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THE ALLEGED PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF  
SPIRITUALISM.

AN ACCOUNT OF TWO SEANCES.

BY  
H. CARVILL LEWIS.

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# THE ALLEGED PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM.

AN ACCOUNT OF TWO SEANCES.

BY

PROFESSOR H. CARVILL LEWIS.

Numerous and marvellous statements have recently appeared in various publications concerning the manifestations produced at the séances of the famous medium Mr. W. Eglinton; and in the Spiritualist paper, *Light*, for October 16th, 1886, an immense mass of testimony, by about one hundred different observers, many of them of high intellectual ability and social position, is given to show that the slate-writing and accompanying phenomena occurring at his séances are not due to any deliberate action on the part of the medium, but to some unknown force, or, as one writer puts it, "conclusively establish the existence of some objective, intelligent force, capable of acting externally to the medium, and in contravention of the recognised laws of matter." \* These various statements,† suggesting a new field of

\* *Light*, No. 302, p. 488.

† Professors N. Wagner, A. Boutlerof, and A. Dobroslavin, of the University of St. Petersburg, concluded an account of a séance with Mr. Eglinton as follows:—"After witnessing the experiments above described we have come to the conclusion: (1) That the mediumistic autographic-writing is genuine, and cannot be referred to the domain of prestidigitation, or explained by the help only of generally-recognised mechanical, physical, or chemical laws. (2) That it can manifest an intelligence of its own not depending to a certain degree upon that of those who assist at the séances; and (3) This phenomenon, by its objectivity, especially affords facility for observation, and deserves full attention and investigation from competent persons and institutions." (*Journal of the S.P.R.*, Vol. II., p. 331.) The President of the London Spiritualist Alliance says:—"It is to me wholly inconceivable that anyone can entertain doubt as to the genuineness of those phenomena."

scientific interest, induced me to visit Mr. Eglinton for purposes of investigation. I have endeavoured to make the following account as accurate as possible, having written it immediately afterwards from full notes taken during the séances.

*First Séance.*

Having called upon Mr. Eglinton the previous evening and made an appointment, I visited him at noon on November 16th, and was ushered into his study. A common wooden table, which had apparently seen rough usage and was covered by a tablecloth, stood in the middle of the room, which was well lighted. Mr. Eglinton expressed disappointment that I had not brought a second person with me, as he had requested. He said that it might be difficult to get results with only one. I had, however, purposely come alone, prepared to observe carefully and without prejudice.

Mr. Eglinton asked me to write one question on the slate which I had brought with me, and another question on one of his own slates. He left the room while I wrote the questions, at my request, and afforded me an opportunity to satisfy myself that the slate and table were ordinary ones, and in no way prepared, as I was convinced after careful examination. He entered when I called, and seated himself near one corner of the table, placing me on the other side of the same corner, the cloth having been removed and a short leaf put up. He took his own slate, on the under side of which was my question, and putting upon it a minute fragment of slate-pencil, placed it *under the table*, holding it against the under side of the table-leaf with the four fingers of his right hand, his thumb alone being visible. With his left hand he stretched across the corner and held my two hands. The conditions were such that there was no possibility of my seeing the slate or his four fingers. I could see his wrist, however, above, and his knees and feet below the table, and could detect, I think, any motion of his fingers by the movement of the tendons of the wrist.

We sat in this position for three-quarters of an hour, I paying strict attention. Nothing whatever was done. As a result of the constrained position in which I was placed, leaning on my right arm, my hand and arm then began to tremble slightly. Mr. Eglinton, perceiving this, asked if I did not feel a peculiar current in my arm. I assented, but in order to determine whether this was due to any "magnetic" or other force proceeding either to or from the medium, or was simply a natural tremor, I let go of his hand and leaned in the same position, when I again felt the same tremor, and on finding that it ceased so soon as I changed my position, even when I held Mr. Eglinton's hand, I was convinced that it was merely nervous and subjective.

We went on with the séance, Mr. Eglinton encouraging conversa-



tion. He said that as the manifestations were entirely beyond his own control, it was best to think of other matters. He favoured me with an extraordinary explanation of hypnotism, and recounted some of his exploits in Spiritualism.\* He repeatedly asserted that his own mind and will had no effect whatever upon matter, and that the phenomena came from without. He was quite correct in denying that "Thought-transference" had any part in the results, as one of our experiments afterwards proved. So long as I kept my eye on his hand and the edge of the slate nothing occurred. He attempted several times now, unsuccessfully, to divert my attention.

It now occurred to me that unless I purposely diverted my attention from him, the séance might be a failure. I therefore looked away from him toward the window on my left, hoping that now the spirits would appear. They immediately did so, as I both felt through Mr. Eglinton's hand held in mine, and also partially saw. The slate, or one end of it, seemed to be lowered beneath the table, and I saw the medium *look down intently* toward his knees and in the direction of the slate. I now quickly turned back my head, when the slate was brought up against the table with a sharp rap. Mr. Eglinton seemed confused, and, complaining of the weight of the slate and the heat of the room, put the slate on top of the table and diverted the conversation.

I suggested that we try the other slate—a small, light, American slate of my own. He put this under the table in the same way, and again I paid strict attention. There was no result. Having asked me as to the nature of my questions, stating that the unknown powers whose coming we awaited were not omniscient, I answered that I had prepared three questions. The first (on his large slate) was one which a spirit would know, but he could not possibly know; the second (on my small slate) was one which a spirit would not know, but he might know; and the third (in a sealed envelope) was one which both he and the spirits knew perfectly well. The questions were as follows:—The first, "Where is my wife?" Mr. Eglinton could not know, as I came under an assumed name, but a spirit who knew me, or could read my thoughts, or could see as far as Wales would have known. The second "Define Idocrase," a spirit would not know unless he be a mineralogist, but Mr. Eglinton could readily know by consulting a dictionary. The third, "Multiply two by two," would be evident to both spirit and medium provided they could get at the question in the sealed envelope.

We went on with the séance, and again I found that I must divert my attention if results were to be had. I suggested trying the large


\* One of these was the conversion of Mr. Kellar, the conjurer, to Spiritualism. So far is this from being the case, that Mr. Kellar, whom I know personally, is nightly offering in America £20 to anyone who will produce Spiritualistic phenomena that he cannot imitate by conjuring.

slate once more, and now, before he could get tired holding it, I deliberately looked away. This time, as I turned back quickly, he dropped the slate upon the floor, question side uppermost and nearest to him, as if the slate had been revolved. He excused himself as before, complaining of the weight of the slate. Again we tried the small slate, and again no result so long as I watched closely.

I now tried a different method. Agreeing with him that it was best to divert my attention, I proposed reading a book while he held the slate.\* He brought me a book, which I placed on the table to my right, and, turning my head partly away from him, began reading. Under these conditions the "spirits" immediately and without a moment's hesitation set to work. Mr. Eglinton began to breathe loudly, and to move uneasily, and in such a way that I judged he was altering the position of the slate. About this time Mr. Eglinton *left the room* for several minutes.

Continuing the séance under the conditions just described, I soon heard, notwithstanding his heavy breathing, sighing, and jerking, that writing was being done with a pencil on the slate. Unnoticed by him, I now slightly turned my head, so that I could see his wrist. I distinctly saw the *movement of the central tendon in his wrist*, corresponding to that made by his middle finger in the act of writing. Each movement of the tendon was simultaneously accompanied by the sound of a scratch on the slate.

He now pulled out the slate and showed me on its upper side the answer to my question, "Define Idocrase." There in hasty, yet distinct characters was written, "*It consists of Silica, Albumina, and Lime.*" The true answer should have been "It consists of Silica, *Alumina*, and Lime." As will be stated more fully at the close of this account, the answer is precisely such as might be obtained by a hasty glance at the definition in a dictionary. Mr. Eglinton was careful to draw my attention to the fact that one corner of the slate-pencil was worn down.

We now tried the large slate, on which was the question, "Where is my wife?" under the same conditions, *i.e.*, that of *non-attention*. I again read a book, turning my head away from him, though not so far but that I could see by a side glance. Again the spirits promptly returned, and again I was conscious by indicative motions that the slate was being manipulated. He then said aloud as if to a spirit, "Shall we have an answer?" I looked away so as to give the spirits a chance, and immediately heard a vigorous and loud scribbling. It sounded like a series of sharp zigzags,—thus, "." I was sur-

\* It was the small slate with the question which only a mineralogical spirit could answer.

prised to find only the short word "No," written in a round hand, when the slate, immediately afterwards, was shown me, since the scribbling I heard certainly lasted much longer than it would have taken to write this word. Again he asked me to examine the fragment of chalk; but I found it more worn down than necessary for the short answer. In order to test this, I took another sharp corner of the same pencil and wrote the word "No"; but found that in order to wear down the corner to an equal degree it was necessary to write the word twice, or to make a zigzag figure of the same length as the sound had indicated. It occurred to me that the wearing down of the pencil fragment was a non-essential portion of the manifestation, and that the real writing was done with another pencil.

It appearing that neither Mr. Eglinton nor the spirits were able to answer a question which the former did not know, I proposed trying the question in the closed envelope, the answer to which should be easy to both powers. Mr. Eglinton declined to attempt this, giving as his reason that as I knew the question, it might be set down as "thought-reading" if an answer was obtained. He proposed that I should write in his own folding-slate,—a handsome affair in hard wood frame, and with a brass lock, being the same, as he informed me, which Mr. Gladstone had used. I had no great fancy for working with specially prepared apparatus, and suggested dispensing with all slates, and asking the unknown powers to write upon a piece of paper in my pocket. This was declined on the ground that just as a chemical reaction can be obtained only by special methods and apparatus, so a manifestation of these unknown powers requires special conditions which are learned by experience.

I then followed his suggestion and agreed to simply write a number on a piece of paper and put it inside of his folding-slate. In order to preclude the possibility of "thought-transference," I wrote a large series of numbers on different slips of paper, and then throwing them into a hat chose one of them, and, without looking at what was written, folded it in four, and, after pressing it tightly, put it in his slate together with a fragment of red chalk. The slate was closed with a spring lock, and after the key was handed to me, the slate was held under the table as before. In order to obtain the necessary condition of non-attention, I busied myself in writing notes for this account, my left hand being held in his left. I listened intently, however, and also felt for any indications. Although I could see nothing, I was again conscious by varied and delicate motions and sounds that some power was opening the slate, lifting up the paper, unfolding it, refolding it, and replacing it. I distinctly heard the rustling sound of the paper being unfolded and refolded. Meanwhile, Mr. Eglinton breathed heavily, and jerked to and from the table as before. As the slate had a spring

lock and shut with a snap, I wondered if this could be accomplished without my hearing the sharp sound. Mr. Eglinton now gave a sudden and strong sneeze, and at the same moment the slate was clapped against the under side of the table. Mr. Eglinton had showed no signs of a cold until this moment.

He now said to me, "I feel the influence strongly," and placing his folding-slate on the top of the table continued, "Will you ask if we can get an answer?" As the answer had, as I was convinced, been already written, this request seemed to me superfluous, but nevertheless, in as grave a voice as the occasion seemed to require, I did so. Mr. Eglinton having put an ordinary slate with a bit of chalk upon it beneath the table, and I having looked away, in a few moments he produced it again with the words, "We will try," written in the same handwriting I had already seen. *Both slates now being on top of the table*, but his right hand being beneath it, Mr. Eglinton said "Listen," and I heard the sound of writing beneath the table, as of the scratching of a slate-pencil against its under side. This procedure may have been intended to make me think that the spirits were now writing in the closed slate lying on top of the table. It would have been more convincing, however, had the hand of the medium been in sight. I hardly thought, moreover, that the soft red chalk in the slate would make the shrill sound that I heard. Having been asked to open the slate with the key I had kept, I found the figure 8, the same as that on the folded paper, written on the slate in red chalk. It was thus proved that "thought-transference" was not the agent which produced the writing; and as yet the evidence was not convincing as to the agency of any "objective, intelligent force capable of acting externally to the medium, and in contravention of the recognised laws of matter." This ended the séance, and, having paid my guinea, I departed.

After reaching home, I found that I had inadvertently left with Mr. Eglinton my small American slate, with the question "Define Idocrase," and its answer. I therefore sent him a note asking for the slate, and also for a statement that the phenomena I had witnessed were not executed by himself, but were due to extra-physical forces beyond his control. The next day the slate was returned, and with it a note giving me the statement requested. This gave me an opportunity of comparing the handwriting on the slate with that of the note. Facsimiles of the two are here appended (Figs. 1 and 2).



FIG. 1.

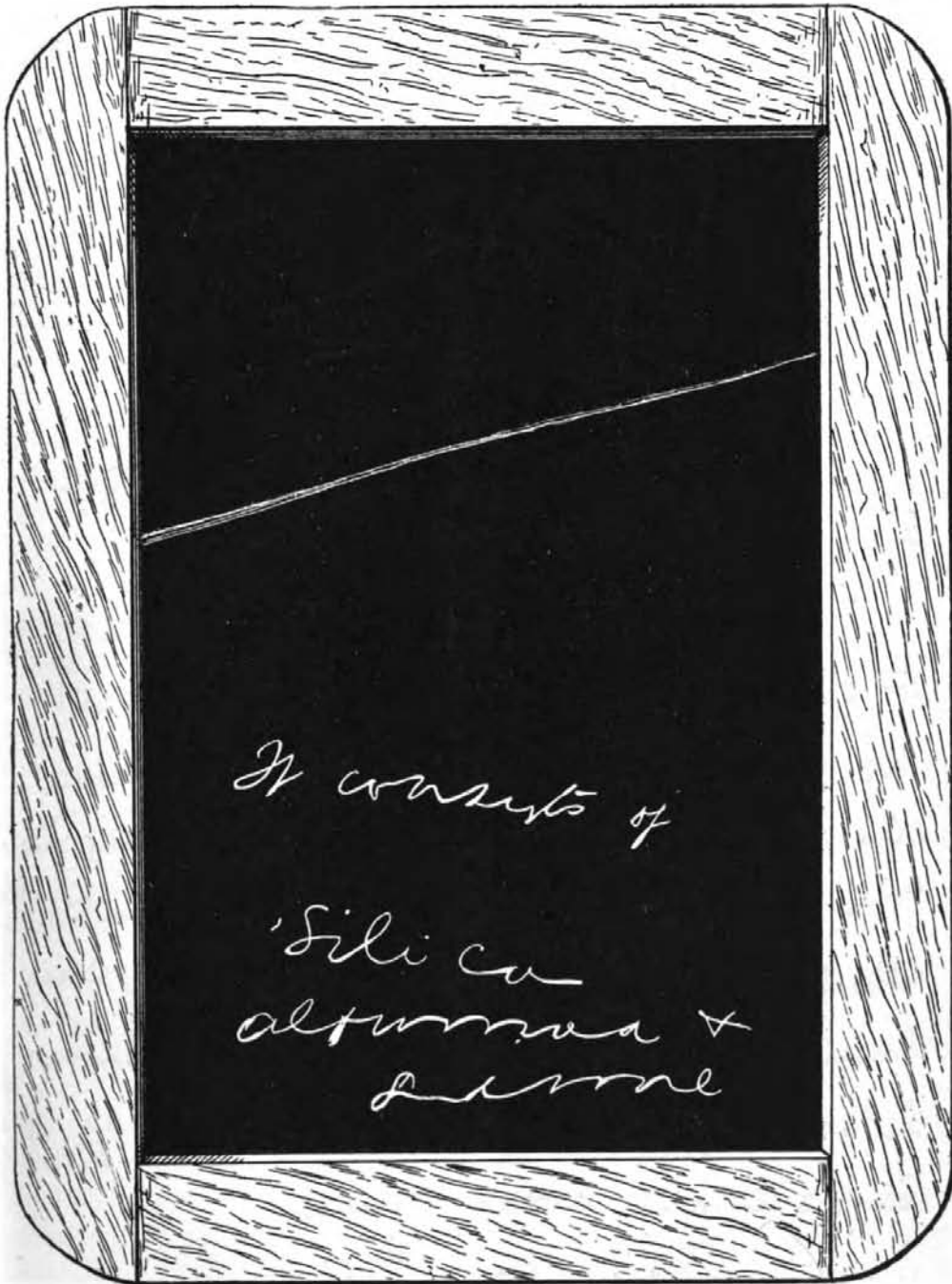


FIG. 2.

G. Hottingham Place.  
Co.  
Nov. 17.

Dear Mr. La Touche.

I return you the slate which you left behind.

I willingly accede to your request & give you a statement that the results you witnessed yesterday were due to extra-physical forces entirely beyond my control - but I fail to see what ~~value~~ value such a declaration can have. The phenomena being, in themselves, sufficient to convince you of the statement above-made.

Yours very truly,  
W. E. Glinton -

Although at first sight no great similarity is apparent, a careful examination shows many striking points of coincidence.\* A difference of style was to be expected; but when we find the same round free hand, the same characteristic backhand curl at the end of the words, and the same peculiarities in the shaping of the letters, both capitals and small, it is difficult to escape from the conclusion that the writing on the slate and in the letter were both made by the same hand. The irregular spacing on the slate indicates that it was done without being looked at. It is a suggestive fact that the first line of the answer was at a distance from the lower edge of the slate equal to that to which the middle finger could reach without shifting the slate, while the thumb remained visible above the table. The other answers produced during the séance were similarly spaced. Careful examination of the slate also showed finger marks extending around it in a manner to indicate that it had been horizontally revolved.

Finally, as to the answer itself, "It consists of Silica Albumina and Lime," we find on reference to Webster's Dictionary, in the definition of the word *idocrase* the words, "It consists of Silica, Alumina and Lime." Mr. Eglinton had ample opportunity to consult the dictionary, since he left the room twice during the séance, one of the times being just previous to the production of the above answer. Either he had taken too hasty a glance at the dictionary, or his memory had failed him in substituting *albumina* for *alumina*. We can hardly suppose a "spirit" to have made this error, or to have imitated the dictionary definition so closely.

Although I am aware of some seven methods of mediumistic slate-writing, the so-called "psychography," only two of them, so far as I could judge, were employed at this séance; and the main condition necessary for success was that of non-attention on the part of the visitor.

### *Second Séance.*

A second visit was made to Mr. Eglinton on the morning of December 16th, and, observing now the condition necessary for success, I had a very satisfactory séance. I took with me two ordinary school-slates, purchased on the way. We sat down at the same table, the cloth having been removed, and proceeded at once to business.

We began with the experiment of the book and the slate, which I had seen several times described.† Mr. Eglinton having left the room,

\* Note the initial "S" and final "s," the capital "L," the final "a's" and "e's," the "of," the "i's," the "c's," &c.

† See the *Journal* of the S.P.R., Vol. II., pp. 295, 301, 303, 307, 308, 317, 318, 325, 330, and 331. It is also described in *Light*, October 16th, 1886, by Mr. Wedgwood (p. 463), Mr. Farner and Mr. Keulemans (p. 465), Miss Symons (p. 467), "G. J. R." (p. 470), Mr. Wilson (p. 473), Professors Wagner,

I took down a book (*The Occult World*) at random from his bookcase, and, without opening it, wrote on one of my slates as follows:—  
 “Page 27, line 13. Word 2 red, 3 white, 4 blue.” I intended by this that the second word of line 13, page 27, should be written on the slate in red chalk, the third word of the same line in white chalk, and the fourth word in blue. Having turned the slate upside down, I called to Mr. Eglinton to come in. He entered, and having put three bits of chalk, red, white, and blue, with the book, on the slate, he put the whole under the table, and, taking my left hand in his left, began the séance. My right hand being free I wrote the following notes as the séance proceeded:—

Mr. Eglinton places the book on the slate with the *open side toward him*.\* His thumb is not visible, his *whole hand being under the table*. I purposely do not look directly at him, but busy myself with these notes. The moment I begin writing, the manifestations begin. He breathes heavily, sighs, moves and rattles the slate, puts his right arm *far below the table*, withdraws his body slightly backward, and then *looks downward intently*, in the direction of the slate. I suddenly look up, and immediately he also looks up with a very distressed expression of countenance. I look down at my notes, and again he looks down intently and for some time, apparently at what he is holding beneath the table. From the position of his arm, I judge that by this time he has lowered the slate to perhaps eight inches below the table, even his elbow being sunk out of sight. He now jerks the slate several times, breathing loudly. I look up again, when he says that he is tired, and brings up the book and slate, laying them on the table. The pencils having been partly jerked off the slate, fresh bits are put alongside the book, and the whole is again placed beneath the table.

I continue my note-taking, and immediately loud breathing and shuddering begin on the part of Mr. Eglinton, who also assumes a most woe-begone expression. He pushes his arm with the slate far under the table, and then bringing it back towards him again *looks down* (as if to read the book). He asks me if I am not conscious of a force going out of me, and a feeling as if his hand was a battery. I am conscious of nothing of the kind. Now he brings the slate up against the under-side of the table, and puts his thumb above, being the same position assumed at the first séance, when writing was being produced on the slate. I now hear the sound of

Boutlerof, and Dobroslavin of St. Petersburg (p. 474), “M.A. (Oxon.)” (p. 475), Mr. P’Anson (p. 500), all of whom regard it as conclusive evidence of the genuineness of “psychography.”

\* This appears to have been also the position of the book in the experiments described in *Light*. (l.c.)

writing, as if on the slate, and a few moments later he exhibits it to me with the answer written as follows:—"of" in red, "occult" in white, and "forces" in blue. The book lies in the middle of the slate, the pencils at one end, and the writing at the other. On turning to the page and line of the book indicated, I find the words "of occult forces" in the correct position, but on close examination find marks made by a *finger-nail* in the margin precisely opposite these words. It is clear that some power made these scratches with a finger-nail, apparently a thumb-nail, after opening the book and finding the place. I am astounded at the simplicity of a performance, which, as described, has been so strongly tinged with the marvellous.

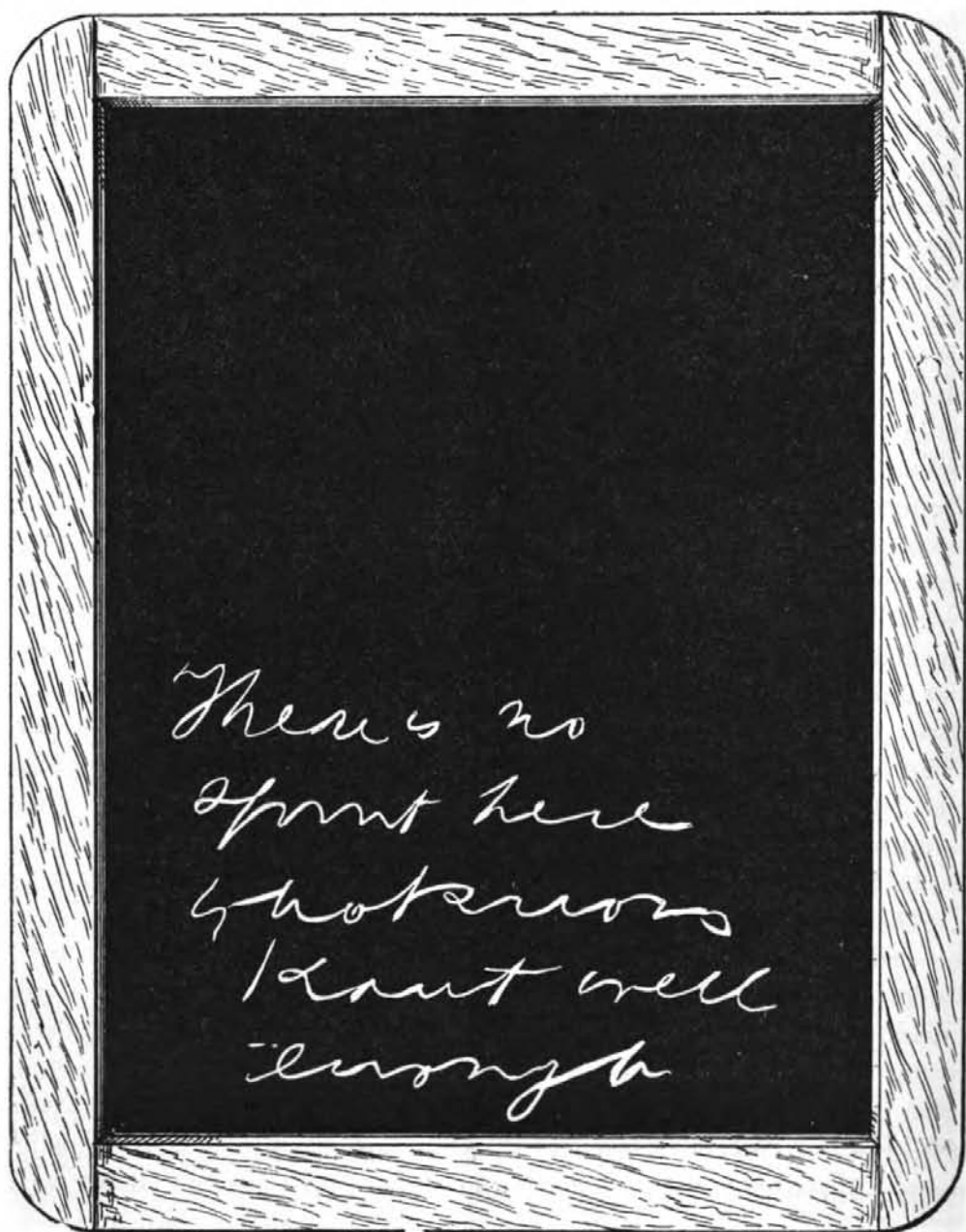
The second experiment has also been described.\* A piece of slate-pencil was put on the slate and covered by a glass tumbler, when the whole was placed under the table, so that the top of the tumbler rested against the under-side of the table. Knowing how easy it would be to shove the slate along under the tumbler when so supported, I asked to be allowed to hold one end of the slate under the table myself, which Mr. Eglinton permitted me to do. I then asked to have the word "Nottingham" written, but on Mr. Eglinton saying that this word was too long, I chose "dog." So soon as I looked away from Mr. Eglinton the operations began. Holding the slate, I distinctly felt him tilt it, shove it slightly along from under the tumbler, and then, inclining his end downwards, write on its upper side. He also looked down at the slate just before he wrote. The writing was hastily done, and the slate then restored to a horizontal position, and shoved back so that the glass should cover the word. The performance was now finished, and the slate brought up for me to examine. The word "dog" was indistinctly and badly written in an irregular scrawl beneath the glass. The writing was not nearly so distinct as that done in Mr. Eglinton's usual method, when the slate is held against the table. (This was, I suppose, due either to the unsteady position of the slate as compared with its position when firmly pressed against the under-side of the table, or else to want of practice on the part of the performer.)

The third experiment consisted of a question and answer written in the ordinary way. I wrote "Please give a quotation from Kant," thinking that Mr. Eglinton would probably have to consult a reference book in order to answer it. He held the slate against the under-side of the table, and I held his left hand with my left and with my right hand again busied myself with these notes. He began at once to write, and in a few moments brought up the slate, on which the following answer appeared: "There is no spirit here who knows Kant well

\* *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, June, 1886, p. 324, and *Light*, No. 302, p. 482.

enough." This was written in the 'characteristic handwriting, in the usual position on the upper side of the slate at the end furthest from him. It began at about the distance from the end of the slate to which his fingers could reach—some four inches from the edge. A facsimile of this answer is appended (Fig. 3), by which it will appear that the handwriting has many characteristics identical with those of former slate-writing, and not essentially disguised from the handwriting in his letter to me.\*

FIG. 3.

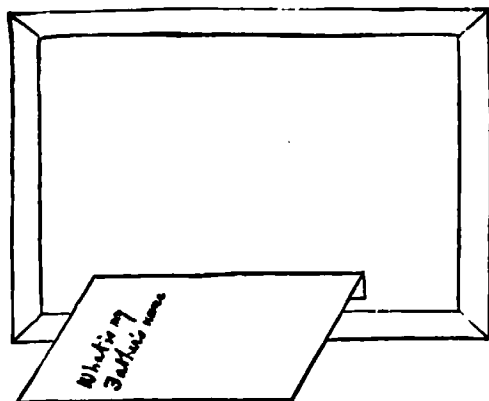


\* Compare *here* on slate with *were* in letter; *there* on slate with *the* in letter; *who* on slate with *which* and *what* in letter, &c.



Mr. Eglinton now intimated that the séance was at an end. I begged that it might be continued, as I was leaving London for the Continent the next day. He said that it was quite impossible to get further manifestations since the "power was exhausted," and explained that this exhaustion of power was quite independent of his volition, and occurred at various times, sometimes at the very beginning of a séance. The thought occurred to me that, notwithstanding this "exhaustion of power," the spirits would perhaps continue to work if some further inducement was offered to them. I therefore proposed to Mr. Eglinton a double fee if the séance was prolonged. The medium yielded without hesitation, and the spirits continued to give excellent manifestations. It was interesting to learn that these "unknown powers" are not removed from the influence of pecuniary inducements.

We proceeded to the fourth experiment. It was one which would be difficult to perform without detection, and, moreover, since Mr. Eglinton was ignorant of the answer to the question, a direct one could not be given (unless by the agency of "spirits" or other "intelligent forces"). As I had come to Mr. Eglinton at first under an assumed name, and at the present séance under my proper one, he had no means of knowing the correct answer to the question, which was "What is my father's name?" I wrote this question somewhat faintly with a lead pencil on a sheet of note-paper, the left side of which was gummed to the left edge of a slate and then folded down so that the question should be on the under side next to the slate. In order to see the question, Mr. Eglinton would have to lower the slate sufficiently to turn over the sheet of note-paper, thus:—



an operation which I could not fail to observe. It was arranged that the answer should be written in pencil on the other side of the same sheet of note-paper, and a minute bit of lead pencil, freshly sharpened, was laid on the slate for the use of the "spirits." All being thus arranged, and Mr. Eglinton having sharpened *another pencil*, he put the slate under the

table in the usual position, held my left hand in his left, and I began again writing these notes, my head being partly turned away, yet not so far but that I could see his motions. I also moved somewhat out from the table so that I could watch his legs.

The conditions being, as he supposes, favourable, he proceeds to lower the slate so that his whole hand and arm up to the elbow dis-

appear from view. I now distinctly hear the rustling of the paper as it is being folded back. This being done, Mr. Eglinton looks down intently towards his knees, apparently endeavouring to read my question, which I had purposely written in a small, light hand. Here he drops the slate upon the floor. Having restored it to its original position, the same operation is repeated, and again he *stoops to look at the question, this time bringing his head within a few inches of the table.* His *left leg now slowly begins to rise* and soon entirely disappears from my view, as though to support the slate upon his knee. His arm and whole hand are at the same time under the table. I now hear writing going on at some length. On my turning to look at him the sound of writing ceases and the leg is let down. Again I look away, when writing recommences, his thumb now being visible and resting on the table. I watch his wrist and distinctly see the tendons move as he is in the act of writing.

Mr. Eglinton seemed, therefore, to have written the last part of the message while the slate was pressed against the under side of the table, in the usual way; but before I interrupted him he had apparently been writing upon the slate while it lay upon his knee. As will be shown presently, the character of the writing leads to the same conclusion. The following answer now appeared, written as requested on the paper:—"We regret that your father's name is unknown to us. If you had a deceased relative present who knew the name of your father it is probable we could. We are not omniscient."

As in every other experiment in both séances the answer indicated *no superior intelligence to that of Eglinton.* It was interesting to find two distinct styles of handwriting upon the paper, a facsimile of which is here given [see Fig. 4, p. 15], corresponding to the two positions in which he wrote.

From the beginning of the answer to the word "could," the writing is angular, the words and lines well spaced, the i's properly dotted, and there is every indication that it was written with the aid of the eye. The words "probable we," written at right angles to the preceding portion of the answer after the slate had been turned, fill a vacant space at the end of the first two lines in a manner that clearly proves the use of eyesight. But the last part of the answer, on the other end of the slate, is in quite a different hand and was written with a fresh pencil point. It is irregular, the lines are no longer straight, the i's are not dotted, m's are twice used instead of n's, and it was evidently written without the aid of the eye. A freshly pointed pencil, or at least a new corner, must have been used to make the thin lines here, which differ markedly from the dull heavy lines of the preceding portion. This last portion shows more clearly the characteristic handwriting produced in former experiments, and it is suggested by

FIG. 4.

could he see  
 out movement

be regret that your  
 Father's name is  
 unknown to us. If  
 you had a deceased  
 relative present who  
 knew the name of  
 your father, it is

probable he

the writing alone that the last five words were written while the slate was held against the under side of the table, and the preceding portion while it rested on his knee in sight. The handwriting of the whole answer is clearly identical with that produced in the last experiment, as a direct comparison of Figs. 3 and 4 renders evident.

As Mr. Eglinton on this occasion did *not* ask me to examine the pencil point, placed on the slate for the use of the spirits, but on the other hand was about to throw it away, I thought this an advantageous opportunity to examine it. I therefore quickly seized and pocketed it. It proved to be perfectly sharp and unworn, and identical in size and condition with what it was when placed on the slate before the experiment. It had certainly not been used for the production of the answer. The other short pencil which I had seen Mr. Eglinton sharpen just before the experiment was not shown to me, but it is not difficult to imagine its purpose. He assured me, however, that the writing was produced by some external agency.

Mr. Eglinton now suggested telling me the number of matches in a matchbox that he held in his hand. Having seen a description of this operation, I declined participating in it. I also declined having him tell me the number of a bank-note that I was to put in his famous folding-slate, divining his method. I asked, however, for one more trial with his folding-slate, on condition that he left the room for a few minutes, to which he assented.

While he was out of the room, I wrote a question upon a piece of paper and put it in the closed slate, which I not only locked, putting the key in my pocket, but fastened together by glueing a postage-stamp across the end, so that it would be impossible to open it without considerable force, and probably the use of two hands. Having called in Mr. Eglinton and got the slate under the table without his noticing the stamp, which was on the edge of the slate farthest from him, I went on with my writing, leaving him and the spirits to open the slate if they could. I heard a slight tinkling sound as if he were using a duplicate key. After several minutes (in which Mr. Eglinton had probably been vainly endeavouring to open the slate), he brought it up, still with the stamp upon it, and laid it upon the table. Then putting a common slate below in the usual way, his whole hand being beneath the table, he asked the spirits, "Can we get an answer?" After putting the slate for a moment on top of the table, and then again placing it below, the sound of writing was heard and immediately afterwards an answer appeared upon the simple slate in his hand, in the usual position, reading "No. We have done all that we can for you."\*

\* Had Mr. Eglinton been aware that the slate had been fastened with a postage stamp, he might have removed it—to remove adhesive paper from a

The question that I had placed in the folding-slate remained unanswered and untouched, and I was forced to conclude that a sealed slate as well as a sealed envelope, was proof against the skill of both Mr. Eglinton and the "spirits." Thus ended the second séance.

Altogether nine distinct experiments were performed or attempted. In reviewing these, it is possible to summarize the principal facts observed as follows :—

1. Writing was never obtained on any of the slates unless they had been held for some time under the table.
2. In every case where answers were obtained, Mr. Eglinton looked down at the slate containing the question long enough to read it.
3. Direct answers were given only in cases where Mr. Eglinton, after seeing the question, either knew the answer already or obtained it by consulting a dictionary. In the last case he left the room for several minutes before an answer was given.
4. Whenever the question was unseen by Mr. Eglinton it was unseen by the "spirits," and when the answer was unknown to him it was unknown to the "spirits," as the written answers in each case proved. In no case was any intelligence other than that of Mr. Eglinton indicated in the answers.
5. The movement of the tendons in Mr. Eglinton's wrist when the sound of writing was heard, the rustling of the paper as it was being unfolded and refolded, and the motion of the slate felt as it was tilted beneath a tumbler, are phenomena perceived by the senses to be in accord with the ordinary laws of nature as applied to the action of Mr. Eglinton's right hand.
6. The fragments of chalk or pencil placed on the slate do not appear to be necessary for the production of an answer. As in one case the chalk was worn down too much, and in another case the pencil was not worn down at all, notwithstanding a long answer, it appears that the abrasion on them often exhibited was purposely made for other reasons.
7. The scratching sound often heard beneath the table like the sound of writing, was certainly made by Mr. Eglinton, as the corre-

polished wooden surface being perfectly easy—and, after opening the slate, replaced the stamp as before. But being entirely unaware of the cause of the failure of the slate to fall open as usual by its own weight, he was unable to do anything with it. I secretly removed the stamp before returning the slate to Mr. Eglinton, who perhaps imagined that I had tampered with the lock. It is needless to remark that genuine "spirits" would hardly have been deterred by a postage stamp, nor would they afterwards have given a totally irrelevant answer. The question "By whose hand is the answer to this question written?" can hardly be answered by the sentence, "No. We have done all that we can for you."

sponding motion of the tendons of his wrist proved. This scratching sound usually immediately preceded the exhibition of the answer, but there is no reason to suppose that it always had any connection with the actual writing upon the slate. On the contrary, in one case the scratching lasted too long for the short answer, and in another case the scratching was done under the table when no slate was there, the slates being on top of the table and Mr. Eglinton's hand alone being below. Like the wearing down of the pencil, the sound of scratching appears to have been in many cases intended only for effect.

8. The answers produced on each of the slates and on the paper have similar characteristic points, and although more or less disguised from the ordinary handwriting of Mr. Eglinton, a careful comparison leads me to the conclusion that all were the work of one hand.
9. The position of the writing on the slates corresponded to the distance to which Mr. Eglinton's fingers could reach from the edge of the table, and sometimes suggested that the slate had been horizontally revolved.
10. During almost every experiment the slate was either dropped on the floor or brought up at least once to the top of the table, ostensibly to rest the medium, but at the same time affording him opportunities for revolving the slate or otherwise manipulating it.
11. In a case which required it, Mr. Eglinton appeared to support the slate upon his knee, and put both hand and arm beneath the table, and in this case the character of the writing differs from that produced when the slate is in the usual position supported against the table.
12. In the experiment with the book and slate, the facts of his hand being completely under the table, his sight directed towards it, and the marks of a thumb-nail being afterwards found opposite the line chosen, afford evidence that the book was opened while under the table.
13. No results were obtained when the question was enclosed either in a sealed envelope or a sealed slate.
14. Nothing was done so long as a strict watch was kept upon Mr. Eglinton, but non-attention was in each case immediately followed by manifestations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Henry Sidgwick (*Proceedings*, Part X., p. 70) has come to a very similar conclusion after séances with many mediums, and has shown that an absence of evidence of continuous observation on the part of the witnesses, and of phenomena dispensing with the necessity for such observation, characterises spiritualistic manifestations in general.



15. Pecuniary inducements were found to be capable of reviving an asserted "exhaustion of power."

It is not for me here to discuss what Mr. Eglinton's motives may be in exhibiting these manifestations and in assigning them to the operation of forces external to himself. It is enough to have proved that the phenomena witnessed were all capable of being produced by his own right hand while hidden beneath the table ; that no superior intelligence or external force was at any time indicated ; and that the one condition necessary for success was non-attention on the part of the visitor.

H. CARVILL LEWIS.

The following is Mr. F. G. Netherclift's Report on the above facsimiles :—

10, Bedford-row, W.C.

8th March, 1887.

I have very minutely compared the writings contained in the four several documents submitted to me for an opinion, namely : A facsimile of writing on a slate, commencing, "There is no spirit here," &c., which I have marked 1. (Fig. 3.)

Another facsimile of writing on a slate, commencing, "It consists of Silica," &c., which I have marked 2. (Fig. 1.)

Some other facsimile writing not written on a slate, commencing, "We regret that your father's name," &c., which I have marked 3. (Fig. 4.)

Also the handwriting in facsimile of a gentleman signing himself W. Eglinton, and which I have marked A ; the said writing commencing, "I return you the slate," &c. (Fig. 2.)

I entertain a strong opinion that the whole of the writings above described are by one and the same hand ; those marked 1, 2, and 3 being the disguised hand of the writer of A.

I am induced to this belief by the following peculiar resemblances, which, notwithstanding the clever attempt to feign another distinct hand, the writer has betrayed.

Supposing the letter A to be the habitual style of Mr. Eglinton's writing, then it appears to me that he has taught himself an eccentric mode of forming his letters, more especially the capitals D, P, W, T, and the small "y," a departure from which, combined with writing in a more sloping running hand fashion, would render his writing at all times difficult, except to an expert, to recognise.

The following agreements, in my judgment, are of sufficient importance to identify the writer of A as the writer also of 1, 2, and 3.

1. Compare the printed style of the letter S as in "Silica," 2nd line of slate-writing marked 2, with the same in "selves," 14th line A.

2. Observe that three several formations of the letter "r" are employed; a round one at the top in commencing a word, thus, "2." Refer to the same in "regret" and "relative," 1st and 5th lines facsimile writing marked 3, and compare same with the "r" in "return" and "result," 5th and 9th lines A. A second formation is a square-headed r like that in the word "your," 7th line facsimile writing marked 3, a counterpart to which will be found in the word "control," 11th line A. And the third formation presents the appearance of a letter "i," thus, "i." Compare the same in the word "father," 7th line facsimile writing marked 3, with the "r" in "yesterday," 9th line, and "yours" "very truly," 16th line A.

3. The letter "w" is a most remarkable and important agreement, almost sufficient in itself to identify the writer. Compare the "w" in the word "well," 4th line slate-writing marked 1. Also in the word "we" head of facsimile writing marked 3, with the "w" in the word "were," 9th line A. The second or final portion of the letter is singularly alike.

4. Observe that the letter "a" is occasionally made open at the top so as to resemble the letter "u." See the word "that," 1st line facsimile writing 3, compared with the word "what," 11th line A.

5. Notice the round "c" in the word "Silica," 2nd line slate-writing 2, with same in "convince," 14th line A.

6. Compare the capital L in the word "Lime," 4th line slate-writing 2, with same in the name "Latouche," 4th line A.

7. Particularly compare the word "to" in 3rd line facsimile writing 3, with the same in the 8th line A. Notice that the letter "o" is only a half letter, simply an "i." Were the writing of the facsimile 3 less sloping this word would be identical.

8. Compare the letter "a" in the word "deceased," 4th line facsimile writing 3, with the same in the word "made," 15th line A. The remarkable point is, the letter resembles an "o."

9. Compare the round "l" in the word "Silica," 2nd line slate-writing 2, with same in the word "control," 11th line A.

10. Remark the final "e" in the word "name," 2nd line facsimile writing 3, and the final "e" in the word "were," 9th line A.

11. Compare the commencing letter "h" in the word "had," 4th line facsimile writing 3, with the same in the word "have," 13th line A. It is a straight downstroke, without leading upstroke or loop.

12. Compare the letter "p" commencing the word "probable," facsimile writing 3, with same in the word "physical," 10th line A. Also a straight downstroke without a leading upstroke.

13. Compare the letters "en" in the word "enough," 5th line slate-

writing 1, with the same in the word "entirely," 10th line A. Notice that the "n" is less bold than the "e."

14. Compare the letter "b" with the diminutive downstroke in the word "albumen," 3rd line slate-writing 2, with the same in the word "above," 15th line A.

If the characteristics I have referred to are carefully examined, I feel confident that the same conclusions as I have formed will be arrived at.

FREDERICK GEORGE NETHERCLIFT.

Mr. Hodgson gives the following opinion on the writings :—

1, Furnival's Inn, Holborn, E.C.

*March 9th, 1887.*

I was unable to make any prolonged examination myself of the facsimiles of the writings you wished to be submitted to Mr. Netherclift. There was of course no doubt that all the writings *might* have been by the hand of Eglinton, and I observed, during the short comparison which I made, several peculiar indications that they actually were written by him,—indications which would probably escape the notice of the ordinary reader. And though the conclusion that Eglinton wrote them all would not be obvious at first sight, I think few would hesitate to agree with Mr. Netherclift after noting the points of resemblance which he has enumerated, and of which additional examples may be found. There are other minor instances of resemblance which Mr. Netherclift thought needless to mention, and I entirely agree with his opinion that all four writings are by the hand of Eglinton. Concerning Mr. Netherclift's remark about Eglinton's habitual style of writing, it may be worth mentioning that I have in my possession a long letter written by Eglinton in 1882, and that it seems clear that he has intentionally changed some of the characters of his ordinary handwriting; and further significant resemblances might be pointed out between his undoubted writing of 1882, and the "psychographic" specimens under examination.

RICHARD HODGSON.

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#### POSTSCRIPT.

Since the above was in print, two articles have appeared in Germany describing séances with Mr. Eglinton, in both of which the inquirers express themselves as convinced of the "supersensual" character of the manifestations.

One of the séances, held at St. Petersburg, is described by Herr Julius Gillis in an article entitled "Sechs Experimente mit Eglinton" (*Sphinx*, III., 16., p. 253, April, 1887). The "six experiments" were very similar to those performed for me and already described; consist-

ing of answers to questions on a slate, writing on a slate a name previously written upon a piece of paper and placed in the folding-slate, telling the number of a banknote also put in his folding slate,<sup>1</sup> performing the experiment of the book and the slate, &c. In all of these the slate and accessories were held beneath the table, and since none of the answers evinced an intelligence beyond that of Mr. Eglinton, the proceedings seem to have been practically a repetition of those done for me, the same methods being used, and the same conditions being required.

Herr Gillis has fortunately published a photographic reproduction of one of the answers (see Fig. 5) which is valuable as evidence. The "spirit" had been asked to perform the experiment of tying a knot in a stretched cord, which Slade had done for Professor Zöllner, and afterwards for Herr Gillis and others. Whereupon the following writing was produced on the slate.

The reader may find it convenient to have the contents in print :—

Mein lieber Herr,

Vor Jahrhunderten wussten unsere Vorfahren diese Phenomene und hatten auch die Kraft, dieselben hervorzubringen. Jedoch durch den Fortschritt der Welt in anderen Dingen kümmerte sich man weniger mehr über das menschliche Schicksal; jedoch jetzt sollte man es mehr denn je. Wir hoffen dass durch die Thatsachen, welche wir Ihnen vorführten, Sie sich mehr and mehr mit diesem Gegenstand befassen werden.

Ihr ergebener

ERNEST.

The experiments which you demand would take a very long series of séances to accomplish, and we could under no circumstances promise them.

It will be observed (1) That the German portion of the answer is totally irrelevant to the question, and had clearly been at least composed before the séance. (2) That the German itself is such bad German as an Englishman might write. "Ernest," whoever he may be, is clearly not an adept at German, else he would not have written "*wussten*" for *kannnten*, "*sich man*" for *man sich*, "*über*" for *um*, "*jeh*" for *je*, "*durch die*" for *in Veranlassung der*, "*and*" for *und*. (3) That the two entirely different styles of writing, while exhibiting Mr. Eglinton's skill at disguising and varying his handwriting, still bear the characteristic marks of his personality. The report [see p. 376] from Mr. Netherclift, the well-known expert, to whom this facsimile was submitted, bears testimony to the truth of this conclusion.

The other article, also founded upon a séance with Mr. Eglinton, is a very well-written one entitled, "Ein Wort über den Spiritismus"

<sup>1</sup> I have already stated that Eglinton proposed to perform this "experiment" with me, but that I had declined it, suspecting his process.

FIG. 5.

Mein lieber Herr,  
 Vor Jahrhunderten warnten  
 unsere Vorfahren diese Über-  
 kommen und hatten auch die  
 Kraft dieselben heranzukehren.  
 Jedoch durch den Fortschritt der  
 Welt in anderen Dingen klümmte  
 sich man weniger mehr über  
 das merkwürdige Schicksal, jedoch  
 jetzt sollte man es mehr denn  
 je. Wir hoffen dass durch  
 die That sachen, welche wir  
 Ihnen vorführen, Sie sich  
 mehr und mehr mit diesen  
 Gegenstand befassen werden.  
 Ihr ergebener  
Ernst  
 The experiments which  
 you demand would  
 take a very long  
 series of seasons to

(*Vom Fels zum Meer*, VI., Hept 8, p. 264), by Baron Dr. Carl du Prel, of Munich, one of the ablest writers upon the subject, himself an earnest but liberal-minded Spiritualist. He describes how, after two unsuccessful séances, at the third séance, seven persons besides the medium being present, all of whom were now sympathetic and "well-wishing" toward him, the favourite experiment of the book and slate, at Mr. Eglinton's suggestion, was performed. As the performance was slightly varied from his usual manner, it may be well here briefly to describe it.

All being seated around the table, with joined hands, and a book having been brought in, a page, line, and number were privately written on a slate by one of the company, the book placed upon the slate, and all put beneath the table, one of the ladies assisting the medium in supporting the slate at one end against the under side of the table. After being held beneath the table for a long time it was finally brought up, and a second slate was laid on top of the book, when all was tied together and again held under the table. Soon the sound of writing was heard, and, three knocks being given, the slates were separated and this writing found: "*Page 175, line 18, word 5, Grabhügel*," which last, on opening the book, was found to be the correct word.

Baron du Prel regards this production as due to the action of an intelligent, invisible, clairvoyant spirit, which, as indicated by its degree of intelligence, was neither an angel nor a demon, but the spirit of a deceased human being. He seems to consider that it is phenomena of this nature which form the true *scientific basis* of Spiritualism. I quite agree with Baron du Prel, when, near the close of his article, he says, "Unless there is in the first place a scientific foundation for Spiritualism, any Spiritualistic code of morals 'floats in the air.' Before we can pin our faith upon the sayings of spirits, we must know beyond a doubt who these spirits are who declare them."

If the scientific basis of Spiritualism consists of the so-called manifestations produced by such men as Mr. Eglinton, or in any facts of a similar nature, it is no wonder that most men of science refuse to have anything to do with it. The experiment just described in no way invalidates the presumption that Mr. Eglinton opened the book and wrote upon the slate while they were under the table. The statement of the lady who held one end of the slate that it had not been moved, while said with perfect sincerity, is without value, for as I have proved by repeated experiments, it is almost impossible to detect the gradual lowering of the other end of the slate for a few inches when held in this position. Anyone can readily verify this point for himself.

H. CARVILL LEWIS.

April, 1887.



Mr. Netherclift's report is as follows :—

I have attentively examined the reduced lithographed copy of slate-writing, and have compared the same with the admitted habitual hand-writings of Mr. Eglinton, with which I am now becoming quite familiar.

I am enabled to give you the following very decided opinion as to the genuineness of the slate-writing in question.


I do not understand German as a language, but I am acquainted with the manner of writing it, having had, in the course of forty years' experience as an expert, to give evidence as to the formation of the letters so as to identify them with other hands submitted to me.


The slate-writing now before me is not written by a foreigner. It is undoubtedly an English handwriting, not German.


The whole of the writing, German and English, is by one and the same hand, being undoubtedly the disguised hand of Mr. Eglinton.

The English writing is disguised in a more upright style than the German, so as to give a greater contrast, and to convey the notion of a distinct hand ; but the characteristics are similar throughout, and when compared with Eglinton's natural hand the same writer is at once identified.

Thus, for instance, compare the letter "w," which in Eglinton's natural handwriting is peculiar, and I have called attention to it in a

former report [p. 371]. This is the shape of it, "  ." The first portion of the letter is made full, and round at the bottom, but the final

portion is like the letter "v," coming to a point, thus, "  ." Notice the word "were" in the 9th line of his letter of November 17th [p. 8], and see how the "w" agrees with that in "welche," 12th line German writing. Also in "wir" and "werden." In the English writing you will see it in "which," 1st line, and "would," 2nd line. In fact, Eglinton cannot guard against this formation, and betrays it in every disguised hand, whatever the style.

Then, again, his writing is recognised by the final "d" with looped downstroke, thus "  ." See "and" in the German writing, 14th line, and "would" and "and" in the English writing, and compare them with the "d" in the word "behind," 6th line, letter of November 17th [p. 8]. This habit also runs through all Eglinton's disguised hand-writings.

The word "to" may always be recognised. There is no word "to" in the German writing, but that in the 4th line of the English writing resembles precisely Eglinton's formation. A peculiarity shown occasionally in the formation of the word "to" will be alluded to in my next report, when, in connection with the disguised writings on the

three slates, Eglinton's eccentricities in writing will more fully be entered into. I will now mention only the three ways in which Eglinton forms the letter "r." These three formations will be found throughout the disguised writings.

FREDERICK GEORGE NETHERCLIFT.



