

THE
SLADE CASE:

ITS FACTS AND ITS LESSONS.

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A Record and a Warning.

BY "M.A. (OXON.)" [pseud.]

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P R E F A C E.

At the request of many friends, who believe they are calculated to be useful, the following pages are reprinted from *Human Nature*.

The writer is profoundly impressed with the conviction that a crisis has arrived, when it behoves all friends of liberty to speak out, and especially when it is incumbent on Spiritualists to be stirring.

Friends of Truth and Liberty must see to it that the attempt to crush both does not succeed.

Spiritualists have a double duty laid upon them :—

First, To contend earnestly for their Faith.

Then, To see that their Faith is pure and of good repute. They must set their house in order, and then range themselves shoulder to shoulder in its defence.

In order to impress on all whom my words can reach the duties which seem to me incumbent on them, I have published the following pages. They record facts, and they draw conclusions, which I hope will commend themselves to most fair minds.

In order to help on the battle by providing the sinews of war, I devote any profit that may accrue from the sale of this pamphlet to the Spiritualists' Defence Fund.

And I invite the sympathy and aid of all my readers in favour of those who have to bear the brunt of the battle.

“ M.A. (OXON.) ”

LONDON, *Jun.* 6, 1877.



THE SLADE CASE:

ITS FACTS AND LESSONS.

ALTHOUGH it would be premature as yet to endeavour to forecast all the issues of the present raid on Spiritualism, the lull between the storms affords opportunity for a certain retrospect, and for the gathering up of some useful lessons. Men of the present day, friends and foes alike, have heard only too much of the Lankester prosecution. Those who will come after may find it useful to have, in the succinct form of a magazine article, a summary of the facts, and a few comments upon them, by one who has lived amongst them and watched them with keen interest. I have called the present raid a crisis in the history of Spiritualism. Possibly I should have been more correct if I had called it the commencement of a crisis: the first serious mutterings of a storm, the bursting of which those who are accustomed to note the signs of the times have long seen to be inevitable. So long as Spiritualism was confined to holes and corners, so long as it was known only as a *congeries* of grotesque phenomena,—“an unseemly attack on furniture”—so long as its defenders maintained ground only too manifestly untenable in the face of facts, the materialists were content to leave us alone—our beliefs were too foolish to need notice, and our creed contained in it nothing but patent contradictions and absurdities. A few raking shots were fired, more in contempt than in serious earnest, and the thing was left to die. But it did not die; on the contrary, it flourished and abounded, and, with unprecedented rapidity, won its way to acceptance among persons who could not be denied to possess a dangerous social influence, and among men whose scientific eminence and high intellectual reputation could neither be contested nor sneered away. The crowning indignity was the admission of the hated subject within the charmed circle of the British Association for the Advancement of Science. It

was bad enough before, but this was the last straw that broke the camel's back. The Committee charged with the selection of papers to be read at the late meeting of the Society at Glasgow, decided by a single vote to accept a paper from Professor Barrett, F.R.S.E., "On some Phenomena associated with Abnormal Conditions of Mind," and that very mild and harmless paper, dealing with some ordinary facts of Mesmerism, and elementary phenomena of Spiritualism, was read before the Anthropological Department of the British Association, Mr. Alfred Wallace, the eminent naturalist, being in the chair.

Mild as the paper was, it proved quite strong enough to provoke a storm. The selecting Committee contained, amongst its members, Professor Lankester, F.R.S., a determined materialist, and he, apparently, made a personal grievance of the fact, that a subject in his eyes so contemptible should be allowed to enter the scientific atmosphere at Glasgow. "The discussions of the British Association have been degraded by the introduction of the subject of Spiritualism," are his words.* It so chanced that there was in London at this time a gentleman from New York, U.S.A., Henry Slade, a medium of great celebrity, who for fifteen years has been before the public, and in whose presence phenomena, especially slate-writing, occur with great regularity. On his way to fulfil an engagement with a scientific committee of the University of St. Petersburg, who were charged with the investigation of psychic phenomena, he had stopped for a time in London, and was giving daylight seances with complete success to a great number of competent observers and eminent scientific and literary men, amongst them such men as Dr. W. B. Carpenter, F.R.S., Lord Raleigh, F.R.S., Mr. Alfred Wallace, Mr. Hutton, editor of the *Spectator*, and many others, Mr. Serjeant Cox, President of the Psychological Society, had also seen and believed, or, at any rate, had drawn up an elaborate report, which was, oddly enough, published in the *Spiritualist* newspaper at the time; and which, still more oddly, was read as evidence at the subsequent trial of Dr. Slade. The learned Serjeant brought this report before his friend, Professor Lankester, and urged him to go and see for himself.

Nursing wrath in his heart, and with all his "prepossessions" excited, the Professor did go, saw, and—seized the slate, on which the message was then just written. The account of that memorable seance comes out more distinctly in the trial, which subsequently took place. It may be shortly stated here that Slade had placed a clean slate, with a crumb of slate-pencil on its surface, in position

* Letter to the *Times*, Sept. 15, 1876.

under the corner of the table, between Professor Lankester and himself, and had requested the Professor to join him in holding it there. Instead of doing so, Mr. Lankester snatched the slate away, and discovered on it a short message. That constituted the exposure; and the explanation given by Slade, which was not admissible at the trial in the shape of evidence, may be introduced here. It is in the form of a letter to the *Times*, to which newspaper Mr. Lankester had forwarded a letter recording his version of what had occurred:—

“SIR,—It very seldom occurs that I feel called upon to write in my own defence. To the statements of Professor Lankester, which appeared in the *Times* of the 16th instant, I think I may with propriety reply.

“These are the facts:—On our sitting down to the table, I held the slate against the under side of the table, when, after some delay, the sound of the pencil writing on the slate was heard. On withdrawing the slate, there was found to be what might have been intended for a name, very poorly written upon the upper surface. I then wiped this off the slate, saying, ‘I will hold it again; perhaps they will write plainer.’ Again a little delay ensued, when I said to Professor Lankester, ‘Perhaps if you will take hold of the slate with me they will be better able to write.’ He thereupon released his hand from where it was joined with my left, and those of his friend upon the table, and, instead of holding the slate with me, seized it, as he describes.

“Instead of there being a message written, as he says, there were only two, or, at the most, three words on the upper surface of the slate.

“Now, had Professor Lankester listened as closely as he says he watched me, he must have heard me say, after asking him to hold the slate with me, ‘They are writing now.’ This was said while he was in the act of removing his hand from where it was joined on the table to the slate, for I heard the sound of the pencil when the writing commenced, while I was asking him to hold the slate with me. Consequently, when he seized the slate, only two or three words were found written upon it.

“Had he told me he suspected I was doing the writing, I think there would have been no difficulty in disabusing his mind on that point.

“That I do the writing with a piece of pencil under my finger-nail is an old theory. However, I always keep my nails so closely cut as to render that impossible, to which those who have taken the trouble to examine them can testify. Therefore, all I have to say is, I did

not do the writing at the sitting with Professor Lankester, nor at any other sitting given by me during the years I have been before the public as a medium.

“Very truly yours,

“HENRY SLADE.”

Not content with writing to the *Times*, Professor Lankester further obtained summonses against Slade, and his manager or secretary, Simmons, for “conspiring to cheat and defraud;” and also against Slade alone for “using certain subtle craft and devices to deceive and impose on” certain gentlemen, whose names, it may here be stated, were used without their permission, and who agreed only in resenting that liberty. The case came on before Mr. Flowers, at the Bow Street Police Court, on October 2, and was repeatedly adjourned until on October 31 it was concluded by a sentence of three months’ imprisonment, with hard labour, on Dr. Slade, the conspiracy charge having been dismissed. From that decision an appeal was at once entered, and it will be heard at the Middlesex Sessions during the third week in January, 1877. Meantime, the defendant is released on bail, and the St. Petersburg investigation is deferred. A brief *resumé* of the case, the evidence in which is printed at length in the *Spiritualist* newspaper of current dates, is all that can be given here.

The evidence for the prosecution, afterwards narrowed down by the presiding magistrate to the testimony of Professor Lankester and Dr. Donkin, who were present when the alleged exposure took place, and of the carpenter who made the table, which was alleged to be constructed in a peculiar manner for purposes of deception, related solely to the seances of September 11th and 15th. It amounted in substance to a recital of the events stated in Professor Lankester’s letters to the *Times*. It was elicited in cross-examination that the case was one of inference and not of demonstration. Both witnesses could say no more than that they observed certain movements of Slade’s arm, which they imagined or concluded to be caused, or which might have been caused, by his writing on the slate as it rested on his knees under the table. That opinion was shown to be a mere conjecture, and was further shown by the witnesses for the defence to be in direct opposition to their knowledge and experience. (It was the peculiarity of this trial that the knowledge was all on one side.) The same remark applies to the industrious attempts made to prove some tricky character in the table. It was produced in court day by day as if its presence would show the trick; it was alleged to have been made to order, and on some “occult” principle; it was altogether wrongly described by Professor Lankester; and as a result of all this flourish of trumpets, it was shown that the allegations were unsup-

ported by fact, the table being a perfectly simple and ordinary article, only made after a fashion more usual in America than in this country. It was, in fact, a strong and substantial table, built to stand the sounding blows which shattered the table belonging to Mrs. Burke which had been previously used, and with little or no hamper underneath which could interfere with the movements of the slate. These movements are entirely out of Slade's control, and the table was made to allow uninterrupted motion of the slate. Had the trick been fraudulently done as the conjurer Maskelyne alleged, the old table with its brackets would have been more suited to the purpose. No allegation was ever more completely shattered by the defence than this; and yet it is characteristic of the root that false ideas take in the public mind that the hazy idea still prevails that the table was a trick table. Most surely it was nothing of the sort. Moreover, the table was produced in court by the defence, which is sufficient evidence they at any rate did not shirk any examination of it. It is instructive to note the circumstances under which this was done. I beg my reader's careful attention. Mr. Lankester had deposed, with that calm superior air which he wears when he thinks he is making a point, that the table was one without a frame, and, therefore, eminently suitable for Slade's tricks. Prior to his cross-examination the table was brought down to court, and Mr. Lankester having been induced to repeat his statements, it was produced by the defence. Nothing could be more complete than the contradiction so given to the statements of Mr. Lankester. *As a matter of fact the table was found to have a frame 5½ inches deep, being, as the carpenter who made it afterwards deposed, about 1 inch deeper than frames for tables of that size are usually made.* At this point a truly dramatic incident occurred. Mr. Maskelyne, who had been in court an attentive listener to the proceedings, saw that the moment for his interposition had arrived. Professor Lankester—shall I say his patron or his *portegé*?—was in obvious difficulty, and, briskly stepping across the platform of the bench, Maskelyne came to the rescue. Turning up the table, he adroitly diverted public attention from the point at issue by calling attention to other features in the construction. It is his business to mystify, and never did he succeed better than on that occasion. From that moment the public mind was possessed with the notion that the table was a trick table; and even the magistrate, who knew nothing whatever about it and had never examined it, heedlessly adopting the conjurer's suggestion, pronounced it to be "the most extraordinary table I have ever seen."

What was the extraordinary character of this table? It apparently resided in a small wedge which Maskelyne affirmed to be obviously

put for the purpose of producing raps. Mr. Maskelyne must have been very much surprised to learn that *that wedge was placed there by the workman who made the table, without instructions, and as an expedient to tighten the support.* This is a fair specimen of the evidence adduced by the prosecution.

The evidence of Maskelyne, admitted by Mr. Flowers under an erroneous impression, calls for no comment. He performed as usual, and was, of course, glad of the chance. It is his business to perform. But it was unkind of him to say that he would like to crush out Spiritualism altogether. Why! he lives upon it. It is the very mother that gave him birth; or, more correctly perhaps, it is the body on which he has lived as a parasite, and its death would be the signal for his own speedy extinction. He should not say that! It is not natural nor nice! However, he totally failed in doing anything whatever to elucidate any disputed point, and his evidence, together with its accompanying performance, was ridiculous in the extreme; as ridiculous as his alliance with the clergy for the purpose to which he devotes his energies. The latest device seems to be to give free tickets to clergymen who will consent to advertise the Egyptian Hall performance as a means of putting down Spiritualism. What a holy alliance! What a sacred crusade! We shall have experiments by Maskelyne in some metropolitan pulpit next, to the sound of a lively chant, and Psycho preaching a sermon, with Maskelyne acting as clerk—a beautiful illustration of the materialistic doctrine of human automatism. To such straits are bigots—scientific and theological—reduced by their common fear of a subject that they instinctively know will crush out their dogmas, and reverse their dearest theories. Beyond proving that, Maskelyne proved nothing whatever.

The evidence for the defence given by Messrs. Wallace, Joad, Wyld, and Joy was in every way excellent, and was absolutely untouched by Mr. Lewis's cross-examination. It was of no avail to the case in point, unfortunately, and the magistrate did not entertain it in framing his judgment. A great point, however, was made when it was admitted. It is now a matter of history. The sentence was given, as has been said, solely on the evidence of the accusers, Lankester and Donkin. I do not further criticise till the appeal has been heard. I may, however, say here, that the successful prosecution of that appeal necessitates a large expenditure of money; and I take this opportunity of urging, with all my might, those who have the power to contribute their subscription to the Slade Defence Fund. The battle must be fought with all zeal, first of all to rescue an innocent man from unmerited disgrace: secondly, to place in the strongest light the evidence we have to offer; and thirdly, to teach erratic

scientists, "with no private object to gain," who amuse themselves by persecuting mediums, that it is an expensive pleasure, and that the game is not worth the candle.

In order to save myself the labour of unnecessary repetition, and to complete the view of the case already presented by the evidence and criticism of an independent observer, I venture to present here an account of a seance which I had with Dr. Slade after the alleged exposure of his tricks by Professor Lankester. After some critical remarks on the nature of the evidence given by Professor Lankester, I sum up his allegations and my own refutation thus in the *Medium and Daybreak*, October 6, 1876:—

"He (Prof. L.) alleges that Dr. Slade writes the message either—

- (1) Previously to the seance, in which case he adroitly changes the slate just cleaned for the one previously prepared :
- or (2) on his lap, while he distracts the attention of the sitters by conjurer's patter :
- or (3) while the slate is in position under the table ; in which case he uses a grain of pencil fixed under a finger-nail.

"In my record of my first seance, printed on August 4th last, I stated that I obtained a message on my own slate, held by me alone, untouched by the medium, and cleaned by myself. This slate was a porcelaine one, not of the kind used by Dr. Slade. He did not clean it or hold it. To which of the above heads does Professor Lankester refer this experiment ?

"At the same sitting there lay on the table in front of me a folding slate, which I examined and found to be clean. It was at arms's-length from Slade, and he touched it on the outside with difficulty. Yet under those circumstances both sides of the slate were covered with an elaborate message, neatly and regularly written, with no erasures or faults of spelling. How is this covered by Mr. Lankester's explanation ?

"On Saturday last I went again, and with the explanation before me, obtained the message, a *fac-simile* of which is given herewith. The slate was an ordinary school-slate, and I examined it most minutely, to enable me to testify, as I do, that it was perfectly clean. The slate had on the frame a small mark, caused by the projection of a wooden chip, which enabled me to testify, as I do, that the slate was not changed. It was held by Dr. Slade under the corner of the table between me and him, and during the five or six minutes during which the message was being written I watched his wrist and hand carefully. I could see no movement of 'flexor tendons' such as Mr. Donkin saw. The wrist was motionless, and the hand that held the

slate never stirred. The other hand was in mine, and the medium's body in full view. The steady, grating sound, ceasing only when we broke the chain by lifting a hand, went on throughout. I held my ear over the slate, and I assert without hesitation that what I heard was the grating of slate-pencil, and not a scratching made by a finger. That slate never left my gaze till it was produced covered with close and clear writing, as the *fac-simile* shows. Which of Professor Lankester's explanations explains this?"

In order that there may be no mistake, I append a *fac-simile* of the slate.

Dear Sir
 The genuine cause is moving
 in, only to be strengthened
 by the persistent and strong
 of persecution and opposition.
 no human can befall it in
 any other system permitted
 upon the basis of justice
 love and truth, trust
 to put and his messengers
 and all will be well.
 I am, truly, Sir,
 your obedient servant

Dear Sir

The glorious cause is moving
on, only to be strengthened
by the tempest and storms
of persecution and opposition.
no harm can befall it or
any other system founded
upon the basis of justice
love and truth. Trust
to God and his messengers
upon the basis of justice
love and truth. Trust
to God and his messengers
and all will be well
I am Truly Yours
J. W. Stoddard

I might adduce evidence more and more striking, again and again repeated, but it would serve no good purpose. If I have selected what my own eyes have seen, it is not because I consider it any better than that of a hundred other observers, but only because I have seen it, and therefore am able to give personal testimony.

Furthermore, as stating concisely what I think it right to say, I append here some remarks on the trial which were printed in the same journal. Since I am compiling an account of the affair for the benefit principally of those who have not followed the evidence, and of those who will hereafter read what I have written as material for history, I hope I may be excused from any charge of egoism in reproducing what I wrote for other readers.

“The first act is complete, and Dr. Slade has been condemned in a penalty so utterly disproportionate to the alleged offence, even in the opinion of so influential and moderate a journal as the *Spectator*, that one feels the sting partly taken out of it by a conviction that such a sentence cannot be sustained on appeal. I am not going to enter into any detailed criticism of the evidence, nor to comment on the curiously vacillating conduct of the magistrate in admitting all sorts of irrelevant matter, and then narrowing the issues down to the statements of Messrs. Lankester and Donkin. If their words alone were to be taken as evidence, why, it may be wondered, should Mr. Massey, Mr. Wallace, Mr. Joad, Mr. Joy, and Dr. Wyld be heard? Why should that irrepressible conjurer be allowed to advertise his entertainment? Why was not Psycho put in evidence? Where was the Wizard of the North? And why was not Mr. Lankester’s horoscope cast on the scope? All this would have amused the Court, and it is hard to see what more than that Mr. Maskelyne achieved, except a sensational advertisement of his performance, which ought to secure for Mr. Lankester a substantial acknowledgment of Maskelyne’s undying esteem and regard.

“Nor is it worth while to wonder why, once admitted, the sworn testimony of competent men that phenomena occurred with Slade in their presence in a way that absolutely could not be explained by the hypothesis of the prosecution, should not weigh against the statements of two men that they *thought, imagined, fancied, concluded*—by their own admission that they did not *see*, and could not, therefore, *know*—that certain phenomena were produced fraudulently by the medium. To plain men it would seem a fair retort on a hypothetical conclusion, to demonstrate that on given occasions that hypothesis did not cover the facts. To the suspicions of Mr. Lankester, who knows nothing of the general subject, and therefore cannot apply the experience of others, it would seem a fair reply to adduce the ex-

perimental knowledge of (say) fifty other competent witnesses who have tried and tested over and over again what he has only casually 'exposed.' If Mr. Lankester stated that writing on a slate held by Slade under the table was in a particular case fraudulently produced, *according to his judgment, though he did not see it so produced*, it would surely be a plain reply to say, 'Appearances are deceitful, and have, in this case, deceived you. We will show you that the movement of the arm which you mistook for the motion caused by writing is due to another cause. We will produce evidence of writing on slates untouched by Slade, on slates lying on the table which he never touched at all, on others held by a sitter, and we will demonstrate that your hypothesis applies to none of (say) fifty cases, and therefore is presumably erroneous in the solitary one to which you apply it.'

"In his discretion the magistrate declined to take this view, as opening out too wide an issue; it would be trying the whole question of Spiritualism. Well, accepting that view, let it be distinctly understood that the question of *Spiritualism has not been tried at all*. What has been done is to take the testimony of two gentlemen respecting a particular interview with Slade and to decide *ex parte* on their statements; no one else was present except the medium, whose mouth was shut. If, therefore, any two persons chose to go to (say) Williams to-morrow, pay him a guinea for a seance, and go away and make any sworn allegation of imposture against him, he must be condemned, provided their story was coherent and did not break down on cross-examination. I do not suppose that such persons are to be found—at least I hope not; but I have some knowledge to the lengths to which bigoted hatred of a subject may carry men who mean to be fair; of the atmosphere of prepossessions it generates in their minds; of the mental obliquity which it develops. I believe in this very Slade case that the witnesses for the prosecution, honestly intending to convey exact impressions, have nevertheless been utterly mistaken, and have been the means of perpetrating a cruel injustice on an innocent man. And I believe there are many others who would think they were doing God service by stamping out a detestable delusion, and would by no means be inclined to look too nicely into the means by which such holy work might be accomplished. This is only to say in other words that there is a deal of human nature in the world, and that violent passion upsets the mental balance.

"Spiritualism has not been tried at all. If it had been proposed (poor Mr. Flowers!) to enter on such a trial, it would have been necessary to clear Bow Street Court of other business for a year, and

enter on a subject whose infinite ramifications Professor Lankester little suspects. Slate-writing is not the only phenomenon called spiritual. What, then, are the phenomena that belong to the same category? Dr. Slade is not the only medium. Who, then, are the others?—Mr. Flowers, with great *naïveté*, asked if there were any English mediums!—and what phenomena occur in their presence? All mediums are not making a living by their mediumship, though they have a perfect right to do so if they please. Are there any private individuals then, who, without volition, and to no profitable purpose of gain, obtain these same phenomena? If there are, is this a new thing, or are there historic traces of it? Does it enter (for instance) into religious systems, as it alleged by Spiritualists? Did the philosophers of old know anything about it? and, if so, how does their experience agree with ours? This is the barest suggestion of the ten thousand questions that it would be necessary to solve in order to arrive at a fair estimate of the subject which Mr. Lankester exposed.' Any attempt to settle them would profitably occupy a fair-minded man for his lifetime, and he would then be forced to confess on his deathbed that his efforts had only touched the fringe of a great subject.

"Though the issue of the appeal which will be prosecuted in January next cannot be anticipated and must not be prejudged, it may be permitted me to say a word about the present prosecution and its results. I notice a very decided growth of opinion among reasonable men in the direction of disapproval of the prosecution altogether. That Spiritualists should object to it is perhaps natural. I presume that the opinion of the dog on the vivisector's table, if it could be ascertained, would be found to be favourable to the Act for the Abolition of Vivisection. But men of weight and influence, who know nothing and care less about Spiritualism, openly disavow Mr. Lankester's tactics.

"Dr. Carpenter administered a wholesome snub to the hot-headed impetuosity which instigated the prosecution, when he refused to sanction it, though his name appears on the summons. Other witnesses, whose names had been used without their permission, did the same, and perhaps Mr. Clarke (whose sympathies are bound up in the rival establishment of Maskelyne and Co.) and Mrs. Lankester (whose interest is obviously with her son) alone supported the rash process which older and sager judgment condemned alike in principle and practice. The article in the *Spectator* of November 4, on the 'Sentence in the Slade Case,' embodies an opinion which is prevalent among thinking men who act rather from consideration than from impulse. Spiritualists are apt to think the prosecution a *crime* ;

men who are not Spiritualists, and yet not Materialists, only consider it a *blunder*.

"No doubt, from the point of view of Mr. Lankester, viz., the crushing of Spiritualism, *it is a blunder*, and we are so far thankful to him as to acknowledge that we owe him the largest and most successful advertisement that Spiritualism has ever obtained. It has been canvassed and discussed in countless social meetings where before it never penetrated. The newspapers have been flooded with it, and the evidence for the defence has made a profound impression. The clear-headed, precise knowledge with which it was given contrasted so favourably with the admitted ignorance of the witnesses for the prosecution (save and except Mr. Massey, whom, in a moment of imbecility, the prosecution ventured to call), and with the absurd exhibition of Maskelyne (which suggested nothing so much as a penny show in a travelling caravan at a fair), and with the still more ludicrous failure of Mr. Lewis to imitate the slate writing, that nothing but gratitude is due for the effective contrast so gratuitously presented. We at any rate cannot object on these grounds. Many a hundred converts will date their nascent convictions that there is 'something in it' from the attempts of the Slade prosecution to demonstrate that *there is not*.

"But though this is so, there are grounds on which I am disposed to be anything but thankful to Mr. Lankester, and they are precisely those grounds which ought to be common between us. I do not thank him for persecuting an innocent man; but he doubtless acts honestly, and I make him a present of that aspect of the question. If he thinks Slade a noxious impostor he has a right to crush him, though, even on his own showing, he has taken a very foolish way to do it.

"But be this as it may, we ought to be agreed that to hamper and hinder the search for truth is not to deserve the gratitude of any man, but only his indignant blame. And this is what Professor Lankester has set himself to do in this prosecution. Professing to detest imposture, he has effectually promoted it and made its growth more rank: for he has done his best to relegate Spiritualism from publicity to seclusion, and to drive investigators to obscure places whither mediums will be banished, instead of striving to encourage open and full investigation. Professing to hate Spiritualism, he has given it an impetus which no other means could have furnished, and has done what he can to take it out of the hands of careful and responsible observers and adepts, and to let loose its unknown powers amongst the ignorant and the enthusiastic, where feeling will do duty for proof, and where imposture and delusion, fanaticism and folly will

find a too congenial atmosphere. Professing to be a seeker after truth, he has shown too conclusively that, like so many others, his truth is that only which squares with his own preconceived ideas. Anything that militates against that crass Materialism which his school affects, anything that upsets that Nihilism which is so dear to a certain tone of thought, he fights against. For these things I owe him no thanks. He has embarked on an enterprise far more wide-reaching than he thinks, and the battle begun at Bow Street will not end there. Any attempt on the part of Materialism to stem the tide of thought which just now is flooding the world will be vain. Men in all departments of thought are waking from the sleep in which the world has long been plunged, and the craving for some higher knowledge of the higher nature in man will assuredly call down its answer. Spiritualism, under some form or other (and the present writer, at least, desiderates a higher form than any that is touched by police-court prosecutions), will increase and flood with its advancing wave the whole line of modern thought. Professor Lankester flourishing a police-court summons to stay its course is as ludicrous a spectacle as Mrs. Partington with her mop fighting the Atlantic Ocean. The old lady should have confined her attention to puddles. Mr. Lankester might profitably do the same.

"Nov. 4, 1876."

In this connection, and in order to place before the readers of this magazine, and all who may desire to compare the items of evidence, a clear statement of facts, I subjoin a *fac-simile* (see following page) of writing obtained by Mr. Hensleigh Wedgwood on two slates firmly lashed together. I may add that the Greek script, with its initial signature, is the same in kind as some Greek characters which Mr. Gledstones obtained on a late visit to Slade. Both specimens differ from some similar writing obtained some time ago by Mr. R. Dale Owen, and published in the *Spiritualist* of November 3rd ult. All are apparently written by a hand accustomed to the Greek character.

The account given by Mr. Wedgwood is as follows. The sudden breaking up of the slate, as if by an explosion from within, has been frequently described by observers :—

"Having a strong belief in the genuineness of the slate-writing exhibited by Dr. Slade, I was desirous of obtaining a specimen from him, under conditions adequate to negative the suppositions of those who accuse him of fraud. I thought that this might be effected if I took my own folding slate, and took care that it was never unclosed, or out of my sight, until the writing was found upon it. I accord-

καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός,
ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον
κατὰ εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν
καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν καὶ
ἐρkéσωσαν τῶν ἰχθύων
τῆς θαλάσσης, καὶ τῶν
πετευνῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ
καὶ τῶν κτηνῶν καὶ
πάντος τῆς καὶ πάντων τῶν
ερπετῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς

ΘΧ

Dear Sir - our
friend could not
do more - he will
come again - let
this be proof for
this time
James Taylor

ingly made Slade understand that if the slate was taken underneath the table, it must be opened before me, so that I could see that there was no writing upon it up to that moment. He saw clearly the importance of this precaution, and we sat down to an old Pembroke table, with his chair facing the light. The slate consisted of a pair of hinged wooden tablets, faced with slate on the inside, so that when the tablets were shut you could not touch the slate at all. Dr. Slade, in the first place, held the shut tablets in one hand under the table for preliminary inquiry. Presently we heard a crackling noise that I did not understand, and when the slate was brought up, it was found to be all broken to pieces in the inside. We were thus reduced to make use of two of Dr. Slade's own slates, apparently new, having the grey look of unused slates. I breathed on them, and rubbed them well with my pocket-handkerchief, and, putting the rubbed faces together, we tied them up fast with a piece of cord, with a fragment of slate-pencil between them. Thus tied up, the slate was laid flat on the table, without having been taken under it at all, or removed for a moment from under my eyes. I placed both my hands upon it, and Slade one of his. Presently we heard the writing begin, coming distinctly from the slate as I leaned down my ear to listen to it. It did not sound, however, like running writing, as we both remarked, but like a succession of separate strokes, as if some one was trying to write and could not make his pencil mark, and I expected that it would prove an abortive attempt. It went on, however, with the same kind of sound for a long time, perhaps for six or seven minutes. At last there was a decided change in the sound, which became unmistakably that of rapid writing in a running hand. When this was done I took the slate into the other room, leaving Slade entranced behind, and untying them, I found that on one face was written, in a very good hand, the 27th verse of the 1st chapter of Genesis, in Greek, from the Septuagint: and, on the other, a message of the usual character in English running hand. The Greek letters, being each written separately, was what had given the broken sound of the former part of the writing, the change from which to the continued sound of running writing had been so striking.

"If it be suggested that the slates were really prepared beforehand with some invisible writing, which was brought out by the heat of my hand, I answer (independent of other grave objections), that the writing as it stands can be wiped out by the merest touch, and could not possibly in its supposed invisible state have escaped obliteration when the slates were well rubbed by my pocket-handkerchief.

"H. WEDGWOOD."

"We found the Doctor and his friends in the drawing room, and after a few minutes' conversation, he asked us to retire with him to the room behind, which is entirely disconnected with the drawing-room, and in which he holds his seances. The window was shuttered, but ample light was diffused from the chandelier in the middle of the room. The room is not overcrowded with furniture—a good feature in a seance-room. The ash table, which I before described, was in the centre, and to its structure and condition at the time, the medium called our attention by turning it up.

"Our sitting was of an entirely different character from that described by me two weeks ago, showing the great veracity of Dr. Slade's mediumship. Physical manifestations, in the common acceptation of the term, were quite absent; a much higher grade was accordingly produced. After a few signals conveyed in sounds, Dr. Slade carefully cleaned a slate with a sponge, and, biting a small crumb from a slate pencil, put it under the slate on the table, and requested me to place my arm over it. I did so, and we all joined hands on the top of the table. Immediately we heard the sound of writing, first at one side of the slate, and then gradually towards the other side, after reaching which the writing ceased, and a tapping sound was heard, to indicate that the message was complete. During the time this writing was going on, Mrs. Burns was much influenced, and she felt a number of hands under the table. Dr. Slade repeatedly saw a form close to her head, which she saw also; it was her father. On the slate being lifted, it was covered with writing, a *fac-simile* of which accompanies this article. We give a copy of it in letterpress, correcting one or two grammatical errors:—

"Dear Mr. Burns,—Let me tell you what Spiritualism is. Spiritualism is to the soul like the gentle dews to the withered flowers, like refreshing rains to the thirsty earth, like food to the hungry. Spiritualism supplies a void in the human soul yet unsatisfied, which has never been and never will be by any other "ism;" it brings nourishing food for the soul, which no other "ism" can bring; and in its genial atmosphere of light and wisdom, watered by the dews of angel-breathings, that unfolds the soul in youthful beauty and eternal freshness, it is the spirit-power alone that ever frees the soul from the bondage of sin and error; and is it not beautiful to the soul to become free, to have the prison-doors of hearts thrown open, to have the chains of error thrown off, and come forth in freedom, to love and see God in all his works? I think your heart responds to all this.—I am, truly, a friend to all humanity,

"A. W. SLADE."

in my humble and lowly prayer for the health and
prosperity of the whole Christian Church and
the peace of the world. I have the honor to be
very respectfully and obediently your
and the Council's humble servant
and the Council's obedient servant
I have the honor to be very respectfully
and obediently your and the Council's
humble servant and the Council's
obedient servant. I have the honor
to be very respectfully and obediently
your and the Council's humble servant
and the Council's obedient servant.

The slate *fac-similed* above is $11\frac{3}{4}$ in. by $8\frac{3}{4}$ in., and may be seen at 15, Southampton Row. I have no wish to enter into the whole question of evidence, but I cannot refrain from adding here a piece of testimony which absolutely precludes the explanation given by Professor Lankester. It is clipped from the *Banner of Light*, Nov. 4, 1876:—

“*To the Editor of the ‘Banner of Light.’*”

“As I had a somewhat difference experience with Dr. Slade from any that I have seen or heard stated, I deem it my duty to give you an account of it. After several sittings with him, at which writing on my own slates, both single and double, was obtained under a variety of test conditions, he allowed me to *sit alone at his table*; he taking a seat near the centre of the room, several feet distant. The slate employed was my own; and I placed it in position myself, after first carefully inspecting it, and rubbing it thoroughly with my moistened hand, after which Dr. Slade was not within six feet of it. As soon as my hands were laid on the table, all of the usual slate phenomena occurred, precisely as they had before done, when Dr. Slade sat with me. That is, there was the same clear and distinct sound of rapid writing, supplemented by three raps; and upon my lifting the slate, I found one side of it completely filled with a closely written communication, beautifully executed, addressed to me, and purporting to come from a deceased friend, whose name was signed to it. This was in the month of June, at eleven o’clock in the forenoon. The slate, with the writing on it, is still in my possession.

“THOMAS W. WATERMAN.

“*Binghampton, New York, Oct. 30, 1876.*”

Evidence such as this was not producible at the trial, and, though a certain amount of testimony was admitted, this was avowedly done for the purpose of counterbalancing the equally irrelevant evidence of Mr. Maskelyne; and the magistrate professed, in delivering judgment, that he had impartially dismissed both pieces of evidence from his mind. He decided entirely on the evidence of Messrs. Lankester and Donkin. Had he felt himself able to take count of the evidence, which could have been adduced by scores of competent witnesses, he would have had still more reason to say, as he did, after hearing four witnesses only, “*Your evidence is overwhelming.*”

It may be well to set forward in a popular form the state of these musty old laws that have been raked out for the purposes of the prosecution, and to define their bearing on the practice of mediumship in public. The curiosities of the statute-book are known to few, and it may be new to many of my readers that public mediums, under

certain statutes, framed for far other purposes, may find themselves prosecuted in any of the following ways :—

I. An indictment may be preferred against a public medium for obtaining money under false pretences. He may be tried at Assizes, Central Criminal Court, or Quarter Sessions, but his case does not come under the summary jurisdiction of a police magistrate, as did the case of Dr. Slade.

The difficulty of proving what the Act requires will stop enthusiastic medium-hunters from having frequent recourse to it. In order to ensure a conviction it is necessary to prove :—

- (1) A pretence or representation made by the accused or with his knowledge and authority.
- (2) That such representation was false, and false to his knowledge.
- (3) That it was made with intent to defraud.
- (4) That money, or its equivalent, were, in fact, obtained in consequence and by means of that representation—*i.e.*, *that the person parting with his money believed the representation, and was induced by it to part with his money.*

These devious and tortuous bye-paths afford ample cover for the “elusive wild beast” to find shelter. It would be very hard to bring him to bay, and manifestly none but a Spiritualist, who believed the representation that the phenomena are due to spiritual agency, could use it.

II. On the trial of any indictable offence, the accused may be convicted of an *attempt* only, so that, failing proof that the fraud was successfully accomplished, it is possible that proof of an intent to defraud, and of the false pretences used for the purpose, would support a conviction for the minor offence (*vide* 14 and 15 Victoria, cap. 100, sec. 2). Or the accused may be indicted for the attempt only, as every *attempt* to commit a misdemeanour is itself a misdemeanour. Observe *attempt*, not *intention*: the *act* is sufficient without the *motive* being proven.

The punishment for obtaining money under false pretences is, at the discretion of the Court, five years’ penal servitude, or imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for any term not exceeding two years.

III. If this be considered by the medium-hunter too risky a proceeding, or if the “elusive wild beast” escapes the meshes of the net, he may be proceeded against as a rogue and vagabond, under the provisions of “The Vagrant Act,” 5 George IV., cap. 83, sec. 4.

This is the Act under which Slade was summarily convicted, and sentenced to three months' imprisonment, with hard labour. It provides that "any person pretending or professing to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive or impose on any of Her Majesty's subjects, may be dealt with summarily." The general words "or otherwise" are governed by the preceding specification of the class of offenders intended to be dealt with, and so will be confined to devices (*ejusdem generis*) of the same class as fortune-telling and palmistry.

For instance, it was held by the Court of Queen's Bench that a mere trick of sleight-of-hand, whereby halfpence were substituted for half-crowns, apparently placed in small paper parcels, which were then offered for sale to a crowd of persons, did not come within the Act. Yet, according to Mr. Flowers, slate-writing does. This is the ground of appeal in Slade's case. If palming off halfpence for half-crowns is not within the Act, it is hard to see how slate-writing is. This, however, is still to be tried.

IV. There remains one more engine, if all these devices fail. The unfortunate medium is liable to prosecution under the 9, George II., cap. 5, which, after repealing the old Act of James I. against witchcraft, proceeds thus—"And for the more effectual preventing and punishing any pretences to such arts or powers as are before mentioned, whereby ignorant persons are frequently deluded and defrauded, it is further enacted that if any person shall *pretend to exercise, or use, any kind of witchcraft, sorcery, enchantment, or conjuration*, or undertake to tell fortunes, or pretend, by his or her skill or knowledge in any occult or crafty science, to discover where or in what manner any goods or chattels, supposed to have been stolen or lost, may be found, every person so offending, being thereof lawfully convicted on indictment or information in that part of Great Britain called England, or on indictment or libel in that part of Great Britain called Scotland, shall for every such offence suffer imprisonment by the space of one whole year, without bail." Furthermore, he is to stand in the pillory, and find sureties for good behaviour.

It will be observed that England and Scotland only are specified. Is Ireland then the happy hunting-ground of mediums? At any rate one crumb of comfort is to be found in the fact that the punishment of the pillory is abolished by 1 Wm. IV., and 1 Vict., c. 23.

Such are the provisions which the wisdom of our forefathers enacted to deliver themselves from having their fortunes told, or from witchcraft, sorcery, and conjuration. What they were afraid of, or how far the provisions of their Acts were meant to apply I do not venture

to guess. Whether Maskelyne is a "conjurator" or not, I dare not even wonder. I should not wonder if he was. But that opens out too wide a question. Would sauce for the spiritualistic goose be sauce also for the conjurating grander? That is a nice point. How far the first young lady who trifles with Planchette may be indicted under this Act is a problem as yet unsolved. But, at any rate, I shall not be wrong if I brand, within the parliamentary use of words, the application of these obsolete statutes to the stopping of unwelcome investigation, by the strongest terms of reprobation. It may be temporarily successful—nay, I will not believe so badly of English common-sense and fair-play, as to credit even so much as that—but the time is not far distant when by the consentient opinion of educated men, those who have wielded such weapons to crush that which they detest and fear, will be held to have gone beyond the rules of fair warfare. The unwelcome truth cannot be met and must be crushed. No means are ready in these enlightened days except the obvious ones of scientific investigation and study. This is not to be thought of: and accordingly the "subtle devices" of Spiritualism are countermined and sought to be exploded by the no less "subtle devices" of an antiquated and barbarous legal enactment. Instead of fighting with the weapons which modern research and civilised usage alone sanction, viz., experiment and investigation, we are met with wholesale ridicule and supercilious scorn, by men who laugh at what they do not understand, and affect to scorn that which inspires them with a vague fear. When these weapons fail they have resort to obsolete and rusty lances dragged from the armoury where they have long hung unused, and rapidly furbished up to meet exigencies for which they were never constructed. These they will use—the High Priests of Science—to crush out, so far as in them lies, the noblest science of all, man's knowledge of his own soul and its eternal destiny. These they will use with such vigour as inspires a man when he feels "his craft in danger." These they will use, and will not even blush that they are belying their profession and turning science into a bye-word, by fathering on it practices which are born of jealousy and fear—they whose *raison d'être* is the search of all truth, but whose practice is the arrogant denial of all save that section which they honour with their own patronage. These they will use until they break in their hands, and leave them foolish and malignant still, but helpless in their mad crusade: men who have tried to revive, in the 19th century, the bigotry and inquisitional tactics of mediævalism, and who have, in most righteous retribution, met with an ignominious failure.

This must be the result of the present attempt in the end. There is an alternative, which I will state, but will not entertain. It is

that the present persecution, bitterly persisted in, should succeed. The result, in this case, may be shortly stated. Investigation will become esoteric, and the truth will flourish all the more in secrecy and seclusion. But meantime a heavy blow will have been dealt to freedom and liberty of action; and the dogmatism of science will be in a fair way to replace, with its even more offensive rule, the iron reign of theological bigotry, which not three centuries of persistent struggle have yet entirely obliterated. The Lankesters of science will replace the inquisitors of church history; and it will be again proven for the hundredth time, that in the opinion of such unyielding bigots, *liberty of thought means liberty to think as I do, or to take the consequences.*

I say I will not entertain this alternative as a serious possibility. I will not think so poorly of the intelligence and fairmindedness of men who are, at least, civilised and cultured, as to believe that any considerable number of them will fight under the banner of Lankester, and wage a war against investigation of any subject, however distasteful it may be to their own notions and opinions. I prefer to believe, till I am forced to think otherwise, that this is a passing craze of which, when it is past, its victims will be thoroughly and deservedly ashamed.

I have given an historical summary of the Slade case, and have said something of the tone and temper of the prosecution in the present instance. But it is to little purpose that Spiritualists view their present experience if they do not gather up the lessons that it teaches. The processes of education are very much the same, whether in the individual or the community. Man learns most from sad experience: the more sad the lesson, the more surely it is learned, and the more deeply imprinted. If the "burnt child does not dread the fire," then that child's future is easy to predict. It will turn out a foolish ne'er-do-well, always in scrapes, and unfit to shift for itself. Precisely the same rule applies to communities, and especially to such a body as this of ours. We are emphatically in need of discipline and education. We have hardly yet settled down after our rapid growth. The child born just thirty years ago, has increased in stature (if not in wisdom) at a very rapid rate. It has grown so fast that its education has been a little neglected. In the expressive phraseology of its native country, it has been "dragged up" rather promiscuously: and its phenomenal growth has absorbed all other considerations. The time has now come when those who have regarded it as an ugly monster which was born by one of nature's freaks only to die an

early death, begin to recognise their mistake. The ugly brat means to live : and beneath its ugliness the least sympathetic gaze detects a coherent purpose in its existence. It is the presentation of a principle inherent in man's nature, a principle which his wisdom has improved away until it is well nigh eliminated altogether, but which crops out again and again in spite of him—the principle of Spirit as opposed to Matter, of Soul acting and existing independently of the body which enshrines it. Long years of denial of aught but the properties of matter have landed the chief lights of modern science in pure Materialism. To them, therefore, this Spiritualism is a portent and a problem. It is a return to superstition : a survival of savagery : a blot on nineteenth-century intelligence. Laughed at, it laughs back : scorned, it gives back scorn for scorn. What is to be done with it ?

The present prosecution supplies the answer of the materialist. Every engine that can be used will be brought to bear to crush : every blot and flaw will be picked out : every slip we make will be pounced upon : every scandalous story of imposture made the most of. We must be prepared to set our own house in order, if we would not have it very rudely done for us. That seems to be sure. We must be prepared to go in for a thorough cleaning. And, truth to tell, we want it. Though the hand that is prepared to scrub is not governed by maternal tenderness, the child is sadly in need of the discipline of soap and water. And to refuse to recognise that plain fact would augur very badly for the educational development of which I have been speaking.

Without going at length just now into the whole question at issue, it may be broadly said, without much fear of contradiction, that an observer who looks at the broad aspect of Spiritualism without any intimate knowledge of the subject, would see in it much to astonish, much to startle, much even to fill him with a certain vague alarm. To such an ignorant on-looker—and be it remembered that the outside public is and must be ignorant of the inner principles, the esoteric rationale of spiritual philosophy—the subject would present a curious picture. Let us assume that an intelligent student of man and manners in the present day desired to make himself acquainted with the working of the various factors that go to make the opinion of the age. He would have no difficulty in seeing that it is no common age, this in which we live. A diligent student of history, he would at once correlate the present epoch with those which have preceded some great revolution in the history of a people :—the same restless spirit of inquiry : the same cautious and repeated trying of old institutions and habits which are brought in their old age to show cause for their

very existence: the same spirit of rampant speculation: the same eager expectation of a something "which is to come." Everywhere and all around him he sees a process of disintegration, a destructive force that for the time obscures and paralyzes constructive energy; or which, at any rate, is more conspicuous in its action and more visible in its effects. In politics the air is heavy with impending struggle: the destroying angel of war is abroad, and over us we may almost hear the rustle of his wings. In the narrower fields of religion and science the same forces are at work. The world has outgrown the religion that sufficed its fathers. The story that they accepted with unquestioning faith is now called upon to stand the ruder test of reason, and the spiritual food that fed them is found unsatisfying for the more vigorous digestion of modern criticism. Bit by bit the old power has been slipping away from churches and creeds. By slow degrees man has emancipated himself from priestly control, and he now stands and looks fearlessly into the face of that which has long been used to frighten him, and the bogie is found to have lost its power. Religion to him means something more than anything that any system however venerable, any church however infallible, any creed by whatever penalties it is sought to be enforced, can furnish him with. It means a theosophy which does not run counter to the lines of human science; which tells him of his nature and destiny, of the place whence he came, and the life to which he goes; which puts before him a God that he can worship, an ideal to which the loftiest aspirations may reach up. He seeks no anthropomorphic conception; he demands precision only in the foundation whereon his faith may rest; content, if he can see but the tendency of life, to allow the tendencies to unfold themselves in progressive cycles of existence. First and foremost he needs to be satisfied of his spiritual existence after bodily death.

Our observer turns from this, the highest religious yearning, to the domain of science. What is the answer that comes from the realm of exact knowledge? Science knows nothing of Soul. Its scalpel cannot find it; its researches, in whatever way conducted, fail to discover it. Matter, and nothing but the properties of matter, is the result of its processes of investigation. Spirit, it says, is an invention of ignorance. Man, in his savage state of rude development, has always had a certain number of vague superstitions. One of them is that he has a soul, and will live after death. The wish is father to the thought. He would like to live, and so has framed the theory of disembodied existence; just as certain mediæval charlatans who feared death, fabricated the notion of an Elixir of Life which was to enable them to defy the last great enemy. Man has no Soul:

there is no Spirit : there is no God : nothing but the reign of Inflexible Law. Man pleases himself in his infancy with these notions, and thinks to propitiate the ideal he has erected by ceremonies which he calls Religion. All in vain ; the rain falls on the evil and on the good : the most abandoned reprobate, equally with the greatest saint, is crushed if he fall from a precipice, or slain by the attack of pestilence. There is one law for all ; and if virtue is the best policy, it is because it is most in harmony with the laws of man's being which his own investigations have discovered, and which it required no Divine Being to reveal.

This then, omitting all that does not show the progressive tendency of modern thought, all that survives yet among the unthinking and the easy-going, who will not be disturbed till their neighbour's house is on fire and they are half choked by the smoke,—this is the outlook that meets our observer. Old Theology losing its power : modern Nihilism at variance with it and with all forms of religious thought. And yet in the midst of it all, the best, the truest, the noblest minds yearning for some proof of the instinct which is not all dead, that they have in them the germs of a future life that death will not be able to destroy. Have then the ancients been all wrong ? Have the noblest of mankind lived for a fallacy, and died for an idea ? What more melancholy, dreary thought ! Is the hope of endless progress a chimera ? Is modern science surely right, and must the quality of infallibility be transferred from the Vatican to Burlington House ?

In the midst of this train of thought our observer turns his attention to another phase of belief. Within the pale of orthodox theology, and even within the precincts of the Royal Society, he observes certain persons who do not entirely agree with either view yet presented to him. Some scientists not only tell him that man has a soul, but also that they have obtained scientific evidence of the fact. Some estimable and religious people assert that the friends whom death has riven from them, not only live in all the plenitude of sentient existence, but that they themselves have held communion with them ; and that not once but often ; not “perhaps,” but “verily and in sober truth ;” not seeing them “as in a glass, darkly,” but openly and “face to face.” Here then is the key to the mystery. If one, a hundred, a thousand of the race live again, then the law must probably be the same for all. Spirit is proven, and immortal life is something more than a speculation. No more tremendous proposition was ever put forward, and our observer will look into the evidence with attention. He finds that the believers in this creed are called Spiritualists, and in their numbers and character, in the startling strangeness of their beliefs, and in the scorn with which those tenets

are received by modern Pharisee and Scribe, he recognises a resemblance to another "sect which was everywhere spoken against," now nearly 2000 years ago, and which has survived to dominate the then fashionable belief. This does not surprise him. He is prepared to find new truth unfashionable. What does surprise him, as he becomes acquainted, in such manner as he best can, with the broad aspects of the subject, is the strange contradictions, the grotesque absurdities (as they seem to him), the trifling puerilities, the mixture of the holiest truths with the plainest fraud, that he fancies he detects all around him. Having obtained access to the only means of investigation open to him, he is at a loss to recognise in what he sees there any realisation of what he had hoped for. If he is fortunate, he will find ready evidence of the operation of a force unknown to him before, and of an intelligence very different from any that he has previously been acquainted with: but he will have some difficulty in correlating that intelligence with that of a departed human being, unless he is more than ordinarily fortunate.

Puzzled and bewildered, if not discouraged, he turns to the records printed from time to time, to the historical evidence and—unless he has the esoteric knowledge which, by the hypothesis, he cannot yet possess—he is more perplexed still. On the surface lie the most patent contradictions, what to him, in the light of his ideal, seem the most puerile follies. Shakespere returns to demonstrate his own imbecility: Bacon, to talk bad English, and worse philosophy. Leaders of public thought in ages long past, saints and sages whose lofty philosophy and noble religious ideas are still a power among us, return to sanction the crudest speculations, or to give utterance to the most dangerous doctrines which have only to be believed and acted upon in order to revolutionise society, and turn the wheel of progress backwards. Side by side with this he finds perpetual records of alleged imposture, all too specious to his eye. The very persons with whom he comes in contact in his investigations are divergent in their opinions, and animated by motives as various. Some are merely curious, some strangely credulous, some jest, some scoff, some look for scientific proof of a pet theory, some seek to explode what seems to them an error or a fraud; few, very few, are the earnest seekers after truth, who strive with reverence and patient care to fathom the mystery that surrounds them.

All this perplexes him. Again I reiterate that he sees only what lies on the surface: he has not the inner knowledge which will enable him to brush away these perplexities, and harmonize these seeming contradictions. He is looking at the matter from without. And I, for one, do not wonder that such an observer, with the best intentions

and the most impartial mind, is bewildered and dismayed. If he has patience to pursue the investigation, he will work through all this scum and find his reward in time: but to most men this is impossible; from all it is asking too much, all the more that these surface difficulties, these absurdities and chicaneries, are no part of the subject, and should be resolutely purged away. Instead of presenting Spiritual Science in the most repulsive garb, it should be our aim to make it lovely and of good report. Instead of trivialities and absurdities, we should strive to set forth the grand truths it teaches in their most attractive aspect. Instead of permitting or tolerating what may wear even the appearance of fraud, whether the authors of that fraud be men or controlling spirits, we should set ourselves scrupulously to eliminate it by making the conditions of investigation such as to preclude its possibility. Instead of dragging spirit down to matter, we should try to raise ourselves to the plane of spirit, and to enter into relations with intelligences of moral consciousness and integrity who will teach us what we want to know. In short we must study the science of spirit, the laws of mediumship, the principles that govern intercourse between the world of spirit and the world of matter, the means by which we may avoid what we all agree, I hope, in deploring.

These are the lessons which lie on the surface, and which the present crisis should bring home to us. We are not beyond learning them if only they are pointed out; and it is only by patient investigation and discussion that we can attain to knowledge of them. I am far from thinking that I can do much to put before those who do me the honour to read this article anything that can be new. I can at best but suggest what must have occurred to many minds before; perhaps, however, it may be serviceable to state it now, and it may, at least, lead to further suggestions from others. In this spirit, with a hearty desire to avoid dogmatism, and with a single wish for truth, I venture to throw out the following suggestions:—

In estimating the bearings of the subject we must have regard to our own world, to that with which we come into communion, and to the link that unites us to it. We must think, not only of ourselves as Spiritualists, but also of the outside world whom we often seek to influence, and who will meddle with us, whether we like it or not; and chiefly, we must try and understand the nature of mediumship and the conditions under which it is best exercised.

On these, the exoteric and esoteric views of Spiritualism, I propose to offer some plain reflections, tentative and imperfect, but, I hope, suggestive too. As to the necessity for facing all difficulties, there can be no doubt in any sane mind; if we do not, we shall surely

suffer for it. It has been said that a divine work cannot be brought to nought by man. It may be so. I do not know; but this I do know: that man, by his folly and wickedness, may materially injure its progress, may bring it into transient contempt, and may impede when he might foster and impel its progress. God works by instruments, and though it is said again that He sometimes chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, I have yet to learn that folly is a good preparation for any form of work. I prefer to think, as most people who are not fanatics will, that we shall be better advised in preparing ourselves by the severest exercise of our highest powers to become "fellow-workers" with the messengers of the Supreme, who are to us the ministers of His will. In this spirit let us "set our house in order," and see how we stand.

Now the questions involved range themselves naturally into those which affect Spiritualists as such, and this is the esoteric view: those which concern us in our relation to the outside world, the exoteric view: and especially those which concern the medium, the link between the two worlds. I will sketch rapidly certain considerations which occur under these several heads.

I. *Esoteric questions affecting Spiritualists only.*

There are Spiritualists and Spiritualists. We are a great body and the body has many members, which fulfil widely divergent duties, and which are related to each other only so far as they are members of the same body. There is the largest freedom of thought among us in matters non-essential. No conclave has presumed to lay down for the acceptance of the faithful a creed to be subscribed to under penalties affixed. There is, indeed, a simple yet very sublime creed which those who have come into communion with the higher spirits have received; but none has sought to force on any of his brethren any dogmatic definition of faith. On the common platform of a belief in existence perpetuated after bodily death, and of the interference of the world of spirit with the world of matter under certain conditions, those who call themselves Spiritualists are content to meet. Their private fancies are (or ought to be) thrown aside, and they are banded together in defence of spiritual existence and spiritual communion. None has any right to graft his own ideas on those stocks, or to hold as of binding force the *dicta* of spirits which to his own mind are commended as reasonable or fair-seeming. The platform is broad and comprehensive.

Again, none prescribes to the individual Spiritualist what part of the wide field of investigation he should devote himself to explore. To one may be commended the religious aspect of the question: to another its scientific demonstration. One may long and seek for

communion with his own departed friends ; another may try to search out the mysteries that beset the whole question of communion with the unseen world. One may experiment with a view to fathoming the powers of his own spirit ; another to see if perchance all unembodied intelligence be indeed that of deceased humanity. There is room for all : and though he who covers the whole ground necessarily obtains a wider view than the minute investigator of a single point, still there is ample room for choice. In a science so new and yet so old, of such infinite ramifications, and of such far-reaching issues, none need fail to suit his individual fancies. The field is open to all.

Wide, then, as the field is, the comprehensive character of those who are generically called Spiritualists is not less wide. Men of every divergent cast of mind find themselves side by side : the one bond between them being a desire for truth, and a certain ability, which does not always belong to those who have not given their minds full play, to look it straight in the face and follow it when they have found it. Most of them have not found satisfaction in older forms of faith, and have come, in the course of their search after truth, to find rest within the pale of Spiritualism. Some have found in its evidences a confirmation of their belief in the "old, old story." Some see a possible union between Religion and Science. Some are simple souls who have come there to meet their friends whom they once thought dead. Some are in hot pursuit of a crotchet—unconscious cerebration, or what not. *Quot homines, tot sententiæ.* It is not necessary that they should subscribe to any declaration, or be bound by any fetters. Most of them, indeed, have emancipated themselves from rusty fetters of old and cramping creeds. The iron had eaten into their soul : and in their new-found liberty, they are little desirous to fetter themselves with fresh obligations.

Hence the organisation of Spiritualists is as elastic as may be. Indeed, to many, it has seemed that the whole question of organisation was open. In America, especially, attempts on the part of a certain number to organise on a narrow basis have been met with strong remonstrance from tried and more catholic-minded workers. I do not propose to say anything about the state of the question in England, save as much as is necessary to my argument, and that respects the future rather than the past. In days which seem (for the present, at any rate) to be over, we were left alone. For the future it looks as if we were to be made the subject of a number of raids. The ominous intelligence that Her Majesty's Government have lent the sanction of their countenance, and the use of the public purse, to the prosecution of Slade is a sign of the times which he who is wise will ponder. Success in one case will encourage other attempts, and we must lay

it to our account that we are to be harried. It seems then to the present writer a very needful thing, that we should consider at once and with all care the best means of resisting impending attacks. They will surely be made, and we must meet them. How? The experience of mankind is in favour of united action in the face of an enemy. Union is strength: discord means defeat. If an organised attack is to be resisted, an organised defence must be planned. That which in its raw state is a mere undisciplined mob becomes, by drilling and organisation, a regiment in which each man stands shoulder to shoulder with his comrade, deriving support from him, and communicating strength in return, presenting a united and unbroken front to the foe, and acting in obedience to the word of command. Does this apply to us? I feel bound to say, after patient thought and with some diffidence in the correctness of my conclusion, that *the principle does apply*. In times of peace, when no foe threatened, when we were safe from attack, there were arguments in favour of large liberty of action which seemed to me weighty. A great part of that weight is lost to them under the changed conditions in which we are now placed, and has been transferred to the opposite side. Though I am fully aware of the extreme difficulty of obtaining it, I cannot conceal from myself that in these days we need all the strength which careful and comprehensive organisation can give us.

Is that organisation possible? I do not say; but I do say that it is extremely desirable that the attention of every responsible person within the pale of Spiritualism should be given to the solution of the question. Let us present a compact and united front to the enemy. Mr. Howitt—*clarum et venerabile nomen*—has raised in the pages of the *Spiritual Magazine* the cry, "To your tents, O Israel," meaning, I presume, that all who accept a certain particular phase of belief should separate themselves from other Spiritualists who do not so believe, and should maintain a policy of isolation. I believe it will be an evil day for Spiritualism when such tactics shall prevail. I earnestly trust rather that differences will be merged in the common instinct of self-preservation, and that the solution of minor differences will be reserved for another and more convenient season.

(1.) This then is one point I want to press home on Spiritualists—*Unity of action, so far as that is possible and attainable*.

Furthermore it is a common cause of complaint among us that the communications received, so far as they are known to the outside world, are of an unsatisfactory nature. It is said that they are frequently trivial, contradictory, foolish (if not worse), and not such as to command respect from those who are little inclined to give it. I am anxious not to overstate the argument, and I must be under-

stood as putting the allegation of an opponent. Is it so? I am disposed to think it is. In very many cases it undoubtedly is the fact that the communications made in circles where a mixed company is gathered are not of a high or consistent character. Why is this? Because, as I understand the philosophy of spirit-intercourse, we do not provide the conditions under which satisfactory communion can take place. Our public circles are frequented by people led there by the most various motives. Curiosity, a desire to expose preconceived fallacy or fraud, the wish to wile away an idle hour,—such motives predominate. And this is so almost by the very nature of the case. Spiritualism attracts a good deal of public notice. Those who hear of it ask at once, “Where can I see anything of this for myself?” Entirely ignorant of the delicate conditions which beset the investigation, they are sent to the nearest public circle. The result is that any possibility of the evolution of phenomena or of the communication of information on satisfactory principles is entirely stopped. It would be impossible for me here to lay down any laws which should be observed in seeking communications from the world of spirit. I am not venturing to do more than throw out hints. But anyone who has intelligently investigated this subject will realize the difficulty which I now point out. I shall have more to say on the question when I come to deal with the nature of mediumship: but meantime it may be said that before communion with the world of spirit can be had on satisfactory bases, it is necessary to revise the conditions on which it is usually sought to be obtained. The melancholy stories of imposture, too often charged on the medium when he is the unconscious instrument of spirits whom the circle have attracted, make this plain enough. It is high time that this should be seen to: and that we should learn that we have it in our power to raise ourselves, in this respect, to far higher results than any yet obtained. When we have purified our circles, when we have made it impossible for those who now gain access without question—the curious, the vicious, the scoffing, the uninformed—to get in without preparation, we shall have removed one great stumbling-block. We must diffuse knowledge of conditions, prevent the ingress of the enemy on our own side, and then we shall be in a position to commune with higher intelligences, and to preclude imposture and trick. Surely this is not impracticable. Surely it is most desirable.

(2.) This is my second point—*The purification of public circles.*

Other points suggest themselves, but I must deal only with the most salient, and that only by way of suggestion. Others may take up points which I have missed, or which do not come within my scope. I pass to the link that unites us to the world of spirit.

II. *The Medium, and the Nature of Mediumship.*

The medium is a mesmeric sensitive, and as such is amenable to every dominant influence brought to bear on him. He is the receptacle of the several positive influences of the circle. If there be present a positive mind filled with doubt, it reacts on the medium. If there be a scoffing, jeering spirit amongst those present, it cuts into him like a knife. If an over-clever person thinks he has detected, or suspected fraud, that suspicion bites into the medium and "the iron enters into his soul"—precious *rusty* iron it is too! If vice be present, it reacts on him. If fraud suggests itself, he feels it. He is the "wash-pot" into which the collective feelings and sentiments of the circle are collected. And more than this. He is the link between them and the spirits that their mental states attract. The communications are pretty sure to be the re-presentations of the mental state of the sitters: unless indeed a powerful controlling spirit is charged to protect and neutralize adverse influence. On the medium first of all devolves the effect of the conditions under which the sitting is held. If the minds be harmonious and the intentions pure, he is calm and passive and a fit vehicle for corresponding influences. If suspicion and evil tempers are predominant, he is influenced in corresponding ways. A mesmeric sensitive, he comes under the dominant influence, and too often re-presents the wishes and thoughts of those who surround him: or rather, becomes the unconscious vehicle for spirits who so act.

When will investigators learn this simple truth? A medium is a mesmeric sensitive controlled by spirits unembodied. These spirits are, in the vast majority of cases, attracted by the circle; and in order to elevate and purify our communications we must exercise supervision over those whom we admit to our circle. A medium should be dealt with in the same way as an astronomer would deal with one of his most delicate instruments. He should be isolated from the rude contact of others, seeing that he absorbs their influence, and becomes charged with their active thoughts. He should be protected from anything that can upset the delicate equilibrium which can alone make him a serviceable vehicle for communications. He should even be guarded from mixing with other people, seeing that each human being is surrounded with his own atmosphere, and that the medium, by virtue of his sensitiveness, readily enters into the sphere of those with whom he comes in contact. He should be isolated; kept from the possibility of being dominated by any earthly influence; trained in habits of temperance, sobriety, and chastity; placed outside of the range of vulgar temptation, and kept "unspotted from the world."

I think I hear the laugh that greets this statement. A medium

is a charlatan, an impostor, who produces one's grandmother for five shillings, a noxious and "elusive wild beast," to be crushed and trampled out! Yes. I am aware of it. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ*. It is for this reason that our circles are crowded with phenomena at best equivocal, too often apparently or really fraudulent. It is for this reason that we have such cause to blush for the puerilities and imbecilities, the frauds and tricks that are perpetually being brought to light. The most delicate of all conditions, the most obscure of all subjects, the most fugitive of all phenomena are dealt with on principles that may do for blasting rock or clearing virgin forests, but which defeat their object when applied to cases where precise knowledge and delicate care are the first requisites. The best results will always be obtained in harmonious family circles, where jealousy, mistrust, and the grosser passions find no place. It would seem as if these spiritual plagues take form and shape in some open circles: as if the mental obliquity of some of the sitters caused equivocal phenomena. This is a wide question. Before we can hope to obtain results at all commensurate with what is possible, we must learn somewhat of the nature of mediumship and of the conditions under which it may be profitably exercised.

(3.) This, then, is my third point. *Let us study the conditions under which the best results may be obtained from mediums.*

III. It remains to consider our attitude to the outside world—the *exoteric aspect*.

Here I will be brief. I should like to have as little to do with the outsiders as possible. I believe the energies of Spiritualists may be more profitably devoted to esoteric development than to touting for scientific recognition, or even to proselytizing in any form. I do not believe that we have any legitimate *locus standi* for scientific proselytizing at present. When we can get our phenomena produced under conditions which we have tabulated and laid down according to rule: when we can get them at *will*, we shall be in a very different case. Our best energies should be spent to achieve this. But seeing that outsiders *will* meddle with *us*, we must consider how we ought to deal with *them*.

As to the question of public circles, I have already indicated the line on which, as it seems to me, they ought to be conducted. It should be impossible for ignorant people to gain access to them and make a fiasco through their ignorance. The Lankestons should be kept out; they should be made to serve an apprenticeship before they can obtain admission.

And, in this aspect of the matter, it is well to note again what I have before said, that by no means sufficient care is given to perfect-

ing a few experiments which can be produced at any time and place for the investigation of those who "want to see something." It can be done, and with comparative ease; and nothing would do more to place our phenomena on a scientific basis than the painstaking attempt to perfect a few which can be produced under conditions which do not admit of doubt. I know that I shall be met with the rejoinder that Slade did that and (by the Nemesis of fate) stands now as the conspicuous example of exposure. I know, and most unjustly it is so. When knowledge has progressed even in a slight degree, the ignorance of a Lankester will be impossible. He will be educated out of himself. Only let the phenomena be produced in sufficient quantity, and under proper conditions for observation, and that cause of complaint will die of inanition. If public mediums, instead of producing a number of astounding phenomena in the dark, would devote their powers to evolving a very few simple experiments in the light, the whole aspect of the matter would be changed. I have said enough of this before. It is sufficient to add now that evidence of (1) a force not yet recognised by science, and (2) controlled by an intelligence outside of man is what we should aim at. For the rest let science come to us. We have no need to run helter-skelter to Burlington House, in order to enlighten those who do not wish to be enlightened, and who only misrepresent our endeavours. As Lord Melbourne was fond of saying, "Why can't you leave it alone?" We have enough to do without adding to our perplexities by trying to convince those who have not yet reached the plane of knowledge on which alone conviction is possible. The same energy and pains judiciously applied would enable us to command what we now ask as a favour. Let us perfect our science, and we may go down to the Royal Institution and compel attention—if that is desirable.

There is an aspect of the question which is yet untouched, and which can find no adequate treatment here. The religious aspect of Spiritualism is far too wide a subject to be treated of at the end of a long, and I fear, wearisome article. But I should ignore one of the most important views of my subject if I did not allude to it. It occupies the attention of outsiders very largely. They are constantly asking *Cui bono?* What is the intelligence? Why do we not get something valuable in the way of information? and so on. These are far-reaching questions, and I cannot enter into them now. But they may not be shirked. The question, What is the communicating intelligence? is a very serious one, and opens up some of the most abstruse points connected with the subject. The answers vary according to the knowledge and predilections of those

who reply. Ignorance, as represented by a majority of those who look cursorily at the matter, will put the intelligence down to something infra-human or diabolic. Serjeant Cox says, the intelligence is invariably that of the medium. He should know better: but he has a pet theory and his prepossessions are strong. Whatever it may be it surely is not that. But no more common phenomenon is observable than this. Men are brought in contact with the facts of Spiritualism; those facts are strange and new: they frame for themselves a rash hypothesis: and thenceforward everything must bend to that theory. They are weighted with an hypothesis which they would give a good deal to throw over; but their Frankenstein sticks to them. Dr. Carpenter is a fair instance in point, and he receives a richly merited castigation from Mr. Alfred R. Wallace in the *Daily News* of Dec. 8 and 19 in consequence. The *Spectator* of Dec. 9 shows up his weak points also. Serjeant Cox errs in the same way as Dr. Carpenter; and in so far his conclusions are both erroneous and mischievous, seeing that they mislead persons who know nothing of themselves, are too lazy to gain experience, and accept the statements of others without questioning. The mass of Spiritualists, again, are too ready to credit everything to the spirits of their departed friends, without taking pains to fathom the very difficult and abstruse questions involved.

But this is too serious a question to be opened now and here. Let it be considered: and let our endeavours be devoted to securing, so far as we can, relations with the highest grade of intelligence that we can reach. Spirits are of all types and classes, and very much depends on ourselves with regard to the communications which we elicit. Is it necessary at this stage of the investigation to insist on so plain a truth? Is it necessary to enforce the warning that that truth conveys? I am afraid it is. And most necessary to be learned is the lesson that it conveys.

I have said more than enough to indicate a few of the lessons that seem to me to press on Spiritualists now. I have perhaps said too much, and what I have said may be misconstrued. I hope not. At any rate I have said openly what is in my mind, and what I earnestly believe is of importance at the present crisis. In anything that I have said I desire to speak on my own responsibility and for myself alone. I may be mistaken in my views: but at any rate they are honestly put forward and with the sincerest motives. The questions on which I have touched are only tentatively handled. It would require a volume to deal with them as they deserve. But surely they are important: and however wrongly I may have treated them, however imperfectly I may have suggested them, they press for solution. If we do not

solve them, *they will be rudely solved for us*. Nothing but good can come from our dealing with them : nothing but mischief can come from our shelving them. I hope that nothing in the mode of their presentation will prevent Spiritualists from giving them their most careful consideration.

I commenced this article by saying that we had arrived at a crisis in the history of Spiritualism. I wish to strike the same note in concluding. I emphatically believe that we have reached a crisis when we shall be compelled to set our house in order and to face much hostile criticism and even persecution. If only the crisis produces its fair result, I at any rate shall hail it with a welcome. Times of persecution cannot be pleasant times : but they should be times of profit. They should be times when lessons are gathered up, and the lines of future progress are mapped out. With the experience of past ages to guide us, it is a day too late to hope that any form of truth worth having will make its way except through persecution and trial. If it were possible for any advanced form of truth to gain acceptance quietly, I should say at once that it was not the highest form of truth which the age was able to receive. Truth is always persecuted. There are always a number of persons who have a vested interest in the old, merely because it suits them ; a number who do not want to take the trouble of facing new difficulties ; many who turn uneasily in their bed, and ask for a little more slumber before they get up ; many whose instincts are engaged on the side of the old and the established. Every new truth has had to win its way, by most righteous discipline, through persecution and obloquy to final acceptance and belief. This grand truth of spirit communion is no exception. How should it be ? Is it not the noblest, mightiest fact that man can know ? And being so, is it not to be expected that a materialistic age should receive it with contempt and scorn ? Let it be so. Only be it ours to see that the scorn is not deserved, that we purify ourselves as those who herald a great truth should, and that we "give no occasion to the enemy of the Lord to blaspheme." If I have said anything here that can help to encourage men to hand on the torch of progressive truth, and to keep its flame pure, I shall not have spoken in vain.

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HM