was untied; the foot gave a convulsive plunge; the devil and his myrmidons (so the *cura* said, looking round triumphantly) had gone to their own place. And, assured of this, the wretched dupe of a girl lay quite still. The exhibition was announced for 11 a.m. on the succeeding day, and it commenced again. Up came a band of blue-bloused artisans and claimed admittance to the church. The priest stoutly refused entrance to any but women. The men beat the church door; the police came; a scrimmage arose, and the priest retreated in haste; the sick girl was dragged to her lowly home; two mechanics now lie in Barcelona gaol for their share in a called-for, if illegal, demonstration; the street was cleared by the police, and the affair was over. Next day the civil authorities of the town, men of high feeling and great enlightenment, shocked at what they had heard and read (for the whole affair is now in print, and can be bought in Barcelona for a half penny), stopped, by civil decree, the whole affair. In conclusion, a few remarks are due in justice to the authorities. First of all the Bishop, a man of enlightenment and erudition, was not cognizant, I believe, of this freak on the part of the clergy of the church in question. Secondly, the moment it came to the ears of the civil authorities, the sharpest and promptest means were taken to admonish the priest and prevent a repetition of a scandal which had shamed and sickened the whole city of Barcelona."

The priest was only following in the footsteps of holy men of old. It is related that—

"St. Apre, bishop and confessor, being one day at Chalons-sur-Saone, saw a young man who was possessed and from whose mouth, as from a furnace, rushed sulphurous flames. As soon as he saw the saint afar off, he became furious, and tried to bite all who came near him. Everybody got out of his way, but the possessed ran towards the saint as if to seize him. But the holy man advanced without fear to the encounter with the cross in his hand, and ordered the possessed to stop. As the fiery vapour which escaped from his mouth touched the face of the saint, and as the possessed tried to bite him, the bishop made over the mouth of the afflicted man the sign of the cross, and the demon no longer being able to escape in that way went out from the body of the man in the form of a diarrhœa."

After all the good Barcelona priest granted the demon a more pleasant way of exit.

Mr. Serjeant Cox and his Prophet.

An acute and impudent American, named Slade, had for some time driven a good trade in humouring simpletons to the top of their bent by getting so-called spirit-messages written on slates in gratification of their gaping wonder, charging them a fee of one guinea each for the pleasure of

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.22.100.574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

being gulled. His vulgar fraud proved, at any rate, that he had made one discovery—namely, the infinite capacity of stupidity. Having been detected by Professor Lankester in writing the messages which he professed to receive from the other world, he was prosecuted at the Police Court as a rogue and vagabond by that gentleman; and he was finally convicted and sentenced to three months' imprisonment, with hard labour. In aid of his defence before the magistrate, the following report from Mr. Serjeant Cox was read:—

"Having undertaken to examine without prejudice or prepossession, and to report faithfully, without favour, in a purely judicial spirit, any alleged psychological phenomena that might be submitted to me as President of the Psychological Society of Great Britain, I narrate, without comment, what I witnessed at a sitting with Dr. Slade this afternoon. I sat alone with him, at three o'clock, in a room at 3, Upper Bedford-place, Russell-square, into which the sun shone brightly, at a table about 5ft. by 4ft., having four legs, no ledge below, and no cloth upon it. Dr. Slade sat at one side of the table, sideways, so that his legs and feet were not under the table, but his whole body fully in my view as he faced me. I sat at the side, the corner of the table being between us. As I sat I could see half-way below the table, and, by moving my head slightly, I could see the whole space below, which was wholly exposed in full daylight. An ordinary drawing-room chair was about six inches from the table on the opposite side, six feet from Dr. Slade. A heavy armchair was in the corner of the room, about the same distance from him and from the table. A slate of the ordinary school size and a piece of slate pencil were upon the table. Instantly upon taking our seats very loud rapping came upon the floor. This was followed by a succession of furious blows upon the table, jarring my hands as they were lying upon it. These blows were repeated at any part of the table desired, by merely touching that spot with the finger, while the blows, as forcible as if given with a sledge hammer, were being made. Dr. Slade's hands were on the table on my hands, and his whole body to his feet was fully before my eyes. I am certain that not a muscle moved. Then he took the slate, after I had carefully inspected it to be assured that no writing was upon it, and placing there a piece of slate pencil, the size of a small grain of wheat, he pressed the slate slightly below but against the slab of the table. Presently I heard the sound as of writing on a slate. The slate was removed, and on it a zigzag line was drawn from end to end. At this moment the chair that I had described as standing by the table was lifted up to a level with the table, held in that position for several seconds, and then dropped to the floor. While the chair was so suspended in the air I carefully noted Dr. Slade. It was far beyond his reach. But his hands were under my hands, and his feet were full in view near my

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.22.100.574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

own on the side of the table opposite to that on which the chair had risen. While I was taking note of his position at this moment, a hand rudely grasped my knee on the opposite side to where Dr. Slade was seated, and his hands were still in mine on the table. Blows of a more gentle kind upon the table, attended with a remarkable quivering of it, announced, as he said, that his wife was present, and desired the slate. After the slate had been carefully cleaned, it was laid on the top of the table, with a like piece of pencil under it. Upon the slate he placed his right hand, and I placed my left hand, and with my other hand I held his left hand as it lay upon the table. As my hand lay upon the slate I could feel, and did distinctly hear, something writing upon it. The communication was evidently a long one; but before I report the result I desire to note a remarkable phenomenon, to my mind the most suggestive that attended this experiment. It is necessary clearly to understand the position of the parties; therefore I repeat it, Dr. Slade and myself sat face to face. One hand of each of us was laid upon the slate. The side of the slate that was being written upon was pressed by us against the table. Our second hands were linked together and lay upon the table. While this position was preserved the writing proceeded without pause. When Dr. Slade removed his hand from mine it ceased instantly, and as instantly was renewed when his hand and mine met. This experiment was repeated several times, and never failed. Here, then, was a chain or circle formed by my arms and body and Dr. Slade's arms and body, the slate being between us, my hand at one end of it, his hand at the other end, and between our hands and upon the slate that connected them the writing was. When the chain was broken, forthwith the writing ceased. When the chain was reformed, the writing was at once resumed. The effect was instantaneous. In this curious fact we must seek the clue to this psychological mystery. Some rapid rappings indicating that the writing was finished, the slate was lifted, and in a clear and perfectly distinct writing the following was read. It filled the whole side of the slate:—'Dear Serj.,—You are now investigating a subject that is worthy of all the time that you or any other man of mind can devote to its investigation. When man can believe in this truth, it will, in most cases, make him a better man. This is our object in coming to earth—to make man and woman better, wiser and purer.—I am, truly, A. W. SLADE.' While I was reading this a hand grasped my knee furthest from Dr. Slade, whose hands were at that moment holding the slate that I might copy the writing. As I wrote, a hand, which I saw distinctly, came from under the table, seized my waistcoat, and pulled it violently. Seeing this, I took the pencil with which I was copying the words and laid it at the edge of the table furthest from Dr. Slade, and far beyond his reach, the end of the pencil projecting about two inches over the ledge. I asked if the hand would take the pencil. Forthwith a

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.22.100.574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

hand came from under the table, seized the pencil, and threw it upon the floor. I again asked that it would pick up the pencil and bring it to me. In a minute it was brought and put upon the table by my side. I saw the hand that brought it as distinctly as I could see my own. It was a small hand, seemingly that of a woman. Again the slate was cleaned and laid upon the table as before, my hand upon it. In a few seconds the following sentence was written. Considerable power was used in this writing, and I could distinctly feel the pressure of the pencil upon the slate, and its motion as every word was written:—'I am Dr. John Forbes. I was the Queen's physician. God bless you.—J. Forbes.' While I was reading this, the hand came again from under the table and seized the sleeve of my coat and tried to pull my arm down, but I resisted and it disappeared. Then it came up again, as if from my legs, and caught the eyeglass that was hanging from my neck and opened it. During all these phenomena Dr. Slade's hands were before me on the table, and his feet full in my view upon the floor. The hand on each occasion came from the side of the table opposite to where Dr. Slade was sitting. He was seated on my left, and the hand came and seized me on my right leg, in a position impossible to him. The hand I saw was not half the size of Dr. Slade's hand. It touched my hand three times, and I could feel that it was warm, soft, and moist, and as solid and fleshly as my own. Again the slate was cleaned and held under the table tight against the wood, one-half of it projecting against the edge, so that I might be assured that it was tightly pressed against the wood; but the slate was seized and with great force drawn away and rapidly raised above me, and placed upon my head. In this position the sound of writing upon it was distinctly heard by me. On removing it I found written upon it the following words:—'Man must not doubt any more when we can come in this way.—J. F., M.D.' Then the large arm chair rushed forward from the corner of the room in which it had been placed to the table. Again, the slate was placed under the table and projecting from it. A hand twice seized and shook my leg, both of the hands of Dr. Slade being at the moment before me, and his whole person visible. Thus ended this experiment. All that I have reported was done, that is certain. How it was done and by what agency is a problem for psychology to solve. For my own part I can only say that I was in the full possession of my senses; that I was wide awake; that it was in broad daylight; that Dr. Slade was under my observation the whole time, and could not have moved hand or foot without being detected by me. That it was not a self-delusion is shown by this—that any person who chooses to go may see almost the same phenomena. I offer no opinion upon their causes, for I have formed none. If they be genuine, it is impossible to exaggerate their interest and importance. If they be an imposture, it is eqally important that the trick should be exposed in the only way in which trickery can be explained, by doing the same thing and showing how it is done."

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.22.100.574 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Dr. Forbes, when alive, could write English, and speak the truth. He seems to have deteriorated in intellect and morality since he became a spirit, for he writes now like a charity school-boy, and tells a lie in saying that he was Physician to the Queen. Mr. Serjeant Cox is the Deputy Chairman of the Court at the Middlesex Sessions, and describes himself as President of the Psychological Society of Great Britain. A doubt naturally suggests itself whether one who has such faculty of observation and such notions of evidence as Serjeant Cox has displayed in his above quoted letter is in his proper place when engaged in the trial of prisoners. And it may, perhaps, suggest itself to those members of the Psychological Society who have self-respect, that they could consult that best by relieving their President forthwith of his onerous duties in attending *séances*, or by their retirement from a Society which imposes such tasks on such a worthy man. Serjeant Cox may be an amiable and good man in all his private relations, but he is plainly, as Deputy Chairman at the Middlesex Sessions, giving to the services of a petty Court talents which were intended not for the correction of the criminal, but for the edification of the idiotic portion of mankind; and, as President of a Society which assumes to be scientific, he seems to be doing his best to make his Society ridiculous. At the meeting of this so-called Psychological Society, if we may trust a report in the papers, he spoke of the prosecution of Slade as evidence of a conspiracy of the materialists who wished to crush spiritualism. We hope that he has been mis-reported, for we should be loth to think that Mr. Serjeant Cox thinks it decent to imply that a brother magistrate, in sentencing a rogue and vagabond to imprisonment, has lent his authority and office to promote the purposes of a nefarious conspiracy.

Responsible Imbecility.

We extract from the *Scotsman* of October 31st the following paragraph :—

PECULIAR CASE OF THEFT.

The case of the Lord Advocate against John M'Lean having been called, the Lord Justice-Clerk said this case was tried at the recent Circuit Court at Aberdeen. The prisoner was accused of theft by means of housebreaking, committed on the 21st or 22nd July, and the jury found him guilty, but recommended him to the leniency of

https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.22.100.574 Published online by Cambridge University Press