

II.

MR. DAVEY'S IMITATIONS BY CONJURING OF PHENOMENA
SOMETIMES ATTRIBUTED TO SPIRIT AGENCY.

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In the Introduction which I wrote (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 381-404) for the late Mr. Davey's "Experimental Investigation," conducted for the purpose of ascertaining "the possibilities of mal-observation and lapse of memory from a practical point of view," I pointed out that "to explain the tricks would in itself be of little advantage to the investigator of the 'physical phenomena' of mediums"; that other methods than those employed by Mr. Davey may be (and unquestionably are) practised; and in any case that explanations of the methods in use would hardly be likely to convince persons who have testified from personal experience to the genuineness of the "psychography" of well-known "slate-writing" mediums that such methods were used for the production of the phenomena which they witnessed. "They will scarcely," I said, "be likely to *remember* the occurrence of events which they perhaps never observed at all, or observed only partially and erroneously; which, whether correctly or incorrectly observed, they have afterwards continually misdescribed or completely forgotten; and which, in many cases, would be distinctly excluded by the acceptance of their testimony as it stands." The notes appended to the detailed reports quoted in the article referred to would, we thought, sufficiently show to the reader the several kinds of mistakes made by intelligent witnesses in recording their impressions of performances like Mr. Davey's, and would enable the student—not necessarily to discover in every case the exact *modus operandi* of the tricks, for this appeared to us to be of trivial importance, but—to appreciate the unreliability of human testimony under circumstances common to such performances. It was, indeed, my own personal opinion that on the whole it was advisable that the methods of Mr. Davey should be described in detail, as far as possible, though in many cases it would be difficult to explain verbally exactly what occurred so that the reader could enter fully into the situation. Mr. Davey, however, was strongly opposed to the revelation, and for various reasons. His chief objections, I believe, were that other methods than the ones which he employed had probably been used by pseudo-mediums, that new methods would doubtless be invented, that the description of his

methods would interfere greatly with his projected plan of giving numerous additional sittings and obtaining further reports (in connection with which he proposed to explain his methods fully), and that many of his sitters would be annoyed at finding precisely how they had been deceived. Mr. Davey's death has removed the only argument—I may now freely say—which had special cogency in my own case, viz., his purpose to give another series of sittings, all of which should be attended by a person thoroughly familiar with his methods, and cognisant beforehand (so far as such cognisance was possible) of the precise things which he intended to do; this person was to write an account both of what was intended and what he witnessed; Mr. Davey was to supplement this account by his own statements; and these accounts were to be compared with the reports of the sitter in each case. The object, of course, in this projected later series was to emphasise still more forcibly the unreliability of the testimony so widely accepted, among Spiritualists, as adequate to establish the genuineness of the manifestations in question.

It appears, however, that the accounts of Mr. Davey's sittings published in Vol. IV. of our *Proceedings* are in themselves more than enough to demonstrate the affirmed unreliability of such testimony, and to justify the position originally put forward by Mrs. Sidgwick that the possibilities of mal-observation and lapse of memory must be absolutely excluded before the testimony to "slate-writing" and similar performances can be taken into further serious consideration. This is clearly shown by the communication which formed the immediate cause of this article, viz., the letter of Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace printed in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research for March, 1891, in which he stated that Mr. Davey's performances "are claimed to be *all* trick, and unless *all* can be so explained many of us will be confirmed in our belief that Mr. Davey was really a medium as well as a conjurer." At the close of my Introduction to the reports of Mr. Davey's sittings, I asked the "experienced Spiritualist" to "point out exactly where the difference lies between 'Mr. Davey's performances' and mediumistic phenomena." Mr. Wallace has accepted this challenge in the name of "many of us";—there is no more illustrious name than his upon the roll of adherents to a belief in Spiritualism; and his reply is substantially a confession that he cannot distinguish between Mr. Davey's performances and ordinary "mediumistic" phenomena. But, strangely enough, as it appears to Mrs. Sidgwick and myself, and others who were familiar with Mr. Davey's devices, Mr. Wallace's conclusion seems to be, not that the analogous phenomena which have been reported about "mediums" were due to trickery, but that Mr. Davey's performances were "mediumistic"! The issue has changed. We are no longer asked to prove that this or that

medium is a "trickster";—we are asked to prove that Mr. Davey was not a medium! Could any better evidence be offered that Mr. Davey's performances and those of certain professional mediums belong to the same class?

Now, I am not at all sure how far my explanations of Mr. Davey's devices will make clear to Mr. Wallace and the many others who agree with him, that every apparently "phenomenal" occurrence at his sittings can be accounted for by ordinary means. It is impossible to reproduce all the details of the sittings, so that the reader may have a faithful picture of the seemingly insignificant incidents that made the writing upon a slate on or under the table, or the turning over of one or two slates, or the substitution of one slate for another, or the secreting and carrying out of the room (to deal with at leisure) of one of the sitter's own slates, appear to the instructed and watchful observer so transparently easy. I should have much greater confidence did I know that these doubters of Mr. Davey's dexterity were familiarising themselves with such books as Professor Hoffmann's *Modern Magic* and *More Magic*, Mr. John W. Truesdell's *Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, and a recent book published in America by Farrington and Co. (St. Paul, Minn.), entitled *Revelations of a Spirit-Medium*. Above all, I recommend these doubters to experiment for themselves. It may be difficult for them to obtain the assistance of a person like Mr. Davey, but they can at least study from books on conjuring the details of many performances commonly exhibited on the public stage, and by accompanying their uninitiated friends to the entertainment, and listening to their accounts of the tricks afterwards, they will be, I venture to think, considerably helped towards a proper appreciation of the misdescriptions usually given of such performances, and will perhaps begin to see the absurdity of attributing "mediumship" to Maskelyne, or Lynn, or Davey. In this direction at least the account of Mr. Davey's methods may prove serviceable.

I shall begin by giving a brief statement of the chief methods used by Mr. Davey and then illustrate his actual practice by describing in detail some of the most important occurrences at sittings where I was present myself. I shall then state what occurred, according to Mr. Davey, at the sittings particularly noted by Mr. Wallace as remarkable, and finally give the explanation of other incidents which without such special reference might still remain incomprehensible. Had I foreseen my departure for America, and my continued stay here, and therefore the impossibility of my conducting such a later series of experiments as I have mentioned above, I should doubtless have reduced to written record at the time the details of the sittings which I myself witnessed, as well as Mr. Davey's statements concerning the other sittings. As it is, I must depend upon my recollections, assisted by the contemporary

notes published, in connection with the reports, in Vol. IV. of the *Proceedings*. With the regular methods employed by Mr. Davey I was, of course, very familiar, as he frequently practised them in my presence, and consulted me about variations of them. Further, I talked them over in detail with Mrs. Sidgwick and Professor Hoffmann, and was present at five out of the sixteen sittings reported, and saw them used. I questioned Mr. Davey at the time about all the incidents at the sittings where I was not present, and was perfectly satisfied with his explanations, I may add that I have seen similar methods used by "mediums" in America, as will be seen later from my account of a visit to the notorious medium Slade.

Referring to the reports, it will be noticed that the manifestations most frequent at Mr. Davey's sittings were:—(1) Writing on the upper surface of a single slate held against the underside of the table; (2) Writing on the upper surface of the under slate when two slates were placed together above the table; (3) Writing in Mr. Davey's locked slate. I shall describe the normal method used in each case; I say "normal," because differences between the sitters as to their attention, &c., together with other incidental circumstances, produced, in almost every instance, certain slight variations from the prescribed steps.

(1) The slate having been cleaned and placed near the edge of the table on top, with a piece of pencil or chalk upon it, Mr. Davey takes a thimble-pencil from a hip-pocket, and slips it on the end of a finger, say the third, of the right hand. A thimble-pencil is a tailor's thimble with a small piece of pencil (or chalk) fastened to it. He then draws the slate over the edge of the table, with the thumb of his right hand on top of the slate, the finger with pencil being tucked into his palm, brings the first and second fingers up to the under surface of the slate, and slowly slides the slate under the table, requesting the sitter on his right to hold the slate with him, and to keep it pressed closely up to the under surface of the table. The sitter does so. The slate is out of sight, but the thumbs of the holders are visible. The sitter, in response to Mr. Davey's suggestion, asks a question. Mr. Davey writes the answer noiselessly with his thimble-pencil on the under surface of the slate, without the knowledge of the sitter. After an interval of waiting, he proceeds to withdraw the slate, ostensibly to see if anything has been written. He places it on the table, and by that time the sitter has let go of the slate. Nothing is found written (on the upper surface of the slate, where the sitter knows that the writing is to appear if it comes at all, and where alone inspection is made). Mr. Davey lifts the piece of pencil off, rubs the upper surface again with a cloth, then seizes the slate with the fingers uppermost, and the thumb underneath, raises the slate

from the table and places it once more under the table, turning the slate over as it is going under the table, and just before pressing it against the under surface of the table, drops upon it again a piece of pencil from the table. The answer to the question is now on the upper surface of the slate, pressed against the table. He then reminds the sitter to hold the slate also, and asks that the question be repeated. After a short interval, the sound of writing is heard, caused by Mr. Davey writing (for it is possible to write either with or without noise), on the now under surface of the slate, the answer to a question not yet asked, and which Mr. Davey may ask himself after the next insertion of the slate under the table. The slate is then withdrawn as before, the answer on the upper surface is read, that surface is cleaned by Mr. Davey; the slate is again placed under the table and turned as before in the process. And so on.

(2) Writing on the interior surface of one of two slates held together above the table.

One slate has already been written upon, during or previous to the sitting, and this lies, writing downward, upon the table. Mr. Davey gives two other similar slates to the sitter to examine and clean, asks him to place pencil (or chalk) on one of them on the table, cover it with the other, and place his hands upon them. Mr. Davey also places his hands upon them. After an interval of waiting Mr. Davey suggests looking to see if there is writing. The sitter removes his hands, Mr. Davey takes off the top slate and places it with seeming carelessness on one side close to where the third slate is lying, and after removing the pencil, say, from the other slate, and perhaps rubbing it again with the duster, which afterwards is perhaps thrown on the slate just removed, and placing some pieces of chalk again on the slate, he takes the *third* slate (writing already on the under surface) and places it on top. The sitter and Mr. Davey place their hands on the slates as before. After another interval of waiting Mr. Davey proposes to hold the slates in the air, or resting against the sitter's shoulder. The sitter raises his hands from the slates. Mr. Davey takes the two slates together, the fingers of his right hand above, the thumb below, and in lifting them from the table turns them both over together. This movement is probably completed by the time the sitter also takes hold of the slates. After a short time, a sound as of writing is heard, and when this is finished, the sitter lifts the top slate, and finds the upper surface of the lower slate covered with writing. But what produces the sound as of writing? Sometimes the finger-nail of Mr. Davey on the under surface of the bottom slate, sometimes a movement of his knee to which is attached a piece of common slate-pencil, the ends resting in two small loops of rubber sewn on to his trousers. He chafes this piece of pencil against another piece

attached to a fragment of wood from which project two fine steel points, by means of which he easily secures it to the pendent rim or the leg of the table. This was Mr. Davey's variation, I believe, on the idea suggested by the wedge-shaped clamp illustrated by Mr. Truesdell. (*Spiritualism, Bottom Facts*, p. 199.)

(3) Writing in the locked slate.

Mr. Davey has two locked slates precisely alike, i.e., as precisely alike as skilled workmanship could make them. In some cases a communication was prepared beforehand, and when a reply was not demanded to some specific question, a single substitution was all that was required. When a question was asked in the locked slate, two substitutions were needed. Thus, a question is written by the sitter in locked slate A. Mr. Davey substitutes locked slate B for A, opens A and answers the question (usually taking it out of the room for the purpose), and later on re-substitutes it for B.

"Well, but," I hear some readers say, "I want to know exactly how and when he makes these substitutions, and besides, how and when does he cover the side of one of the sitter's own slates with writing?" It is just these questions that are difficult to answer satisfactorily without introducing the whole *mise en scène*, so to speak, of the sitting. I think, however, that a tolerably fair conception may be formed by considering several of the reports and describing, as far as I can now reproduce them, the immediately connected details. But before doing so I shall describe Mr. Davey's usual method of substituting one of his locked slates for the other. This might almost be called his favourite device.

The first step was to engage the attention of the sitter on some other object. This was usually done by starting an experiment with another single slate or pair of slates. While the sitter was occupied in cleaning a slate, or examining pieces of pencil or chalk, or inspecting the writing that so "mysteriously" appeared on the ordinary slate, Mr. Davey was manipulating his "duster," a cloth which he used for drying the slates. This, after perhaps drying a slate with it, he would throw, apparently carelessly, over the locked slate on the table, and so as to hide this slate completely. Then, under cover, occasionally, of the use of his handkerchief, he would slip the other locked slate from his coat pocket or from beneath his waistcoat, slide it softly upon the edge of the table, and, bending over the table somewhat, with possibly one arm resting far forward on the table, so as partly to obstruct the view of the moving slate, push the slate softly forward till it was near the first slate concealed by the "duster." He would then sometimes boldly remove the duster with the first slate inside, and, below the surface of the table, slip the slate beneath his waistcoat, afterwards replacing the duster on the table. Sometimes after the second

slate had been placed upon the table, he allowed the first slate, covered by the duster, to remain on the table also for a considerable interval, owing to the possible danger of removing it without detection. On one occasion it remained there, I think, for more than a quarter of an hour, until at least the conclusion of the sitting, when he gathered up his various articles into his bag. While the sitter was wondering at the long communication in the *second* locked slate, the *first* locked slate, under the duster, was lying within his reach on the table before him.

Let us now consider the above explanations in detail with special reference to Sitting II. (*Proceedings S.P.R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 426-435.) For convenience of reference I here reproduce portions of the accounts:—

Mrs. Y.'s Account.

A piece of chalk was placed on one of our slates, and the slate was held tightly up against the underside of the table leaf by one of Mr. Davey's hands and one of my daughter's. Their thumbs were on top of the table, and their hands spread underneath on the underside of the slate. I held Mr. Davey's other hand, and we all joined hands around the table. I watched the two hands holding the slate without a moment's intermission, and I am *confident* that neither Mr. Davey's hand nor my daughter's moved in the least during the whole time. Two or three questions were asked without any sign of response. Then Mr. Davey asked rather emphatically, looking hard at the corner of the table under which they were holding the slate, "Will you do anything for us?" After this question had been repeated three or four times, a scratching noise was heard, and on drawing out the slate a distinct "Yes" was found written on it, the chalk being found stationary at the point where the writing ceased. As my eyes were fixed uninterruptedly on both my daughter's hand and on Mr. Davey's also, and as I certainly had fast hold of his other hand all the time, I feel *confident* he did not write this word in any ordinary way. This same result was obtained two or three times.

Miss Y.'s Account.

Mr. Hodgson brought us a little pasteboard box, in which were a number of small pieces of chalk of different colours. I chose two of these and placed them on one of our slates. We had all previously written either our names or our initials on that side of the slate. Mr. Davey slipped the slate under the edge of the table, I holding on to it all the time, and we held it flat under the table with our thumbs above the table. I held the slate very firmly against the table, and I am sure I did not relax my hold once. After waiting some time and asking various questions, we heard, or seemed to hear, the chalk moving on the slate. We drew the slate out, and on it was written "Yes," which was an answer to our last question. We again put the slate under the table, and, in order to be sure that nothing had been written on it, I half slipped it out again and saw that it was perfectly clean. After some more waiting, my father asked when we were to sail for America. The chalk again squeaked, and on drawing the slate out we found "the 18th" written very indistinctly. This happened not to be the date, which was the 15th.

There is no mention of the previous withdrawals in either of these accounts. Mr. Y., however, did remember them, and recorded them in his report.

At the first and second examination nothing was on the slate, and it was washed afresh, and soon the word "Yes" was found scrawled on the upper side of the slate as an answer to some indifferent question.

Mr. Davey did not venture to write the word at once, and did not produce his writings continuously. The first part of a sitting was often a time of tedious waiting, so that the vigilance of the sitters might become relaxed, and so that they might be accustomed to regard the withdrawals of the slate as having no special meaning, if, indeed, it should ever occur to a sitter that they were suspicious. After one of the early withdrawals, Mr. Davey, having previously written the word *yes* on the under surface of the slate, turned the slate over in the act of replacing it, and, of course, during this interval Miss Y.'s hand was *not* holding the slate. She had relinquished her hold when the slate was placed on the table. Mr. Davey then asked his own question, to which the *yes* was a proper reply. Similarly after one of the later withdrawals, Mr. Davey, having written "the 18th" on the under surface as a reply to a question previously asked by Mr. Y., and having turned the slate over in the act of replacing it, requested Mr. Y. to repeat his question. "On what day do we sail for America?" Thereupon the writing was apparently produced, and the answer exhibited proved to be relevant, though the date given was not correct. It would weary the reader were I to point out all the discrepancies between the reports which I quote, such as that Mrs. Y. speaks of "a piece of chalk," and Miss Y. speaks of "two" pieces as having been placed on the slate. It is important, however, to emphasise here that although the slate was several times withdrawn from under the table, and Miss Y. on these occasions relinquished her hold of it completely, yet there is not the slightest indication in the above accounts that Miss Y.'s hold was ever relaxed at all, or that there was a single withdrawal when nothing was found written upon the slate. These are instances of the complete omission, from the record, of circumstances without which the trick would have been impossible. They were due to lapse of memory rather than to mal-observation, since at the times of the withdrawals the sitters were doubtless aware of them. The turnings of the slate as Mr. Davey replaced it under the table were probably not observed; that is to say, it was not observed that his method of placing the slate under the table brought the unexamined surface to the top.

After this explanation I think that the reader will find no difficulty in seeing exactly how the similar "phenomena" recounted in the other reports, in connection with a single slate held under the table, were produced. He must supply, of course, the "withdrawals" and the accom-

panying circumstances, since these are completely omitted from nearly all the records, and where the withdrawals are mentioned there seems to have been no conception, in the mind of the witness, of their significance.

Proceeding to the cases of writing appearing between two slates above the table, I quote the three different accounts from Sitting II.

Mrs. Y.'s Account.

After a short rest, Mr. Davey asked us to wash two of our own slates and put them together, with pieces of chalk of different colours between, and all of us to reach across the table and hold them all together. This we did, and then Mr. Davey asked my husband to choose mentally three colours he wished used in writing. After all holding the slates closely pressed together for a few minutes, we placed them on the table, and Mr. Davey and I placed our hands on them while the rest joined hands. In a few moments the same sort of electric shock seemed to pass through Mr. Davey, and his hand and arm which were on the slates quivered nervously, and immediately a scratching noise was heard. He then asked me to lift one slate off the other, which I did, and found one side covered with writing in three colours, the very three my husband had mentally chosen. I am perfectly confident that my hand was not removed from the slates for one single instant, and that I never lost sight of them for a moment.

Miss Y.'s Account.

After this experiment, we put aside Mr. Davey's slate and took two of our own. We cleaned them, and placed on one a number of little pieces of coloured chalk. The second slate was put on the first one, and my mother and Mr. Davey held it above the table. Mr. Davey asked my father to think of three colours. We joined hands once more, and in a little while we heard writing between the slates. When we took one off, on the under one was written :—

In *red*, "We are very glad to be able to give you this."

In *white*, "We can do more yet."

In *green*, "Good-bye."

My father had thought of red, white, and blue. We could not be sure by the night light whether the "good-bye" was written in green or blue. But there was a piece of chalk on the slate that looked much more blue than the piece with which the "good-bye" was written.

Mr. Y.'s Account.

We next placed small pencils, in six colours, between two of my newly-bought slates, marked by ourselves with our names written in pencil, without removing them from the top of the table, and the hands of some of the party were laid upon them for some minutes, after which they were held up in the hands of two persons. I had been asked to choose the colours in which the writing should be made. I mentally chose red, white, and blue, but did not tell my choice. After holding Mr. Davey's hand for some minutes, with my mind strongly fixed on these colours, the slates were opened, and we found, in the order I had mentally selected :—

(Red) "We are glad to be able to give you this."

(White) "We can do more yet."

(Blue) "Good-bye."

The slates used were the *three* ordinary school slates which Mr. Y. had purchased on the way to the sitting, which was held at my rooms at Furnival's Inn. The experiment preceding this was with Mr. Davey's locked slate. While the sitters were still pondering over the writing that had appeared in the locked slate, Mr. Davey retired to an adjoining room, taking with him, under his waistcoat, one of Mr. Y.'s slates. He there wrote upon the slate in red, white, and blue, thinking that if Mr. Y. were asked to choose mentally three colours, he would be more likely to select these three than any others. (I believe that Mr. Davey usually had red, green, pink, blue, yellow, and white chalks at his sittings.) Returning to the room and the table he surreptitiously placed this slate on the table again, writing downward, pushed Mr. Y.'s remaining two slates, which we may call the *first* and *second*, forward, and requested that these should be cleaned thoroughly. After the cleaning, Mr. Davey placed some coloured pieces of chalk upon the first slate and covered it with the second. According to my remembrance, Mr. Davey then lifted the two slates a little from the table and asked all the sitters to join in holding them. After a short interval he suggested looking to see if there was any writing, and the slates were lowered to the table, the sitters removed their hands, and Mr. Davey took off the top slate (the *second*), showing the under surface of it where there was no writing, and placing it on the table close to the *third* slate. Moving the chalks slightly, to be assured that there was no writing, he "replaced"—not the second slate which he had just removed, but—the *third* slate, which already had the writing on the under surface. He then placed his hands upon the slates, and so also did one or more of the sitters. After another short interval, Mr. Davey suggested holding them up in the air; the sitters lifted their hands, Mr. Davey seized the slates, raised them, turned them over together and requested, I believe, Mrs. Y. to join in holding them. At this stage I think that the sitters all stood up and that Mr. Davey then called upon Mr. Y. to think of three colours to be used in the writing. Very shortly the sound as of writing was heard. When the sound ceased, Mr. Davey let go of the slates, and the writing was found on the upper surface of the lower slate.

It is probable that my remembrance of the scene even where it is clear and distinct is wrong in some points, and on others even my remembrance is not clear. I cannot recall very clearly, for example, at what point Mr. Y. was asked to think of three colours. He may have been asked earlier to choose mentally three colours, and the request may

have been repeated later. But these points are unimportant for my present purpose, which is to show the reader how the trick was done. I witnessed Mr. Davey abstract the slate; I witnessed him in the act of writing the message in the adjoining room; I witnessed him return the slate to the table, and afterwards substitute it for the other slate, and I witnessed him turn both slates over together as he raised them in the air. These were the important points for me to watch, as I knew beforehand.

Now for the omissions in the reports. In the first place, Mr. Y. and Miss Y. refer nowhere in their whole reports to the fact of Mr. Davey's leaving the room. Mrs. Y. refers to it, but supplements her reference by stating that "the slates were all the time in full view on the table with the rest of us who remained behind"! If she could but have seen Mr. Davey's hurry and excitement in the other room while he was preparing the message on one of her own slates!

In the second place, there is not the slightest indication, in any one of the three reports, that the slates were separated during the experiment after they had once been placed together, yet they were not only separated, but the separation was used for the purpose of substituting a third slate for one of the two cleaned for the experiment. (All three slates, I believe, had been marked at the beginning of the sitting, but no special markings were made for this particular experiment.)

We may now turn to the other cases where this particular trick was performed, and notice certain variations in the details. In Sitting I., the reader will easily be able now to supply the omission made by the two recorders; the top slate was removed and the third slate substituted in a manner similar to that described above. But in this case Mr. Davey wrote on the slate *before the sitting began*. Mr. R. took three slates to the sitting, and he states that there "could not possibly" have been "any tampering" with them, "as during the whole séance they never for one moment left the room." This last assertion is true, but Mr. R. gives 7.30 p.m. as the time of his going to Mr. Davey's house, and the sitting did not begin till 8.30 p.m. In the meantime Mr. Davey had taken one of Mr. R.'s slates and Mr. R.'s box of chalks also into another room, and written upon the slate, and rubbed away the corners of some of the fragments of chalk and pencil, and brought them back to the room. What occasion was there for the intending sitters to watch their slates then? The sitting had not begun, and besides, Mr. Davey had, let us say, given them some interesting curios or remarkable photographs to examine while he excused himself for a few moments. Later on, the sitting begins. Mr. Davey takes the parcel of slates: "Ah! these are your slates, Mr. R. Very glad you've brought your own slates. If anything comes, you see, it's so much more satisfactory. We'll try first if we can get

any writing on one of your own single slates. Better clean it thoroughly," at the same time holding up the top slate for Mr. R. to take, and of course he takes it. The slate upon which Mr. Davey has written is the lower one of the remaining two, the writing being on the under surface; and these two slates remain on the table in full view while the experiments with the single slate are in progress. This important lower slate, however, becomes completely forgotten, temporarily at least, when the sitters are preparing the other two slates for the second form of experiment, at which time, had there been any need, Mr. Davey might have written upon it again. Hence Mr. Davey's note to this sitting that "although Mr. R.'s slates did not leave the room during the séance, one of them was left unguarded on the table on one occasion for about sixty seconds." As a matter of fact, however, as Mr. Davey assured me, he wrote upon this slate before the sitting began.

The next instance of this "manifestation" occurs in Sitting IV., held in my rooms; Mr. Padshah had taken three new slates, but had left them in my rooms while he made a call upon some friends. In the meanwhile Mr. Davey arrived, and used the opportunity to write on one of Mr. Padshah's slates, which he then placed at the bottom. When we were ready for the sitting, Mr. Padshah having returned, Mr. Davey began by passing round his locked slate for inspection, cleaning, &c. He then took the top one of Mr. Padshah's slates for trials with a single slate held under the table, leaving the two other slates in the middle of the table. Later on, in the midst of experiments with the single slate, he lifted the top slate of these two, placed some coloured chalks on the lower one, and placed the other slate again on top. The other important movements I may give in the words of my friend, Mr. J. Russell, who saw them. He had not been initiated into the *modus operandi*, but he did know definitely and positively that Mr. Davey's performances were not "mediumistic," and he was acquainted with the object of Mr. Davey's investigations. Mr. Russell is naturally an exceptionally keen observer, and he noticed and recorded the important trick-movements, of which there is no mention in the reports of the other two uninitiated witnesses. I therefore add his testimony to my own. Mr. Russell writes in his report:—

In the meantime, Mr. Davey had once more examined the two slates where the coloured chalks were, but finding nothing, had placed them side by side, and carelessly, as if in a fit of absent-mindedness, had taken the chalks from the slate which had been at the bottom, and placed them on the other. He had then put them together as before, except that the original position of the slates was reversed, the old bottom one being now at the top, and the old top one at the bottom. Presently, asking Mr. Padshah if in a former sitting with Eglinton the medium had not got some writing on his shoulder, he took up the two slates and placed them on Mr. Padshah's shoulder, but in less

than a minute took them off, reversing them as he did so, and replaced them on the table. The old bottom slate was now once more at the bottom, and the old top one at the top, but each slate had been reversed, so that the two sides which had originally been turned to the table were now turned up. In a few minutes Mr. Davey had a sort of convulsion, Mr. Hodgson and Mr. Hughes said they heard sounds like writing, the slates were opened, and there, on the lower one, was a message, half in green, half in red (nearly the colours chosen by Mr. Padshah and my wife), expressing a hope that we should be satisfied with writing given thus, under such excellent test conditions.

Now, from the point of view of the psychologist analysing the value of human testimony, I regard Mr. Padshah's reports as in several respects the most instructive of the whole series. Mr. Padshah's mind is pre-eminently clear and sincere, and his report, written immediately after the sitting, is an excellent expression of the effects produced upon him. We can see, so to speak, a piece of wonderful testimony (as regards this particular manifestation) *in the act of making, but not made*. Describing the commencement of the sitting, Mr. Padshah wrote:—

There was full light on every corner of the table; two of my (?) slates, one washed by myself, the other by Mr. Davey, were put very nearly in the centre with a number of small chalk-pieces between them of different colours.

Later on, in discussing this manifestation, Mr. Padshah wrote:—

I confess I do not remember, even after such a brief lapse of time, whether I had examined the two slates *not* washed by me, and found them unwritten. I imagine I must have, for otherwise it would be very stupid.

Here, in the first place, we see that while Mr. Padshah's memory told him at the commencement of his report that *one* of these two slates had been washed by himself, his memory told him, apparently, a short time later that *neither* of these slates had been washed by himself. This, at least, seems to be the fair inference from his words. But the next point, concerning the *examination* of the slates, is more important. He imagines, he says, that he must have examined the slates, "for otherwise it would be very stupid." In the case of ninety-nine out of a hundred *bonâ fide* witnesses the statement in their report would not have taken this form. Their *imagination* that they *must* have examined the slates would have usurped the place of their failing remembrance, and they would have written, with perfect sincerity, "I examined the two slates and found them perfectly clean."

The same general method was employed in Sittings V., VI., VII., IX., XII., and XV., the slates being Mr. Davey's, and the communications having been prepared beforehand, and I think that the reader will have no difficulty now in supplying the omissions which vitiate the records. The choice of colours and the transcription of passages from books chosen by the sitters, and the writing in foreign languages, I shall consider later.

In Sitting VIII. the word *Yes* was found on the upper surface of the lower of two of the sitters' slates held together. This word was written on the top of one of the sitter's slates while the sitter was glancing over the books on the shelves for the purpose of choosing one for the locked-slate experiment. I saw Mr. Davey write it on the slate, as the slate lay on the middle of the table, and then turn the slate over. This slate afterwards reached the required position by the regular method. After this experiment came that of the locked slate, which was also a success, and while the sitter was wondering over the locked-slate message, Mr. Davey took one of his slates into another room and covered one side of it with writing. This interval the sitter speaks of parenthetically as a "momentary absence." After Mr. Davey's return the two-slate experiment was conducted in the regular way, and was indeed completed; but Mr. Davey got nervous, shuffled the slates out of position again, and hardly knew himself what had become of the writing. In trying to make up for this false move he slipped again, the sitter noticed a shuffle of the slates, seized them, and discovered the writing "before its time."

As regards the "two-slate" incident which occurred in Sitting XVI., Mr. Davey informed me that before the sitting began, and while exchanging greetings in the ordinary manner, he undid the parcel containing the slates brought by Miss Symons, took out one of her slates, substituted for it a new slate brought by himself, and tied up the parcel again,—all this with his back to the parcel so that his movements might be concealed from Mrs. Sidgwick and Miss Symons. He then left the room, ostensibly to fetch his own slates, &c., from another room, and while absent, wrote on the slate belonging to Miss Symons. Miss Symons herself carried the parcel, now containing Mr. Davey's slate, to the séance table without, of course, noticing anything wrong. Her slate, with writing on it, was placed among Mr. Davey's own slates, and, when the time came, in the course of the two-slate experiment, was re-substituted openly, as described in detail by Mrs. Sidgwick in the following account, which was written the day after the experiment, and before she knew how and when the trick was done. (The footnotes are a later addition.)

Miss Symons had brought two common slates and a locked one. Mr. Davey had also slates with him of various shapes; one of them with round corners as Miss Symons's had, and some with square corners. Miss Symons's two slates¹ were held together on the table and under the table by her and Mr. Davey. Then one of Mr. Davey's square-cornered slates was substituted for one of them, then again removed, and the two round-cornered ones²

¹ This is, of course, a mistake. It was the two slates out of the parcel, but one of these was really Mr. Davey's.

² Really Miss Symons's this time.

again held, on the ground that though it might be easier to get writing on Mr. Davey's slate, it would be more satisfactory to get it on Miss Symons's. We waited a considerable time. Mr. Davey asked me to draw the curtains between the two rooms. Then we sat as before, the two slates on one another on the table, and our hands on them. The sound of writing was heard, and presently on looking between the two slates, one of them was found to be written on all over one side. I cannot remember every detail of what occurred, but the impression produced on my mind most distinctly was, that one of Miss Symons's slates had been written on all over one side, and that there had been no possible opportunity for Mr. Davey to have done this.

We now come to the experiments with the locked slate. In addition to the two similar locked slates of small size which I have already mentioned, Mr. Davey had some other similar locked slates of large size, of the Faber make. One of these is represented in *Proceedings*, Vol. IV., pp. 466, 467. My impression is that he had *three* similar slates of the large pattern. He most frequently, however, used the smaller size, described by Mr. H. W. S. in Sitting XI., as "composed of two ordinary pieces of slate, about six by four inches, mounted in ebony covers hinged on one side with two strong plated hinges, and closed in front, beyond the question of a doubt, with a Chatwood's patent lock." Let us call these two locked slates A and B, and suppose that A is the first locked slate exhibited. I shall now describe in detail the locked slate incident in Sitting II. Mrs. Y.'s account of this is as follows:—

He gave me a locked slate of his own, which I thoroughly washed and locked myself, and put the key in my own pocket. We then joined hands, and Mr. Davey and my daughter placed one hand each on the slate as it was lying on top of the table. Different questions were asked, and we waited some time, but no response came. Mr. Davey seemed to me very much exhausted, and I urged him to desist from any further efforts. But he seemed loth to do this, and said he would rest a little while, and would then, perhaps, be able to go on. After a short time of conversation, the slates all the while being in full view and carefully watched by me, we again tried it, under the same conditions as before, only that this time Mr. Davey requested us each to take a book at random from the shelves in the room, and mentally think of two numbers representing a page and a line, and he would see if he could reproduce it. This also failed of any result, and Mr. Davey said he feared he was too tired to produce anything, as he had been very much exhausted by a long and very successful séance the night before. We again begged him to desist, but after a short rest . . . he insisted on another trial. The slates still remained all the time in full view on the table. Mr. Davey asked my daughter to choose another book, which she did at random, he having his back to her and standing at some distance while she did it. This book was at once tied up and sealed by one of the party, Mr. Davey never touching it from first to last. I then held it in my lap, while we joined hands as before, and Mr. Davey and my daughter each put one hand on the slate. Still nothing came. Then we changed positions, and I placed

my hand on the slate instead of my daughter, giving her the book to hold. During this change she kept her hand on the slate until I had placed mine beside it, and the book was awaiting her on the opposite side of the table, my husband all the while holding Mr. Davey's other hand. I am confident that Mr. Davey could not possibly have manipulated the slate during this change, for it was in full sight all the while, and our hands were on it, and the book was tied and sealed on the opposite side of the table. A few minutes after this readjustment Mr. Davey seemed to have a sort of electric shock pass through him, the perspiration started out in great drops on his forehead, and the hand that was touching mine quivered as with a nervous spasm. At once we heard the pencil in the slate moving, and in a few moments Mr. Davey asked me to unlock the slate. My daughter took the key out of her pocket and handed it across the table to me, and I unlocked the slate, and found it covered on both the inner sides with writing. When read, this writing proved to be a sort of essay or exhortation on the subject of psychical research, with quotations from the book chosen intermingled throughout. I forgot to say that Mr. Davey had asked us all to choose in our minds two numbers under ten to represent a page and a line of the book, but had finally concentrated his thought on what my husband was thinking. In the writing there were quotations from every page we had any of us thought of, but not always the line; but in the case of my husband the line was correct, but not the page. He had thought of page 8, line 8. The line was quoted from page 3, and Mr. Davey said this confusion between 8 and 3 frequently occurred, because of the similarity of the numbers. This test seemed to me perfect. The slate was under my own eye on top of the table the whole time, and either my daughter's hand or my own was placed firmly upon it without the intermission of even a second. Moreover, we closed and opened it ourselves.

This sitting was held in my rooms in the evening. In the morning Mr. Davey came to my rooms, and re-arranged some of my books. He placed a series of greyish-white books (chiefly Cambridge University Calendars) on a shelf easy of access, and in the middle of them he put a volume of selections from Mrs. Browning's poems after first copying some phrases from it. This book had a blue binding with gilt lettering on the back. The communication afterwards found by the sitter embodying these phrases from the book, I saw Mr. Davey then and there in the morning write in the locked slate. At the first trial of this experiment, the volume of Mrs. Browning was not chosen. No result, therefore, was obtained. At the next trial Miss Y. chose the required book. Now, Mrs. Y. states that Mr. Davey had his back to her daughter and was "standing at some distance while she did it." Mr. Y. also says, "My daughter, leaving him at the table, replaced on the shelves the book she had first taken down, and took at random a copy of Mrs. Browning's poems." Miss Y.'s own account of this part of the incident is also positive:—

We sat as before around the table, discussing the failure of the experiment. Finally Mr. Davey started up and said, "We must try it with one

book alone. Will you choose one, Miss — ?" I supposed that he asked me to do it because my seat was nearest to the bookcase. I got up and went to the bookcase. Mr. Davey stood by the table with his back to me. That latter fact I feel as if I remember most distinctly. I mention it to show that I chose my book at random and was not influenced in my choice by him.

As a matter of fact Mr. Davey escorted Miss Y. up to the bookcase and led her, as it were, up to the very shelf where the required book, in bright contrast to its dingy neighbours, was "forcing" itself to be chosen. "Choose a book, any book, take any book at random,"—with a wave of the hand in front of the special shelf, and Miss Y., quite naturally, reached out her hand and took the book that "fixed" her gaze. I gave in my previous notes what I thought was the probable explanation of the agreement of all the witnesses in the erroneous statement that Miss Y. went alone to the bookcase to choose her book. After the writing had been produced in the locked slate, Mr. Y. asked Miss Y. if she had gone alone to the bookcase, and she replied that she had, and that Mr. Davey had remained by the table with his back towards her. I conjectured also that Miss Y.'s lapse of memory was an instance of *transposition*, that she remembered correctly Mr. Davey's actions, but connected them wrongly with her second choice of a book instead of with her first.

By the "forcing" of this book the first step in the trick was performed. The next step was to substitute locked slate B for A. But the sitters were very careful, as the reader may notice from the accounts of their actions when Mr. Davey suggested that Miss Y. should change places with her mother. Miss Y. kept her hand upon the slate as she walked round the table, and correctly says that she did not relax her hold of the slate till her mother had her hand upon it. Nevertheless the time came when Mr. Davey did substitute B for A. But there is no mention whatever, in Mrs. Y.'s report, of the circumstances which enabled Mr. Davey to perform the substitution. Nor is there any mention whatever of these circumstances in Mr. Y.'s report. They are mentioned, however, in the report of Miss Y.

Mr. Davey asked us each to think of two numbers as before. Finally he asked us to write them down on a slate. I wrote mine on one of our own slates so that he could not possibly see what I had written, and I placed it on the table away from Mr. Davey and leaned my elbow on it. I think the others did the same with the other slates. To my remembrance, some of us watched the locked slate all the time while we were writing.

Miss Y.'s remembrance, about which she was apparently not sure, is not correct. At this juncture all the sitters forgot the locked slate and left it unguarded on the table. My impression is that all the sitters left the table, Mr. Davey having so candidly remarked that they must not let him see the numbers they wrote, and not let him even see

the movements of the end of the pencil. I then saw Mr. Davey with the help of his duster (see p. 258) substitute locked slate B for A. I may mention that Mr. Davey gave a plausible reason for desiring the sitters to write their numbers down, viz., that a previous sitter had forgotten the numbers which he had finally chosen, and therefore could not tell whether the passages quoted in the writing were according to the chosen numbers or not.

In Sittings I., III., V., VIII., IX., and XV. the *modus operandi* will now be obvious. In each case the communication was prepared beforehand, and an opportunity was given for the substitution of B for A.

In connection with Sitting IV. it is noteworthy that Mr. Padshah, who was not perfectly satisfied that he had taken due precautions in examining the two single slates, and in seeing that all the surfaces were clean, did become absolutely convinced that the locked-slate writing, if not produced by chemical means, was "undoubtedly genuine." Mr. Davey, as he had done for Sitting II., came to my rooms in the morning, and placed in a "forcing" position, with the neutrally tinted numbers of the periodical *Mind* in its neighbourhood, Bastian's volume on *The Brain as an Organ of Mind*, a bright red book of the International Scientific Series. Mr. Davey wrote on the locked slate in my presence the communication afterwards found there by Mr. Padshah, including the words, "The Brain an Organ of Mind." When asked to choose a book Mr. Padshah finally chose (mentally) the periodical *Mind*, after having thought both of *The Brain as an Organ of Mind* and of *International Law*. Mr. Padshah's conclusion about this experiment was that it is "evident that Mr. Davey must have minutely studied the time it takes for complete precipitation; or that the whole precipitation takes place simultaneously; or that the phenomenon is undoubtedly genuine. The theory of writing without a chemical and then bamboozling me would be really contemptible." As I pointed out in my contemporary notes to this sitting, Mr. Padshah did nevertheless lose perception of the slate A for a short time, and during this interval Mr. Davey substituted B.

In Sitting VI. a double substitution was made. The sitter wrote a question in A. Mr. Davey substituted B, opened A, read the question and answered it, and re-substituted it again. Mr. Davey's usual method in these cases was to take A out of the room for the purpose of reading and answering the question. Later on, the substitution was made again for another experiment, B having been prepared beforehand, and the book to be chosen by the sitter placed in a "forcing" position.

Sitting X. was with a Japanese gentleman, and the locked slate used was of the large size. The first locked-slate experiment involved merely a simple substitution. This was all that was involved in the

second locked-slate experiment also. The Japanese part of the message was easily enough obtained. Mr. Davey had met the sitter before and had obtained some information about him. He then went to the "Japanese Village" on exhibition in London, and for a consideration procured the services of an interpreter in translating and writing in Japanese on the locked slate the communication which Mr. Davey provided in English. The sitter says: "Once more I locked the double-slate . . . and put the key in my pocket and even sealed it myself." Mr. Davey suggested the sealing, but he substituted the second locked slate for the first before the sealing took place. (Compare Zöllner's experiment with Slade. Mrs. Sidgwick supposes that Slade substituted for two slates put together by Zöllner two other slates upon which he—Slade—had just written. *Journal S.P.R.*, December, 1886, p. 481. This case of Mr. Davey's is exactly parallel.)

In Sitting XI. there was a double substitution in experiment [a]. In experiment [c] there was a single substitution. Experiment [d] is described by the sitter as follows:—

Lastly, as requested by Mr. Davey, I took a coin from my pocket without looking at it, placed it in an envelope and sealed it up. I am certain that neither Mr. Davey nor myself knew anything about the coin. I then placed it in the book-slate together with a piece of pencil, closed it as previously and deposited it on the table; and having placed my hands with those of Mr. Davey on the upper surface of the slate, waited a short time. I then unlocked the slate as requested, and to my intense amazement I found the date of the coin written, by the side of the envelope containing it.

The seal and envelope (which I have now) remained intact.

I do not recall with certainty what the coin was. Let us suppose it was a shilling. Mr. Davey beforehand wrote the date of a shilling of his own in locked-slate A, placed this shilling in an envelope and sealed it up, and placed this envelope also in locked-slate A, which at the beginning of the experiment he had concealed about his person. He then requested the sitter to take a shilling from his pocket without looking at it, to place it in an envelope and seal it up, place it in the locked-slate (B), &c. The sitting was at Mr. Davey's house, and Mr. Davey provided the envelope, from the same packet, of course, as the one already containing Mr. Davey's shilling in locked-slate A. The sitter was requested not to look at his coin, ostensibly, I believe, on the ground of precluding thought-transference, but really so that the sitter might not know the difference between his own coin and Mr. Davey's. It is now plain that all the dexterity required in this experiment was a simple substitution.

In the locked-slate experiment described in Sitting XII. there was a double substitution. In the first locked-slate experiment in Sitting

XIII. there was a double substitution. For the second there was a single substitution.

Mrs. Sidgwick has furnished the following account of the locked-slate experiment in Sitting XV. :—

We then [after the writing of the word *Melbourne*] again sat at the table, Miss Symons next to Mr. Davey. She now took charge of the locked slate, which at this period was examined and was blank. [Then follows the account of obtaining the message with the Spanish sentence in it.] It was not easy to read, and while we were engaged in deciphering it Mr. Davey was still gasping and suffering apparently from the effects of the effort. He wandered restlessly about the room, with convulsive movements, &c. After a time he seemed better, and we determined to try another experiment. A book was chosen out of Mr. Podmore's bookshelf and laid on the table under our hands, and Miss Symons and Mr. Davey sat next each other, this time holding the locked slate.

The locked slate was unguarded while we were poring over the first long message, and there was plenty of time and opportunity then either to substitute another similar one or to write the message. Moreover, the book chosen was the one wished for by Mr. Davey. He made various objections and suggestions till I perceived that for some reason he wanted that one and chose it. I tried at first to choose a small book because I wanted the trick to succeed, and fancied it would be done by holding the book on the slate under the table and opening it there. Whether I should have been conscious of acting on anything but my unaided impulse [in choosing the large book] if I had not wanted to help Mr. Davey [by choosing a small one] I do not know.

I shall now describe the method of producing writing on the interior surfaces of common slates screwed and corded together and the knots of the cords sealed. For accounts of this experiment see Sittings XIII. and XIV. I quote here the account given in Sitting XIII.

I now took the two new slates which I had purchased, and which had never for a moment passed out of my possession, I even taking the precaution of sitting on them during the foregoing proceedings. I placed a piece of red crayon therein, and screwed them down top and bottom so tightly that by no possibility could even the thin edge of a penknife be introduced. I then corded the slates twice across and across, sealing them in two places with red and blue wax (for, of course, any attempt to remove the seals by heat would cause the colours to fuse, and thus immediately detect the artifice), stamping them with my own private signet. Mr. Davey placed the slates under the table, and requested me to name some word I would like written. I stipulated for "April." After a few minutes, during which I most carefully watched him, he returned them, and after 10 minutes' work, so tightly were they closed, I found exactly what I had desired.

. . . After perusal of above, considering that the expression, "I found exactly what I desired," might be liable to a possible misconception, I think it better to add that I state in the most unequivocal, explicit, and

emphatic manner, that after Mr. Davey had returned me my two slates, secured as above described, and which I most carefully and minutely examined to detect any signs of tampering, finding, however, my seals intact and the cording and screws in exactly the same condition as when they left my possession a few moments before, and that the word "April," which I had asked for, was legibly written with the crayon, on one of the inside surfaces. Whether the top or bottom I did not observe. The apparently impossible having thus been solved as I hereby testify.

The sitter might also have sealed the screw-heads without preventing the performance of the trick.¹ Mr. Davey takes the slates thus prepared and places them in a horizontal position between his right leg and the adjoining leg of the table. He holds them in that position by the pressure of his right leg. He then takes from his hip pocket a wedge with a fairly sharp edge for insertion, but with the other edges smoothed so as to avoid indenting the frames of the slates. I think that the wedge that Mr. Davey used was made of brass, and was somewhat more than two inches long and about half an inch wide. He forces this wedge between the frames of the two slates at a point farthest from the screws. Thus if the screws are on the top and bottom of the slates, he forces the wedge in at the middle of one of the sides. There is enough elasticity in the frames and the cords to prevent any injury to the frames or the cords or the seals. An opening a quarter of an inch wide is easily produced in this way. Leaving the wedge in position he takes from the hip of his trousers, where it has been fixed by the insertion of its ends in two small rubber loops, a piece of an umbrella rod, say seven or eight inches long, in the end of which is fastened a piece of pencil or chalk. This he inserts through the aperture produced

¹ In this connection the following extract from an account of a séance by Mr. T. O. Roberts, whom Mr. Davey characterises as "without exception the keenest witness I have ever met," may be of interest. The séance took place on April 23rd, 1887, later than any recorded in Mr. Davey's paper in *Proceedings*, Part IV. Mr. Roberts was, I believe, aware that Mr. Davey was a conjurer.

Mr. Roberts "purchased two common slates with wooden frames (8in. x 5in.) and rounded corners." He continues :—

I cleaned the slates myself and placed a small piece of grey chalk . . . between the slates, which I then placed together, noting which were the inner surfaces by a printed heading at the top of each ; I next drilled six holes through the frames, one at each end, and two at either side, into which I drove six screws, these tightly binding the two slates together, placed my seal on the head of each screw, then bound the slates with thick cord and sealed the ends after tying the final knot.

When I handed the slates, thus prepared, to Mr. Davey, he told me that the test was too severe, and that he did not think that it would be possible to produce the writing under such circumstances, but expressed his willingness to try.

Operations commenced by his placing the slates under the flap or leaf of the table near the corner, supported by the fingers of his right hand while his thumb rested on the table ; with my right hand I held his left above the table and with my left I assisted in supporting the weight of the slates in the same manner as adopted by him.

by the wedge, and writes the words required. He withdraws the rod and the wedge, replaces them in their private receptacles, and brings the slate above the table.

The writing or drawing produced under an inverted tumbler placed on a slate on top of the table is described in several accounts. (Sittings I., II., and XVI.) The following is Mrs. Y.'s account of this experiment in Sitting II. :—

He placed one of our slates on three little china salt-cellars that lifted it up about an inch from the table. Upon the middle of this he placed several pieces of different coloured chinks, and covered them with a tumbler. Then he told my husband to form a mental picture of some figure he wished to have drawn on the slate under the glass, and to name aloud the colour he would have it drawn in. He thought of a cross, and chose aloud the blue colour. I suggested that blue was too dark to be easily seen, and asked him to take white, which he agreed to. We sat holding hands and watching the pieces of chalk under the tumbler. No one was touching the slate this time, not even Mr. Davey. In a few minutes Mr. Davey was again violently agitated as with an electric shock, which went through him from head to foot, and immediately afterwards we saw, with our own eyes, each one of us, the pieces of chalk under the glass begin to move slowly, and apparently to walk of their own accord across the space of the slate under the tumbler. My husband had said just before that if the piece of red chalk under that tumbler moved, he would give his head to anyone who wanted it, so sure was he that it could not possibly move. The first piece of chalk that began to walk about was that very red piece! Then the blue and white moved simultaneously, as though uncertain which was the one desired. It was utterly astounding to all of us to see these pieces of chalk thus walking about under the glass with no visible agency to move them! All the while Mr.

The word selected by me to appear between the slates was "Parnell."

After remaining in this position for some fifteen minutes, during which time I watched his hand most carefully, and thwarted what appeared to me to be his several devices for diverting my attention, he informed me *he could not produce the writing unless I allowed him to take the slates out of the room!*

To this I assented, feeling that I was beginning to expose his inability to rival the "spirit-mediums" if only ordinary watchfulness were exercised. While these and similar thoughts crossed my mind, the door opened, he returned with the slates, having only been absent from the room 3 minutes. I then examined the slates most carefully, and I solemnly assert that my seals were intact in every case and that the slates were bolted together so tightly that it would have been impossible to introduce even the blade of a penknife between them, while my cord round them was as tight as when it left my hands, and the sealed ends were undisturbed.

The task of unscrewing the slates, &c., occupied several minutes, and this I performed myself, when I confess, greatly to my surprise, that the word "Parnell" was clearly and distinctly written on the inner surface of the lower slate. This I was at a loss to account for, especially as the piece of chalk that was enclosed had no sign of friction whatever upon it, this being evident at a glance, as the ends thereof had been newly broken.

I neither know nor pretend to understand how this trick is done, but I congratulate Mr. Davey on the celerity displayed by him, and the skill he undoubtedly possesses.

Davey, whose hands were held on one side by myself and on the other side by my husband, seemed to be on a great nervous strain, with hot hands and great beads of perspiration. When the chinks stopped moving, we lifted the tumbler, and there was a cross, partly blue and partly white, and a long red line marking the path taken by the red chalk! We were impressed by this test beyond the power of words to declare. The test conditions were perfect, and the whole thing took place under our eyes on top of the table with no hands of anybody near the slate.

The ostensible reason for placing the slate on the salt-cellars was that the slate might be insulated, so that the explanation of "electricity" might not be offered! Mr. Davey has a fine silk thread attached to one end of a button on his waistcoat. To the other end is fixed a small piece of *red wax*, which except when in use in the experiment is in his pocket together with the slack of the silk thread. While placing the slate on the salt-cellars with his left hand he takes the piece of wax between the fingers of his right hand, picks up with these same fingers some pieces of chalk,—moves his right hand forward to the other side of the slate—not yet placed in position—so that the thread shall be *under* the slate when the slate is placed on the salt-cellars. He then places the slate in position, brings his hand down from the far side of the slate and places the pieces of chalk and the piece of wax on the middle of the slate, and places the inverted tumbler over them. But while he is making a little heap of the chinks on the middle of the slate, before placing the tumbler in position, he also draws a figure (or a number, as the case may be) that he thinks the sitters is most likely to choose. He draws this, of course, very rapidly and dexterously, and he arranges the chinks over it so as to conceal it. Further, he has placed the piece of wax on the side of the heap which is nearest to himself. He now takes his place very carefully so that the thread, the length of which has been well calculated, shall not be tightened too soon. The reader will now see that by withdrawing his body from the table, Mr. Davey can finally cause the wax to move in the opposite direction, *i.e.*, away from himself, and through, so to speak, the little group of chalk fragments, producing a movement in them also. The tumbler is then lifted in excitement, usually by Mr. Davey, the slate is inspected, and a figure discovered. In the meantime Mr. Davey gives a jerk to the thread, moves away from the table, and gathers the wax and thread once more into his pocket.

There are several minor details of Mr. Davey's performances which hardly need explaining. Thus many of the sitters describe the pieces of pencil or chalk as being worn at the conclusion of an experiment. Usually they would have been found equally worn at the beginning of the experiment had the attention of the sitters been then called to them. Sometimes, indeed, they were not worn at the beginning, but Mr. Davey then took care to substitute worn pieces before the

writing was produced. There are several specific cases (Sittings I., IX., and XIII.) where the pencil was found resting at the end of the message. These were in locked-slate experiments. Mr. Davey had chosen and placed the pencil so that when the slate (to be substituted) was closed, the pencil did not move when the slate was shaken. When the slate was carefully opened, right side up, the pencil was found where Mr. Davey had placed it.

After the foregoing explanations I believe that the reader will find little difficulty in explaining to himself Mr. Davey's *modus operandi* in most of the experiments in the series of sittings with him recorded in Vol. IV. of our *Proceedings*. But I shall give the details of a few other cases where either possibly the reader may still be unable to see the exact method used, or where a special additional trick was involved.

In Sitting III. occurs the following description :—

The next experiment was the placing of 3 bits of coloured chalk on the table, and of a clean slate (selected and placed by myself) over them. I put my hand on the slate, Davey his on mine, and we joined contact. Again we heard the sound of writing, and when I lifted the slate there was written large and neatly in the coloured chalks (three lines or so in each colour) this message :—“Don't you think I've done enough for you to-night I'm tired Joey.” I noticed the chalks seemed worn, showing signs of work, just like the little bit of pencil in the previous experiment.

Mr. Davey very rarely used the “trick slate,” but the case described above was one instance of its use. The slate was neither selected nor placed by the sitter. Mr. Davey first placed some coloured nibs of chalk on the table just in front of the sitter. He then took one of his own slates which the sitter had not touched, and apparently sponged both sides thoroughly. Mr. Davey himself then placed the slate over the pieces of chalk, and asked the sitter to place his hand upon the slate. The sitter then for the first time touched the slate. The slate used in this case had a false flap, which fitted the frame. On the surface of the slate itself, under this flap, was a prepared communication. The exterior surface of the flap resembled the exterior surface of the true slate. The interior surface of the flap was covered with a piece of blotting-paper which bore marks of use in the form of casual blots and lines, &c. On the table in close juxtaposition lay a pile of blotting-paper, the top of which was also marked by casual blots, &c. This blotting-paper was there for the ostensible purpose of drying the slates. Mr. Davey took the slate with false flap uppermost, and sponged the exterior surface of the flap. He then turned the slate over on top of the blotting-paper, and sponged the other surface of the slate. He then lifted the slate and placed it above the chalks, leaving the false

flap behind upon the pile of blotting-paper, but with the blotting-paper side of it uppermost. The sitter was watching the slate "with all his eyes," but, of course, saw nothing which it was undesirable that he should see. "The chalks seemed worn," as the sitter says, but then the sitter did not examine the chalks beforehand, or he would have found them equally worn then.

There are two reports of Sitting VII., and I may refer to an experiment where the reports differ in a very important point. Mr. V.'s report is:—

The medium tore off half a sheet of letter-paper bearing the address of his house; this he gummed to the surface of an ordinary slate, a fragment of lead pencil was put on the paper, and the slate then transferred beneath the table-flap, and held by Mr. P. and the medium. Writing immediately audible. At our request the slate was exposed before it had ceased. To the best of my remembrance the slate could not have been beneath the table-flap for more than 20 seconds. On examination we found the following message written in a hand which bore a much greater resemblance to the medium's than any of the others.

Mr. M. writes:—

Mr. Pinnock asked if we could not get the writing on a piece of paper instead of the slate. Mr. Davey said we might try, and thereupon tore a sheet of writing-paper into two, and pasted one half on to a slate by the four corners; he cut off a small piece of black lead from the end of a pencil, put it on the paper and covered the slate with another slate. Writing was heard at once, and we separated the slates and found the paper written over diagonally as in the case of the first slate. The paper was not, however, quite full, and it looked as if the slates were separated too soon, as the sentence was not finished. The writing was evidently written with the point of the pencil.

This experiment was actually "led up to" by Mr. Davey, who had already prepared the message, and who substituted the slate containing the prepared message by the two-single-slates method already described (p. 257). Mr. Davey also suggested that the slates should be examined before the sound as of writing had ceased.

In her report of Sitting XVI. Miss Symons describes one experiment as follows:—

He took up 12 squares of paper, asked me to name any 12 animals I liked, whose names he wrote on the 12 squares of paper. These were shuffled together, and I was asked to choose one, which I was to glance at and then instantly to burn. Mr. Davey at the same time threw the other squares into the fire. I next wrote the first and last letters of the animal I had chosen on another piece of paper, this Mr. Davey burned in the gas, bared his arm and showed us that there was nothing written there, rubbed the ashes of the burnt paper over the bare arm, and presently what looked like letters became very faintly visible. They did not, however, become sufficiently distinct to enable us to read them, and Mr. Davey said he would presently get the

animal's name written on a slate. . . . Before he left, Mr. Davey held a slate with me under the table, and asked that the name of the animal written on the slip of paper I had chosen should be written on the slate. Writing was heard, the slate brought up, and I found "rhinoceros"—wrongly spelt—in red chalk. This was correct, though how Mr. Davey knew, or by what means the word was written, I have no idea, for the slate appeared to me to be clean when we put it under the table.

This, though not on this occasion completely successful, is a very easy trick. Before the experiment, write on the arm, with a brush or a feather, in uric acid, the name of an animal (or a flower, or a country, &c.) likely to be one of twelve chosen. Wait till it dries. There is then no visible trace upon the arm. When the sitter names an animal, write, on the square of paper, the name that you have written upon your arm. Do the same with every piece of paper, no matter what animal the sitter names. The slip chosen afterwards by the sitter will necessarily contain the name written upon your arm. Rub the ashes of this paper upon the arm, and the letters will "stand out" in the colour of the ash. I have performed this experiment myself successfully two or three hours after writing the name upon my arm. The word "rhinoceros" was already written on the slate when Mr. Davey placed it under the table, as Mrs. Sidgwick had good ground for stating, for Mr. Davey wrote it openly in her presence and showed it to her while Miss Symons was out of the room.

Those who have read thus far, and who have taken pains to compare my explanations not only with those accounts which I have re-quoted in this article, but with the reports as originally given in Vol. IV. of our *Proceedings*, will realise now, I trust, if they have not done so previously, the extreme imperfection of those reports, and therefore the great unreliability of any testimony to the ordinary "slate-writing" performances of professional mediums. The medium may leave the room, he may withdraw a slate several times, he may separate slates placed together on the table, and alter their respective positions, he may turn slates over together, and yet not one of these circumstances may appear in the report of the sitter. These points and others the student might easily have discovered for himself by comparing the different reports given of the same sittings by the uninitiated witnesses, and yet these points are all of the most fundamental importance as regards the question of trickery. Thus in Sitting II. only one witness out of three refers to Mr. Davey's leaving the room, and only one witness out of three mentions the withdrawals of the slate before the writing was manifest. In Sitting IV. only one witness out of three records the separation of slates placed together on the table, &c. Further, in Sitting II. only one witness out of three records a highly important incident (the sitters' writing down on slates the numbers of

which they were thinking), which was specially brought about by Mr. Davey for the express purpose of making a substitution, and during which the substitution was actually made.

Yet here I must confess that while it is gratifying to learn that Mr. Davey's labours have been so successful in producing the conviction that his "manifestations" and those of certain professional mediums do actually belong to the same category, it is disappointing to find that the chief object of at least my own Introduction to Mr. Davey's investigation seems to have met with but little appreciation by Mr. Wallace and those whom he represents. I admitted that "there are numerous records of 'psychographic' phenomena that have occurred with mediums (and also with Mr. Davey) which, as described, are inexplicable by trickery," and I endeavoured to show "how far such records might be misdescriptions, and what were the chief causes of the misdescriptions." The notes to the records were made for the purpose of showing to investigators some of the important misdescriptions that actually occurred, and that are therefore to be expected in such records. Further, there were five sittings each of which was reported by more than one witness, and opportunity was given to the student to discover for himself, by a comparison of different reports of the same sitting, numerous other instances of misdescription. The question of primary importance concerns the value of human testimony under the circumstances involved. Why do we not accept such testimony? Because it is demonstrably fallible in precisely those particular points where it must be shown infallible before the phenomena can be accepted as supernatural. I have already briefly adverted to some of the instances of this fallibility in the explanations which I have given of Mr. Davey's methods, but it seems to me needful to further emphasise it in view of the fact that Mr. Wallace has been able to entertain the idea that Mr. Davey was a "medium." My purpose will, I think, be sufficiently conserved if I refer to one or two additional striking cases of discrepancies between reports of the same sittings.

In Sitting I. a long message was obtained on the locked slate, but the message was incomplete, ending "We hope to." Mr. Davey ended the message purposely in this way and afterwards "led up to" the request that the message might be concluded. In the meantime Mr. Davey had written the conclusion of the message on one of Mr. R.'s slates, which was lying on the table, writing downwards, ready for the experiment.

Mr. R. writes as follows:—

I desired after this to have the writing on the double slate of Mr. Davey's continued at the point where it had been broken off, and obtained this result on one of my slates which I held underneath the table and which began immediately. "We hope to see you again—Joey." I was also anxious to

know what the VII signified as I have already said before. On the first attempt we got the answer—"good-bye Joey"—but we were more successful on again putting the question, the result being a distinct "Septe—"; whether, as I have already said, it was intended for September I cannot tell.

Mr. L.'s account is :—

The writing having stopped so abruptly, two ordinary slates were placed upon the table in the manner before described, and it was asked by Mr. R. that the letter should be concluded. Within a period of 15 seconds from the time of asking such question and after completing the circle with our hands, the words "to see you again, Joey," were written.

The two slates were again placed in the same position as before, and Mr. R. having put an unimportant question, after the completion of the circle as before, I saw upon the slate "Good-bye, Joey"; but on a second trial a scrawl was obtained which looked very much like "Sept. Joey," but it was impossible to say definitely what it was intended for.

It is noteworthy that Mr. L. makes this experiment follow immediately after the locked-slate message, and places the "tumbler" trick last, while Mr. R. makes it follow the "tumbler" trick, which he puts immediately after the locked-slate experiment. I do not recall what Mr. Davey told me about his precise operations in connection with these writings, but from my knowledge of his methods, aided by his note, I infer that he cleaned the top of the slate, the underside of which was already prepared with the conclusion of the message, that he placed this slate under the table, turning it over in the process according to the single-slate method described on p. 256. He then wrote "Good bye, Joey," on the then under surface of the slate with his thimble-pencil, brought the slate up and laid it upon the table, when the words "hope to see you again, Joey," were manifest. These words were rubbed out, and this slate placed upon another slate, and both slates together placed under the table, being reversed in the process. He then wrote "Sept. Joey" on the under surface of the bottom slate, brought both slates together to the top of the table, and lifted the top slate, when the words "Good-bye, Joey," appeared on the upper surface of the bottom slate. He rubbed these out, put this slate upon the other, and placed them once more under the table, reversing them as he did so, and then possibly, as though changing his mind, placed them on top of the table again. When the top slate was removed, "Sept. Joey" appeared on the upper surface of the bottom slate.

But I wish to draw the reader's particular attention here, for a reason which will appear later, to the fact that one witness states that the communication came upon a single slate held underneath the table (a statement which Mr. Davey confirms), and the other that it came between two slates placed on top of the table. Nor is this the only instance of a mistake of this kind in the reports. Comparing the accounts of the letter-paper incident which occurred in Sitting VII.,

and which I have quoted on p. 277, it will be noticed that in one account the experiment is described as having been made with a single slate held underneath the table, in the other as having been made with two slates above the table. The experiment was actually made with two slates which were probably finally held under the table.

Another important discrepancy between the reports of Sitting VII. occurs in the case of the ordinary two-slates experiment. Mr. V., after referring to the locked slate and the writing of a question therein, &c., describes experiments [a] and [b], and then proceeds to describe experiment [c] as follows:—

Two ordinary slates taken, cleaned by us, but not marked, pieces of red and green chalk introduced between them, the slates then deposited in front of the medium in full view, and about four or five inches from the edge of the table and from the medium's body; the medium rested one of his hands on the upper surface of the top slate, and my hand reposed on his.

After a pause the sound of writing distinctly audible; this continued for about 15 seconds, then the medium remarked, "What a pity I forgot to ask you what colour you would have it in." Mr. M. suggested green; sound of writing continued for about five seconds longer, then ceased. On the removal of the top slate, the bottom slate was found to be completely covered with writing. The writing ran in diagonal lines across the slate; the writing was upside down with respect to the medium; the writing was firm and distinct in character. The first three-quarters of the message were written in red, the last quarter in green.

Mr. M. is much more accurate in his account of this incident, and I include, in the quotation which I give, his reference to other experiments which came between the beginning and the end of the two-slates experiment. There is no clue to the *modus operandi*, for the uninitiated reader, in Mr. V.'s account, but there are very obvious clues, for any careful student of the series of reports, in Mr. M.'s account. Mr. M. describes the locked slate, &c., &c., and then proceeds:—

Mr. Davey then showed me some ordinary slates, in wooden frames. These I helped him to wash and dry. We then took our seats round the table. . . . Mr. Davey asked Mr. Pinnock to place the locked slate under his (Mr. Pinnock's) coat and then button up the coat.

[c] We now took three slates, on one of them we placed three fragments of crayon, two of which were red, the other green, we then covered up this slate with another and left them on the table in full view.

[a] On the third slate we also put a piece of crayon and then held the slate underneath one flap of the table which we put up for the purpose. . . . We sat in this way talking and smoking for some time, twenty minutes to half an hour I should say, nothing whatever occurring. At last Mr. Davey asked me to change places with Mr. Pinnock. This I did and thus had one of my hands on the slate. Mr. Davey now said, that in the manner usual at séances we would ask questions of an imaginary being;

and he said, "Are you going to do anything to-night, Joey?" After a short pause he repeated the question, and then I felt the slate vibrate as if being written on, and could hear a scratching noise; we took the slate from under the table-flap and saw the word "yes" written over Mr. V.'s initials, and I particularly noticed that the writing was towards Mr. Davey, and upside down to him, and in all we saw afterwards this was the case.

[b] I now asked a question as to the whereabouts of a person at that time, not knowing the answer myself; we waited for some time without any result, when Mr. Davey asked me to again change places with Mr. Pinnock.

[d, e, g, &c.] I did so, and Mr. Davey told Mr. Pinnock to place the locked slate on the table beside the two slates we had left face to face, and we also lifted the uppermost of these two slates and found the slates still quite clean, with the three pieces of crayon between them. We again waited some time with no results; meantime, having a discussion as to mediumship of different people, and then Mr. Davey asked if I were a medium. After a pause I heard vigorous scratchings on the two slates left face to face on the table and on which Mr. Davey's arm was resting, his two hands being engaged, one in holding the slate under the table flap, the other in holding Mr. V.'s hand; the scratching lasted roughly under ten seconds, and I expected to see a dozen words or so, and was therefore amazed to discover, when the top slate was lifted, that the underneath slate was covered with writing from corner to corner, and also the writing was not straight across the slate, but was across it diagonally; three-quarters of the writing was in red, the other quarter in green, and no crayon was left.

Now, the reader will easily infer from Mr. M.'s account that the two slates were placed in position by Mr. Davey and were wrongly supposed by the sitters to have been taken from those cleaned by them some time—not immediately—previously. After studying the accounts of Sittings IV., especially the reasoning by Mr. Padshah, and after considering that the slates used were Mr. Davey's, the reader will also infer that the under surface of the bottom slate was already covered with the writing afterwards found. He will then argue that if a series of movements such as those described by Mr. Russell (see p. 264) could be completely omitted from the report of Mr. Padshah, they might also have occurred in Sitting VII., although they are not recorded in the reports of that sitting. But more instructive even than these clues in Mr. M.'s account to Mr. Davey's *modus operandi*, is the fact that Mr. V. describes the steps of the experiment as though they came in immediate sequence; whereas we learn from Mr. M. that about half an hour elapsed between the first and last steps of the experiment, and that during this interval experiments were being made with a single slate. These experiments [a] and [b] are described by Mr. V., but they are described as occurring before the commencement of [c].

I shall give one more illustration of differences between reports of the same sitting before proceeding to consider in detail those (slate-writing) sittings which Mr. Wallace has mentioned as being, apparently,

particularly hard to explain. In his report of Sitting VII. Mr. V. writes:—

At the request of the medium, Mr. P. wrote a question in the book-slate (I shall call this slate A in future); he then locked it and pocketed the key. Neither Mr. M. nor I knew the nature of the question at the time. The slate was left for some minutes upon the seat of an arm-chair, but was subsequently transferred first to Mr. P.'s coat, and then to the table at which we sat.

Later on, after recounting experiments with a single slate and with two slates, Mr. V. continues:—

The medium and Mr. P. placed their hands upon slate A, which had remained in sight in front of the latter since the commencement of the séance. The sound of writing audible almost immediately. Mr. P. opened slate, and we found the question he had written, together with the accompanying answer.

Turning now to Mr. M.'s account, we find that he also mentions that Mr. Pinnock, at the beginning of the sitting, wrote a question in the slate, locked it and kept the key. He says nothing, however, as to what was done with the slate at that time, but goes on to describe, as the next events, the examination of the table, the cleaning of ordinary slates, seating themselves at the table, &c. He then writes: "Mr. Davey asked Mr. Pinnock to place the locked slate under his (Mr. Pinnock's) coat and then button up the coat." Then follows his description of the two-slates experiment, which I have quoted above (p. 282), on reference to which it will be seen that Mr. Pinnock placed the locked slate on the table before any writing had been obtained between the two single slates. After the writing between the two slates was obtained, the locked-slate experiment was proceeded with.

Mr. Davey now put his hand on the locked slates which had been left on the table since Mr. Pinnock took them from under his coat; we heard scratching inside.

Putting these accounts together, it is obvious where the opportunities for substitution were given. B might have been substituted for A shortly after A was locked up and while it was resting on the arm-chair as described by Mr. V., so that it was really B that Mr. P. placed in his pocket (a desirable place lest the sitter should think of examining it before A was re-substituted). The re-substitution of A was easy while the sitters were absorbed in the long message that appeared between the two slates.

Compare, with these reports, those of Mr. R. and Mr. L. of the locked-slate experiment in Sitting I. The first mention of this experiment by Mr. L. occurs *after* the experiments with the single slate and with the two slates together. He writes:—

Mr. Davey then produced a "locked slate," which I examined *most minutely*, and, as far as I was able to judge, the surfaces were genuine slate

and had not undergone any process of preparation which would aid him in obtaining writing. A small crumb of pencil was inserted, and the slate closed and locked by Mr. R. The key was then given into my possession. We then placed our hands in an exactly similar position as before, and Mr. R. having repeated the question, "Will the Emperor of Germany live through the year?" I very soon heard the pencil travelling over the surface of the slate. After the lapse of about four minutes the slate was carefully unlocked by Mr. R., and the pencil very much worn was found at the place where the writing ended.

From this account it would seem that the first inspection of the locked slate almost immediately preceded the production of the writing, but it appears from Mr. R.'s account that the slate was inspected and locked at the very beginning of the sitting, and was put by him in the pocket of his coat. After describing the experiments with a single slate and with double slates, he continues:—

The next experiment was with Mr. Davey's closed slate. After it had been produced from my pocket we laid it on the table locked and with the small piece of pencil inside, joined hands as before and the question was put, "Will the Emperor of Germany live through the present year?" Immediately the writing began, exactly the same as on previous occasions, and when after the space of 4 minutes (about) I carefully unlocked the slate we found the following wonderful message.

If the reader will compare these accounts with the accounts of the locked-slate experiment in Sitting VII., and especially with that by Mr. M., he will at once surmise that the locked slate was produced from Mr. R.'s pocket before the communication was obtained between the two slates in the preceding experiment, and that while the sitters were absorbed in its contemplation Mr. Davey substituted B for A. But the important point to notice is not how the trick was done. The important point is that just as we have seen from the reports of Sitting VII. that a witness may describe the steps of the *two-slates experiment* as though they occurred in immediate sequence, with no other experiments intervening, whereas in reality the last steps were separated from the first by an interval of half an hour, during which other experiments were made with a single ordinary slate, and the locked slate also claimed attention:—so here we find, from the reports of Sitting I., that a witness may describe the steps of the *locked-slate experiment* as occurring in immediate sequence, with no other experiments intervening, whereas in reality the last steps were separated from the first by an interval during which various experiments were made with a single slate and with two slates together.

Bearing in mind, then, these two special possibilities of error and also the other possibilities of error to which I have drawn attention on pp. 260, 263, 269, *all of which are sufficiently demonstrated by comparing the reports of the sitters themselves*, let us now consider in detail the

reports of Sittings XI. and XII., which Mr. Wallace has particularly mentioned (*Journal S.P.R.*, March, 1891) as needing explanation.

The report of the experiments in Sitting XI. is as follows:—

[a] After I had finished examining the [locked] slate, Mr. Davey asked me to write in the slate any question I liked while he was absent from the room. Picking up a piece of grey crayon, I wrote the following question: "What is the specific gravity of platinum?" and then having locked the slate and retained the key, I placed the former on the table and the latter in my pocket.

After the lapse of a few minutes I heard a distinct sound as of writing, and on being requested to unlock the slate I there discovered to my great surprise the answer of my question: "We don't know the specific gravity, JOEY." The pencil with which it was written was a little piece which we had enclosed, and which would just rattle between the sides of the folded slate.

Having had my hands on the slate above the table, I can certify that the slate was not touched or tampered with during the time the writing was going on.

[b] Next; having taken an ordinary scholar's slate and placed a fragment of red crayon upon it, Mr. Davey placed it under the flap of the table. I held one side with my hand as before. I then heard the same sound as previously, and when the slate was placed on the table I found the following short address distinctly written: "Dear Mr. S—,—The substitution dodge is good; the chemical is better, but you see by the writing the spirits know a trick worth two of that. This medium is honest, and I am the only true JOEY." The writing was in red crayon, and was in regular parallel straight lines.

[c] Then, again, Mr. Davey requested me to place a small fragment of slate pencil in the lock slate, which latter had been previously cleansed with sponge by me. Respecting the method of closing the slate, &c., everything was done as in the first instance; the slate was locked, and I retained the key.

As soon as the sound of writing was over I picked the slate from off the table, where it had been lying right under my eyes, unlocked it, and read as follows: "We are very pleased to be able to give you this writing under these conditions, because with your special knowledge upon the subject you can negative the theory of antecedent preparation of this slate as advanced by certain wiseacres to explain the mystery.—'JOEY.'" The fact that the pencil when removed from the interior of the slate had diminished in size and showed distinct traces of friction convinces me that it was the pencil and nothing else which produced the caligraphy. If the particles taken from the pencil by friction did not go on the surface of the slate, where could they go?

[d] Lastly, as requested by Mr. Davey, I took a coin from my pocket without looking at it, placed it in an envelope and sealed it up. I am certain that neither Mr. Davey nor myself knew anything about the coin. I then placed it in the book-slate together with a piece of pencil, closed it as previously and deposited it on the table; and having placed my hands with those of Mr. Davey on the upper surface of the slate, waited a short time. I then unlocked the slate as requested, and to my intense amazement I found the date of the coin written, by the side of the envelope containing it.

The seal and envelope (which I have now) remained intact.

This last feat astonished me more than the others, so utterly impossible and abnormal did it appear to me. I may also mention that everything which was used, including the cloth and sponge with which the slates were cleansed, were eagerly and thoroughly scrutinised by me, and I failed to detect anything in the shape of mechanism of any kind.

Now, that this report is very scanty and inadequate is obvious on the face of it, and Mr. Davey assured me that there were other experiments tried of which no mention appears in the report. But I do not propose to depend, for my explanations of this sitting, simply and merely upon either my remembrance of conversations with Mr. Davey or my detailed knowledge of his methods. I am anxious that students should learn how to interpret for themselves such accounts as these, and it seems to me that I can best achieve this result by pointing out, to begin with, some of the most obvious indications, which we find in the report itself, of its deficiencies, afterwards amending the report as regards its most flagrant misdescriptions. We shall then easily see how the tricks were performed.

In the first place, then, let us note that various important circumstances receive no mention whatever in the report. Mr. S. tells us that after he locked the slate in experiment [a] he placed it on the table, and "after the lapse of a few minutes" he heard "a distinct sound as of writing," &c. But he tells us absolutely nothing as to what happened during this interval which he describes as a "few minutes." He does not even mention the return of Mr. Davey to the room. The locked slate might have been changed a hundred times for all that appears to the contrary in the sitter's account. What he certifies is "that the slate was not touched or tampered with *during the time the [sound as of] writing was going on.*" The reader may also notice that the sitter does not say anything about enclosing a piece of pencil when he first locked the slate, but it appears afterwards that "the pencil with which it [the answer] was written was a little piece which we had enclosed." Here is another indication of circumstances omitted. When did "we" enclose it?

Concerning experiment [b] Mr. S. writes: "Having taken an ordinary scholar's slate and placed a fragment of red crayon on it, Mr. Davey placed it under the flap of the table. I held one side with my hand as before." *Before? when?* The sitter makes no mention of any previous experiment where he assisted in holding a slate under the table, yet his remark here carries a clear implication that there was at least one such previous experiment. Again, the sitter says that *Mr. Davey* placed the slate under the table, and he does not say that any examination of it was made by himself. There is, therefore, nothing in his description of this experiment which conflicts with the supposition that

Mr. Davey took a slate with the writing already on one side, slipped it under the table, turned it over, pressed it against the flap, and then asked the sitter to join in holding it against the table.

Similarly, in his account of experiment [c] there is no express statement that conflicts with the supposition that the slate might have been changed during the interval between the sitter's examination of the slate and the beginning of the sound as of writing. The sitter says nothing as to the interval that elapsed between the time of his depositing the slate, after locking it, on the table, and the conclusion of the sound as of writing, except the remark, "where it had been lying right under my eyes," and he does not expressly say that it had been "lying right under his eyes" during the whole of the interval in question. The inference from his remark, comparing it with his account of experiment [a], is that what he meant was that the slate had been "lying right under his eyes" during "the time the [sound as of] writing was going on." Other experiments occupying, say, half an hour might have been in progress between the time of the sitter's locking the slate and hearing the sound as of writing.

Now, we have already seen that witnesses may make numerous positive and express statements which are entirely erroneous, the result being that *if their descriptions are taken as correct*, the phenomena which they describe are inexplicable by trickery. But, curiously enough, in the report before us, the phenomena described in the three first experiments mentioned by the sitter are perfectly explicable by trickery without altering a single word of his accounts of them. Only in his account of experiment [d], and scarcely in that, are the details narrated in such a way that, *as described*, trickery seems impossible.

Let us now revise the report of these four experiments. We may do this by consideration of the methods usually adopted by Mr. Davey as revealed in the whole series of sittings, and by consideration also of the errors to which a witness is liable, as revealed by a comparison of the different reports given of the same sitting. We find, then, that Mr. Davey usually began by giving the locked slate to the sitter to examine, and possibly to write a question therein. He then tried experiments with a single slate and with two slates together, and afterwards recurred to the locked slate. Observing this general order, I amend the report as follows, correcting, of course, by no means all of its fundamental misdescriptions; but—and I desire to lay very special emphasis on this fact—the changes which I do make, excepting the descriptions of the actual substitution of one slate for another, and the doings of Mr. Davey while out of the room, are *all warranted by a comparison of the reports of those sittings where more than one independent report was made*. The additions which I make are in square brackets, and the italicised parts explain how the tricks were done.

[a] After I had finished examining the slate, Mr. Davey asked me to write in the slate any question I liked while he was absent from the room. Picking up a piece of grey crayon, I wrote the following question: "What is the specific gravity of platinum?" and then having locked the slate and retained the key, I placed the former on the table and the latter in my pocket.

[When Mr. Davey returned to the room, he asked me to examine the table carefully, which I did. It was an ordinary table, without any trick-mechanism of any sort. During this interval Mr. Davey substituted B for A. He then gave me some ordinary slates to wash and dry. During this interval Mr. Davey left the room, opened A and answered the question, and returned and re-substituted A for B. Mr. Davey now took three slates.

[b] On one of them (which had not been in the hands of the sitter, and on the under surface of which was the prepared message) he placed a fragment of red crayon. He then covered up this slate with another and left them on the table in full view. On the third slate he also put a fragment of crayon and held it under the table against the flap and asked me to hold it on my side. We asked if we should get any phenomena, and after a short time the sound of writing was heard, and we looked at the slate and found the answer "Yes." We then put our hands on the locked slate.]

[a] After the lapse of a few minutes I heard a distinct sound as of writing, and on being requested to unlock the slate I there discovered to my great surprise the answer of my question: "We don't know the specific gravity, Joey." The pencil with which it was written was a little piece which we had enclosed, and which would just rattle between the sides of the folded slate.

Having had my hands on the slate above the table, I can certify that the slate was not touched or tampered with during the time the writing was going on.

[c] Then, again, Mr. Davey requested me to place a small fragment of slate-pencil in the lock slate, which latter had been previously cleansed with sponge by me. Respecting the method of closing the slate, &c., everything was done as in the first instance; the slate was locked, and I retained the key.

[In the meantime Mr. Davey lifted the top slate of the two on the table, but there was no writing there. He reversed the positions of the two slates so that the slate with the message on the under surface was now on top. Mr. Davey then took these two slates and placed them under the flap of the table, reversing them together as he did so.]

[b] I held one side with my hand as before. I then heard the same sound as previously, and when the slate was placed on the table I found the following short address distinctly written: "Dear Mr. S——,—The substitution dodge is good; the chemical is better, but you see by the writing the spirits know a trick worth two of that. This medium is honest, and I am the only true Joey." The writing was in red crayon, and was in regular parallel straight lines.

[While the sitter was examining this message Mr. Davey substituted B for A. Mr. Davey now put his hands on the locked slate. Very soon the sound of writing began.]

[c] As soon as the sound of writing was over, I picked the slate from off

the table, where it had been lying right under my eyes, unlocked it, and read as follows: "We are very pleased to be able to give you this writing under these conditions, because with your special knowledge upon the subject you can negative the theory of antecedent preparation of this slate as advanced by certain wisacres to explain the mystery.—'Joey.'" The fact that the pencil when removed from the interior of the slate had diminished in size and showed distinct traces of friction convinces me that it was the pencil and nothing else which produced the caligraphy. If the particles taken from the pencil by friction did not go on the surface of the slate, where could they go?

[While the sitter was copying the communication Mr. Davey left the room and placed the coin in envelope, and envelope in slate A, and wrote date (see p. 271) and returned.]

[d] Lastly, as requested by Mr. Davey, I took a coin from my pocket without looking at it, placed it in an envelope and sealed it up. I am certain that neither Mr. Davey nor myself knew anything about the coin. I then placed it in the book-slate together with a piece of pencil, closed it as previously and deposited it on the table.

[Mr. D. showed and explained to me a means commonly employed in producing slate-writing by fraud. While the sitter was examining the trick slate, Mr. Davey substituted A for B. I then took the locked slate.]

And having placed my hands with those of Mr. Davey on the upper surface of the slate, waited a short time. I then unlocked the slate as requested, and to my intense amazement I found the date of the coin written, by the side of the envelope containing it.

The reader now will surely need no further enlightenment as to the details of events in Sitting XII., or indeed in any other sitting of the series, and will, I trust, be disposed to think, with Mrs. Sidgwick and myself, that the most startling result of Mr. Davey's investigation is not the wonder of the tricks themselves, but the extreme unreliability of the accounts given of them by uninitiated witnesses. And we should remember further that these accounts probably represent the most accurate reports, as a whole, of such performances, ever brought together in a series. For the witnesses knew beforehand that they were expected to write out accounts of what occurred, and more important still, the reports were written within two or three days after the sittings. And I may here also refer the reader to my remarks in *Proceedings S.P.R.*, Vol. IV., pp. 396-399, concerning the disadvantages under which Mr. Davey laboured as compared with the ordinary professional medium.

The reader may now ask how far his knowledge of Mr. Davey's methods may prevent him from being imposed upon by fraudulent mediums. Possibly not very much. Frequent observation and practice of them, however, would no doubt be of great assistance. Surreptitious writing on slates held under the table, the substitution, openly made, in the case of slates lying on the table, and the manipulations of two slates where the writing is originally on the under surface of the lower

slate, and eventually is found on the upper surface of the lower slate, are, I have no doubt, in frequent use by fraudulent mediums. Eglinton was apparently in the habit of using all these methods. Mr. Davey purchased some of his devices from an individual who gave him to understand that they had been procured from an American medium. The author of *Revelations of a Spirit-Medium* enumerates eight different methods of apparently producing "independent slate-writing" without the help of a confederate. The most important of these is a variation of the two-slates experiment combined with the trick-reading of pellets, and as I have reports in my possession written by a member of our Society who witnessed this general method in the case of two well-known American mediums, Watkins and W. A. Mansfield, I quote what the author of the book says (pp. 124-126) about this trick.

Another feat that is astonishing and convincing is accomplished with two cleanslates. They are thoroughly cleaned and laid side by side upon a table, on one side of which sits the "sitter," and opposite him the "medium." The "sitter" is now furnished with a small square of soft white paper and requested to write the name of some deceased friend or relative, and with it a question. This being done he is requested to fold it up small, similar to the physician's powder papers. The "medium" has a blank one, folded in the same way and palmed between the index and middle finger of the right hand. When the "sitter" has folded his pellet, the "medium" reaches forth his right hand and takes it between the thumb and index finger and carries it to his forehead. While raising the hand to the head, he slips the written pellet down and the blank one in view. After holding it to his forehead a few seconds he requests the "sitter" to take it and hold it against his own forehead for a moment. Of course the "sitter" gets the blank pellet and the "medium's" hand drops to his lap. He now opens the pellet and reads it. We will say it reads: "John Smith. Will my business succeed? George."

Having read it and palmed it again, he now requests to hold the pellet to his forehead again. He effects the change and says to the "sitter": "You now hold the pellet in your left hand and I will write the answer."

This time the "sitter" has the pellet he wrote, and holds it while the "medium" takes up a slate, and leaning well back, holds the slate with his left hand and body, and writes with the right hand in such a position that the "sitter" cannot see the writing. He writes:

"Dear George,—Your business is sure to succeed beyond your expectations. John Smith."

He now states to the "sitter" that he does not feel at all sure that he has written the correct answer, and reads aloud:

"The papers will never be found. Harry White."

Of course it is not an answer to the question, and the "sitter" so states. The "medium" requests that he open the pellet and see if it is plainly written, with no omission of words.

While he is doing so the slate is deftly turned the other side up. When the sitter reports that the question is properly and plainly written, the "medium" apparently rubs off the line of writing and lays the slate on the table, writing underneath. He now announces that he will let the spirits do

their own writing, and putting the other slate on top of the one containing the writing lays his hands on top of the slate a few seconds, when he opens them, and of course there is no writing.

He now states that he does not believe he can get anything—but, wait, he says, we will put the pellet inside—that may help them.

The pellet is placed on the blank slate and the one containing the writing laid on top. Now the writing is between the slates. In picking up the two slates together, he turns them over, and the writing is on the bottom slate. He now allows the "sitter" to hold the slates alone, and indicates when to open them. They are opened, and much astonishment created by the pointed answer to the question inside the pellet.

It is obvious that there may be many variations of this trick. In the sittings with Watkins and Mansfield, accounts of which were written by Mr. John F. Brown, an Associate Member of the American Branch, each of the sitters (three at one sitting and two at the other) wrote several questions on slips of paper afterwards crumpled or folded into pellets. Some of the medium's surreptitious dealings with their pellets were observed by the sitters. Mr. Brown's account of the two-slates incident at the sitting with Watkins is as follows:—

Watkins "gave the name of George Hall, and soon commenced to write rapidly, covering one side of the slate, then he turned the slate over on his arm so that the writing could not be seen, and wrote a few lines more. He said we had better copy the messages as it would be more interesting for us to have them to refer to. A. took pencil and paper, and Watkins read slowly the following communication. . . . The side of the slate containing the signature was turned towards us without any concealment; the opposite side was kept from our view. After he had finished reading, and while we were looking at the copy, Watkins erased the part we had seen, then turned the slate end for end, rubbed the sponge again over the same side and put the slate on the table with writing on its under side. . . . Not long after the George Hall message, a second attempt was made to get independent writing, a first attempt having been unsuccessful. The previous attempt was shortly before the first message, and its lack of success gave Watkins the excuse for writing himself. A bit of pencil was now laid on the top of a clean slate and the slate with the writing already on it lifted from the table and placed upon the other. Watkins then took hold of them both, waved them in the air, and, as he brought them back, turned them over so that the slate now underneath had writing on the upper side. All this was distinctly followed by us both, and we were looking for writing just where it appeared."

The writing that appeared, as Mr. Brown points out, was doubtless what Watkins had written when he was pretending to write the first part of the George Hall message; and when he pretended to read the George Hall message from the slate he "made it up" as he proceeded until he turned the slate over.

I witnessed yet other slight variations at a sitting with a Mrs. Gillett. Under pretence of "magnetising" the pellets prepared by the sitter, or folding them more tightly, she substitutes a pellet of her own

for one of the sitter's. Reading the sitter's pellet below the table, she writes the answer on one of her own slates, a pile of which, out of the sitter's view, she keeps on a chair by her side. She then takes a second slate, places it on the table, and sponges and dries both sides, after which she takes the first slate, and turning the side upon which she has written towards herself, rubs it in several places with a dry cloth or the ends of her fingers as though cleaning it. She then places it, writing downward, on the other slate on the table, and sponges and dries the upper surface of it. She then pretends to take one of the pellets on the table and put it between the two slates. What she does, however, is to bring the pellet up from below the table, take another of the sitter's pellets on the table into her hand, and place the pellet which she has brought up from below the table between the slates, keeping in her hand the pellet just taken from the top of the table. The final step is to place a rubber band round both slates, in doing which she turns both slates over together. She professes to get the writing without the use of any chalk or pencil. Some of her slates are prepared beforehand with messages or drawings. More interesting, perhaps, because of its boldness, is her method of producing writing on the sitter's own slates. Under pretence of "magnetising" these she cleans them several times, rubs them with her hands, stands them up on end together, and while they are in this position between herself and the sitter she writes with one hand on the slate-side nearest to herself, holding the slates erect with the other hand. Later on, she lays both slates together flat on the table again, the writing being on the undermost surface. She then sponges the upper surface of the top slate, turns it over, and sponges its other surface. She next withdraws the bottom slate, places it on top and sponges its top surface, keeping its under surface carefully concealed. The final step, the reversal, is made, as in the other case, with the help of the rubber band. Mrs. Gillett has probably other methods also. Those which I have described were all that I witnessed at my single sitting with her.

In many records which have been written of experiences with "pellet mediums," the writers affirm that the medium never touched their pellets. In the case of such records we are fully justified in applying our general conclusions, drawn from a consideration of the errors made by sitters with Mr. Davey, although Mr. Davey did not, at any of the sittings reported, use the "pellet" device. If a *bonâ fide* witness can report with confidence that he held his hands on the slate and watched it continuously during the experiment, when in reality he completely forgot about it for an appreciable interval during which it was manipulated by the "medium," he can equally report that he watched his pellets the whole time, and that they were not touched or tampered with by the medium, although as a matter of fact the

medium did touch them, and did substitute one pellet for another. A good instance of this has been brought to my recollection by the following memorandum, which I have just found among my notes:—

October 8th, 1888.

On Saturday morning, October 6th, Mrs. [Q.] called, and during the conversation referred to the medium Watkins, and a conversation we had had concerning him the previous week. She had then been profoundly influenced by sittings which she had with him, and had been most strenuous in denying that Watkins touched the pellets in any way, although admitting that Watkins had rolled up one piece of paper as specimen, and left it on the table, and she was unable to say what had afterwards become of it. She had also been positive that Watkins did not tamper with the slates which she was holding.

On Saturday morning Mrs. [Q.] told me that since leaving me the previous week she had recalled that twice, at least, Watkins had touched the pellets, once when he moved one pellet aside, saying "this is mine," and on another occasion when he took up a pellet and asked her to pinch it up a little smaller.

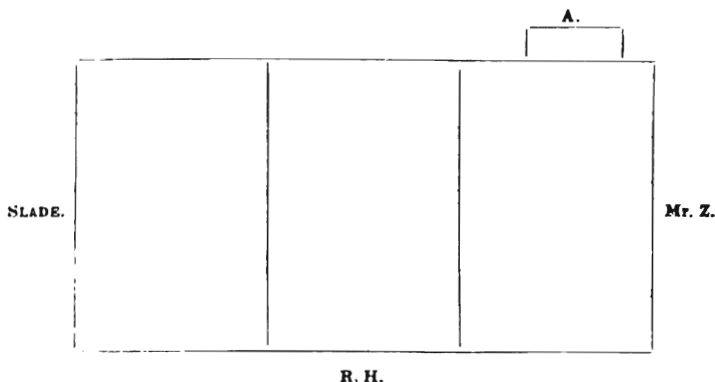
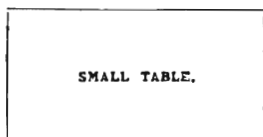
Lapse of memory again, we must note, rather than mal-observation. Similarly, Mr. Padshah originally scouted the suggestion that he had lost perception of the locked slate, but when I assured him positively that he had lost perception of it, he was finally able to discover, in a dim recess of memory, on its way to oblivion, the occasion of the loss. And Mr. Padshah's report was written immediately after the sitting. When we reflect on circumstances like these, how manifestly absurd appears the reliance which so many Spiritualists place upon reports of "psychographic" and kindred phenomena, where the lapse from memory of possibly a single apparently trivial detail vitiates the whole record of the uninitiated witness.

Slade also uses the two-slates method, as appears from the following account of a sitting which I had with him in February, 1891:—

February 10th, 1891.

Sitting with Slade, 11 a.m., February 3rd, at 229, East 14th-street, New York, with Mr. Z.

Second room—simple table with two leaves—large Pembroke. On further side of table was a small table close to the large table and close to the wall, with a cloth over it hanging down. [The accompanying rough diagram will illustrate the positions.]



Slade took two slates from the little table, upon which there were four, and showed them to us. He turned them over and let us turn them over—they were clean. He then replaced them on the small table, and suggested trying to get "raps." He asked if Mr. Davis was present—three raps. Just before this he sat somewhat facing me, with right leg visible and left leg partly so, saying, "Notice my position." Almost immediately, however, he turned square towards the table and his left leg disappeared from view entirely. The raps, which continued for some time—two or three minutes—might easily have been produced by his foot. All our hands were together upon the table.

Slade then took one of the replaced slates from the side table, put a piece of pencil on it (he had a box full of small fragments on the table), and held it with his right hand under the table for a short time. He did not keep the slate close to the table. No result. He then replaced the slate on the table, and then took from the side table one of the two slates which we had not inspected (the surface of which was much newer looking), and placed it on top of the slate No. 1. Then seizing both slates together with his left hand, he turned them over and laid them on the right arm of Mr. Z., slanting away from me. Almost directly the sound as of writing was heard. Slade's fingers were concealed behind the slate, but I observed the tendons working in his wrist.

The message was an ordinary general statement signed by the name Davis. The writing, of course, was already on the under surface of slate No. 3 when Slade took it from the side table.

Then Slade took the clean slate and held it under the table—then said, "They're taking it away from me," and stooped and pressed up against the table as though his arm was being drawn under. Half of the slate then became visible [at A] facing me to the right, then disappeared, and shortly

after struck me at the lower part of my waistcoat and fell to the floor. All this might easily have been done by Slade with his feet.

He placed the slate on the table again and turned it over. It was clean. Then he took it in his left hand, and stooped down somewhat to the left. I then heard a sound as of a slate slipping to the floor, and conjectured from the position of the upper part of his left arm that he was substituting the slate which we had just seen to be clean for slate No. 5, which was probably out of sight and leaning against the leg of the little table. (See *The Seybert Commission on Spiritualism*, p. 74.) In making the substitution I suppose that one of the slates slipped on the floor. However, he brought this slate (No. 5) to the top of the table, took No. 2 or 4 (I am not sure which) and placed No. 5 on top of it. Then seizing both slates together with his right hand, he turned them over and laid them on my left arm slanting away from me and away from Mr. Z. Almost immediately the sound as of writing began—but the slates slid along my arm slightly, bringing Slade's fingers in gentle contact with my arm, and I could feel the motion of a finger or fingers moving backwards and forwards. Slade also noticed the contact, and drew the slates up further so that his hand did not touch my arm.

The writing was a general kind of message, signed by T. Z.—the name of Mr. Z.'s father,—but as Mr. Z., at a sitting ten days before, had been specially asked by Slade what his father's name was, there was no test. The two writings were evidently by the same hand.

After this, Slade asked me to write a question on the side of a slate (No. 2 or 4) remote from himself. I wrote, "Fred, will you give me a test if you are here?"

Slade took the slate in his right hand with the question on the under surface and held it under the table, not close to the leaf. Almost immediately the slate rubbed past my left knee, suggesting that Slade was turning the slate over. I then observed him furtively looking downwards, and he shortly asked me if I had asked two questions. I replied, No. After waiting a little longer, he said that he felt that there was no influence present—the power, he thought, was exhausted, and he could generally tell when it left him. He thought it was no use sitting any longer. He suggested that I should have another sitting soon, alone.

(Mr. Z. thought the writing between the slates remarkable, and had no idea whatever of the trick movements, &c., made by Slade. I explained the details to him immediately after we left.)

There remained to ascertain the truth of my conjecture concerning slate No. 5. I requested permission to thoroughly examine the large table, and began by turning it completely over to my right, so that I could see the corner where I supposed the fifth slate to be. As I did this, Slade carelessly stooped down, picked up the fifth slate from the floor, close to the foot of the small table, and laid it by the other slates on the table.

Further, I have proof that Mr. Davey's general methods are easily discoverable from the reports themselves by persons who have paid special attention to the production of such phenomena by trickery. About a year ago I became acquainted with a Mr. W. S. Davis, of New York, a printer by profession, who was making himself familiar with

the methods used by fraudulent mediums in rope-tying, slate-writing, materialisation, and other "physical phenomena." I requested him to read the accounts of the sittings with Mr. Davey and write me a description of the methods which he supposed Mr. Davey used. His descriptions were practically correct throughout, and indeed he gave additional variations of some of the methods. The only cases where the reports failed to give him sufficient clues were the book incidents, where the communication was prepared beforehand and the book was "forced." Mr. Davis himself has given some sittings which have been regarded as specially remarkable by various Spiritualists of New York and Brooklyn, and brief accounts of these have appeared in some Spiritualistic papers. Mr. Davis informs me that he never claimed that he was assisted in any of his performances by "departed spirits," and as a matter of fact, they were all due to trickery, and he has explained to me his methods in detail. It may be interesting to compare the reports given by "Spiritualists" of a sitting with Mr. Davis with his account of what actually occurred. But I shall first give the explanation of Mr. Davey's "materialisation" séance which has been furnished by Mr. Munro, who assisted Mr. Davey, or rather, I should say, actually produced the phenomena.

The following is the report by Mr. R. of the sitting for materialisation:—

On Thursday evening, the 7th October, 1886, I was present at a séance held by Mr. Davey, at his house. There were in all eight persons, myself included. We took our seats at 7.30 p.m., round an ordinary dining-room table (in the dining-room of the house), which, at Mr. Davey's request, we examined carefully, as also any other objects in the room which demanded our attention. The door of the room was locked, and I placed the key in my pocket, it was also sealed with a slip of gummed paper; the gas was then turned out, so that we were left in darkness. A musical box was wound up, and set to play an air, with the object, as I suppose, to enliven the proceedings! I held Mr. Davey's right hand, his left was held by Mrs. [J.]; the rest joined hands, so that during the séance a continual chain was formed which was maintained the whole time. After we had remained some time thus, various noises as of a shuffling of feet, &c., were heard in different parts of the room, and I distinctly felt something grasp my right foot; almost immediately I was touched on the forehead by a cold hand, which, at Mr. Davey's request, also touched those that wished it. The musical box was lifted, and although it was dark I fancied I saw it, surrounded by a pale light, descend through the air; it certainly struck me lightly on the side of the head, then it was again raised, and deposited on the table.

The hand which touched me was cold and *clammy*; it evidently belonged to a most courteous and obliging spirit, for it did exactly what we desired! and at my wishing to feel the full palm on the back of my head (so as to ascertain its shape and size) it rested there for fully three seconds; it was, however, a somewhat weird experience! Various raps were now heard, a gong sounded

behind my back, and we were told by Mr. Davey to pay attention, as something wonderful was about to take place. Faintly, but gradually growing more distinct, a bluish white light appeared hovering about our heads ; it gradually developed more and more till at length we beheld what we were told was the head of a woman. This apparition was frightful in its ugliness, but so distinct that everyone could see it. The features were distinct, the cheek bones prominent, the nose aquiline, a kind of hood covered the head, and the whole resembled the head of a mummy. After favouring those of the company who wished to see its full face by turning towards them, it gradually vanished in our presence. The next spirit form was more wonderful still ; a thin streak of light appeared behind Mr. Davey, vanished, appeared again in another part of the room, and by degrees developed into the figure of a man. The extremities were hidden in a kind of mist, but the arms, shoulders, and head were visible. The figure was that of an Oriental, a thick black beard covered his face, his head was surrounded by a turban ; in his hands he carried a book which he occasionally held above his head, glancing now and then from underneath it. The face came once so near to me that it appeared to be only two feet from mine. I thus could examine it closely. The eyes were stony and fixed and never moved once. The complexion was not dusky, but very white ; the expression was vacant and listless. After remaining in the room for a few seconds, or rather a minute, the apparition gradually rose, and appeared to pass clean through the ceiling, brushing it audibly as it passed through. The séance here terminated ; the gas was turned on again, and everything appeared the same as when we first sat down ; the door was unlocked, the seal being found intact. I will mention that during the whole of the séance I held Mr. Davey's right hand, with but one exception, when it was found necessary for him to light the gas to see to wind up the musical box, as it had stopped playing. *Nothing was prepared beforehand ; the séance was quite casual ; we could have sat in any room we wished, and we had full liberty to examine everything in the room, even to the contents of Mr. Davey's pockets, which were emptied (before beginning the séance) by him on the table before our eyes !*

October 8th, 1886.

JOHN H. R.

Mr. Munro's Account.

Although Mr. Davey was kind enough to instruct me in the methods of his slate-writing, I was not present at any of the sittings described in Vol. IV. of the *Proceedings*, with the single exception of the materialisation séance, which is the only one published in which confederacy was employed.

The explanation which I am about to give of that séance may be of interest as indicating how much or, I should rather say, how little, accounts of such phenomena correspond with the facts which actually occur. And the sitting for materialisation is eminently adapted for this purpose, inasmuch as the accounts were written so very soon after the sitting ended, two of them at least having been completed on the same evening. At the same time I should like to remind the reader that any explanation I can give of the phenomena can be but partial. I can only inform him of the *mere mechanical processes* which were employed. A full explanation would involve a description of the mental attitude of the sitters and of every word and gesture of the medium whereby that mental state was altered. *This I cannot*

describe, and yet it is of infinitely greater importance than any of the tricks and devices used in the manufacture of the spirit forms. The latter might have been produced by a host of other methods, and the method actually employed does not appear to me to be a matter of much consequence. It is only for the reason stated above that I consider its publication of any value.

With slate-writing séances it is quite different, for in them the mechanical processes—the mere “conjuring”—which can be used are necessarily very limited. But when we darken the room and keep the investigators in ignorance of what they are to observe, the possibilities for trickery are infinitely increased, whilst the control which the medium must exercise over the thoughts and emotions of his sitters need not be so great. It is not, therefore, surprising that Mr. Davey himself introduced the accounts of the sittings for materialisation with a sort of half apology, seeing that the testimony for such phenomena is and must be so much inferior to that for slate-writing. To myself it is even surprising that any explanation should have been called for in the case of a séance where the facilities for deception were so great, and it is almost incredible that an investigator of Mr. Wallace's experience should regard it as of equal or even greater importance than the slate-writing experiments. Considering the sensational nature of the phenomena observed, it is not surprising that the accounts of this sitting show an even greater discrepancy with fact than do those of the slate-writing séances, and I think it will be well to indicate first of all a few of the more important errors.

In the first place, the séance, so far from being the casual affair which Mr. R. supposed, had, in fact, been carefully arranged beforehand. I had been staying with Mr. Davey for several days before the sitting, and we had discussed the details of the materialisation process, and even rehearsed it through, the night before it was given. Mr. Davey had also given a similar séance in the spring of the same year.

In the second place, the locking and sealing of the door, so carefully recorded in all three accounts, was by no means so well calculated to prevent the entrance of agencies from without as the reporters appear to have imagined. The process of “locking” the door, which was performed by Mr. Davey himself, although he subsequently gave the key to Mr. R., consisted in first locking and then unlocking it. Sealing a door with a piece of gummed paper is now a well-known trick. The gummed paper, if properly adjusted, adheres firmly to the door when it is opened, and, when it is again shut, presents all the appearances of never having been moved. The interesting part about the sealing in this case is that the paper was *not* properly adjusted, and at the end of the séance, Mr. Davey, noticing that the gummed paper had fallen down on to the ground, hastily stuck it back in its place and called Mr. R.'s attention to the fact that the door was still sealed—a fact to which he and the other sitters readily gave their testimony.

The third point to which I would call especial attention is the examination of the room, with which every one of the three reporters was quite satisfied, Mrs. J. even going so far as to state “we searched every article of furniture.” In spite of this positive statement, the examination was imperfectly performed, for in that cupboard beneath the bookstand, which was situated furthest from the door, were concealed a gong and several other appliances, including the female spirit herself. Mr. Davey showed his

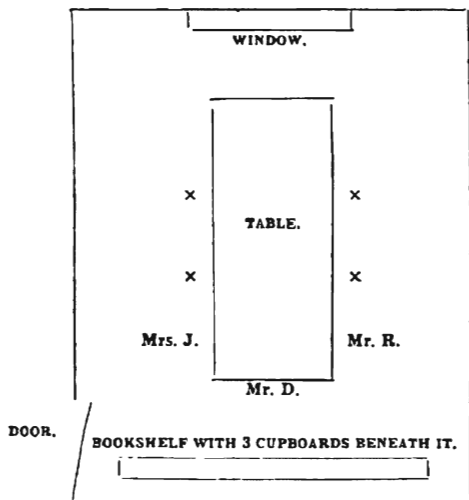
sitters that the other cupboard was empty, but diverted their attention from this one so skilfully, that they were afterwards convinced that they had examined it also.

I will now describe what took place at the séance, step by step so far as I can remember it.

It had been arranged to hold the meeting in the dining-room, and Mr. R.'s statement, "we could have sat in any room we pleased," is not correct. Mr. Davey did, indeed, I believe, offer his sitters their choice of rooms. But had they selected any other room (and there were only two others which could conveniently have been used for the purpose) he could easily have found some excuse for rejecting it in favour of the dining-room. There was no peculiar advantage in this room. It was selected chiefly on account of its size, and because it was not overcrowded with furniture. At the same time the cupboard behind the medium's chair was conveniently situated.

With regard to the sitters, four had been expected. The arrival of Mrs. J. and Miss W. was, as Mrs. J. remarks, quite unexpected. Mr. R. certainly intended to be present, but I am not sure whether he anticipated a séance. On their entrance into the dining-room, free leave was given the sitters to search every article of furniture, and I think the search was pretty well performed until it came to the cupboard under the bookshelf. From it Mr. Davey diverted attention by emptying out his pockets before his audience—a proceeding which they did not fail to remember as a conclusive proof of the completeness of their search.

Mr. Davey now "locked" the door in the manner already described and the gas was turned down. At the same moment I, who had by this time found my way into the passage, and could hear everything which was taking place in the room, turned down the gas outside, in order that no light might enter the room when the time for my own entry should arrive. A large musical box was then started, not, however, as Mr. R. supposed, "to enliven the proceedings," but that it might help with Mr. Davey's shuffling of feet to cover any noise which I might make in entering the room.



I must now explain that Mr. Davey sat at the end of the table with his back turned towards the bookshelf and with the door on his left. Mr. R. was on the right, Mrs. J. on the left of the "medium," the other sitters being seated on either side of the table nearer to the window. Having put out the gas in the passage I opened the door very slowly and came in barefooted, closing the door behind me as noiselessly as I could. In so doing I will not be certain that I was not responsible for one or two of the very conclusive spirit-raps mentioned in the reports. I now went up to behind Mr. Davey's chair, and, after tapping him on the back to indicate my safe arrival, proceeded to raise the musical box and wave it to and fro above the heads of the sitters, and to make raps in different parts of the room.

Throughout the séance I maintained a position behind Mr. Davey's chair, never advancing at any time in the direction of the window. The knocks at the far end of the room and on the ceiling were made with a long stick which I had brought in with me. Touching the sitters on the face, feet, or hands was of course easily managed, and, inasmuch as I had rolled up my sleeves and held my whole hand and forearm in a jug of cold water before coming in, Mr. R.'s description of the cold clammy hand which touched him was not purely imaginative.

I next opened the cupboard beneath the bookshelf behind and to the left of the medium. It contained the gong, which I sounded for some minutes, and also the first spirit-form, which I afterwards divested of the black cloth with which it was draped. This spirit is graphically described by Mr. R. as "an apparition frightful in its ugliness, with cheekbones prominent and nose aquiline, the whole resembling the head of a mummy." It was prepared as follows:—A mask was taken and fixed upon a thick piece of cardboard. Muslin was arranged round the mask, and a thick collar of cardboard coated with luminous paint encircled the whole. The collar had been exposed to the sun throughout the day, so that when I uncovered the form it was rendered distinctly visible by the light thrown upon it by the now luminous collar. This spirit-face is interesting as indicating one method of producing materialisation phenomena without the aid of an accomplice, for a conjurer of Mr. Davey's skill would have had but little difficulty in manipulating it in my absence.

The second spirit was personated by myself. A turban was fixed upon my head, a theatrical beard covered my chin, muslin drapery hung about my shoulders. The book from which I read was a portfolio coated inside with luminous paint. It was concealed in the cupboard, where it lay wrapped up in black cloth, and when this covering was removed the book gaped a little, and so gave rise to the thin streak of light which Mr. R. describes. Before materialising, I mounted up on to the back part of Mr. Davey's chair, from which position I gained several advantages. At one moment I could bend forwards so as to appear close to the table in front of the medium, and at another, by standing upright, I could bring my head close to the ceiling. Indeed, the range of possible movement is so great, and the effects so startling, that many people have difficulty in believing the above explanation until they have seen the process repeated in a lighted room. My face and shoulders were rendered visible by the light thrown upon them by the open "book" which I was supposed to be reading, so that Mr. R. could

not possibly have seen me when I held it above my head. For the "fixed and motionless" condition of my eyes I cannot account, the pallor of my face was due to flour, "the vacant and listless expression" is natural to me.

The statement that the apparition appeared to pass clean through the ceiling with a scraping noise occurs in all three reports. It is a curious mistake, founded on a blunder which I made in the acting of my part—a blunder so serious that at the time I thought I had—in part at any rate—betrayed the secret of our ghostly methods. When I had, still standing on Mr. Davey's chair, risen to my whole height, I gradually elevated the "open" book above my head, shut it and firmly pressed the two sides of the cover together. But the portfolio had been exposed to the sun all the day and the cover had in consequence become warped, so that its free margins were bent away from one another. When I pressed them together, they adhered for an instant and then burst asunder with a loud report which was mistaken by the listeners for the brushing of the spirit form against the ceiling.

The séance did not terminate immediately after this, as Mr. R.'s account seems to suggest, but a very considerable interval elapsed, during which I slowly found my way out of the room. Mr. Davey then lit the gas in the dining-room, whilst I at the same time turned up the gas in the passage outside and then retreated upstairs—there to remain till the sitters should depart. I believe the statement that the medium's hands were held continuously throughout the séance except when he was turning on the musical box or lighting the gas is perfectly correct.

And now I think I have sufficiently explained the methods employed in this materialisation séance, and the reader has probably already long ago come to the conclusion that the sitters were in this case peculiarly unscientific and ill-suited for the investigation of these phenomena. To have neglected to lock the door themselves and yet to suppose it had been carefully locked, to have omitted to search in one of the cupboards and yet to imagine they had searched "every article of furniture," does indeed appear extraordinary neglect and carelessness. And yet I do not think there are many persons who would have taken these precautions, simple as they seem, or, if they had done so, would not have neglected other tests equally important. After all, their omitting to lock the door themselves was not an important error on the part of the sitters, since nothing would have been easier than for Mr. Davey to have provided me with a duplicate key, although I will not be sure whether he had two keys in this particular case.

I may also add that the cupboard, in which the gong and other materialisation apparatus were concealed, was only a small side cupboard wholly hidden from view by the door of the large central compartment when the latter was opened, and it needed a very careful investigation to discern that it did not form part of the central cupboard itself. The omissions, therefore, of the sitters are not so absurd as they at first appear. Let the reader also remember that Mr. Davey had given séances more or less similar to this one before other sitters, and yet in no case had any suspicion of his *modus operandi* entered their heads. I may further mention that in one case I had assisted in the production of the phenomena (which, however, did not in this case include materialisation) when the sitting was not held in the medium's own house.

For my own part, I think that the three published reports of this sitting are by no means extraordinary for their inaccuracy, and this conclusion is borne out by a reference to other reports of séances—reports by both sceptics and Spiritualists. Except in those rare cases in which I was myself present at the sitting, it is impossible for me to say where exactly the misstatements came in. But in most of the accounts which I have read there are grave omissions, in many there are positive statements about facts, which the writer could not possibly have known, and in almost all there is a confusion between the phenomena observed and the inferences drawn from those phenomena. And this is true even of the accounts written by trained scientific men—even of what I may call the classic literature of Spiritualism.

The errors of the reports appear even less striking when we take into account the fact that the accuracy of a report naturally varies inversely with the miraculous and sensational nature of the phenomena. If reports of slate-writing séances are full of mistakes, those of materialisation séances must be much more so. Indeed, I doubt whether the most scientific and unemotional of men would be capable of giving an accurate account of every detail they had seen after having been in the presence of the "figure frightful in its ugliness," or of that other form with the stony and fixed eyes which Mr. R. describes. But, even so, the results are extraordinary, unless one recognises their true explanation, which is to be found not in the inferiority of the sitters but in the superiority of the medium.

The methods devised by Mr. Davey were simple enough—so simple that one is astonished at his boldness in using them. But, as I have already pointed out, the mere mechanical means which he used were nothing, the personality of the medium was everything. Had silence been maintained throughout the séance, success would have been impossible. Had Mr. Davey and myself changed parts it would have been equally impossible. There are few men, indeed, who with such simple contrivances could have produced so amazing an effect on the minds of the sitters. Professional mediums would probably laugh at the clumsiness of his methods. But he had a power which they lack—a power which more than compensated for any want of conjuring dexterity or experience in deceiving. He had such a control over the sitters' minds that he could divert their attention almost whenever he pleased; he could persuade them they had seen what they had not seen; he could make their very tests a trap into which they should themselves fall. And Mr. Wallace is quite right in supposing that this séance cannot be explained as a simple mechanical or sleight of hand trick. But the extra something which is wanting is not Spiritualism, it has no connection with Spiritualism. It is nothing else than the extraordinary genius of Mr. Davey.

Let us now turn to an account by Spiritualists of a sitting with Mr. W. S. Davis, to whom I have referred above (p. 295). Prior to his giving sittings himself, Mr. Davis had been very aggressive in denouncing bogus mediums, and, moreover, not a few persons were made aware that he had no "mediumistic" power at all. Further, the *New York Herald*, of June 13th, 1891, contained an article on the subject

explaining what Mr. Davis proposed to do, and quoting some letters written by Mr. Davis to a reporter in proof of its assertions. Mr. Davis wrote, *inter alia* :—

The great argument with the Spiritualists is this :—Are we deceived? Are we not as capable of detecting trickery as you are? We are shrewd in business matters, why should we be less shrewd in this? . . . Now, my object in giving these séances is to get evidence that people can be deceived very easily. . . . All that I do is trickery, and I am doing just exactly what all of their famous mediums have been and are now doing.

This article and another warning article which appeared in *The Banner of Light*, a Spiritualistic paper, caused considerable disquiet among the Spiritualists who were endorsing Mr. Davis's manifestations as genuine. Finally, Mr. Davis "expressed a desire to give a séance under strictly test conditions and let a committee judge." This offer was accepted. In the following account I abridge from the statement made by Mr. Davis :—

The date for the test séance was July 23rd, 1891, and only 15 persons were permitted to attend. The séance was a success, and congratulations were plentiful. The following report appeared in *The Better Way* of August 15th, 1891 :—

" AN ENDORSEMENT.

" To the Editor of *The Better Way*.

" DEAR SIR,—We, the undersigned, tested the powers of W. S. Davis on Thursday evening, July 23rd, 1891, by applying such conditions as, in our judgment, absolutely precluded the possibility of fraud. The medium submitted to severe tying. The only door leading into the séance-room was locked, sealed, and carefully watched. The medium permitted us to put him into a large bag so that not even his head was exposed, and the sealing, &c., was done by us, and not by confederates. We practically had charge of the séance from beginning to end, and there were no friends of the medium present not equally known to us. The room was carefully examined before the séance, and during the séance the cabinet was opened for examination at very frequent intervals. Under these stringent conditions wonderful manifestations of spirit-power were given without delay, and immediately after the cabinet curtain was drawn in each case.

" It is worthy of note that writing was obtained on a slate which was locked up in a box and doubly secured by the liberal application of sealing wax, when the medium did not touch the box or slate.

" James B. Bogert, Elizabeth F. Kurth, Mrs. M. T. Morris, Hermann Handrich, Win. C. Coss, Elizabeth A. Smith, John M. Coombs, Eleanor Dailey, Elizabeth S. Davis, Alexander S. Davis, Louis Sherk, W. P. Munroe, Mrs. W. P. Munroe, Margaret Smith."

The following report also appeared in *The Progressive Thinker* for August 8th, 1891, and an account by Mr. Handrich was published in *Psychische Studien* for October, 1891 :—

"The undersigned, a correspondent for the *Psychische Studien*, of Leipzig, Germany, and a number of prominent Spiritualists and mediums of Brooklyn,

received invitations from Mr. W. S. Davis to attend a séance under test conditions, in order to convince his friends of the genuineness of his mediumistic gifts. The handsome residence of Mrs. M. Towers, a lady highly esteemed by her friends, and of prominent social standing, had been placed at the disposition of Mr. Davis and members of the circle. As I have previously mentioned in a letter addressed to Mr. Davis (in relation to a former séance which was held in the same premises), that confederates, if any, could find an easy access behind the curtain which fenced off a corner of the large sitting-room, I was requested by the medium to seal the only door leading to the room from the vestibule of the house, to which I gladly consented. Double walls, trap doors, and other hiding places are out of question; notwithstanding, I convinced myself by ocular inspection, and guided by Mr. Bogert, Inspector of Buildings. Next, I assisted in tying the wrists of the medium, and I know positively that it was not legerdemainly done, as the blood hardly could circulate under the firm pressure of a hard rope which was used for this purpose. A few minutes after the medium took his seat in the corner, hidden by the curtain which separated him from the spectators, brilliant sparks and lights appeared in front of it; no electric press-the-button affair, but genuine phenomena of occult power. Bells were ringing; one of them, and likewise a slate, were thrown over the curtain, which extended in height only about four feet from the floor. Mr. Wicks, the master of ceremonies, drew back the curtain. The medium extended his hands, which by close examination and bright light bore witness that they had not been untied, as the rope actually cut itself into the flesh, and the impressions of its texture were distinctly visible on the skin of the upper part of the wrists after the rope was cut through with a knife.

“Unbound, the medium again sat himself in the corner. The curtain was drawn; a long rope, besides the small one, was handed over the curtain by Mr. Wicks, and a few minutes after it was drawn back again and the medium was securely tied to the chair. Remaining in this position, his coat was taken off and put on again; musical instruments were played, accompanying the songs of the audience, and other manifestations witnessed, whilst the rope, after repeated examinations, proved not to have been tampered with in any way or manner, of which I gladly and conscientiously bear witness, as I convinced myself of the fact.

“The next test to which the medium submitted, after having been delivered of his fetters by the same occult intelligence which bound him to the chair, was to be put into a bag. I also assisted in this operation, and after the bag was shut and sealed over the medium's head, I knew that there was no other exit for him except by getting out where he was put in. In this position the medium was placed on his chair in the corner, and with him a small wooden chest containing an unprepared clean slate. The chest was thoroughly examined by me and others; the padlock, the cover, and buttons sealed up, and then placed in the corner where the medium was seated. After a short pause, Mr. Wicks and myself got the medium out of the bag and the slate out of the chest, and found written thereon: ‘We have done enough. H.’ (H. stands for Haicidoka, the *nom de plume* of the medium's control.) The seals on the door, padlock, bag, and chest were found unbroken, to which I testify without fear or favour.

“HERMANN HANDRICH.”

I will now describe just exactly what did occur at the test séance.

After the company was seated, I took a seat in the "cabinet." Mr. Wicks asked the people to sing. While they were singing "Nearer, my God, to Thee," Mr. Wicks extinguished the light and handed to me, in the darkness, an electric battery, to which was connected by a wire a small incandescent lamp. Lights were shown by "pressing the button," although Mr. Handrich states that such was not the case. Various results were produced by moving the lamp from one place to another, by short and long pressure on the button, and by wrapping different coloured tissue paper around the lamp, &c.

Mr. Wicks then gave me a "transparency" which had been hidden behind a large picture hanging on the wall. The lamp was placed inside of the thin box. The button was pressed and a life-sized hand was shown. This was the end of that part of the show, and in a few minutes Mr. Wicks asked if a little singing would increase the forces, and was answered by two raps, meaning "don't know." Being anxious to get more phenomena they sang, which enabled Mr. W. to get the lamp and "transparency" away from me without being heard.

After the room was lighted, the cabinet curtain was removed and I came out of the pretended trance and stated to the company that conditions seemed to be favourable and that we would commence to test matters. . . .

Mr. Handrich and Mr. Bogert fastened the door shut by locking it and sticking strips of paper from the door to the door-case with sealing wax. . . .

The "first test" consisted of being tied by occult agency, having my coat removed without tampering with the ropes, and permitting the company to examine the fastenings as long and as often as desired.

After I got well "under control" Mr. Wicks hid me from view by drawing the curtain. He then threw over the curtain a long and a short rope. The short rope was not used, but was substituted by another rope carefully knotted, &c. This prepared rope is well arranged, it generally requiring considerable time to make it. Braided cotton sash cord is used. The knots are made when the rope is wet and are held together by driving in soft smooth iron nails which are filed off close and hidden by working the rope over them. This is the "Spirit Tie Harness." I got it from Frank Vanderbilt, an old-time medium who flourished when the Eddy family, Eva Fay, the Davenport Brothers, and many others were in the business. . . .

In my tie the principal knot is in plain view and people think it is the last knot tied and they know it is a slip knot. They never for a minute seem to think that any other knot is of any importance. After a very careful examination of the ropes it is generally settled that the trick is in my coat, if the investigator happens to be of the opinion that it is a trick. . . .

In talking with me about this particular manifestation, the Spiritualists argue in this way: "Kellar and others do this in the theatres, but they do not believe that Kellar could do it under test conditions unless he is a medium—and where is the proof that he is not a medium?"

The next "test" consisted in permitting the company to bind my wrists together with stout twine. When I announced that I would submit to this test, Mr. Handrich took from his pocket a thin copper wire covered with cloth, and asked permission to bind me with it. I said certainly, and walked

over to him remarking that it was immaterial to me who did the tying or brought the string. He said it isn't string, it is wire. I said I thought that metals of any kind would produce very uncomfortable sensations in my wrists, as wire would act as a conductor of electricity. He apologised and said that the twine would serve the purpose fully as well. . . . I then bared my left arm and asked Mr. Bogert to tie the twine around the wrist. He did the tying so loose that I could have pulled my hand through. I told him to untie it and make a better job of it. He declined to do so, saying that he had implicit confidence in me and would not stop the circulation of blood for anybody. (You see he would have been as good as a confederate, so far as the tying is concerned, and it would not have been necessary for me to resort to the regular trick of stealing slack either.) I pretended to show a little temper, and said it was a test séance, and that I wanted everything done thoroughly. Mr. Bogert then tied the cord around my wrist very tightly,—the knot being on the inside of the wrist. I presented my left arm with the palm of the hand up. I then went to another person and had another knot added to the ones Mr. Bogert had made—I went to other persons, allowing each to make more knots. All of this looked as though I was being well tied, but my real object in going from one to another to have more knots made was to take a turn around my wrist with one end of the twine. This is sleight of hand, and is not noticed when done properly. One end of the twine is wound around the wrist after the last knot on the left wrist has been made, just as I am in the act of telling a person to take the other end and pull on it; then after taking the hitch on the first end I ask another person to pull on that end. Then I put my right arm exactly over my left and request the two persons to bring the two ends together and tie them tightly. Then I go from one to another, asking each person to add a knot. Then the knots are fastened with sealing wax. I then take a seat in the cabinet and sit there in full view until I get "under control," then the curtain is drawn. I immediately turn my arms in opposite directions, which takes the turn out of the rope, and my hands are free. I can take my hands out of and get back into the fastenings with great quickness, which I did on this occasion.

The next test consisted of being tied up in a bag. The end of the bag is gathered together by passing a twine through brass eyelet-holes and drawing the bag together by pulling the two ends of the string. When the bag is being drawn up over my head, I catch one of the loops of the twine and pull in as much slack as I can. This is similar to Mrs. Martin's neck-tie exposed by you [At a rope-tying materialisation séance which I attended in New York.—R.H.], but is much better, since I do not have to close a door to pull in slack. Mr. Wicks is prepared to erase any marks put on the ropes, and after the fastenings are pronounced intact he immediately cuts the rope in a number of places while he holds the bag up and while I am getting the extra rope in my pocket. The bag tie knot is also fastened with wax. This looks good to the audience and it apparently increases the value of the test, but the sealing is really a help to the trick, as it makes it impossible to untie the knot after the performance, and the string has to be cut.

The next "test" was to get writing on a slate locked up in a box while I was in the bag. You should have seen them examine the slate. They

washed it very carefully ; held it against a light to burn off a possible prepared message written in sympathetic inks. Little or no attention was paid to the box. The slate was put into the box. The box was then closed and locked. The key-hole of the lock was covered by a piece of paper which was fastened with sealing wax. Several strips of paper were wound around the padlock and fastened with sealing wax. Then the lid and box were fastened together by sticking paper, &c.

After I got "under control" again (in the bag) and while they were singing another hymn, the lights were lowered, the cabinet curtain drawn, and the box was put into the cabinet. All that I had to do was to get my head and arms out of the bag, and push in one end of the box and take the slate out. [Here Mr. Davis describes the trick-box, with diagrams.—R. H.]

The most singular thing in connection with this "test séance" is the fact that the tests were all "forced" and nobody thought of it. But why should they have thought of it since nearly everything called "tests," so far as public mediums are concerned, are forced? . . . The manifestations occurring while I was tied in the bag, &c., consisted of performing on the banjo, flute, violin, bones, writing on slates, exhibiting tambourine, bells and hands over the curtain, &c.

Mr. Davis, at my request, repeated the above performances in detail before a group of our members, including myself, in New York, and after each performance he illustrated his methods in full light to the complete satisfaction of all the persons present. Mr. Davis informs me that he and Mr. Wicks "will undertake to explain the methods of, and reproduce the performance of, any slate-writing, fire-test, rope-tying, etherealising, and materialising medium who will go before a committee of your Society and permit us to be present."

Returning now to the accounts which I have given of Mr. Davey's methods,—in connection with the statement made by Mr. Wallace that unless *all* Mr. Davey's phenomena can be explained by "trick," he will be confirmed in his "belief that Mr. Davey was really a medium as well as a conjurer,"—what is the value of the testimony to such phenomena given by persons who are in the position of Mr. Wallace, unable to distinguish between the avowed medium and the avowed and proved conjurer? Many other Spiritualists have apparently held the same position. Thus, Mr. Dixon, writing to *The Spiritualist* in 1875, said that he was "thoroughly nonplussed" by Dr. Lynn's cabinet performance.

Unless the spirits did "it," I am utterly at a loss how to account for it, and my only way out of the difficulty, when questioned by my friends, was to claim this part of the performance as a genuine piece of Spiritualism. . . . I am sure the cause of Spiritualism would gain immensely if Lynn's séance [?] could be explained. . . . If I had not paid my money for an evening with Dr. Lynn I should have come away from it as a

Spiritualist séance with the most perfect assurance that the manifestations were genuine.

Mr. Gledstones, writing in the same year, 1875, points to the probability of the medium's *doubles* doing the feats, and strongly suggests that Maskelyne and Cook project arms from their bodies! Mr. Coleman, writing in 1874, says:—

All inquirers who desire to study the psychological character of spiritual manifestations should be recommended to visit Messrs. M. and C. [Maskelyne and Cook], who have gone on practising them with a perseverance worthy of a better aim, and who are, in my opinion, the best of living mediums.

Somewhat similarly, Mr. Wallace in 1877 describes a performance of Dr. Lynn's at the Royal Aquarium, including a cabinet trick, and the moving and floating of a table about the stage, two feet from the floor. He says:—

Your readers must be told that Dr. Lynn is not the performer; but a gentleman who is introduced as "a medium—a real medium"; and I must say I believe him to be one. . . .

A week later "M.A. (Oxon.*)" added his testimony as follows, in a passage which I quoted in my previous article:—

I am glad to see that Mr. Alfred Wallace agrees, after seeing Lynn's medium, with the substance of my letter in your issue of July 6th. Given mediumship and shamelessness enough so to prostitute it, and conjuring can, no doubt, be made sufficiently bewildering. It is sheer nonsense to treat such performances as Maskelyne's, Lynn's, and some that have been shown at the Crystal Palace, as "common conjuring." Mr. Wallace positively says, "If you think it is all juggling, point out exactly where the difference lies between it and mediumistic phenomena."

It is not surprising that statements of this kind should have called forth such an emphatic remonstrance as the following from Mr. Coates, who at the same time professed his belief in Spiritualism:—

The man who cannot distinguish between mediumship and conjuring, though he be a doctor of law, science, medicine, or divinity—his evidence is shaky, his theories not worth the paper they are written on, and his advocacy the cause had better be without.

Mr. Wallace, however, does not seem to have made any advance since 1877 in his discrimination between conjuring and alleged mediumship of the kind we are considering. Why? Is it not obviously because no discrimination *can* be made? And accordingly many Spiritualists continue to call conjurers "mediums." A recent instance occurs in a communication to *Light* for October 24th, 1891, by "T. W." He writes that "we may say, without prevarication, that the conjurers have utilised physical Spiritism." He refers to a coin trick by Bosco, and apparently regards it as involving "mediumship." (It was probably a variation of the coin trick described in *Modern Magic*,

p. 161.) He also mentions the "famous conjurer," M. Duprez, and says: "He must be a powerful physical medium. I saw his performance some years ago, and . . . I believe that there is scarcely a 'trick' performed in which he is not aided or supplanted by unseen force." Now, statements like these, absurd as they seem to persons familiar with conjuring operations, do not originate simply and merely from ignorance of conjuring, and the remedy is not, simply and merely, to become acquainted with certain trick-devices.¹ The remedy for such absurdity is to learn that an uninitiated witness cannot describe to himself the real conditions under which the feats were performed, because his powers of observation and memory are inadequate for the purpose. He may *rightly* conclude that under such and such conditions the feats are inexplicable by conjuring, but he *wrongly* concludes that the conditions were as he describes them.

The plain result from our investigation is that the great bulk of the testimony to the "physical" marvels of Modern Spiritualism is not entitled to serious consideration as affording any evidence of supernatural phenomena. I may conclude with a warning which I venture to give specially to our members in America, viz., that nearly all professional mediums form a gang of vulgar tricksters who are more or less in league with one another. Associated with this combination, here and there, are certain other persons who either have been, or intend to be, professional mediums, and who are equally untrustworthy. These tricksters are continually deceiving fresh groups of uninitiated observers of their performances, and I frequently receive

¹Of course a knowledge of trick-devices is likely to make a witness hesitate in many cases before concluding that a certain "phenomenon" was not produced by ordinary means. But it sometimes acts the other way, especially if the witness thinks that he is already an expert. The well-known conjurer Kellar was not familiar with special "slate-writing" methods when he was in India in 1882, and Eglinton was able to deceive him. Kellar afterwards changed his opinion as to Eglinton's phenomena when he became familiar with the methods. Yet even at this later date, he was unable, in conversation with me, to offer any explanation of the production of writing between slates screwed together and sealed, &c., as described above, though he did not suppose it was other than a trick. Similarly it seems to me quite likely that an expert in the different trick-methods of opening sealed envelopes might be baffled by the trick described as follows in *Revelations of a Spirit-Medium*, pp. 178-9:—

"But the smoothest thing in the sealed letter reading, and the one that has puzzled the people for years, is usually done in connection with 'slate-writing.' The 'sitter' is furnished with a heavy white envelope, of small size, and a white card of the size of an ordinary visiting card. He is requested to write the name of a spirit friend on the card, and to write one or not more than two questions with it. After he has written as requested, he is instructed to place the card in the envelope with the writing next the smooth side and away from the glue. This being done, he is furnished with letter-wax with which he seals the seams to prevent the envelope being opened.

"The 'medium' now takes his seat at the table opposite his sitter and near a

accounts of them which, I need hardly say, are entirely worthless for the purposes of our investigation. It is not from the professional mediums—so numerous in the United States—for “slate-writing,” “materialisation,” and kindred performances, that we can look for any enlightenment whatever, on the positive side, in the course of Psychical Research.

window. Placing the envelope on a slate he thrusts it beneath the table. After sitting long enough to do his work, raps are heard on the slate, and, withdrawing it, he hands it to the ‘sitter.’ The envelope still lies on the slate, and there is no evidence of its having been touched. The seals are intact, and there is not a mark or mar on it.

“On the slate is written the replies to his questions, and the name of the spirit addressed is signed at the bottom of the message.”

The expert in opening letters would rightly conclude that the envelope had not been opened, and if he did not allow a margin for his ignorance of special devices, he might be disposed to attribute the phenomenon to some “clairvoyant” power.

“In order to perform this trick, do just as the ‘medium’ did up to the time he placed or held the slate beneath the table. Instead of holding it there with your hand, slip one corner between your leg and the seat of the chair. Thus you are holding it by sitting on it. Your hand is now free to do as you choose with. Your ‘sitter’ cannot see your movements, for the table is interposed. Put your fingers into the ticket pocket of your coat and bring out a small sponge that is saturated with alcohol; dampen the envelope over the card and you can easily read the name and question. Write the answer and sign the name addressed, and your ‘sitter’ will be ‘paralysed’ with astonishment.

“Nothing will serve to dampen the envelope but alcohol. Nothing else will allow of your reading the writing on the enclosed card, and nothing else will dry out quickly enough and leave absolutely no traces of any manipulation. Water will not dry out quick enough, and when it *does* dry leaves the envelope shrunken where it was applied, thus leading your ‘sitter’ to suspect that you have not played fair.”