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THE TRAPPED MEDIUM OR TWO, CLEVER SCEPTICS.



WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED

BY

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As prefaces, as a rule, are *not* read, the Author would feel obliged if the present one be taken note of, by way of exception.—C. R.

PREFACE.

—:o:—

WHAT a fuss there is about Spiritualism! Some say (and among them are big swells of science), "It is all bosh!" and others (and among them big swells of science too), "It's true." Of course the known natural laws tell us, "It can't be," but the stupendous facts nevertheless do occur—"There's the rub." To make confusion worse, there are impostors who imitate paltry manifestations; these humbugs speculate safely, since we have plenty of folks who believe theirs to be the only explanation—and pay for it. If imitation is to go for the real thing, why be afraid of a thunderstorm, when at the theatre you can see how the thing's done? Imitation goes very far nowadays, and we would not wonder at hearing of a poor youth falling desperately in love with a pretty talking doll, if of the proper size! But, oh bother! there are mediums also, who do *genuine* work and call it conjuring, because it pays better. Then there are *private* mediums, who could do great work, but are cowards and traitors for love of mammon. To make a perfect mess of it, we have mediums who *mix* when the real is not profitable enough. Only the other day they caught a fellow in the act of making false spirit photographs, after having done plenty of good ones. They put him in prison, but he was told (whether by himself or somebody else we don't know) that if he would confess that *all* was trickery,

he would be set free, and the scoundrel did so confess, and brought other people down too. He was condemned to prison nevertheless. Served him right. *But he is at large again and produces photographs once more. Mediums can do wonderful things!* But people now say (with a remarkable twist of logic), "It is all a swindle—because he (the traitor; mind) confessed it." People can reason wonderfully! Some say it is the devil. Perhaps they are well acquainted with that gentleman. Heaven knows. Some wise folks say, "It will soon die out;" and take a snuff after this grand remark, but generally sneeze it off again. Very funny, it has been said so during the last thirty years—and the poor dying thing is kicking and doing well. We would, in this perplexing medley, rather rush at once to the big fellows of science, who say it is "all bosh," but we are not made wiser by it, for it is said *only* by those who have *not investigated* and don't know anything about it. They don't explain, but snub it off with, "Much above that sort of thing!" or spoil *séances* by meddling with conditions and introducing tricks of their own make, then boast of having *exposed the farce*—like schoolboys, breaking a pane, then running away, crying, "We have smashed the whole house!" "Ah, these manifestations are so trivial, so ridiculous," a whole lot of grumblers assert. They would be right if there was nothing but table jumping and tilting, but to judge things by their rude beginnings would be like despising a lovely flower for its dirty root; besides, how ridiculous not to believe in spirits, yet give rules how they must behave! The grumbler himself may stand in the creative scale nearer to his ancestor, the ugly gorilla, than to the other end—the human form divine. It would not be fair, then, to measure his intelligence by such a silly remark.

“What is the good of it?” may be dismissed as of equal weight, since every one ought to know there is nothing in this world *without* a purpose. “But it has always to be in the dark.” Has it? Only with a few experiments, just as in chemistry. Darkness! Welcome objection to those who have no *light* in their *heads*! Thus if we listen to the twaddle of arguments from the one side and to the extraordinary statements from the other, we are in a perfect maze. To believe in the facts requires an awful amount of credulity; to swallow the explanations of the sceptics *much more*, and nice doses of *stupidity* too. We must not forget one amusing blunder of fashionable ignorance, namely, the idea that Spiritualists want to create a new belief; and these objectors are the most matter-of-fact people, for they are pretty *tired* of belief, and want *tangible evidences*. Now, what does all this mean?—what is it? Yes, what is it? It is a hard nut to crack. Let them try their jaw-bones on it, and we’ll look at the funny side and see how our heroes, Professor Molecule and Dr. Proto-plaster, set to work to nip it in the bud, and take hold of the so-called materialisation. What is that? Take a queer creature, called a medium (a genuine one, mind) and bind him hand and foot; sew him up, seal, pin and nail him to the ground, that he can’t move an inch: out comes a life-like figure. It is an optical delusion! Nonsense, it walks and talks, pinches you, and may give you a box on the ear if you don’t behave. Then it’s a mechanical trick. Fiddlesticks! It may happen in your own room, medium coming alone, and being searched too from top to toe. So our heroes did, and let us follow them in their further clever proceedings:—



Here we introduce—

PROFESSOR MOLECULE, F.R.S., X.Y.Z., B.I.G.A.S.S.*

and DR. PROTOPLASTER, his assistant.

* The latter distinction he obtained for his clever dash against Spiritualism, from the Anti-Spiritualist Society (now defunct).



They bind the medium (a mere lad) rather tightly, and the Professor puts his private seal; newly made, on a lock of his hair. After mutually admiring their cleverness, they take their seats before the curtain.



As a little singing is required to draw power, they begin, somewhat sarcastically, "When shall we three meet again?" and lo! There's the figure! Did you ever! It vanishes—off they bolt into the cabinet, and—



Would you believe, there's the medium exactly as before.
The Professor snuffles about the seal. It's all right.
Extraordinary! They feel their own legs to see whether
they are *subjective* or *objective*!



They are in deep thought, and call up the whole lot of natural laws. "You have no idea what conjurors can do!" is the last result of their mental struggle (we have heard that motto before). Confound the binding! They hit upon another clever test.



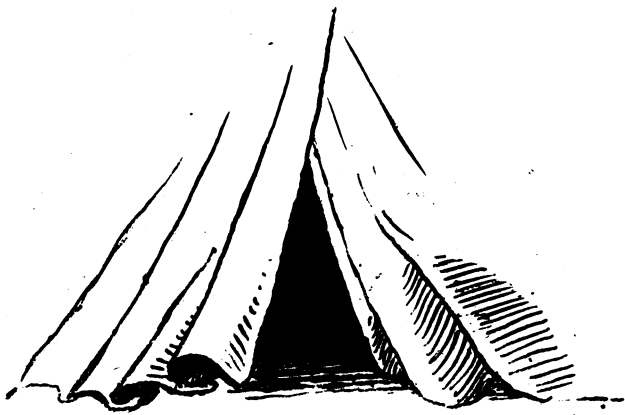
They pile up in a heap what there is about, balance every bit with mathematical nicety, and put the medium on a step ladder, with a filled jug in his hand. Of course the slightest move will make a mess of it. A photograph of the ingenious structure is taken to compare notes with afterwards. They place themselves, with new hopes, before the curtain, after mutually admiring their own cleverness.



“Dear me, there’s the figure again! It shows intelligence, too!” Not a sound to be heard, although they prick up their ears like rabbits! Figure says, “Good-bye.” Photo. taken immediately afterwards. Result: *vide* previous picture. Isn’t it odd? Now they help the medium down again, and—



Down with a crash goes the whole structure! the best compliment to their architectural skill, but the poor fellows don't half like it, because they are awfully entangled, and (first sign of dawning belief) pray the "kind spirits" to release them. Whereupon the medium closes the shutters, takes hands of each, not heeding the warning of the Professor that his arm is between the steps of the ladder, and there ensues a—

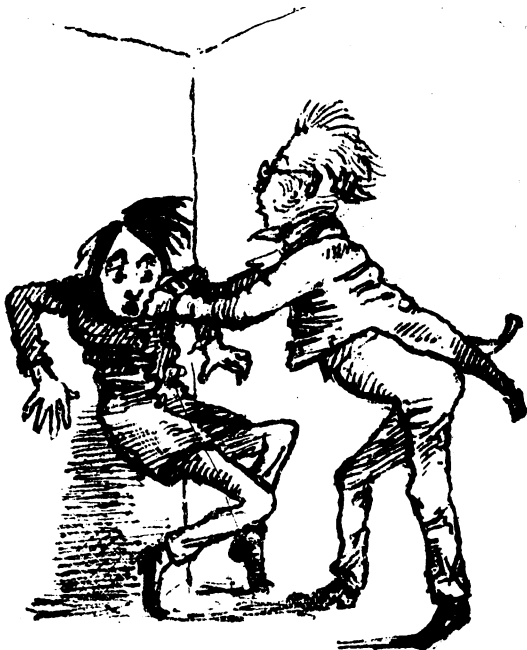


DARK SEANCE,

of which a piece can be seen through the curtain (a nice opportunity for those who have not been at one). The spirits are busily engaged removing obstructions. Touches are felt. Delightful breezes occasionally refresh the trembling men of science ; the Professor's mangled arm is set free (tremendous illustration of matter passing through matter !). Delicious physical relief in present instance, but terrible mental confusion ! The noises subside and—



They find themselves snugly seated at the table, refreshments provided. That will do! They feel inclined to give in; but as this is exactly the same situation as before the sitting (the Professor kindly opening proceedings with a glass of wine), the idea strikes him that this might be a splendid specimen of *unconscious cerebration*—a theory formerly so *exceedingly convenient* and *handy*, but which *won't wash now*. But alas! the contents of an ink-bottle on the Professor's face are the cause of suppressed laughter. He doesn't like it, and asks, "Will the kind spirits remove the ink-spots? then I'll believe." The spirits, however, rap out, "Can't do it; it's a *black art*." Now the suppressed laughter bursts forth wildly. This is unfortunate, for a suspicion flashes through his mind, culminating rapidly into a —

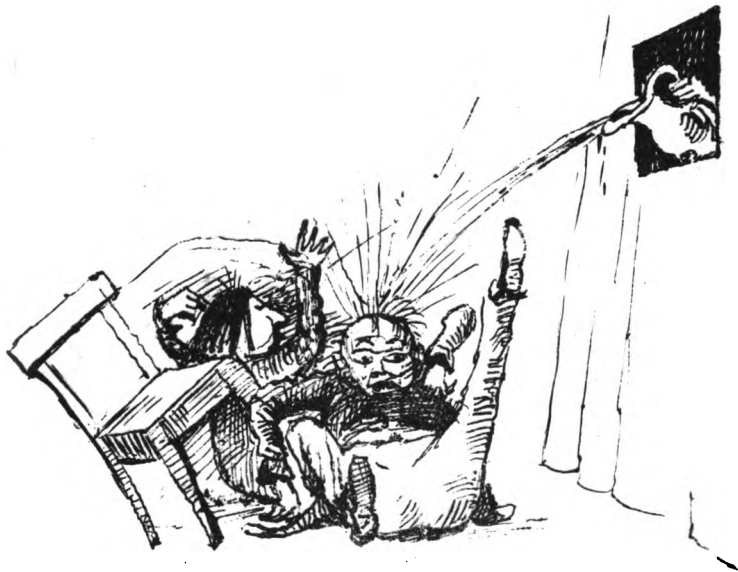


Desperate attack on his assistant, Dr. PROTOPLASTER. "You, scoundrel, are a confederate; I'll make you pay for it!" The poor man is nearly choked; but as the Professor can't prove his charge (as in *most* similar cases) he lets him go, and re-papers and rearranges the sitting-room, so that secret ingress is absolutely impossible without detection. On cooling down a little, his scientific mind naturally invents the—



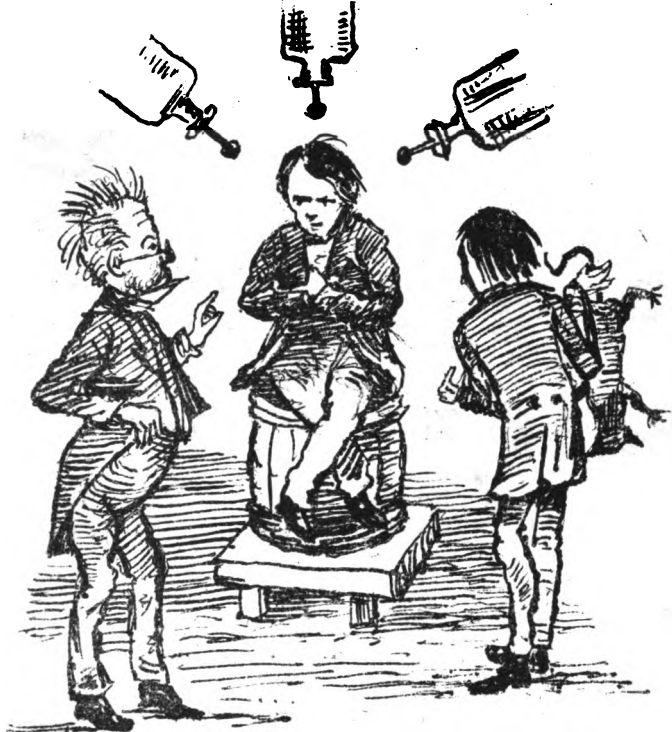
BATH OR WATER TEST.

The medium, *in naturalibus*, is placed in the bath, with sawdust strewn around to show any attempt at getting out. A jugful of water thoughtlessly left behind. The Professor, now sure of having the medium in the trap (the assistant as well), strikes up with vigour, and somewhat maliciously:—



“ Let us gather at the river ”—

and splash comes a foretaste of the river, as explained in the picture. After being cured of a slight cold—a natural result of the unexpected contact of icy water on the heated brain—they concoct a test, showing not merely that they have now become *perfect test maniacs*, but that their hitherto purely *scientific* motives are evidently tinged with signs of *personal ill-feeling*.



They place their victim on a powder-cask, and below terrific electrical machinery. With imposing scientific coolness (both *being old hands in vivisection*) they point to the inviting chances around him. The assistant brings a live cat. A touch with the Leyden jar and, lo! the poor wretch is a corpse! He thus shows the medium what *he* may expect. The Professor crowns his loving-kindness with the information that the least movement would cause a match to ignite and he would be done for. They now return *half stupefied* (having quite overlooked *their own safety*), not this time mutually admiring their cleverness. They don't know what to sing: perhaps they are a little nervous and—



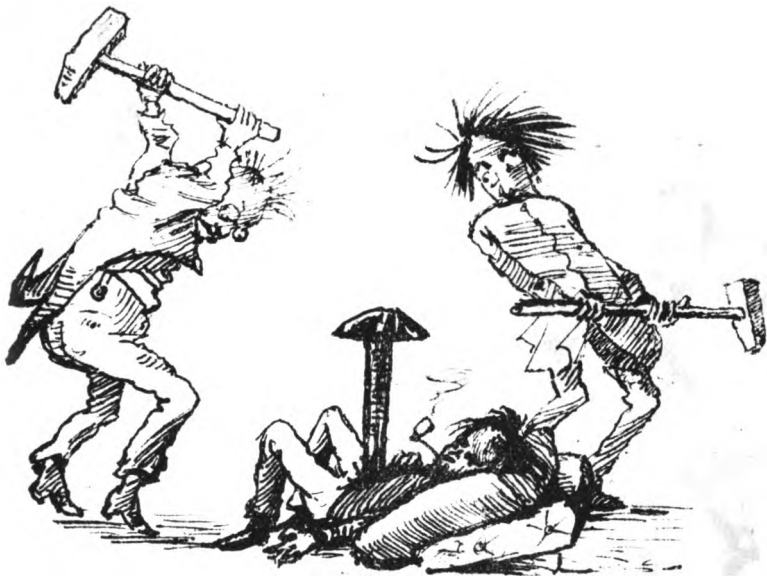
That's too rude!—down comes the cat! This horrid warning of what might be their own fate puts them quickly on the alert. Puffs of smoke come; they sniff, smell—can't be sulphur—nor yet powder—it's more like “baccy!” With trembling steps and scientific caution they approach the “chamber of horrors,” and—



Find the medium quite at ease, smoking his pipe and dangling his legs cheerfully. The two inquirers take to their heels in a twinkling, dropping spectacles on the ground.



Profoundest thoughts again! Dr. Protoplaster (being secretly given to phrenology) tickles his *bump of perception*, to put this noble organ in good working order. The Professor's reflections take a most diabolical turn. He reasons thus: If matter passes through matter, what matters it if I pass a bit of matter through the body of the medium?—it's only matter.



They carry out their design, with the consent of the medium, and nail him furiously to the ground, like a butterfly in a collecting-box.* The medium, in deepest trance, drops his pipe, looking like a corpse! With tottering knees, this time *quite* stupefied, they fumble to their seats (something like a voice whispering “Manslaughter!” haunting their minds). There is no mutual admiration of their cleverness. With befitting tact as to the solemnity of the occasion, they sing, or better stammer, the “Dead March” from *Saul*; when—

* The author holds himself not responsible for the truth of this part, and hesitatingly refuses his positive belief in it; nor would he encourage similar attempts in other circles, as it might be attended with disastrous results to the health of the medium.—C. R.



Ah—eh—eh—oh—uh!!! Heaven protect us! Horror of horrors! Nail and hammer protrude with giant arms! They don't stop for further development, but, terrified, clear the room in a space of time not measurable by earthly instruments.



This shock proved too much for both. We now find them in the sick-room with their old friend, DR. FAIRREASON.

Dr. FAIRREASON: Hulloo, old boy! You are in a frightfully feverish state; you will have to be toned down. Why did you not investigate quietly and impartially?

PROF. MOLECULE: Is this thing not an outrage upon common sense?

DR.: Exactly so; therefore it may require grappling with a bit of *uncommon* sense.

PROF.: What! you believe in these things!

DR.: Does it follow I must believe if I won't accept the rubbishy arguments set against them? Should I be so conceited as to snub the eminent men who have tested these phenomena? To tell you the truth, I have seen some of these manifestations in a private and respectable circle, and find that your explanations don't touch them all; the theory of conjuring is simply a disgrace to the *commonest* sense!

PROF.: You mean there is no trickery?

DR.: Where is there *none*? Anything passing through human hands will be adulterated. I care only for the genuine.

PROF.: But public opinion—

DR.: What? you a man of independent intellect talking of public opinion! Dash it! Study the course of it alongside the development of politics and science; before truth is clearly established public opinion is nothing but an old gossiping goose, and stupefied children take shelter beneath her wing.

PROF.: But the rubbish of spiritual literature!

DR. : Of course ; every new discovery excites imagination, and what scope for imagination with *these* stupendous facts ! Make a bonfire of its whole literature, the hard stubborn facts remain the same. Ha ! ha ! ha !

PROF. : And these silly, ridiculous manifestations !

DR. : Ah, I have got you there ! I feel quite ashamed of you. How unscientific to sneer at and abuse the manner of expression when you can't explain the force itself !

PROF. : But what is the good—

DR. : Bless you, that old tune again ! Dear me. It shows by experiment that we have an independent spiritual nature. Don't you see how the ugly claws of materialism interfere with everything sublime ? Is not even music, the lovely daughter of heaven, sometimes the handmaid of mammon ?

PROF. : But it has always—

DR. : Been so. Granted. To express it in few words, there's the Beauty and the Beast in human nature. Nice compliment to Creation if the beast should get the victory in the end ! Yes, there is something higher in human beings ; your materialistic science tries to crush it, but will find hard nuts to crack ! You build up your structure of arguments, reaching almost to the sky ! A touch from the spirit-hand, and down tumbles the card house, to the intense delight of the applauding children !

PROF. (a little confused): But mediums themselves have confessed that all was trickery!

DR.: Where is the proof that they confessed the truth? Must they be saints? They may often be low creatures in spite of their mysterious spiritual gift, like many poets and artists, who inspire crowds, and return home poor weak mortals themselves. Besides, I know cases where such confessions proved wise, for fear the listener should go cracked in learning the real truth.

PROF.: But I know of people renouncing that belief.

DR.: Only cowards and traitors.

PROF.: And people who tried a *séance* but got——

DR.: Nothing—hem! Take, for instance, a couple of eggs, some butter and flour, and there is certainly a pancake; but, put together a bundle of people and have a sitting, but there may be no manifestations. *The Spiritualist* very aptly says: “This power has been sent to *command*, not to obey.”

PROF.: The presence of sceptics——

DR.: Does *not* interfere, as you know, and you have paid dearly for that lesson; but a certain class of conceited snobbish know-alls seem not to take with the spirits, and it is amusing to hear them boast, “In my presence things won’t come off;” while in point of fact the spirits don’t like their precious company. Ha! ha! ha!

PROF. : But you must admit most eminent men of science are against it.

'DR. : Name me any one who denies after *thorough honest* investigation.

Here a long awful pause set in. The Professor crept under his blanket, turned round and round, sighed, coughed, sneezed, turned round once more and stared at the doctor, who continued :—

DR. : And why consult authorities upon one subject in matters relating to another ? A chemist may be very clever at analysis without finding anything new ; a doctor may cure nicely and skilfully, yet twaddle nonsense about other things. A *virtuoso* may play like a god on his fiddle, piano, or flute, —and talk like a fool.

PROF. (rather timidly) : So it seems, then, that we made fools of ourselves to cry it down.

DR. : At last you have hit the nail on the head ; but don't fret about it, my boy, there are plenty of folks sharing the same fate with you. You have been a little too cocksure, because of the tremendous results of science, and you deserved the " raps " on the knuckles, and have to be *toned down*, that's all. Good-bye.

FINALE.

Dr. Protoplaster overheard this conversation with intense delight, and felt secret pleasure in seeing his worthy master soundly beaten. He cunningly and secretly contrived to get the current papers on the subject, and pursued with growing interest such periodicals as the old and respectable London *Spiritual Magazine*, the popular *Medium and Day-break*, the fashionable, critical *Spiritualist*, and the severe *Psychischen Studien*; also the prominent American papers the *Banner of Light*, and the severe *Scientific Spiritualist*, &c., and was soon cured of the effects of his arrogant *à priori* judgment. He found, as all must who prefer study to twaddle, that there was "something in it," and he made known his change of views cautiously and tenderly to his good master, who can as yet swallow only small doses, and whose recovery, we are grieved to say, seems very doubtful; but of whose ultimate course we may be able to inform the reader in due time.

Periodicals connected with Spiritualism.

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