

THE REALITY OR UNREALITY OF SPIRITUALISTIC PHENOMENA

*BEING A CRITICISM OF DR. W. J. CRAWFORD'S
INVESTIGATIONS INTO LEVITATIONS
AND RAPS*

BY

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“MAN IS A DUPEABLE ANIMAL.”

TO the cool-headed the present wave of Spiritualism will appear but as the natural and predictable sequel to a war that entailed the severing of countless loving ties. History is by no means devoid of previous instances of similar waves of superstition following in the wake of widespread sorrow and affliction, for the wounded soul is often devoid of reason. It has to be admitted that a few—but relatively to total numbers *very few*—eminent men of science hold a brief for the cult of Spiritualism; but it cannot be too strongly insisted upon—and this is a point frequently lost sight of—that because these scientists are undoubted authorities in some particular branch of science, such as electricity or astronomy, they are not necessarily authorities in “occult” matters.

Recently a great deal of interest in the Press and elsewhere has centred in the alleged marvellous performances of spirits, and much has been written and said on the subject. One of the latest productions, claiming to be an accurate scientific investigation into the actual doings of spirits, is a book entitled *The Reality of Psychic Phenomena: Raps, Levitations, etc.*, by W. J. Crawford, D.Sc. One ardent admirer of this

book claims that it demonstrates "according to the rules of evidence and upon unimpeachable testimony that.....the movement of material bodies by an unknown and invisible agency" has actually taken place; and he adds that the author of the work displays "neither inanity nor defective logic," but is "severely scientific and unemotional in his treatment of the subject."¹

Again, at the great debate on Spiritualism on March 11 at the Queen's Hall between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mr. Joseph McCabe, the former made many references to Dr. Crawford's experiments, telling us emphatically not only that he had implicit faith in the genuineness of the phenomena claimed to have been exhibited through the mediumship of Miss Kathleen Goligher, but that he was convinced that Dr. Crawford's experiments constituted a paragon of accurate scientific research.

The following criticisms are brought forward because no one, so far as I am aware, has taken the trouble to expose what appear to me to be the dangerous fallacies of this work.

A few passages selected and reproduced verbatim from Dr. Crawford's book will enable readers to judge for themselves whether or not the manner of investigation and the character of the phenomena are of the order claimed by this Doctor of Science, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and their several followers.

The book describes a series of séances conducted by a certain Morison-Goligher family. Dr. Crawford informs us that

"it is altogether a family affair, being composed of father, four daughters, son, and son-in-law.....All the members are

¹ *The Case for the Spook.* J. Dadd ; *Literary Guide*, February, 1920.

mediums in a greater or less degree.....Miss Kathleen Goligher, the youngest of the four daughters, is, however, a medium of outstanding merit" (1).¹

"The whole of the family look upon Spiritualism as their religion" (2).

"Before we can expect anything worth having.....we must have the following set of conditions as nearly perfect as possible :—

A very powerful medium.

A circle of sitters supporting the medium.

The medium and sitters to be imbued with the seriousness and wonder of the phenomena presented—to be linked together, as it were, by the one object of getting the most out of the phenomena for the common good.

A band of operators who have the same objects in view" (3).

"Operators," the reader will be interested to learn, are "spooks" or "spirits," and hence we find ourselves confronted, at the very outset, with the naïve *assumption* of the existence of such entities. Imagine spirits being imbued with the seriousness and wonder of, say, a bamboo table raised up into the air *by their own* efforts. Mark, too, the fact that before one can obtain any "psychic phenomena" one has first to catch the right sort of spirit. Any old spirit will not do. But more assumptions follow, for the author proceeds :—

"The thing which has chiefly struck me during the course of my investigations has been the wonderful co-operation between the operators and myself. One scarcely becomes usedto having one's behests attended to by beings who are entirely beyond the confines of bodily sight.....Every demand I made of the operators was either successfully carried out or was attempted" (4-5).

From which it will be seen that we are further expected to accept without proof a co-operation between the experimenter and the spirits for the production of the "psychic phenomena." How simple it all sounds! From the spirit host you first pick out those you think

¹ The numbers refer to the pages in the 1916 edition in which the passages may be found.

are of an accommodating disposition, for Dr. Crawford warns us that "mischievous operators or others who will not or cannot co-operate with the experimenter are useless" (3). You then organize a co-operative society, and there you are! Now, I would be the last to deny that during Dr. Crawford's levitation experiments the tables were raised up in the air. It is not the *performance* that is questioned, but the *means*. As Laplace said to Napoleon when the latter suggested an alternative causal agent in astronomical phenomena: "*Je n'ai pas besoin de cette hypothèse.*"

Let us see next what Dr. Crawford has to tell us about the conditions of visibility, etc., under which his investigations were carried out. He says:—

"For the general purpose of lighting the séance chamber a gas jet, enclosed in a lantern having a red glass sliding front and side, is used.....When one becomes used to the red light visibility becomes quite good—most objects in the room are quite plainly seen.....For reading small numbers and graduations, such as those on the steelyard of a weighing machine, I most often employed an electric pocket-lamp with the lens covered with a piece of red tissue-paper" (6).

"I have noticed.....that the operators found difficulty in applying psychic force to polished bodies, and that they prefer a rough, darkish surface" (236).

"I placed an ordinary white handkerchief on the floor near the medium, and asked the operators to move it about the room. Although I left it there for nearly half an hour, it did not move perceptibly. At the time this seemed very strange.....when solid tables weighing over 10 lbs. could be levitated" (78).

"The table was placed.....on the drawing board.....I was beginning to think the operators would be unable to effect the required levitation. Then I heard seven or eight raps on the floor.....the pre-arranged signal that they [the spirits] wished to give a message. By means of raps the following was spelt out: 'Cover the drawing board with a dark cloth.' Now, the drawing board was white.....A dark cloth was placed over [it].The experiment now proceeded much more successfully" (98-99).

How can visibility be "quite good" if an additional torch-light is necessary to make the numbers on the scale of a weighing-machine legible? Although the author regrets "that psychical phenomena cannot as a rule be produced in full white light," he makes no mention throughout the book of a single psychical phenomenon taking place in such condition of illumination. Indeed, the avoidance of white light by the spooks, or even of white and polished objects partially lit up by red light, is a point the significance of which will not be lost on any person possessing a modicum of intelligence.

"The light is usually strong enough—after the eyes get accustomed to its red colour—to see quite plainly all the sitters" (12).

Such an expression as "light" seeing the "sitters" can scarcely be described as "severely scientific."

"The only difficulty in the visibility is where a table or other large body casts a shadow over a portion of the floor.....The only place in shadow, if the table is comparatively large (if it is a small one he can see right round it), is between the foot of the table and the medium. But even with the largest table it is sometimes possible to see completely under it (as I have done), to see the feet and bodies of all present at rest and hands held together in chain order, while the table has been steadily levitated. It comes to this, then, that the only region not always visible (and this is only sometimes the case) is the region in the neighbourhood of the medium just above and on the floor" (12-13).

The only inference to be drawn from this convoluted description is that it is a subtle species of camouflage designed to lure the unwary reader into a belief that the region between medium and levitated object is generally clearly visible, whereas, in point of fact, the exact opposite is the case. It is not to be overlooked that the least illuminated portion of an initially poorly lighted

chamber is just that region where interest chiefly lies—viz., between the medium and the table.

“In many cases of levitation the levitated table, the space all round, above, and over it, and all the sitters, are quite plainly visible” (13).

Note the tautological expression “above and over,” also the absence of any reference to the medium or to the under aspect of the table. It may be that the word “over” is a *lapsus calami* for “under.” On the other hand, it may be that Dr. Crawford really means what is printed, in which case we have no choice but to conclude it is a wilful throwing of dust into the eyes. Be this as it may, when Dr. Crawford shows, before accredited witnesses, *one single instance* of levitation in which the levitated table, the space all round it, above it, *and under it*, all the sitters *and the medium*, are plainly visible—in short, if he will arrange for the spirit-levitation of a table under conditions that preclude *trickery*—I will give £20 to any charity he may elect.

“The medium is the only one who cares little about the phenomena. I think she sits more as an obligation to the others than for any innate satisfaction to herself” (12).

“The medium was always keenly interested in the experiments.....It was amusing to watch how interested she was when, say, an electric bell was rung by the reaction under a levitated table” (13).

Even if we carefully differentiate between the pure phenomenon of levitation and this same phenomenon plus the experimental factor introduced by Dr. Crawford, the above remarks are distinctly contradictory. Assuming the medium levitated the table by muscular effort, she would naturally be disinterested in, or feign to be disinterested in, her own share in the phenomenon, but could scarcely avoid displaying interest in

the new and, to her, strange element introduced by the experimenter.

"The phenomena presented are purely physical, and physical in the sense that the results depend upon the action of psychic force upon material bodies" (7).

Passing by the unwarranted assumptions of the existence of "psychic force" and of its action on material bodies, the above statement savours more of clotted bosh than severe science. Either the phenomena *are* or *are not* physical. The raising of a 16-lb. table into the air and the maintaining it there without visible or tangible support (63), the ringing of an electric bell by spirits (75), and the indentation of putty by spirit fingers (202) are most emphatically not physical phenomena. If Dr. Crawford still maintains otherwise, he should give us his definition of the word "physical."

On page 8 we are told that—

"All the movements of matter produced by.....[psychic force] are telekinetic, or produced without material contact. *In no experiment which I describe in this book was there any contact between any portion of the body or dress of the medium or sitters and the material body under psychic action.*"

But this does not preclude the use of physical apparatus by the medium or sitters. In any case the statement, despite the italics, is valueless from a "severely scientific" point of view, as the red light could permit of only low visibility, and "the region in the neighbourhood of the medium" is "sometimes..... not always visible" !

"The sitters are sometimes psychically 'touched'" (9).

A good opening for sarcasm, but I refrain in deference to the undue sensitivity of Spiritualists to ridicule. Needless to say, Dr. Crawford uses the word "touched" in its usual sense. He explains, on page 194, that

"a psychic touch feels exactly as though the rounded end of a material rod was pushed on to one's arm or foot or other part of the body. The 'solidity' of the touching body is what impresses the experimenter ; for, no matter how carefully or softly the operators apply the touch, one feels as though the blunted end of a hard something—a something even made of metal—were being used."

So, in Dr. Crawford's opinion, there are metals in the spirit world. But most people will incline to the belief that the metals in this world are quite sufficient to account for the phenomena alluded to.

His extreme credulity, self-deception, and fallacious reasoning may be judged from the following :—

"I propose to give.....a few of the facts which show that the phenomena produced.....are the genuine thing, and are in no way due to conscious or unconscious action on the part of the medium or sitters" (11).

"The medium and her family are upright, religious-minded people, who keep to a high moral standard in their daily lives. Each and every one of them is incapable of any wrong action with regard to the ordinary affairs of life."

"All the séances are looked upon as religious institutions. They are invariably opened and closed by prayer."

"All the members of the circle are my personal friends, and I have had intimate knowledge of them for three years" (11).

"The medium.....cares little about the phenomena." She "charges nothing.....No dark séances are held" (12).

"The medium was quite conscious during all my experimental investigations, and any fraud presented would therefore be in the nature of deliberate action" (13).

"It matters not one whit whether members of the circle come to the séance-room in their ordinary boots or shoes, in their stocking soles, or in soft felt slippers. The thunderous blows on the floor within the circle are not in the least affected as regards magnitude" (13-14).

"A great many people have been invited to.....witness the phenomena. I think I can say that not one.....has come awaywithout the assurance that 'there is something in psychic force,' be he previously sceptic, believer, or a sitter 'on the fence'" (14).

Dr. Crawford, in forming from premises such as

these, the conclusion given in the first extract above, is guilty of the *non sequitur* of a "defective logic." The swindling company promoter or the grocer who sands his sugar is often to all appearances an upright, religious-minded person. The ceremonies in connection with the burning of witches, the tortures of the Inquisition, and the car of Juggernaut were, by their several devotees, conscientiously regarded as deeply religious, and were invariably attended by prayer. Whether or no the medium charges fees is neither proof nor disproof of Spiritualistic phenomena. Desire to acquire riches is by no means the only, or even a necessary, cause of the mediumistic craze. The love of notoriety and the desire to be regarded as an important personage or as being possessed of abnormal mental powers are, it is well known, far more powerful stimuli to action. In the Middle Ages many of the unfortunate women who were roasted as witches were themselves firm believers in their powers of holding commerce with Satan.

Dr. Crawford says that no dark séances were held, to which it may be replied that neither was one held in a clear light. Moreover, on page 70 he makes a contrary assertion, thus: "The room had been made perfectly dark. The levitation was, therefore, in complete darkness."

To recapitulate a few of the "psychic phenomena" described in this book, we have the following: The raising of tables into the air by spirits (34-150); the increase or decrease at the will of the spirits in the weight of tables (70); the "sticking" of tables to the floor by spirits so that even muscular men cannot raise them (71); the making of spirit finger-marks on putty (204); the resounding of spirit sledge-hammer blows on the floor (30, 207); the ringing of hand-

bells (31) and the tearing up of paper (192) by the spirits; the keeping up of a "terrific noise" by spirits until the experimenter cries out "Stop," and then, at this command, the reigning of "perfect silence" (31); the forcible ejection by spirits of the visitor from the circle of mediums (10); and, finally, the spelling out, by the spirits, through the instrumentality of an electric bell, of a valedictory "good-night" (94). And yet we are proudly told by Dr. Crawford that, of "a great many people" who witnessed these amazing occurrences, not one came away without the assurance that "there is something in psychic force." These good people were decidedly not lacking in the art of damning with faint praise; but, horrible thought, did they put a different meaning into that word "something" to that inferred by the worthy doctor of science?

"The observer.....may be *within the circle*, and he may move anywhere inside it so long as he does not get immediately in front of the medium" (12). "There is only one place round the table which the observer may not cross, and that is the region between the medium and the levitated table" (80). "A visitor.....is allowed to walk inside the circle anywhere he pleases so long as he does not cross the line table to medium" (80). "The instructions to the visitor are.....'You may move inside the circle anywhere you please so long as you do not get directly in front of the medium'" (81). "The only region of vital importance round the levitated table is that between table and medium" (81).

This effectually disposes of those who have maintained that Dr. Crawford thoroughly examined the region between the table and the medium. If during an act of levitation the region suspect is to be a Holy of Holies wherein one must not venture nor explore with the eye or hand, then *cadit quæstio*. Under the conditions imposed it is up to any one to claim he had transformed a boot into an omelet.

"Fairly strong light may be flashed upon the top surface [of the table] without affecting the levitation, while the same amount of light flashed beneath the table will immediately cause it to drop" (80).

"The space below the table is of prime importance to the levitation and to movements of the table generally" (81).

"By a simple process of observation and deduction it is easily seen that, while a table is levitated, the regions of space about it really vital to the phenomenon are the space between medium and table and the space beneath the table" (81).

With such deduction we all heartily agree. Where most of us part company from Dr. Crawford is in his interpretation of the processes and means of levitation going on in the region between medium and table and below the latter. Dr. Crawford postulates, *inter alia*, a "psychic cantilever" (155) manipulated by spirits (158), who "pull it" into the body of the medium or cause it to be "projected from her" (168), and by its means move the table about the floor or lift it bodily into the air. Most people will prefer a much simpler explanation than this "severely scientific" one.

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the bewildered reader to ascertain in what means of levitation Dr. Crawford really does believe. Here he talks of a "psychic fluid" (219); there he discusses a "psychic stuff" which, he says, has been actually seen as a "whitish substance issuing from the *left* side of the medium," and which, when poured out in large quantities during levitation, causes a "soreness in her left side" (231, 232). The Doctor himself has felt a "reptilian" substance in the vicinity of the medium during levitation (146).¹ On page 141 he gives "psychic

¹ I presume this is the same "horrible stuff" that Sir Conan Doyle, in his debate with Mr. McCabe, alluded to as *ectoplasm*, which, he added, has actually been photographed as it poured forth from the medium's mouth.

pressure," and on page 167 he suggests "suction" (save the mark!) as the cause of the levitation phenomena. On page 26 he writes :—

"I wish to add finally that I fully satisfied myself during each of the experiments.....there was absolutely no fraud, and that the phenomena were due to the action of psychic force alone."

And lastly, in his Preface, where we may legitimately assume we are given his considered verdict, he says :—

"I wish to state explicitly that I am personally satisfied they [the invisible operators] are the spirits of human beings who have passed into the Beyond."

Such are the many factors Dr. Crawford conjures up to explain what to most people would appear to be very ordinary physical phenomena. The reader will do well to compare these explanations with those given by Mr. Stuart Cumberland in a work¹ recording his own personal investigations into so-called spiritual phenomena. He says :—

"From medium to medium I went, to find that.....whatever happened there was the outcome of human agency pure and simple, actual spiritual force or influence at such séances having no existence. Whatever illusions may have remained to me were knocked on the head. Disgust at the chicanery practised and contempt for the puerile manifestations claimed to be spiritual took the place of expectancy and earnest longing for truth.....And so I set to work not only to find out how the so-called spirit phenomena were produced, but to reproduce them after the manner and under the conditions governing the medium's productions."

But to return to Dr. Crawford :—

"I myself many times, while levitation has been in progress, have moved inside the circle right round three sides of the table" (80).

What Dr. Crawford presumably means by this rather misleading sentence is that he passed along three sides

¹ *That Other World.* Stuart Cumberland. (Pub. Grant Richards.)

of the table, but not along the fourth side.¹ If one goes *right round* three sides of a table, one necessarily goes round *all* sides, and this Dr. Crawford did not do. But we must give the reader some idea of the size and weight of the tables used in the experiments. On page 38 we find the following data :—

Table.	Weight.	Number of Sides.
1	10 lb. 6 ozs.	4
2	6 lb.	8
3	6 lb. 4 ozs.	4
4	2 lb. 12 ozs.	4

Occasionally a yet heavier table was in use. On page 63 we are informed that—

“During the evening [a table] was levitated many times, the longest period being certainly well over a minute.....The 16-lb. table [square-topped].....is the heaviest I have used during any of my experiments.”

On page 59 he says :—

“The highest levitation I have ever seen was about 4 ft.”

On page 58 he tells us that,

“as in the case of the distance of the table from the medium, there appears also to be a critical height.....about 8 ins. from the floor, whereat the expenditure of psychic energy is a minimum.”

That is to say, any height above 8 ins. involves a distinct effort on the part of the spirits (58). And, as we shall see shortly, there is a limit to the height to which the table can be raised.

“If a specially high levitation is demanded, or if the operators are giving an ordinary general demonstration, on which occasions they seem to desire to produce the most spectacular results possible.....I have seen the surface of the table shoulder-high ” (58).

¹ Although the particular table is not specifically alluded to, it is assumed it is a four-sided and not an eight-sided one.

In the first place be it noted that only light tables (2 lbs. 12 ozs. to 16 lbs.) were in requisition. This very significant fact is in perfect accordance with the view that levitation is brought about by muscular effort on the part of some human being, but is not easily reconcilable with Dr. Crawford's theory of spirit agency. It is claimed that on one occasion the spirits were able to keep suspended in the air not only a table, but also four people, who "tried to depress it to the floor"; while the table "moved up and down and to and fro in the air with such powerful motions that we, who had hold of it, might as well have tried to stop the movements of a locomotive" (70). Assuming the total downward pull of gravity was equivalent to that exerted by a weight of 400 lbs.—a modest estimate for a table with four persons hanging on to it—then the opposing force exerted by the spirits must be equivalent. Again, on page 14, Dr. Crawford tells us that "often a force approximating a hundredweight is exerted" by these occult agents. It may be urged by way of excuse that the language is figurative only. If so, it is out of place in a work that purports to be scientific; if, on the other hand, it is literal, the experimenter should enlighten us as to why spirits imbued with the energy of moving locomotives and with a strength capable of lifting hundreds of pounds, never volunteered, and were never requested, to levitate tables weighing over 16 lbs. It is an unfortunate coincidence that an ordinary individual reclining in a chair can lift a 16-lb. table, but cannot lift a grand piano.

The statements on pages 58 and 59 concerning the height of levitation appear to be contradictory, unless the expression "shoulder-high" is to be taken as apply-

ing to the sitting posture. In any case, if the tables are raised up into the air by "spirits of human beings who have passed into the Beyond," why is the height limited to a paltry four feet or so? That it should be thus strictly limited if the medium or sitters raised the objects with their limbs is quite intelligible. Has it not struck Dr. Crawford that, had the table been raised "shoulder-high" by some person in the séance room, he would also have received the impression of a "distinct effort" on the part of the agent? Again, we ask why, if spirits are the agents, the height should be limited to four instead of to forty feet and the weight to 16 lbs. instead of 16 cwt.?

For nearly two whole pages (56-57) Dr. Crawford dilates on the "Distance of the Medium from the Table," but not once does he give us this distance. Amid a tangle of irrelevant matter one fact stands out prominently, and that is, *the table was invariably within reach of the medium*.—

"If the table happened to be too close to, or too far from, the medium, it would be pulled along the floor until the distance for levitation was apparently correct" (56).

Pulled, mark you, by the spirits, not by the medium or sitters. The accessibility of the table to be levitated may be gathered from the following ingenuous admission on page 15 :—

"If the medium leans back in her chair and endeavours to levitate the table with her feet, she may do so for a few seconds in a stilted, jerky kind of fashion; but the real levitation is quite different in character and quality from the spurious one, and the latter can only be maintained for a very short time."

The reader is left with very confused ideas as to the length of time the spirits are able or willing to keep tables floating in the air. On page 45 we are told that—

"The table was always levitated for a much longer time than I required to leisurely carry out the experiment.....In fact, in all six cases I had to ask the operators to drop the table at the conclusion of the test" (45).

But this test occupied only three minutes, for we are told that—

"A levitation lasting from two to three minutes gives ample time to obtain a fairly accurate balance on a weighing machine" (45).

On page 35 we read :—

"The table.....may remain.....in the air.....for a minute or more."

On page 82 a table is levitated "for a fairly long time." On page 60 a 10 lb. 3 oz. table is levitated "for certainly well over a minute." From which we see, if we ignore the ambiguous remark on page 41, "time was not a factor," that the beings in the spirit world who so obligingly placed themselves at Dr. Crawford's disposal manifested a precisely similar capacity of endurance as ordinary human beings. As a control test, I put myself in a similar position to that occupied by the medium during Dr. Crawford's experiments. Reclining in a chair, I found I was able to levitate *Webster's Dictionary* and the first volume of Haeckel's *Evolution of Man*, together weighing 17 lbs., for three and a-half minutes. The levitation was accomplished in broad daylight by the simple expedient of passing one foot through a loop in a cord encircling the books. It should be added that during the phenomenon the muscles of the limb sustaining the weight were quite rigid. Why the limbs of Dr. Crawford's medium should have been rigid during levitation of the table when this was brought about by spirit and not by flesh agency it is difficult to understand. But let us have the scientist's own words :—

"During many of the levitations.....I examined the medium. Her arms.....were always stiff—*i.e.*, the muscles seemed to be under great stress, making the arms even sometimes iron-like in their rigidity.....From shoulder to wrist the amount of the muscular tension was surprising.....The medium herself says that high levitations affect her muscular system most. She says the muscular rigidity is not confined to her arms, but occurs all over her body" (141-142).

And Dr. Crawford and his followers are still convinced it is the spooks who raise the table! *Populus vult decipi, decipiatur.*

Dr. Crawford admits on page 16 that when the levitated table is comparatively large the limbs of the medium from the knees downwards are in deep shadow, and he consequently narrows down, to his own satisfaction, "any theory of fraud [during levitation] to the surreptitious use by the medium of her feet" (17). He then proceeds to eliminate—again to his own satisfaction—this sole surviving possible element of deceit, and he does so in the following manner. He says, on page 18: "Take experiments 48 and 49. The medium's feet were near the nail N on the floor. I placed them there, and felt them from *time to time* [italics mine], and *they never moved* [italics his]." A good specimen of the type of logic and scientific research displayed throughout the book.

On pages 139-40 Dr. Crawford actually commences to examine the region between medium and table—that very region about which the troublesome critic is so anxious to learn. But let the experimenter speak. On page 19 he says:—

"In experiments 59 and 60 I moved apparatus freely in front of the medium between her and the table, and *I could plainly see the whole space and also the table.*"

Expectantly we turn to experiment 59 and read:—

"The table was jerking about on the floor. I moved the contact-maker¹ here and there.....in front of the medium..... At a certain spot about two feet above the floor the bell rang, and simultaneously the table stopped" (139).

No matter ; we refuse to be downhearted, and turn to experiment 60 :—

"I asked for levitation of the séance table, and while it was in progress I moved the contact-maker about in front of the medium.....At practically the same spot the bell rang again, and *the table instantly dropped*. The operators would not allow me to proceed with the experiment. They affirmed, by means of raps, that the contact-maker was in the stress-line from medium to table" (140).

What churlish spooks ! Directly the Doctor begins to examine the most important space in the room a cold is cast on the congregation and the "psychic phenomena" fail. Of a surety are we

Unhousell'd, disappointed, unaneled,
No reckoning made.....

I hope sufficient² passages from this book have now been animadverted upon to show the reader how preposterous are the claims of Dr. Crawford and his apologists. His so-called explanations of "psychic phenomena" disclose an atavistic cerebration worthy of the savage who puts a spirit behind the thunder-clap and the earthquake. He strains at gnats and swallows camels, missing the obvious and natural causes of the most commonplace events. Every phenomenon described in his book is explainable in physical terms, and could have been brought about by normal action on the part of one or more of the Goligher-Morison family circle of mediums. With a credulity that calls to mind

¹ A simple little piece of apparatus consisting of two wires in an electric circuit separated about one-eighth of an inch, the bringing into contact of which by the slightest pressure rings an electric bell.

the latter half of *Matthew* viii, 10, he assumes the existence of "psychic force," "psychic fluid," "psychic stuff," "psychic cantilevers," to say nothing of his invisible operating spirits. To that splendid precept known as William of Occam's razor, "Entities should not be multiplied," he is supremely indifferent. Once only do we find ourselves in emphatic agreement with the author, and that is when he ascribes certain of his successes to the fact that "the medium and sitters" were "linked together.....by the one object of getting the most out of the phenomena" (3).

I do not claim to have disproved the agency in these levitations, etc., of "psychic force" and "spirits," because the very conditions under which the alleged phenomena happen preclude disproof. Whoso makes an assertion, on him lies the burden of proof; and I submit that Dr. Crawford has brought forward but scanty evidence and no proof of his far-fetched theories. If I stated I knew the present world unrest was due to a maleficent emanation projected excentrically from the sun by pyrozoic Anthropophagi, Dr. Crawford could not disprove the statement, but he could demand proof. I think most rational persons would be prepared forthwith to accept Spiritualism and all it connotes if only they were furnished with a fair showing of evidence in its favour. This the Spiritualists have *never*, I venture to say, given. I do not know of what particular branch of science Dr. Crawford is an ornament, but I do know that if a schoolboy offered as evidence in a class of elementary physics that which is offered as such in this book he would be sent to the bottom of the class.

Even if, as claimed by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and others, Spiritualism has brought comfort and consola-

tion to thousands of human beings, this cannot be accepted as any evidence of its truth. Happiness of such a nature, confined as it necessarily must be, in the majority of cases, to individuals of undue emotional and neurasthenic bias, is not far removed from that intense happiness occasionally displayed by those suffering from general paralysis of the insane. The intellectually honest decline to enter such a fools' paradise. "Not what is 'satisfying,' but what is true," is their demand, for they recognize with Huxley "that there is no alleviation to the sufferings of mankind except veracity of thought and action and the resolute facing of the world as it is." As a medical man, I feel bound to state as my firm belief that a careful, dispassionate examination of the whole question of Spiritualism from a point of view commanding the broadest outlook in time and space will reveal an ever-accumulating evidence to show that the sum-total of human happiness, far from being increased, is being *decreased* by this creed and its practices, and the clock of civilization is being set back.

Summing-up these observations on the reality or otherwise of spiritistic manifestations, the reader will find set before him three suppositions, one of which he must select. The first is that Dr. Crawford has been wilfully deceiving us. So far as the present writer is concerned, this supposition may be at once dismissed. The second is that his interpretation of the phenomena is true, in which case there are, indeed, new anxieties added to life and new terrors added to death. The third and, to my mind, the most probable supposition is that Dr. Crawford is a victim of deception.

It would be well were all investigators into the

“occult” to bear in mind Sir William Hamilton’s Law of Parsimony : “ Neither more, nor more onerous, causes are to be assumed than are necessary to account for the phenomena.” In other words, when confronted with stools and tables floating in the air, be sure, before assuming as agents the spirits of human beings who have passed into the Beyond, that you have first eliminated all human agency.

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