

really becomes conspicuous. Hitherto, with the exception of the Bryant-Wells investigation, which could hardly be called scientific, his pretensions had not been seriously tested, and, operating as he did among avowed spiritualists, he had enjoyed unlimited opportunities for the perpetration of fraud. But henceforth, skeptics as well as believers having ready access to him, he found himself not infrequently in a thoroughly hostile environment, and subjected to the sharpest criticism and most unrestrained abuse. Nevertheless, he was able not simply to maintain but to augment the fame of his youth, and, after a mediumship of more than thirty years, could claim the unique distinction of not once having had a charge of trickery proved against him.

Besides this, overcoming with astounding ease the handicaps of his humble birth and lack of education, his life was one continued round of social triumphs of the highest order; for he speedily won and retained to the day of his death the confidence and friendship of leaders of society in every European capital. With them, in castle, chateau, and mansion, he made his home, always welcome and always trusted; and in his days of greatest stress, days of ill health, vilification, and legal entanglements, they rallied unflinchingly to his aid. Add again that Kings and Queens vied with one another in entertaining and rewarding him, and it is possible to gain some idea of the heights scaled by this erstwhile Connecticut country boy.

He began modestly enough by taking rooms at a quiet London hotel; where, his fame having spread through the city, he soon had the pleasure of giving a séance to two such distinguished personages as Lord Brougham and Sir David Brewster. Both retired thoroughly mystified, though the latter some months later asserted that while he could "not account for all" he had witnessed, he had seen enough to satisfy himself "that they could all be produced by hands and feet,"—a statement which, by the way, was at variance with one he had made at the time, and involved him in a most unpleasant controversy.

Basis of Lytton's "Zanoni"

AFTER Brougham and Brewster came a long succession of other notables, including the novelist Sir Bulwer Lytton, to whom a most edifying experience was granted. Rapping away as usual, the table suddenly indicated that it had a message for him, and, the alphabet being called over in the customary spiritualistic style, it spelled out:

"I am the spirit who influenced you to write 'Zanoni.'"

"Indeed!" quoth Lytton, with a skeptical smile. "Suppose you give me a tangible proof of your presence."

"Put your hand under the table."

No sooner done, than the invisible being gave him a hearty handshake, and proceeded:

"We wish you to believe in the—!" It stopped.

"In what? In the medium?"

"No."

At that moment there came a gentle tapping on his knee, and looking down he found on it a small cardboard cross which had been lying on another table. Lytton, the story goes, begged permission to keep the cross as a souvenir, and promised that he would remember the "spirit's" injunction.

For Home, of course, the incident was a splendid advertisement, as were the extravagant reports spread broadcast by other visitors. Consequently, when he moved to Italy in the autumn as the guest of one of his English patrons, he gained instant recognition, and was enabled to enter with phenomenal ease upon his Continental crusade.

In order to reach the most striking manifestations of his peculiar ability, we must pass hurriedly over the events of the next few years, though they were perhaps the most picturesque of his career, including as they did séances with the third Napoleon and his Empress, with the King of Prussia, and with the Emperor of Russia. In Russia he was married to the daughter of a noble Russian family, and for groomsmen at his wedding had Count Alexei Tolstoi, the famous poet, and Count Bobrinski, one of the Emperor's chamberlains. This was in 1858; and shortly afterward he returned to England to repeat his spiritualistic triumphs of 1855, and increase the already large group of influential and titled friends whose doors were ever

open to him. Had it not been for their generosity, it is difficult, indeed, to see how he could have lived; for his time was almost altogether devoted to the practice of spiritualism, and he was never known to accept a fee for a séance. As it was, he lived very well, now the guest of one, now of another, and the frequent recipient of costly presents. From England he fared back to the Continent, again traversing it by leisurely stages. Thus nearly a decade passed before the occurrence of the first of the several phenomena that have won Home an enduring place among the greatest lights of spiritualism.

The Triumph of Levitation

AT that time his English patrons included the Viscount Adare and the Master of Lindsay, who have since become respectively the Earl of Dunraven and the Earl of Crawford. They were sitting one evening (December 16, 1868) in an upper room of a house in London with Home and a Captain Wynne, when Home suddenly left the room and entered the adjoining chamber. The opening of a window was then heard, and the next moment, to the amazement of all three, they perceived Home's form floating in the dim moonlight outside the window of the room in which they were seated. For an instant it hovered there, at a height of fully seventy feet above the pavement, and then, smiling and debonair, Home was with them again. Another marvel immediately followed. At Home's request Lord Dunraven closed the window out of which the medium was supposed to have been carried by the "spirits," and on returning observed that the window had not been raised a foot, and he did not see how a man could have managed to squeeze through it.

"Come," said Home, "I will show you." Together they went into the next room.

"He told me," Lord Dunraven reported, "to open the window as it was before. I did so. He told me to stand a little distance off. He then went through the open space, head first, quite rapidly, his body being nearly horizontal and apparently rigid. He came in again feet foremost, and we returned to the other room. It was so dark I could not see clearly how he was supported outside. He did not appear to grasp or rest upon the balustrade, but rather to be swung out and in."

To Lord Dunraven and Lord Crawford again was given the boon of witnessing another of Home's most sensational performances, and on more than one occasion. This may best be described in Lord Crawford's own words, as related in his testimony to the London Dialectical Society's committee which in 1869 undertook an inquiry into the claims of spiritualism.

"I saw Mr. Home," declared Lord Crawford, "elongated eleven inches in a trance. I measured him standing up against the wall, and marked the place. Not being satisfied with that, I put him in the middle of the room and placed a candle in front of him, so as to throw a shadow on the wall, which I also marked. When he awoke I measured him again in his natural size, both directly and by the shadow, and the results were equal. I can swear that he was not off the ground or standing on tiptoe, as I had full view of his feet, and moreover a gentleman present had one of his feet placed over Home's insteps. . . . I once saw him elongated horizontally on the ground. . . . Lord Adare was present. Home seemed to grow at both ends, and pushed Adare and myself away."

A Famous Scientist's Tests

THE publication of this evidence and of the details of the mid air excursion provoked, as may be imagined, a heated discussion, and doubtless had considerable influence in inducing the famous scientist, Sir William Crookes, to engage in the series of experiments that he carried out with Home two years later. This was at once the most searching investigation to which Home was ever subjected, and the most signal triumph of his career. Sir William's proposal was hailed with the greatest satisfaction by the critics of spiritualism in general and of Home in particular. Here, it was said, was a man fully qualified to expose the archimpostor who had been so justly pilloried in Browning's "Mr. Sludge the Medium"; here was a scientist, trained to exact knowledge and close observation, who would not be deceived by the artful tricks of a conjurer. It was pleasant too to learn that, in order to circumvent any attempts at sleight of hand, Sir

William intended using instruments specially designed for test purposes, which he was confident could not be operated fraudulently.

But Home, or the "spirits," proved too strong for even Sir William Crookes and his instruments. In Sir William's presence, in fact, there was a multiplication of mysteries. The instruments registered results that seemed inexplicable by any natural law: a lath, cast carelessly on a table, rose in the air, nodded gravely to the astonished scientist, and proceeded to tap out messages alleged to come from the world beyond; chairs moved in ghostly fashion up and down the room; invisible beings lifted Home himself from the floor; "spirit" hands were seen and felt; an accordion, held by Sir William, played tunes apparently of its own volition, and afterward floated about the room, still playing. And all this, according to the learned investigator, "in a private room that almost up to the commencement of the séance has been occupied as a living room, and surrounded by private friends of my own, who not only will not countenance the slightest deception, but who are watching narrowly everything that takes place."

In the end, so far from announcing that he had convicted Home of fraud, Sir William published an elaborate account of his séances, and gave it as his solemn belief that with Home's assistance he had succeeded in demonstrating the existence of a hitherto unknown force. This was scarcely what had been expected by the scientific world, which had eagerly awaited his verdict, and loud was the tumult that followed. But Sir William stood manfully by his guns; and Home,—bland, inscrutable, mysterious Home,—figuratively shrugging his shoulders at denunciations to which by this time he had become perfectly accustomed, added another leaf to his spiritualistic crown of laurels, and betook himself anew to his friends on the Continent, where, despite increasing ill health, he continued to prosecute his "mission" for many prosperous years.

Only One Reverse

AS a matter of fact, throughout the period of his "mediumship," that is to say, from 1851 to 1886, the year of his death, he experienced only one serious reverse, and this did not involve any exposure of the falsity of his claims. But it was serious enough, in all conscience, and calls for mention both because it emphasizes the contrast between his earlier and his later life, and because it throws a luminous sidelight on the methods by which he achieved his unparalleled success. When he was in London in 1867 he made the acquaintance of an elderly, impressionable Englishwoman named Lyon, who immediately conceived a warm attachment for him and stated her intention of adopting him as her son. Carrying out this plan, she settled on him the snug little fortune of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, which she subsequently increased until it amounted to no less than three hundred thousand dollars. Home at the time was a widower, and it was his belief, as he afterward stated in court, that the woman desired him to marry her.

In any event, her affection cooled as rapidly as it had begun, and the next thing he knew he was being sued for the recovery of the three hundred thousand dollars. The trial was a celebrated case in English law. Lord Dunraven, Lord Crawford, and other of Home's titled and influential friends hurried to his assistance, and many were the affidavits forthcoming to combat the contentions of Mrs. Lyon, who swore that she had been influenced to adopt Home by communications alleged to come through him from her dead husband. Home himself denied that there were any manifestations whatever relating to Mrs. Lyon; whose story, in fact, was so discredited on cross examination that the presiding judge, the vice chancellor, caustically declared that her testimony was quite unworthy of belief. Notwithstanding this, he did not hesitate to give judgment in her favor, on the ground that, however worthless her evidence, it had not been satisfactorily shown that her gifts to Home were "acts of pure volition," the presumption being that no reasonable man or woman would have pursued the course she did unless under the pressure of undue influence by the party to be benefited.

Hypnotism the Explanation

IF for "undue influence" we read "hypnotism," we shall have a sufficient, and what seems to be the only satisfactory, explanation of the Lyon episode

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AT THE CIRCUS—Silhouette Studies by Jessie Gillespie

