

*To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.*

DEAR SIR,—In reply to Mr. Wallace's letter, my informant as to the musical-box matter was Mr. H. B. Lodge, of Huddersfield, the gentleman who was the instrument of the crushing exposure of Monck, in October, 1876. Not caring to rest entirely on my own recollection of facts which took place 13 years ago, I have submitted Mr. Wallace's letter to Mr. Lodge, who replies as follows :—

“Your statement as to Dr. Monck's musical-box trick is quite correct. I put the cigar-box over the working part of the musical-box with my own hands, and Monck did not get a sound from it till this was done, and even then only in a very dim light. At first I was puzzled ; then it struck me how it was done, and I was so certain about it that at the end of the séance I offered the doctor a handsome sum (whether £20 or £50 I cannot now be certain, but I think the latter) if he would allow me to search him and I did not find both a duplicate musical-box and a ‘spirit hand’ we had seen in the course of the manifestations. I further told him that if I failed to do so I would not only make him the most abject apology, but would become a Spiritualist and work for the cause to the very utmost of my power. All the sitters except myself and one other gentleman were Spiritualists, and they agreed that my offer was a fair one. In fact, his host (Mr. Hepplestone) said to the doctor, ‘If you have nothing concealed, why not allow Mr. Lodge to see for himself? We are believers, and we also believe Mr. Lodge to be an honest investigator,’ or something to that effect. The other Spiritualists present also urged Monck to consent, but instead of doing so, he struck me in the face, and then rushed up to his bedroom and locked himself in. After some time a policeman was fetched, and the door burst in ; and if it had not been for an open window and a couple of sheets tied to the waterspout, I have no doubt some of us would have thought the doctor had been ‘spirited’ away. The Rev. Dr. Monck had certainly ‘flown,’ and without either hat or overcoat. No doubt he took many things with him. A small box (about 10 or 12 inches by six), which he had brought into the séance with him was missing, and the ‘hand’ and duplicate musical-box used at the séance would naturally be on his person ; but he left plenty of other evidence behind, for in two lock-up boxes and a large-sized bath (locked and strapped) we found scores of things such as ‘spirit hands,’ ‘spirit faces,’ ‘floating rods,’ ‘illuminated names,’ ‘spirit lamps,’ and any quantity of white gauze, in fact, all sorts of things to produce so-called ‘manifestations.’ We also found some 60 or 80 keys, some of them being skeleton keys.

“The drum in the musical-box which was supposed to play *never moved*, or

if it did, the spirits must have moved it back again to the point from which it started.

"We made every endeavour to trace the small box which Monck had carried off with him when he escaped out of the window, but without effect. When he was admitted to bail, I went to the railway station and saw him off. He waved his hand by way of 'good-bye,' and when the train had got perhaps 30 or 40 yards out, he held this very box out of the window, shook it, and laughed, as much as to say, 'I have done you here, at all events.'"

The sequel will be in the recollection of most of your readers, or may be found recorded in the local newspapers. The matter was taken up by the Huddersfield Superintendent of Police, Mr. Hilton, and after one or two appearances before the magistrates, Dr. Monck was sentenced (with the hearty approval of the local Spiritualists) to three months' imprisonment as a rogue and a vagabond.

So stands the evidence as to the musical-box matter. It is only circumstantial, it is true, but amply sufficient, I think, to satisfy any unprejudiced person. The charge was clear and precise. A definite assertion was made that this "manifestation" was produced by means of a duplicate musical-box on the person of the medium, and he was challenged to disprove it by submitting to a search. If he was innocent, he had everything to gain and nothing to lose by doing so. He would not only have pocketed a handsome money *solatium*, but increased his own prestige, and poured shame and confusion upon the head of his accuser. He was surrounded by friends and believers, only too eager that he should justify himself, and pressing him to comply. Can any sane person doubt that *if he could*, he would have done so? Instead of this, he flies panic-stricken, leaving behind him damning evidence of habitual imposture, in the shape of a whole arsenal of fraudulent machinery.

Mr. Wallace argues that my explanation is incorrect, because *nearly a year later* he was present at a séance with Monck where an *uncovered* musical-box movement played and stopped at command, and Mr. Wallace adds: "Each person in succession placed his hands on the box, and felt it play or stop when desired, *thus proving that it was not another box under the table which played.*"

Is this remarkable? The wonder would rather have been if Monck, after the undesirable publicity given to that second box up the leg of his trousers, had *not* amended his *modus operandi*. He must have sadly wasted those three months of enforced seclusion, if he did not come forth with a few new devices for the confusion of the unwary, and probably an improved musical-box trick was among them. Mr. Wallace's own note shows that he knew all about the suggested box under the table, and was prepared for that contrivance; but probably he was taken in by some device equally simple. "Each person in succession placed his hands on the box, and *felt* it play or stop when desired." Why *felt*? Obviously because there was not light enough to *see* it play or stop. Does any man ever put out his hand to *feel* whether a thing is in motion, when his eyes assure him that it is so? It is therefore a mere

figure of speech to say that "the hands of the spectators assisted their eyes and ears," for their eyes could have had no real share in the matter. With a far less degree of obscurity than is here indicated, a black silk thread is perfectly invisible, and the use of such a thread would be amply sufficient (to anyone having the most elementary knowledge of conjuring expedients) to account for the playing and stopping of the actual box on the table.

The only real marvel in the facts stated is that a gentleman of the scientific eminence of Mr. A. R. Wallace should, after the overwhelming exposure of October, 1876, again be found sitting with a proved humbug like Monck. The fact illustrates the weakest point of the Spiritualist creed : viz., the willingness of believers not merely to hush up proved fraud, but again to give credence to the quasi-supernatural powers of the imposter. There is hardly a medium known to fame who has not been detected in flagrant trickery, but the most scathing exposure does not shake the firm faith of thorough-going Spiritualists. However grossly the offender may have deceived others, so long as they themselves have not detected him in fraud (as they probably would not till the end of time), they still fraternise with him, "sit" with him, take grave notes of his "manifestations." What wonder, then, that less credulous persons are chary of accepting their evidence !

ANGELO LEWIS ("Professor Hoffmann").

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