

*Printed for Private Circulation only.*

# EXPERIMENTS

WITH

DR. SLADE.

---

BY GEORGE KING.

9340. e 17.



## EXPERIMENTS WITH DR. SLADE.

BY GEORGE KING.

---

DR. SLADE'S name a few weeks ago was in everybody's mouth. By one party he was condemned as an unprincipled impostor, by another lauded as a persecuted martyr. Moreover, each side brought forward alleged facts in support of its opinions. Messrs. Lankester and Donkin, on the one hand, told how a paltry attempt had been made to swindle them by clumsy sleight of hand, and famous conjurers were enlisted to show the way the trick was done. On the other hand, men of unquestioned eminence came forward and maintained that Messrs. Lankester and Donkin had been hasty in jumping to conclusions, and that, had they exercised more patience in their investigations, they would have met with phenomena not so easily disposed of.

In the midst of these contradictory reports, it seemed the only wise course to go and see for myself, which I did ; and the following is a brief record of my experience.

At five o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, 18th Nov. last, I repaired, by appointment, to the house of Dr. Slade. I had determined to take with me a slate of my own, and on the way I tried in four or five shops to find one to my mind. At last I secured what satisfied me—a folding slate with a varnished wooden case of somewhat peculiar construction. Each of the two flaps was seven and three-quarters inches long, by five inches wide, and had a three-quarter inch frame all round, which projected one-tenth inch above the surface. When the slate was folded there was, therefore,

between the leaves a completely enclosed cavity about one-fifth inch deep, and nearly air-tight. The slate was done up in a paper parcel by the shopman, and tied with twine.

Thus armed, I presented myself at Dr. Slade's door, and was ushered into the drawing-room, where were Dr. Slade, Mr. Simmons, and two ladies. Dr. Slade and Mr. Simmons were sitting by the fire, and they invited me to take a chair beside them. Dr. Slade shortly said it was time to "light up," and he retired to a small adjoining parlour. In less than two minutes he returned, and asked me to follow him. The parlour was brilliantly lighted by a gaselier suspended over a small, rickety, mahogany table in the centre of the room, and the gas remained at full power during the whole of our sitting. I examined the table, turning it over for the purpose. It had four legs attached to a frame, and was about three-and-a-half feet long by two feet wide, exclusive of a flap on each side. The flap and its appurtenances on the side opposite to that at which I sat were much shattered, as if by violent usage, but on my side there did not appear to be any breakage. The flap against which I sat must originally have been intended to rest on two brackets, but one of these had been removed, so that under the corner of the raised flap which was between me and Dr. Slade there was no impediment whatever. We sat down, I against a flap of the table, with my back to the fire-place; Dr. Slade at the end of the table, on my left, with his face towards me, his left shoulder towards the table, and his legs projecting towards the fire-place. I produced my slate, and undid the wrapper. Dr. Slade had it for one instant open in his hand, but in my full view, as he dropped upon its clean surface a minute crumb of pencil. The slate was then firmly closed, and to my certain knowledge remained so till I opened it myself in the drawing-room half an hour afterwards. Dr. Slade proposed that it should be tied up, to which I, of course, assented. He got a piece of twine from the chimney-piece, and while the slate was in my hands and his, the leaves were securely tied together and the twine double knotted. Dr.



Slade placed his left hand with both mine on the table, and for a few minutes held my slate in his right, but in my full view. I watched it intently all the time. He said there was a power which prevented him from putting it under the table even if he would. After a short time, as nothing came, Dr. Slade placed my slate on the table under my left arm, and my left elbow rested on it almost till the close of the sitting. Dr. Slade never touched it again. He took a slate of his own, with a crumb of pencil on its surface, and passed it out of sight under the table, saying, "Our friends have done nothing for us yet. Perhaps they do not want to write on the gentleman's slate while I hold it. Will they write while the slate is under his arm and I am not touching it?" For a second of time scratching was heard on Dr. Slade's slate, and, when it was brought up, the words were on it "We will." He then joined his right hand to my left, his left still clasping my right, and instantly within my slate the sound of writing became audible, and continued for about ten minutes. At frequent intervals I put my ear close to the slate to listen, and there could be no mistake. The sound was low, but very distinct, and I specially noted that we could recognise the crossing of the "t's," the dotting of the "i's," and the insertion of the punctuation. It seemed as if a person were writing not rapidly, but steadily and deliberately, without jerk or pause. Two loud raps on the table announced the conclusion of the message. Dr. Slade then passed his own large slate, apparently perfectly clean and dry, half under the table, but so that I could see the other half and his hand holding it. My own slate meanwhile I placed beside my right elbow to be out of the way. Dr. Slade asked, "Can you do more for us to-night?" A scratching was heard, and the word "cannot" appeared on that portion of the upper side of his slate which had been beneath the table. The "c" was close to the side of the slate nearest to me, and far out of reach of Dr. Slade's hand, and the word was written, not horizontally, but perpendicularly towards Dr. Slade. The "t" was care-

fully crossed, and the fragment of pencil lay where it had stopped, just at the end of the cross stroke of the "t."

We returned to the drawing-room, I carrying my own slate, and there I cut the string that bound it; and within I found a long message, entirely filling both sides of the slate, and consisting of ninety-nine words, besides the signature "A. W. Slade." It was carefully written in a good firm hand, and the lines were straight and even. Each "t" was accurately crossed and each "i" was dotted. The crumb of pencil, too, was there, with one end worn away as if in writing.

Had only a few words been scrawled on my slate, it would have been, under the circumstances, astonishing; but the result actually attained is simply confounding, when it is remembered that the quickest penman, with every facility for writing, cannot put down on paper, in long hand, with every word at full length, more than about twenty words per minute, and that writing on a slate, where there is more friction, occupies more time. By whomsoever it was done, this message must have taken *at least* five minutes to produce; but Dr. Slade had not the slate for that length of time in his hand—and, be it repeated, it had never left my sight—and for less than five seconds only was it open. As already explained, it was, except for one instant, firmly tied shut with twine.

It is impossible to describe the jealous care with which I watched to detect deceit. I could discover none, nor the possibility of any. I had gone with my mind full of the evidence given in court by Messrs. Lankester and Donkin, but their alleged exposure was quite inapplicable to what took place in my presence.

I had studied the explanations of Mr. Maskelyne, but they did not touch my case at all. What he said on oath that conjurers could not do I found done in the presence of Dr. Slade. The following is his cross-examination in the late trial at Bow-street as reported in the *Daily Telegraph*: "By Mr. Massey: Suppose I brought you a slate from a shop, and never let it go out of my sight, and that you put your hands upon it, and I mine upon it, and that you found

it covered with writing, what would you say to that?—It is very well to be told a thing of that kind, but I should say a medium would not do that.

“If I sat with you or Dr. Slade, and the slate became covered with writing—a slate just brought from any shop—what would you say?—That it is a great pity that Mr. Slade does not always do that.

“Would you say that such a thing would be impossible to be produced by your art?—I say I could not do it as you describe it without any physical interference.

“Do you believe any mortal man could do it?—I believe that a man who believed that he saw such a thing would be labouring under a deception.”

It will be observed how closely the hypothetical case put by Mr. Massey resembles the actual facts detailed above, only that he seems to speak of an ordinary slate, while I adopted the additional precaution of submitting to the medium a closed one.

Mr. Maskelyne, in his last reply, undertakes with charming modesty to decide for all the world what is in itself possible, and what impossible. He thinks that everything beyond the juggler's art is *ipso facto* impossible, and that it is more rational to reject it without examination than to accept it, no matter with what amount or weight of evidence it may be supported.

On December 15th, I had again an opportunity, in conjunction with a few friends, of testing Dr. Slade's alleged mediumship. We sat in our own room, at our own table, and used our own slates, one ordinary school slate, and one folding book-slate. As the *séance* was not so completely under my personal control as the previous one, it is not worth while describing it with so great minuteness. Suffice it to say that I sat next Dr. Slade, on his right hand, and that, as he always held the slate in that hand when he placed it under the table, I had every opportunity of closely watching him. We had a number of very short messages, sometimes on one slate, sometimes on the other. I observed

a mark on the school slate, which, on those occasions when the slate was not passed entirely out of sight, enabled me to say positively that the writing was done on the *upper* side, and not on the under. One little circumstance seems to me very remarkable: I have already alluded to it above. When one of these messages appears, the crumb of pencil invariably remains at the point where it stops after writing the communication, forming a perfect continuation of the last stroke of the last letter. This fact, trifling in itself, to my mind goes far to, prove that the message has been written with that identical piece of pencil, and on the upper side of the slate. I do not see how otherwise it could be placed instantaneously in position with such mathematical accuracy.

The messages always purport to emanate from some invisible being. The major part come in the name of A. W. Slade, the deceased wife of the medium, but other so-called "spirits" are frequently represented, and it is a curious fact that with the change in the name of the penman the character of the handwriting completely changes too. It would be interesting to submit various specimens to a calligraphic expert. The matter of the communications appears to me to be of far less importance than the manner of their coming. The only one of any length received by me was that of ninety-nine words above mentioned. It is couched in somewhat high-flown language, and the subject is the advantages of an assured knowledge of immortality. It is very much such as a person of fair intelligence and education might utter on being suddenly asked to make a neat little speech to a total stranger.

11, ST. GEORGE'S-TERRACE, GLOUCESTER-ROAD, S.W.

*December 18th, 1876.*