

CORRESPONDENCE

The Spiritualists

SIR,—I am obliged to Dr Dingwall and others for reminding me of the sentences (*Proc.* IV, p. 48) in which Mrs Sidgwick mentions Florence Cook. This, which seems to be the only definite mention of her in S.P.R. literature before Podmores 'Studies in Psychical Research' (1897), proves that the Sidgwick's knew *something* about her. I was however, in my review of Mr Trevor Hall's book, attempting to rebut his imputation of 'disingenuousness' on Sidgwick's part in the compliment he paid to Crookes, in his first Presidential Address (*Proc.* I, p. 9). Politeness demanded that he should pay a compliment of some kind to scientists of distinction who had investigated paranormal phenomena before the foundation of the S.P.R., more especially as none of the three whom he names, Crookes, A. R. Wallace, de Morgan, had been members of the group—Mrs Sidgwick, Lord Rayleigh, Frederic and Arthur Myers, A. J. and G. W. Balfour, Gurney, etc.—with whom he had himself been closely associated. His compliment was about as guarded and tepid as was consistent with courtesy: 'I do not presume to suppose that I could produce evidence better in quality than much that has been laid before the world by writers of indubitable scientific repute—men like Mr Crookes, Mr Wallace, and the late Professor de Morgan.'

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SIR,—The reader of Mr Hall's book *The Spiritualists* may feel doubtful about the author's conclusion but would naturally be inclined to accept his documentary evidence with complete confidence. It was, therefore, disappointing, to say the least, that in checking two references I found that Mr Hall had made some quite inexcusable mis-statements.

Presumably to cast doubt upon Crookes's account of the farewell-séance with Katie King, Mr Hall writes (p. 65) that 'according to Miss Marryat's account, she evidently claimed that it was she and not Crookes who was in the cabinet when Katie King disappeared.' In her account to *The Spiritualist* she made no such claim, but as Mr Hall writes (p. 64) she 'altered this story in her book'.¹ She said that when Katie King invited her into the cabinet she dropped her white garment and 'stood perfectly naked before me. "Now," she said, "you can see that I am a woman."' Which

¹ There is No Death, pp. 142-3.

indeed she was, and a most beautifully-made woman too; and I examined her well, while Miss Cook lay beside me on the floor".¹ This quotation from Miss Marryat's book¹ does not refer to the farewell-séance at all, but to a séance 'on a very warm evening.' A short description of the occurrences at the farewell-séance is given on p. 168 (Leipzig edition). It does not mention that Crookes went behind the curtain with Katie King and says nothing about herself doing so. There is, therefore, no discrepancy in this respect between her account of the séance and Crookes's.

On p. 65 Mr Hall discusses 'the testimony of Crookes himself about the cutting of pieces from Katie King's dress.' He writes that 'Crookes had told Lord Lytton that he cut large pieces from the dress of the materialized form of Katie King and no sooner were they cut out than the holes made in the dress closed under his eyes.' In her account to *The Spiritualist* about the farewell-séance quoted by Mr Hall on p. 64, Miss Marryat also describes this phenomenon: '... when she (Katie King) had cut, before our eyes, twelve of fifteen pieces from the front of her white tunic . . . there was not a hole to be seen in it . . .'. On p. 66 Mr Hall writes that this 'account was mentioned with approval by Crookes in his own description of the final séance in which he referred his readers to Miss Marryat's letter in the previous issue which he said his own narrative supplemented'. It is worth recording that Crookes later disclaimed much of Miss Marryat's account of the séance,² saying that 'there is not a word of truth in it'. The reader who takes the trouble of looking up the reference³ will find that Crookes's statement does not refer to Miss Marryat's account at all. The article in the Journal under the heading *Polemics of Spiritualism* is about 'an alleged account by Sir William Crookes of a very remarkable case of "dematerialisation" witnessed by him with the medium Miss Florence Cook . . .' which had appeared in the *Annals des Sciences Psychiques* for March, 1906. The story about the dematerialisation which was attributed to Crookes was really taken from Miss Marryat's book *There is No Death*⁴ and it was she who had witnessed it. What Crookes said *about the passage in the Annals* was: 'As far as I am concerned there is not a word of truth in it. Nothing of the sort ever happened in my presence, in my house or elsewhere.' Whether he believed in this particular story of Miss Marryat's we do not know.

These two mis-statements may not be of any importance relative

¹ in my edition (Leipzig, 1892) on p. 165.

² Journal of the Society for Psychical Research, 1906, XII, p. 265.

³ On p. 268 of the Journal, not p. 265 as given by Mr Hall.

⁴ p. 166 in Leipzig edition.

to Mr Hall's argumentation, but they show that, unfortunately, we cannot have complete confidence in his documentary evidence.

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Depersonalization and Telepathy

SIR,—Occasionally, in twilight sleep, extraneous sounds such as those of a radio originating outside the sleeping person, will seem to originate within the percipient through psycho-auditory transposition on his part. An article in *Consumer Reports*, vol. 22, no. 2, Nov. 1957, 'Headsets and Hi-Fi Hallucination', noted that owing to a restriction of sensation caused by concentration on auditory stimuli and the presence of grey sound in high fidelity radio reception, a derealization of person and environment takes place in subjects equipped with headphones. This 'stems from the fact that with a pair of headphones, the sound radiates only into the . . . ears and seems to emanate within the head of the listener.' Oftimes, hallucinations ensue.

I have witnessed a telepathic séance conducted through radio and telephone amplifier in which the phenomena of 'derealization' and 'originating within the percipient' are used to help effect the basic psi contact.

Operator and percipients are separated and placed behind screens. All are equipped with headphones, in parallel hook-up attached to a high fidelity radio receiver and transmitter, and telephone amplifier. An artificial sound timed with percipients' breathing is added to the acoustical grey sound already present. (The sounds of breathing exercise a striking hypnagogic effect and heighten empathy to a marked degree.) Subjects are quickly brought to a state of derealization. This can be facilitated by the (prior) administration of drugs.

The physical apparatus and the distance factor (ever a bane in telepathic experiments) soon fade from the mind. And the thoughts conveyed in speech instruction, which also fades, seem to originate within the heads of percipients. The operator's thoughts become identical with those of the percipients. Conditioned in this way over a period of time, a sensitive percipient can *abandon the physical apparatus*, leave the room, and still maintain contact with the operator and other percipients linked to the physical apparatus. This percipient is now in a real telepathic situation.

I have examined a subject telepathized in this way and questioned him. There are no visible effects apparent at first. Gradu-