

Light:

A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research.

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

"LIGHT! MORE LIGHT!"—Goethe.

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[The Editor of "LIGHT" desires it to be distinctly understood that he can accept no responsibility as to the opinions expressed by Contributors and Correspondents. Free and courteous discussion is invited, but writers are alone responsible for the articles to which their names are attached.]

NOTES BY THE WAY.

Contributed by "M.A. (Oxon)."

MASOLLAM. *

I do not presume, on a single reading, to attempt an elaborate estimate or review of Mr. Laurence Oliphant's latest novel. It is, as all he writes always is, full of charm; and this particular work is of special interest to all who concern themselves with the occult in any of its protean forms. Mr. Oliphant's large experience in psychical and occult matters qualifies him to teach, to warn, and to guide. His position, as a writer known to the public, ensures that what he wishes to say will receive attention from those who have ears to hear. How large a class that may be, whom it may comprise with ears sufficiently alert to catch the author's subtle meaning, I have no means of knowing; but I believe it to be a larger class now, and a more instructed one also—more open to impression—than at any former period with which I am acquainted. No doubt *Masollam* will provoke the sneer of the superficial reviewer. He will not understand the book, and he will seek to veil his ignorance in a cloud of contemptuous words. The author is prepared for this. He expects little from his book. "If I have reconciled myself," he says, "to a task from which I look for small profits, and still smaller praise, it is because the group of people that I have presented to the reader is by no means so impossible as he may suppose; and because, in consequence of a growing tendency in society to dabble in the mystical and occult, it has seemed to me desirable that something should be written to illustrate one form, at all events, of the development this tendency is liable to take. . . . The effect of the extraordinary increase of acute nervous sensibility, which is characteristic of the present generation, has already produced several such persons [as are described in *Masollam*], and must inevitably produce many more. At present such exceptionally developed types are still comparatively rare, and, by reason of the nature of their experiences, shrink from contact with the world, and above all from contact with those whose prejudices jar painfully upon the raw surfaces of their natures. They feel as if they had lost an outer covering of some sort—had been, so to speak, peeled; and naturally the people who hurt them most are those who ridicule the notion that everybody's hide is not of equal thickness, and who, having themselves the thickest of all, brush rudely against them."

It would be hard to put more incisively and precisely the truth about the feelings of a sensitive brought into contact

with the modern investigator, who is the psychical vivisectionist of this age, and who cares nothing for the sufferings of the unfortunate medium, whom he dissects as ruthlessly as Schiff vivisects his dog into whose body he has injected some rare and curious poison. The vivisector knows that he has done what will produce certain effects and symptoms when the poison works. The modern investigator of psychical mysteries does not even know so much as that. By his methods he throws around the sensitive an atmosphere of darkness, and then he wonders that clairvoyance is at fault. He brings with him, by his suspicions and his preconceived conclusions, a poison that enters into the very inmost nature of the unfortunate medium on whom he is experimenting, and then he wonders that results readily obtainable by others, whose methods are of a different order, are absent in his own case. It is not always so, no doubt, but in many cases it is; and the general failure of scientific committees to get at successful results by the methods that they elect to employ is referable to this cause. Mr. Oliphant's book is full of pregnant hints, and suggestive statements such as that I have just quoted; and some of the incidental expositions of occult matters, given by certain of the characters, are of the highest value. I shall better serve the purpose of my readers by directing their attention to some specimens of what I refer to, leaving them to peruse the novel, as they no doubt will, at their leisure.

The author's purpose in *Masollam* is, as he more than once avows, to warn his readers against dabbling with the occult from unworthy motives, such as curiosity, desire to gain forbidden power, or to pry into hidden secrets. "To increase the forces of one's own nature by substituting for its lower desires the potencies of the Divine love for humanity, so that, as a man in the world and of it, you may be the better able to grapple with its ills"—this is the noble aim. "Man's organism is undergoing a change; and the vulgar evidences of it are to be found in the phenomena which have so far forced themselves on public attention in the forms of Spiritualism, Mesmerism, Occultism, and so forth, that societies have been formed to investigate them, and journals to chronicle them. This change means a quickening of organic sensibility and an increase of faculty, whereby man's receptivity to forces, too subtle to invade his hitherto dense personality, has become augmented. So far, these forces have found expression in phenomena more or less frivolous and valueless, because their nature and the laws by which they are governed have never been examined; nor could they be, excepting by those who, divesting themselves of every base and personal motive, devoted themselves exclusively to their investigation." The author recurs again and again to this great truth. He believes, and I wholly agree with him, that till it is recognised and acted upon, the phenomena with which we shall have opportunity of making ourselves acquainted will be trivial, delusive, and illusory; he believes that the methods imported into investigations of these occult phenomena are deceptive and calculated to lead astray. I concur again. The pronouncements of the Society for Psychical Research have all been vitiated by this source of error. The failures of some of the leading members to get results personal to themselves are traceable, to a parallel cause.

There is a converse error which has not escaped Mr.

* *Masollam*: A Problem of the Period. Blackwood, 1886.

Oliphant's notice. "It is not necessary," says Madame Masollam, in answer to some remark of her brother's, "for you to tell me that, if you were of a sceptical turn of mind, you would talk like an ass, as, in fact, you often do, but it is generally from an excess of credulity; as, for instance, when you bother me with interpretations to your absurd dreams. . . . Some persons—you are one of them—never dream without trying to pose as seers, but they do not take into account the number of cases in which their presentiments and their prophecies turn out inaccurate. I really don't know which talk the greatest nonsense, the people who believe too much or those who believe too little: those who take every phenomenon, which is new and striking to them, as evidence of a direct invisible agency which is to be relied upon infallibly: or those who deny the existence of all invisible agencies whatever, because they are so often inaccurate, are always capricious in their manifestations, and refuse to be controlled by the conditions which prejudiced investigators insist upon imposing. . . . Credulous people in their way are as exacting as sceptical. They don't make allowance for the irregularity and uncertainty of those phenomena which they term spiritual, of our ignorance of the laws by which they are governed, and for the conflicting, and therefore utterly confusing, influences to which we, whose nervous systems have become highly sensitised, are exposed. They look to us as infallible guides. If they knew how little we really know, they would shrink from the risk which following our guidance involves: but yet they should not, for we still know so much more, and feel so much more, than others, and are so often making discoveries and obtaining new light, that they should risk the danger of great mistakes in the search after higher moral and psychical powers, and the truths they lead us to, in the hope of great results. But we have mostly to deal with credulous people, and credulous people are generally timid." I often wonder whether Spiritualism has suffered most from injudicious friends or sceptical foes; from those who go about forcing the subject on any chance acquaintance without knowledge of his needs, talking excitedly of it and of nothing else, full of emotional enthusiasm, obviously inaccurate in statement and illogical in deduction;—from such, or from men who are constitutionally incapable of realising anything except through the ordinary avenues of the senses; who insist on subjecting these fugitive psychical phenomena to tests suitable in the laboratory, but wholly out of place and ludicrously inapplicable here; who, finding nothing by such means, deny what they can't see, touch, or hear; who angrily denounce those who are more developed in sensitiveness than themselves as rogues or knaves;—from which of these classes have we suffered most? An interesting problem. I don't know.

Once more, starting from the fact that the present generation is witnessing new progressive psychical developments, Mr. Oliphant points out how desirable it is that these should be recognised. "So long as a person refuses to admit the possibility of their existing, so long will he probably be unconscious of any new experiences in himself; the essential condition of these manifestations being that the will should be a consenting party; for, as the forces operating are will-forces, or, at all events, can only operate through the will, if there is an obstruction there they are absolutely paralysed." Another pregnant hint as to causes of failure in observation and investigation in the case of those who start with a belief that there are no such phenomena really as Spiritualists, for example, record. The strong, dogmatic will of the pseudo-investigator paralyses and stops everything. "This does not, however, imply that many do not become invaded by [these forces] without conscious will-co-operation. It only implies that

any such invasion would be rendered difficult, if not impossible, where there was conscious will-resistance. Nor does it imply that they can invariably be invited by any amount of will co-operation, as organic conditions of surface denseness may exist which will defy the most earnest effort." These "organic conditions of surface denseness," or else the dominant antagonistic will, which latter, I am bound to say, I do not allege as existing, seem to have produced from some members of the Society for Psychical Research criticisms which Spiritualists are now deploring, while they view them with as much astonishment as regret.

Mr. Oliphant thinks that the non-recognition of the action of these forces, tending, when the experimenter acts "ignorantly, incautiously, or from unworthy motives," to danger of serious mental malady, is specially deplorable, because "medical and scientific men render themselves, by the very fact of their denial, incapable of treating the maladies which result from them." "Hallucination, delusion, hysteria, monomania, are all words coined to express phenomena, the origin of which those who use these terms are absolutely unable to account for or explain, and with which, therefore, they can deal only empirically. If a study of them involves a departure from the region of what is called 'positive science' into another region called 'mystical,' the sooner a distinction so false and so pernicious in its effects is removed the better. There is nothing mystical whatever in an investigation into any of those moral, psychical, and physical phenomena upon which the happiness and well-being of the human race depend: and positive science, which limits itself to the investigation of facts which can only be dealt with by the aid of chemical appliances and the most external senses, and which leaves out of account all those forces upon which emotions depend, is so shallow that it might well be called *negative* instead of *positive* in so far as its results are concerned." It is interesting to note how the ill-advised action of men of science is gradually undermining their influence. When these Rip van Winkles wake up they will find the balance of power has been transferred.

I must pass by much that is of deep significance at this conjuncture. The antagonism between good spirits and the adversaries is emphasised. The influence of unseen beings on the acts and habits of ourselves is brought out much as it is in *Spirit-Teachings*. "We poor finite human beings think we are playing the game of life ourselves; but we are nothing but the pawns on the terrestrial chess-board, and even the invisible hands that move us are but the instruments of intelligence where the force is generated, under the impulsion of which hands and pawns alike are moved." But, interjects a questioner, "we are thinking matter, with minds and wills of our own. The analogy is not complete." "With minds and wills, yes: of our own, in the sense of absolute freedom, no. We cannot resist obedience to impulse, even though we are permitted the sense of directing our choice as between conflicting impulses. And in proportion as the intelligence of the human pieces, who are thus controlled and played with, is developed, so they begin to understand the rules of the game and the meaning of the players, and thus become able to co-operate intelligently with them." The man who, divested of the merely personal inclinations, enrolls himself in the host that is fighting for the universal good, "begins soon to be conscious that there are rival influences at work who use the base passions of earthly men to frustrate that grand endeavour." That is the key. But the whole passage must be read and studied. It is full, as indeed is the whole book, of profound psychical insight, and it preaches a doctrine most necessary for these times. I shall have occasion to recur to another part of the book.

The Late Dr. Keningale Cook.

Many friends will learn with sincere regret of the death of Dr. Keningale Cook, one time a very ardent Spiritualist, and as the writer of these lines knows, a firm believer to the last. Dr. Cook died, after a long and very painful illness, on the 24th of last month, at his little property, Arnewood Rise, on the borders of the New Forest. He bore with great fortitude suffering of no ordinary kind, for the cause of death was internal chronic abscess, the pain from which grew sharper and more intense towards the end. He had but just passed his fortieth year, and his last work was to see through the press his two volumes entitled, "The Fathers of Jesus," containing the series of essays on ancient religious and philosophical systems, and their bearing on Christianity, on which he had been engaged for ten years or more. Dr. Cook (who was the son of the Rev. Canon Cook, forty-two years vicar of Smallbridge, and the Rural Dean of Rochdale, and since then five years rector of Elwick Hall, Castle Eden, in the county of Durham) went to school at Rugby, under the head mastership of Dr. Temple, now Bishop of London, and took his B.A. and M.A. degrees in the ordinary course at Trinity College, Dublin, adding to these a few years later the degree of LL.D. He married Mabel, only child of the late Mortimer Collins, and the fine and delicate mediumship of his wife was of the utmost service to him in the early days of his study of Spiritualism, and subsequently when he was at work upon the essays just mentioned. He wrote a volume of poems when he was little more than a youth which was published a few years later under the title of "Purpose and Passion." About ten years ago he became proprietor and editor of the old *Dublin University Magazine*, changed its title to the *University Magazine* and opened its pages freely to contributions on all occult subjects. Many of the essays to be found in "The Fathers of Jesus" were first published here; now Ruskin, Professor Huxley, and Mr. William Rossetti, Professor Blackie, Mr. F. R. Conder, Mr. Richard Garnett, and Mr. Julian Hawthorne, lent occasional assistance; and Miss Mabel Collins, besides one or two clever novels, wrote some very original short stories wherein Spiritualism, or facts based on it, were prominent motives. In 1881, Dr. Cook published a second volume of verse, "The Guitar Player and Other Poems," in which there is a great deal of thoughtful, earnest, and truly imaginative work. In the following year this volume was incorporated with a third, in which appeared the two romantic plays, "The King of Kent," and "Love in a Mist." The second of those plays he made the subject of an ingenious and very well written novel which was issued only about a month ago. All that he wrote was written like a scholar, and a man of thought, whose literary aims were high. Had he made letters his profession, he would certainly have taken higher rank as a writer than he did; on the other hand it is far from improbable that certain of his poems and the best of his prose writings will be preserved in the criticism of an age more liberal in thought, and more courageous in speculation, than the present. His memory will be a kindly and affectionate one for those who were his most intimate friends.

SPIRITUALISTS resident in Lynton, Lynmouth, Ifracombe and neighbourhood, will oblige by sending their addresses immediately to the editor of "LIGHT," as friends about to visit the district would like to make their acquaintance.

WANTED, two or three gentlemen to complete a circle meeting on Tuesday evenings for the investigation of Spiritual phenomena. No paid or professional medium. Neighbourhood of Camden Town.—Apply by letter to "M.," 10, Craven-street, Charing Cross.

WHATEVER may be the date or the character of the myths of India, Christ is no mythical, but an absolute and altogether historical, personage. His history stands in plainest terms in the book which is as much the matter-of-fact history of the Jews as the history of England is of the English. It is not the fable of a fabled people. That people exists amongst us and the other modern nations to-day; it exists in fulfilment of the same age-long chain of prophecies which foretold and attested Christ. On every page of that history, from its first to its last, stand the declarations of the coming of Christ; and when he did come it was in no obscure or mythical age, but in a comparatively modern period, amid the blaze of Greek and Roman civilisation, which attest, in fullest evidence, his life, death, and eternal doctrines.—WM. HOWITT.

PSYCHOGRAPHY AND CONJURING.

With Special Reference to a Paper by Mrs. Sidgwick in the "Journal" of the Psychological Research Society of June, 1886.

By GEORGE HERSHELL, M.D., LONDON.

As a commencement I may say that I am an amateur conjurer of fourteen years' standing, and that for the last few months I have been investigating the slate-writing of Mr. Eglinton with the especial object of finding out what light the art of prestidigitation could throw upon the phenomenon. I started as a complete sceptic, but am now compelled to admit that they are undoubtedly genuine.

Such being the case, and knowing how easy it is for a great many people to be misled by reading a clever and plausible paper like that of Mrs. Sidgwick, I feel bound in the cause of truth to publicly make known my conclusions, and the way I have arrived at them.

I shall begin by an analysis of Mrs. Sidgwick's paper, and shall endeavour to point out the errors into which she has fallen. After this I shall show to what extent conjuring can imitate slate-writing, and how such imitation differs from the genuine phenomenon.

The perusal of her paper has caused me much amusement, as it is an excellent example of feminine logic. It is, I think, universally admitted that the average woman, however educated and intellectual, will, when given certain premises, invariably draw the opposite conclusion from them to that which the laws of logic point out, and which one of the opposite sex would infer. Woman, as a rule, is unequal to a syllogism. This is not a defect, but a feminine characteristic; women, as a class, are charmingly illogical, and Mrs. Sidgwick by her paper has proved that she is no exception to the rule.

The first part of her paper is taken up by reports of sittings with Eglinton by competent observers, extending over forty-five octavo pages. All this evidence is favourable and conclusive as to the genuineness of the phenomena, and nearly all the observers state that they are convinced that Eglinton does not himself produce the result. Nevertheless, she coolly says that the conclusion she arrives at by studying these reports is that the writing is produced by Eglinton's own muscular action. She, *who has never seen herself any writing (as nothing happened at the three sittings whilst she was present)*, sets up her judgment against that of the many credible witnesses who testify in favour of it, and says, in effect, that their evidence is unreliable.

As to the contents of the paper I would take exception to the following passages:—

She says: "The juggler's art consists largely in making things appear as they are not. Can we suppose that it has caused facts which did not occur to be imagined, and facts which did occur to be overlooked to the extent required to make the cases before us explicable by ordinary human agency?"

First of all, I would point out that she is wrong in her terms. "The juggler's art" is quite distinct from prestidigitation, or conjuring proper, this latter only being the science of deception. The former deals with *balancing, cannon ball feats, et hoc genus omne*.

Secondly, I deny the fact that conjuring *can* influence the imagination to the extent required, and shall prove my assertion presently. She "has no hesitation in attributing the performances to clever conjuring." It is very astonishing the unlimited power of doing impossibilities that people who know nothing about the subject give to conjurers.

The fact is really that the art of prestidigitation consists of only a very few broad methods to either cause to vanish, appear, change, or metamorphose an object, and all tricks can be referred to one or other of these heads, although people who are not conjurers have a hazy sort of idea that the possibilities of the art are unlimited. That is why the evidence of conjurers is especially valuable in cases like this, as people like Mrs. Sidgwick do not hesitate in referring things they cannot account for to the agency of an art of the capabilities of which they are entirely ignorant, whilst an expert in the art would see at once that the phenomena were quite different to anything he could do. It would be instructive to learn whether Mrs. Sidgwick's experience of conjuring is equal in amount to her experience of psychography (*viz., nil*).

Her next statement is:—

"The validity of all the evidence here presented (with one doubtful exception) depends on continuous observation." She goes on to say that she has a very low estimate of the power of exercising continuous observation

of herself and others. What she says about herself may possibly be true; she ought to know best, but men of science, whose whole lives are spent in the *continuous observation* of intricate phenomena, observation much more continuous and intense than outsiders have any conception of. To take only examples from her own paper, men like Wagner, Professor of Zoology, Boutlerof, of Chemistry, and Dobroslovin, of the University of St. Petersburg, and Professor Oliver Lodge,—are men like these likely to relax their observation during such child's play to them as a sitting of merely an hour's duration? Besides she has overlooked the important point that there being always more than one present, it is extremely unlikely that the attention of both will be diverted at one and the same moment. Again, when a couple of expert conjurers go to a sitting with Eglinton, knowing from their own experience that if slate-writing is a trick their attention has *got to be diverted* at some critical point (this being in conjuring parlance called making a "temps"), if the trick is to succeed, is it likely that both of them will allow their attention to be diverted at the proper moment by any of the hackneyed devices that they have themselves been accustomed to use all their lives? Mrs. Sidgwick must, I am afraid, be measuring other people's mental capacities by her own. As regards Mr. Wedgwood's writing in the sealed slate she says "Mr. Eglinton saw the slates at the first séance. . . I cannot perceive that we have any means of knowing that a pair was not prepared in imitation and substituted at the second séance." This is simple nonsense. Apart from the mechanical difficulty of effecting substitution, which I shall fully consider later on, there remains the fact that it is extremely difficult to procure two slates whose frames are exactly alike. There is always some slight difference, as they are cheap slates and made in large quantities. This would lead to detection if the observer had any claim to consider himself an observer. Then there is the almost impossible mental feat of remembering sufficient detail about the method of sealing, the quality of the paper used, the kind of wax, the seal, &c., to give the substitution a chance of deceiving the person who had prepared the original ones.

Mrs. Sidgwick complains: "It is surely significant that there should be but a *single* instance of writing in securely closed slates, and that a dubious one." Is not Eglinton's locked slate a securely closed one, and are there not numbers of cases on record where writing has been obtained in it? Is not my fenestrated slate, described on p. 151 of *Twist Two Worlds*, and upon which writing was obtained in the presence of two competent observers, a securely closed one? It was made under my own supervision, and the cover secured with brass screws.

We now pass to her statement "I do not think that writing on a slate produces any vibration perceptible to the touch of ordinary people." The vibration that is communicated to a slate by a piece of slate-pencil depends upon the size of the piece, the surface in contact with the slate, the roughness of the slate's surface, the hardness of the pencil, and the amount of pressure used. So that the crude experiment of Mrs. Sidgwick is quite inadequate to set this point at rest. One thing at least is certain, and that is the pressure on the pencil is sometimes very great indeed, sufficient even to reduce the pencil to fragments. Besides which there is the well-known fact that physical effects produced by spirit agency are very frequently accompanied by vibration; to wit, the vibration in a table which accompanies spirit raps, although anyone, if he tries, will find it quite impossible to make it vibrate by any amount of raps that he may give to it, with any instrument.

I now pass on to the methods by which it is possible for a conjurer to imitate psychography.

1. First of all we have the classical method by which Mr. Maskelyne helped to secure the conviction of Slade. A metal thimble carrying a small piece of pencil is worn on the third finger, which is underneath the slate. The writing is done on the under surface of the slate, which has to be turned over and a fresh crumb of pencil placed on it to replace the bit which has fallen on the floor during the act of turning over, a feat easier to describe than to accomplish without being detected.

Eglinton allows the sitters to initial one side of the slate, marks the crumb of pencil placed on the slate, and allows the corner of the slate to project from the table, so that if anyone is not convinced that the slate is not turned over it is his own fault.

2. *Thumb-writing*.—A very great deal has been said about the position of Eglinton's thumb. It is possible to get posses-

sion of the crumb of pencil on the slate, and getting it under the thumb-nail to write upon the surface of the slate, the slate resting the while upon the performer's knees. Eglinton has proved to me that he does not use this method *by allowing me to pare his thumb-nail* almost to the quick, after which his séances were just as successful as before. This fact is worth any number of observations as to the position of his thumb, which, as it happens, he never moves under the table, but only to the side, where it rests in a hollow cut for that purpose in the edge. This movement will be found necessary to relieve cramp by anyone who will try and hold up a slate for an hour under a table.

3. *The use of a slate with a false side*.—At all the shops where conjuring apparatus is sold, a slate can be procured having an extra side which lies loose upon one of the sides of the slate. The inner surface of this flap is covered with blotting paper. When the slate is shown round as clean, this flap is held in position by the thumb, and after it has been shown not to have anything written on either side is placed with the false side downwards upon a piece of blotting paper lying upon the table. The false side falls out upon the blotting paper, from which it cannot be distinguished as its upper surface is covered with similar paper, and the writing which had been previously written upon one of the true sides of the slate is disclosed. This trick was sold after Mr. Eglinton's famous séance with Mr. Gladstone, as purporting to be the method used by him. It is not necessary to say any more about this way of producing the writing, as I only insert it for the sake of completeness, it being obviously impossible to work it under the conditions that are observed at his séances. It is in fact merely a stage trick, and could not be worked with people bringing their own slates.

4. *Having a pencil fixed to the under surface of the table and moving the slate*.—I have experimented for a long time with this method. After some hours practice I was able to write a word or two by it, but the necessary movement of the slate is very noticeable, and all my friends detected the manoeuvre at once. There is also the difficulty of fixing and removing the pencil, and as Eglinton allows anyone to examine the under surface of the table at any stage of a sitting he would never dare to make use of such a transparent device. Besides, there is no method of fixing a bit of pencil securely enough to the under surface of the table to bear the strain of writing with, that does not leave a mark of some sort. Eglinton was courteous enough to allow me to thoroughly examine every part of the table he uses, and I failed to find any such mark.

5. *The use of sympathetic ink*.—It has been suggested that the long messages entirely filling one side of the slate are produced by previously writing the message on a slate with "some chemical" which will come out to resemble slate-pencil writing after a lapse of time, and then changing this slate for the one brought by the sitter. There are several points against this theory.

1. The only chemical which will at all resemble slate-pencil writing is a chloride of barium, or calcium, in solution. This is invisible, but if wetted with a weak dilution of sulphuric acid, the white sulphate is precipitated on the surface of the slate, and looks on a superficial observation something like slate-pencil writing. But this writing *always* smudges, and is *indelible*.

Now the long messages Eglinton gets rub out quite easily, proving conclusively that it is not the result of chemical action. I have spent considerable time in experimenting in this direction, and have consulted distinguished chemists and prestidigitateurs about it. The former assure me that there are no other chemicals to produce a like result, and the latter that they have themselves always used the "flap slate" described above in these performances. So that I think we may safely assume that there is no sympathetic ink which will produce a good imitation of slate-pencil writing.

2. Besides, even if Eglinton had a slate previously written upon there is the difficulty of changing it for the other one. It is very easy for people to say, "Oh, but he changes the slate." In order to do this one must first have your written slate concealed. And after the change you must have somewhere to put the one for which you have changed it. I have carefully examined Eglinton's room and table, and have no hesitation in asserting that there is no place where this could be done. A slate, moreover, is too bulky to be hidden under one's clothes, and Eglinton, as he sits exposed to the view of both sitters, could not attempt anything of the sort without instant detection. Besides he allows one to initial the slates to prove that they are not changed.

Besides these methods that I have enumerated, there are none others known to conjurers by which slate-writing can be produced.

I will now draw attention to some investigations of mine which I hope will dispose of some minor doubts. One afternoon I paid Eglinton a visit with the express purpose of ascertaining for myself certain facts about the locked slate. Previously I called at one of our leading manufacturers of conjuring apparatus, and was permitted to examine all the apparatus which opened by a secret method, such as the "Spiritualistic collar and handcuffs." At Nottingham-place Eglinton allowed me to subject the locked slate to a most minute examination, extending over some time, and I thoroughly convinced myself that there was no way by which it could be opened without the use of the proper key. I also found that even if it was held under the table unlocked, it was impossible to shut it again without such a loud click as would infallibly betray the fact to anyone in the room.

I then wrote a sentence on one side of it, and holding it open on my knees under the table, found that I was unable to read a single word, as although it was broad daylight there was a very considerable amount of darkness under the table. I also found that I could not read a word in a book placed open upon a slate and held under the table, much less find a page and count a line and a certain word in that line.

I think that these ascertained facts ought to quite convince those people who still have an idea that Eglinton manages somehow to read the message written in the locked slate before the answer is written.

I would also draw attention to the fact that even were it possible to imitate the sound of pencil writing, as some observers seem to think that the sound of the writing and the writing itself are not synchronous, it very frequently happens at successful sésances that the messages follow each other in such quick succession (as in my first sésance reported in "LIGHT") that even if it were possible, as I have proved, I hope, that it is not, there would be no time for a message to be written in the interval which elapses between the time of apparent writing as judged from the sounds of writing.

So that taking all these facts into consideration I think that all conjurers, at least, cannot do otherwise than come to the conclusion that their art has nothing whatever to do with the phenomena of psychography.

In conclusion, I would say that I regret to find in Mrs. Sidgwick's paper an absence of that calm dispassionate judgment which should always characterise scientific inquiry.

I know that as regards herself my paper will be wasted, as it is quite useless to argue with people possessing the fatal facility for drawing false inferences from given premises to the extent of Mrs. Sidgwick, who I am very much inclined to believe belongs to that class of sceptics about whom it has been said, upon the best authority, that "if they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

CORRESPONDENCE.

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

An Urgent Appeal to Spiritualists.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—I have to-day received from the Council of the Society for Psychical Research a copy of their last *Journal*. Although this publication is issued to "members and subscribers only," by the Council forwarding me a special copy I conclude they have no objection to my publicly referring to the same. Mrs. Henry Sidgwick has chosen—on what ground she adduces not one particle of evidence—to stigmatise the phenomenon of slate-writing as "clever conjuring," alleging, as a reason for so doing, the impossibility of complete observation of the methods under which it is produced! But at the same time the judgment which Mrs. Sidgwick now pronounces (we are not informed whether she speaks on behalf of the Society or only individually) is such an assumption of infallibility of her own powers of observation—for she coolly says, in effect, that the thousands of distinguished men and women who have testified to the verity of psychography are incompetent investigators—that every person who is convinced of the reality of this phenomenon must protest strongly against such an arrogant

attitude. For this purpose I shall be grateful if everyone who has satisfied himself of the genuineness of the manifestations occurring in my presence will be good enough to forward me their testimony to that effect—allowing me the right to use the same should I deem it necessary. No names would, however, be published without consent.

The slight which Mrs. Sidgwick has through me put upon the intelligence of all the investigators must raise a storm of opposition to such methods as must for ever silence the presumptuous attitude which she has chosen to assume, and if a time is ever to come when Spiritualists are to assert themselves it is now. I trust my friends from far and near to whom this letter is addressed will—in the interest of the truth—at once respond to the appeal which I now make to them.—Yours truly,

6, Nottingham-place, W.

W. EGLINTON.

July 6th, 1886.

Mr. F. Omerin.

To the Editor of "LIGHT."

SIR,—Being unable immediately to answer the many letters I have received during the last few days on professional matters from readers of "LIGHT," kindly allow me to give this excuse through your columns, begging correspondents to be good enough to accept it until they receive a reply, which shall be in due course.—I remain, sir, yours faithfully,

F. OMERIN.

3, Bulstrode-street, Cavendish-square, W.

July 5th, 1886.

SPIRITUAL BATTLE.

(FROM MR. LAURENCE OLIPHANT'S *Masollam*.)

"We poor finite human beings think we are playing the game of life ourselves; but we are nothing but the pawns on the terrestrial chess-board, and even the invisible hands that move us are but the instruments of intelligence where the force is generated, under the impulse of which hands and pawns alike are moved. . . . You observe how intensely interesting life becomes, when it resolves itself into one long and fierce combat between the intelligences and their forces which make for the right, and those which are ranged to resist it. The man who is absorbed in his own personal interests and ambitions knows nothing of it, for he does not recognise any forces opposed to him outside the sphere of his own mundane hopes and fears. He struggles blindly with events, as the sailor does with the elements, caring only for his own cargo, and making only for his port of destination. But he who, divested of all personal inclination, enrolls himself in this mortal life in the host of those who, from unseen realms, are combating for the universes, begins soon to be conscious that there are rival influences at work, who use the basest passions of earthly men with which to frustrate that grand endeavour; and they finally get to perceive a certain method in the operations of both sides, and to recognise the fact that the success of the side on which they are fighting must depend upon the strength of the altruistic sentiment which animates the combatants; for in proportion to that depends, in its turn, their receptivity to the divine impulse under which they combat. Hence it often happens that we who are engaged intelligently in this strange warfare, find ourselves impelled to adopt a course of action, the ultimate bearing of which is concealed from us. Often it is even difficult for us to justify our acts to ourselves on any principle of common-sense; often we really believe we are struggling to accomplish a purpose, which, after we have failed, we find did in fact achieve another and altogether different result, the meaning of which now becomes clear, though it would have been impossible of achievement, except under the mask of another design,—in other words, we are constantly making feints to deceive the enemy, but are ourselves kept in ignorance at the time that they are feints; but as we come in the course of a long experience to be more familiar with the divine tactics, and to recognise the marvellous operation of the laws which govern the forces at work on both sides, we become overwhelmed with the magnitude of the struggle; and as our lives become wholly devoted to it, we recognise in every minute detail which affects them, its bearing upon the vast issues at stake, and are at once crushed by a sense of our own insignificance, and uplifted by the stupendous consideration that no one is too insignificant to affect, by his own personal effort, the destiny of that whole human race of which he forms a minute fractional part."

THE HERMETIC SOCIETY.

At the meeting of June 29th, a joint paper on the "Constitution and Nature of the Ego," by the president, Dr. Anna Kingsford, and the hon. sec., Mr. Maitland, was read by the latter. The paper will be embodied in the revised and enlarged edition of *The Perfect Way*, now in course of preparation. The following is an outline of the argument.

Consciousness and memory are inherent in the substance of existence. Otherwise Evolution, as disclosed by the facts of physical science, would be impossible. In every living entity are four kinds of potency; the mechanical, which is the lowest, the chemical, the electrical, which includes the mental, and the psychical, which is the highest. The three first belong to the domain of physiological science; the last to that of occult science. This last and highest mode is inherent in the Substantial. It subsists latent and diffused in all matter and is the cause of organic life, being the cause of the differentiation of matter. Hence *Psyche* is called the "Mother of the Living."

Originally abstract and universal, *Psyche* becomes concrete and personal as she issues through the gate of matter into new life. A mere spark in the globule, she becomes, by continual accretion and centralisation, a refulgent blaze in the globe. As along a chain of nerve cells the current of magnetic energy flows to its central point, with ever increasing impetus, so is the psychic energy throughout nature developed. Hence the necessity of centres, of associations, of organisms. And thus by the systematisation of congeries of living entities, that which in each is little becomes great in the whole. The *quality* of *Psyche*, however, is ever the same; her potentiality is invariable.

Our souls, then, are the agglomerate essences of all the numberless consciousnesses composing us. They have grown, evolving gradually from rudimentary entities which were themselves evolved by polarisation, from gaseous and mineral matter; and these entities combine and coalesce to form higher, because more complex, entities, the soul of the individual representing the combined forces of their manifold consciousnesses, polarised and centralised into an indefeasible unity.

As the material is thus the world of causes, so the psychic is the world of effects; and the soul may be said to be the effect of the body; for organism is before function. But it is none the less true that organism is the result of idea, and that mind is the cause of Evolution. The explanation is that spirit is before matter in its abstract, though not in its concrete conception. This is to say that mind, superior to, and yet identical with, that which results from organism, precedes and is the cause of organism. This mind is Deity, primordial and unmanifest; a pure and naked fire burning in Infinitude, whereof a flame subsists in all creatures. And the purpose of Evolution, and separation into many forms—the purpose, that is, of Life,—is the elaboration of soul through the varied transformations of matter.

Spirit is essential and perfect in itself, having neither beginning nor end. Soul is secondary and perfected. Spirit is the first principle and is abstract. Soul is the derivative, and is therefore concrete. Spirit is thus the primary Adam, and Soul is Eve,—the "Woman" taken out of the side of the "Man."

The essential principle of personality, that which constitutes personality in its higher sense, is consciousness, is spirit; and this is God. Wherefore the higher and interior principle of every monad is God. But this primary principle, being naked essence, could not be separated off into individuals, unless contained in and limited by a secondary principle, which is, necessarily, evolved. Spirit, therefore, is projected into the condition of matter, in order that soul may be evolved thereby. Soul is begotten in matter by means of polarisation. And spirit, of which all matter consists, returns to its essential nature in soul—this being the medium in which spirit is individualised—and from abstract becomes concrete. So that by means of creation God the One becomes God the Many.

As the soul is within and before the ether, the energy whereby it polarises and accretes is not dependent upon the undulations of the ether, as are material energies, but upon the will of the spirit which is before the soul. The soul is the medium in which this force operates. And when the soul has once gathered of this force sufficient to burn centrally—for all life is a process of combustion—she is not quenched by the disintegration of the physical elements. In fact, these fall asunder and are shed many times during life, and the consciousness and memory remain the same; the Ego and its thoughts being one and continuous. This is because the Ego in us has

grown up out of many elements whose interior Egos are perpetuated in our interior Ego, because their psychic force is centralised in our individuality. But our souls are not, therefore, limited in capacity to the sum total of these consciousnesses as they are in their separate state; but represent them combined into One Life and polarised to a level indefinitely higher. And similarly with the souls of the planets. Each "Planetary God" is, therefore, not a supernatural extraneous personage; not an original Divine principle; but the sum total of the souls comprising the planet, and focussed to a higher plane, his spirit being the Divine Nous of these souls. And so on upwards to the Supreme. Thus the problem of the Ego in man is the problem also of God in Nature. And as the soul of the man is more than the associated consciousnesses of his body, so the soul of the planet is more than those of the planet; the soul of the system more than those of the associated world-consciousnesses; and that of the manifest universe more than that of the corporate systems. And beyond and above this again, is the abstract and unmanifest Deity who is before and independent of Nature. For the Manifest does not exhaust the Unmanifest, but the "Father is greater than the Son."

All the component elements of the body polarise to form an unity which is as a sun to the system. But this polarisation is fourfold, being distinct for every mode of consciousness. And the central, innermost, or highest point of Radiance, and this alone, is really subjective. The consciousness of this central and true Ego is attained through the unification of the soul with the spirit; by means of which she also becomes subjective, and from being reflective merely to the spirit, becomes radiant and effulgent with the spirit. They who stop short at the secondary and outer consciousness, and imagine it to be the Subjective, have failed to penetrate to the innermost and highest point of the consciousness in themselves; and have, therefore, yet to attain to common-sense in its true mode;—that which represents the *consensus* of all the manifold planes of consciousness whereof man is constituted. This last is the condition of man in his unregenerate state, and therefore of the vast majority of men. In such degree as man fails to attain the consciousness of the true Ego, he is but man rudimentary, and necessarily agnostic. For, of the region which, being spiritual, primary, and real, interprets the sensible, secondary, and phenomenal, he has no perception; and instead of being a continuous personality, consists but of a succession of unrelated, unstable states, the only consciousness he recognises being not noumenal, but phenomenal, like a flame making and unmaking itself at each instant. Recognising the true Ego within himself, man recognises the true Ego without himself; recognises, that is, the macrocosmic Deity, which prior to this he cannot do. For man can discern without himself that only which he has in himself. Thus self-consciousness, in its true sense, is God-consciousness. The physiologists of the period, who tell us that memory is but a biological *processus*, and that consciousness is dependent upon the duration and intensity of molecular nervous vibration—so that there is nothing to cognise the unstable states thus arising—do not touch the *Psyche*, but treat phenomenon as capable of cognising itself. Whereas, being objective only, phenomenon cannot cognise itself. So that unless there were an inner, subjective Ego to perceive and remember this succession of phenomenal states, the condition of personality would be impossible, not only for a single lifetime, but for a fraction of a lifetime; still more for the immortality which appertains to the true Ego.

The paper concluded by an application of its doctrine to the elucidation of the "Mysteries of Religion,"—especially of the dogmas of the "Immaculate Conception" and "Assumption," which it exhibited as having for their subject the elaboration and glorification of the human Ego.

The next meeting will be held at 4.30 on Thursday, the 15th inst., when Mr. Maitland will read a paper entitled, "The New Illumination."

MEN narrow their views in order to see more distinctly, as they go to the bottom of a well to see the stars at noon; but it is a poor exchange to give sunlight for starlight.

To wish that others should learn by our experience, is sometimes as idle as to think that we can eat and they be filled; but when we find that we have eaten poison, it is doubtless mercy to warn others against the dish.

Not until he is at the verge of the grave, when he is about to enter into the realm of *unknown* beings, does man fully feel how much he loves such as are already known to him, who suffer like himself, who die as he does.

WHAT IS SAID OF PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA.

PROFESSORS TORNEBOM AND EDLAND, THE SWEDISH PHYSICISTS.—

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

asked for by persons present, and, by means of a simple code of signals, answer questions and spell out coherent communications."

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

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

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

DR. LOCKHART ROBERTSON.—"The writer" (i.e., Dr. L. Robertson) "can now no more doubt the physical manifestations of so-called Spiritualism than he would any other fact, as, for example, the fall of the apple to the ground, of which his senses informed him. As stated above, there was no place or chance of any legerdemain, or fraud, in these physical manifestations. He is aware, even from recent experience, of the impossibility of convincing anyone, by a mere narrative of events apparently so out of harmony with all our knowledge of the laws which govern the physical world, and he places these facts on record rather as an act of justice due to those whose similar statements he had elsewhere doubted and denied, than with either the desire or hope of convincing others. Yet he cannot doubt the ultimate recognition of facts of the truth of which he is so thoroughly convinced. Admit these physical manifestations, and a strange and wide world of research is opened to our inquiry. This field is new to the materialist mind of the last two centuries, which even in the writings of divines of the English Church, doubts and denies all spiritual manifestations and agencies, be they good or evil."—From a letter by Dr. Lockhart Robertson, published in the *Dialectical Society's Report on Spiritualism*, p. 24.

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

CONJURERS AND PSYCHICAL PHENOMENA.

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

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

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

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Light:

SATURDAY, JULY 17TH, 1886.

THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH AND SPIRITUALISM.

This week we give largely increased space to reading matter in order that Mr. C. C. Massey's valuable paper may be published *in extenso*. Even with the extra pages, however, we have been compelled to hold over a considerable quantity of correspondence relating to Mrs. Sidgwick's article in the June number of the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research. Just indignation is felt in many quarters at the unfair and prejudicial manner in which the Society has thought fit to deal with Spiritualism in general, and Mr. Eglinton in particular. Mrs. Sidgwick's article is to all intents and purposes "a stab in the back" dealt with an animus which, we regret to say, is only too plainly discernible. We vigorously endorse the strong protest made by Mr. Stainton Moses at the meeting of the Psychical Society on Monday last, a brief report of which follows.

Our own comments on Mrs. Sidgwick's strictures and conclusions we are forced, through the exigencies of space, to reserve till next week, but in the meantime we simply desire to point out that unless an official disavowal of Mrs. Sidgwick's article, as being representative of the views of the Society, is forthwith made, the duty of all Spiritualists, who are members of the Society for Psychical Research, will be obvious. Mr. Myers, on Monday last, said something in this connection, but in our opinion that gentleman's guarded disavowal can hardly be looked upon as satisfactory. Indeed, it appears to us that in the matter of its responsibility for the statements of its members, the Society has adopted an attitude akin to that of the lad, who having been detected throwing stones, and being charged with the fact, promptly pleads: "Please, sir, it wasn't me; it was the boy who has run away!" In this as in many other instances, the position of the Society is, as we hope to show, utterly indefensible.

GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

On Monday evening, July 5th, at the rooms of the Society of British Artists, Mr. C. C. Massey read a paper, a verbatim report of which appears in another column, before a general meeting of the Society, Professor Balfour Stewart being in the chair.

On the invitation of the chairman a somewhat lively discussion followed the reading of the paper. Amongst other speakers

Mr. W. Stainton Moses, the President of the London Spiritualist Alliance, said all present would no doubt feel deeply indebted to his friend Mr. C. C. Massey for the very able, temperate, and most closely reasoned paper they had heard. Spiritualists especially would feel grateful to him for having contributed to their literature one of the best reasoned arguments in defence of their faith he had ever heard. Some had thought the Society for Psychical Research had been wrong in not concerning itself with Mr. Eglinton. That reproach would lie in the path no longer after the publication of the last *Journal*, but it would lie in the mouths of Spiritualists to say that when the Society did concern itself with him it did so in a man-

ner that was unfair and unjust. He, for one, thought it had been the worst step the Society had yet taken in approaching the question so unfairly and unjustly. Some Spiritualists might go further and ask themselves whether they could be of use in such a society, and whether it was not their duty to carry on their own work in their own way, unless indeed the action of Mrs. Sidgwick was disavowed; for assuredly Spiritualists at large would consider that her article had committed the Society to methods which they could not approve. Speaking for himself he regretted the publication of that article very much, and he had been delighted to learn since entering that meeting that it was not intended to be more than the expression of an independent opinion, and was not to be regarded as committing the Society to its lines. He had felt it his duty to make a protest, and he hoped the disavowal of which he had spoken would be confirmed from the chair. Mr. Stainton Moses then related one or two incidents of his own experience in psychography.

Dr. Wyld followed, confirming the remarks made by his friend the last speaker. What struck him in reading the article in the *Journal* was the extraordinary amount of credulity on the part of Mrs. Sidgwick which it indicated. She had given some twenty or thirty cases of slate-writing from men and women of the highest position as to intelligence and integrity—and many of the cases were excellent—the whole of which she dismissed in about a single sentence by saying that to her mind the whole of those things might have been produced by sleight of hand. He thought that indicated an extraordinary amount of credulity on the part of Mrs. Sidgwick, for she must be well aware that for eight or ten years past there had been published almost weekly, in the pages of "LIGHT" and other papers, testimony from various conjurers, stating that however these phenomena might have been produced they were not produced by sleight of hand nor by any machinery, known to them, and that they were altogether beyond the reach of the art of conjuring. It seemed extraordinary that Mrs. Sidgwick, who was not a conjurer, should say that they were. Dr. Wyld then proceeded to describe two cases of slate-writing which had come within his own experience, and both of which entirely obviated the objections raised by Mrs. Sidgwick.

Mr. Myers wished to say a few words in explanation. He felt quite sure, in fact, he knew, that Mrs. Sidgwick did not want her article in the *Journal* to be accepted as an authoritative exposition of the views of the Society, but quite the contrary. She alone was responsible for her statements, which only dealt with the subject from one standpoint. Their Society was composed of various people holding different views on these matters which were discussed in the *Proceedings* and in the *Journal*. He hoped other people would write to the *Journal* their views on the other side. They had published every scrap of evidence which had been sent to them, and Mrs. Sidgwick had expressly desired him to say that had Dr. Herschell's letter which appeared in last week's "LIGHT" been sent to her that also would have been printed. As regards the Society being supposed to commit itself to a line of opinion which would induce Spiritualists to leave the Society that seemed to him to be entirely in the air. There were two ways in which the Society could express its approval or disapproval; by the election of members to serve on the Council, and by communications to their *Journal* and *Proceedings*. The two Spiritualists who had spoken, and who might be said to be representative Spiritualists, were both members of the Council, and nothing they had ever said had been refused due consideration. There surely was some unfairness in their now complaining. Moreover he had several times strongly appealed to Spiritualists, through "LIGHT" and other channels, for evidence in relation to these phenomena, but the response had been very inadequate. He had over and over again appealed ineffectually to Mr. Stainton Moses to place at his disposal his own personal records, and which he (Mr. Myers) regarded as of the very highest value.

[We have no space this week to report the discussion upon Mr. Massey's paper. Several other speakers addressed the meeting, and various questions were asked. These, however, are beyond our present purpose.]

A SIGN OF THE TIMES.—At the last Ely Theological Festival, Canon Evans, in unveiling a statue of the late Bishop Woodford, erected under a canopy in the north wall of the college buildings, made use of these words: At the festival last year we had no thought of the dark shadow that a few months later was to envelope this college. Then our founder was with us in bodily presence, not, it is true, in good health; but we had no reason to fear that the end was so near. To-day, though he is not with us in bodily presence, who will venture to say that he is not with us in spirit?

THE POSSIBILITIES OF MAL-OBSERVATION IN RELATION TO EVIDENCE FOR THE PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM.

A Paper read at a Meeting of the Society for Psychical Research, on Monday, July 5th, 1886, by C. C. MASSEY.

In his opening address at the first general meeting of this Society, the President, Professor Sidgwick, while expressly evading "the difficulties of determining in the abstract what constitutes adequate evidence" of the phenomena called Spiritualistic (as well as of thought-reading and clairvoyance), nevertheless concluded with the following general statement of the sort of proof at which we ought to aim.

"We must drive the objector," he said, "into the position of being forced either to admit the phenomena as inexplicable, at least to him, or to accuse the investigators either of lying or cheating, or of a blindness or forgetfulness incompatible with any intellectual condition except absolute idiocy."*

As I am about to maintain that much of the existing evidence for the phenomena in question already places objectors in the dilemma thus succinctly indicated by Professor Sidgwick, I must ask leave to point out, with some approach to particularity, how, and under what circumstances, I conceive the dilemma to arise. This is the more necessary, because it will have at once occurred to all of us that the dilemma does not arise in the case of conjuring tricks, to which the phenomena we are considering are usually referred by the incredulous. No one thinks the worse of his own or another's intelligence for not discovering a conjurer's trick; but most of us would feel ashamed of mistaking a conjurer's trick for a genuine manifestation of an unknown force. Nor is there, so far as I am aware, any mediumistic phenomenon on record which absolutely defies simulation under all circumstances and all conditions of observation. The whole evidence is a question of these circumstances and conditions, and to demonstrate that a conjurer can baffle observation under inferior conditions of these phenomena is quite beside the mark. We have to judge the evidence, or to answer an argument, at its best. The success of the conjurer with even the most intelligent spectators depends on their overlooking the true conditions of the performance, and this again depends on their attention not being directed to the particular operation which decides, or is the condition of the result. Any spectator who knew *exactly* what to observe would have already discovered the trick, and a very little practice in observation would enable him to detect the actual *tour de force* by which it was accomplished. This remark, of course, does not apply to the secrets of machinery, or elaborate scientific apparatus; and it is perhaps true that pseudo mediums and thaumaturgists have availed themselves of such mechanical means. But none of the phenomena relied upon by Spiritualists and the maintainers of a psychic, or nerve, force are at all explicable by contrivances which could baffle the well-informed observation of even an adept. If the medium is a conjurer, he may, of course, have some simple preparations, but to bring them into play he must succeed, as other conjurers do, by the ignorance of the witnesses of the particular thing to be done, on which all depends. By this particular thing I mean, as will appear when we come to consider the opportunities of a conjurer at a mediumistic séance, one definite act or operation which, under the circumstances of the experiment, has become the indispensable *condition* of the conjurer's success. In an ordinary conjurer's performance this never is known, and observation, therefore, wavers and is distracted by this uncertainty. The most important thing is, perhaps, just what never would occur to the mind as important at all. I shall endeavour to show (1) that at mediumistic sittings, under the best conditions, this uncertainty does not and cannot exist; and (2) that even inferior powers of observation, equipped with knowledge of the exact thing to be observed, and associated with average intelligence, are competent to baffle any conjurer in the world, provided only that the conditions of observation are physically easy. There must be sufficient intelligence to know that a conjurer's sole chance in that case lies in that possibility of withdrawing your attention from the single perception required of you. Very little will be required to be secure against this, because a dominant idea, even if for a moment in abeyance, is immediately re-excited by any foreign action possibly designed to lay it completely asleep. This especially applies, as I know by my own experience in the slate-writing sittings, to offers of conversation, changes of hand induced by fatigue, and so forth; jealous vigilance is aroused by the smallest modification in the conditions.

The Latest Issue.

In the June number of our *Journal*, only issued a few days ago, Mrs. Sidgwick takes up a position apparently opposed to the reception of general testimony to these phenomena, so far as they

occur in the presence of professional mediums, and must be established by observation of any degree of continuity. This is a plain issue, and one on which it behoves us to have a clear opinion. For, if Mrs. Sidgwick's view is adopted in this Society, we may at once renounce that part of our original programme which referred to the objective phenomena of Spiritualism, it being extremely unlikely that sufficient material for judgment will be offered to us from experience in private life, or from evidence independent of the senses and minds of witnesses. But I believe that you will not adopt that view, and I hope you will show you do not adopt it, by instructing a committee to collect and report upon the available evidence.

A Broad Distinction.

Now there is one broad distinction between the medium and the conjurer which makes it possible to get evidence with the one which the performances of the other can never afford. On the hypothesis of mediumship we should expect to be able to reverse one *essential* relation of conjurer to spectator, so that the latter shall be no longer a mere observer or looker-on, but shall be himself the principal actor in all the preparations, while the physical activity of the medium is reduced to the *minimum*. The conjurer can only mask his essential performance by his incidental and apparent performance. By this activity he obtains two indispensable advantages. For, first, he imposes on the spectator a multitude and succession of observations in uncertainty of the precise essential point to which attention should be directed to prevent or detect trickery. And, secondly, he is enabled to distract attention, or to impose inferior or impossible conditions of observation with regard to the particular operations which have to be concealed. We may, therefore, be quite sure that in order to baffle a conjurer it is only necessary to undertake all preliminary manipulations ourselves, and so to make our arrangements that mere observation has only to be directed to a single fact of sense perception, or at most to two or three such facts well within an average capacity of simultaneous or successive attention; and, further, that the conditions of this observation should be the easiest possible. If, moreover, we can reinforce the confidence which everyone must feel in his own senses up to a certain point by adequate contrivances to dispense with actual observation of any important particulars, we shall reduce the problem to the most extreme simplicity that human experience admits of. For testimony to phenomena obtained under such conditions to be of the highest evidential value, it is only necessary that the witness should in some way assure us that the observation, thus simplified and directly designated by the preparations, was in fact made, or that when this assurance is not explicitly given, it is only because failure of the observation, under the circumstances, would have been inconsistent with a sane and waking condition. If there is any possibility left for observation to guard against, we must be satisfied that it was either such as *could not* have escaped attention, or one to which attention was *actually* directed. In that case, he only can question whether observation has really performed its office who doubts the capacity of the human mind and senses to take in the most elementary facts of perception.

Adverse Presumptions.

Now I submit that testimony of the highest value exists, and exists even in abundance. But it will be perfectly idle to adduce cases in illustration of this proposition, if every case in which the evidence is apparently free from defect is assumed to be incorrectly described. That is the assumption which Mrs. Sidgwick is prepared to make, because in her view observation is defective, not only in what it omits, but in what it asserts. I shall presently endeavour to show that this can only be true of general statements which fail to discriminate the elements of an observation, and which under the name of observation give us only a mental result instead of testifying to individual and indivisible acts of perception.

The Measure of Supposable Mal-Observation.

And as to important elements which are assumed to be lost for observation, we shall have to see of what nature they must be, of what character and dimensions—in order that they may affect the result. And then the appeal must be an universal experience of the degree to which the senses can and cannot be stimulated by external occurrences without arousing attention sufficient for lively perception with notice by a waking man. I am aware it may be said that mental preoccupation is *pro tanto* sleep in regard to everything upon which the mind is not actually engaged, and that this preoccupation it is which we may suppose the conjurer to have induced. But it is always the nature of the particular act in each case to be performed unobserved by the conjurer, which must determine the degree of preoccupation in the witness necessary for the accomplishment of the former's purpose. Now, as regards this, if the *positive* observations of the witness respecting the physical conditions are generally trustworthy, we get thereby a measure of the conjurer's indispensable physical interference, and thus of the degree of stimulation to the witness's senses by such

* *Proceedings*. (Vol I., p. 16.)

interference. In proportion to that stimulation must be the degree of preoccupation for observation to fail. So that it will not do to urge the abstract truth or experience of the liability of the mind to momentary preoccupation during a prolonged observation: we must in each case compare the degree of preoccupation supposable with the degree that is then and there requisite for the conjurer's purpose. And here the appeal must again be to common experience.

Samples of Evidence.

Having regard to the limits of our time, I am obviously unable to do more on the present occasion than offer a few samples from the bulk, and even as to some of these I must content myself with a brief reference to the essential character of the evidence as illustrating the points I have in view.

Now I will first take two or three of the experiments devised and instituted by the late Professor Zöllner with the medium Slade, selecting the briefest suitable accounts that I can find. The following will be found at p. 39 of the translation entitled *Transcendental Physics*. Zöllner says:—

I took a book-slate, bought by myself; that is, two slates connected at one side by cross-hinges, like a book, for folding up. In the absence of Slade, I lined both slates within, on the sides applied to one another, with a half-sheet of my letter-paper, which, immediately before the sitting, was evenly spread with lamp-black soot. This slate I closed, and Slade consented to my laying it (which I had never let out of my hands after I had spread the soot) on my lap during the sitting, so that I could continually observe it to the middle. We might have sat at the table in the brightly-lighted room for about five minutes, our hands linked with those of Slade in the usual manner *above* the table, when I suddenly felt on two occasions, the one shortly after the other, the slate pressed down upon my lap, without my having perceived anything in the least visible. Three raps on the table announced that all was completed, and when I opened the slate there was within it, on the one side, the impression of a *right* foot, on the other side that of a left foot.

And this was just what Zöllner had himself desired with a view to obviate possible objections to a similar phenomenon obtained previously under inferior conditions.

Now I submit that this experiment reduces the supposition of mal-observation to the extreme of absurdity. It would appear from the account that the experiment was proposed to Slade only immediately before it was tried, so that there was no time for the preparation by Slade of a slate to be substituted for Zöllner's. But as we are now on the point of observation I will suppose for a moment that possibility. It will then be seen that Zöllner's statement expressly excludes the possibility of a substitution *before* he placed the slate on his lap, so that Slade would have to effect it with his feet afterwards, and that though the slate was all the time partly in Zöllner's view, and when the least sensation would have instantly drawn his eyes to the spot.

I pass to another case from the same source (p. 81).

The experiment, says Zöllner, was as follows:—

I took two bands cut out of soft leather, forty-four centimètres long (about fifteen inches) and from five to ten millimètres broad ($\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch), and fastened the ends of each together, and sealed them with my own seal. The two leather bands were laid separately on the card-table at which we sat; the seals were placed opposite to one another, and I held my hands over the bands (as shown in the plate). Slade sat at my left side, and placed his right hand gently over mine, I being able to feel the leather underneath all the time. Presently, while Slade's hands were not touching mine, but were removed from them about two or three decimètres (from 8 to 12 inches), I felt a movement of the leather bands under my hands. Then came three raps on the table, and on removing my hands the two leather bands were knotted together. The twisting of the leather is distinctly seen in the plate, copied from a photograph. The time that the bands were under my hands was at most three minutes. The experiment was in a well-lighted room.

Here the arrangements had reduced the office of observation to the simple points (1) whether the bands lying before his eyes on the table were in fact connected at the moment Zöllner covered them with his hands; (2) whether Slade could and did touch them when they were thus covered; (3) whether Slade could or did either knot them at the moment Zöllner removed his hands, or then substitute others for them. If anyone thinks that either of these things could have happened unobserved, I can only say that I am sure he will not get any honest conjurer in the world to agree with him.

The following fact, from my own experience with the same medium, Slade, may be fitly adduced here.

It was in New York, on the evening of the 14th October, 1875, and was publicly recorded by me shortly afterwards, from notes taken immediately on my return to my hotel after the sitting. And my recollection of it is still perfectly distinct. It was at Slade's own room, brightly lighted with gas. The floor was carpeted. We sat at a table in the centre of the room, three of us, Slade opposite to me, my friend Colonel Olcott at the end of my left and on Slade's right. There was no one else present. Slate-writing experiments were proceeding between Olcott and Slade, when a chair on *my right*—at the end of the table opposite Olcott—was thrown down by some undetected force. I got up, felt round the chair for any attachments, and then producing a tape measure I carried with me for the purpose of my investigation, I took the shortest distance between the medium and the

chair, as the latter lay upon the floor. It was just five feet, and on resuming my seat I could see a good clear space between the table and the prostrate chair. Meanwhile, Slade had not moved from his seat, and I requested him not to stir, and asked that the chair, which lay on my right, and which I could watch as nothing intervened between me and it, *might be picked up and be placed by me*. There was an interval of perhaps two minutes, during which time the medium, still engaged with Colonel Olcott, remained seated in the same position, as I know, because my range of vision from where I sat took in the whole general situation, though, as the prostrate chair and the free space of floor between it and the table were the main things to be observed, I kept my eyes steadily in that direction, and never lost sight of chair and floor for a moment. Suddenly I saw the chair move along the ground a few inches towards me, and in a direction slightly oblique to the table, and then, as I watched it and the open space between it and the table, medium, and everything else, it was jumped upon its legs and deposited at my right side, just as if some one had picked it up in order to take a seat beside me. No mediumistic phenomenon that I have witnessed has made stronger or more lasting impression upon me than this one.

On another occasion I was sitting alone with Slade in bright daylight, when his chair was drawn suddenly and considerably back, with him upon it. I at once pushed back my own chair from the table so as to command a full view of Slade's whole person. I then asked that my chair, with me upon it, might be drawn back. This was done almost immediately, to the extent of two or three inches. There would be no question either of Slade's agency in this, or of any unconscious action of my own, as I could, and did, see Slade from head to foot, and there was no time for gradual tension of the muscles of my own legs and feet against the floor in analogy with the process which no doubt often occurs in table-turning or tilting with contact of hands. I could multiply instances from my own experience in which observation has been similarly simplified and facilitated. When this is the case—and it will be found to be the case in a very large number of records—I contend that it is perfectly indifferent whether we are experimenting with a professional or with a private medium, and that the largest margin we can rationally allow for unknown possibilities of conjuring cannot prevent the issue being reduced, as is desired, to one simply of the *veracity* of the witness.

Evidence is Experimental in the True Sense.

I must, therefore, take exception to the statement of Mrs. Sidgwick, in the paper read at our last meeting, that the evidence is "so seldom experimental; that is, that the observer so seldom knows beforehand what will be the precise phenomena and conditions." The precise phenomenon in the case of the slate-writing mediums, for instance, is always known beforehand, unless we confuse the term "phenomena" and "conditions," *i.e.*, conditions of observation. The only variation is in the possibility of imposing tests supplementary to ocular observation, and these usually originate with the observer himself. I may instance a case recorded only the other day ("LIGHT," May 22nd), in which the observer, Major le Taylor, went three times to Mr. Eglinton, each time obtaining the writing under a new test premeditated by himself. He did this on the very principle recommended by Mrs. Sidgwick, of allowing a very large margin for conjuring and for defects of observation. As to the conditions of observation, they are known beforehand in all those cases—and very numerous they are—in which the phenomenon is obtained under conditions of observation prescribed by the observer himself. In Zöllner's above cited cases (and others could be adduced from his book) phenomenon, test, and conditions of observation, were all prescribed by himself. In both my cases of the chairs (especially the first mentioned) the phenomenon was prescribed by myself, and, equally in both, the conditions of observation were the best conceivable, because the very simplest. Mr. Eglinton's mediumship is especially remarkable for successes obtained under tests and conditions imposed by observers. In addition to Major le Taylor's case, may be mentioned, as illustrations, several others with this medium.

A Good Test Case in Psychography.

Thus, on January 5th of last year, Mr. D. H. Wilson, M.A., goes with his wife and sister to Mr. Eglinton—these four being the only persons present. Mr. Wilson suggests obtaining by psychography an extract from a closed book.

Accordingly (he says) Mrs. Kimber (his sister) wrote on a slate the number of *page*; Mrs. Wilson the number of a *line*, and it remained for me to choose the book from which Mrs. Wilson's line of Mrs. Kimber's page was to be written by psychography on the slate. For this purpose, with closed eyes, I took a book from the medium's shelves, which held about 200 volumes. A crumb of pencil was placed upon the slate, on which Mrs. Kimber and Mrs. Wilson had written the number of the page and line respectively. A second slate of exactly the same size and form was placed over this one, and the book was put by myself on the top of the two slates. Mr. Eglinton and Mrs. Kimber rested their hands on the book.

It should be noted that:—

1. Precaution had been taken that no one besides Mrs. Kimber knew what number she had written on the slate to express the page to

be recited, the same being true of the number Mrs. Wilson had written to express the line of that page.

2. The slates and book were all on the top of the table immediately before the eyes of all present. (The sitting was by daylight.)

3. The medium did not touch the book until the moment when he and Mrs. Kimber rested their hands thereon. It had been handled by myself alone.

After the lapse of a few seconds the sound of writing was heard within the slates. Upon the usual signal of three taps (also seemingly within the slates) to indicate the end of the experiment, I examined the slates, and found the following sentence, written on the under one, with the pencil resting on the full stop at the end. (I may mention that all the writings throughout the entire séance were conscientiously punctuated, and that every *t* was crossed and every *i* dotted.)

"Page 199, line 14, is a table, the last word is O'."

Mrs. Kimber had written 199 and Mrs. Wilson had written 14.

I then opened the book (*Ghose's Indian Chiefs, Rajahs, &c.*, Part II.) and turned to p. 199, which commences thus: "Table A. Estates belonging to the Hon. Maharaja Jotundra Mohun Tagore Behadur," &c.

The fourteenth line is as follows:—

"Shikharbâte, 24 Pargannas, 210 0 0."

Now, though the form of Mr. Wilson's statement that the book had been handled by himself alone, before he put it on the slates as they lay upon the table before the eyes of all present, does not expressly or necessarily import that it had never been out of his hands from the moment he removed it from the shelf, I do not think anyone can seriously suggest that Mr. Eglinton had the several opportunities unobserved:—

1. Of reading page and line on the slate, although we are told that precaution (very easy to take) was taken against this very thing.

2. Of getting possession of the book, opening it, and finding page and line.

3. Of writing those twelve words and figures with their six *t*'s and *i*'s all crossed and dotted on the slate.

Were that possible, my own conclusion would be that human observation, under the simplest and easiest conditions, and with attention directed to the self-devised tests to be guaranteed by the observation, is absolutely worthless for any purpose and under any circumstances whatever. And I would here refer to the sensible remarks of Mr. G. A. Smith upon a similar experience of his own with Mr. Eglinton, which will be found at p. 301 of the *Journal*.

Other Cases.

Other investigators with Mr. Eglinton have obtained tests similar to the above, with variations devised by themselves, making the operations to be performed unobserved by the medium still more complicated. I will only here refer to the experiment recorded by Mr. J. S. Farmer and Mr. J. G. Keulemans in "LIGHT" of October 17th, 1885. It is too long to quote, but should be referred to as showing what elaborate and ingenious arrangements observers can sometimes make for their satisfaction with results entirely successful. Other cases will be found in the June number of the *Journal*. The following instance, recorded by Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace in the *Spectator* of October 7th, 1877, is another illustration of the security an investigator can command by taking all the arrangements into his own hands. The medium was Dr. Monck. Mr. Wallace says:—

The sitting was at a private house at Richmond, on the 21st of last month. Two ladies and three gentlemen were present, besides myself and Dr. Monck. A shaded candle was in the room, giving light sufficient to see every object on the table round which we sat. Four small and common slates were on the table. Of these I chose two, and after carefully cleaning and placing a small fragment of pencil between them, I tied them together with a strong cord, passed around them both lengthways and crossways, so as effectually to prevent the slates from moving on each other. I then laid them flat on the table, without losing sight of them for an instant. Dr. Monck placed the fingers of both hands on them, while I and the lady sitting opposite placed our hands on the corners of the slates. *From this position our hands were never moved till I untied the slates to ascertain the result.* After waiting a minute or two, Dr. Monck asked me to name any short word I wished to be written on the slate. I named the word "God." He then asked me to say how I wished it written. I replied "Lengthways of the slate," and then if I wished it written with a large or small g. I chose a capital G. In a very short time writing was heard on the slate. The medium's hands were convulsively withdrawn, and I then myself untied the cord (which was a strong silk watchguard, lent by one of the visitors), and on opening the slates found on the lower one the word I had asked for, written in the manner I had requested, the writing being somewhat faint and laboured, but perfectly legible. The slate with the writing on it is now in my possession.

The essential features of this experiment are that I myself cleaned and tied up the slates, that I kept my hands on them all the time, that they never went out of my sight for a moment, and that I named the word to be written and the manner of writing it after they were thus secured and held by me. I ask, how are these facts to be explained and what interpretation is to be placed upon them?

ALFRED R. WALLACE.

I was present on this occasion, and certify that Mr. Wallace's account of what happened is correct.

EDWARD T. BENNETT.

Evidence from Special Character of the Phenomenon.

In other cases it is the character itself of an unexpected phenomenon which leaves no escape from the evidence other than suppositions of mendacity or hallucination. The following instance of this from Zöllner is so remarkable that at the risk of again

quoting what is already known I must give it at length, which I am the rather induced to do, because Mrs. Sidgwick has apparently not thought the evidence of this distinguished man of science to be worthy of any special mention. The séance was at the house of Zöllner's friend, Herr von Hoffmann, mid-day on May 6th, by bright sunlight. Zöllner says:—

I had, as usual, taken my place with Slade at the card-table. Opposite me stood, as was often the case in other experiments, a small round table near the card-table, exactly in the position shown in the photograph illustrating further experiments to be described below. The height of the round table is 77 centimetres (about 2ft. 4in.), diameter of the surface 46 centimetres (about 16in.), the material birchen wood, and the weight of the whole table 45 kilogrammes. About a minute might have passed after Slade and I had sat down and laid our hands, joined together, on the table when the round table was set in slow oscillations, which we could both clearly perceive in the top of the round table rising above the card-table, while its lower part was concealed from view by the top of the card table. The motions very soon became greater, and the whole table approaching the card-table laid itself under the latter, with its three feet turned toward me. Neither I, nor, as it seemed, Mr. Slade, knew how the phenomenon would further develop, since during the space of a minute which now elapsed nothing further occurred. Slade was about to take slate and pencil to ask his "spirits" whether we had anything still to expect, when I wished to take a nearer view of the position of the round table lying, as I supposed, under the card-table. To my and Slade's great astonishment we found the space beneath the card-table completely empty, nor were we able to find in all the rest of the room that table which only a minute before was present to our senses. In the expectation of its re-appearance we sat again at the card-table, Slade close to me, at the same angle of the table opposite that near which the round table has stood before. We might have sat about five or six minutes in intense expectation of what should come, when suddenly Slade asserted that he saw lights in the air. Although I, as usual, could perceive nothing whatever of the kind, I yet followed involuntarily with my gaze the direction to which Slade turned his head, during all which time our hands remained constantly linked together on the table; under the table my left leg was almost continually touching Slade's right in its whole extent, which was quite without design, and owing to our proximity at the same corner of the table. Looking up in the air, eagerly and astonished, in different directions, Slade asked me if I did not perceive the great lights. I answered decidedly in the negative; but as I turned my head, following Slade's gaze up to the ceiling of the room behind my back, I suddenly observed at a height of about five feet, the hitherto invisible table, with its legs turned upwards, very quickly floating in the air upon the top of the card-table. Although we involuntarily drew back our heads sideways, Slade to the left and I to the right, to avoid injury from the falling table, yet we were both, before the round table had laid itself on the top of the card-table, so violently struck on the side of the head, that I felt the pain on the left of mine fully four hours after this occurrence, which took place at about half-past eleven.

Exceptional Manifestations and Conditions not really necessary.

But I am not prepared to admit that it is necessary to have recourse to exceptional manifestations, or even to manifestations under exceptional conditions of observation, to establish these facts in rational belief. With regard to psychography, for instance, I contend that locked slates, tied up slates, folding slates, your own slates, slates above the table when the writing is obtained, are all really dispensable precautions. What we most require, in order to be secure that the essential facts are within the compass of our observation, and that observation itself has not been distracted or relaxed, is that the phenomenon shall occur with simplicity and directness. If there is delay with changes of conditions, you must regard every such change as the beginning of a new sitting, and make a careful re-examination of the slates. If you do this effectually, not merely taking a careless glance to be able to say you have done it at all, the task of observation is thoroughly simplified under usual conditions.

A Test for Average Powers of Observation.

The following case from my own experience with Mr. Eglinton will show the extent of the claim I make for average powers of observation as against the possibilities of conjuring. The sitting was on April 10th, 1884. I wrote the account of it in the evening of the same day, and it was reported in "LIGHT" of April 19th. The only other sitter besides myself and the medium was one of our Vice-Presidents, the Hon. Roden Noel, who fully corroborated my statement. We sat in broad daylight. We used Mr. Eglinton's slates, of which there was a pile upon the table at which we sat. I sat next to the medium, on his right, Mr. Noel was on my right. Passing over some preliminary experiments, in which writing in small quantities was obtained, I desire to challenge judgment on the question of mal-observation in what follows, which I copy from my own report in "LIGHT."

Mr. Eglinton now laid one of two equal sized slates (10½ inches by 7½) flat upon the other, the usual scrap of pencil being enclosed. Both slates were then, as I carefully assured myself, perfectly clean on both surfaces. He then forthwith, and without any previous dealing with them, presented one end of the two slates, held together by himself at the other end, for me to hold with my left hand, on which he placed his own right. I clasped the slates, my thumb on the frame of the one (7½ inch) and three of my fingers, reaching about four inches, forcing up the lower slate against the upper one. We did not hold the slates underneath the table, but at the side, a little below the level. Mr. Noel was thus able to observe the position. Mr. Eglinton held the slates firmly together at his end, as I can assert, because I particularly observed that there was no gap at his end. I also noticed his thumb on the top of the slates, and can say that it rested quite quietly throughout the writing, which we heard almost immediately, and continuously,

except when Mr. Eglinton once raised his hand from mine, when the sound ceased till contact was resumed.

We heard the sound of writing distinctly, yet it was not, I think, quite so loudly audible as I remember with Slade. When the three taps came, denoting that the "message" was finished, *Eglinton simply removed his hand from the slates, leaving them in my left hand*, also quitting contact of his other hand with my left. I took off the upper slate, and we saw that the inner surface of one of them was covered with writing, twenty lines (118 words) from end to end written from the medium, and one line along the side by the frame, and "good-bye" on the other side. The writing was in straight lines across the slate, all the lines slanting from left to right. It begins about an inch from the top; from the bottom it is continued along one side (one line) and then there are three lines in the inch-deep space at the top, written in the reverse direction to that of the body of the message. The ability to produce the writing in any direction is thus shown. The writing is flowing, easy, and with a distinct character, as of an educated penman. I took the slate away with me, and it is now in my possession.

False Slate Surfaces.

I am glad that I took this latter precaution, for a reason to be mentioned. Everyone, I suppose, will agree that the production of all this writing, as described, by the medium while we held the slates, was absolutely and entirely impossible. The question is thus *apparently* reduced to the single point to which I wish to reduce it, whether such average powers of observation as mine and Mr. Noel's would be so deceived as to make our statement that Mr. Eglinton, after enclosing the pencil within the slates which we *then* "carefully assured" ourselves were *both* quite clean on *both* surfaces, "forthwith," and "without any previous dealing with them," presented those *same* slates to me to hold—whether, I say, our observation could be so deceived as to make that statement inconclusive on that important point. But as it is imaginable that a thin sheet of slate, already inscribed on one side, might be loosely fitted into the frame of one of the slates used, clean surface uppermost, so as to fall into the frame of the other slate, written side uppermost, when the first was placed upon the second, it is fortunate that I was able to exclude that suggestion by my possession of the slate on which the writing appeared, which, by-the-bye, was wrapped in paper, either by myself or by Mr. Eglinton under my eyes, at my request, and carried away by me, *immediately* after we had examined the writing, the sitting being then closed.

The Sure Test of True Observation and Scientific Testimony.

The above case, therefore, aptly raises a question which I think has been greatly confused by vague apprehensions of unknown possibilities of conjuring, apprehensions, I may add, not at all sanctioned by the pretensions of conjurers themselves. So far as the art of conjuring relies on the fallibility of observation, the success of the conjurer depends on his being able to impose the conditions of observation at the critical stage in his proceedings. For very simple observations, such, that is, as are resolvable into two or three elementary acts of perception, are not fallible if these acts of perception are really performed. The conjurer has to prevent their being performed, while he deceives the mind into the impression that they have been performed. Under certain conditions this is easy to him; whereas under conditions not imposed by himself it is totally impossible. Now in studying evidence adduced by others there is one sure test for determining whether the conjurer's opportunity is or is not excluded by the evidence—I mean in cases where the statements of the witness, if taken simply at their *verbal* worth, would sufficiently exclude all possibilities of conjuring. It is only the best testimony—perfect *honesty* of statement being supposed—of which the verbal or apparent worth is a true measure of its real worth. And the reason of this is that very composite facts are often not analysed by the witness, and that an observation comprising several distinct acts of sense perception is stated generally, as though it were a single and indivisible perception. We have then imposed upon us as evidence a conclusion of the witness's mind in place of an observation of his senses. The proof is not then reduced, as we desire to reduce it, to a question of veracity. For this purpose we must have particularity of statement, evidence that the witness has himself analysed the observation into the acts of perception constituting it, and that at the time of the observation. But however people may unconsciously misrepresent or exaggerate—as undoubtedly happens—this innocent looseness or inaccuracy belongs only to *general* statements of matters of fact, and as soon as the demand is made upon the witness for greater definitude, either at least a confessed lapse of memory exposes the worthlessness of the evidence, or the latter degenerates into conscious mendacity. Much of the value of cross-examination in judicial proceedings, for instance, depends on the presumption that precise and definite misstatements cannot be *bona fide*. And the art of cross-examination—so far as this has for its genuine aim the discovery of truth—largely consists in reducing a general statement to the particular ones which it really involves. Now a scientific statement of fact is such a statement as leaves nothing to be elicited by this sort of cross-examination. And in considering the evidential value of the observations with which we are now concerned, we have always to see if possibly essential facts in the narration are capable of further analysis. The note of an uncritical

judgment, either in making or receiving statements which should be scientifically accurate, is the unconscious presumption of the component elements of the facts stated, or to speak more accurately, of the several facts of observation by which the resultant fact is ascertained.

I submit that we have here the whole secret of the possible success of a conjurer who is without confederates or artificial appliances. We have at the same time a sure test for determining the value of observations with professional mediums, who must continue under the suspicion of being conjurers till these phenomena are generally recognised, which will perhaps not be until the laws of their occurrence are a little understood. I therefore respectfully urge that the objection to rely upon investigations with professional mediums is especially unworthy of the scientific spirit in which this Society professes to examine evidence. Our standard should be the highest, our criticism the severest; but the best testimony will leave no room for suggestions of mal-observation, and then it will only remain to see if, supposing the allegations to be strictly veracious, the facts are still explainable by any recognised agency. We have heard of the necessity of allowing a wide margin for unknown possibilities of conjuring, and that sounds plausible enough until we come to ask what conjuring means, and must mean, under the conditions of these experiments. We then see that the margin for possibilities of conjuring is really a margin for possibilities of mal-observation. But when we get to the ultimate unit of observation—the indivisible, elementary fact of sense-perception—mal-observation by the attentive mind is no longer possible, and testimony which shows that there existed a mental direction to these particulars is testimony which excludes the margin for everyone who will not cheat himself with words for the evasion of his critical responsibility. I am, of course, aware that what I have here called "the indivisible, elementary fact of sense-perception" is further resolvable with regard to the primary functions of mind and sense; but for all that, the simplest nameable fact remains the starting-point of all experience, and illusion in experience begins with the mental combinations of which that is the unit. For all mere illusion or misinterpretation in relation to this simplest element of experience—as when a rope upon the path is taken for a snake—results from imperfect conditions of observation, or (what is the same thing from the subjective side) from pre-occupation of the mind by its own concepts. It follows that as long as the attention is given to an indivisible fact under proper conditions of observation, the conjurer's opportunity has not arisen. It arises first with the opportunity of the observer's own mind for self-deception. And if the witness is strictly veracious, it is logically certain that his evidence will itself betray to the critical eye the point or points at which the conjurer's operations were possible, if possible they in fact were.

What an Honest Witness can and cannot Say. Two Illustrations.

But as general remarks on such a subject as the present require to be illustrated, let us consider what may be supposed to happen on a particular occasion, and what, in that case, an honest witness will and will not say. Suppose that at a conjuring performance for the simulation of psychography the conjurer has already succeeded in writing unobserved upon one side of the slate, and wishes now to make you believe that both sides are clean before depositing the slate, with the inscribed side downwards, on the table, to be turned up when the phenomenon is supposed to have come off in that position. Now, if at this critical moment you do not prescribe your own mode of examination, either by taking the slate in your own hand and turning it over, or by seeing that the conjurer turns it slowly round before your eyes, he may be able, by a little manipulation, aided by a little talking and delay, or with the assistance of another slate for purposes of confusion, to present the same side to you twice over, and make you think that you have seen both sides. (This, I should say, is the explanation recently suggested by the famous German conjurer, Hermann, of Berlin, of the *modus operandi* in such a case.) But if that were so, the witness *could* not innocently use terms *expressly* and *definitely* inconsistent with what really happened; he could not, for instance, honestly say, as I said in the report I have read to you, that the medium did something "forthwith," "without any previous dealing with the slates," which the witness "*then* carefully assured himself" to be "both clean on both sides," whereas it was in the very fact of delay, of previous dealing, and of neglect of "careful" assurance that the supposed medium has found his fraudulent opportunity. The honest witness could not so frame his statement, because, though he might honestly forget, he could not honestly *invent* specific and positive acts of perception, for the appearance of which no mental inference or interpretation could be responsible. But we have an instance—an actual instance—ready to our hands of how he *might* express himself in such a case. He might content himself, as Mrs. Sidgwick contented herself, in the account of a conjuring séance which was put before us at our last meeting as an illustration of the fallibility of

observation, with a mere incidental allusion, in general terms, to an observation of the first importance. I must refer briefly to the omissions in that account, which has since been kindly sent to me by Mrs. Sidgwick herself. The opportunity for surreptitious writing on one of the slates prior to their final deposition on the table is not even apparently excluded by anything we are told. We hear nothing, for instance, of a continuous junction of the conjurer's and sitter's disengaged hands upon the table while the slates were being held under the table. I have learnt from Mrs. Sidgwick that this was the normal position, but that she cannot now and that she probably could not at the time say that it was continuous—a defect of observation which would be almost unaccountable, were it not otherwise evident that Mrs. Sidgwick's object was rather to test a friend's powers of observation than her own. Then we are told that this conjurer at one time substituted one of his own slates for one brought by Mrs. Sidgwick's friend, Miss Z., and we are actually not told of any observation of this discarded slate, or of the conjurer's hand, by either sitter during that interval. We hardly hear of any continuous observation of any one fact. The whole time occupied is undefined. Assuming, as seems most probable, that the writing was already performed when the slates were deposited on the table the second time, everything came then to depend upon the immediately prior observation of them as free from writing or otherwise, yet Mrs. Sidgwick contents herself with saying, after describing the finding of the writing, "the slate seemed to have been on the table from the moment we had seen it clean." Miss Z. says: "We examined the slates when they were put the second time on the table, and satisfied ourselves that they were clean." Now both these forms of statement violate the canon of evidence above mentioned: that a composite observation shall not be stated generally, as if it were a single and indivisible perception. You can only ascertain that a slate is "clean" by successive examination of both its surfaces, the evidence of which must, in the reasonable intendment of the witness's language, exclude all possibility of deceptive manipulation by the conjurer while the surfaces seem to be displayed. Otherwise there is nothing to show that the witness appreciated at the time the prime importance of this observation. How this particular trick was performed I do not know; it might have been performed for all that the evidence even seems to be worth, in several different ways, every one of which is excluded in all good reports of genuine phenomena. That Mrs. Sidgwick found herself driven to the mistaken hypothesis of a change of slate may raise a presumption in some of us that she had made to the best of her ability the observations which would seem to necessitate it. But so far as we have the evidence positively before us, it is rather useful as an illustration of what evidence ought not to be than of what it commonly is, or as affording any ground whatever for distrusting other evidence which on the face of it is free from defect.

The Medium's "Privilege of Failure."

In the course of her paper, Mrs. Sidgwick urged that the medium has an advantage over the avowed conjurer in being allowed to fail should the conditions be inconvenient. Now if the medium-conjurer could confidently foresee at the beginning of a sitting either that he would or could not get *all* the conditions required for success in the several successive operations he might have to perform, this privilege of failure would no doubt be very advantageous. But in many cases, especially in the slate-writing, the conjurer's conditions may break down at any point, and should strict conditions of observation be insisted upon at a late stage, no harmless failure, but exposure, must result. If, for instance, I am right in supposing that "Miss Z.'s" slate was already written upon when it was to be deposited on the table, where would "Mr. A." have been, if "Miss Z." or Mrs. Sidgwick had resolved to examine the slates in her own way, and not as "Mr. A." chose that she should seem to do so? The conjurer in such a case has really two tricks to perform for one success, and usually he will have parted with the privilege of failure as soon as he has performed the first. So that though now and then an ingenious professional or amateur may succeed in one way or in another, repeated observations, reflection, and public discussion would soon lay bare all his resources, and there would be an end of him.

Conjurers and Mediums.

The professional conjurer has a large repertory of tricks, and is constantly inventing new ones with all the aid which mechanical appliances, confederates, and his own stage, can afford. He can drop a trick as soon as it is in danger of discovery, and vary his entertainments indefinitely. The public go for amusement, and do not study or hear of the discoveries made by critical experts, by which the conjurer is soon warned off dangerous ground. Nor are professional experts interested in exposing each other's performances, but in repeating them for their own benefit; whereas against the medium they are all, with a few exceptions, banded. The medium, on the other hand, is especially developed for a comparatively few phenomena, which recur with him for many years

as the main feature and attraction of his mediumship. A certain proportion of his visitors are habitual students of the subject, whose attention is open to every explanation that is put forward, and who have the advantage of their own systematic observations with the same and similar mediums. They are constantly obliged to defend themselves from the charge of credulity and mal-observation; each time they go to a séance they have the keenest inducement to obviate some objection to their own or others' evidence, or to meet some more or less possible suggestion as to the *modus operandi*. They improve their methods of observation, they direct it to fresh points, they devise and obtain new tests. Psychography alone has now been before the public of this country for ten years. Some of the most famous conjurers, and many acute minds, have engaged in criticism of the facts and of the evidence, and yet it has survived the ordeal as no single trick, or variations of a single trick, of such a character and under such conditions as this slate-writing could possibly survive it.

Three General Objections—1. Detected Trickery.

To deal at length with general objections to the genuineness of these phenomena is not within the limits of my present subject. Yet I may be allowed to advert to two or three which have been lately brought before us by Mrs. Sidgwick. There is the detected trickery—real and reported—of mediums. As Eduard von Hartmann has pointed out, occasional trickery is antecedently to be expected from the exigencies of professional mediumship, having regard to the uncertainty with which the true force is developed. And the whole theory of mediumship points to influences and conditions which must result sometimes in actual deception, and sometimes in the mere appearance of it. It is a mistake to suppose that we can make this branch of psychical research quite independent of psychology. And there are features in this trickery which should make us look a little deeper than the conjuring and fraud theory for its explanation. Slade, for instance, now often cheats with an almost infantile audacity and *naïveté*, while at the same or the next séance with the same investigators phenomena occur which the most consummate conjurer might well envy.

2. Failure of Tests Dispensing with Observation.

Then it is made an objection that tests designed to dispense altogether with observation in the presence of the medium have not been obtained, although they could not be conceived to present greater physical difficulties to a genuine occult agency than things actually done. There is in this a quiet assumption that we have not here to do with independent wills and intelligences, or with laws other than physical, which is quite illegitimate at the outset of our researches. But without having recourse to such suggestions, I need only point out that if human observation under the easiest conditions is at all to be relied upon, the evidence can become perfect without these tests, and can only be illogically prejudiced by the absence of them.

3. Failure of Mediums with Some Investigators.

A third objection which weighs with many is the failure of mediums with some investigators who, of course, on that account are credited, if they do not credit themselves, with too much astuteness, and with too great powers of observation for the medium to venture on his tricks with them. It is a remarkable illustration of this theory that Mrs. Sidgwick, who tells us that personal experience has made her form a very low estimate of her own powers of continuous observation, and who failed to detect the opportunities of an amateur expert in slate-writing, although she knew (as I infer from her account) that a trick was to be performed, is one of those with whom that accomplished conjurer, Mr. Eglinton, has been uniformly compelled to exercise his "privilege of failure." It is another commentary on this view that I myself, and others upon whom Mr. Eglinton has found it very easy to impose, have had with him as many failures as successes, under precisely the same apparent conditions in both cases. The causes of failure as of success are at present too obscure for such arguments to be other than prejudicial and opposed to the scientific character at which we aim. No doubt it is a disappointment—and perhaps no one has felt that more severely than myself—that some of the most distinguished members of this Society have failed to obtain evidence through Mr. Eglinton.

Such Failures Presupposed by the Society at the Outset.

But we must remember the idea with which we started, and which was so well expressed by Professor Sidgwick in his first address to us. It was never supposed that these phenomena had the scientific character of being reproducible with certainty for any and every one who took the trouble to sit for them a few times. We were to accumulate testimony, to overcome opposition by the gradual accession of witnesses of good intelligence and character. There was no necessity for that if we could say to all the world—go to this or that medium, and we guarantee to you personal evidence. The physicist does not rely upon testimony or ask others to rely upon it. But we pre-suppose that the phenomena with

which we deal are not accessible to all. If, then, they are not accessible to some of ourselves, is our position in relation to them altered? No; we are estopped from making that demand of personal experience, and from making that objection of personal failures—we are “hoist with our own petard”! Seeing that innumerable observations, by new witnesses of undoubted character and intelligence, have accumulated since Professor Sidgwick first addressed us four years ago, it will be asked, it has been asked, whether there was indeed a mental implication in his words, so that the new evidence which was to subdue the world must be that of himself and a few special friends. We know that that is disclaimed, but is it disclaimed in favour of a criticism which discovers all other evidence to be faulty? By further and further depreciating the powers of human observation, by more and more magnifying the resources of conjurers, it is nearly always possible to suggest a chink or cranny for escape in this case, and another and different chink or cranny in that case. But the very object of accumulating evidence is to make such suppositions increasingly violent the larger the area of experience which they have to cover, until the hypothesis of mal-observation becomes the last resort of those who will not or cannot credit testimony until their own senses have had cognisance of the facts. I believe that distrust of human observation, to the extent to which that distrust is now carried, is not justified by experience, which would be almost impossible for the simplest acts of attentive perception if it were justified.

Inadequacy of Fraud to Explain the Vitality of Spiritualism.

Surely there is a larger view, a deeper insight into this already long chapter, swelling to a prodigious volume, of human evidence, than is afforded by this miserable theory of conjuring, and cheating, and imbecility. Are we not shocked by its inadequacy, by its disproportion to the total effect? That effect is dwarfed in popular imagination for a time, because the dominant culture has refused to recognise it, and has encountered the facts with the very narrowest conceptions in the armoury of its intelligence. But the effect is already one of the appreciable influences on human life and thought. Many a delusion has been that, but not delusions of observation which depend for their vitality upon an ever-springing supply of recurrent fraud. Again and again has phenomenal Spiritualism been “exposed” and “explained”; every such incident, every such attempt, has been a new instruction to investigators, a new difficulty to the supposed conjurer. Yet fresh observers, with full knowledge of all that has happened and of all that is suggested, go to mediums and come away with the certainty that the phenomena are genuine.

Baffled Conjurers.

Even the first of living German conjurers, Hermann of Berlin, who had considered the subject of this slate-writing very carefully, went the other day to Slade, and after witnessing the phenomenon under very ordinary conditions, professed his present inability to explain it.* He adds, I am glad to say, that he is to have a series of sittings with Mr. Eglinton in a few months, and he is not at all apprehensive that Mr. Eglinton will evade the engagement, the results of which will be published. Dr. Herschell, a well-known amateur, has recently written to Mr. Eglinton in the following terms:—

For some time after my first sitting with you, I candidly confess that I worked very hard, both by myself and in consultation with well-known public performers, to find out a method of imitating psychography, and I do not think that there is a way that I have not tried practically. I have come to the conclusion that it is possible to produce a few words on a slate if the minds of the audience can be diverted at the proper time (a thing perfectly impossible under the eyes of conjurers, who know every possible way of producing the result by trickery, without instant detection). Beyond this, conjuring cannot imitate psychography. It can do nothing with locked slates, and slates fastened together. It cannot write answers to questions which have not been seen by the performer, as you are constantly doing. At the best it only produces a mild parody of the very simplest phenomena under an entire absence of all the conditions under which these habitually occur at your seances.

Allow me also to take the present opportunity of thanking you most sincerely for the opportunities you have given me of satisfying myself of the genuineness of psychography by discussing openly with me, as you have done, the various possible ways of imitating the phenomena, and of letting me convince myself, in detail, that you will not avail yourself of them.

I hope that you have had a successful visit to Russia, and that your health is now quite re-established.—With kind regards, yours sincerely,

W. Eglinton, Esq.

GEORGE HERSCHELL, M.D.

The Conjurer Maskelyne, a Believer in the New Force.

Our English conjurer, John Nevil Maskelyne, has publicly testified, from his own experience, to the existence of an unrecognised force productive of physical effects.† But with the acknowledgment of such a force in the human organism must

disappear the presumption against those more developed manifestations which depend on its relations to intelligence and will.

The False Methods of the Society.

The ascertainment of those relations is among the highest functions of a society for psychical research, and I am not alone in believing that we should have found our scientific reward in beginning with a provisional faith in the material of our inquiries. In this region the laws and conditions are still almost wholly obscure, but of one thing in it we may be generally sure—that there can be no greater mistake than to investigate phenomena of psychical origin with a total disregard of psychical conditions. We are false to our hypothesis if we assume that adequate precaution against fraud is the *prime* condition of success, and that beyond this it is only necessary to bring an unprejudiced mind to the investigation. These are indeed *indispensable* conditions, but there may well be other and more positive ones not less indispensable. If we entertain the hypothesis of mediumship at all—and why else are we investigating?—it must mean for us something more than that in the mere presence of certain persons certain phenomena may occur.

Conditions Necessitated by the very Hypothesis on which Investigation starts.

A medium is not like a bar magnet which can and must exhibit its special characteristics under certain exclusively physical conditions. It is antecedently probable that something more is required of the investigator than the attributes of a fair-minded judge—a co-operation, namely, which will be best if it include some contribution of that unknown force on which the phenomena primarily depend, but which shall at any rate favour, and not repress, the development of that force in the medium. This sort of co-operation is a mental disposition perfectly consistent with the most scientific vigilance, and which in my own case I have found even promotive of it, because I was well resolved not to be conducive to my own deception.

Relation of Telepathy to these Conditions.

It would be strange if in this Society we were to ignore the probable application of telepathy to the phenomena now in question. For telepathy in its principle must be far more than a mere emotional or ideal transfer upon special occasion. The interaction of our psychical natures must be more intimate and influential than superficial consciousness betrays.

An “Ideal Circle.”

I once heard it remarked, jestingly or seriously—I hardly know which—that the composition of an ideal circle for the investigation of these phenomena, would be a man of physical science, a professional conjurer, a detective policeman, and an Old Bailey barrister. That suggestion represents the spirit which brings failure, and must bring failure, to every investigation of this character. And if you as a Society wish for useful original research by your own agents, you must not choose your agents upon that principle.

The Right Circle.

They must be persons thoroughly impressed with the great importance of exact observation and exact statement, but who combine with these pre-requisites some positive experience and some reasonable regard to the hypothesis on which you are investigating at all.

A Committee to Collect and Report on Evidence.

But there is another course open to you, which, I submit, is preferable in the first instance. Many, of whom I am one, are of opinion that the case for these phenomena generally, and for “autography” in particular, is already complete. You may seek an independent opinion on that contention from those among yourselves who possess your confidence in regard to impartial judgment and rational appreciation and criticism of evidence.

Composition of such a Committee.

But unless you wish for a foregone negative conclusion, your committee must not consist of those who think that human observation, with the most express direction of the mind, is not to be trusted to ascertain the fact that a slate has been untouched for five minutes on a table before the eyes, or who are prepared, when they have before them exact statements of facts of observation inexplicable by conjuring, to assume that the facts have been mal-observed and misdescribed. For that way lies interminable doubt, and not progressive science.

THE LIBRARY OF THE LONDON SPIRITUALIST ALLIANCE.—The following works of fiction, presented by Mr. J. S. Farmer, have been added to the Library:—*Masollam* (3 vols.), by Laurence Oliphant; *Karma* (2 vols.), by A. P. Sinnett; *Affinities* (2 vols.), by Mrs. Campbell Praed; *The Brothers of the Shadow*, by Mrs. Campbell Praed.

* See an article by Hermann in the June number of the German magazine, *Sphinx*.

† See correspondence in *Pall Mall Gazette*, Mr. Maskelyne's letter, 29th April, 1885.

ADVICE TO INQUIRERS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The following are a few books which will prove of service to the inquirer. They can be obtained by members from the Library of the London Spiritualist Alliance, or they may be purchased of the Psychological Press (see advt. pages), 16, Craven-street, Strand, W.C.:—Animal Magnetism (*Wm. Gregory*); Miracles and Modern Spiritualism (*A. R. Wallace*); Researches in Spiritualism (*W. Crookes*); From Matter to Spirit (*De Morgan*); The Debateable Land (*Dale Owen*); Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World (*Dale Owen*); Planchette (*Epes Sargent*); Proof Palpable of Immortality; The Scientific Basis of Spiritualism (*Epes Sargent*); Report of the Dialectical Society; Zöllner's Transcendental Physics (*Translated by C. C. Massey*, 2nd Ed.); Psychography ("M.A., Oxon."); Spirit Identity ("M.A., Oxon."); Higher Aspects of Spiritualism ("M.A., Oxon."); Judge Edmunds, Letters and Tracts; Primitive Christianity and Spiritualism (*Crowell*); New Basis of Belief in Immortality (*Farmer*); Hints for the Evidences of Spiritualism (*M.P.*); Theosophy and the Higher Life (*Dr. G. Wylde*); Mechanism of Man, 2 vols. (*Mr. Sergeant Cox*); Startling Facts in Modern Spiritualism (*N. Wolfe*); Arcana of Spiritualism (*Tuttle*); Spirit Teachings ("M.A., Oxon."); The Use of Spiritualism (*S. C. Hall*); Spiritualism at Home (*Morell Theobald*); Pioneers of the Spiritual Reformation (*Howitt Watts*).

These are but a few volumes of a very extensive literature. Not counting pamphlets and tracts, upwards of 2,000 volumes on the phenomena and philosophy of Spiritualism have been published since its advent. It is therefore manifestly impossible to do more than allude to the fact here.

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