conclusive force when we are considering Spiritualism in general that it has when we are considering Mr. Eglinton in particular, because it has to be balanced in the first case against the great improbability that all mediums, public and private, through whom "physical phenomena" have occurred, would consciously or unconsciously simulate them; while the supposition that Mr. Eglinton has simulated them is rendered in a high degree probable by what we know of his previous career.

But it behoves all persons who, like myself, think that there is reason to believe that genuine "physical phenomena" do sometimes occur, and that if they do it is of immense importance to prove it,—to remember that the argument in question grows in force, and that if it cannot, by proper experiments, be removed, it must ultimately prove fatal to any scientific recognition of the alleged facts.

Mr. Wedgwood's cases have, obviously, no tendency to remove it.

We may conveniently take together the very similar evidence of Mrs. Louisa Andrews and of Mr. George Seymour to the occurrence of writing between slates screwed together. The experiment here—in Mrs. Andrews' case at least—has one of the characteristics required—namely, that the slates were fastened up before the séance and opened afterwards away from the medium. But unfortunately I find it impossible to agree with Mr. Wedgwood in regarding slates merely screwed together as for the present purpose "securely closed," and the space between them as "entirely inaccessible to the medium." To take out and replace a screw requires at most a screw-driver (I have

sometimes found the back of a knife sufficient), and screw-drivers are common household implements, besides being frequently attached to pocket knives. Mrs. Andrews and Mr. Seymour would probably reply that the mediums had no opportunity of unscrewing and screwing up the slates. But the evidence for that depends on their power of continuous observation and accurate recollection—recollection, too, in both cases after a considerable interval of time. After my experience with Mr. A., the amateur conjurer (see *Proceedings X.*, p. 67), I cannot regard it as at all unlikely that the mediums should have found the required opportunities. Mr. A. wrote a long message completely covering one side of my friend's slate, and we had not the least idea that we had given him any opportunity of doing so. To those who know the kind of opportunity likely to be given no reason appears why it should either have taken longer, or have been more difficult, to unscrew the slates, write the sentences obtained on them, and screw them up again. In one respect indeed the screwed-up slate phenomenon would be decidedly easier to produce, for once the slates were safely screwed up again there would be no danger of premature discovery of the writing; whereas Mr. A. had, I suspect, considerable anxiety about preventing premature discovery of his writing by my friend and myself. And apart from the possibility of opening the slates during the séance, it should be noticed—especially in relation to the case of Mrs. Andrews—that in neither account are we told that the slates were screwed up *immediately* before they were taken into the séance-room.

In the rest of Mr. Wedgwood's instances there is not even an attempt made to secure the slates before the séances so as to render the surface written on inaccessible to the medium during the whole of the séance.

Taking these in order we will consider first the case where, Dr. Monck being the medium, writing was obtained on a slate which during part of the séance had a board nailed over it. A fatal objection to this experiment is that it was suggested by the medium himself, (or, what for this purpose comes to the same thing, his "control" Samuel,) and carried out apparently in all its details according to his directions. It is in this respect, therefore, to be compared with public performances of conjurers, which we must all have heard described in a way that makes them seem inexplicable. If we examine this particular account to see whether it suggests any explanation, the first point that strikes us is that it is expressly stated that the hammer and tacks used belonged to one of the witnesses, but that no such statement is made as regards either the slate, the board, or the book from which the quota-

tion was taken. It seems highly probable, therefore, that these were the property of Dr. Monck, and, if so, they may have been specially contrived with a view to this performance. For instance, the slate may have had a false surface, so that when the witnesses cleaned it they cleaned a surface which Dr. Monck afterwards found an opportunity to remove, leaving the writing, which was already below it, visible;—and the book may have had several similar pages numbered 133. But it is not necessary to resort to these suppositions. All the implements used may have belonged to the sitters, and their suitability to the occasion may have prompted Dr. Monck to suggest the experiment. The same number of the *Medium and Daybreak* from which Mr. Wedgwood quotes (that for October 27th, 1876), contains an engraving of the slate, reduced, we are told, by photography. From this and the description given, it appears that the slate used was a small one— $7\frac{3}{4}$ by $5\frac{1}{8}$ inches—and that the board (the lid of a cigar box) was secured with five tacks—two at each end and one at one side. The board, being narrower than the slate, extended a very little way on to the frame on the remaining side, and probably there was no room for a tack there. Thinking that such a board so secured could, after being forced off, be replaced by pressing with the hands without using a hammer, I determined to try the experiment. I similarly secured the lid of a cigar box to my own slate with tacks, which I happened to have by me, and which, as far as I could judge from the engraving, corresponded with those used at the séance under discussion. Then after forcing off the board, I tried to replace it, using my hands only. The experiment, which I tried several times, was not always quite successful. I was not always able to press every tack in up to its head, owing probably to its being slightly bent either by the hammering in, or in the forcing off. I thought this was perhaps due to the hard wood of which the frame of my slate is made. That used at Dr. Monck's séance is said to have been common deal. Accordingly I tried nailing the cigar box lid to a common deal board. The difficulty I had experienced now entirely vanished,—I found none in replacing the lid after removal, nor in pushing in all the tacks completely. The lid, moreover, when so replaced held more firmly than I should have expected. It required some forcing to get it again off, though, of course, less than the first time. I also ascertained, by doing it with my eyes shut, that even without practice one could take the board off and put it on again in the dark; and, further, that with suitable arrangements one can write ten parallel lines sufficiently well in the dark to justify the supposition that practice would make perfect in the art. The whole evidence, then (apart from the quotation), even if we accept the description of the sitting as strictly accurate, rests on Mr. Lonsdale's belief that he kept

his hands on the slates throughout the time while the gas was out. The nailing on of the board was a misleading complication, calculated to make him less careful than he might otherwise have been. I know nothing about Mr. Lonsdale or his fellow witnesses, but I cannot think that we ought to trust his, or any one's, observation and memory to the extent required to assure us that an experienced trickster like Dr. Monck could not under the circumstances have succeeded in obtaining possession of the slates for some portion of the dark period,—possibly substituting a similar combination of frame and board for Mr. Lonsdale to guard in the meanwhile.

But Mr. Wedgwood will ask how on this hypothesis I explain what seems to him the most important point in the experiment—the correct quotation from a page which, according to the account, was decided on by Mr. Clapham's opening the book at a venture after the gas was relit. The book, if a genuine one, may perhaps have had a tendency to open at p. 133, a tendency which Dr. Monck may have caused, and which in any case he may have ascertained and availed himself of. Or, it is possible that he forced p. 133 on Mr. Clapham while giving him the impression that he chose at random. It will be observed that failure would have carried with it no risk to Dr. Monck. Mediums play with Spiritualists at a game of "heads I win tails you lose." Suppose that Mr. Clapham had opened the book at some other page—say p. 145. No one would have thought the worse of either Dr. Monck or "Samuel." Why should they? Spirits are not infallible, and besides, probably Mr. Clapham fumbled about a little before he decided on p. 145, and so confused "Samuel" as to which page he really meant. That is the sort of thing that would have been said. The whole incident would of course have been less striking, and perhaps no account of it would have been sent to the *Medium*, though on the other hand the great importance of obtaining writing under a board might have been held to more than counterbalance the little failure about the quotation.

There are other possibilities which (supposing that the book was prepared to open at p. 133) do not appear to me to be excluded. Thus the entire slate portion of the slate might have been removable and another similar piece of slate, prepared with the writing, might have been substituted during the interval of darkness. The fact that one side-piece of the frame had no tack in it suggests ways in which this might have been contrived without any need of disturbing the remaining part of the frame or the board on which Mr. Lonsdale's hands are said to have rested continuously. And only the frame of the slate appears to have been marked—not the slate itself. Moreover I should not myself trust the accuracy of the account so fully as Mr. Wedgwood

appears to do ; indeed, Mr. Wedgwood goes further than the account warrants, for he says, "The slates" (by which I presume he means the *single slate* mentioned) "by the plainest inference from the words of the narrative, were never in possession of Monck from the commencement of the experiment." I cannot agree that this inference is justified, and I even think that the writing may have been on the slate throughout. Dr. Monck might have held the slate for Mr. Lonsdale to clean it, and might have manipulated the slate so that Mr. Lonsdale cleaned the same side twice. Dr. Monck might then have *appeared* to show both sides clean before the full jet of gaslight ; and the writing of the initials on the frame (and this is the only supposition involving a divergence between the account and the impression of the sitters *at the time*—that is, involving inaccuracy of memory) might have *followed*, not *preceded*, this exhibition. According to the additional details given in the *Medium*, the writing and the board were *not* on the side of the slate which had been marked. To nail on the board, therefore, the slate must have been turned over. Dr. Monck may have turned it, and in doing so have covered the writing with the board, holding this in position till the tacks were driven in. Or, again, Mr. Lonsdale may have cleaned *one* slate, shown both sides before the gaslight, and *then* placed it on the table to be initialled, and at this stage Dr. Monck might have substituted *another* slate. In short, it is obvious that a case of this kind falls very far short of the evidential standard which Mr. Wedgwood applies to it—that, namely, *of having been produced, according to the testimony of thoroughly competent and trustworthy witnesses, under circumstances which dispensed with the necessity of continuous observation.*

Mr. Wedgwood next instances experiences of Professor Zöllner's with Dr. Slade. In the first, either before or during the séance (we are not told which, and we have no reason to suppose that Dr. Slade did not himself suggest the experiment), two slates which Professor Zöllner believed to be his own and to be marked by himself (but we are not told how he convinced himself that his mark H. 2—made we are not told when or how—was not imitated), were tied together (we are not told by whom).

We can hardly say that this description excludes the possibility that the writing was there before the slates were tied together at all.

Professor Zöllner considered (see Mr. Massey's translation, second edition, pp. 78-79) that on account of his reputation as an experimental physicist we ought to assume that he took the necessary precautions against trickery, even though he does not mention them. I have, to some extent, explained elsewhere (*Proceedings X.*, p. 65, foot-note),

why I cannot agree with him. And the description of the remaining part of the experiment we are discussing is one of the passages in his writings which convince me that he had so little idea of the possibilities of conjuring, as to make his testimony almost worthless in a matter where trickery is the most important known cause to be excluded.

The slates tied together as above stated (not a secure mode of fastening) were placed on the corner of a table. We are not told which corner, but from the statement that his hands were two feet from it I infer that it was next Dr. Slade; since, had it been on the other side of the table, it would have been more forcible to say that he could not reach it without stretching across. Professors Zöllner and Weber and the medium then sat at the table and occupied themselves with magnetic experiments. As the scene is described—the attention of the two professors being well occupied with the compass needle—a conjurer would hardly desire a more favourable opportunity for untying the slates, writing on them, and tying them up again. There is here, I think, no doubt as to whether the necessary precautions were taken or not—it seems certain that they were not taken. When, as Professor Zöllner supposed, “very loud writing began” (it is “writing” in my edition of Mr. Massey’s translation, not “rapping” as Mr. Wedgwood has it), the real performance was probably over, and Dr. Slade was making a noise under the table.

In the next case, as in Dr. Monck’s, we have an experiment prescribed by the medium himself, and here again all depends on Professor Zöllner’s observation, since the trick, if, as I believe, there was one, was doubtless done *before* the slates were sealed together. It is important to notice (1) that there were “several” similar slates on the table; and (2) that the séance began, according to Mr. Massey’s translation of Zöllner, as follows:—

Scarcely were we seated, when Slade fell into a trance, . . . folded his hands, and uttered, with altered voice and head upturned, so fine a prayer, that I shall never forget the impression which the noble speech and the fervour with which the prayer was spoken made upon me. The impression was to me so unexpected, and interested me, by the æsthetic (?) in the whole demeanour of Slade with his almost transfigured countenance, so highly, that I did not remember to write down the words.

It seems not improbable that Professor Zöllner also did not remember, during this dramatic scene, to watch Dr. Slade’s hands, and that these were occupied in covering two of the slates with writing. The phrases written may have been part of the “prayer,” and their incoherence and the faults of spelling, &c., which they exhibit may be due to the medium’s divided attention. Then (3) Professor Zöllner’s

description of the process of sealing is very inadequate and obviously omits important details. He says :—

Slade now desired me to take two of the new slates, and lay a splinter of slate-pencil between them, and then to seal these two slates firmly together. I did this, after having again satisfied myself that the slates were perfectly clean.

Where was the sealing-wax? On the table? And if not, who fetched it? Was it fetched before or after Professor Zöllner satisfied himself that the slates were clean? And how were the slates held in position while they were being sealed? They were large slates, 334 millimètres—more than 13in.—long, and 155 millimètres—a little over 6in.—wide. We do no violence whatever to Professor Zöllner's description if we suppose that events happened as follows: Professor Zöllner placed two of his slates together, having seen that they were clean (the "again" refers to his having cleaned them before leaving home). He then rose to get the sealing-wax, and Slade seized the opportunity to substitute, for the two slates arranged by Professor Zöllner, those on which he had written. Just as Professor Zöllner returned to his place, Slade took up the two slates in the most natural way possible and held them together for Zöllner to seal. The subsequent raising of the slates on edge could doubtless have been done by Dr. Slade with his foot; they were in a convenient position for this, and he has, I understand, been detected in the very act of using his feet to produce similar phenomena.

As to the "perfectly clear account of writing produced between a pair of hinged slates padlocked together," to which Mr. Wedgwood briefly refers, I need only point out that there are too many keys in the world for an ordinary padlock to be regarded as certainly rendering the interior of the slates "entirely inaccessible to the medium." The padlock in question, as I learn from Mr. Hodgson, who has seen it, is a common one, and can be opened without "audible sound" if the key is turned slowly, though in any case I should attach little importance to its noisiness as a security against surreptitious opening. Further, as I also learn, the slate was, according to the witness "F." 's remembrance, locked and unlocked at least twice after the arrival of the sitters, and before the apparent production of the writing. The case, therefore, is not one avoiding the necessity of continuous observation—indeed, "F." himself lays the main stress of his evidence on his jealous guarding of the slates. The details of the various conditions, time intervals, &c., were not, I learn, recorded on the day of the sitting, but were given from memory nearly two years later; the record made at the time consisting of little else than the questions and answers.

We have, therefore, to allow, not only for the usual defects of observation and of memory which can hardly fail to mar a record made immediately after a sitting, but for the more serious lapses which must inevitably have occurred during this long subsequent interval, and which must, in my opinion, fundamentally impair the value of the record.

It appears, then, that all the six cases brought forward by Mr. Wedgwood completely fail to reach the required standard. In only one of them—that of Mrs. Andrews—were the slates both (1) fastened finally before being brought to the séance, and also (2) not unfastened till after the séance was over and in the absence of the medium; and in that case the fastening was not secure. In only one case—the slates sealed together by Professor Zöllner—was the fastening at all secure; and in that case it is easy to suggest how the writing may have been done before the fastening.

I now come to the weak point in Mr. Wedgwood's own experiment in obtaining writing between closed slates, and his criticism of my suggestions about it. The suggestion that the slates might have been tampered with in the interval between the two séances seems to Mr. Wedgwood absurd. But this is, I think, only because he has not reflected sufficiently upon the various possibilities, and the only one that has occurred to him—namely, that Mr. Eglington should knock at the door and offer the servant who happened to open it a bribe to give him the slates,—is, as he says, incredible. But how can Mr. Wedgwood know that Mr. Eglington had no previous acquaintance with any of his servants? How can he tell that he was not in relations with the brother, or the *fiancé* of one of them? Burglaries have been effected with the assistance of servants, yet in probably 999 cases out of 1,000 a burglar would meet with an "indignant rebuff" if he walked up to a servant he did not know, and asked her to help him to rob her employer. And many persons who could never be induced to connive at a burglary, might not be too scrupulous to permit a pair of common slates to be taken away for a few hours, receiving perhaps a substantial pledge for their safe return.

But I think it not impossible that Mr. Wedgwood may himself have contributed to the letting of those slates out of his keeping, and have now forgotten all about it. He has frequently had séances at his house. Is it not possible that at some of these séances the sealed-up slates may have been produced with other things? Is it not even possible that whether they were produced from the cupboard by Mr. Wedgwood himself or not, they may on one occasion have gone away

unobserved in the bag of the medium—not necessarily Mr. Eglinton, but maybe a friend of his—and similarly have returned on the occasion of another séance? Here then are two possibilities, neither of which seems to me incredible; and if it were worth while one could probably think of other ways in which Mr. Eglinton might temporarily have obtained possession of the slates. Nor do I think that in any case he would have been running serious risk. The circumstances in connection with the exposure made by Archdeacon Colley are enough to show that if Mr. Eglinton had failed in such an attempt, and even if the denunciation had been made which Mr. Wedgwood thinks must infallibly have followed, he need not have feared that he would “irretrievably ruin his own character” with Spiritualists.

My other suggestion, that Mr. Eglinton may have prepared a pair of slates in imitation of Mr. Wedgwood’s and exchanged them at the second sitting (or perhaps earlier), seems to him absurd, partly because he assumes that a “hasty glance at the slates” was all the opportunity which Mr. Eglinton had at the first sitting of fixing every particular in his memory. But according to Mr. Wedgwood’s own recollection of what occurred at the first sitting, that assumption is by no means justified. Mr. Wedgwood sent me an account of this first sitting in a letter written on the 4th of last June, and I do not think he will object to my describing it in his own words.

We sat down on the opposite sides of the table with a pile of slates within his reach, I holding my own sealed pair. Then the gas was put out, and he handed me a pair of slates and end of twine, and told me to fasten them together. I laid down my slates before me and did so. He handed me a second pair, which I treated in the same way, and then by his directions placed my own sealed pair between the two pairs just tied together, and held my hands on them till the séance ended, getting nothing on any of the slates. I took away my own pair sealed and tied as I had brought them, and they were never out of my keeping till some months afterwards I determined to try again, and now in addition to the sealed string I gummed the whole frame round so that there should be no access whatever to the inside.

Mr. Wedgwood was certainly not holding his own slates while he successively tied up the other two pairs, and I see no reason for supposing that he held them during any material part of the dark séance. Even, therefore, if it be strictly true that Mr. Eglinton had little opportunity of *seeing* the slates, it seems clear that he may have had much opportunity of *handling* them, of measuring the exact position of the seals, of taking impressions of them,* of gauging the twine, and

* I do not see how Mr. Wedgwood can know that Mr. Eglinton had not obtained a counterfeit of his seal, one with “H.W.” on it, before this. Mr. Wedgwood was so well known as an investigator and employer of mediums, that it may well have been worth while to keep copies of his seal.

observing how it was tied, as well as of noting the size and kind of slates—slates, it must be remembered, being manufactured wholesale in definite patterns and sizes.

Mr. Wedgwood thinks that when he left, after the first sitting, Mr. Eglinton had no reason to suppose that he would make a second attempt. But this is again an assumption. Mr. Eglinton may have determined that if Mr. Wedgwood did not spontaneously try his slates again, he would indirectly suggest to him to do so, either through other spiritualists or other mediums. Mr. Wedgwood may even have been conscious when he applied for the second séance that he was acting on some one's suggestion, and have forgotten it now, after the interval of some years.

But, granting all this, Mr. Wedgwood thinks he interposed another insurmountable obstacle to this mode of deceiving him by adding the gummed paper. He is careful to emphasize the fact that he did not use postage paper for this, because by a slip he said, in an account which he sent to *Light* in 1885, that he did use postage paper. (I think it is by a similar slip that he speaks in the November *Journal* of an interval of "two months" between the two séances, while in previous accounts he had called it "some months," or "two or three months.") But it is very unimportant whether the paper used was postage paper or not, since, as appears to be the case, it was, at any rate, not any very rare or peculiar kind of paper, or paper secretly marked in any way. For if the trick was done at all in the way we are discussing, the gummed paper was probably added to the imitation pair of slates *after* Mr. Wedgwood had arrived at the house and shown his own gummed up slates.* To do this Mr. Eglinton had only to leave the room—it would not take long—and he frequently leaves the room on one excuse or another during his séances. It is true that Mr. Wedgwood thinks he "could not be mistaken as to the individual peculiarities of his own handiwork," but this is a subjective conviction which cannot be imparted to others in the absence of any describable and inimitable peculiarities of the said handiwork. I have seen an imitation signature acknowledged by a person who believed he had written it in that place, but who had not really done so.

I have discussed possible explanations of Mr. Wedgwood's experiments thus in detail because, unsatisfactory as it is, it seems to be the nearest approximation we have to a successful experiment of the kind required. But if I am asked what I really think, I should say that it is

* Mr. Wedgwood's account in the June *Journal* rather suggests that he added the gummed paper *at* Mr. Eglinton's. But from his later statements I think he did it before he went to the séance, though he has not stated explicitly when and where it was done.

waste of time to criticise experiments recorded so long after the event. The probability is very great that essential facts have been forgotten, and it is more probable that the clue to the true explanation has thus been for ever lost than that any one explanation now suggested is the true one.

In conclusion, I will add a few words about a phrase at the beginning of Mr. Wedgwood's article. He implies that a man who goes to see a medium "with every expectation of being able to detect the illusion" is more likely to succeed in doing so than others. Now it is my belief that if a fraudulent medium would tell us what kind of people it was most easy to convince, he would put, immediately after the blindly credulous, those who are quite confident that if there be trickery they are sure to detect it. Their confidence may arise from an underestimate of the skill of the performer and so lead to carelessness; it may arise from an over-estimate of their own skill; or it may merely arise from an unwillingness to admit that even the best observers may now and then be baffled by an unexpected combination of circumstances. In no case is complete confidence justified, and in no case does it help the observer. And should a very confident witness chance to be baffled, he will be convinced; for he believes that he can see through any trick; he did not see through this; therefore this was not a trick;—a logical conclusion from a false premiss.

AN ACCOUNT OF AN OUTBREAK OF RELIGIOUS HALLUCINATION IN THE BAHAMAS, WEST INDIES,

WITH A BRIEF SKETCH OF SOME PHENOMENA CONNECTED THEREWITH.

[Further inquiries are being made concerning the occurrences described in the following account, the first part of which we abridge. The writer, a medical practitioner and clergyman, explains that "the black people of the Bahamas are all descendants of the negro slaves who were brought here from the West Coast of Africa. They are of a very emotional and excitable temperament." They are deeply superstitious, the form of witchcraft known as *Obeah* being very prevalent. "Notwithstanding this, the people are shrewd in business matters and able to trade to their own advantage." The majority of the people on San Salvador belong to the Baptist Society. The people are outwardly religious, keeping Sunday strictly, &c., but "religion apparently gives them no strength of character." "They firmly believe in ghosts, fairies, demons," &c.]

Last year, in the spring, we were continually hearing reports of the remarkable doings of a young woman who was in the habit of preaching in the chapels. Report brought the news that she had visions, and was able to

run along the tops of high walls with her eyes closed, and climb trees, sitting on slender branches without falling. This spirit soon affected a few other girls, and in a very short time a band of them formed themselves into a sect, and proceeded to make converts. Some little time after this I paid a visit to the place where all the excitement was, and I made it a matter of duty to be present at one of their meetings. The meeting was held in a small room. All around the sides the people who had come to see and hear were seated. In the centre stood six girls, walking up and down, keeping time to a slow monotonic chant, sung by the people assembled. This chant gradually increased in rapidity, and as it increased the girls kept time in their tramping or marching backwards and forwards, clapping their hands, barking like dogs, and swaying their bodies about. The glare in their eyes was something horrible to look at. Suddenly one girl would give a shriek, and fall down in a convulsive fit, soon to be followed by the rest, and by any of the sightseers who were wrought up and affected by the sight. The noise of kicking, shouting, shrieking, and groaning that followed is perfectly indescribable. At first I attempted to bring the girls to by means of restoratives, but the people were so excited that they made a show of violence at my interference with the "outpouring of the Spirit," as they said.

For nearly an hour these girls would lie and kick until quite exhausted. Then they would get up and recount what they had seen whilst under the "afflatus." Graphic descriptions of hell were given, and names of people who were there, and who were going. In addition to this, some of them would mention events that were then occurring some 10, 20, and 30 miles away. Subsequent investigation proved that what they had seen was correct. I give one instance that I vouch for. One girl said she saw a certain elder of a chapel 18 miles away (she was personally unacquainted with him) engaged in sinful practices (giving details) in secret. Upon inquiry it was found correct, the man being too frightened to conceal his sin.

These attacks spread like wildfire through the whole island. Villages at distances of 10, 15, and 30 miles from each other were affected simultaneously, though it is almost certain they had no communication with each other. Girls at work in fields would be seized suddenly, and had to be carried home. The general desire of all who were attacked was to be together in community.

Parents who had some concern about their daughters endeavoured to keep them at home. And this fact brought out another remarkable phenomenon. When a meeting (for shouting and excitement) commenced, girls who were subject to fits, though far removed from the sight and sound of the meetings, would be acted upon like a galvanic battery. I have sat in a house in attendance upon a patient when suddenly she would begin to twitch and shake, and finally succumb to a fit. I found out that at the precise moment she was seized, other girls in the meeting had been taken too. This was a remarkable thing and scared the people considerably.

Two aggravated cases came under my own observation. These were two daughters of the magistrate. In this case the girls were white, though natives of the Bahamas. Though they never went to nor saw any meetings of these fits and excitements, they were both attacked, and exhibited symptoms of a more violent and aggravated form than the black girls. The case

of the elder girl was peculiar. She would be seized with a fit, shrieking, laughing, crying, and showing all the symptoms of hysteria. After the fit was over she would fall into a kind of trance, lasting from 12 to 17 hours at a stretch. When I first saw her (I had been called in after she had been lying some eight hours in this manner, and all efforts to arouse her had failed), my first act was to feel her pulse. Immediately I touched her she awoke and smiled. She told me she had seen me coming, though I lived about one-eighth of a mile distant from the place. Next day she fell into the same kind of trance, and every effort was made by her relations to bring her to—cold water douche, slapping, spirits of ammonia applied—all to no purpose. They then sent for me, and upon my taking her hand she came to. It now dawned upon me that I had some influence over her, so I told her that she was not to have the fit for two days, then for four days, and so gradually I got her round, the fits only coming at intervals. She has thoroughly recovered, though she has been quite different in her habits and manners since.

In the case of her sister, younger than herself, most curious phenomena were exhibited. She had most violent fits, taking four and five strong men to keep her down; she would bite at people, and tear her clothes to rags, and the sight of myself aggravated her to a painful degree. They would not let her know I had been sent for, yet as soon as I left my house for the purpose of seeing her she would call out (in her fit) that I was then starting from my house, and beg them to keep me away. She could not see me, yet she was always correct in telling them of my whereabouts. When she woke up from her trance after the fit (in her case the trance lasted only for an hour or so), she would tell her father of things she had seen done. Upon inquiry we always found she was correct. When she was well enough she was sent away to another island for a change. Whilst there she told her friends of things which were being done at San Salvador (50 miles of ocean separating the two islands). In these things also she was correct. Once, acting upon information given by her in these trances, her father unmasked a great evil existing at his very door; he knew nothing of it, but the girl, 50 miles away, saw it, and gave details, and these corresponded with subsequent discoveries.

But all this undoubtedly affected the girl's brain, and for two months she lost the use of her limbs. She is now gradually recovering, but her power of seeing things, or clairvoyance, has quite gone.

I have set down these few items just as they occurred. I have no explanation to offer, for I do not profess to understand the Spiritualistic side of the matter. The physical side of the matter was doubtless a bad attack of hysteria, very similar, I should imagine, to that which broke out in the middle ages amongst the nuns.

The magistrate and his family have now left the island, and I am the only white person here. We have now nothing of the epidemic.

* * * * *

Since writing the foregoing the following interesting fact occurred to myself last month, June, 1886.

A man came to me for medicine. Upon sounding him, the stethoscope

revealed the fact that he was suffering from heart-disease. I warned him not to exert himself by hard work in the fields, and gave him two pills to take, telling him to come next morning when I would commence to treat him. He went straight from me to the fields, and two hours afterwards I heard that he was picked up dead ! I was considerably concerned, and in the evening the local magistrate came to me requesting I would attend the inquest to be held at 7 a.m. next morning. That evening I went to bed feeling very uncomfortable, as I felt I ought to have told him the critical state he was in. I fell into a troubled sleep, and dreamt I was already at the inquest. I saw the body lying on the floor, and the magistrate directed someone to remove the shirt from the body for me to examine him. As they were taking off the shirt I thought the man arose and ran to me, and put his arms round my neck. I was so astonished at this that I awoke. When awake I felt more easy in my mind, having a conviction (why, I don't know) that the man was not dead. This was 11 p.m.

I was up at 5 a.m., getting ready to go to the inquest. Already I found a man at the door who gave me the information that the man was not dead. The custom is to hold wakes, and it appears that whilst they were singing around the body, he suddenly sat up, to the people's dismay and fright. They rapidly cleared out, being, as I have already stated, so superstitious. I saw the man, and asked him if when he awoke he thought of me. He said Yes ; the first thing he did when he awoke was to remember my words about taking the pills. As near as I can get it, the time was 11 p.m., the exact time I dreamt that he was alive.

This is my own experience, and I offer for explanation the fact of my dream corresponding so precisely to the event, which happened two and a-half miles from where I was sleeping.

F. BARROW MATTHEWS.

San Salvador, Bahamas, West Indies.

July 6th, 1886.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

SIR,—Permit me in very few words to state that I have resigned my membership of the Society for Psychical Research, with the offices which I have the honour to hold as Vice-President and Member of Council.

I have conceived that as a representative Spiritualist I could not do otherwise, considering, as I do, that the evidence for phenomena of the genuine character of which I and many others have satisfied ourselves beyond doubt, is not being properly entertained or fairly treated by the Society for Psychical Research.

I believe it is not the practice of the Society to announce the names of those who retire from its ranks, and I therefore venture to ask permission to make this statement myself.—I am, &c.,

W. STANTON MOSES,

Late Vice-president and Member of Council, S.P.R.

21, Birchington-road, London, N.W.

November 18th.