

I HAVE to request your insertion of a post-card I have this morning received, for two reasons; *first*, because, as it is anonymous, and as the writer of it is obviously a reader of NATURE, no other way is open to me for replying to it except that which your columns may afford; and *secondly*, because it is a very curious example of the misconceptions into which men are apt to fall who allow themselves to become "possessed" by "dominant ideas."

"If Mr. A. R. Wallace has to choose between being either 'a fool or a knave,' there is *at all* events *no choice* left for *the man* who deliberately and maliciously makes incorrect assertions and suppresses the truth to further his own views. I dare say you know what most people would call such a man. Yours,
"ONE WHO WAS AT PLYMOUTH"

Now, in the first case, it must be perfectly obvious to any one who is capable of reasoning logically, that nothing which I said of Mr. Wallace in your last number can be twisted into the implication that he is either "a fool or a knave." John Hampden is continually saying this of Mr. Wallace and of everybody who upholds the rotundity of the earth. And I mildly suggested whether, in putting himself in opposition to the whole aggregate of scientific opinion on the value of Reichenbach's Odylism—not because he had himself repeated them, but because he believes in Reichenbach—Mr. Wallace is not assuming an attitude in some degree similar, that is, setting himself up as the one wise and honest man who duly appreciates Reichenbach, and therefore implying that everybody else is either stupidly or wilfully blind to the evidence he presented. If anyone thinks it worth while to read Mr. Wallace's review of my lectures on "Mesmerism, Spiritualism," &c., in the last number of the *Quarterly Journal of Science*, he will be able to judge whether I have or have not wronged Mr. Wallace in this matter.

The writer's appreciation of my own character, which has fre-

quently been expressed to me before in the same manner and in the like terse and elegant language, is now enforced by what he deems to be Prof. Carey Foster's judicial opinion, delivered at the Plymouth meeting; and I find myself, therefore, fully justified in my opinion that by his introduction of the word "intentionally" Prof. Carey Foster made his judgment legitimately bear a meaning, which, as he has stated, he would consider insulting to my character. And I cannot but believe that Prof. G. Carey Foster will regret having thus given a new handle to a man who obviously *wishes* to insult me on account of my antagonism to spiritualism. As the writer of the post-card continues to use Prof. G. C. Foster's authority, *after* that gentleman's explicit disavowal of the offensive meaning here attached to it, and as I may, of course, expect that he will continue to avail himself of that authority, I should like him to know through your columns that it is scarcely worth while for him to trouble himself to repeat these attacks, since they have long since ceased to do anything else than amuse me, and will only furnish me with materials for amusing other people.

It seems much to be regretted that neither spiritualism nor attendance at the meetings of the British Association, nor even the reading of NATURE seems able to teach this person to behave like a gentleman.

WILLIAM B. CARPENTER

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