

15

SPIRIT-MEDIUMS

AND

CONJURERS.

AN ORATION

DELIVERED IN THE CAVENDISH ROOMS, LONDON, ON
SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 15TH, 1873,

BY

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HONORARY MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION;
EDITOR OF "THE NEW ERA," ETC., ETC.

TO WHICH IS APPENDED RULES TO BE OBSERVED AT THE SPIRIT CIRCLE.

"Sey hinter ihm was will! Ich heb ihm auf."
DAS VERSCHLRIERTE BILD ZU SAIS.

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INTRODUCTION.

BY THE EDITOR OF THE "MEDIUM."

It has been said that Spiritualists are not educated observers, and therefore not reliable witnesses as to what occurs at their seances. The mediums may be conjurers, but Spiritualists are too obtuse to discover the means by which they are imposed upon. Spiritualists are of two classes—the impostors and their dupes—is a favourite newspaper aphorism. That such opinions are groundless the intelligent reader need not be told. But now that Dr. Sexton has exposed the whole arts of the conjurers and shown that spiritual phenomena in no respect resemble them either in results or the conditions employed, the above quoted insults will be for ever rendered obsolete. As to the effect produced by the following oration we quote from the MEDIUM of June 20, in which the oration itself was copiously reported.

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"Dr. Sexton's lecture on Sunday evening fell like a bombshell amongst the conjurers. The men who have been so long with impudent effrontery pretending to simulate spiritual phenomena, received such an exposure at the hands of the Doctor as they are not likely soon to forget. Their tricks were all laid bare to the meanest understanding, and their 'wonderful mysteries' reduced to most common-place conjuring tricks. Long before the time for commencing the lecture the Cavendish Rooms were crowded to suffocation, and conspicuous among the audience were to be seen Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke, Dr. Lynn, and others of the conjuring fraternity. The faces of these men were a perfect study as the Doctor went through their tricks one by one, showing how simple they were, and how easy to be performed. When the Maskelyne knot was exhibited by means of which that gentleman ties himself in the cabinet, Mr. Maskelyne and Dr. Lynn rushed to the platform to look at it, whereupon the lecturer said, with a smile on his face, 'Oh, you've seen it often, Mr. Maskelyne.' The roars of laughter and the applause that followed this sally were tremendous. As the secrets of the mysterious cabinet with its suspended mirror, the marvellous box, and other apparatus employed by Maskelyne and Cooke were described, these worthy professors of the art of 'illusion' were white with rage, whilst Dr. Lynn was evidently highly amused; but when his turn came, and the 'blood-writing on the arm' was shown to be nothing more solemn than a little red ink, and the paper reading only a new variation of one of the simplest of all conjuring tricks, then it was Maskelyne and Cooke's turn to enjoy the fun, and laugh at the discomfiture of Dr. Lynn. It was evident that these gentlemanly 'illusionists' hate each other as heartily as they do the Spiritualists. The only thing wanted to complete this evening's proceedings was the presence of Herr Dobler, whose tricks also shared the same fate. The reception that Dr. Sexton met with was such as has seldom been witnessed in connection with Spiritualism; the applause that again and again greeted him was perfectly deafening. At the close of the lecture Mr. Maskelyne asked to be allowed to say a few words, and permission having been granted, he proceeded to say that he could not enter upon a controversy—first, because it was Sunday night, and, secondly, because

he would stand no chance, he was aware, in a 'battle of words with the learned Doctor.' He begged to say, however, that he was simply an 'illusionist,' and did not pretend to do more than tricks of deception. He had been many years perfecting his apparatus. The Doctor was wrong in some of his explanations, &c., &c. On being pressed to state which, he said his table was not lifted with silken cords. He then declared Spiritualism was humbug, and that he could do all that mediums did, whereupon Dr. Speer called out, 'I offered you twenty pounds to do so in my house, and you have not answered the letter.' The only reply that Mr. Maskelyne made to this was that he had answered the letter, although what he had said in the reply he did not state. Another gentleman in the audience shouted out, 'I'll give you a thousand pounds if you can.' Mr. Maskelyne then went on to say that he did not lay claim to be assisted by spirits, and therefore he didn't know why Spiritualists attacked him in this way. To this the Doctor replied that for several weeks he had had the words 'SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS' on his bills and in his advertisements. Mr. Morris said a few words on behalf of Dr. Lynn, to the effect that Dr. Lynn was engaged by him, and that no claim was made to spiritual powers, and if there were he would have nothing to do with him. Dr. Lynn himself made a few remarks, but said nothing to the point. The conjurers were evidently beaten with their own weapons, and they left the hall terribly crestfallen. On Monday, Maskelyne entertained his audience at the Egyptian Hall with a statement that the Spiritualists had attempted to stab him in the dark; that Dr. Sexton had sent some one to break his cabinet; that he was not allowed a hearing at the Cavendish Rooms on Sunday; all of which statements, we need hardly say, were utterly untrue. Dr. Lynn has changed his advertisement, and now admits that there is nothing in his tricks but what a clever man might discover, thereby acknowledging the accuracy of Dr. Sexton's descriptions of them. On the whole, Sunday last was really a red letter day with the Spiritualists, and there can be no doubt the whole proceedings tended greatly to strengthen our movement. For a long time the friends of the movement all over the country have been annoyed by the gratuitous abuse and unseemly allusions to Spiritualism of these tricksters, and Dr. Sexton's exposure was looked forward to with deep interest, not only by London Spiritualists, but by their brethren in all parts of the country. Committees could not promote the cause better than induce the Doctor to visit them, and deliver his lecture with the illustrative experiments. In a financial sense it would be a certain success, and the information imparted on the peculiarities of the spiritual phenomena is of the highest value. Now is the time to act, while the public mind is palpitating with excitement over the audacious pretensions of the would-be expositors of Spiritualism. The spirit of firm, defiant determination with which the Doctor confronted the modern descendants of Pharaoh's court appendages should inspire every friend of Spiritualism who, by their timely co-operation, might enable Dr. Sexton to do a work which he is alone capable of accomplishing."

SPIRIT-MEDIUMS AND CONJURERS.

An Oration delivered at the Cavendish Rooms, London, on Sunday Evening, June 15th, 1873.

It will be in the recollection of most persons present that some time since Professor Pepper, on leaving the Polytechnic, took the Egyptian Hall for the purpose of giving an exhibition in which all the so-called tricks of the Spiritualists should be exposed. Now, no man living was better competent to do this than Professor Pepper; he was a scientific man, he had paid great attention to the study of optics and optical illusions, as was evidenced by his celebrated "ghost" effects, and he had command of a very large supply of apparatus. The new entertainment that was to explode Spiritualism for ever consisted of a series of most clumsy imitations of the very lowest forms of spirit-manifestation, and every trick performed could be most easily explained by anyone who had paid the slightest attention to the subject. This exhibition went on for a short time, and was then suddenly brought to a close, the reason for its discontinuance being a most commendable one. Professor Pepper stated that when he commenced this kind of entertainment he was under the impression that the Spiritualists consisted simply of a number of ignorant and illiterate persons, and that an exposure of the whole thing would consequently meet with the approval of all men who occupied anything like a position in society. To his great surprise, however, he soon discovered that some of the most thoughtful, learned, and scientific men living, were firm believers in this same Spiritualism; and more, that large numbers of persons looked upon the subject in so solemn and serious a light that they considered treating it with ridicule or jest as highly offensive. The Professor, therefore, like the honest and conscientious man that he was, having a regard for the feelings of other persons, withdrew the performance, and there it ended. This course, however, has not been followed by others, since we have in London at this moment several conjurers who night after night attempt by mere trickery to show phenomena something like those that take place in the presence of spirit-mediums, and to burlesque and ridicule the whole subject of spirit-communion. Now, I may say at the onset, that if I deal severely with these men—several of whom are present—I do it not out of any ill-will that I bear them, but because I feel keenly the most objectionable course of procedure that they are taking. In exposing their tricks I have no wish to do them any injury in

their business, but simply to defend the glorious truths of Spiritualism against their miserable burlesque imitations. To me Spiritualism is not only a reality, but one of the grandest truths that has ever been made known to mankind. It has brought peace and consolation to many a suffering heart, and cheered many a dying pillow. It has opened the portals of the future world, and placed us face to face with the denizens of the great hereafter, and taught us—and some of us were not very apt pupils in learning the lesson—that there is a conscious and personal God who is the Father of all spirits, and that to love and worship Him is man's highest duty on earth. With such views you will not wonder that we look upon this subject as being most solemn—I had almost said sacred—and that any attempt to bring it into ridicule, and provoke an ignorant mob to laugh at its verities, must jar most discordantly upon our feelings. If these conjurers were content to perform their feats of legerdemain and leave Spiritualism alone, they might go their way without let or hindrance from me. I have no desire to make the public acquainted with the mysteries of their craft, and thus destroy the illusive spell which constitutes their stock-in-trade. But when they parade the term Spiritualism on their bills and in their advertisements, and night after night with the most barefaced effrontery tell their audiences that the tricks they perform are of the same character and accomplished by the same means that mediums employ for producing what are usually called spiritual manifestations, they must expect to meet with the sternest opposition from every true Spiritualist. In fact, to be silent under such circumstances would be to be false to our faith, and criminal to what we hold to be the truth. This it is that has driven me into the course that I shall take to-night. These men defy us to discover their tricks, and cannot, therefore, justly complain when we, having done so, publish the discovery for the benefit of society at large. It is in the cause of Spiritualism that I speak when I say that whilst spiritual manifestations admit of no means of accounting for them save that which they lay claim to, the tricks of these conjurers can be all explained upon the ordinary principles of deception confessedly resorted to by the practitioners of the art of legerdemain. Some are difficult to find out, others are very simple and easy. I do not hesitate to say that those of Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke—both of whom are present—are very clever, and certainly above the usual range of feats of the kind; but they no more resemble spiritual phenomena—as I will show you presently—than does German silver the metal from which it borrows part of its name. Dr. Lynn's tricks—and he is also present—are really of a most simple character, easily understood by the merest tyro in conjuring, which fact I will endeavour to prove to you by not simply explaining them, but by performing the whole of them in exactly the same order in which I saw them at his entertainment. Those of Maskelyne and Cooke I cannot perform to-night because I lack the cumbrous apparatus by which they are accom-

plished ; but I will explain them fully to you, and you will then see with what pretence these men assume to show phenomena at all analogous to spiritual manifestations.

The principle that I deal with to-night is the theory that all the so-called manifestations are the result of trickery and imposture. Perhaps there are not many persons who entertain this view; since most people are inclined to think that after all there must be something in it, to say nothing of the numerous theories that have been invented to explain part of the phenomena upon some principle which, while it excludes the supernatural element, yet at least leaves room to conserve the honesty of the medium. Even these, however, believe that most of what is done in spirit-circles is the result of some trick by which the weak-minded are imposed upon; and therefore I shall confine myself solely to this theory, that Spiritualism is in truth simply another name for humbug. According to this view, Spiritualists are divided into two classes—the deceivers and the deceived—the impostors and those who are imposed upon; and what is very curious, you have the ordinary state of things completely reversed, for in general it is the ignorant and illiterate who are deceived by the clever and intelligent, whereas in this matter it is the educated and well-informed who are imposed upon by the untutored and simple. Spiritualism comprises in its ranks some of the most eminent men living, in science, culture and general knowledge, men not easily deceived in other matters, yet these are supposed to be all deluded and led away—by whom, think you? Why, by a number of ignorant mediums, many of whom can hardly write their names, and few—very few—of whom have had more than an ordinary education, or are above the average range of intelligence for people in the same sphere of life as that in which they move. This is, to say the least of it, highly improbable. The self-sufficiency with which the conjurers speak of the ignorance of Spiritualists is really curious. Do they imagine that they alone are capable of detecting trickery, and that we are all a set of ignorant dolts, lacking even common sense? I have a decided objection to being considered a fool, and yet all the conjuring tricks seem intended to show that I really am one, and how profoundly clever is the person performing them. Dr. Lynn, on the programme of his entertainment, says, “There are in New York city alone more than 30,000 believers in spirit-manifestations.” Are we, then, to understand that these 30,000 people are all asses, and that Dr. Lynn possesses more intelligence than the whole of them put together? What is the inference that we are expected to draw from his performance? What but this, that out of this 30,000 people there is not one so clever as am I, Dr. Lynn, the great thaumaturgist, because they are all imposed upon by tricks like those which I am about to show you. But I saw through all Dr. Lynn’s tricks in one night, as I will convince both you and him presently. How is it, then, that we do not detect similar tricks when performed by professed mediums? Why did

not Dr. Lynn undeceive all these poor deluded people when he was in New York? Why come here and leave 30,000 people to perish in such deplorable ignorance? Professor Anderson once did declare that he had made an end of Spiritualism in America, and that he was about speedily to put it down in England. "There is not one Spiritualist left in America," he said, "since I exposed the humbug; and there won't be one left in England very soon. I'll speedily extinguish the whole thing." Well, what has happened? There are still more than 30,000 Spiritualists left in New York, and a few I suppose in other parts of the States, and some in England. In fact, it is the Professor who is extinguished, and not Spiritualism. It flourishes still with all the vigour of youth, whilst the self-styled "Wizard of the North" is seldom heard of as appearing before the public. I shall now endeavour to show—*first*, that spirit-mediums are not impostors; and *secondly*, that ordinary believers in Spiritualism are not victims of imposition.

I.—SPIRIT-MEDIUMS ARE NOT IMPOSTORS.

Of course I speak in a general sense. I am very far from believing that there is no dishonesty amongst persons laying claim to mediumship, or even amongst those actually possessing the power. If that were the case they would be exceptions to humanity at large, for there is no class, however pure its pretensions, however high and exalted its aims, into which deception and hypocrisy do not sometimes intrude. What I mean is, that what is called "mediumship" is not based upon imposture, but is a class of genuine phenomena, being in reality what it professes to be. This I hold for the following reasons:—

1.—*Mediums are generally persons who have had no instruction in the performance of conjuring tricks, nor any experience in the practice of them.* Everyone knows that in order to perform the feats of legerdemain it is essentially necessary to have practice and experience. You may learn most of the tricks—at least, the old ones—out of books; but, having done so, you can't perform them, and for the simple reason that to do so with any degree of perfection requires many years of practice. Hardly anything depends so much on practice as this. Witness the clumsy mode in which an amateur performs his first feats of sleight-of-hand, and compare this with the easy mode in which the accomplished professional goes about the business; the latter deceiving your eyes at almost every step, and the former bungling so as to expose to any careful observer the whole secret upon which his success should depend. Now, mediums are not conjurers; they are, as a rule, persons whose past life has been very unfavourable to learning the mysteries of this, or indeed of any other art. They are frequently ignorant, uneducated, and withal most diffident and modest. When we see certain phenomena taking place in their presence, we are perfectly sure that they could not have produced them; first, because to do

so would require mechanical contrivances which we know are not present; and secondly, that were such apparatus there, the medium would be utterly ignorant of its use. In the case of a professional medium, whose history we may not know until he appears before the public, we may not feel quite so certain on this point; yet even then, if we have the testimony of truthful and honest people who have been acquainted with him during the whole of his life, to the effect that by his own unaided power he could not accomplish the results witnessed, this is evidence which would be considered conclusive upon every other matter in human life. But in cases where the mediumistic power becomes developed in our own homes, in members of our own families, there can be no mistake. If I hear a public medium in a state of trance speaking in a language which I am assured on the very best authority he or she has never learned, I may not feel quite satisfied on the subject; but if this same thing happens to a member of my own family, whose entire past education I am acquainted with, there certainly can be no mistake about the matter. Need I say that is not at all an uncommon occurrence. Many of you will, I have no doubt, have had experience of such kind of manifestations. Well, what theory about conjuring tricks can explain such a fact as this? If a table be raised or tilted which the strength of those sitting at it would be sufficient to move, one may naturally doubt whether, after all, muscular force may not have been used; but if the table be so heavy that the combined efforts of the whole of the persons taking part in the circle would be insufficient to lift it, certain it is that the muscular theory must break down. Mediumistic power is not unfrequently developed in young children at the tender age of seven or eight years, or from that to ten or twelve, and when that is so, very extraordinary phenomena occasionally take place in their presence. This cannot bear the slightest resemblance to conjuring; no tricks can be performed in such cases, and no deception practised. Every Spiritualist present will, I have no doubt, be able to call to mind many cases where the phenomena that they have witnessed could not by any possibility have been produced by the medium present.

2.—*The phenomena frequently occur under circumstances which render deception impossible.* There is a general impression that all the spiritual manifestations take place in the dark, and that therefore the whole of the conditions are most favourable to deception and fraud. This is by no means correct; on the contrary, as far as my experience goes, I have witnessed far more wonderful phenomena in the light than in the darkness. I am not at all partial to dark seances, and would always much rather have the light, at least enough of it to enable me to see what is going on. However, every Spiritualist knows that frequently very powerful manifestations take place in the daylight or gaslight, and in the presence of persons best of all competent to judge as to whether there is trickery resorted to, and who, being sceptics, are on the alert to pounce down upon a hitch of this kind the moment

it should make its appearance. Mr. Serjeant Cox, a gentleman of the most unimpeachable veracity and the soundest judgment, and not a Spiritualist, tells us that in the house of Dr. Edmunds—a sceptic—in the presence of other sceptics, a very large dining-table was moved most palpably, when no person touched it, all present kneeling on the chairs, the backs of which were turned to the table. “In that position,” he says, “of the entire party, a heavy dining-table moved six times—once over a space of eight inches at a swing. Then all the party, holding hands, stood in a circle round the table at the distance from it, first of two feet, and then of three feet; so that contact by any person present was physically impossible. In this position the table lurched four times; once over a space of *more than two feet*, and with great force. The extent of these movements, without contact, will be understood, when I state that, in the course of them, *this ponderous table turned completely round*; that is to say, the end that was at the top of the room when the experiment began was at the bottom of the room when it concluded. The most remarkable part of this experiment was the *finale*. The table had been turned to within about two feet of a complete reversal of its first position, and was standing out of square with the room. The party had broken up, and were gathered in groups about the room. Suddenly the table was swung violently over the two feet of distance between its then position and its proper place, and set exactly square with the room, literally knocking down a lady who was standing in the way in the act of putting on her shawl for departure. At that time *nobody was touching the table*, nor even within reach of it, except the young lady who was knocked down by it.” On another occasion, in a different house, with other persons present, he informs us that whilst he and some friends were looking at the pictures, “very loud sounds, as of violent blows, came from a large loo-table which stood alone in the centre of the room, *nobody being near it*. We turned to look at the table, and, untouched, it tilted up almost to an angle of forty-five degrees, and continued in that position for nearly a minute; then it fell back. Then it repeated the movement on the other side. None of us were standing within five feet of it at that time. The room was well lighted with gas. There was no cloth upon the table, and all beneath it was distinctly visible. Only four persons were in the room, and no one touched it, nor was near enough to touch it had he tried.” Now, such manifestations as these could not possibly have resulted from trickery, since, in the first place, there was no one present to play the tricks; and if there had been, detection would have been inevitable. These tables, you must bear in mind, were not touched by mortal hands, and therefore there could not have been muscular motion. Contrast this with the miserable exhibition of table-turning as seen on the stages of the conjurers, and you see at once that there is no analogy whatever between them; the latter being usually accomplished by silken cords or fine wire, which escape detection, because no one is allowed on the stage,

and the wire or silk is always of the colour of the background and the stage but dimly lighted.* In the Report of the Dialectical Society, you will find an account of several such results as those I have mentioned taking place, under circumstances which prevented the possibility of any trickery being resorted to. Of course most of us who are believers in Spiritualism have witnessed far more wonderful phenomena; but I quote these because they occurred in the presence of scientific sceptics, whose sole object was to detect and expose trickery, if any there were.

3.—*Professional conjurers are utterly unable to produce anything like the spiritual manifestations, if subjected to the conditions imposed on the medium.* Even the simple phenomena—the simplest of all—of table-rapping can only be produced by conjurers with the aid of elaborate machinery. Take the exhibition of Professor Anderson, as shown a few years ago, for the professed object of exposing Spiritualism. In order to obtain a few simple taps on a table he had an electric battery communicating by wires with the table, and an arrangement of small hammers under the table, by means of which the taps were produced. “This,” said he to me one day, “is the mode in which the humbug of Spiritualism is carried on.” “Oh, that’s it, is it?” I inquired. “That’s it,” he replied. “Don’t you see how nicely it can be managed by electricity? I have exposed the whole thing now.” “Well, but,” said I, “I have witnessed this sort of thing in the houses of friends and in my own house, where there was no battery, no wires, nor hammers worked by electricity, nor any of the arrangements that you speak of. How do you explain that?” Of course at this time I was not a Spiritualist. “Oh,” he replied, “you are as big a fool as the rest of them.” “Just so,” I remarked, “only that does not get you out of the difficulty.” I recollect one sapient writer, who certainly deserves a tomb in Westminster Abbey for having made such a discovery, declaring that the raps were produced by the action of the *peroneus longus*—one of the muscles of the leg—which was made to snap in some peculiar way by moving the foot. Every one who has heard the genuine spirit-raps will know that they cannot be produced by batteries and hammers, that their peculiarity is such that they admit of no imitation, except a very clumsy one, and the same may be said of all the other phenomena.

If Spiritualism be a delusion and mediums impostors, how is it to be accounted for that no conjurer can do anything at all worth comparing with what we call spirit manifestations? That they pretend they do is quite true, but that they do nothing of the kind is equally certain to those who have looked into the subject. This I will now endeavour to show you. In pursuing this inquiry I shall be compelled to go back to the time when the Davenport Brothers were in England. Many of you who are now present, I have no doubt, recollect these extraordinary young men; others,

* On Mr. Maskelyne’s stage the table is raised, I have every reason to believe, by hooks attached to the wrists of the two persons whose hands are placed upon it.

probably, have forgotten what they did; and some of my younger hearers, perhaps, may have not seen them at all. A few weeks ago, one of the country newspapers, speaking of my lectures, remarked that there was not much to be said against my Spiritualism, but that it was too bad of me to lend my name and position to uphold the "Davenport delusion." Now, it is just because I feel sure that there was no delusion at all in the matter that I take the course I do. I mentioned on a previous occasion, in this room, that whilst the Davenport Brothers were in England I wrote a letter* to the *National Reformer*, defending them from the charge of trickery which had been preferred against them in that journal. That letter contained, mainly, a reference to their collision with the conjurers, some of whom challenged them to a trial of their powers, but shirked the contest when they found that the Brothers were really in earnest. Professor Anderson, of course, made a great noise about the matter, declared that the tricks were sheer humbug from beginning to end, and that he could himself perform them with the greatest ease in the world. The consequence of this was that the Brothers wrote the following letter:—

"308, Regent Street, Oct. 6, 1864.

"SIR,—Having read your letter in the *Morning Post* of Saturday last, we beg to accept the challenge made or implied in that communication. We are ready to appear before a party of twelve or more gentlemen specially chosen as capable of fairly investigating the phenomena we present. You shall be present, and shall have every facility given you to examine the empty room and the instruments we use. You shall then explain to the satisfaction of the gentlemen present the legerdemain you have stated we employ, or produce, if you can, in your own person, the same result. Should you succeed by legerdemain in performing or imitating those results, or be able to detect and expose imposture, we shall then be ready to acknowledge that your accusations are justly founded. But if you fail, as we are well assured you will do, we shall require you to retract publicly the accusations you have publicly made against us.—We are, &c.,

BROTHERS DAVENPORT."

This letter, than which nothing could be fairer, was forwarded to Mr. Anderson, and what think you was his reply? Why, that he had not given any challenge at all. A similar one was then sent to M. Tolmaque, who also had been denouncing the Brothers as impostors, and that worthy likewise declined the honour of a contest. A letter was then written to Mr. Dion Boucicault, at whose house a seance had been previously held by the Brothers, challenging the two conjurers to do what the Brothers did under the same circumstances. This letter was signed by Ira E. and William H. Davenport and William W. Fay, and published in the papers at the time. Like the former one, it passed unheeded by both Anderson and Tolmaque. The former shuffled out of it by requesting the Brothers to perform their tricks in the light in his theatre, and

* Now reprinted in No. 6 of Tracts entitled "Seed Corn"—"Dr. Sexton's Conversion to Spiritualism."

the latter declared "he would have nothing to do with works of darkness." Other challenges were given by the Davenports and by Mr. Palmer, the end of them all being that Tolmaque inserted the following in the *Morning Star* :

"I, M. Tolmaque, Prestidigitateur, hereby inform Mr. Palmer that as long as he sails under false colours I will not answer him, or any of his friends, on the subject of the Brothers Davenport.

M. TOLMAQUE."

The gist of this is easily seen, that unless the Brothers would acknowledge themselves conjurers he would have nothing to do with them; that is, unless they would lie, and state themselves to be what they were not, this worthy would wash his hands of the whole affair. One honest professor of the art of legerdemain there was, and he by far superior in his abilities to most of the others viz., Hermann, who candidly acknowledged, after attending a Davenport seance, that he was totally unable to comprehend how the phenomena were produced. A standing challenge, offering £100 to any conjurer who could accomplish the same results as the Davenports under the same conditions, was then inserted in the newspapers by Mr. Palmer, the manager of the Davenport exhibition, but it met with no response from the conjurers. They all knew perfectly well that their feats of legerdemain would be utterly useless beside the marvellous mediumistic power of the Brothers.

Scientific men were invited on all hands to investigate the phenomena, and in doing so to apply the strictest tests that human ingenuity could suggest. Very few of them availed themselves of this, the majority declining to do so for the same reason that they refuse to investigate Spiritualism to-day. Dr. Carpenter—at least he is generally considered to be the author of the article in the *Quarterly Review* on "Spiritualism and its recent Converts," October, 1871—makes the following statement: "We were requested to join a committee for investigating the supposed 'occult' powers possessed by the Davenport Brothers. Being informed that the members of the committee would be required, like ordinary attendants at the Brothers' performance, to join hands in a 'circle,' and that the essential part of the performances themselves took place either within a cupboard into which no one was permitted to look, or in a dark room, we replied that we did not consider these performances to be proper subjects of scientific inquiry, for that no scientific man could consent to forego the use of his eyes and his hands, the most valuable of all his instruments for the investigation of objective truth." Now this is very far removed from the truth. Not only were the Brothers not placed "in a cupboard into which no one was permitted to look," but investigators were actually allowed to take a seat inside the said cupboard whilst the manifestations were going on. As to the joining hands in a circle, this was done to render imposture impossible, instead of to aid it.

Whilst all had hold of each other's hands it was felt that no one could by any possibility assist in the performance of the tricks. The conditions, therefore, which this writer makes out to have an air of suspicion about them, were in reality adopted as a safeguard against deception. How very difficult it is to please some people!

Now, as I have stated on a previous occasion, I took great pains to investigate the Davenport manifestations, and I will briefly describe to you the result of my personal experience in the matter, and place it in juxtaposition with my experience of conjurers who pretend to show all the Davenport phenomena, and to accomplish the same results by means of trickery. What took place in the cabinet is being imitated at the present time by Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke, and the dark seance is being regularly burlesqued—I can hardly call it imitated—by Herr Dobler.

(a) *The Cabinet.*—The first time that I saw the Davenport Brothers, I went upon the stage as one of the committee of investigation, and on this and other occasions that I visited them I had ample opportunity of noticing what usually occurred in their presence. We—that is, I and some one else selected from the audience—made their hands and feet perfectly secure by means of ropes. We fastened them to the seats inside the cabinet in such a way that we considered it utterly impossible that they could move. I was especially careful to place the ends of the ropes upon the floor, in a particular manner, so that afterwards I could tell whether the ropes had been untied or in any other way tampered with. Before the door of the cabinet could be closed, a horn was thrown out with some violence; and, having been replaced—we, in the meantime, satisfying ourselves that the Brothers remained tied—the doors were shut. In an instant afterwards five or six musical instruments were played upon, bells were rung first and thrown out at the aperture afterwards, arms of various kinds and sizes were thrust out at the small aperture in the front, and various other phenomena of a similar extraordinary character took place. In the midst of the noise produced by musical instruments and bells, the doors of the cabinet were suddenly flung open, and there sat the Brothers tied as at first. I went immediately to examine the loose ends of the rope, which I found lying on the floor exactly as I had left them, evidently never having been moved, which they must have been had the persons bound in any way attempted to set themselves free. After this the hands of the mediums were filled with flour, so as to render it impossible that they could be opened without detection; still the instruments were played, and arms were thrust out at the aperture, as before. I now went into the cabinet with them, and what occurred then I wish you to pay particular attention to, so that you may see how utterly unlike it was to anything that is done by Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke, in whose cabinet I have also been during a performance. The two cabinets are not at all alike, to begin with; that of the Davenports was made of plain wood, panelled like a door, and simply

painted outside and in; whilst that of Maskelyne and Cooke is a huge clumsy box, somewhat resembling a four-post bedstead blocked up at the sides, and with doors at the foot. At the back there is a large shelf big enough for a man to sleep on, and the whole of the inside is lined with felt, similar to that of which druggets are made, the object of which I shall presently explain. The Davenport cabinet was about six feet high, with room in it for three persons to be seated comfortably side by side, and its depth just allowed space for the knees of persons so sitting with their faces to the door. In the centre of the door was an opening of a diamond shape, the bottom of which was about five feet, or a little more, from the floor of the cabinet, this being the aperture out of which the instruments were thrown and the arms thrust. Now, bear in mind that it was utterly impossible—and this I pointed out to Mr. Redmond, who soon after this time began a performance with a similar cabinet, and, like Maskelyne and Cooke of to-day, professed to do all that the Davenports had done—for any person inside the cabinet to thrust his arms out of the opening unless he stood upon his feet to do so. This you can easily prove for yourselves by chalking the size of the doors and the height of the aperture on a wall, and then placing yourselves in front of it. Well, the two Brothers seated themselves in the cabinet, one at each end, facing each other, and therefore as far as possible removed from the opening in the door. We tied them to their seats. Bear this in mind—we tied them, they did not tie themselves. This is a fact of very great importance, as you will see presently. I then sat down between them; that is, directly opposite to the opening in the door, which, however, was so high up that I could not reach it, although immediately in front of it, without rising from my seat. My hands were now placed upon the shoulders of the Brothers, and fastened there with cords; mark this, too, you will see its significance in a few minutes. My right hand was most effectively tied by some person from the audience, who suspected that I might be a confederate and I think I shall not be exaggerating if I say that he put at least twenty knots in the cord that was wound round my wrist, and took some four or five minutes in making it secure. Before the doors were actually shut, and whilst therefore the full light of the slightly lowered gas was shining on my face, a hand gave a powerful tug at my whiskers. The doors having been closed, the musical instruments—six in number—were immediately picked up from the floor, where they had been lying previously, and commenced playing tunes in the upper part of the cabinet, about my head. My face was gently patted with hands of some kind or other; my hair was pulled about, my arms and shoulders touched, and in other ways I was made sensible that there was intense activity on the part of some person or thing inside that enchanted cabinet. Did the Brothers move? Most certainly they did not; for, my hands being on their shoulders, I could in an instant have detected the slightest motion of the hand or arm. During the

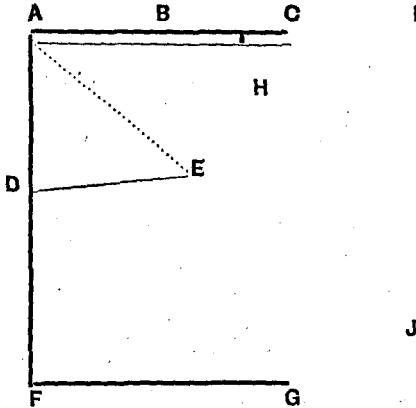
time that this was going on, I, feeling my wrist in pain, said to Wm. Davenport: "Cut this business short, as the cord is hurting my wrist." He replied, "Ask to have it untied." "Ask whom?" I said, inquiringly. "The spirits," he answered. "Will you untie the cord that's on my wrist?" I inquired. The answer was three gentle taps at the back of the cabinet, and immediately afterwards the rope was unwound from my wrist in less time than it has taken me to describe it; every knot was untied, and the cord left hanging loosely on my arm, where it remained until I came out. Whilst I was inside, several arms were thrust out at the opening and distinctly seen by persons outside. Now, it is certain that these were not the arms of the Brothers, because they could not have reached the opening without rising from their seats, and had they done this I should have detected it in an instant; moreover, if their hands had been free, they could not have played six instruments at once, and still have had hands left with which to touch my face and arms and pull my hair. Some of my friends endeavour to persuade me that the Davenports did move, but that being in the dark I did not notice it. Darkness, however, although highly unfavourable to seeing, is not at all so to feeling, and I had my hands on their shoulders, where the slightest muscular movement would have been detected.

Let us now see what sort of an imitation is given of all this by Maskelyne and Cooke. The *Hornet* of the Derby week, in an amusing article, gave the names of a number of persons who are before the public as competing in the race for popularity, and I, for what reason I know not, was matched against Mr. Maskelyne, and of course beaten. The writer says: "Passing the furzes at Tottenham Court Road corner, Mr. Bancroft's Prince of Wales, wonderfully guided by Wilton, achieved a great success. Here Mr. Maskelyne's Manipulation overhauled Dr. Sexton's Medium, getting the pace of his field for a quarter of a mile, when the 'spirit' vanished in sore distress, the field following at half a boat's length, and but narrowly escaping a foul with the Cambridge boat." Well, we shall see presently whether Mr. Maskelyne's "Manipulation" is good for anything against either my "Medium" or anyone's else. A few weeks since, at the Crystal Palace, I and some one else from the audience went upon the stage and tied the arms of Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke. They then went into the cabinet. I requested to be allowed to tie them to the seats, but that was objected to. The doors were closed, and in an instant two small bells not much larger than the end of your thumb were thrown out at the opening. The door was opened, and the conjurers remained tied as before. As I saw in an instant that this had been done with the teeth, I requested the trick to be repeated, which, being agreed to, I placed the bells quite at the back of the cabinet, one in each corner. Now, it is not easy to get one's mouth into a corner and use the teeth to seize hold of a small article placed there, so I expected a good deal of delay. And so it turned out; at least three minutes

elapsed before the first bell was thrown out; the other never came at all, notwithstanding the fact that the gentlemen performing the trick were both free to move about, only having their hands tied. I now went into the cabinet with them—at least, with one of them. I requested to be allowed to tie him; he refused, however, and tied himself. The reason for this is very obvious. I will show you the kind of knot that is used by these gentlemen, and you will see how easy it is to get the hands out although the rope looks most secure. You may even seal the end, as the doing so will not present the slightest difficulty in the way of getting the hands out and placing them back again. [Mr. Ogan, a young man who had accompanied the Doctor, here stepped upon the platform and fastened himself in the rope on the principle employed by Maskelyne and others; then several of the audience, including Mr. Maskelyne himself, came and examined the knots.] You see that that knot appears most secure; you may tie the ends with silk, or seal them, if you desire to do so. Now, see with what rapidity he can release his hands and afterwards place them back again in the rope. Here is the key to all the next part of Mr. Maskelyne's entertainment. I went into the cabinet and was seated opposite to the one performer, who was to remain with me. My eyes were bandaged in consequence of the cabinet having lamps inside, the purpose of which lamps I will explain presently. My hands were placed upon the knees of my companion. I asked to be allowed to have them upon his shoulders, but this was objected to, or at all events my request was not complied with. The door was closed, and all the phenomena that occurred was the placing on my head of a tambourine, and the throwing out of the window the two small bells before referred to, all of which could of course be most easily done when the hands had been freed from the rope—the work of a few seconds, as I have shown you. As my hands were on his knees, it was impossible for me to detect the movement of the arms. And this is said to be doing all that was done in the Davenport cabinet. Why, the two bear about as much resemblance to each other as the productions of the poet Close to the sublime and glorious dramas of the immortal bard of Avon. When the hands are thrust out of the Maskelyne cabinet—a feat which is never performed, as in the case of the Davenports, with a stranger inside—it is accomplished by taking the hands out of the ropes in the way before named.

The disappearance of certain persons from the cabinet is accomplished by a very simple optical contrivance, based upon the same principle as the Proteus that was brought out at the Polytechnic some time since. A sheet of looking-glass is placed in the roof of the cabinet, which falls down and hides the before-named shelf, and as the whole of the inside of the cabinet is lined with painted felt, when the glass is down the roof is reflected, and looks in the distance exactly like the back over the shelf. The man who has disappeared lies behind the glass on the shelf. The felt inside has dark lines running in a diagonal direction, into two of

which the edges of the glass fall when the mirror is down, which, with the arrangement of the lamps, prevent the edges from being observed by the spectators. This glass can be seen by any of the audience who will take the trouble to look for it, especially by those who are in the gallery, and who from their elevated position can look down upon the shelf. The following rough diagram will illustrate this point:—



Suppose this to be a section of the cabinet. A D F is the back, A B C the top, F G the bottom, and D E the shelf. The glass is concealed in the roof of the cabinet, probably backed with iron, with a layer of felt between the iron and the glass, and covered with felt outside so as to resemble the rest of the cabinet. If you put your hand to the top, you will at once feel that there is an arrangement of this kind in the roof. The hinges of the glass are at A, and when it is down it lies in the position of the dotted line A E. The shelf is raised in the front, so that whilst you are seated at J you are unable to see on to its upper surface, and therefore the illusion is exceedingly complete. If the spectator, however, be placed at I, which of course he would be in the gallery, he can then look down upon the shelf, and if sufficiently near, or with a good opera-glass, will see that there is really no shelf at all visible, but only what appears to be the back part of the cabinet above the shelf is seen, but what is really a reflection of the top. There are lamps placed at H, and these form a very important feature in the business. The light from these is thrown up to the top of the cabinet, and reflected in the glass. Any person watching with sufficient care will see at once the striking contrast between the brightness of the glass when it is down and the dull appearance of the felt when the mirror is up. A little model of this wonderful cabinet may be easily made by any of you at

home, and if you do this you will see in an instant how the whole thing is arranged. When Mr. Maskelyne talks about no one having ever found out the principle upon which this illusion is accomplished, he displays an amount of effrontery that is really amusing. The "years of labour" that he has bestowed upon it presents an equally laughable feature, since this optical illusion is no more his discovery than is gravitation. It is, in fact, as old as looking-glasses, and has been applied in the same way that Mr. Maskelyne now uses it thousands of times before he was born, as any of you may convince yourselves by reading any good book on optics. At all events, it is exactly the same thing as the Proteus of Professor Pepper, excepting that the glass is differently arranged. The performance of Maskelyne and Cooke on the first occasion that I saw it was something like the following: A sailor comes on the stage with a bundle in his hand, in which there are probably two gorilla masks and two pairs of fur gloves. The sailor is put inside the cabinet, and his hands and feet placed into stocks, an old watchman or one of the audience fastening them with a padlock. The door of the cabinet is closed, and the sailor gets out of the stocks and up behind the looking-glass. The door is now opened, the empty stocks only remaining to be seen; these are taken out, and the door closed again. The sailor now comes from behind the glass, takes off his sailor's costume, under which he has a gorilla skin, puts on one of the gorilla masks and fur gloves. The door is opened, and the gorilla runs out. A butcher then comes upon the stage, catches the gorilla, and puts him into a canvas suit (made all in one piece), so as to quite cover him excepting his head and hands. The butcher and gorilla go inside the cabinet, and the door is closed. The butcher now takes from under his smock another canvas suit (a *fac-simile* of the one the gorilla has on), and puts it on, likewise the other mask and gloves the sailor had in his bundle, and places his butcher's hat and steel on the floor; the other, or gorilla proper, gets behind the glass. The door is opened, and of course there sits the gorilla, having eaten the butcher with the exception of his hat and steel. The gorilla comes out of the cabinet, and the watchman chases him off the stage. The door of the cabinet is again shut, the other gorilla gets out from behind the glass, the watchman looks about but cannot find the gorilla, opens the door and finds him again in the cabinet. The butcher who got out of the cabinet disguised as a gorilla now runs in from the other end of the hall among the audience, without his hat and steel. The gorilla is now put into a box, which is placed in the cabinet and the door shut; he gets out of the box and goes behind the glass. The door is opened, and the cabinet and box found empty. Door again closed, the gorilla again puts on sailor's clothes, takes off mask and gloves, opens the door, and walks out.

This is occasionally slightly varied, but the principle upon which it is done is always the same. In one variation of it the

gorilla is not chased off the stage, but kept in sight of the audience. In that case there is a duplicate butcher, who, on the real butcher leaving the stage only for an instant, comes from behind the wings and enters the cabinet, neither speaking nor showing his face to the audience. This, of course, answers equally well with chasing the gorilla off the stage.

Now, what is there here that is not most easily performed? The getting out of the stocks is accomplished by an arrangement which when worked opens the hinges, leaving the lock intact, and the escape from the corded box is done by an opening at one end. In the same way, at another part of the performance, Mr. Maskelyne gets into the box with a canvas covering on it, and cords fastened round it. This is not difficult. The box is first closed and locked, the end being left open. The canvas covering is then put on, and the box corded. At the end that is open the canvas is left hanging loosely down. The performer now gets in at this end between the cords, pulls the canvas as far into its place as he can, and then closes the end. The box is always placed in the cabinet on one end, that one being uppermost where the canvas is loose. When any of you go to witness this performance, insist upon the box being placed upon the other end, and you will see how delighted the performers will be with the idea. Now I have no word to say against this performance as an exhibition of optical illusions and legerdemain: it is exceedingly clever—the cleverest, perhaps, that has been brought before the public.* But what I have to complain of is the introduction of the term "Spiritualism" into the matter. Let Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke leave Spiritualism alone, and we will not interfere with them. If, however, they will persist in declaring that they do all that mediums do, and that their exhibition is intended to expose Spiritualism, I shall feel it my duty to instruct the public how all their tricks are done, and, if needs be, to do them. I say most unhesitatingly that if I had the apparatus I could perform them all myself. I shall require a larger box, that is all, as I am stouter than Mr. Maskelyne, and have not had the practice that he has of being rolled up like a hedgehog. At all events, I will get the necessary apparatus, and illustrate what I have said.

(b) *The Dark Seance*.—An imitation, so-called, of the dark seance of the Davenportes constitutes the performance of Herr Dobler. This man, with the most audacious effrontery, declares that he can do all that was done by the Davenportes, whereas he in truth does nothing at all except release his wrists from a rope which he has tied himself, move about a few instruments illumined with phosphorus, and put his hands through a lady's muff. The puffing paragraphs that he has got into the papers are perfectly surprising. "If," says one, "there should be any persons left with a lingering

* By this I simply mean that the mechanical contrivance is very complete; not that there is anything in the performance which could not be done by any person after an hour's instruction.

belief in the Davenports, he should see Herr Dobler, who will speedily dispel the illusion." I came across the following glowing description of Herr Dobler's dark seance:—

“What a pity Herr Dobler did not come before the public some seven years ago, when the famous Davenport Brothers were in the height of their notoriety: The feats they performed he now performs; but whereas in their case the credulous were asked to believe that the ‘manifestations’ were the result of some supernatural agency, in his case they are honestly attributed to mere manual dexterity, or sleight-of-hand. On Monday afternoon, in the small concert-room at Exeter Hall, Herr Dobler, who otherwise styles himself the Wizard of the World, made his first appearance before a metropolitan audience—a small but critical audience specially invited to test his powers. Two gentlemen having been selected to act as a committee, the seance commenced. All light, natural and artificial, having been excluded, Herr Dobler kept his audience for two minutes in profound darkness. Upon the gas being re-lighted, he was discovered securely bound to a chair with a rope—bound at the knees, bound at the ankles, and with his hands tied tightly behind him. The committee having reported that the fastenings were of a very decided character, darkness was again resorted to. A bell and a tambourine, which until then had been quietly lying on a table upon the platform, at once began to give forth most discordant sounds, and finally took rambling excursions into mid-air, phosphorus having been placed upon them to indicate their course to the audience. The gas was then lighted, and Herr Dobler was seen to be firmly bound hand and foot as before. He next borrowed a light overcoat from one of the audience, and in the darkness slipped it on with marvellous rapidity, still remaining as tightly corded as a travelling trunk on its way to India. With the same rapidity the coat was taken off and returned to its owner, Herr Dobler being to all appearance as hopelessly incapable of this effort as an infant in arms. Then a lady's muff was violently taken from one of the committee, and instantly found, light being admitted, to be on Herr Dobler's arm. With the same rapidity it was transferred to the other member of the committee, who, on receiving it, received also the pressure of a hand. Nor was this all. One of the committee sat opposite Herr Dobler, with his hands on Herr Dobler's knees, and their feet touching. While in this position his whiskers were pulled and the tambourine was placed upon his head, the Wizard, as the gentleman afterwards explained, appearing all this time to be motionless. Finally the Wizard released himself from his bonds during a few minutes of darkness, some flour with which he had previously filled his hands remaining undisturbed in the process. These feats, it should be added, were performed under circumstances which utterly excluded the idea of confederacy.”

Alas for the credulity of newspaper editors! The Davenport Brothers in their dark seance were tied by persons from the audience; their feet were placed upon sheets of writing-paper, and pencil lines drawn around their boots; halfpence were laid upon their toes, and in many other ways they were secured against moving. In their case the instruments were thrown on to the

floor outside the circle, and picked up again, the mediums remaining tied in their chairs. Herr Dobler ties himself in a manner that I will show you, and when the light is out he releases his hands, putting them back again before the gas is lighted. [Mr. Ogan here tied himself in the style adopted by Herr Dobler, and showed that he could untie himself in a few seconds, and tie himself up again in the same way in an equally short space of time.]

Now you see how easily all the tricks of Dobler can be performed. There is not a person in this audience who could not do the whole of them after an hour's practice, once having learnt how the rope is fixed. As soon as the light is out the conjurer takes his hands out of the ropes, as you saw Mr. Ogan do just now, and can then, of course, either move the instruments, pull the whiskers of the gentleman seated opposite to him, put his arm into a coat or his hands through a lady's muff, or do any other trick depending upon digital movements. The flour in the hands is no test at all when he has tied the ropes himself, as you see, because he can remove the ropes, keeping his hands closed the while. When any of you go to witness Dobler's performance, insist on tying him yourself; and if you do that pretty securely, you will spoil his entertainment.

There is one point that I may just name here, and it will apply to real seances as well as to sham ones, that is the impossibility of judging accurately as to the distance of a luminous object in the dark. I hear persons frequently remarking in a dark seance, "Oh! look, there's a light quite at the far corner of the room," or at the ceiling, or over the mantelshelf, or in some other particular spot specified. Now, these statements result from ignorance of the laws that regulate the sense of sight, or rather from a misconception of the power of the eye in vision. The eye can only judge as to how far off objects are by comparing them with others whose distance is tolerably well known. The position of a luminous point in the dark, therefore, cannot be defined. When Herr Dobler moves about the instruments illumined with phosphorus, they are simply held out as far as his hands can reach, no farther. In the case of the Davenports, as I told you before, the instruments were thrown out of the circle on to the floor behind the spectators, and picked up again, but you will see nothing like this, of course, at the entertainments of conjurers.

Next we have an imitation given of the floating in the air. Let us see what that is worth. This, as you know, happened to Mr. Home in a private room where there could be no machinery employed, and was witnessed by Lord Lindsay, Mr. S. C. Hall, and some of the most trustworthy men living. The imitation of this marvellous phenomenon consists of a girl raised on a pedestal hidden behind a looking-glass, or rendered invisible by its being painted of the same colour as the background, and the stage being partially darkened; or a woman lifted up by a lever at the back of the stage. Whenever you see this kind of thing done, ask to be allowed to go on to the stage to examine it, in the same way that

you could do with a spirit-medium in a private room. I need hardly say that this will be refused. Contrast the jerks consequent on the working of the apparatus to be seen in the raising of Mrs. Maskelyne with the graceful floating in the air of Mr. Home, and you will see at once that they are as unlike each other as is the ascent of an eagle to an acrobat climbing up a rope.

Then we have what is called second sight. Now that such a power as this does exist apart from Spiritualism is quite certain, since we see it displayed in somnambulism, trance, and even sometimes in normal dreaming. We see it in a very perfect form in some cases of spiritual manifestations, as most of you can probably testify. This, too, we have imitated, as it is being done at present by Dr. Lynn at the Egyptian Hall. The tricks performed by this gentleman are of a most childish character, and consist, as I will show you, simply in ringing the changes upon a few pieces of paper, and writing a name upon his arm in red ink. Dr. Lynn is, judging by his advertisement, not only a medium, but half a dozen mediums rolled into one. He modestly describes himself as follows:—
 “Dr. Lynn, the Hebrew medium. Dr. Lynn, the Greek medium. Dr. Lynn, the Italian medium. Dr. Lynn, the French medium. Dr. Lynn, the German medium. Dr. Lynn, the Spanish medium. Dr. Lynn, the Persian medium. Dr. Lynn, the Japanese medium. Dr. Lynn, the Chinese medium. Dr. Lynn, the great English and American thaumaturgist and polyglot medium. Dr. Lynn, the embodiment of all the strange manifestations and phenomena of the so-called spirit-media. Science, natural and unnatural. Extraordinary illusions, of the most amusing and interesting nature. The grand secrets of the ancient Egyptian magicians and the startling wonders of the Modern Spiritualists fully explained upon philosophical principles.” Ye gods! what a man this should be to come up to his own description of himself!

“But trust me, child, I’m much inclined to fear
 Some counterfeit in this your Jupiter.”

Now Dr. Lynn’s tricks as such are really so simple that they are hardly worth explaining. Their success depends entirely upon his great power of sleight of hand. Most of his feats of *legerdemain* have been done hundreds of times by the merest amateurs in mechanics’ institutions and schoolrooms, and are to be found described in every book on conjuring. It is not, however, with these that I have to do, but with his pretended imitations of spiritual phenomena. These I will first show you, and then explain how they are done. Dr. Lynn is here; let him say whether I do not reproduce every one of the tricks that he does having any pretended relation to Spiritualism. [Mr. Ogan here came upon the platform and went through every one of Dr. Lynn’s tricks having any bearing on the subject of Spiritualism, ending with the celebrated blood-writing on the arm. This was an exact *fac-simile* of Dr. Lynn’s performance on the Friday night previously, when Dr. Sexton and Mr. Ogan went to see him.] The first trick done here,

you see, is this. A number of pieces of paper are taken and held up before you to show that they are blank. One of these is given to a gentleman to fold up and put in his pocket. Whilst the person who has it is in the act of folding it, the conjurer informs him that he is not doing it properly, and thereupon takes it from him for the ostensible purpose of showing him how to do it better. At this point he changes the paper, taking away the blank piece, and substituting one for it on which are written the figures 1495. This last piece of paper is now given to the person in question already folded, and he is told to place it in his pocket without opening it, and keep it very close by pressing his hand upon it outside his waistcoat. A second piece of paper is handed round amongst the audience, and several persons are asked to write three figures each upon it. This done, the paper is taken by the conjurer to the platform, and in the act of passing is changed for another on which the same number of figures are written, the total of which will amount to 1495. This is given to a gentleman on the platform, who has been previously chosen from the audience, and he is requested to add up the figures. He does so, and calls out 1495, whereupon the gentleman who has what he thinks is a blank piece of paper in his pocket is requested to take it out, and on doing so discovers the same number, 1495. Wonderful! isn't it? When any of you see this again, just peep into the so-called blank paper after you have received it back from the conjurer, or, what is still better, seize the chance of writing the last three figures on the other paper, and add the whole of them up before it leaves your possession, and you'll soon see that the number won't be at all the same as that which will be afterwards called out from the platform. Or make a mark on the paper so that you can recognise it again, and then after the figures have been added up and the total called out, demand to see the paper in order to judge whether it is the same. Whilst this trick is going on, another blank paper is handed to someone else in the audience, and changed in the same way as the other in process of folding for one having 14 marked upon it. The paper on which is written the number 1495 is now given to someone else in the audience, and he is requested to erase either the first two or the last two figures. Should he erase the last two, it leaves 14; should he erase the first two, it leaves 95, which he is immediately requested to add together, this also making 14, which number corresponds with the figures on the piece of paper in the pocket of the gentleman before referred to.

The next trick is a little more complicated, but is still very simple. A number of persons in the audience are requested to write on small pieces of paper handed out for the purpose the names of any friends, relatives, or other persons who may be deceased. This being done, the papers are collected and placed in a hat on the stage, in charge of some one of the audience. These names are read by the conjurer by the following simple means: He has at first in his hand a paper containing a name

that has not been written by any one of the audience. The name on this paper on the evening that I was there was Medusa, just as Mr. Ogan had it to-night; any name, however, will do. Now the Professor takes one of the names out of the hat, or requests the person in charge of the hat to do so and hand it to him, which comes to the same thing, and professes to hand it to someone in the audience. The paper that he really hands out is, however, the one with Medusa on it, the other he retains in his hand. Whilst he is going through the farce of reading Medusa he walks to the back of the stage, professedly to consult the spirits, taps at the wall, and does other like little bits of by-play, the real object of which is to get a chance to open and read the paper that he has in his hand. This done, he takes another out of the hat, gives the first one taken out, and which has now been read, to some other person in the audience, and reads the second one in the same way. He starts, you see, with a paper in advance, and he always keeps in that position, actually reading the one in his hand whilst professing to decipher the one given out. Of course no one denies that Dr. Lynn has a marvellous power of sleight of hand, and it is on this that his success depends.

The only other trick of this character that is performed is done upon the same principle, the mysterious blood-writing being a part of it. A number of names are written on separate pieces of paper as before. These are rolled up in small pellets, and placed on the top of a hat. A name has previously been written on the conjurer's arm in claret-coloured ink, or some similar fluid, and a paper pellet rolled up, and held by the conjurer, upon which is a name corresponding to the one on the arm. Some person from the audience now selects one of the pellets, and the rest are thrown away. It is very unimportant which one he selects, as no one of them is the one that will be opened. This he is told to press upon the Professor's arm outside his coat. In doing this the conjurer takes the paper, and changes it for the one that he has in his hand already prepared for the purpose, and the name on which corresponds with the name written on the arm. All this, you see, is easily accomplished, as is proved by the fact that we have done it here to-night. You see that every trick here depends upon substituting one piece of paper for another so rapidly that you don't discover the change. And this miserable buffoonery is to be compared with spiritual manifestations. *O imitatores! servum pecus!* Dr. Lynn, when I saw him, said that he should consider himself complimented if anyone found out his tricks, because it would show that they had paid attention to what he was doing. I hope, therefore, he will be pleased with the fact that I discovered them all on seeing them only once, and have reproduced them here to-night in his presence.

This so-called blood-writing is professedly an imitation of what occurred in connection with the mediumship of Mr. Foster. We will see what resemblance there is between them. In the report of the Dialectical Society Mr. Edward Laman Blanchard gives

his experience of Mr. Foster's mediumship relative to this very matter. Now I need hardly say that Mr. Laman Blanchard is a gentleman well known and highly respected. He is an eminent literary man, and a gentleman whose veracity is unquestioned. The following is his statement. I quote it because I have never seen Mr. Foster myself:—

“On January 11th, 1862, the deponent, in company with Mr. Cornelius Pearson, the artist, and Mr. Thomas Spencer, the well-known analytical chemist, visited a ‘medium’ named Foster, at 14, Bryanstone Street. Names previously written on slips of paper and rolled up into pellets were brought by each person, and these names were quickly and correctly given by ‘raps,’ without the possibility of the ‘medium’ acquiring a knowledge of the contents of the paper slips beforehand. On the arm of the ‘medium’ appeared in red letters ‘William Blanchard,’ the name of the deponent’s father, and immediately afterwards appeared on the palm of the medium’s hand the numbers ‘27,’ indicating, in answer to a question put, the exact number of years which had elapsed since the said William Blanchard had ceased to exist on earth. All this was done very rapidly, the deponent and his friends being utterly unknown to the ‘medium,’ and the letters and numbers disappearing in the sight of those present, without the arm of the medium being withdrawn.”

Now let Dr. Lynn do something like this, and having done so we will forgive him for burlesquing spiritual manifestations. Let’s see his arm bare before the letters appear, and when the name comes let it be that of a deceased friend or relation of someone present of whom he has never heard, and whose name has been written on a piece of paper that he has neither seen nor had access to, so as to be enabled to tamper with it. Pshaw! the conjuring tricks are not worth mentioning on the same day with the most trifling of the spiritual manifestations. In taking leave of this part of the subject, I say to Dr. Lynn, as I did to Maskeleyne and Cooke, leave Spiritualism alone, and you can go on with your conjuring unmolested by us; but if you will attempt to bring ridicule and discredit upon that which we prize so dearly, don’t be surprised if, through our instruction, you find your audiences as wise as yourself in conjuring tricks.

II.—ORDINARY BELIEVERS IN SPIRITUALISM ARE NOT VICTIMS OF IMPOSTURE.

Nothing can be more improbable than the supposition that all the believers in Spiritualism are imposed upon by mediums who perform similar tricks to those I have been describing. We know tolerably well what can be done by conjurers, and what can’t; and we are confident that the phenomena that we have witnessed hundreds of times cannot be explained or accounted for by any feats of legerdemain, by whomsoever practised. I have never yet seen a conjuring trick that I could not understand, and I have

witnessed the performances of all the greatest professors of the art. How, then, is it that I can't see through the tricks of mediums, if tricks there be? As I have remarked before, these persons are hardly likely to be better skilled in feats of sleight-of-hand, than such men as Frikel or Hermann, or possessed of more perfect apparatus than Robin or Anderson, and yet they do without detection more than all the conjurers put together; and what they do is done under circumstances to which no professor of legerdemain or illusion will for one moment submit. There is but one explanation of this fact, which is, that conjuring has nothing in the world to do with the matter.

Spiritualists may now be reckoned, not by scores, or hundreds, or thousands, but by millions; and to suppose that all these people have been made the victims of an imposture practised by mediums, is a thousand times more absurd an hypothesis than that which holds the phenomena to be what they profess. In America—and the people of that country are by no means behind ourselves in being able to detect imposture—the movement bids fair soon to become universal. Robert Chambers, certainly no mean authority, says, after personal experience of the Americans:—

“I have studied the question of Spiritualism wherever I have gone, and the result is most satisfactory. There, the great fight is over, and you hear little comparatively said of it, but you find it in all the churches. It has given *new evidence*, new life, and a new leaven to Christianity there.”

On the continent of Europe the movement spreads with a rapidity that is most gratifying to those who believe in it and alarming to its opponents; and in England every week adds names to the grand and glorious cause of spirit-communion.

Then look at the character of the men who have embraced Spiritualism, and judge whether they are people likely to be deceived and misled by rank impostors. Dr. Hare, in America, had been a dogmatic sceptic for many years, and was certainly one of the most matter-of-fact men of his time, to say nothing of the circumstance that he was a profound man of science, and he embraced Spiritualism, as did also Judge Edmonds, Dr. Bush, Senator Tallmadge, Dr. Dexter, and one better known in England than all of them—Lloyd Garrison—a man whose labours in the anti-slavery cause have won for him lasting renown. The benevolent old Robert Owen saw before his death how glorious was the truth of spirit-communion, and towards the end of his life proclaimed the glad tidings on every occasion when an opportunity presented itself. His son, Robert Dale Owen—eminent as a man of science and a statesman—soon followed his worthy father from the darkness of scepticism into the bright light of spiritual truth. The late Robert Stephenson was a Spiritualist, so was Professor de Morgan, one of the most eminent mathematicians of his day—a man whose whole life therefore had been devoted to that branch of knowledge which allows nothing to be taken for granted, but demands demonstration

at every step. Mr. Robert Bell, and, it is generally believed, Mr. Thackeray accepted the truth of spirit-communion. Mr. Wallace, perhaps the foremost naturalist of the day, Darwin alone excepted; Mr. Varley, one of the most eminent electricians of the age; Wm. Howitt, S. C. Hall, Dr. Gully, Dr. Garth Wilkinson, Drs. Elliotson and Ashburner—both at one time most materialistic in their views—Robert Chambers, and a score of others, all of whom embraced Spiritualism, were hardly persons likely to be imposed upon by conjuring tricks performed under the guise of mediumship. The supposition that all these eminent men have been deceived by tricks, such as I have been showing you here to-night as performed by conjurers, is simply preposterous, and cannot be entertained for a single moment.

I have been asked here to reply to a question as to whether any tricks are ever played by mediums, to which I reply, Yes, I fear there are; but that in no way affects the truth of Spiritualism. I hope Spiritualists will guard against impostors as well in our ranks as out. Those amongst us are far the most dangerous. I say for myself, that if I ever discover anyone playing tricks in a seance, I will expose him unmercifully, be the consequences what they may. Our movement is based upon God's truth, and it can stand without fraud or deception; and if it could not, then it might fall, and the sooner the better.

Spiritualism is calculated to effect a glorious change in society. There is scientific contention on every hand; men of science are squabbling about the most unimportant trifles in connection with Nature's phenomena, and seeming to agree in nothing but in falling down to worship a deity, whose name is "Law." "There is no God but Force, and Tyndall is his Prophet." Political and social anarchy prevails around us, and frightful turmoils are in daily danger of arising from the rotten state of society that prevails. Religion has on the one hand allied herself with Popish tyranny and darkness, that is antagonistic to liberty, and cannot bear the light of day; and on the other has merged off into a materialism that is atheistic all but in name. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in birth-pangs (*συνώδινε*) even until now. In all cases we see but through a glass darkly. Spiritualism has done something, and will yet do more, towards bringing on the time that poets and prophets have looked forward to—

"When from the lips of Truth one mighty breath
Shall, like a whirlwind, scatter in its breeze
The whole dark pile of human mockeries,
Then shall the reign of mind commence on earth;
And starting forth, as from a second birth,
Man, in the sunshine of the world's new spring,
Shall walk transparent, like some holy thing."