Spiralitism and Conjurors.

By Alfred Russel Wallace.

A short time since there was a note in The Spiritualist to the effect that Dr. Lynn was exhibiting "burlesques of spiritual phenomena at the Aquarium." From Dr. Lynn's antecedents it seemed probable that this should be so, but probabilities are not facts. From what a friend informed me I had no doubts, and I therefore visited the Aquarium a few days back, and, with four other gentlemen, went on the stage to take part in the science. Your readers must be told that Dr. Lynn is not the genuine spiritual medium who, in "A Medium’s Testament," is a medium and a real medium; and I must say believe me, to be one. We sat at a table—a very common and undoubtedly genuine table, which I turned over and examined, and after about four minutes' sitting this table rose up full two feet from the floor, and floated horizontally round the stage twice, resisting my efforts to stop it. All our hands were on the table; it moved about rapidly, but somewhat irregularly; and no wires or machinery had anything to do with it. To me the motive was exactly such as might be expected, with a genuine medium, but more powerful. Then followed the cabinet science, the "cabinet" being a baize curtain supported by four poles on a carpet-covered platform, raised about a foot above the stage, and having no connection with it. We examined it thoroughly, and it was absolutely above suspicion. The medium was tied, hands, and feet, in the usual way, in a chair, by two gentlemen, and almost all the phenomena which characterised the Davenports' performance were here reproduced, but with even greater rapidity. At the very same instant that the cabinet was raised, the medium's hands became free, and the moment they descended the curtain was drawn back, and we found the medium with feet and hands tied exactly as before. This was repeated in various ways half a dozen times. Then, for an instant, three figures appeared in the cabinet robed in white from head to foot, and the next instant they disappeared, the medium being found tied as before, with no possibility of concealing the white robes, to say nothing of the figures which were there. The medium's coat was also removed and afterwards put on again, his hands remaining tied, and one of the spectators also entered the cabinet and remained concealed inside, and the contact put on him again without his being able to give any account of how it was done.

Now, it seems to me that a very bad effect will be produced by telling the public that this is all imposture; for they will naturally say, "We see no difference between this performance and those which you tell us are real: if this is imposture, then all your alleged spiritual manifestations are imposture also." I trust that you, Mr. Editor, and some of your readers, who have had more experience of mediums than I have had, will visit the Aquarium theatre and tell us your impressions after going on the stage; and if you think it is all juggling, point out exactly where the difference lies between it and medicinal phenomena. I must also add, that when I was there Dr. Lynn said nothing against Spiritualists or Spiritualism. Of course, he made his usual fun, and referred to the risk of prosecution if he said it was all done by spirits—a remark which his audience took as an excellent joke, but which might have another meaning.

There have been many cases in which genuine clairvoyance has been closely observed in this country; in all these cases it has been demonstrated that the exhibition of anything claimed to be spiritual manifestations is punished by the strong arm of the law, it is to be expected that some physical mediums will engage themselves to professors of loge-dermain in order to secure peace and safety. But the phenomena in which Dr. Lynn was engaged were produced by conjuring, it is clear that Dr. Lynn, who is a master of the art, could do it himself and thereby add to his reputation; but he does not and, as I venture to think, cannot do so, and until some one up to the tricks of conjurers really shows how it is done, I shall continue to hold the opinion that we have here a case of genuine mediumship.

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