

Transcription, March 2015:

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‘Psychography.’<sup>1</sup>

Mr. J. J. Owen, for some years editor of *The Golden Gate*, and author of “Spiritual Fragments” and “Our Sunday Talks,” has given the reading world a very interesting work entitled “Psychography.” The volume is devoted chiefly to relating psychical phenomena. Mr. Owen has confined his discussion in this volume to phenomena occurring through the mediumship of the well known independent slate writer, Mr. Fred P. Evans, he also gives the story of Mr. Evans’ work in various parts of the world, and explanations as to how the phenomena are produced, as explained by the influence which acts through Mr. Evans’ organism.

I have never had an opportunity of meeting Mr. Evans, and so know nothing personally of the phenomena as it comes through his organization, but I have personally witnessed independent slate writing on many occasions, performed under conditions which precluded all possibility of fraud. Indeed, my wife and I have had messages come on slates held by ourselves, while the psychic was seated several feet from us, and had never so much as touched the slates. The message on one occasion came in answer to questions asked after we were seated and holding the slates, my wife’s mother, as well as myself and my wife, hearing the sound produced during the progress of the writing. The psychic had never touched the slates, and the writing took place in my own home. I cite this because many persons who have detected psychics in fraud, or who have never witnessed phenomena under circumstances where legerdemain was impossible, are liable to discredit all such phenomena, which to say the least is unscientific.

Mr. Owen’s work is well written, and will prove very enjoyable to those interested in literature dealing with this phase of psychic phenomena. In view of the great interest felt by thousands of *Arena* readers in psychic research, and because one of the sitters on the occasion referred to was the great evolutionary scientist, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, whose many papers in this magazine have awakened such general interest, I give an account, from this work, of some remarkable experiences which occurred in the presence of Dr. Wallace:—

The most remarkable *séance*, in many respects, for independent writing with Mr. Evans, was one given in presence of the eminent scientist, Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, F.G.S., of England, his brother, Mr. John Wallace, of Stockton, Cal., Dr. David Wooster, one of San Francisco’s leading physicians and a member of the Academy of Sciences, and the writer—four persons in all besides the psychic, Mr. Evans. We arranged for this *séance* with Professor Wallace, to come off at nine o’clock in the morning of the day mentioned, at the residence of Mr. Evans. It was fully half past nine when we reached his residence, where we were pleasantly received by Mr. Evans, and conducted to the *séance* room, which was a small front room directly over the hallway. The morning sunlight was streaming in at the window, and the room was as light as noonday.

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Mr. Evans took a seat at a table with his back to the window. Professor Wallace and his brother sat at the opposite side of the table, Dr. Wooster sat behind the professor, and the writer, behind and a little to the right of Mr. John Wallace, the object being to give the brothers the fullest possible benefit of the *séance*. A pair of medium-size folding school slates, brought by John Wallace, who had never witnessed any experiments in psychography before, was placed upon the table, together with two pairs of other slates; and, a few minutes later, a single slate, with cross lines thereon to indicate that the colored writing usually produced in this experiment is written over the cross, was placed upon the table. The slates were all thoroughly cleaned and examined by the brothers, and were, from first to last, directly under their hands and sight.

Without giving the experiments in the order in which they were produced, or even reproducing the numerous messages written (as they were mostly of a private or unimportant character), we will speak more especially of the *manner* of their production.

The messages through this psychic are always given under what may be regarded as absolute test conditions. All being done in the light and above board, with the slates in the hands of the investigator, there is not the slightest suggestion or possibility of deception. And such was the case in this instance.

The influences worked readily, and in a few minutes several messages were written in the ordinary way, to the delight of Professor Wallace, who expressed his admiration of the prompt and perfectly fair manner in which they were produced.

The professor then inquired of Mr. Evans if writing could be produced upon paper placed between the slates, when he was requested by the spirit control to tear off six sheets from a common writing pad of white paper at hand and place them between a pair of slates, which he did. In a few minutes we were assured by the psychic that the forces were at work upon the paper, and soon it was found that upon each of the five slips of papers was a finely executed crayon sketch of a prominent spiritualist passed to spirit life, representing them as they appeared in earth life, namely, D. D. Home, Dr. Benjamin Rush, Dr. Robert Hare, Jonathan Pierpont, Mrs. S. F. Breed, and upon one slip an unknown spirit picture not as well done as the others.

Perhaps the most remarkable test given at this *séance* was the writing in five colors, by Mr. Evans' control, produced on the under side of the slate with the cross, the writing appearing *over* the white lines. The colors used by the spirit in this experiment are remarkably brilliant. In fact it is the best sample of colored writing we have yet seen through this psychic. The message reads as follows:—

“Dear Friends: I am pleased to meet you all here, and to you, Professor Wallace, I must express my deep admiration for the noble stand you have taken in bravely advocating that which you believe to be true, namely, the truth of spirit return. Alas! too many are bound down to accept that which they do not believe in, merely because it is not fashionable to doubt it. I mean orthodoxy. But the time is fast approaching when all will only be too glad to embrace a belief in Spiritualism. I must leave you now with the glad thought that I will one day welcome you all to the spirit side of life.

“Spirit guide, John Gray.”

Another most remarkable experiment was given as follows: Mr. Evans placed a sheet of white paper over a slate lying upon the table, upon which slate it was seen there was no writing. He raised the slate level, touching his forehead with the edge, when in less than half a minute there was found upon the upper surface a finely written and beautiful message of one hundred and forty-seven words, signed “Elizabeth Wallace,” the name of a sister of Professor Wallace. This message must have been almost instantaneously

stamped upon the slate, and yet the writing is, to all appearances, the result of the attrition of a slate pencil over the surface of the slate.

The last, and, to the scientist, perhaps the most satisfactory experiment of the *séance*, was the production of writing on the two inner surfaces of the folding slates brought by Mr. John Wallace. Upon one surface was a message by Spirit John Gray, and upon the other a message signed “T. V. Wallace,” the name of the father of Professor Wallace. This writing was absolutely conclusive of the existence of an independent, occult, intelligent power capable of performing such wonders.

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We will add, in conclusion, that a slate placed upon the floor contained four short messages to the author—one from John Gray, the others from three spirit friends, and in a *fac simile* of their familiar chirography. The number of slates written over, including the one with the picture, was eight, containing in all thirteen written messages, which, with the slate picture and six crayon sketches, we consider the most remarkable result ever obtained at a single *séance* with any slate-writing psychic. The duration of the *séance* was less than one hour.

“The above appears to me to be a correct account of one of the most remarkable and convincing *séances* I have ever attended. I have never, on any occasion, witnessed phenomena of so wonderful a character appear with such rapidity and in a manner so entirely free from suspicion. Alfred R. Wallace.”

“I agree with the above remarks of my brother. John Wallace.”

“I entirely agree with Professor Wallace in his estimate of the phenomena and the perfect freedom from any suspicion of fraud in their production.

“D. Wooster.”

The volume is handsomely printed, and contains many illustrations.

B.O. Flower

<sup>1</sup>“Psychography: Marvellous Manifestations of Psychic Power through Fred P. Evans,” by J. Owen. Cloth; pp. 214; price \$2.50. The Hicks-Judd Company, San Francisco, Cal.

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