

But were there a "spec," a new company "spec,"  
 A limited something to float,  
 I'd sit on the Board (without being bored),  
 And then play the part to "promote."  
 But did a "pal" need of solace my mede,  
 Of help then I'd speedily lend,  
 True aid from my heart, and act the *good* part—  
 The best part of all—the *true* friend.

Vesta Gilley.

## The Dark Séance.

BY JOHN LAWSON.

SOME years ago I had a mania for outrivalling Maskelyne and Cooke and their well known illusions—as an amateur of course. Since the time I had seen the celebrated B—— do the dark seance *a la* the Davenport Bros., I had never rested, and I longed to be able to do the feats of this well known professor. "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Well, the "tide" arrived; and though it did not lead to fortune, it led to the opportunity I had for so long been waiting. To oblige an old friend, I had agreed to take the chair at a concert at the Grand Hotel, ——, near Manchester. I had been fulfilling a week's engagement at the Palace in the city. The artistes announced were the usual vocalists and reciters; and, as an additional attraction, there was a "star line," which read:—

### THE GREAT BAGGS IN THE DARK SÉANCE.

At 7.30 on that eventful Sunday I found myself speeding in a motor to the hotel. I may state that though in this particular village I was not known personally, my friend assured



Photo by HAND.  
 JOHN LAWSON.

me that my fame had spread, and there was likely to be a great crowd to meet me. It was as he said.

The large room was crowded to its utmost capacity; and there was obviously a large sum to be handed to the local charity, or whatever it was. Arriving at the hotel, we found the "stage manager" on the verge of despair. No Great Baggs, and consequently no Dark Séance. A telegram delivered just before eight had stated he had missed his connection from Liverpool, but that he would

arrive some time during the evening. A terrible fog was rolling up, and this greatly minimised his chance of ever coming. What was to be done? The audience would certainly not accept a deputy for the Great Baggs. We were saved, however; for that genius who always presents himself on these occasions was not lacking. I would be the Great Baggs. A hasty conspiracy, and I announced from the chair that it would be impossible to occupy the platform after nine o'clock as it would be required for the great Dark Séance. The platform was very limited in size and faced a large bar at the end of the room. I was informed later that the room had been given free on condition that the landlord was allowed the bars; and all through my chairmanship I had sat there with a vivid kaleidoscope of hot whiskies and thirsty mortals surging around. At 9.15 my friend announced that the One and Only Baggs would now appear. Fortunately, I had in the pocket of my evening dress a beard which is usually worn by Cuthbert in *Humanity*. Some powdered glue from the chemist, a little burnt cork, some arrowroot, and—a little patience, substituted John Lawson for the Great Baggs. I do not know why spiritualists are always men of melancholy aspect; but certainly the Great Baggs looked one as I stood there with a large coil of rope, and began a speech which I had studied years before when I had ambitions of becoming a magician.

I started in broken accents (though I have since thought that Baggs could not be in any way associated with the French):—"Ladies and Gentlemen." I got no farther for a moment. I noticed that the landlord was blowing down a tube, and I caught the tail end of his remarks: "I want all of you up here." Surely I was making an impression. I continued my speech. "I beg to introduce to you the celebrated dark séance as performed many years ago by the celebrated Davenport Brothers. I shall introduce all the manifestations, together with the extraordinary phenomena which have been attributed to Spirits." Somehow the landlord did not seem happy; in fact, he seemed quite uneasy. But, I argued to myself, such conduct is beneath the notice of the Great Baggs and I produced a coil of rope about two yards long, with a large knot in the centre, which I carefully concealed in my hand. I had prepared around each wrist a piece of rope like bracelets, securely stitched, and carefully hidden by my cuffs. I explained that I desired a committee of two gentlemen. These were not slow in coming forward. I then requested another gentleman to stand by the only light that I had left burning, much, I thought, to the dismay of the landlord. Once more I began to speak. My preparations had by this time completely cowed the audience; and it is not too much to say they hung on every word I said. In tones that might have well issued from the mouth of some Indian fakir, I began: "In the space of ten seconds, or ten seconds and a half, whilst I am in total darkness, tambourines and bells shall ring" (here I waved my arms impressively), "and when the lights are lit I shall be found bound hand and foot to the chair." I may explain that this is accomplished by the two ends of the rope tied to the ankles round the legs of the chair, the larger knot being brought under the chair and put between the arms, and the knot being securely tightened by pressing the two arms together as though it was really tied. This was carried out with success. The committee were requested to examine every knot (which they did), and I asked them, if the hands were tied first, how could the legs be tied, and *vice versa*, as the knot finished at the legs. "Lights," I called, and out they went. By this time I am certain that the landlord was getting nervous. A tambourine illuminated by common matches was seen floating over my head. This was accomplished by the only thing available, *i.e.*, a fishing rod borrowed by my friend. The lights went up, and the audience stood amazed. I then explained that I would now give the celebrated spiritual item. Once more we were plunged into darkness. I may state that my hands were free each time, as I only had to drop the centre knot to the floor. Somehow or other the pencil dropped from the table, and I was longer than I might have been on the floor. I heard murmurs in front, and all of a sudden the lights were turned up by the landlord, shouting at the top of his voice, "Turn those lights up; turn those lights up; I can't sell any beer with them down." I was discovered on my knees searching for the pencil. I tried to beat a retreat, after vainly calling for the lights to be lowered. There was general confusion; cries of "swindle," "impostor," filled the air, and then happily the clock struck ten. Never before did I welcome the ten o'clock closing on Sundays as I did on this occasion.

I have dressed rapidly for working turns, but I am prepared to swear I never dressed so quickly in all my life before ; for I was out of the hall, in the motor, and whizzing to Manchester well under the two minutes. I heard that the tall dark man with the beard I passed in the passage as I rushed through was the original Baggs. If this should meet his eye, I apologise profoundly to him, for I will wager his reception somewhat surprised him.

John Lawdon

### God's Greatest Gift.

By ALEXANDRA DAGMAR.

**T**HE morning sun shone brightly, cast its rays through the casement window, and with its warmth and light cheered the room where Man slept. And yet Man awoke discontented. With a sigh as though in expression of a sleepless, troubled night, he raised himself.

"There is something—something I want. I live a wretched life because I am poor. I must be wealthy; I must have riches untold."

Thereupon Man wandered forth through a thickly wooded forest until he came to a small dwelling on the door of which were the words, "Home of Saga the Wise." Man entered, and stood before Saga the Wise, a wizened little old man with face deep furrowed with lines, long white hair, keen blue eyes, and a sallow complexion.

"Saga," said Man, "I must have wealth."

"Thou art sure that this is the gift thou most desirest?"

"Yes," answered Man.

"Then for a year must thou suffer the direst pangs of poverty. Everyone thou comest across shall during that time insult thee with their wealth; but at the end of the year thou shalt be rich." And Man wandered out into the world again. After his endurance he became richer than any nobleman in the country. But his wealth brought him no satisfaction, and again he started off to Saga.

"Saga, I care not for wealth. I must have the power that fame will bring." "For two years," answered Saga, "shall the fame of others confront thee in every path, and be hard to bear, but after that thy fame shall be greater than any in the land." And in course of time Man's second desire was granted to him. And again he derived no happiness from it. Once more he wended his way to the dwelling in the woods. "Saga, I am not yet content—my heart is empty—my life is a burden to me. What is it I lack?" And Saga asked, "Canst thou not guess?" And Man answered, "No." "Thou lackest that gift without which all others are as nothing; thou lackest LOVE," said Saga. "Tell me how I may have

