

the formulation of a proper Glossary (the need for which has several times been urged by our President, Dr Prince), and the standardisation of methods of control for all controllable phenomena.

As stated in the *June Journal*, the *Transactions* of the Athens Congress will be printed in England, at the price of 7s. 6d. The papers will be printed in the languages in which they were read (English, French and German), and the volume will be one which every serious student must wish to possess.

The next Congress will be held, on the invitation of our Society, in London in the autumn of 1932, the year of our Jubilee. It should be a point of honour with all of us to see that the London Congress does not in any respect fall below the high standard set at Athens.

IN DEFENCE OF D. D. HOME.

BY HEReward CARRINGTON.

It may seem strange that a defence of physical phenomena should be forthcoming from one who, like myself, has generally been regarded as one of its severest critics. However, I feel that the truth concerning these historic sittings should precede all other considerations, and that, if a critic has overstepped the bounds in dealing with certain recorded evidence, his attention should be called to that fact, and any injudicious statements on his part corrected. This I feel can justly be done in the present instance.

No sincere student of psychic phenomena should resent the truth, no matter how unpleasant that may be. Actual historic documents are always welcomed, and because of that I feel that Dr Barthez's letter regarding Home should by all means be published, and should be known to researchers generally. The fault I find in Count Solovovo's paper is in the extravagant importance he attaches to this document, and the remainder of his article, in which he attempts to criticise Home's sittings generally, and to show that they might perhaps all have been of the same nature, and that all his phenomena were (probably) fraudulent. This conclusion is, I think, absolutely unjustified.

First of all, however, a few words regarding the famous Barthez letter itself. We read: ". . . The thing is very simple. Mr Hume wears thin shoes, easy to take off and put on; he also has, I believe, cut socks which leave the toes free. At the appropriate moment he takes off one of his shoes and with his foot pulls a dress here, a dress there, rings a bell, knocks one way and another, and, the thing done, quickly puts his shoe on again. . . ." This sounds exactly like a dogmatic statement as to how a certain phenomenon was produced, made by a man who had not actually seen it so produced,

but who imagined that it *must* have been so accomplished. As a matter of fact, that is precisely the case! Dr Barthez did *not* himself see anything of the kind. In support of his statement, he quotes a certain "M. Morio," who, he says, has "made of it a fine record, written and signed, with all the details necessary to establish the authenticity of his discovery." Yet this extraordinary document appears never to have been published! Where is this first-hand statement from the witness in question? Surely it should have been produced to back up so grave a charge. As a matter of fact I think it highly improbable that Home wore low shoes of the kind; every photograph and drawing I have seen of Home shows him wearing high boots.

Coming now to his criticism of the existing evidence, Count Solovovo makes much of the fact that Home frequently moved freely about the room, lay on the floor, moved furniture, etc. But he fails to tell us that *no phenomena were produced* at such times, and that manifestations were only noted when Home ceased his "rampaging" about the room, and again joined the circle. What earthly difference does it make *what* Home did, if he was properly controlled during the actual production of phenomena? Providing he was not obviously preparing some subsequent trick, I cannot see what possible bearing all this has on his results. In the vast majority of his sittings, no such perambulations were noted.

Count Solovovo toys with the idea of an accomplice who might, at times, have been smuggled into the room! Is it contended that such an accomplice was invariably necessary? Not at all, it is virtually admitted that the introduction of an accomplice would have been impossible on most occasions. Then why bother to introduce one at all? If Home could fraudulently produce his phenomena without the assistance of a confederate, why should he ever introduce one? Unless a theory is more or less inclusive and explanatory, it is surely superfluous to introduce it.

In an earlier criticism, Count Solovovo practically admitted that many of Home's phenomena could not be explained by fraud, and attempted to show that hallucination might explain many of these facts (*Proceedings*, xxi. 436-82). Now, nothing is said about hallucination, and a resort is again made to possible methods of fraud! Which of these alternatives does Count Solovovo champion? Or is it a combination of both of them?

It is also quite beside the mark to raise questions as to Home's private life, his morals, his social standing, his financial transactions etc. All these may have been as shady as you please; they do not at all affect the central problem: Did supernormal phenomena ever occur in his presence? Count Solovovo makes the point (quite rightly, I think) that excellent social position should not prevent

the imposition of the severest physical checks and tests. On the other hand, I should contend that, no matter how "low" that status may be, supernormal phenomena obtained under the strictest conditions of control necessitate their acceptance. The whole crux of the matter lies in the actual conditions under which manifestations are produced.

Count Solovovo says (p. 259) that ". . . we are justified in thinking that, if Sir William Crookes's notes had been as full as Lord Adare's we should have found in them, now and then, indications suggesting a possible natural explanation of occurrences which as described seem to exclude it. . . ." It is nearly always possible to pick holes in records of sittings, in this manner, at a distance. The critic notices that such-and-such a point is not adequately covered in the report. He promptly assumes that such-and-such *might* have happened at the time, and then as promptly concludes that it *did* so happen! The investigator making the report, however, might have a very clear picture in his mind as to precisely what happened during that period, and know very well that nothing of the sort imagined did in fact take place.

May I venture to ask Count Solovovo one question? Does he believe that one single genuine physical phenomenon has ever occurred? If so, why should not such phenomena occur over and over again—a hundred, a million times? If they have been noted in the presence of one medium, why not in the presence of another—provided, of course, the conditions were such as to render their genuine character highly probable? But perhaps Count Solovovo does not believe that a single genuine phenomenon has ever been observed? I can see no valid reason to suppose that supernormal physical phenomena did not occur in Home's sittings, where the testimony seems unanimous and overwhelming. If supernormal phenomena occurred in Home's presence, it is to my mind preposterous to endeavour, at this late date, to show that they did *not*, by picking a few minor flaws in the recorded testimony, and by postulating accomplices, hallucination, fraud, etc., as explanatory hypotheses. It is possible that Home did trick upon occasion, and even that he was caught in such tricks. But the attempt to dispose of the whole mass of recorded phenomena, in his case—and indirectly of supernormal physical phenomena in general—by these means, seems to me a totally unwarranted procedure.