

THE
SPIRITUAL RECORD.

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ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE,
NATURALIST AND SPIRITUALIST.

ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE, Fellow of the Geographical Society, author of "The Malay Archipelago," "The Geographical Distribution of Animals," etc., etc., the compeer of Darwin as Evolutionist, honoured with a Royal Pension for eminent services to science, is one of the calmest, bravest of explorers, fact collectors, and careful observers of phenomena in the Natural History of Animals, and also in what may be called the Supernatural History of Man. Too clearsighted not to perceive the importance of the facts of Spiritualism—too honest and courageous to conceal his knowledge of an unpopular truth, he has borne his testimony to the facts of Spiritualism, like Professor Hare, Professor Mapes, Professor Buchanan, Judge Edmonds, Mr. Epes Sargent, Governor Talmadge, and hundreds more in America; and like S. C. Hall, Professor de Morgan, William Howitt, Robert Chambers, Serjeant Cox, the Earls of Dunraven, Earl Balcarres, Mr. William Crookes, Professor Zöllner, Professor Barrett, and many more honest and brave men in Europe.

It involves martyrdom, no doubt, to bear witness to a yet unpopular truth—the small martyrdom of a sneer in a leading article, or a jest in *Punch*. Sometimes it comes to being denounced as insane by a brother scientist, and both Zöllner and Wallace have been foully libelled as lunatics by scientific writers not worthy to black their shoes.

Mr. Wallace's chief contribution to the literature of Spiritualism

is a volume of 236 pages, published by Trübner & Co., in 1881. It consists of three essays :—

- I. An Answer to the Arguments of Hume, Lecky, and others, against Miracles, read before the Dialectical Society.
- II. The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural, a series of articles contributed to a secularist journal.
- III. A Defence of Modern Spiritualism in the *Fortnightly Review*.

In his preface Mr. Wallace mildly alludes to the treatment he had met with from scientists, on account of his recognition of the facts of Spiritualism. Mr. Anton Dohrn accused him of having been influenced by clerical and religious prejudice, while Haeckel has not hesitated to speak of him as a lunatic. In answer to Mr. Dohrn, Mr. Wallace gives us a bit of autobiography. He says:—

“From the age of fourteen I lived with an elder brother, of advanced liberal and philosophical opinions, and I soon lost (and have never since regained) all capacity of being affected in my judgments, either by clerical influence or religious prejudice. Up to the time when I first became acquainted with the facts of Spiritualism, I was a confirmed philosophical sceptic, rejoicing in the works of Voltaire, Strauss, and Carl Vogt, and an ardent admirer (as I am still) of Herbert Spencer. I was so thorough and confirmed a materialist that I could not at that time find a place in my mind for the conception of spiritual existence, or for any other agencies in the universe than matter and force. Facts, however, are stubborn things. My curiosity was at first excited by some slight but inexplicable phenomena occurring in a friend’s family, and my desire for knowledge and love of truth forced me to continue the inquiry. The facts became more and more assured, more and more varied, more and more removed from anything that modern science taught or modern philosophy speculated on. The facts beat me. They compelled me to accept them, *as facts*, long before I could accept the spiritual explanation of them: there was at that time ‘no place in my fabric of thought into which it could be fitted.’ By slow degrees a place was made; but it was made, not by any preconceived or theoretical opinions, but by the continuous action of fact after fact, which could not be got rid of in any other way. So much for Mr. Anton Dohrn’s theory of the causes which led me to accept Spiritualism. Let us now consider the statement as to its incompatibility with Natural Selection.

“Having, as above indicated, been led, by a strict induction from facts, to a belief—1stly, In the existence of a number of preterhuman intelligences of various grades; and, 2ndly, That

some of these intelligences, although usually invisible and intangible to us, can and do act on matter, and do influence our minds,—I am surely following a strictly logical and scientific course, in seeing how far this doctrine will enable us to account for some of those residual phenomena which Natural Selection alone will not explain.”

After this frank preface, Mr. Wallace gives a page of mottoes, which he might have enlarged by quotations to the same effect from Agassiz, Lecky, and many more, on the supremacy of facts over theories, and the absurdity of rejecting what is true from a preconceived idea that it is impossible. The maxims given are, however, to the point, and ought to be sufficient :—

“A presumptuous scepticism that rejects facts without examination of their truth, is, in some respects, more injurious than unquestioning credulity.”—HUMBOLDT.

“One good experiment is of more value than the ingenuity of a brain like Newton’s. Facts are more useful when they contradict, than when they support, received theories.”—SIR HUMPHRY DAVY.

“The perfect observer in any department of science will have his eyes, as it were, opened, that they may be struck at once by any occurrence which, according to received theories, ought not to happen, for these are the facts which serve as clues to new discoveries.”—SIR JOHN HERSCHELL.

“Before experience itself can be used with advantage, there is one preliminary step to make which depends wholly on ourselves : it is, the absolute dismissal and clearing the mind of all prejudice, and the determination to stand or fall by the result of a direct appeal to facts in the first instance, and of strict logical deduction from them afterwards.”—SIR JOHN HERSCHELL.

“With regard to the miracle question, I can only say that the word ‘impossible’ is not, to my mind, applicable to matters of philosophy. That the possibilities of nature are infinite is an aphorism with which I am wont to worry my friends.”—PROFESSOR HUXLEY.

In his paper read at the Dialectical Mr. Wallace dissects Hume on Miracles.

“A miracle,” says Hume, “is a violation of the laws of nature ; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable that all men must die ; that lead cannot of itself remain suspended in the air ; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water ; unless it be, that these events

are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a *violation of these laws*, or, in other words, a *miracle*, to prevent them?"

"This argument is radically fallacious," says Mr. Wallace, "because if it were sound, no perfectly new fact could ever be proved, since the first and each succeeding witness would be assumed to have universal experience against him. Such a simple fact as the existence of flying fish could never be proved, if Hume's argument is a good one; for the first man who saw and described one, would have the universal experience against him that fish do not fly, or make any approach to flying, and his evidence being rejected, the same argument would apply to the second, and to every subsequent witness; and thus no man at the present day who has not seen a flying fish alive, and actually flying, ought to believe that such things exist."

The same may be said of all new discoveries and all wonderful inventions. Reputed miracles abound in all periods of history; every one has a host leading up to it, and every one has strictly analogous facts at the present day. What more striking miracle than for a human body to rise into the air without apparent cause?—yet this fact has been observed during a long series of centuries. St. Francis of Assisi was seen by many persons to rise into the air so that his secretary could hardly touch his feet. St. Theresa was raised into the air in sight of all her sisterhood. Lord Orrery and Mr. Valentine Greatrak saw at Lord Conway's house in Ireland a gentleman's butler, in their presence and in broad daylight, rise into the air and float about the room above their heads. Similar facts are related of St. Ignatius de Loyola and Savonarola. These and numerous facts of the same kind are given by grave and learned historians upon evidence which they declare to be as reliable as human testimony can be.

"We all know," says Mr. Wallace, "that at least fifty persons of high character may be found in London who will testify that they have seen the same thing happen to Mr. Home." We gave a list of such persons in our last number, in the testimony of Mr. S. C. Hall.*

The exposure of the fallacies of Hume is too easy to be of much interest. When a man brings three senses to bear upon a fact—when he sees, hears, and feels a ghost, or materialised spirit, for example, no argument about its possibility or the well known laws of nature can destroy the evidence of his senses.

* See *Spiritual Record* for June, p. 14.

Mr. Wallace scouts the idea that the consent of scientific men is necessary to the recognition of any fact. Every great truth, he says, has been established in spite of their strenuous opposition. The discoveries of Galileo and Harvey were violently opposed by all their scientific contemporaries, to whom they appeared absurd and incredible. Benjamin Franklin was laughed at as a dreamer by the Royal Society for proposing lightning conductors. The *Edinburgh Review* proposed a strait jacket for an advocate of railways. When Stephenson proposed to use locomotives, learned men gave evidence it was impossible for them to go twelve miles an hour. The French Academy ridiculed Arago when he wanted to discuss the possibility of an electric telegraph.

In his Essay on "The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural," Mr. Wallace gives a list of what he considers credible witnesses to remarkable facts. Among these we find Professor A. de Morgan, Mathematician; Professor Challis, Astronomer; Professor Wm. Gregory, M.D., Chemist; Professor Robert Hare, M.D., Chemist; Professor Herbert Mayo, M.D., F.R.S., Physiologist; Dr. Elliotson, Physiologist; Judge Edmonds, Lawyer; Archbishop Whately, Clergyman; Nassau E. Senior, Political Economist; Capt. R. F. Burton, Explorer; W. M. Thackeray, Author; T. A. Trollope, Author; William Howitt, Author; S. C. Hall, Author.

This list of credible witnesses to what we call spiritual facts could be very largely expanded. There are in Europe and America thousands of perfectly competent scientific men, capable of judging of the nature of the facts, whose testimony is as reliable as human testimony can be on any subject whatever.

But preconceived opinions meet us at every turn and deny the possibility of the most carefully observed facts. The "laws of nature" are set against the evidence of all our senses. When Galileo offered to show his scientific friends the satellites of Jupiter through his telescope, they refused to look. It was not worth the trouble. It was a law of nature that the planets could not exceed the perfect number *seven*.

Mr. Wallace argues that, for anything we know, there may exist ethereal beings with powers and senses immeasurably beyond our experience, and capable of doing many things we call miraculous. The phenomena of Spiritualism may be as natural as any other phenomena. In any case it is unphilosophical to either deny facts or to ignore and neglect them.

And he makes this strong point—*viz.*, That since the appear-

ance of spiritual manifestations, not one single individual has carefully investigated the phenomena without accepting its reality ; and that "while thousands have been converted *to* the belief, no single person has ever been converted *from* it."

In answer to the "unfortunate statement" of one of our most celebrated men of science, that "before we proceed to consider any question involving physical principles, we should set out with *clear* ideas of the naturally possible and impossible," Mr. Wallace says :—

"It was very 'clearly impossible' to the minds of the philosophers at Pisa that a great and a small weight could fall from the top of the leaning tower in the same time ; and if this principle is of any use, they were right in disbelieving the evidence of their senses, which assured them that they did ; and Galileo, who accepted that evidence, was, to use the words of the same eminent authority, 'not only ignorant as respects the education of the judgment, but ignorant of his ignorance.'"

The testimony given in a brief chapter by Mr. Wallace as to the facts connected with Od-force, Animal Magnetism, and Clairvoyance, is very interesting ; but we reserve them for the present. We have noticed that the most sturdy disbelievers in mesmeric phenomena become devout believers when they come into antagonism with Spiritualism, which they assure us can be easily accounted for by animal magnetism, clairvoyance, and the very phenomena they have hitherto denounced as absurd and impossible.

We come then to "the evidence of the reality of apparitions." First he quotes some testimony published by Hon. Robert Dale Owen, U.S. Minister to Naples, who, when a professed sceptic, became interested in the phenomena of Spiritualism by some physical manifestations in the presence of Mr. D. D. Home. In 1855, sitting in his own well-lighted apartment, in company with three or four friends, "a table and lamp weighing ninety-six pounds rose eight or ten inches from the floor, and remained suspended in the air about ten seconds, the hands of all present being laid upon the table." On another occasion he says :—

"In the dining room of a French nobleman, the Count d'Ourches, near Paris, I saw, in broad daylight, at the close of a *dejeuner a la fourchette*, a dinner-table seating seven persons, with fruit and wine on it, rise and settle down as already described, while all the guests were standing around it, *and not one of them touching it*. All present saw the same thing."

Startled into attention by these facts, Mr. Owen began to observe and record. The result may be found in his "Footfalls upon the Boundary of Another World." The following ghost story in his collection is valuable, because the apparition was seen by *two* persons :—

"Sir John Sherbroke and General George Wynyard were Captain and Lieutenant in the 33rd Regiment, stationed in the year 1785 at Sydney, in the island of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. On the 15th of October of that year, about nine in the morning, as they were sitting together at coffee in Wynyard's parlour, Sherbroke, happening to look up, saw the figure of a pale youth standing at a door leading into the passage. He called the attention of his companion to the stranger, who passed slowly through the room into the adjoining bed-chamber. Wynyard, on seeing the figure, turned as pale as death, grasped his friend's arm, and, as soon as it had disappeared, exclaimed, 'Great God ! my brother !' Sherbroke thinking there was some trick, had a search immediately made, but could find no one either in the bed-room or about the premises. A brother officer, Lieutenant Gore, coming in at the time, assisted in the search, and at his suggestion Sherbroke made a memorandum of the date, and all waited with anxiety for letters from England, where Wynyard's brother was. The expected letter came to Captain Sherbroke, asking him to break to his friend the news of his brother John's death, which had occurred on the day and hour when he had been seen by the two officers. In 1823 Lieutenant-Colonel Gore gave this account in writing to Sir John Harvey, Adjutant-General of the Forces in Canada. He also stated that some years afterwards Sir Sherbroke, who had never seen John Wynyard alive, recognised in England a brother of the deceased, who was remarkably like him, by the resemblance to the figure he had seen in Canada. Mr. Owen has obtained additional proof of the correctness of these details from Captain Henry Scott, R.N., who was told by General Paul Anderson, C.B., that Sir John Sherbroke had, shortly before his death, related the story to him in almost exactly the same words as Mr. Owen has given it, and which was communicated in manuscript to Captain Scott."

Several equally well authenticated cases of apparitions are given, and the following case of physical manifestations at a French parsonage, curiously like those which occurred about the same period at the house of a Congregational Doctor of Divinity in the New England State of Connecticut.

The disturbances occurred at the parsonage of Cideville, Seine Inférieure, in the winter of 1850-51. The circumstances gave

rise to a trial, and the whole of the facts were brought out by the examination of a great number of witnesses. The Marquis de Mirville collected from the legal record all the documents connected with the trial, including the *procès verbal* of the testimony. It is from these official documents Mr. Owen gives his details of the occurrences.

“The disturbances commenced from the time when two boys, aged 12 and 14, came to be educated by M. Tinel, the parish priest of Cideville, and continued *two months and a half* until the children were removed from the parsonage. They consisted of knockings, as if with a hammer on the wainscot; scratchings, shakings of the house so that all the furniture rattled; a din as if every one in the house were beating the floor with mallets, the beatings forming tunes when asked, and answering questions by numbers agreed on. Besides these noises there were strange and unaccountable exhibitions of force. The tables and desks moved about without visible cause; the fire-irons flew repeatedly into the middle of the room, windows were broken; a hammer was thrown into the middle of the room, and yet fell without noise, as if put down by an invisible hand; persons standing quite alone had their dresses pulled. On the Mayor of Cideville coming to examine into the matter, a table at which he sat with another person, moved away in spite of their endeavours to hold it back, while the children were standing in the middle of the room; and many other facts of a similar nature were observed repeatedly by numerous persons of respectability and position, every one of whom, going with the intention of finding out a trick, were, after deliberate examination, convinced that the phenomena were not produced by any person present. The Marquis de Mirville was himself one of the witnesses.”

The testimony of scientific and literary men, selected by Mr. Wallace, should have some weight with the most inveterate sceptic.

Professor De Morgan was educated at Cambridge, studied for the bar, was Dean of University College, and wrote on mathematics and logic. In the preface to his wife's record of Spiritual Facts, “From Matter to Spirit,” published in 1863, he says,—

“I am satisfied from the evidence of my own senses, of *some* of the facts narrated (in the body of the work), of some others I have evidence as good as testimony can give. I am perfectly convinced that I have both seen and heard, in a manner that should make unbelief impossible, things *called* spiritual, which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence, or mistake. So far I feel the ground firm under me.”

The late Judge Edmonds of New York had been a member of both branches of the Legislature, President of the Senate, Inspector of Prisons, before he became a Judge, when he rose to the highest dignity, that of Judge of the Supreme Court of New York. Induced by friends to visit a medium, and astonished at what he saw, he determined to investigate, and expose a fraud if he could discover one. He published the result in a work on "Spirit Manifestations," from which Mr. Wallace has selected the following testimony. Judge Edmonds says:—

"On the 23rd April, 1851, I was one of a party of nine who sat round a centre table, on which a lamp was burning, and another lamp was burning on the mantelpiece. And then, in plain sight of us all, that table was lifted at least a foot from the floor, and shaken backwards and forwards as easily as I could shake a goblet in my hand. Some of the party tried to stop it by the exercise of their strength, but in vain; *so we all drew back from the table*, and by the light of those two burning lamps we saw the heavy mahogany table suspended in the air."

Describing another séance he (Judge Edmonds) says:—

"I felt on one of my arms what seemed to be the grip of an iron hand. I felt distinctly the thumb and fingers, the palm of the hand, and the ball of the thumb, and it held me fast by a power which I struggled to escape from in vain. With my other hand I felt all round where the pressure was, and satisfied myself that it was no earthly hand that was thus holding me fast, nor indeed could it be, for I was as powerless in that grip as a fly would be in the grasp of my hand. It continued with me till I thoroughly felt how powerless I was, and had tried every means to get rid of it."

Again, as instances of the intelligence and knowledge of the unseen power, he says that during his journey to Central America, his friends in New York were almost daily informed of his condition. On returning he compared his own journal with their notes, and found they had known all his movements and conditions, even to a headache, which had kept him in bed two thousand miles away. He says:—

"I was not a believer seeking confirmation of my notions. I was struggling against conviction. I omitted no test which my ingenuity could devise."

Mr. Wallace asks whether such a man, a distinguished lawyer, an eminent judge, could have been deceived.

“Robert Hare, M.D., Emeritus Professor of Chemistry in the University of Pennsylvania, was one of the most eminent scientific men of America. He distinguished himself by a number of important discoveries (among which may be mentioned the Oxy-Hydrogen blowpipe), and was the author of more than 150 papers on scientific subjects, besides others on political and moral questions. In 1853 his attention was first directed to table-turning and allied phenomena, and finding that the explanation of Faraday, which he had at first received as sufficient, would not account for the facts, he set himself to work to devise apparatus which should, as he expected, conclusively prove that no force was exerted but that of the persons at the table. The result was not as he expected, for however he varied his experiments he was in every case only able to obtain results which proved that there *was* a power at work not that of any human being present. But, in addition to the *power* there was an *intelligence*, and he was thus compelled to believe that existences not human did communicate with him.

“It is often asserted by the disbelievers in these phenomena, that no scientific man has fully investigated them. This is not true. No one who has not himself inquired into the facts has a right even to give an opinion on the subject till he knows what has been done by others in the investigation; and to know this it will be necessary for him to read carefully, among other works, ‘Hare’s Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations,’ a volume of 460 closely-printed 8vo. pages, which has passed through five editions.”

Prof. Hare’s Experiments were of the greatest ingenuity and accuracy, many of which have been repeated by Mr. Wm. Crookes, F.R.S., of which we shall have something to say in a future number.

Mr. Wallace, still dealing with the facts, and the witnesses to the facts, says Mr. T. Adolphus Trollope wrote to the *Athenæum*, March 21, 1863:—

“I have been present at very many ‘sittings’ of Mr. Home in England, many in my own house in Florence, some in the house of a friend in Florence. . . . My testimony then, is this: I have seen and felt physical facts, wholly and utterly inexplicable, as I believe, by any known and generally received physical laws. I unhesitatingly reject the theory which considers such facts to be produced by means familiar to the best professors of legerdemain.”

Dr. Gully testified in the *Morning Star* to the absolute accuracy of the celebrated article published by Thackeray in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, written by Mr. Bell. Mr. Wallace quotes a

letter from the late William Howitt to Mr. T. P. Barkas of Newcastle, in which he states that an accordion was carried and suspended over a lady's head, "and there without any visible support or action on the instrument, the air was played through most admirably in the view and hearing of all." Mr. Nassau Senior, one of the most admirable observers and clearest of narrators, "was, by long inquiry and experience, a firm believer in spiritual power and manifestations." And so of Thackeray, Lord Lyndhurst, Archbishop Whately, etc.

Let us come now to Mr. Wallace's Personal Evidence, which is given with the clearness and sincerity which characterise all his writings. In 1844 he made very successful and interesting experiments in mesmerism. In 1865 he attended some *séances* with the well-known medium, Mary Marshall, and later in a private home circle with such tests as entirely satisfied him that the phenomena were genuine.

In his "Defence of Modern Spiritualism" in the *Fortnightly Review*, Mr. Wallace gives very important testimony as to the genuineness of spirit photography, and of other manifestations, and says:—

"My position, therefore, is that the phenomena of Spiritualism in their entirety do *not* require further confirmation. They are proved, quite as well as any facts are proved in other sciences; and it is not denial or quibbling that can disprove any of them, but only fresh facts and accurate deductions from those facts. When the opponents of Spiritualism can give a record of their researches approaching in duration and completeness to those of its advocates; and when they can discover and show in detail, either how the phenomena are produced, or how the many sane and able men here referred to have been deluded into a coincident belief that they have witnessed them; and when they can prove the correctness of their theory by producing a like belief in a body of equally sane and able unbelievers,—then, and not till then, will it be necessary for spiritualists to produce fresh confirmation of facts which are, and always have been, sufficiently real and indisputable to satisfy any honest and persevering inquirer."

Such is the testimony of Wallace, the Naturalist,—of one of the most intelligent observers of the phenomena of nature, who has brought all his intelligence and all his science into the observation of the phenomena of Spiritualism—a Naturalist who believes that Naturalism includes Spiritualism—that the phenomena of Spiritualism are natural, and that the phenomena of nature are spiritual.