

THE

Harbinger of Light.

MONTHLY JOURNAL
DEVOTED TO

ZOISTIC SCIENCE, FREE THOUGHT, SPIRITUALISM,
AND THE HARMONIAL PHILOSOPHY.

"Dawn approaches, Error is passing away, Men arising shall hail the day."

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THE letters on Spiritualism, and the discussion consequent, which have lately appeared in the open columns of the *Argus*, promise to fulfil all the good and important purposes which we hoped for and expected in their publication. J. S. has evidenced the advantage of bringing to the consideration of the subject a clearer mind, a riper knowledge, and a quicker perception by an incomparable degree, than any of the controversial combatants. This well-fitted defender of Spiritualism has limited himself (as one of the correspondents, "ORA," remarked) to advancing "his own testimony as to the knowledge that had reached him, giving at the same time the best explanation in his power of the method by which that knowledge had been obtained." By adopting and adhering to this course, J. S. has taken a position unassailable by any fair weapons of sound logic or intelligence. No answer has been given to the statements of this witness, except general assertions that he is altogether wrong, and these more or less mixed with stupid abusiveness and empty sneering. H. G. T., the most able of the opposing party, writes like a man weighed down with the consciousness that his cause is a weak one, and merely puts forward certain musty old views to which he has accorded a lazy and unreflecting acquiescence. Apemantus figures as the small joker in the troupe, and like small persons in general seems possessed of disproportionate intrepidity. Vain and violent as Sir Jeffrey Hudson, and volatile as Miss Mowcher, he is probably the only man outside his small clique who thinks his letters of any real consequence to the controversy. The adversaries of Spiritualism might imagine some gain to their strength in the co-operation of a professed funny man, but it would have been more to their advantage if Apemantus had not sacrificed so much candour, and been so deficient in logical ability, when he came forward with his "ground and lofty tumbling" in the pages of

the *Argus*, Of comic writing in general we make no pretension to be able to judge. There are, however, different phases of fanciful humour; and many persons prefer the wit of Erasmus to the buffoonery of a Jack Pudding, and will more admire the neat and delicate dialectic sword-play of J. S. than the here-we-are-again coarse and clumsy facetiousness of Apemantus. When a flippant young gentleman once said to Sam Johnson, "what would you give to be as lively as I am," the Doctor politely replied that he "would almost consent to be as foolish. If the *Argus* funny man were to rally us with such a question, we are afraid that, in the reply made, we should have to cede the palm of politeness to the great moralist." No other letters opposed to the statements of J. S. appear worthy of comment, either as being so conspicuously able or so pretentiously dull as those we have referred to. An editorial deliverance in the *Argus* of the 17th ult. appears to suggest an inclination to pooh-pooh the whole question for the present. There is a parliamentary usage whereby a leader of debate puts up, as the phrase is, a good or indifferent speaker to answer any attack, just as it happens to be considered an important matter or not. On this occasion the leading journal has not "put up" a by any means powerful or effective writer to deal with the question, and the inference is almost unavoidable that the editorial opinions on the subject are in suspense for the present.

We are without either time or inclination to notice more fully the garbled slip-slop of the *Argus* leading article, but it may be as well to glance at its logical imbecility. Says the scribe, referring to J. S., "we may well wonder that a gentleman of more than average culture and ability should be so ready to attribute any phenomena he may witness to an agency which is commonly spoken of as supernatural, simply because he cannot account for them on any known grounds. There are many phenomena in the physical world which it is impossible to explain. For instance, the existence of the force of gravity can only be inferred from results produced thereby." Just so, and in like manner the nature and condition of disembodied spirits are inferred by J. S., not only from what he has himself seen, heard, and variously experienced, but from the phenomena observed by thousands of men of the highest intellectual

attainments in all parts of the world—and which phenomena are unaccounted for by any other theory than that of spirit agency, and are capable of being perfectly explained by it. Surely, J. S. is as much warranted in believing in the existence of that agency as Sir Isaac Newton was in deducing the law of gravity. Both causes are equally the rational deductions from certain known effects.

The silly articles on Spiritualism that have appeared in the *Telegraph* may be briefly dismissed. These are so obviously made up of foolish misrepresentation, wanton inaccuracies, and fallacious argument, that they will have no more influence on the question than on the bits of meat they are destined to envelop in the butchers' shops—except by obscuring it for a very brief period. There is hope, however, through the law of development, even for the intelligent progression of such as the *Telegraph* writer. Within a few months he will probably feel that he has been very much in the wrong; within a year he may have it in his power to discover that Spiritualism is truth; and in time, (though many years will have rolled over his head before it happens), his mind will be illumined to learn that he has served the cause he strove to hinder—that his very foolishness was used to advance a knowledge of the truth. The most forward and enlightened system of medical treatment is the Homœopathic—like cures like; and on similar principle, those who are suffering from ignorance and bigotry must be dosed with medicine which temporarily increases the ailment, in order to promote their best assured recovery. The mind of the *Telegraph* writer seems to be, in the manner pointed to, broken out all over with boils of orthodoxy. This attack takes the shape of a favorable eruption of prejudice and superstition; but, like an enthusiastic disciple of Hahnemann, he has full faith in his ability to cure himself by resorting to the maxim, *similia similibus curantur*.

Several months ago we asserted that the advance of Spiritualism in public opinion would shortly be very marked and rapid. At the same time we asked our readers to note the changes which are rapidly taking place in Europe, in regard to religious and political orthodox belief. We now call attention not only to changes which have occurred very lately, but to the revolution that is obviously impending in the political and religious creed of the people of the old world. The late discussion on Spiritualism has stirred the attention of thinking men, and secured its being examined in a manner worthy of its claims. The ephemeral scribblers and talkers on the subject, that buzz momentarily in one's ears, can no more impede the progress of Spiritualistic knowledge than so many mosquitos could stop the advance of a railway train.

In conclusion, we will spare a few words for those who affect to sneer at the intellectual status of believers in Spiritualism. There are hundreds of men in Europe and America compared with whom the wittings of the press are but as mere worms in intelligence—tadpoles in mental development. Of course the persons we now address will clamour, "name, name." Well, we will give the name of one firm and faithful follower, and one who knows himself to be spiritually inspired in all his great works of political progression—and this man is the Prime Minister of England, William Ewart Gladstone.

THE article on Spiritualism (doubtfully Dr. Carpenter) which appears in the last number of the "Quarterly Review," has been eagerly reprinted, and largely commented upon by the press, as a crushing blow to the claims of Spiritualists and to Spiritualism generally. But to those who know anything of Spiritualism and its phenomena the article in question displays such an amount of ignorance of the important subject treated upon as to make one blush for the future reputation of these savans, who treat so authoritatively subjects they have never investigated. At the outset the writer deliberately ignores the facts of mesmerism, facts that are demonstrated by Drs. Elliotson, Leger, Ashburner, Townsend, Barth, and hosts of others who devoted a lifetime to the investigation and application of the science; but the main argument of the article is the stale and exploded one of unconscious muscular action! Ye Gods and little fishes, unconscious muscular action! Surely the writer must be unconscious of the publication of the Dialectical Society's report, and the accounts thereon of the movement of a large table, under test conditions, without contact of any portion of the bodies of anyone, thus merely endorsing thousands of well attested instances before recorded. In the face of these his illustrations of mental abstraction, the unconscious movement of the legs, or the playing of a tune without concentration of thought, are simply absurd. Dr. Carpenter, after quoting himself on what he calls the ideo motor principle, alludes to an instrument invented by Professor Faraday (called an indicator), from which he concluded that the motion produced was solely due to the muscular action of the medium. Professor Faraday's strong prejudice against Spiritualism is too well known for any one to expect him to have arrived at any other conclusion. But Professor Hare (whose prejudices were not so strong, though a disbeliever) went through the same course of experiments with a very different result, and being convinced (by the instruments he had invented to disprove it), had the courage to avow the facts, and their effect upon his belief, suffering greatly in prestige thereby. To account for the mental phenomena the writer brings forward the rusty gun, "Unconscious Cerebration" assuming that the instances he quotes are fair samples of spiritual test communications, while it is well known that by far the larger number of spiritual communications given through developed mediums are on subjects that never entered into the conception of the medium, and often relative to events that have not transpired. Dr. Carpenter's slur at curative mediumship is gratuitous, while numerous instances are on record of cures performed by mesmerism and spirit agency (one of the most notable of modern times being that of Leon Favre, formerly Consul General of France); he does not give a single instance of injury done thereby. Finding he cannot get over the scientific testimony of the occurrence of the physical phenomena by fair means he adopts the foul one of disparaging the scientific attainments, &c., of Dr. Crookes, Professor Hare, Sergeant Cox, Lord Lindsay, and others. Home and other mediums, whose manifestations have stood the test of thousands of the most acute sceptics, are denounced as dishonest imposters, and the inference we are expected to draw is that Dr. Carpenter is the clear-headed honest man who *does* understand Spiritualism, and does not distort facts in reference thereto. Enjoy your opinion, Dr. C., and your glory while it lasts: if you live a few years longer in this world you may yet be ashamed of your article in the *Quarterly*.

COMMUNICATION.

THE SPIRITUAL WORLD.

THE Spirit-world is a comprehensive term, it does not represent a Sphere or Locality, but the whole Spiritual Universe. The Spirits of just men made perfect, and the Spirits of unfortunate undeveloped men all have their abiding place in it.

The law of *Affinity* is the principle which regulates all societies in the Spirit-world. The undeveloped and animal nature seeks a correspondence when it recovers a consciousness of its continued existence; and the spirit of a kind and benevolent man seeks also a correspon-

dence under the same circumstances. This is, to some extent, apparent in the body. Men generally seek *kindred associates*; and you may know the character of a man by the company he associates with. It is but a finite manifestation of God's infinite *law of affinity* which exists in all spheres, worlds, and space. As there is a very great diversity of tastes and desires, and general characteristics in man, it naturally follows there are a vast number of communities in each plane of development in the spirit-world. These communities are so harmonious in the higher spheres, that the mind of *one* represents the mind of the *whole community*, and the acquisition of any new truth by *one* is participated in by *all*. The affinity is perfect, and the consociation of spirits in each society is like unto a beautiful musical instrument—the touch vibrates through the whole.

In the lower spheres of the spirit-world, the harmony is less apparent, the strong-minded and passionate spirit exercising a restraining and commanding influence over those whose will is weaker, yet they cling to him because they are in affinity; the disposition is the same, but the majority are *negative* to the *positive* mind.

Man's aspirations should soar, whilst in the body, to the beautiful and harmonious consociations of the higher spheres, for there will he meet a heaven transcending all his earthly conceptions, or his highest aspirations.

Good night. God's blessing attend you.

Poetry.

LITTLE DARLING JENNIE TO MAMMA.

BY WILLIAM BRUNTON.

I know you love me, mamma dear,
 You love your own sweet darling pet,
 Come, let me kiss that falling tear,
 For I can kiss and love you yet!
 You've sown my little grave with grass,
 And set the sweet white marble stone,
 A scroll 'round which the lilies pass,
 And word is writ, "I'm still your own!"
 And there you come on sunny days,
 And bring me bright and blooming flowers,
 And sound again that soothing praise:
 "Our little darling still is ours!"
 Yes! then you think I stand close by,
 Or run about with childish bound,
 Or mount on silver wings and fly
 In bird-like joyance round and round!
 Then speed we home with heartfelt glee,
 And there I greet and kiss you all,
 And do so love myself to see
 My little picture on the wall!
 From cushion seat and lily leaves
 I smile and show my little face,
 I smile away the care that grieves,
 And bring you comfort, hope and grace!
 How sweet to live in heaven like this,
 With home below and home above,
 Two homes, yet one—two homes of bliss,
 Of sweetest bliss and perfect love!
 O mamma dear, here, here I rest,
 Till you and all of us shall be
 In spirit-life in spirit blest,
 Amid the happy, pure and free!

To Correspondents.

Communications for insertion in this Journal should be plainly written, and as concise as possible.

OUR LONDON LETTER.

LONDON, Dec. 1st, 1871.

DEAR HARBINGER,—In the hurry of this high-pressure London, time passes almost unwittingly, and it seems but yesterday since the dispatch of last mail. A crowd of events have impressed themselves upon us within these four short weeks. Several notable incidents in connection with Spiritualism have taken place, or con-

tinued themselves with increased intensity. We may refer to the Report of the Dialectical Society, which has called forth bitter and unjust diatribes from the London newspapers, but more favourable reviews from the more respectable members of the provincial press. In the public announcements works on Spiritualism appear quite frequently, and several eminent houses in the trade have books on Spiritualism either in hand or just published. Robert Dale Owens' new work entitled, "The Debatable Land between this world and the next" has just appeared. Mr. Home has a second vol. of his "Incidents in my Life" ready for issue, and Trübner announces a work on the "evidences of Spiritualism." Gerald Massey's essay: "Concerning Spiritualism," is on the point of publication, and a beautiful lithograph to illustrate the "Ten Spiritual Commandments," given through Emma Hardinge is also nearly ready for delivery. The present winter must be a busy one in progressive literature if these and other works find ready sale, as no doubt they will. In America similar activity is visible, as will be seen from the *Banner of Light*; hence details need not be noted here.

In the last number of *Human Nature* there was a long article, by Mr. Tebb, of London, who has just visited the United States, wherein he gives the result of his investigations, as to the number of Spiritualists in America. He estimates them at about 700,000 which is far below the lowest estimate. It is exceedingly difficult to enumerate those who take an interest in this movement. Here in London, and even in country villages, believers in the ministry of angels can scarcely be identified. Two noted American mediums are at present in London and are, each in her way, creating a great amount of interest and promoting a knowledge of psychological facts. Miss Kate Fox, whose mediumship was the first developed in America, is giving sittings amongst the upper classes in the West End, with much satisfaction. The phenomena produced consist of the spirit-light, visible hands, the spirit-touch, direct writing, writing backwards through the hand of the medium, and very peculiar raps. Miss Lottie Fowler continues to be very successful in her tests and clairvoyant descriptions. Several instances might be adduced showing that psychometry will not explain all the cases. For instance, she described one evening at the Progressive Library a death by drowning of a young man at Chatham, giving the name, age, date of death, and a minute description of the individual, all of which have been attested as correct. There was no person present who had any knowledge of the circumstance, nor any one at all connected with the deceased. In many other instances her powers have been truly remarkable.

Spiritualism is taking firm hold upon the popular mind. The old argument of "Tricks and Delusion" have given way to the general opinion that the manifestations are facts, or may be accounted for by "cerebration" or some "unknown power in nature." The mind of this world will give in to anything but the truth, especially if it point in a spiritual direction. Still it is gratifying to think that the external facts are gradually insinuating themselves into universal recognition. We are pleased to observe that, in the land of the South, there is a similar activity; and that we have the *Harbinger of Light* and other publications coming to us freighted with such cheering indications of progress.

J. BURNS.

LETTER FROM A LADY.

THE lady who writes the following communication is distinguished for her love of truth, and her devotion to duty. For some years past she has been an invalid, but has been sustained and soothed by the prospect of an unclouded future, opened to her by the revelations of the spiritual philosophy.

MR. EDITOR: I should not have the presumption to offer anything to the public at this time, were it not that I wish to bear my testimony to the tranquilizing effect of the Spiritual Philosophy in the time of sickness, and in view of the approaching separation from earthly relations and of an entrance into a new life of which we have heretofore known so little. To many is

the veil now removed, that has separated the dead from the living, and none now need say: "we know not the destiny of the soul, or whether it is immortal," for the testimony of its immortality is sufficiently established to satisfy the most sceptical; and the assurances of angels, who are labouring for our happiness with untiring vigilance—that, succeeding this short life of trial and discipline, we enter upon one of happiness and joy inexpressible, have taken from death its terror, and from the grave its victory.

And now I wish to say a few words to the friends, particularly to females, who cherish our faith, concerning its application in our daily practice. It seems to me, that we are too much engrossed in seeking for more light when we have not used that which we have for any profitable purpose. We profess to believe in the philosophy of Harmony, but what have we done to develop Harmony, either in ourselves, our families, or in society? If we have not, let us seriously ask ourselves, not, *when* shall we begin, but *how*? Let us not be in too much hurry to go out and convert our neighbours, but first weed our own hearts of all noxious plants, which we may have suffered to grow there, and cultivate in their stead, Love, Kindness, and Good-will to our neighbour—by which I mean every human being, without regard to nation, caste, or color. Let us have a cheerful word for the desponding, sympathy for the distressed, encouragement for the timid, and in all cases use our influence in trying to win the vicious from their unhappy delusion. Surely, here is work; and of all concerned, I know of none who can do more than the mothers of the rising generation; and here I would call attention to the education of our very young children. There is not at present, a school in the colony, where children are not required to hear and assent to the revolting doctrines of sectarian churches. This is wrong; for, if it be a truth that "as the twig is bent, the tree inclines;" it must be of the utmost importance that the infant mind receive a just direction. Moreover, it is our duty, as fast as possible, to institute schools free from such influences; and it seems to me there might be a great improvement in the mode of imparting instruction; so that the school-house, instead of being a miniature prison, might be made, of all others, the most attractive place. Schools should be often visited by the parents, and so managed, as to combine amusement with instruction; and great care should be taken not to task the intellect beyond a healthy activity.

We have positive assurance that there is a better time coming; but I fear we have not sufficiently understood the means by which it is to be brought about. It is not the law of Nature to force happiness upon anyone, in this or any other sphere; and those who fold their hands and wait in idleness for others to perform what they ought to do themselves, will have to wait a long time before they will realise their expectations.

Wagarabillie,
21st Decr., 1871.

MARY STOREY.

LETTER FROM A CLERGYMAN.

MR. EDITOR,—I am induced by certain articles which have appeared lately in several of the daily papers, to request the insertion of a few sentences in the columns of the "Harbinger."

It is known to all that certain phenomena, purporting to be of a preternatural character, are now attracting great attention in various parts of the Colony. Connected with these "manifestations" there is a species of literature which is also obtaining a wide circulation. There is a large and an increasing number of persons, not all of an illiterate and credulous class, whose minds are drawn to this subject, and whose belief is becoming sensibly affected by it.

I met, a few days since, in a neighbouring district, with a distinguished physician, and who is also a churchman of the most decided stamp, and he said to me "why do not our clergy inform themselves more carefully as to the tendencies of the times? Do they know the extent of this so-called 'Spiritualism'? I wish to know how to treat it, and as the clergy are set for the guides

of the people, I wish to know this from them. I have no fears for my own faith; but my neighbours are swinging loose, and I would like to know what to tell them."

I thought that his demand was reasonable, and it is to draw the attention of our clergy to this subject, the importance of which is not to be determined by newspaper squibs, that I write these lines. There is a work going on in relation to this "Spiritualism," which we shall soon be obliged to meet in some more potent way than mere official malediction. It is undermining the ancient faith in many quarters more effectually, because more secretly, than any other influence now at work in our community. It cannot be properly met and satisfactorily refuted without examination.

Now we of the clergy should certainly make this investigation, and not refuse to do so, through fear of compromising our dignity and damaging our reputation. It is already frequently intimated that clergymen are getting to be abstractions, rather than men; and, if cowardice shall prevent us from looking *any subject* fair in the face which we have reason to believe is leading society astray, this charge would not seem to be altogether undeserved. To say this matter does not merit examination, is to prejudge the case; *everything* deserves examination which lays any strong hold on the popular mind. The puerilities and nonsense that are connected with it, do not furnish a sufficient reason for turning away with contempt; and if it were so, few subjects would have ever commanded attention in their beginning. Chemistry was once alchemy, astronomy was once astrology. But then, behind all these "rappings," "tippings," and other trivial operations, there is a work going on, "which it is worse than folly to despise." I will venture to say that if the whole extent of this work were disclosed, which the nature of the case renders impossible, it would greatly astonish us all. I am glad to see that our most judicious and exemplary Bishop has lectured and written on the subject; for his sound churchmanship and piety none will dispute; but I should like still better if he would have the moral courage to announce, over his own printed signature, that he intends, as he has opportunity, to give the subject a careful investigation.

As the basis of such examination, it is evident that these phenomena must fall somewhere within the following classification:

1st. Imposture and delusion. If this be the whole explanation, it is important that the trick be so conclusively exposed as to put an effectual stop to so mischievous an imposture. It is certain that such an exposure has not yet been made, and it will require a re-arrangement of the laws of evidence before it can be done. The credibility of human testimony, and the degree of credence to be allowed to the senses, are points which will have to be carefully reconsidered.

2nd. Psychological law. If these demonstrations be a new development of Psychology, they are certainly worthy of consideration; for they show powers to exist in the human soul, which our old experience has never recognized. Let the whole matter be settled upon this basis, and it will then be removed to the domain of natural science; and theologians may go on their way unmolested.

3rd. Influence of Evil Spirits. If this be the explanation of the whole matter, it becomes a question of some interest to know how their influence may be counteracted; and we have the problem to solve, why such beings are allowed to disturb the minds of men, while spirits of a nobler grade have no direct control over this erring world. But this, also, is a decision which we cannot prove to the satisfaction of others, without knowing something of the subject.

4th. The only other possible explanation is that which the friends of this new *movement* claim to be true. In order to show this claim to be untenable, it is of course necessary to know the grounds upon which it rests, and this involves a careful investigation of the subject. I think there is evidence enough to show that the three elements, of imposture and delusion, a new development of psychology, and very probably some evil influence that is extra-mundane, all enter into these "manifesta-

tions." As I have not had the opportunity to investigate the subject by personal observation, never having heard any of these sounds, nor seen any of these movements, which are said to be produced without the intervention of material agency, I have no further opinion on the subject. But one thing I know, that it is getting a hold on the community which renders serious investigation, on the part of some competent persons, imperative. It is leading to the adoption of opinions which strike at the root of what we have considered fundamental truths; it is introducing among us a *new school of theology*, which is not to be extinguished by a sneer.

I am perfectly aware that to ascribe so much importance to such a subject as this, will lead those who know nothing about it, to suspect the soundness of one's judgment, and it will be said that our wisest course is to let it alone; it is one of the humbugs of the day, and will soon die of itself. It may be so, but the indications do not point that way at present. Men of the highest scientific reputation acknowledge themselves to be perplexed; professional men of the widest experience, are personally identified with this new belief; clergymen are questioned by their parishioners; the most important and holy principles of our religion are called in question. Meanwhile, is it right for the clergy, who profess to be the teachers of the people, to remain silent, when they believe that souls, committed to their charge, are being lured to destruction?

TOMAK.

"M. C.'s" LETTER ON SPIRITUALISM.

"On the Continent, where the majority freely express their thoughts, scepticism has been long known, and universally acknowledged to be, the Spirit of the Age.

The fact remains averred to me, that scepticism is as much the order of the day in England as throughout the Continent of Europe; for it is surely the meditative, the erudite, and the philosophical minority whose opinions can alone claim weight and value, not the frivolous, the worldly, and the unthinking mass.

Where does doubt arise? Clearly, from the want of such evidence as is of a nature to induce conviction. Hence the moment is evidently arrived when, if revelation is either a truth or a necessity, it is indispensable that the preceding ones should be supplemented in a manner calculated to meet the requirements of modern civilization.

The universal aspiration has been to receive testimony from beyond the grave. What was Byron wont to say—"Let one return from the dead, and I shall believe." How often have I heard sceptics of lofty intellects declare that no other evidence save that of the departed speaking from the spirit-world, could be deemed conclusive, or force absolute conviction upon their minds. In what form then does the new revelation come, but in that which is universally felt to be the most desirable, the most consoling, and the most convincing, by every intelligent mind. It comes in the form of the spirits of the departed returning to this earth.

The new revelation differs from those which have preceded it chiefly in the evidence by which it is made manifest—evidence which is adapted, with supreme judgment, to the requirements of a scientific age, which nothing but irrefragable demonstration can convince.

Nothing has ever approached the nature of the evidence now afforded in regard to its universality, its supreme conviction, and the vast and glorious perspective it opens to progressive humanity. It has been well remarked by the erudite director of the *Revue Spirituelle*, of Paris, that the new light now bursting upon the world clearly points to the fact that every preceding revelation has been based on truth divinely communicated to men. It may be added that this is but another illustration of the law which we behold in operation throughout the universe—variety in unity—"Scepticism and Spiritualism." By the authoress of "Aurelia."

"If an angel appeared to Abraham, why should not another appear to 'J. S.'? If I believed the one statement, I should feel bound to believe the other, for I should naturally place more faith in 'J. S.', whom I know, than Abraham, whom I don't know."—*Letter from "M. C." to the Editor of the ARGUS, 6th January.*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

SIR,—As the arguments of M. C. are those which Spiritualists always put forward in demonstration of the reasonableness of the hope that is in them, I wish to draw the attention of your readers to that particular view of the subject.

As a Spiritualist I am quite disposed, and I feel that I shall do well, to take up the arms of an enemy, and

make them do battle on my own side. The pith of his very sound reasoning, which (as observed) has ever been the argument of all Spiritualists will be found in the quotation from his letter I have selected for a motto to this letter. But to make his meaning quite clear, I will quote him further—"If a man chooses to believe that Peter raised the dead, or healed the sick, that a human body outrages the law of gravitation by walking on the water, or that iron swam in it, why does he reject as absurd the statements that tables move without the intervention of human hands; that accordions play, that spirits return from the grave? The Churchman's excuse is, "I believe the miracles of my religion to have been worked by God for a wise purpose." Very good; so says the Spiritualist of his miracles. What has been possible is ever, and will ever be possible. If iron could defy gravitation in the days of Elijah, why should not wood do the same in the days of Naylor? Pagan, Christian, and Jew believe the marvels on the authority of their priests, or, at the best, on the authority of MSS. whose authorship is admitted to be doubtful, and yet these furious believers refuse to give credence to the transportation of Mrs. Guppy, for which at least twenty honest—living—people, resident in London, are ready to pledge their credit."

I judge this to be admirable reasoning. I do not know if the fact is established beyond all question, that twenty disinterested, honest, living people are prepared to pledge their credit so far; but if not, the argument stands good by merely substituting other phenomena of the most modern date equally miraculous with the Scripture miracles, and testified to by 20 or 20,000 living witnesses in any part of the new or old world.

These are just the reflections Spiritualists have gravely and earnestly urged upon the attention of all serious, God-fearing people.

Spiritualists very naturally remonstrate with such, and indignantly inquire why (when there are so many M.C.'s in the world) do you turn your backs upon those signs and wonders which God, by His ministering spirits, as of old, sends to your aid, in proclaiming His existence and power, and demonstrating the truth of the spirit-world and life beyond the grave.

If the clergy and others who fondly suppose that they see clearly, not (through a glass darkly) think proper to unite to a certain extent with the "M.C.'s," and deride such manifestations of spiritual power as revelation from God is built upon?—

If they presume to dictate to the Almighty how much dignity, according to their notions of dignity, He should accompany with any sign or wonder demonstrative of any super-mundane power? then the answers are ready, viz.—1st. Mankind are not in possession of any record of God having ever dealt otherwise with, or otherwise revealed himself unto the inhabitants of the earth than by signs and wonders. 2nd. The past and present doings of the Supreme Disposer of Events constitute the only measure or standard by which we can judge of what is right and proper to be done by God. A table is not borne up to the ceiling by unseen agency before the eyes of men, contrary to the will of God. If the object does not seem clear to us, we should remember that we now see only through a glass darkly. 3rd. Modern signs and wonders strike us as M.C. so justly admits as of the same complexion and in very good keeping with those of old recorded in the sacred books, which are held in reverence, not in Christendom only, but throughout the wide world over. So far M.C. is quite right in recognising the sameness of past and present wonders, and he is thanked for his helping hand, so far, to the cause of Spiritualism. As for his other sentiments, I think the authoress first quoted must have had him especially in her mind's eye.

I am, your obedient servant,
W.

A mock dialogue on Spiritualism, by H. W., has occupied a considerable amount of space in the "Daily Telegraph" during the last month. If H. W. will play "Enquirer" to our "Philo" we think we can settle him up as comfortably as he has his dummy.

FREE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT.

WHAT is Religious Thought, that we should desire to see it free? What is freedom, as applied to Religious Thought? It will be my endeavor herein, as briefly as possible, to trace an answer to these questions. The subject they refer to, which is the title of this paper; is just now claiming a considerable share of attention from most persons, and especially from those who are (like most of the readers of the *Harbinger*) striving to think for themselves.

It is somewhat surprising and discouraging to notice, however, that this class forms but a very, very small minority of the human race. Mankind, for the most part, seem a good deal like sheep, divided into a number of flocks, and each flock following a leader with blind confidence and thoughtlessness; and unfortunately it too frequently happens that the leaders are as blind as their followers; and that the old adage is mostly applicable—"Blind leaders of the blind."

Now, when we come to consider for a moment, we cannot, I think, fail to be convinced that this state of things is not as it should be. That each individual, of every flock, is quite capable of, and is intended by his or her maker to think for him or her self, and although they may, with both pleasure and benefit, listen to the opinions of others, and especially of those who are more gifted either naturally or by education than themselves, yet that it is not at all right or natural that a single one of them should ever surrender his own judgment, or follow without due consideration, the advice or directions of *anyone*, be they never so learned or gifted.

Each one is a child of the same Universal Parent, and each one is capable of loving that Parent. Each one is also capable of addressing him and asking for a fuller and freer gift of His Holy Spirit. Perhaps one may be able to do this in more elegant language, or with a clearer distinctness than another, but I am not at all prepared to admit that our loving Father would hear the one any sooner, or answer him better or with greater certainty, than he would the most uncultivated and ignorant among us.

Believing this to be true, how does it happen that we nearly all act as though we believed the contrary? How can any reasonable being be found capable of and willing to pin his faith to the opinions of any man, or set of men; to accept their dicta on all theological or religious questions almost if not altogether unquestioned?

The answer is unfortunately only too plain. Men and women have been *trained to follow their leaders*, and are now training their children to do the same.

They have been taught to accept such and such opinions as ascertained facts, and comparatively very few ever give themselves the trouble to call these presumed facts in question.

Habit or custom, and indolence then, I think, are the two chief causes of this state of things, and it should be the endeavor of every one who desires to see an alteration in this respect, to set themselves earnestly to work to remove these causes—to get people to overcome their old habit and to think for themselves. This is not an easy task I admit, but with patience, wisdom, and above all with love, it may be done.

There are, however, one or two other obstacles to be removed before we can hope to achieve any very large measure of success; other reasons, besides the two we have named, which help to keep people in the groove they have formed for themselves.

One of these is family and friendly association. To dare to strike out a course contrary to, or divergent from the one they have been pursuing, requires courage, requires each one, in fact, to be prepared to sink all private friendships in the desire for truth; and this is no light nor easy matter. Another cause is the fear of injury to your business, by provoking, or more properly speaking by arousing, the antagonism of those with whom you have been in the habit of associating, but from whom you would soon find yourselves compelled to separate at least to some considerable extent.

These causes have kept, and will unquestionably continue to keep, many persons from ever taking the first step. They see the probable consequences, in loss of

friendship, loss of esteem or regard, and probably loss of support in trade, and they never summon courage enough to take it.

With these it should be our aim to inculcate and foster a strong and earnest desire for truth. Truth at all hazards. Once we have succeeded in that, the rest must follow. The plunge must then, sooner or later be taken, and we shall have the reward of seeing so many persons restored to the full use of their own reason, no matter whether it takes them the same course as ours has brought us, or not. That is not what we want. Our aim is not to become leaders ourselves. Not to oust one leader for the purpose of supplying another; but to start them thinking, and acting, and praying for themselves.

There is yet another reason why they are content to remain as they are, without thinking for themselves. They are, and probably have been all their lives, like people in a railway cutting. At their back is the road they have come; in front is the road they are going; and they cannot see, and therefore do not know, that on each side of them there may be, and most likely are, as beautiful scenes and as direct roads as the one they are following. They have never allowed themselves to climb the sides of the cutting, and have no idea of the beauties hidden from their sight. They can therefore have no desire to see what they are in ignorance of the existence of. Let us help them up the sides and point out, or direct their attention to the glories surrounding them on every side. The desire to explore some of them will soon come, and once having achieved that grand object we shall indeed be well rewarded for our pains.

So far we have only touched upon that part of our subject which is comprehended in the one word "Freedom." It will now be my endeavor to suggest some encouragement to the laborers in this cause, by pointing out, very briefly, how "Thought" in reference to Religion, is fast becoming general, and how necessary it is to progress.

So long as a congregation of people are content to go on, week after week, accepting the sayings and opinions of one man for their guidance, so long will stagnation to each person be the result. If they can only be got to take the matter into their own hands, they will soon see that the reed upon which they have been leaning is but a rotten one after all, and will not properly sustain them under trial or difficulty; or even supposing that its strength is believed to be sufficient for that purpose, it certainly will not enable them to progress to anything like the extent they would otherwise be capable of. Each one of us has been gifted with reason. Let us use it; for by it shall we be judged. Just exactly as we have used the talents given to us shall we obtain our reward. It will serve no better purpose now than in the time of Jesus, to say that we have only a few talents and have therefore depended for instruction upon some one who had more. It cannot I think be too distinctly stated, nor too clearly understood, that our progress depends entirely upon ourselves; and the only way to make satisfactory progress is to think for ourselves. Yet how few among the many ever do so when religion is the subject. Let it be the earnest endeavor of *those few* to incite all with whom they come in contact, to commence to think. Let us help them up the sides of the cutting, and assist them to see the many beauties which surround them, and which they had not been able to see before; and having given them a glimpse of these beauties let us assure them of many, many more, which only require to be sought for by themselves to well repay them for their trouble. Induce them to think and we shall not long have to supply subjects. They will soon come fast enough. Like water pent up in a dam, make but a small opening that a little may escape and it will soon increase the opening for itself, and work its own freedom. So with the pent up thought of thousands upon thousands. Once they break through the obstacles which bind them, and overcome the unnatural inertia resulting from long disuse of their most God-like faculty, and we shall soon be delighted to see that no power on earth would be able to gather them up and bind them again in the one fold.

Objections will, by some persons perhaps, be taken to

this apparently blind course. We shall be told that "the multitude will, in their despair at having lost their anchor, run riot and commit rash and wicked acts, and inevitably bring about their own eternal ruin. Take away the buoy which has sustained them and they will immediately sink, many never to rise again." Some will even go so far as to say that "even if their form of Religious belief is not strictly true yet that it is far better than none, or than the one we would suggest, and that it is wickedness in us to try to disturb them."

These are, however, but shallow objections, and easily answered.

Have we not sufficient faith in the wisdom and the power of our Almighty Parent to trust ourselves unreservedly in his hands? Can we, for one moment, believe that He, who made us and loves us *all*, would ever allow us to drift to eternal destruction, whilst we were conscientiously and with all our might, using the only means He has given us to save ourselves? Can we suspect that He would, or even could, allow one soul to be everlastingly damned whilst that soul was eagerly striving for truth? The idea is too monstrous to be entertained for one moment.

For our part then, let us throw over for ever the pernicious and Jesuitical idea that "the end justifies the means," and press forward eagerly for truth. Let us each make ourselves sure that the *means* we use to save ourselves are *good*, and *true*, and *noble*, and we may, with the utmost confidence trust the *end* in our Heavenly Father's hands, feeling and knowing that we are His children, and that He loves us with far more than an earthly love, and would never let one of us come to any everlasting hurt while we were, with honesty and diligence, searching for truth. Let us determine to put off all unnatural bonds and be free, and let us use our reason diligently and well, and hasten, as far as in our power, the time when it will be the exception to see men voluntarily fettering themselves, or too indolent to use their reason; when they will indeed be thankful for the assistance of those who gave them the courage to believe in and practise "Free Religious Thought."

It must not, however, be supposed that I at all bewail its absence, even in the present day. On the contrary, I believe this age is advancing with exceedingly rapid strides, in the direction indicated. My object is partly to encourage this movement but more especially to caution my hearers against throwing off one set of bonds, and putting on another. Spiritualists, of all others, should be careful lest they fall into this error. Freedom surrounds us in all nature. The birds and the animals in their natural state are free of every restraint. They live instinctively aright, enjoying and carrying out their great maker's ends. Man alone has surrounded himself with laws and customs which prevent him being natural, which give him distorted views of God and His laws, and which not only damp his happiness, but which also retard his progress in an immeasurable degree. Let it be our aim therefore to study our loving Father through His works. To see how He deals with all nature, and reason, from what we observe on all sides, how it is likely He deals with us. When we once succeed in discovering a faint ray of light, we must earnestly, but *rationaly*, and with *caution*, pursue it, until we emerge into the broad light of glorious day, and find ourselves indeed free children of Him who made us, and all that surrounds us; who loves, and preserves us, and who is far too good and wise ever to desire us to surrender, for one single moment, on any subject, our individual right to bring everything to the bar of that reason He has so wonderfully and wisely implanted within us. Having satisfied ourselves of the truth and value of our discoveries of God's laws in relation to us, let us act in accordance with Reason's highest, and therefore most natural, dictates. We shall then begin to know what real happiness means. We shall then be able to rely implicitly upon God, with a full and perfect love and confidence in Him: cheerfully trusting our future entirely in His hands; our only care being to use our talents well, according to the best of our ability; and with love and good fellowship to assist our neighbor to do the same, and to enjoy with us the same glorious and natural Freedom in "Religious Thought." J. W. H.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE ON SPIRITUALISM.

THAT intercourse with the invisible world has been enjoyed by human beings in all ages, is one of the best authenticated facts in connection with the history of the race; and it would be well, I think, if studious Spiritualists who come across any trustworthy testimony to this intercourse, would make a note of it, for the information and benefit of others. By way of setting an example in this respect, I submit a few excerpts from the *Religio Medici*, of Sir Thomas Moore, confessedly one of the noblest and most original works in the English language. J. S.

"It is a riddle to me . . . how so many learned heads should so far forget their metaphysics, and destroy the ladder and scale of creatures, as to question the existence of spirits. For my part, I have ever believed, and do now know, that there are witches.* They that doubt of these do not only deny them, but spirits; and are obliquely, and upon consequence, a sort of not of infidels, but atheists." SECT. XXX.

"We do surely owe the discovery of many secrets to the discovery of good and bad angels. I could never pass that sentence of Paracelsus without an asterisk, or annotation: *ascendens constellatum multa revelat quarentibus magna natura, i.e., opera Dei*. I do think that many mysteries ascribed to our own inventions have been the courteous revelations of spirits; for those noble essences in heaven bear a friendly regard unto their fellow natures on earth: and therefore believe that those many prodigies and ominous prognosticks, which fore-run the ruins of states, princes, and private persons, are the charitable premonitors of good angels, which more careless inquirers term but the effects of chance and nature." SECT. XXXI.

"Therefore for spirits, I am so far from denying their existence, that I could easily believe, that not only whole countries, but particular persons, have their tutelary and guardian angels. It is not a new opinion of the Church of Rome, but an old one of Pythagoras and Plato. There is no heresy in it: and if not manifestly defined in Scripture, yet it is an opinion of a good and wholesome use in the course and actions of a man's life; and would serve as an hypothesis to solve many doubts, whereof common philosophy affordeth no solution. SECT. XXXIII.

"Having no certain knowledge of their nature, 'tis no bad method of the schools, whatsoever perfection we find obscurely in ourselves, in a more complete and absolute way to ascribe unto them. . . . As the soul hath a power to move the body it informs, so there's a faculty to move any, though inform none: ours upon restraint of time, place and distance: but that invisible hand that conveyed Habakkuk to the lion's den, or Philip to Azotus, infringeth this rule, and hath a secret conveyance, wherewith mortality is not acquainted. If they have that intuitive knowledge, whereby, as in reflection, they behold the thoughts of one another, I cannot peremptorily deny but that they know a great part of ours. They that, to refute the invocation of saints, have denied that they have any knowledge of our affairs below, have proceeded too far, and must pardon my opinion, till I can thoroughly answer that piece of Scripture, "At the conversion of a sinner, the angels in heaven rejoice." . . . I confess there is not any creature that hath so near a glimpse of their nature as light in the sun and elements. We style it a bare accident, but, where it subsists alone, 'tis a spiritual substance and may be an angel. In brief, *conceive light invisible, and that is a spirit.*—*Ibid.*

"These are certainly the magisterial and masterpieces of the Creator; the flower, or as we may say, the best part of nothing; actually existing, what we are but in hopes and probability. We are only that amphibious piece, between a corporeal and a spiritual essence; that middle form, that links those two together, and makes good the method of God and nature, that jumps not

* This was a belief held by Bacon, Sir Matthew Hale, Bishop Hall, Richard Baxter, Dr. Henry More, Dr. Willis, Glenville, Lavater, &c. In all probability many of those persons whom an ignorant and superstitious age denounced as witches and familiars of Satan, were the usual mediums.

from extremes, but unites the incompatible distances by some middle and participating natures. That we are the breath and similitude of God it is indispensable, and upon record of Holy Scripture: but to call ourselves a microcosm, or little world, I thought it only a pleasant trope of rhetoric till my near judgments and second thoughts told me there was a real truth therein. For, first we are a rude mass, and in the rank of creatures which only are, and have a dull kind of being, not yet privileged with life, or preferred to sense or reason; next we live the life of plants, the life of animals, the life of men, and at last the life of spirits; running on, in one mysterious nature, those five kinds of existences, which comprehend the creatures, not only of the world, but of the universe. SECT. XXXIV.

"Now for that immaterial world methinks we need not wander so far as the first moveable (i.e. *primum mobile*); for even in this material fabric, the spirits walk as freely exempt from the affection of time, place and motion, as beyond the extremest circumference. Do but extract from the corpulency of bodies, or resolve things beyond their first matter, and you discover the habitation of angels; which if I call the ubiquitary and omnipresent essence of God, I hope I shall not offend Divinity; for, before the creation of the world, God was really all things. For the angels he created no new world, or determinate mansion, and therefore they are everywhere where is his essence, and do live, at a distance even, in himself. That God made all things for man, is in some sense true; yet, not so far as to subordinate the creation of those purer creatures unto ours, though, as ministering spirits, they do, and are willing to fulfil, the will of God, in these lower and sublunary affairs of man." SECT. XXXV.

"EVIL" VIEWED FROM SPIRITUALISTIC, AND FROM ORTHODOX STAND-POINTS.

Read before the "Association of Progressive Spiritualists," Sunday morning, Dec. 31st, 1871; and before the "Free Discussion Society," Sunday evening, Jan. 14th, 1872.

AFTER eighteen centuries of so-called Christianity the problem of evil and its cure remains still unsolved by Christians. Sin, as it is called, is as rampant as ever, and although Christianity is the state religion, all the institutions for the administration of justice and repression of crime are founded on essentially *unchristian* principles. The one principle laid down by Jesus himself, in positive terms, and also illustrated by more than one of his parables, is this—"I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." So we see that Christians to-day hold this anomalous position, they believe, or think they believe, that God Himself came to earth, took human form, and taught us emphatically to resist not evil, and yet our Courts of Justice, and all officers for the administration of justice, together with police forces, volunteers, and standing armies, are a direct protest against the principle, and are instituted for the opposite purpose, that of resisting evil to the utmost; and I have never yet heard expounders of Christianity cry out against it. Therefore those who insist on the Godhead of Jesus are placed in a very curious position, they say in effect that they are wiser than God; they preach a doctrine as emanating from Him, and practically confess that it won't work, by adopting measures for dealing with evil diametrically opposed to those laid down by Jesus. To be consistent, Christians should do away with these *unchristian* institutions and found others in strict accordance with Christ's commands, or else admit at once that these commands are *impractical*, and accept the logical deduction from such an admission. If Jesus gave commands which are impractical, we are driven to the conclusion, either that he did not fully understand human nature and its requirements, or else that these commands were intended for other ages than ours, and other states of society. In either case we are left to grope our way darkly as best we may, blundering that we may learn, until by dearly bought experience we learn those lessons which Christianity has failed to teach. One of the lessons so learnt is that mankind cannot be guided by simple precepts, that nothing but

the accumulated effects of innumerable failures can teach them the right course, and induce them to follow it. And thus it is, that to-day we find, as I said before, nearly all the institutions by which we are surrounded are essentially *unchristian*, and if anyone were to advocate their entire revolution he would probably be looked upon as a mad visionary, and suffer social crucifixion.

Looking the matter fairly in the face we see that the teaching of Christ is one thing, and the practice of Christians is another. This arises not from individual caprice, for I would ask where and when have Christians, acting in their *collective* capacity, carried out Christ's precepts, of resisting not evil, but overcoming it with good? The quakers are the only ones who have ever attempted it, but they are in so small a minority that we can let them stand as the exception to the general rule. That this rule is general could be demonstrated if necessary. Take for instance the church in its ecclesiastical jurisdiction, there at least you would expect to see Christ's principles carried out to the letter, but what is the fact? When a clergyman is seen guilty of evil doings, such as expressing heterodox opinions, when have his ecclesiastical judges ever tried to overcome the evil with good? Is the offender not prosecuted and persecuted, deprived of his living, and ignominiously expelled from the church; and in past times have not such men been persecuted with a fiendish cruelty that is absolutely sickening to contemplate? That these things do not obtain to-day, we have to thank principally that spirit of rationalism, which is still looked upon by the church as its greatest enemy. The member of the Ballarat congregation who proposed that Mr Inglis' income should be increased by an additional £100 a year after he was convicted of one of the most glaring pieces of plagiarism on record, was acting on Christ's principle of returning good for evil, but how this was received by the rest of his fellow Christians, and how it would be likely to work is well known. Christianity is taught theoretically, but when practical measures are to be instituted it is generally put aside. In fact the orthodox religion seems to be in a helpless condition generally, its precepts are contrary to its practice, it is out of harmony with the Spirit of the age, its adherents are luke-warm and divided amongst themselves, and altogether incapable of working out that radical reform which would enable them to keep pace with the onward march of progressive thought. In nothing is the Church so much out of harmony with the spirit of the times as in its theory of evil or sin: founded as it is upon the assumed "fall of man" and his consequent total depravity. The ideas arising from a contemplation of the doctrine of Original Sin are truly startling. A man is created "perfect" and placed in the presence of temptations which proved irresistible. The consequences of yielding to these temptations, as depicted by theologians, are the most horrible conceivable by the mind of man. To say that this result was not foreseen by the Divine Mind is to deny his omniscience, and to say that he could not prevent it is to deny His omnipotence. No theory of man's "free agency" will get out of this difficulty, and we are bound to assume that the "fall" was part of the Divine plan. The scheme for saving mankind from the awful consequences of this "fall" is admittedly so inadequate that few there are who find the narrow way, so the majority do not escape the "Divine curse," and must therefore suffer an eternity of torment. Such in brief is the orthodox notion of sin and its consequences. It is needless to say that Modern Spiritualists reject such irrational ideas, and they are therefore accused of taking away the safeguards of morality, and by unsettling men's faith tending to make them lawless. To reply to this objection is the object of this paper, and I wish to show that in substituting rational ideas for irrational ones they tighten, rather than loosen, the bonds of moral obligation.

Spiritualists reject the orthodox notions of sin and its consequences on the following grounds:—

We do not believe in the "fall" of man from a state of perfection, because there is not sufficient evidence to support such an idea, and because there is a large amount of evidence to the contrary. It contradicts the well ascertained laws of progression, and represents the

Deity as incapable of carrying out His designs, if they were benevolent, and succeeding admirably if they were malignant. Rejecting the fall we necessarily reject the consequences of the fall such as eternal torments, and we shrink from attributing to God, actions more horrible than the worst ever committed by the most degraded of His creatures. It may be here objected that the doctrine of eternal damnation is seldom preached now, I am aware of this, but that *it is* preached I can testify, having heard one of the most respected of ministers declare from the pulpit, that—"If the lake of fire and brimstone is only a metaphor, that we are to remember that a metaphor *always* falls short of the reality," from which we must infer that if Hell is not a lake of fire and brimstone it is something a great deal worse! There are very few Christian ministers who do not refer to Hell and the Devil occasionally, and a few years ago it was the fashion to portray the infernal regions with all possible minuteness, to represent the most horrible tortures imaginable, and then endeavour, by every ingenious device, to lead the mind to conceive an idea of an eternity of such tortures. Many clergyman preach about the Devil for the same reason that foolish nurse-girls talk about "Old Bogie," to frighten children into complying with their wishes. The Devil and his angels have hitherto been looked upon by theologians as a sort of moral police for the detection and punishment of "sin." The fear of Hell has undoubtedly exercised a restraining influence over some minds, in certain stages of their development: an influence, perhaps, that could have been exercised by nothing else, but as these minds become further developed they begin to reason for themselves, they see the absurdity of the whole doctrine, the restraining influence is thrown off, and they become what theologians call "lawless." It generally happens, however, that before this influence is thrown off, these minds get glimpses of a higher and nobler restraining power that appeals to their *reason*, instead of appealing to the lower instinct of fear. This higher restraining power is the *knowledge* of the *laws of nature* which compel obedience in proportion to the degree in which they are intelligently comprehended. These laws are so beneficent and yet so exacting that they only require to be known to be obeyed as far as the individual is capable of obeying his convictions, in opposition to the blind and vicious propensities he may have inherited; propensities which will become more and more feeble through each succeeding generation, in the ratio in which knowledge abounds. A man cannot get knowledge without cultivating his faculties and thus improving his organism somewhat, this improvement will, under favourable circumstances, be transmitted to his offspring, if he has any, his children having thus inherited a disposition to acquire knowledge will continue in the way he has begun and leave to their children still further improved organisms, and so on through many generations until our remote descendants will have so improved in their physical and mental constitutions that they will yield with *ease* that obedience to the higher dictates of the mind which we yield with *difficulty*. This course of improvement, which I have so imperfectly sketched, will take place only as a *general rule*, there will be many *apparent* exceptions.

The foregoing argument lessens the weight of the oft-urged objection that the *knowledge* of what is right will not make men do it, even if they know it to be to their true interest to do so. Many well meaning men are continually dragged down by the animal portion of their nature, and do things from which their higher nature recoils; but if the struggle between the higher and lower nature is continued through a few generations, the lower will inevitably be subdued, and cease to exert any uncontrolable influence.

The orthodox view of the punishment of sin, in spite of its severity, fails to have the desired effect on persons whose reason is awakened in the slightest degree; for the simple reason that the punishment is not *inevitable*, and to have made eternal torments inevitable would have been going to greater lengths than even our orthodox friends would go. The scheme for salvation from the consequences of sin tends to neutralise the fear of Hell, so that the devil and all his angels are powerless

to frighten the sinner from the error of his ways. According to the orthodox scheme a man may lie, cheat, and steal with impunity if he repents and believes at the eleventh hour. A man may go from dissipation to dissipation, from youth to age, neglecting his duties and scattering distress and misery in his path and yet escape the consequences by a death-bed repentance. A man may go red-handed from crime to crime, desolating happy homes, and revelling in the wretchedness he has brought about, and yet the repentance following his arrest and conviction, and a mumbled confession of faith, is sufficient to send him at once to heaven to take his place beside the philanthropist who has devoted his life to the happiness of others.

Such a scheme does not even appeal to a man's fears effectually, and it so violates the natural sense of justice that it cannot appeal to anything higher.

How much more rational then to teach men that they cannot possibly escape the consequences of their actions; that the transgression of any natural law will *inevitably* bring its own punishment. To teach them that to live in harmony with the laws of their being is *happiness*, and to be out of harmony with them is misery. Teach men that they are social beings, and that to injure any member of society is indirectly to injure themselves, and that the good of one is the good of all. How much more rational to so reform society that those hotbeds of crime and disease, want and misery on the one hand, and needless luxury on the other, should be no more; to so constitute society that men's *duties* should agree with their *interests*, and thus put an end to dishonesty. This looks a rather hopeless task, but who, looking at the accomplished facts of the past, shall dare to place bounds to human ingenuity? That it will be done is as sure as it is that man has unsatisfied aspirations. It will be objected that the suffering caused by the transgression of natural laws will be insufficient to deter men from transgressing, and that they will give way to their lawless passions. This *may* be so, but if it is, men will remain *undeterred*; as the orthodox scheme has lost its hold on thinking minds, and the unthinking will not pay any heed to it, until they have done all the harm they are likely to do, and are brought to their death-beds. The objection comes with a very bad grace from Christians, who, to be consistent, should charge Jesus with loosening the bonds of moral obligation when he refused to judge the woman taken in adultery, and made use of those memorable words—"He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her." Or in the beautiful parable of the Prodigal Son, when the good father is made to reward his erring son, thus offering an inducement for other sons to go and do likewise. In fact the Christian's position is so inconsistent throughout that their objections to us are worthless; let them put their own houses in order before essaying to arrange ours.

The problem of evil is very simple in the abstract; but our visions have been so perverted by early training, and the chaotic nature of the ideas current on the subject, that it is difficult to get a clear view of it.

Man is surrounded by general laws, which govern him physically, morally, and intellectually. Perfect obedience to these laws would yield perfect happiness, but as man at the outset was ignorant of these laws he could only become conscious of their existence by the discomfort caused by transgressing them, and the comfort resulting from obedience. Although the existence of laws were thus made known early in the history of the race, the nature of these laws was very imperfectly understood, hence the imperfection of human enactments, and the injustice resulting from them. The natural laws are so beneficent and so perfect in their working that mankind will be compelled to yield obedience in proportion to their knowledge of them. This brings us to the proposition of the gifted author of "The Alpha" that "The errors of mankind are always in the exact ratio of their *Ignorance*," and points to the first duty of the true reformer, the duty of thoroughly instructing all children in the laws which regulate their being, the laws of both bodily and mental health, the social laws, and those governing their spiritual aspirations, as far as they are known. The laws of health have been sadly

neglected hitherto; how many a fine constitution has been ruined through ignorance of them, how many sent to premature graves, leaving helpless ones to mourn their loss, and how many great minds have been weighed down and crippled by physical infirmities resulting originally from this cause.

The prevailing ignorance of social laws should be removed as speedily as possible; the crime and misery resulting from this ignorance is but too apparent.

The laws regulating our higher nature and the aspirations are not so readily comprehended as the preceding ones, but the principal evil seems to result from the mistaken endeavour to force the mind into creeds, which however well they may have been adapted to the past, are certainly too narrow for human needs to-day. This, I believe, would be acknowledged by one half of the orthodox ministers if they could but see something better to replace the old theology. But their hands and tongues are tied; to investigate any new form of religion, except for the purpose of denouncing it, would be fatal to their position. But a knowledge of the operations of the natural laws will gradually spread among the people, and the great work before us is to demonstrate them so scientifically as to *compel* belief, and right actions will ultimately follow.

In the meantime there is a wide field for the exercise of the utmost charity in judging others, as nearly all the crimes that society punishes in the individual are directly traceable to society itself. Thousands of miserable wretches are yearly plunged headlong into crime from absolute want, caused by the vicious constitution of society. This begets such a sense of wrong and of injustice, that it turns men into beasts of prey who make war on society, and are only held in check by keeping an army of police. Who shall say that this does not arise from a wildly misdirected desire for justice, which properly trained and directed would have made heroes of them? The enormous amount of human energy that is annually wasted in crime and its repression would, if turned into the proper channel, cultivate all the waste lands and create abundance of those necessities of life, the want of which is the principal incentive to crime. To me it is a beautiful thought, that nearly all the crimes committed in this crime-stained world, may after all, be but the result of *misdirection* of faculties that are noble in themselves. How many a poor wretch there is, born in sin and misery, surrounded from infancy by the direst poverty, unable to earn an honest living, and not knowing where to get food to satisfy the cravings of his nature, yet he looks around and sees thousands rolling in wealth and luxury who would spurn him as they would the dirt under their feet; what can he do in such a case? Shall he accept such a state of things as right, and miserably starve; or shall he, guided by those self-same instincts that would be called *manly* if applied in any other way, make war on those he considers his oppressors and endeavour to get by foul means that subsistence which he can get in no other way? The same instincts that prompt the use of these means by the criminal, prompt society to make war on him; he is captured and dies as he has lived—miserably, and if unrepenting, our orthodox friends would consign him to an eternity of misery hereafter. And for what? What has been the cause of all the misery suffered by this poor wretch, does it not simply resolve itself into an accident of birth? If he had been born in other circumstances, and surrounded by better influences, and possessed a happier organization, might he not have been the most *honoured* instead of the most *despised* of earth's children? Be it ours then to work earnestly for the amelioration of human suffering, and to extend our sympathy to those poor wretches who may, after all, be more sinned against than sinning.

E. W. C.

Attention is called to Mr. Tyerman's advertisement in this issue. Our country friends would do well to avail themselves of the opportunity of securing the services of an able exponent of the facts and philosophy of Spiritualism.

THE ARGUS REVIEW OF "SCEPTICISM AND SPIRITUALISM."

"If what you saw is a fact, and appreciating, as I do, your intelligence and veracity, then be sure there lies much more beneath it than meets vulgar eyes; much which is worthy of the deepest and most profound investigation. I should look upon myself as little better than a fool, were I to let such a mystery pass by me without endeavouring to elucidate it."

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

SIR—Following in the wake of the *Quarterly Review*, I observe you have at last broken the ice, and began to write about, what your readers have been talking about, so long, and so much, viz.—"Spiritualism."

Trusting that your space will be open to both sides of what ought to be a grave, as well as interesting controversy, I venture to address you, and take exception to the *justness* of your review of "Scepticism and Spiritualism" in the *Argus* issue of the 28th inst.

Your review quotes amongst others this passage—"Their retort may be very witty, but in order to be either cutting, or apropos, it lacks, *like most* of their arguments, three indispensable ingredients, i.e.—truth, relevancy, and depth." Granting that your witty review has been pleasantly dressed up to suit the taste of a thoughtless fashionable world, who love to go, like dead fish, with the stream, I shall content and limit myself to pointing out, how it fails in the three particulars suggested, and prognosticated, by the Authoress of the book in question. Truth then first—certainly truth before, and above all things—The review opens with these words—"We should imagine that she is one of those ladies' maids who have no objection to travel abroad, and her book is full of bad English, worse French, and illogical argument, and all that belongs to those who affect "studies"—"literature"—and the society of men of letters." The real and plain facts of the case are, that the book is not only written in good English, but in such singularly good language as to be indicative of a stamp of mind, the very reverse of that of a ladies' maid, causing the review to be so far the very reverse of the truth. This is unimportant, except that it sounds the key note of distortion of facts, the tone of which runs through the whole review. However as this is only my word or opinion, against yours, allow me by way of gaining evidence on my side, to ask how it came to pass that a woman of the ladies' maid rank and cast, mixed so sociably with those in high positions all over the continent. It is true that in describing sayings and doings that transpire upon the continent, she very naturally (not affectedly) gives some of the pointed exclamations she hears, in the very words of the language in which they were uttered. It would have evidently been unnatural for her to have translated such exclamations in every instance. The charge of affectation is simply untrue. I judge there is insufficient French in her book to permit of an opinion being formed of her *proficiency* in that language, but it should be remembered that an educated Englishman, listening to a French or German gentleman visitor in England, might detect imperfections in their use of English every few minutes. To infer therefrom, either vulgarity, or deficiency of education, would be strictly untrue, and this is the kind of untruth I charge home to your review. The deficiency in the first ingredient "truth" being thus established, I pass on to—

RELEVANCY.—Mention is made of her having seen at her very first seance a table hop eight feet, and flowers had moved in her presence, from the chimney-piece to a girl's hair, and all this without the intervention of any human hands, or seen agency. The question is,—is this true? If we grant her lack of perfect gentility, and good taste, how does that fact become relevant to the truth, or otherwise, which she records, and which I repeat is the great and only point the mind's eye concentrates itself upon. A lady with taste, gentility and erudition, as perfect as an *Argus* reviewer, would not be more truthful, or reliably observant than a clever ladies' maid, a status which I think your gallantry yet allows to our authoress. How therefore does this question of gentility and good French, become relevant, when the eye is fixed enquiringly upon the truth of the wonder. Having noticed what is not relevant, I will just mention

what would be exactly relevant, for instance if the review had mentioned whether the reported movement of the table and flowers, and harmony from a musical instrument without contact of human hands, or seen agency, was a truth, or falsehood, in the estimation of the reviewer. The review might be searched in vain for an answer to this question. A senseless, evading, unmeaning grin, is invariably substituted by the Anti-Spiritist, for a bold answer to such a question. I think I have now established the fact of there being a second deficient ingredient in the review of "relevancy." We next come to—

"DEPTH."—Why does not the review go at once into the depth, and heart of the subject, by attempting a solution of the two following questions, which stare us in the face at the first glance, the very first blush of the whole business. It must of necessity be that the phenomena do, or do not take place. A clergyman (in your issue of the same date with the review) avers, that from his own personal experience, the phenomena do take place, and accompanied by intelligence and free from trickery, even to the counting of coins in a gentleman's pocket or giving the name of a lady, to whom a gentleman is engaged to be married.

FIRST QUESTION.—If motion and sound by unseen agency accompanied by intelligence takes place in our midst, why did we not hear or read of such great wonders in the days of our fathers? What can be the cause of the new effects we witness, or hear of? what the object? How far can we disassociate these events, with the Supreme Disposer of events? and lastly how foolish to meet such events only with laughter, and hearty mutual abuse all round, and how is that to be explained?

SECOND QUESTION.—If the phenomena do not take place,—then, and in that case, what can be the cause of the yet greater wonder than all the harmony and movements spoken of? what I say, can be the cause of such wonderfully false reports? all alike, from all parts of the world, and springing up under our very noses, and before our own eyes, if we like to look or listen? If your review had acknowledged our being driven by force of facts, and circumstances, to these two difficult questions, I would not have charged it with lack of depth of reasoning. The review recognises no phenomena, puzzling or otherwise. It "affects" to suppose, but dares not to state, that such phenomena, exists only in the fancy of silly people. Here the "affectation" lies, not with the "ladies' maid."

"The faults of our neighbours with freedom we blame,
But tax not ourselves though we practise the same,"

I hold that I have now made good my engagement, and that I have convicted your review of lacking the three ingredients, indicated by the authoress, "truth, relevancy, and depth." As example prevails more than precept, and seeing that you have not the courage in your review, to say whether you believe the sounds and movements as described, did, or did not, take place, I will set you an example and say, that I do believe they did take place, exactly as described. My inducement and reason for believing is this,—Before I had my hands upon a table in a circle for five minutes, for the first time in my life, it rose up five or six inches and moved round in a circle as it drew one leg over the carpet; at a following seance, the very last that I was at, the table astonished us all, by beating time to an air I sang. This was distinctly visible to every one in the room, not a very small party—I ask how much difference is there between the phenomena at these two seances, and that recorded by the clergyman already spoken of on the one side, and the flower movements, antigravitation leap, and the harmonious chords, which severally convinced and converted, the Authoress of *Aurelia*, and her lady friend, in the other case. The difference is not so great, and having seen the one phenomenon, I believe in the like one, which I did not see. The truth is there are countless instances of flower movements by unseen agency on record—yet these are the words you make use of in introducing the subject in your review:—"The following absurdity is recorded as having taken place." Now Sir, if the flowers did move as recorded, that was not the way for you to notice it. If your employees saw

and recorded such phenomena as the bronze Burke and and Wills marching down Collins Street past your door would you consider it a matter for laughter, and head your notice of the phenomenon in your next issue, in the same words that find a place in your review? viz: "The following absurdity was seen, and recorded by our employees." To treat such phenomena with laughter only, and without attempt at investigation or elucidation would (like your review), exhibit a lack of depth of thought—See motto selected for this letter.

If your position is not altogether too high to be corrected in this respect, by a "ladies' maid," I will conclude by quoting her—

"The critics who presume to ridicule the phenomena forget that it is the supreme wisdom of God which they presume to arraign before their petty tribunal. For IF THE FACTS ARE TRUE, who shall deny that they proceed from God's will? And if from Him, who shall presume blasphemously to assert that they can be either PUERILE, FOOLISH OR VAIN."

I am, Sir,
Your obdt. Servant,
W.

South Yarra,
29th Dec., 1871.

P.S.—I have obtained, and append hereto, a certificate from the highest authority in this colony, as to the quality of the acquirement of the Authoress in question, and the goodness or badness of her French and English.

It will be seen that the opinion of that high authority is adverse to *Argus* truthfulness in that one particular, and as a brick is a very good sample of the constituent portions of the whole wall, so is this particular a good sample of the justness of the whole review.

An abortive attempt to correct the lady's spelling, and a tumble down over the business, does not say much for the candid earnestness of the reviewer; nor can I see how a t too much or too little, is relevant to the great question at issue, viz: whether mankind are, or are not, at the present time receiving a further revelation through the agency of those ministering spirits employed by God on such missions during so many ages past.

The review proves this, and it proves no more. It proves how much truth there was in the oft repeated observation of the authoress, that the Spiritualist (as in the case of the early Christian) is invariably subjected to have his or her veracity, and natural and acquired endowments of mind, aspersed and traduced.

MELBOURNE,
Jan. 29, 1872.

Dear Sir,—I have looked into the book you sent me, by the "authoress of *Aurelia*," and in answer to your questions I should be disposed to say:—

(1) That the lady's acquirements are good, but that her mind is not of that judicial order which is best qualified to estimate the value of evidence.

(2) I have discovered nothing wrong in her English or French. I observe the *Argus* Reviewer twice appends (*sic*) to her word *savants*—I suppose because she spells it with a *t*; but that is the way in which it is now almost always spelt.

Yours,
J. E. BROMBY.

PHILOSOPHY ACCEPTS SPIRITUALISM.

It will be seen from the following letter that the great German philosopher, Immanuel Herman Fichte avows his conviction that the spiritual phenomena of the day indicate the action of a superhuman influence. The eminent thinker is a son of the distinguished Johann Gottlieb Fichte, the contemporary and intellectual peer of Kant. The son shows himself the inheritor of the father's genius. It is satisfactory to learn that he had been led by his own independent psychological investigations to conclusions similar to those which the revelations of the seers and mediums of Spiritualism imply. The testimony of a man like Fichte outweighs the ignorant carpings of a thousand Huxleys:

STUTTGART, July 7th, 1871.

My Dear Sir: Accept my warmest thanks for Hare's work, which, had you not sent it to me, would probably have escaped my notice. I made myself acquainted with its contents without delay, and can state the following as being my present impression in relation thereto. As to its revelations concerning the world beyond, they seem to me to be of the highest importance, because they not only, at least for the most part, harmonize with those which have been given by other spiritual seers, but because they are intrinsically reasonable, *Godworthy* and truly cheering. I myself have the greater reason to think them valuable, as they essentially agree with the principles of my own psychological investigation, which is entirely independent of them. I refer to that which is really essential and decisive, laying aside a great deal that is unessential in these "revelations," (such as the demon-

stration of the existence of spiritual spheres which are said to surround our planet, &c.) which may, I fear, furnish abundant material for doubt and ridicule to those who are unfavorably disposed.

As to my present position with regard to "Spiritualism," I had an opportunity last year of becoming acquainted with its phenomena and testing them repeatedly. This was through my personal acquaintance with Baron Gldenstbbe and his sister, who spent the winter of 1869-1870 at Stuttgart, and who honored me with their full confidence. *I have come to the conclusion that it is absolutely impossible to account for these phenomena, save by assuming the action of a superhuman influence; but that deception, credulous acceptance of worthless things, false interpretation of incidental matters—in a word subjective admistures are not wanting; on the contrary, that they often play a principal part, which obscures the value of the whole thing. In short, there is a great deal of chaff, and but little genuine grain in the thing, so that I have often become weary of attending such experiments, or of causing them to be made, although two excellent mediums were at my disposal after the departure of Gldenstbbe. I feel, however, deeply interested in the cause, for I am by no means unaware of its high importance, both in a religious and social point of view. I shall therefore be grateful to you if you will continue your communications, and I assure you and your worthy friend, Councillor Aksakow, of my most grateful appreciation of the indefatigable zeal with which you so perseveringly devote your powers to that cause.*

Yours with high respect,
J. H. VON FICHTE.

To MR. GREGOR CONSTANTIN WITTIG, BRESLAU.
—*Banner of Light, Nov. 25, 1871.*

Mr. Tyerman and Mr. Oliver lectured at Geelong last month to good and attentive audiences. Want of space prevents our publishing reports.

At the opening service of the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists at their new place of meeting in Latrobe Street East, two Gentlemen (members of the Victorian Tract Distribution Society) with more courage than good taste, stationed themselves at the door and thrust into the hands of the congregation as they entered, "A Warning against Spiritualism," being a reprint of an English publication, authorised by the Victorian Tract Distribution Society, with a note of approval from the Bishop of Melbourne. Mr. Tyerman took occasion to refer to the matter before entering on his discourse, and after alluding to the tolerance of the Spiritualists in allowing this distribution to take place within the precincts of their building briefly but conclusively refuted the three propositions upon which the argument of the pamphlet is based. Now that our Orthodox friends have taken the initiative, they can have no reasonable objection to our following their good example, and stationing some Tract distributors at the doors of their assemblies. We shall be happy to furnish any volunteer Tract distributors with a few hundred Tracts gratis, on application for this very laudable purpose.

Fanaticism may exist in as great a degree in an exceedingly incredulous, as in a too credulous mind. Hence the *strong-minded man*, who denounces fanaticism in others, and stops his ears to the evidence of facts which he will not believe to exist; is nothing but a poor weak fanatic after all.

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