

## PRO AND CON.

### IN RE MRS. H. V. ROSS: "WHO SHALL DECIDE WHEN DOCTORS DISAGREE?"

We devoted considerable space in our latest issue to placing before the BANNER readers the facts on both sides—as far as attainable—in the Ross imbroglio; and have decided to follow the same course the present week: Inviting each individual under whose notice this number may fall to read carefully the matter, for and against, presented therein, and make up his or her mind as to the weight of evidence.

#### LETTER FROM PROFESSOR JAMES.

To the Editor of the Banner of Light:

As my name has (very unwelcomely to myself) been quoted in the newspapers as that of a witness to Mrs. Ross's mediumship, I feel it my duty to say just what my experience has been.

I visited her house three times, once alone at an ordinary séance, once at a private sitting arranged by Dr. A. R. Wallace, and once at a private sitting to which I was invited by Dr. J. R. Nichols. I had previously called at the house to ask Mrs. R. if she would not consent to give a séance out of her own house. *She refused to do so at any price.*

I examined walls and floors as carefully as the mere eye would permit, and could see no way of introducing confederates. The first sitting went by without my noticing any suspicious circumstances, so that I concluded that Mrs. Ross was better worth spending time upon than any of the other "materializers" whom I had visited.

At the second sitting the sliding doors, usually kept shut, were opened, and Dr. Wallace was allowed to sit just beyond them in the back room, from which the confederates, if such there were, would have to be introduced. So far so good. But when I asked permission to sit there with Dr. W. *the permission was denied.* The moment the séance began a white-robed spirit came out, and did an unusual thing, namely, she drew Dr. Wallace out of his seat, and into the front room, and spreading her drapery out so as to conceal the side of the doorway, and part of the cabinet, kept him there some little time. No one could see this manoeuvre without the suspicion being aroused that it was intended to *conceal the passage of one or more confederates from the back room over the doorway and under the cabinet curtain, which hung loosely along side of the doorpost.* At the end of the séance the same performance was repeated with Dr. Wallace, who between whiles had been allowed to sit quietly in his place. The concealment of the side of the doorway was less perfect this time, and a lady who was one of the sitters tells me that whilst Wallace was up she distinctly saw the doorpost eclipsed from view by the *passage of the curtain, or some other dark body over it.* During this sitting a female form emerged from the cabinet with her white drapery caught above her knees. *Herdlegs from the knees down were clad in black trousers,* like those in which a male spirit had the instant before appeared, and in which another male spirit appeared the instant after.

At the third sitting a form tall enough to be that of a child four or five years old appeared between the curtains of the cabinet and stood there, whilst the little girl of one of the sitters (kneeling on the floor, if I remember rightly,) played with its left hand. I was allowed to approach, and the light was strong enough to see fairly well. The figure had an oval, delicate-featured face, looking as if it might belong to a girl of ten or twelve. The body was as *unplausible looking a dummy as I ever saw,* slung from the neck of the real person who might have been kneeling on the floor. This and the fact that the hand with which the sitter's child played was in an impossible position, made me ask the supposed spirit child to give me its right hand. The request was boldly granted, to my surprise, and what seemed, both to my sight and touch, to be four adult finger tips, held together and surrounded by a sort of "mit" drawn down to the knuckles, was protruded and drawn across my own extended fingers, too rapidly to be held, but slowly enough to give me confidence in my observation.

The facts I have underscored, added together, were sufficient to convince me personally that whether mediumship was or was not an element of Mrs. Ross's performance, roguery certainly was, and I resolved not to waste any more time upon performances given at her own house. Good carpentry can make a secret door in any wall.

I learn that now, many days after the capture of her confederates by Mr. Braman and his friends, she invites a more rigid scrutiny still of the cupboard and wall, and shows an affidavit from her landlord that the house is what it was before her lease. I do not learn, however, that spirits still continue to emerge from the cabinet many at a time, with the sliding-doors closed as they used to do before the catastrophe; nor do I see why a secret opening through a wall may not be unmade in forty-eight hours by the same skill which made it.

I wish to confine myself to facts as closely as possible, so I make little comment on your policy (a policy which would ruin any cause) of defending exposed frauds through thick and thin, so as to present a "solid front" (!!) to the enemy. You ought, it seems to me, to consider it one of your first duties to raise a fund for the following up of such exposures as that of the Ross gang by the criminal conviction and imprisonment of its members. Only then would your opinions about more genuine cases begin to deserve consideration from inexperienced inquirers like

Yours truly, WILLIAM JAMES.

18 Garden street, Cambridge, Feb. 10th, 1887.

[We earnestly hope Prof. A. R. Wallace will feel prompted to address a letter to our columns in reply to what Prof. James says regarding his part in the séance reported Jan. 8th.

As regards the very gentlemanly criticism in which this Harvard Professor chooses to indulge (in his last paragraph) concerning the BANNER OF LIGHT and its course generally, we have but this to say: His statement that the BANNER has defended "exposed frauds through thick and thin" is not true. It is a principle of common law that an individual accused of wrong doing must be held innocent until legally proved guilty; the BANNER has demanded only this for the Spiritualist mediums—in the face of a skeptical public, which seeks to reverse the maxim and throw the burden of proof on the medium—and on this line we shall continue to "present a solid front to the enemy," as long as this paper is issued. We have no favors to ask of Prof. James or his ilk, and feel that our course is founded in justice and truth.]