

Chapter 16 Some Interesting Acquaintances

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183 Euston Road
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T +44 (0)20 7611 8722
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CHAPTER SIXTEEN.

Some Interesting Acquaintances.

Many persons of strong individuality and intellectual power came to the Dialectical, whom I found it interesting to know, though it would be misusing a great word to call them by the supreme title of friends.

Amongst those who frequently attended and spoke at that time, I remember Professor W.K. Clifford, a great mathematician, and an avowed Agnostic; Professor Thorold Rogers, M.P., whose book "Six Centuries of Work and Wages" is a classic; Professor Sheldon Amos; Professor Hunter, M.P., and Dr. G.B. Clark, M.P. Some journalists, such as Mr. Fox Bourne, Editor of The Examiner, the then leading Radical weekly, and other writers, came frequently and spoke occasionally. Then quite a little group of young lawyers, some of whom afterwards gained distinction, and several authors of standing used to attend; also Radical politicians of many shades, from mere mild "Adult Suffragists" to fierce Republicans.

Dr. Alfred Russell Wallace, the scientist and traveller, who, it was claimed, had anticipated Darwin in putting forth the idea of Evolution, came not infrequently. There was also present sometimes Mr. Henry G. Atkinson, of whom Harriet Martineau thought so highly that she collaborated with him in a book — "Letters on Man's Nature and Development" — which work her brother, the Unitarian preacher, Dr. James Martineau, stigmatised in such coarse terms of reprobation (declaring, for instance, that it showed that she had "laid down all sense of moral obligation at Atkinson's bidding") that the brother and sister were never on friendly terms again. Mr. Atkinson spoke seldom at the Dialectical (and my

recollection of his speeches is that they were rather cloudy and verbose. However, I was able to claim acquaintance with him when some years later, I wrote the Life of Harriet Martineau for "The Eminent Women Series," and he lent me a number of her personal letters to him, with leave to quote from them, adding to the interest of my biography.

From a different circle came Viscount Amberley, the eldest son of the Statesman known to early Victorian times as Lord John Russell, afterwards as Earl Russell. Lord Amberley was a fragile, delicate, little young man. In one of Lord John's early letters to his wife, dated from Windsor, he had said of this son of his: "The only thing I envy the Queen is the rosy cheeks of Prince Alfred. I wish our poor little boy had the same." But though Lord Amberley had always but small physical strength, he had large intelligence and moral courage. He used to speak at the Dialectical on the lines of a book that he published, entitled, I think, "A History of Supernatural Religion." In this book, as well as I remember it, he traced the development of one historic faith from another and earlier one, up to the origin of supernatural beliefs in the terrors before the forces of Nature of early races of man. It is truly a strange study, that of how one Faith after another has been passionately accepted as the explanation of the riddle of the Universe, taught as unassail-

able revealed truth to all the children who are to form the next generation of believers, upheld by penalties, legal and social, and provided at enormous expense with temples and priests to teach, and enforce by supernatural terrors, the beliefs and dogmas — and yet the Faith dies out, or passes into something new! The traveller to-day ^{may} see in a short space of time magnificent remains of Roman, Grecian, Egyptian and Assyrian worship and ^{religions} beliefs — all different beliefs — not now held to be true by one single living soul! It should be an instructive study, and Lord Amberley found it such. But Lord and Lady Russell, his parents, who were quite orthodox, so strongly disapproved of this work that, on the early death of the author, they bought up and destroyed every available copy of the work and suppressed ~~it~~ further publication. Moreover, the provisions of Lord Amberley's Will as to the education of his sons (the present Earl Russell and Hon. Bertrand Russell) were not carried out. This was partly because the Executor ^{whom the dead father} had named, was himself suffering from a mortal complaint, and therefore knew that his life could not be prolonged sufficiently for him fully to carry out his trust, so ^{he} thought it useless to enter on a contest ^{about it.}

The old Earl Russell ^("Lord John") did not even allow his son's wishes to be regarded as to the disposal of his own remains. When he used to come to the Dialectical, Lord Amberley was a young widower; his late wife, a daughter of Lord Stanley of Alderly, had been as advanced in her views as himself. Lady Amberley was ^{one of the very few} ~~and the only~~ women of rank to give ~~her~~ ^{her} adherence to the Women's

Suffrage movement in its early days. She was as convinced as her husband that all social reform must depend on the acceptance of birth control by all classes of Society, and ^{she} used to say openly to her women friends that she intended to have only two children. But when the second arrived, behold! the irony of the Powers that be, it was Twins. The little girl thus unexpectedly given, of course found a welcome, and it was by her maternal devotion ^{to this} ^{little daughter} that the young Lady Amberley died, much as Princess Alice did a few years later. The child contracted diphtheria, and the mother devotedly nursing her suffering babe, caught the disease, and they died together. Lord Amberley did not ^{very long} survive this loss, but it was during his widowerhood that I knew and liked him very much. He was, like many brave thinkers who defy public obloquy to speak the truth ^{that} they think they see, very gentle in manner.

Probably by her own previous wish, Lady Amberley's remains were not deposited in consecrated ground, but in a mausoleum in the garden of their own country house, where her widower ordered his remains to be placed also when his time should come. But his father intervened about this ^{too} ~~also~~; he took steps to have the coffin of Lady Amberley removed, and placed, together with that of her husband, in the consecrated family vault of his ancestors, the Dukes of Bedford.

Another member of an aristocratic family who came occasionally to the L.D.S. to expound his peculiar views was the Hon. Auberon Herbert, a brother of the Earl of Carnarvon. Mr Auberon Herbert's recipe for "rebuilding the sorry scheme of things" may be comprehensively, and I hope not unfairly, described as Voluntaryism gone Mad. He maintained that no body of citizens had any right to constrain any other section even so far as to compel their payment of any taxes to the State. It is obvious that, when persons are compelled to pay taxes to carry out some State action of which they disapprove, the principle of individual liberty is thrust aside: as, when Quakers or other Nonconformists are made to pay Church Rates, or anti-vaccinators are made to pay for carrying out a compulsory Vaccination law. ~~Mr~~ Auberon Herbert therefore proposed on the principle of individual liberty, to abolish ~~the~~ compulsion even as regarded taxation. He maintained that sufficient means for carrying on all the Government services that are really indispensable, such as the defence of the country, the maintenance of a Police force to secure internal order, etc, could be obtained by the voluntary contributions that would come from all well-disposed citizens; leaving every individual to contribute to the State expenses when the hat was passed round as much or as little as he chose, while guaranteeing to all the protection of the State for life, limb and property.

This too-confiding belief in human nature was enforced by a gracious personality. One felt as he spoke that he would indeed have fulfilled voluntarily all and every just obligation

because it was just; and all besides that keen sympathy could suggest as a moral obligation. But how different are most people — and the richer, as a rule, the meaner and the less willing to pay the debts of moral obligation! It is as difficult in regard to public as to personal life to avoid measuring the corn of others by one's own bushel. The power to see clearly what is right and duty, and a consequent will to follow that light, ^{are} ~~is~~ all too rare, and a State cannot be safely based on the contrary assumption.

*France-Prussian
war of 1870-71, a rare*

Mr Auberon Herbert's brother, it may be mentioned, had ^{in the} opportunity of displaying ^{self-} devotion to the general weal, of which he so availed himself as to win more than passing fame. He was the Hon. Alan Herbert, M.P. who elected to remain in Paris during the great siege ~~of Paris~~ in order to help to organize and to carry on both medical and general relief work, which was an outstanding mercy in that time of misery to ^{the} ~~the~~ French and British residents alike.

The sister of these two remarkable men, the Countess of Portsmouth, early placed herself on record as a supporter of women's suffrage, signing petitions to Parliament year by year, and occupying a seat on the platform at great rallying meetings.

Mr Auberon Herbert has the distinction in my mind of having made the most beautiful speech on women's suffrage that I ever listened to — and of course I did listen to hundreds. That speech by Mr Herbert and one by Sir George Grey (the great pro-consul of New Zealand, the first British colony to enfranchise women) were alike in their unique recognition of the great moral wrong done to women, and the grief and

Dissatisfaction
~~disappointment~~ caused amongst us, by relegating our powers and our enthusiasm to petty ends, and forbidding us the exercise of any careers in which we could exert and expand our nobler qualities of mind and moral nature — excepting, of course, in motherhood. I had felt this wrong most keenly from the beginning of my attention to the subject of the position of women, though I generally kept silence on this aspect of the matter because I believed that the majority of people would not understand its full significance. The rare response to my thought in this direction by these two men, their unique recognition of this deeper psychological wrong done us by our subjection, gives them a special place in my memory.

to the Dialectical Society
A visitor, who came, I think, on one occasion only and yet had a personality so powerful as to impress the recollection of him upon my mind, was Winwood Reade, the author of a very remarkable book (which I had previously read with keen interest) entitled, "The Martyrdom of Man". Starting with prehistoric times, with what he believed could be traced of the nomad life of our semi-bestial ancestors, "the human herd", this work presents a résumé of the tragic history of the human race. It shows how all the advance that has been made has been necessarily based upon the constant pressure of peril, misery and suffering, and that this has been the scheme, if scheme or plan there be, for the government and progress of all the inhabitants of this world of pain and sorrow. [What I particularly remember about Winwood Reade's Dialectical address was how exceedingly ill the lecturer looked. Despite his splendid physique, and the power

(N.P.)

and brilliance of his speech, he appeared to me to be dying as he stood there, and I felt, by my magnetic sense, that he knew it himself and felt it keenly — resented it, as it were. He was a nephew of Charles Reade, the novelist, who very strongly objected to the young man publishing his freethinking views. Winwood Reade had been an African explorer, then went to the Ashantee war as the Special Correspondent of The Times, but in an emergency he fought in the ranks; and he returned from this campaign shattered in health by Malaria, and died in 1875, at the early age of thirty-six, not long after his Dialectical address, when I had seen him to be dying. Indeed, in the age-long human tragedy, is there a more poignant touch than that "proud man", in the heyday of his physical strength and with his wonderful brain stored with knowledge and instinct with thought and feeling, should be, at the touch of miserable microbes, microscopic elements of disease, hurled into the grave, where, as the Bible reminds us, "there is no knowledge, nor device, nor wisdom; but "the wise man dieth as the fool dieth".

Mr Charles Bradlaugh and his then devoted follower and associate, Mrs Annie Besant, came to the Dialectical Society's meetings from time to time, and contributed brilliantly to the proceedings.

I have never forgotten an occasion when Mrs. Besant read the opening paper, on "Marriage". Mr. Bradlaugh, who spoke later in the debate, chose to take his seat, and presently almost reclined, upon the long music-stool set in front of an American organ that stood in the hall (Cavendish Hall, Mortimer Street, W) ready for some sort of Sunday Service. A large, high movable

screen was partly drawn round this instrument, ^{it was} so arranged that, as it happened, I alone, ^{from 1 place where I was} sitting in the front row, could see Bradlaugh ^{15 Expression} while Mrs. Besant was speaking from the platform. His ^{its unusually long & projecting upper lip, its} powerful rugged face, with its heavy clean-shaven jaw, and ^{over-}hanging dome of brow, fascinated me as I ^{looked &} listened. He did not mind that I could see his anguish in his ^{face} ~~expression~~; and as the woman he loved and could not marry, spoke bitterly from the platform of the inexorable Marriage laws which held men and women in cruel shackles when circumstances had made the relation nothing but a source of daily torture, yet not to be evaded except at the price of social ruin and disgrace, the fury and the sorrow and the longing that passed like successive waves over the responsive man's massive yet mobile countenance, made upon me an ineffacable impression of deep human emotion. ^(N.P.) [Their circumstances ^{as regards their respective marriages} were ~~very~~ sad. Bradlaugh had been for ^{a considerable} time entirely separated from his wife because she was a dipsomaniac, and in her fits of drunkenness so squandered his small resources that it had been quite necessary to place her under control with her relatives in the country. Mrs. Besant, on her side, was separated from her husband, because he was a Church of England clergyman, and she had become an avowed freethinker. In neither case, of course, did the Divorce Laws allow of a dissolution of the unfortunate marriage; so that these two people of powerful individuality, and at that time apparently in full sympathy, were kept apart from one another in their intimate lives, by law and social opinion. Mrs Besant once told me, with much bitterness of feeling, how she was spied upon, by servants in her own home and detectives following her wherever she went, in an attempt by her husband to discover some suspicious circumstances by which he might obtain a divorce from her, but he never could do so. Her two children were removed from her care by order of the Courts of Law, but it was on the same ground that Shelley's children had been taken from his custody, that is, that they were not being taught the Christian religion, and that freethinking parents had no rights.

Charles Bradlaugh was by far the most powerful ^{orator} ~~speaker~~ that I ever heard. He was a man of ~~immense~~ ^{immense} magnetism and of huge physique. I once myself saw him go off a platform and walk down ⁱⁿ to the body of ~~the~~ ^{the} hall, and ^{there} take two ordinary-sized young men, who were constantly interrupting the proceedings, each by the collar of his coat, lug them out of their seats, and push them before him, ^{one in either hand,} as if they had been a couple of small boys, vainly resisting, till he had ejected them through the door; when he returned to the platform, neither breathless nor excited, and continued his lecture as calm and collected as if nothing had happened.

Another time, at a set debate on Socialism which he held with a champion of that idea named Hyndman — this was not at the Dialectical Society but in the great St. James' Hall, before a public audience of over fifteen hundred people — ^{'s anti-socialist speeches} Bradlaugh made such mincemeat of his opponent as to cause extreme annoyance to the Socialist section, who angrily endeavoured to end the proceedings by yells and boos. One by one, however, they were quieted, till at last there was but a single shouting Socialist ^{one Belfort Bat,} left; a long thin creature, stretching as far as he could over the chair in front of him, and screaming in a sharp staccato voice. I sat a few rows behind this last interrupter, and so I saw Bradlaugh gather, as it were, his full magnetic force into his right hand and fling it violently out towards the noisy ^{howling,} ~~ing~~ Socialist, ^{vehemently} addressing him also by name: — "Sit down, Bax!"

As though struck by lightning, or by Lord Lytton's fabled Vril, the man fell suddenly and violently right back into his seat, not only silenced, but for a few moments absolutely inert and collapsed. It was amazing!

Mrs. Besant, after many years' association with Bradlaugh, went over to the Socialists. *moved yet farther from him; she* Later on, she *favoured* herself a disciple and follower of a woman who was the very antithesis of Bradlaugh. *Her new leader was* the Theosophist, Madame Blavatsky. Upon this defect-

ion, Bradlaugh's daughter and biographer says: *Mrs. Besant & Mr. Bradlaugh*
 "A friendship sprang up between ~~them~~ of so close a nature, that had both been free it would undoubtedly have ended in marriage. In their common labours, risks and responsibilities, their friendship grew and strengthened, and the insult and calumny heaped upon them only served to strengthen the bond. This lasted for many years, until Mrs. Besant.... entered upon paths widely divergent from those so long trodden with her colleague, paths which brought her into close association with persons strongly inimical to Mr. Bradlaugh, and the aims to which he was devoting his life.... He had lost all confidence in her judgement. She had disappointed him and the disappointment was very bitter. For thirteen years she had stood upon the same platform with him; and when she one day said that for ten years she had been dissatisfied with her own teaching, he felt it very keenly; but he never uttered a word of blame."

Personally, I never had any faith in Mrs. Besant, either as a thinker or a leader of forlorn hopes. She was a

no leads.

good speaker, fluent, sometimes even eloquent, but she always seemed to me insincere. She appeared to use catch-words, to employ set phrases as counters, and not to speak from the depths of conviction. This, of course, may sound like being wise after the event, but it was always my feeling.

As a fact, there were not many Sessions of the Dialectical given over to religious discussion. Most of the members had already deeply considered the subject, and it was quite rare for supporters of orthodoxy to come to uphold their "Evidences." But this does not mean that the members were all Agnostics. Theists, like the Reverend Mr. Voycey, and those vague so-called Unitarians, who were in fact merely Theists, such as Moncure D. Conway, Minister of South Place Chapel, would present their views occasionally; and several members who were believers in Spiritualistic manifestations from another world were always ready for a Field Day.

Two or three years before I joined, the Dialectical Society, ^{its Council} had appointed a Committee to investigate the so-called Spiritualistic phenomena. A Report was ultimately published by this Committee in a volume which may still be seen in many Public Libraries. The Report was not, however, issued either by the Dialectical Society, or with the sanction of its Council. Somehow or other, the Spiritualists had got the majority on the Investigating Committee, and it was they who arranged and published the Report; including therein, it is true, the formal

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Reports of some of the Sub-Committees that they had not obtained any evidences of the reality of ^{so-called} Spiritualistic phenomena, and also some adverse statements of considerable length from individual members who came out of the investigation as sceptical as they went in — Dr. Edmunds being the chief writer in the latter class. But on the other hand, the Spiritualists who edited the volume ^{have} ~~been~~ taken good care, ~~naturally enough~~, that the bulk of it should be what was called "evidence" of the reality and convincingness of the Spirit manifestations.

Some of these warm adherents of Spiritualism were still members of the Dialectical when I joined, and clashed swords on every opportunity with the professed Rationalists, who were in every way the superior force.

Two of the most famous ^{Mediums} of their time thus became known to me: one, D.D. Home slightly, the other, Mrs. Guppy, quite well.

Home was certainly a remarkable person, and made an unusual impression on me, ^{he did} as ^{he} on others. He had those pale ^{blue-}grey eyes with a strange far-away look in them at times, that I have noticed in other "psychics" (including W.T. Stead). ^{Home} ~~was~~ was rather tall, slight, gentlemanly, with ~~dark~~ hair of a ^{red shade}. Quite a considerable part of the so-called Dialectical Society's Report is occupied by wonderful tales of ^{his} ~~Home's~~ manifestations, ^{however,} not ^{merely} witnessed by the Committee, but ^{relates} told to them and called "evidence." These things were ~~related~~, it must be admitted, by presumably reliable people; but on the other hand, when Home

It so happened that these were the Mediums responsible for the partial conversion of Elizabeth Barrett Browning to a belief in intercourse between living people and the Spirits of the departed. Home and Mrs. Guppy at different times were invited to go out to Florence and hold Séances, at the house of the British Minister, Sir A. Paget, and elsewhere, and the "manifestations" so impressed Mrs. Browning as to make her husband exceedingly angry, and cause him to write "Sludge the Medium."

(where the Brownings resided)

attended the Special Meetings of the Sub-Committee held at Dr. Edmunds' house, 4, Fitzroy Square, with the host as Chairman, and with Bradlaugh sitting on the floor underneath the table holding firmly on to the Medium's toes, nothing whatever happened.

Remarkable tales were nevertheless told of what the ^{famous medium} sometimes ~~did~~ ^{achieved} ~~had done~~ elsewhere at Séances.

Two responsible witnesses; the Master of Lindsay, ~~Stewart's Lord Lindsay~~, and his friend, Lord Adair, ^{afterwards Earl of Dunrovenan}, bore testimony that they had, both together, seen Home lifted off a couch and carried round the room high in the air by invisible hands; and also, that they had felt him grow several inches longer whilst their hands were upon his hips. ^{Other} ~~Some~~ witnesses averred that they had seen Home carefully select with the tongs the fiercest chunks of red-hot coal out of a fireplace, and not only carry them about in his own bare hands, but lay them in the palms of others without any burns being produced.

D. D. Home had several sittings at the Tuilleries with the Emperor Napoleon III, to whom ^{he} ~~Home~~ ^{once} professed to have given messages from the great Napoleon. It was ^{at a Séance,} ~~at a Séance,~~ ^{so he said} in the Salon Louis Quinze, an immense room at the Tuilleries. Only the Emperor and Empress were present. Pencils and papers

were laid on the table, and, in the full light, a beautifully shaped hand, white as alabaster, was seen to come over the table. It raised a pencil and wrote; the sound of the writing could be heard, and a message written in the autograph of the first Emperor was produced. The hand was like that of Napoleon the Great; small and beautiful; it was a member of which he was proud. It went across the room after writing, to the Emperor, who kissed it. Then it went to the Empress, who shrank back. "Do not be frightened, kiss it," said the Emperor; and the Empress did so. The Emperor of Russia also had phenomena produced to him by Home.

There is a good deal about Home at the French Court in the Memoires of Princess Pauline Metternich, who was Austrian Ambassador at Napoleon ^{the Third's} Court, and an intimate friend of the Empress Eugenie. The Princess declares that she ^{actually} saw chairs walk about the room alone; ^{at Home's Séances} that the shapes of hands appeared between the tablecloth and the table, and were grasped by the hands of the company sitting round the table, but one by one melted away in the grasp; that violets freshly bedewed were brought in through locked doors; and so on.

If testimony is to be received for proving anything, indeed, it must be supposed that D.D. Home had some remarkable powers or faculties — but of course those powers, even if genuine, were not necessarily connected at all with disembodied spirits. For my own part, I only met Home casually, I think three times, and though I was certainly impressed by his peculiar

eyes, perhaps by his "magnetism," I never saw him at work. However, Frederick A. Ford, then the devoted Hon. Secretary of the Dialectical Society, ~~and a member of the same~~ who was the ^{very} reverse of credulous, told me that he really did himself see inexplicable things happen in Home's company. Fred ^{Ford} was present at one of Home's Séances when the Medium invited every person seated round the table to ask for something to be brought in to the locked room by the Spirits, and in each case the objects came, including a live lobster, and a large block of ice which was flung upon the table with such force that splinters flew from it. Fred himself asked for a full-blown rose, and he averred that he saw a luminous hand holding the rose float along the table till it stopped before him, when he took firm hold of the hand and the rose together, and the hand presently melted away slowly in his clasp leaving the flower there. He had the faded rose for a long time. To many people that faded blossom would have appeared to be "evidence" that spirits gave it, just as the Mediæval biographer of St. Cuthbert tells how the saint one day, when his server at Mass was not at hand as he should have been, "hung up his Chasuble on a sunbeam; in proof whereof the Chasuble is there to this day." But Fred ^{Ford} was of a sceptical and logical turn of mind. He was bound to admit that he did not know how Home did it; that was all. Everybody who sees the avowed tricks of a conjuror leaves their mystification at that — it is a trick that might be easily explained if the operator ^{were} ~~was~~.

to reveal his secrets. willing. But bring in supernatural pretensions, and ^{many} people are easily awed, and ^{strangely} credulous.

However, Fred (who was ^{at the time of these marvels} ~~that a few years before I knew~~ ^{under} a young fellow of ~~about~~ twenty), after accepting Home's invitation to accompany him to Séances several times, determined to decline to go any more, because of the fatigue, almost nervous exhaustion, that he felt the next day. Home was very fond of inviting very young men to go to his Séances, and some ~~of~~ others of these young fellows, told Fred that they also experienced ^{afterwards} a degree of fatigue to which they were unaccustomed under any other circumstances. It was Home's habit to be affectionate to young men. The Countess of Caithness, in her account of his Séance at her house, says: - "He came and sat down and put his arm affectionately round the waist of my son. Raps were heard almost immediately." Is it possible that the Medium in some mysterious manner was able to draw ~~his~~ power from the "animal magnetism" of others?

I still have the photograph which ^{Home} ~~he~~ gave to Fred, with this autograph inscription on the back: "My dear Fred: That God may bless and his good angels guard you, is and ever will be the sincere prayer of yours affectionately, D.D.Home, July, 1869."

Home had, so Fred told me, exceedingly bad health. He lived to be 57, and died in 1886, at Paris.

On one occasion, at least, Home had turned his powers, whatever they were, to very practical use. An old lady named

Mrs. Lyon was led to make over to him a gift of a large sum of money, I think £30,000. By ~~his~~^{his} bye, she repented of her "obedience to the Spirit's orders," and reclaimed her benefaction, bringing a lawsuit for its recovery, on the ground that she had been induced to part with it by fraudulent misrepresentation. She gained a verdict in her favour, and Home had to disgorge this plunder. But soon after she died, and then, ha, ha! She found out! Home often received from her as a Spirit, not, alas! hard cash, but messages of contrition; and at his subsequent Séances it was quite usual to hear that poor old Spirit sighing and rustling her useless bank notes. Fred told me that the Medium's explanation of the affair to his intimates was that the aged female professed to adopt him as her son, and endowed him accordingly; but that then she preposterously developed a warmer feeling, and when he refused to reciprocate, revengefully reclaimed her benefaction.

One of the most convinced Spiritualists amongst the Dialectical members was Mr. William Volckman, who subsequently became the husband of the then ^{famous Medium,} Mrs. Guppy. I first remember hearing her rather comical name whilst I was a student at Edinburgh. There came a Report to Mr. Herbert for insertion in "The ^{Evening} Courant," of a marvellous "levitation" of Mrs. Guppy. It was asserted that this celebrated Medium, ^{who weighed about sixteen stone,} was quietly sitting making up her household books at her home in Highbury, when, without her knowledge, or consent, asked or obtained, she was

picked up by the all-powerful spirits, carried bodily through the air like a witch without a broomstick, and popped down upon a table in the middle of a dark Séance in a house a mile and a half from her own home, the traject having been so rapidly effected that the ink was still wet upon the pen that she carried! As there are always some who will not be convinced by testimony, an outspoken scepticism about the tale was heard. So Mr. Guppy had the brilliant idea of authenticating this wonderful power of the spirits and his wife in conjunction, by a decisive national test, to wit:- That Mrs. Guppy should be shut up in the deepest dungeon of the Tower of London and closely guarded by Beefeaters, when he would bet £10,000 against the Crown Jewels that she would be mysteriously transmitted therefrom during the night by the Spirits to some other appointed spot - I forget if it was the throne ^{- horn} in Buckingham Palace or her own bed. I remember Mr. Herbert caustically observing that Guppy might as well have made his stake a million whilst he was about it, as it was so very obvious that the Crown Jewels could not take up the challenge anyhow.

Mrs. Guppy came not infrequently to the Dialectical Meetings, ~~always~~ ^{frequently sometimes} with her friend, Mr. Volckman. This gentleman had distinguished himself already in Spiritistic ^{realistic} Annals, by his exposure of the pretensions of another female Medium, who was Mrs. Guppy's principal rival. ~~It was~~ The other Medium ~~was~~ was one of two sisters who in conjunction with one

another were able to "materialize spirit forms." Mr. Volckman went to one of the sisters' dark Séances, and when the spirit-form, revealed by a luminous emanation from its own spotless white robes, glided silently around the circle, he suddenly sprang up and caught it in his arms. He once mentioned to me that he knew instantly that it was not incorporeal because its breath smelt of onions. Nor did it hesitate to give immediate proof of ordinary physical powers, for it ferociously tore at the full and beautiful red beard that flowed over Volckman's breast, while the sister who was the Medium, and who was supposed to have materialized the spirit out of her own aura, roared that she was being killed by this violence to her control's manifestation. But urged by his chivalrous devotion to his fair lady^y, Volckman held on till the lights had to be turned up, and there was revealed, clutched in his cruel embrace, the other Miss Fox - or Miss Cook - or whatever the name was (it was some short name like that) of the Medium sisters.

About this time Mr. Guppy died, and his widow and Volckman desired to marry. Unfortunately Volckman already had a wife and a large family of children. But this objection was got rid of by his deliberately behaving towards his wife in such a manner as to compel her to apply for a divorce; after which the famous Medium and her devoted admirer became ~~united~~ ^{legally united.} One at least of Mr. Volckman's children by his first wife must have continued in his custody, or ~~at least~~ ^{some} were allowed to visit him; and the new wife, who already had a Guppy family, had

another child as Mrs. Guppy-Volckman, so that, on one occasion, I heard her speak to him of "my child, your child, and our child."

Mr. Volckman was quite well-to-do, and after her marriage to him, I believe, the celebrated Medium gave up exercising her psychic powers professionally. At any rate I was invited three or four times to ~~Seances~~ Seances at their house at which ~~she~~ Mrs. Guppy-Volckman herself, was not avowedly the Medium acting. Nothing happened on the earlier of these occasions beyond the Medium being "entranced," and talking in an assumed voice a considerable amount of banality and rubbish; accompanied by a few knocks on the furniture such as could easily be produced in the darkness by human methods. As this was the utmost limit ~~and~~ ^{of} my usual experience with various Mediums at Seances, I very soon came to the same conclusion about investigating "Spiritualism" that Dr. Charles Drysdale and Professor Huxley had announced as theirs when they were invited to join the Dialectical Society's *Investigation* ~~Enquiry~~ Committee; that is, to waste no time in fuller enquiries about it. Professor Huxley replied to that invitation:-

"Supposing the manifestations to be genuine they do not interest me. If anybody would endow me with the faculty of listening to the chatter of old women and curates, I should decline the privilege, having better things to do. And if the folk in the Spiritual world do not talk more wisely and sensibly than they are reported to do, I put them in the same category. The only good that I can see in a demonstration of the 'truth

no leads.

of Spiritualism' is to furnish an additional argument against suicide. Better live a crossing-sweeper than die and be made to talk twaddle."

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However, one day (this was a few years later on) Mrs. Guppy-Volckman invited me to a special Séance, which she amiably assured me was planned especially to enlighten "celebrated people" — the pleasing inference is obvious — by the employment of a Medium of exceptional endowments. This was a young man who had been a public-house potman, and bore a plebian name — let us say it was Johnson. His remarkable power was that of materializing a spirit, by name John King, whom I should see and hear — one cannot say "in the flesh," yet as will be seen, with at least one fleshly endowment: he had lips to kiss with, anyhow.

So I went to the Guppy-Volckman house, a spacious residence, ~~in the Bayswater region~~ in the Bayswater region. We were eighteen in number, including the host and hostess; the Medium Johnson; and one of the most appalling ^{-looking} individuals I have ever surveyed, because to a naturally ferocious cast of countenance and enormous bulk he added a terrible wide red slash going right across his face, cutting through the brow, the nostrils and lips, and the chin, which was a relic of his brave exploits in one of the then frequent wars between the little South American Republics. This nightmarish gentleman was an annexe to the Medium, and would have made short work,

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doubtless, of anyone who tried to emulate Mr. Volckman's *old* exploit with the "materialized Spirit". ~~_____~~
 He was called, I think, Colonel Griggs, and he manipulated the musical-box which prevented complete silence in the materializing Circle. I was seated throughout next to this nightmare of a warrior, who gripped my hand tightly on one side, while on the other side I was pinioned as firmly as her strength allowed by a pretty young lady of title, aged then ^{I think} about twenty-four; Lady Archibald Campbell, one of Whistler's most famous sitters, and the mother of a future Duke of Argyll.

We first sat closely packed around the ~~_____~~ dining-table in the dark. On the table lay long cornets of stiff paper, which were presently used both to strike the hands of the convives (if I may use that expression) as they rested on the table, and to shout messages through in voices which to my sceptical ears, sounded to be those of Mrs. ^{Suppy-} Volckman, and Johnson the Medium, and the split-nosed Colonel, scarcely disguised except for the hollow sound given by shouting through the paper trumpets. The message "to my intention," as the French say, was an admonition to seek to acquire more power of faith in the Unseen. I drew this on myself, as the Spirits were pointedly avoiding me, and I plaintively enquired: "Is there no message for me?" Beyond these "messages", the only phenomena were a few bright spots of flame, like the stars that a sky-rocket emits, that wandered about in the air, and the ringing

(N.P.)

of a bell which was suspended by a chain from the ceiling above the table, and which we had been invited to notice before the lights went out could not be in any way worked from outside and was too near the ceiling to be reached by human arms. Now at this time Mrs Guppy-Volckman always walked with two sticks; but it so happened that a mutual acquaintance had previously told me that she had seen the famous Medium out shopping in a cheap street like any other housewife, and that she was walking there quite freely and without the aid of any stick at all. When we sat down at the dining-table, by mere chance I had noticed that Mrs. Guppy-Volckman put her sticks, before taking her seat, in the corner by the fireplace; and when the lights went up, this part of the performance being over, I kindly turned to this corner to pass my crippled hostess her two sticks. Lo and behold! The sticks had walked! They were in quite another corner of the room. So then "I sez to meself, sez I, "them ~~there~~ two sticks, joined fishing-rod style, could at any rate reach that bell!"

Then we went upstairs and formed a circle round the back drawing-room. Johnson retired into a corner that was curtained off, and I was not only still policed by the slit-nosed Colonel and Lady Archie Campbell, but I had been required to give the Medium my personal promise that I would not touch the Spirit, as it was so very bad for ~~his~~ ^{Johnson's} health if his materialization was thus tampered with by unexpected human contact.

From the Medium's curtained-off corner there soon came strange sounds, groans and struggles, as "John King" drew forth Johnson's aura and transformed it, I will not say into an apparent human body, but at any rate into a man's head, shoulders, arms and hands, and a long white dressing-gown; for thus soon appeared "John King," holding in his hand some small luminous object (it might be a phial of phosphorus) which he continually raised near enough to his chin for us to see vaguely ^{for a moment} half-muffled human features, ~~for a moment~~. Thus he passed backwards and forwards around the circle, and to my surprise Lady Archie said to the spirit - "You may kiss me, John King." That is how I know the "spirit form" had "materialized" lips.

With this the Séance ended; but not my experiences, quite. The folding door leading into the front drawing-room was now widely opened to reveal the tea-table, to which we all adjourned. Of course the folding door, when so fully opened, entirely covered and obstructed the door leading from the back drawing-room on to the landing, and a large chair had been pushed against ^{the folding door when it was opened,} ~~it~~, so that nobody should leave through that back room door: everybody would naturally pass out by the main drawing-room door. When I wanted to go, however, the ^{front room} doorway was obstructed by a little crowd of guests chatting, and as I was in a hurry, (thinking no mischief, I declare,) I stepped into the back drawing-room, pushed away the easy chair

on its castors, and tried if I could open that door and so get out on to the landing. I could not; it was still locked as it had been for the Séance; but another discovery awaited me, for there, hanging up on a nail in ^{that} ~~a~~ concealed corner, was a long, white, woolly dressing-gown. So then I sez to myself, sez I, "Now I know what John King was clad withal!"

Mrs Guppy-Volekman was a very big heavy woman with a large, immobile face lit only by rather deep-set, watchful, crafty - ~~eyes~~ looking eyes. Her type was curiously like that of two other great female adventurers in an analagous direction: Joanna Southcote, the prophetess, who gave out that she was to be the mother of the Messiah: and Madame Blavatsky, the heavy-built, sleepy-eyelidded but artful-eyed friend of Mahatmas of Thibet, who taught her Theosophy, and worked wonders through her mediumship. It was so curious to discern so close a resemblance in physical type between three elderly women who had each gained public notice and credulous belief in the same uncommon life-path, that for some time I had their respective portraits pinned up side by side in my Study as a strange illustration of the gullability of humanity *about matters supernatural.*