

Transcription (from hardcopy), March 2015:

Light 25(1294) (28 Oct. 1905): 507 (anon.)

[p. 507]

‘Justice for Dr. A. R. Wallace and Sir W. Crookes.’

Writing in the ‘Referee’ of October 22nd, under the heading ‘Science and the Soul,’ ‘Merlin’ gives a very appreciative notice of Dr. A. R. Wallace’s autobiography, and deals at length with his spiritualistic experiences, regarding which ‘Merlin’ says: ‘Dr. Wallace has nothing to modify, nothing to withdraw, nothing to explain away.’ On one point ‘Merlin’ is in error; he says, referring to the mediums of some twenty or thirty years ago: ‘Mr. Maskelyne outdid many of the wonder-mongers at their own trade, and proved that the great majority of the effects produced were to be realised by normal means.’ The fact is, Maskelyne never produced any phenomena under test conditions such as those to which mediums were subjected; his performances merely travestied, *without* tests, the phenomena they were supposed to duplicate. ‘Merlin,’ however, makes a good point when he says ‘it was forgotten’ (by those who scorned the whole subject because of imposture, real or supposed) ‘that it is possible to tell lies about a thing which in itself is true, and that one observed fact is of more value than any number of exposures of imposture’; and he further says: ‘To-day the inquiry into psychic phenomena has advanced so far that no man of science is ashamed to be found engaged in the investigation,’ and he mentions Professor James, Sir Oliver Lodge, Dr. A. R. Wallace, and Sir William Crookes, regarding whose *bona fides* he justly says ‘there is, as a matter of course, no word to be spoken. There is no question either as to their powers of observation, or of their ability to sift the evidences laid before them. They are all men *whose devotion to the search for truth is beyond dispute.*’

After quoting some of Dr. Wallace’s remarkable experiences in materialisation phenomena, and mentioning that Sir William Crookes, like Dr. Wallace, ‘records a simultaneous appearance of the materialised form and the figure of the medium,’ he says: ‘Nothing less than the establishment of completely separate identities—one for the medium and another for the materialised form—would satisfy them,’ and, in conclusion, ‘Merlin’ points out that when Dr. Wallace and Sir William Crookes made their investigations they were already famous:—

‘They not only risked their reputation for truth, but if they allowed themselves to be beguiled, their moral force as students and expounders was for ever undermined. They had nothing to gain and everything to lose by their proclamation of what they believed to be the truth. No incentive to care and watchfulness was wanting. It would have been easily possible to allow the whole question to die out and be forgotten. But they stand by their guns. They willingly revive a discussion which has involved them in much odium and reproach, and it is not to be wondered at that added thousands are every year to be found who regard them as witnesses for the truth.’

We are pleased to see that ‘Merlin’ at least appreciates and does justice to the sterling valour of these two brave and faithful devotees at the shrine of truth, and honours them for their fidelity to their convictions.

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The Alfred Russel Wallace Page, Charles H. Smith, 2015.