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BETTINA VON ARNIM.

By William Howitt.

"Göethe! I have Second-sight!"—Bettina.

In the notice of Fräulein von Günderode I mentioned the introduction which Günderode gave to Bettina into Spiritualism and into mediumship. Bettina became one of the most celebrated female writers of Germany. The spirit, independence of thought and action, and vivid dash and colouring of her writings, while they gave her a character of eccentricity and of a mad-cap sort of extravagance, at the same time produced an immense sensation, and her works were always read with a voracious avidity and created universal discussion. The principal of these works are the *Correspondence of Göethe with a Child;* the Memoir and Correspondence of Günderode with Herself, and one with the singular title *Dies Buch Gehört dem König*, "This Book belongs to the King." All these exhibit the fullest evidences of Bettina's Spiritualism, then unknown by any specific name, and, of course, set down only as one of her many extravagances, a philosophy imagined only to create what is now termed sensation.

I mean on this occasion to confine my notice to the correspondence with Göethe, which Bettina herself translated into English, but which I have not met with. But I have met with further productions of Günderode, the whole, I believe, which have survived, unless it be some of those contained in Bettina's work, *Die Günderode.* Besides the volume quoted under the assumed name of *Tian*, which appeared in 1804, another volume was published in 1805, and a third in 1806. The volume published in 1805, in Heidelberg, entitled *Studien*, was edited by her friends Professors Creuzer and Daub. Her productions altogether, consist of a number of lyrical poems; several prose dramatic articles, and four dramas, *Hildgund*, *Udohla*, *Magic und Schicksal*, and *Mahomed der Prophet von Mekka.*

All these productions display much poetic genius, and all equally show the settled tendency of her mind towards the supernatural. The stanzas display the growing power of her intellect, and are sufficient proofs that had she lived she would have attained high rank as a dramatic poet. The drama of *Mahomed* is a thoroughly spiritual production of great vigour, and in it she manifests her perfect knowledge of spiritual conditions and characteristics. Mahomed is a great medium, exhibiting all the features of a medium—trance, vision, and attendant spiritual powers necessary for his great mission. Günderode was born in Carlsruhe, in February, 1780, and destroyed herself in July, 1806, so that she was a few months over twenty-six years of age. A very interesting portrait of her is given in a collected publication of her writings, by Friedrich Götz, Mannheim, 1857.

The perusal of this volume enables me to correct an error in my article on Günderode. The apparition of Günderode's sister was not to Bettina, but to Günderode herself. The three dreams of Bettina were the cause of her conviction that they would find Günderode dead.

The appearance of the *Briefwechsel* of Bettina—correspondence represented as that of a child of thirteen, with the great poet and philosopher, Göethe, in which this child not only talked of her ardent love for him, of her self-introduction to him, of flying to his arms, clasping him round the neck, and seating herself on his knee—the grave man of sixty, and of an overwhelming fame—but of pouring out all the fires, impulses, wayward fancies, and speculations of her precocious heart, was a sufficiently startling spectacle. But this child of thirteen gravely lecturing the great poet on his faults, and the faults of his most popular writings, calling him boldly to account for his want of religion, his want of conception of music, and of the true beauty and scope of female character, was still more astounding to the learned men of Germany. At the same time, the glowing eloquence, the breadth of intellectual horizon, the depth of mental intuition, the varied literary and philosophical experience; in a word, this rich and refined mind, amid a strange garnish of outré and girlish conceits, made it appear a moral impossibility that these letters could originate with a child of thirteen. *The Conversations Lexicon* makes her just ten years older, and thus much of the wonder would vanish. Bettina, however, always asserts her then age as thirteen, instead of three-and-twenty, which the encyclopædia makes her. That Bettina had none but the purest ideas and intentions in this singular intimacy, will be felt by every reader of the work, and it is evident that no stigma attached to her on its account by her subsequent marriage with the distinguished Achim von Arnim. She opens her book with the warning,

"This book is for the good, and not for the bad." A significant application in other words of our "*Honi soit qui mal y pense.*"

The account which Bettina gives of her early life, of her life indeed, at this time, of the friendship with Günderode and then with Göethe, is certainly strange and extravagant enough. She travels with her brother-in-law and her sister, whom she familiarly calls "Lulu." Part of the way the ladies appear in male attire, as most adapted for passing, with least chance of annoyance, through the different armies, French and German, which then occupied Germany. Bettina prefers the seat outside by the coachman. They travel by night and in winter, through great forests, and the driver tells them of recent robberies in these parts. Bettina carries her pistols in her belt. No robbers appear, but heavy snows fall. Wrapt in her cloak she sits and sleeps, awaking to find herself covered in a snow-wreath. At morning dawn she shakes off the snow, begs that the carriage may stop, for a run into the still woods, under the pine trees laden with snow, and then fires off her pistols at the boles of the trees. At Weimar, she calls on Wieland, the poet, and demands an introduction from him to Göethe. The old poet, in much wonder, writes on a card:—"Bettina Brentano, Sophy's sister, Maximilian's daughter, Sophy La Roche's grand-daughter, wishes to see thee—receive her kindly." With this she marches to the great man's house, and so begins this singular history.

In her subsequent summer's sojourn on the Rhine, she wanders about at all hours, by day or night; rambles to any distance alone, over rocks and through woods; talks with boatmen, shepherds, poor women, goose-girls, or anybody, and finds something worth knowing in all. In a letter to Göethe's mother, with whom she has made the same unceremonious acquaintance, and who loves her as a daughter, she writes:—"People say, 'Why are you sad?' Sad! my heart is full of joy; but it is too great, too wondrous to shew itself in laughter. But it raises me from my bed before day, and I wander out amongst the sleeping plants on the hills, where the dew washes my feet, and I think devoutly, it is the Lord of the world who washes my feet, since he will have me to be pure in heart as he washes my feet pure from the dust; and thus, when I come upon the top of the hill, and overlook the wide country in the first beams of the sun, then do I feel what joy is, feel it expand itself mightily in my bosom, and I breathe forth a thank-offering to the sun, who shews me what his and our God has prepared for us."

At Bingen she ascended continually to the ancient chapel of St. Rochus, on the top of the hill overlooking the Rhine, and this she used to make her soul's oratory, and to sit in the confessional, and open out her soul to God, and to a universe of

mysterious thoughts that poured into it. She planted a vine, which she carried up in a pot, at the foot of the crucifix within the walls of this deserted chapel, and wreathed it round the figure and the cross, delighting herself with the wonder of the simple people when they came there in pilgrimage on St. Rochus's-day, for it is a great pilgrimage chapel. She fetched up from the Rhine below, no trifling labour, two jugs of water, to water the vine and the flowers—King's-crowns and the Longer-the-dearer, whatever they may be, for the bees, which some peasants had placed in a hive, on a shelf, in the deserted confessional. She sails down the Rhine for miles with a boatman, who has been in Spain and India, and sings wonderfully; and then she walks home, through the night, by the softly plashing river. On the hills she has much converse with an old shepherd, who plays wild, strange music on his schalmei, a sort of horn, saying music was a protection against evil thoughts and *ennui*, but not always against bad spirits. These he had met with at night on the hills, and they had turned him back, even when he was going to see his sweetheart. Now, however, he was old, and had been in the wars. Yet, once he had met a man in full armour walking in the moonlight, far away on the hills, with a large black dog with him.

One night Bettina, having slept in the sunshine of the afternoon, on the steps of St. Rochus's Chapel, woke at midnight in the full moonlight, and in the solemn hush of the forest. Deep was her delight, and without any fear. "The spirit," she says, "has also its senses, through which we see and hear and feel many things that have no outward existence. There are thoughts which the spirit only, with its deeper sense, comprehends. So I see often what I think and what I feel. And I hear things which shake me through and through. I know not how I have arrived at these experiences; they are not the products of my own enquiries. I look round at the utterance of a voice, and then I perceive that it comes out of the invisible, the region of love."

She covered her head and slept on the chapel steps till morning, and then adds: "Yes, dear friend, this morning as I awoke, I felt that I had lived through something great. It was as if the resolves of my heart had wings, and I could soar aloft over mountain and valley, into the pure, the clear, the light-filled azure. No oath, no conditions—all only in the befitting motion of a holy aspiration towards heaven. That is my vow. Freedom from all bonds—a determination to follow and believe only in the spirit which reveals the beautiful, which prophecies of blessedness."

In this vow we have the secret of Bettina's life; the key to all that appears strange, eccentric, and reckless of the world's social laws; and amid all this, throughout the whole of her

writings, nothing stands forth so conspicuous as the heart of a noble, brave and spiritualized woman of genius. She had found a soul in nature that lived with her and for her; which was friendship, society, religion, philosophy, and love. A great and universal teacher speaking from the central oratory within; speaking in every flower and blade of grass, in every breathing of the air, and spring of water. The Great Spirit, as the American Indians named Him in awe, teaching through spirit, whether concrete or individualized, the wisdom of eternity. "Ah! every form contains a spirit and a life, which must inherit the everlasting. Do not the flowers dance? Do they not sing? Do they not write in the air—'Spirit?' Do they not paint their innermost being in their form? I love every flower, each according to its kind; and to none have I been untrue. They live in and from love. In God's love, and in your love. They wither and die from neglect. I have seen it, and could tell some touching stories of flowers and trees dedicated to a love that has flourished or ended in deep, deep woe."

But Bettina found a deeper voice, which the voices of Nature, of whispering leaves, plashing waters, songs of birds, thwarted and disturbed:—"I have given myself much labour to collect myself, and to get down below all interfering influences. I have shaded myself from the light of the sun; and gone out into the dark night when no star shone, and no wind stirred. I have gone down to the river strand, but it was never sufficiently solitary; the waves disturbed me, the sough of the grass—and when I gazed into the thick darkness and the clouds parted, and a star blinked through, I wrapped my head in my mantle, and buried my face in the earth in order to be wholly, wholly alone. That strengthened my heart I became pure, and then I was enabled to perceive what, perhaps, no one else perceives, or cares to perceive. Then out of the infinite depths of the inner world, spirit rises up before our spirit and we gaze on it, as the Divine Spirit gazes on Nature. Then Spirits bloom out of the spirit; they embrace each other, they elevate each other, and their dance is form, and it is music. We see them not, we feel them, and harmonize ourselves with their heavenly power; and in doing this we undergo an operation which heals us."

Such was this young paradoxical Bettina—a riddle to the wise world, a lawless young creature to them who had not found her deeper law; to herself, consistent, intelligible, and amid all apparent agitation, full of repose. Let us hear what this child in comparison to Göethe has to say to this great Titan of German poetry and metaphysics:—

"Oh Göethe! I fear for thee: I fear to say what I think of thee. Yes; Christian Schlosser says, that thou understandest not

music: that thou art afraid of death: and hast no religion: what shall I say to thee? O Göethe, I feel like a man who has nothing to protect him against bad weather: I am both stupid and dumb when I am thus cruelly wounded: but as I know that thou art hidden in thyself, I see a solution of these three enigmas. I long to explain music in all directions; and yet I feel that it is supersensual, and that I do not understand it: yet I cannot bring myself to pass by this unexplainable thing, but worship it: not that thereby I hope to comprehend it—no, the incomprehensible is ever God: and there is no mediate world in which other mysteries are originated. As music is inexplicable, so is it certainly God. This I must say, and thou with thy idea of the third and the fifth wilt laugh at me. No: thou art too kind, and too wise to laugh: thou wilt probably let thy conceptions and thy acquirements of study fall before such a sanctifying secret of the divine spirit in music. What would be the reward of all our laborious researches if this was not so? After what shall we make research? What is it that moves us but the Divine? What can those more profoundly learned say that is better and nobler concerning it? Music is the medium of the spirit by which it raises the sensuous into the spiritual. And if they should bring any arguments against this axiom, must they not be ashamed of themselves? If any one says music is given only that we should accomplish ourselves in it—yes, truly, we ought to educate ourselves in God. If any one says—it is only a means to the Divine, it is not God himself. I reply: No, ye false tongues; your vain song is not penetrated by the Divine. Ah! the Godhead himself teaches us to comprehend our letters, that we, like Himself, may learn by our own power to reign in the kingdom of the Godhead. All education in art is only to this end, that we may lay the foundation of independence in ourselves, and that this may remain the fruit of our labour.

"Some one has said that Christ did not understand music. I cannot contradict this, because, in the first place, I am not sufficiently acquainted with the whole course of his life, and what has occurred to me to say, I cannot tell what you would think of it. But Christ says:—'Your body also shall be glorified.' Is not music the glorification of our sensual nature? Does not music so affect our senses, that they feel themselves melted into the harmony of sounds, which thou with thy third and fifth wilt calculate? Learn to understand, and thou wilt more and more marvel at the incomprehensible. The senses flow into the stream of inspiration, and are thus exalted. Everything that spiritually affects man, passes thus over into the senses, and thus he feels himself through them excited to all that moves him—to love and friendship, to martial courage, and to longing after God—all

this is in the blood: the blood is spiritualized; it kindles the body, so that it may act in perfect union with the spirit. That is the operation of music on the senses: that is the glorification of the body. The senses of Christ were absorbed into the Divine spirit: they became one with it, and he said, 'Whatever ye touch with the spirit, as with the body, that is divine; and then is your body also spiritualized.' Did Christ say this? or have I imagined and thought it, as I heard them say Christ did not understand music? Excuse me, but I feel dizzy, and scarcely know what I say.

"This winter, I had a spider in my room. When I played on the guitar, it descended into the lower part of its web hastily. I stood before it, and passed my hand over the strings; you could see plainly how the sounds thrilled through its little limbs. When I changed the accord, it changed its movements: it could not do otherwise. This little creature was penetrated with joy, penetrated with spirit so long as my playing continued; when this ceased, it returned to its concealment.

"I had another little companion in a mouse, which, however, was more affected by vocal music; and most of all when I sang the musical scale. The stronger the notes became, the nearer it advanced; it remained sitting in the middle of the room. My master had great delight in the little beast, and we took all possible care not to disturb it. When I sang songs and changing tunes, it became alarmed and hastened away. Thus the musical scale was clearly in harmony with this little creature: it was transported by it; and who can doubt that it led it into a higher condition. These sounds produced as purely as possible, and in themselves beautiful, harmonized with its organism. There was an element in it which could receive the sinking and swelling of these notes. These little creatures shewed themselves overcome by music—it was their temple in which their existence felt itself exalted by contact with the Divine; and thou who feelest thyself excited by the eternal pulsations of the Divine in thee, shall it be said that thou hast no religion—thou, whose words, whose thoughts are ever directed by the Muses, dost thou not live in the element of exaltation, of intermediation with God? Ah, yes! the elevation out of unconscious life into the revelations of the Divine—that is music."

Bettina has more to say on this subject than I can quote. She hears music in nature as well as in art; yet she says she does not hear it, she lives in it. It becomes one with her life, for it is spirit, and it is God. "Music does not simply impress me, neither can I judge of it. I cannot understand the effect it has upon me—whether it moves me, whether it inspires me; I can only say, when I am asked my opinion of it, that I have no

answer. It may be averred that I do not understand it: that I admit, I only feel in it the immeasurable. As in all the other arts, the mystery of the Trinity reveals itself. When nature assumes a body, then the spirit transforms it, and brings it into combination with the Divine. It is thus in music; as if nature did not stoop to the consciousness of the sensuous, but that she seized on the senses, and bore them with her into the supermundane. * * * * * I am stupid, friend. I cannot express what I know. If I *could* express what I mean, thou wouldst fully agree with me. As it is, thou wilt at least understand the Philistine, who carries his practical understanding so far that he can discriminate betwixt talent and genius. Talent convinces, genius does not convince, for to him to whom it is imparted, it gives an idea of the immeasurable, the infinite—whilst talent has its defined boundary, and so it is readily comprehended and explained.

"The infinite in the finite, the genius in every art, is music. In itself, however, it is soul; in that it tenderly moves us, and commands this movement; it is spirit, which warms, nourishes, bears, and again gives birth to its own soul, and by this means we perceive music, otherwise the outward ear could not hear it, but only the spirit; and thus every art is the body of music, which is the soul of every art; and thus music is also the soul of love, which gives no account of its workings, since it is the contact of the Divine with the human."

To these impassioned remarks on music, wonderful indeed, in a child of thirteen, Bettina adds some sportive remarks on the spiritual belief of Madame Göethe, the poet's mother, a very noble minded, able and fine looking woman, called from her masculine understanding, Frau Rath:—"We poor human creatures ought to be contented that we can feel the stirrings of spirit-life; that our whole existence is a preparation for comprehending blessedness; and ought not to wait for a well-cushioned and bedizened heaven, like thy mother, who believes that every thing which has given us pleasure on earth, we shall find there in superior splendour." Yes, she insists that even her faded wedding-gown of pale green silk, embroidered with gold and silver leaves, and her scarlet mantelet, will be there her heavenly costume; and that the jewelled wreath, which a horrid thief deprived her of, already drinks in the light of the stars, and will burn in the beauteous diadem of her salvation. She says, "Why was this countenance given me? And why speaks the spirit from my eyes this or that, if it be not from heaven, and has not the expectancy of it?" All that is dead, she asserts, can make no impression—but that which does make impression, is living and eternal. When I invent or relate to her anything, she says, "These are all realities and have their places in heaven." Often I

amuse her with the artistic emotions of my imagination. "These," she says, "are tapestry of phantasy, with which the walls of heavenly dwellings are ornamented." Lately we were at a concert together, and she was in raptures with a violoncello; so I seized the opportunity and said:—"Take care, Frau Rath, that the angel does not strike you about the head so long with the fiddlestick, that you at length perceive that heaven is music." She was greatly struck, and after a long pause, said, "Maiden, thou mayest be right."

Bettina, who was thus developed to perceive the great, inner, all-moving, all-inspiring world, the world of all life, operating in and through the outward, sensible creation in a thousand forms and voices, moved amid a learned, a poetical, an æsthetical generation that could not comprehend her. How great, then, must have been her delight in May, 1810, in Vienna, to make the acquaintance of Beethoven. How great was the amazement of the brilliant circles of that gay capital to see the illustrious composer enter into the evening parties, accompanied by this riddle of a smart, wild, self-willed, visionary girl. To see him shew her the most marked regard: to hear of his daily seeking her society, and playing his finest and newest compositions to her. Beethoven, the inspired prophet of grand harmonies, had met with a soul which comprehended his inspiration. Bettina writes to Göethe:—"It is Beethoven of whom I will now speak to thee, and in whom I have forgotten the world and thee. I am truly but a child, but I cannot err when I say, what probably no one will understand or believe, that he advances far ahead of the accomplishment of the whole of humanity: and can we overtake him? I doubt it. May he only live till the mighty and sublime mystery which lies in his spirit, has reached its most mature completion; yes, may he reach his highest aim: then certainly will be laid the key of heavenly knowledge in our hands, which will lead us a step nearer to happiness.

"I can confess it to thee, that I believe in a divine magic, which is the element of the spiritual nature, and this power of enchantment Beethoven exercises in his art; on all of which he can instruct thee. It is pure magic: every attitude is the organization of a higher existence, and thus Beethoven believes himself the founder of a new sensuous basis in spiritual life. Thou canst probably understand what I mean by this, and which is true. Who could replace this spirit with us? In whom could we look for the like? The whole of human life and action moves in him like clockwork; he alone produces spontaneously from himself the undreamt-of, the uncreated. What need has such an one of intercourse with the world, who already before the sunrise is at his sacred day-work, and who after sunset

scarcely looks round him; who forgets his necessary bodily food, and is carried by the stream of inspiration aloft from the flat shores of every-day life? He himself says:—'When I open my eyes I sigh, for what I see is contrary to my religion, and I am obliged to despise the world, which has no conception that music is a higher revelation than wisdom and philosophy. It is the wine of the new spirit-birth, and I am the Bacchus, who treads out for men this noble wine, and makes them drunk with it. When they are sober again, then they find that they have fished up all sorts of things which they bring to the dry land with them."

"I have no friend," he said, "I must live by myself alone; but I know well that God is nearer to me than to others in my art. I go on with him without fear: I have always known and understood Him. I have no anxiety about my music; no evil chance can befall it: He whom it gives to comprehend it, must be free from all the misery which others drag along with them."

Suddenly stopping in the middle of the street, and amidst wondering crowds, and looking upwards unconscious of them all, he poured forth an inspired speech to the wondering maiden. He declared that music was the electric plain on which the spirit lives, thinks, and invents. All true philosophy, all true art, existed in the same spiritual element. Every isolated thought linked itself to the totality of thought, in the universal relationship of spirit. "I am of an electrical nature," he added, "and everything electrical excites the soul to musical, flowing, outstreaming production."

The next day Bettina read over to him what she had written down of his discourse. "Did I say that?" he asked. "Then I must have been in a raptus."

Bettina earnestly and faithfully expounded the great doctrine of all inspiration originating in the spirit-world. That all efforts without that influx are dead. And she warmly exhorted Göethe not to content himself with any aim less elevated than that of raising his readers to the loftiest possible elevation of moral life and motive. She pointed out to him the low and defective grade of his female characters in general, excepting Gretchen and Mignon. The whole player-pack in *Wilhelm Meister*, she said, she would like to sweep into the limbo of oblivion. Wilhelm Meister, what a far nobler career might, in her opinion, have been marked out for him. Poor Mignon, how was her nobler nature, how were her divine gifts unrecognised or misused. What might not a nobler Wilhelm Meister have achieved for a struggling people like the Tyrolese, against the French invaders, by the soul-stirring music and voice of the inspired Mignon.

In a word, Bettina von Arnim presents us with a fine

example of a writer opened up into the spiritual life; into the perception of the true source of all being, all living beauty, and moral greatness; and living amid a generation which, however intellectual, walked beneath the obscurity of a cloud through which she had ascended to perpetual sunshine, calling in vain on those to follow her. Yet, there was a singular fascination in her vivid pages, which, whilst the wise ones read, and even whilst they termed them "*schwärmerisch*" and fantastic, compelled them to think and dream of them. Grave poets, and amongst them, Göethe himself, turned her glowing prose into poems, and those which Göethe thus transposed, stand confessedly equal to his own proper compositions.

It is a pleasure of discovery, in traversing the literary lands of even the commencement of the present age, to come ever and anon, on the footprints of truth's unrecognized pilgrims—Unas of the higher light, like Spenser's fair creation:—

Making a sunshine in the shady place.

Many such, no doubt, await our further explorations. Let us walk on through brush and shadow, gathering such treasures by the way, and adding at once to our own pleasure, and to the visible host of the Children of the Morning.

In concluding this article, I ought to say that Bettina's work, already mentioned, "The King's Book," written at a much maturer age, bears out all the spiritual and intellectual promise of her Göethe correspondence. The spiritual element everywhere presents itself. In one place she says:—"What can I do with the calves' eyes of the world, which stare at the truth unbelievingly, or utterly unconscious of what is the subject discoursed of? The subject is the all-living spirit, which shall not be suppressed in whatever form it shall appear. The superstition, which inevitably fixes itself on this spirit, has never become living, but has persecuted the spirit, and would compel it to stand still in the midst of its holy transformations. That must be put down, for it is the wicked tyrant which out of the truth forges a lie. But not you alone—all the world—what avails your singing of hallelujahs, and ringing of bells? There is but ONE tone which can penetrate the Divine ear. It is spirit alone which, unconstrained, issues from the heart of man; that is the only power which can come into contact with God: His ear alone understands the free spirit." Yes, God is a spirit, and must and can only be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

The results of the operation of spirit on her own mind was to make her "King's Book" an earnest appeal to the temporal powers to retrace their course in the work of human government; to make the spirit of love the basis of legislation; to rule, not for

self, but for the people. In her plans she advanced into all the great social and political topics of to-day. She advocated the reform, and not the destruction of criminals; the prevention rather than the punishment of crime; the abolition of all capital punishments; and the serious endeavour morally and religiously to restore the very worst and most degraded of offenders; the improvement of the social condition, and the recognition of the true rights of woman. She drew pictures of the condition of the poor which might be the work of the social reformers of this greatly advanced time, and who have yet so much to do in that direction. In a word, the book displays all the sound social philosophy which might be expected from a pure spiritual source, but which to the writer's contemporaries looked like the advocacy of a new Utopia. That Utopia, however, we have seen ever since acquiring disciples amongst the most distinguished minds, and steadily advancing into a great and beneficial reality.

But I have pledged myself not to go at large into this "Book which belongs to the King," and shall close this article with a passage from Hans Christian Andersen's Autobiography:—

"At Berlin, in the house of the Minister Savigny, I became acquainted with the clever, singularly gifted Bettina, and her lovely, spiritual-minded daughter. One hour's conversation with Bettina, during which she was the chief speaker, was so rich and full of interest, that I was almost rendered dumb by this eloquence, this fire-work of wit. The world knows her writings,—but another talent, of which she is possessed, is less generally known, namely, her talent for drawing. Here again it is the ideas which astonish us. It was thus, I observed, she had treated an incident which had just occurred before, a young man being killed by the fumes of wine. You saw him descending half-naked into the cellar, round which lay the wine casks like monsters. Bacchanals and Bacchantes danced towards him, seized their victim, and destroyed him! I know that Thorwalsden, to whom she once shewed all her drawings, was in the highest degree astonished by the ideas they contained."

Query.—Were these not spirit-drawings? It is probable, just as much as her writings were and are highly spiritual.

MEN WITHOUT A CREED.

In an article headed the "Rise of Christendom," in the *Dublin Review* for September, we find an instructive story on which we desire to say a few words.

"Nations," says the writer, "trained for many generations in Christian faith have before now fallen away from Christianity. But it does not seem that they are able to reduce themselves to the level of heathen nations in their moral standard, their perception and appreciation of good and evil, justice and wrong, or of the nature and destinies of the human race. In some respects they are morally much worse than heathen. But it does not appear that in these points they can sink so low, because their nature, fallen though it be, approves and accepts some of the truths taught it by Christianity. Hence, in order to judge what man can or cannot do without the revelation of Jesus Christ, we must examine him in nations to which the faith has never been given, rather than in those which have rejected it. Unhappily, there are at this moment parts of Europe in which the belief in the supernatural seems wanting. An intelligent correspondent of the *Times* a year ago described such a state of things as existing in parts of Northern Germany and Scandinavia. The population believes nothing, and practises no religion. Public worship is deserted, not because the people have devised any new heresy of their own as to the manner in which man should approach God, but because they have ceased to trouble themselves about the matter at all—Lutheranism is dead and gone; but nothing has been substituted for it.

"The intelligent Protestant writer was surprised to find a population thus wholly without religion, orderly and well behaved, hard-working, and by no means forgetful of social duties. The phenomenon is, no doubt, remarkable; but it is by no means without example. Many parishes (we fear considerable districts) in France are substantially in the same state. The peasantry are sober, industrious, and orderly, to a degree unknown in England. They reap the temporal fruits of these good qualities in a general prosperity, equally unknown here. They are saving to a degree almost incredible, so that it is a matter of ordinary experience, that a peasant who began life with nothing except his bodily strength, leaves behind him several hundreds, not unfrequently some thousands of pounds sterling. But in this same district whole villages are so absolutely without religion, that, although there is not one person for many miles who calls himself a Protestant, the churches are almost deserted, and the curès (generally good and zealous men) are reduced almost to

inactivity by absolute despair. Some give themselves up to prayer, seeing nothing else that they can do; some will say that they are not wholly without encouragement, because, after fifteen or twenty years of labour, they have succeded in bringing four or five persons to seek the benefit of the sacraments, out of a population of as many hundreds, among whom when they came there was not one person to be found."

This is not a brilliant account for either the Roman or the Lutheran forms of religion to give of themselves, but if the state of the people in these districts, who are described as wholly without religion, is so "Orderly, well behaved, and hardworking, and they are by no means forgetful of social duties," many persons will draw the comparison between them, and a great part of our population in England, who with twenty-thousand-parson power, and all the jangling of the sects, are neither so orderly, well-behaved, hardworking, or mindful of their social duties. Is it quite certain that it would be good for the former to be the subjects of our Missionary and other religious societies? Is it that, like the young ladies in *Punch*, "more curates" is what they want? Or is it that they are saved from the terrors of ecclesiasticism, and that whilst they have no forms nor set creeds, the true spirit of religion is not absent from their souls. Many of our acquaintance in this England of ours, and amongst them men high in the courts of science and of letters, are in the same state as these well-behaved peasants, and they pride themselves moreover in confidential moments, in describing themselves as infidels. They don't believe in Christianity or in any revelation—not they. And they indeed think so, like the writer of the above extract in speaking of the countrymen. But we do not believe them, or him either. It is impossible for them to be other than Christians in Christian Europe, so far as concerns the moral teachings of Christianity. The common law of every country in Europe is Christianity, and it is entirely out of their power to get its foundations out of their souls, which are interpenetrated with it to their very depths. They cannot therefore, although they say they would, get away from Christianity, and when they think they are emancipated from it, they have only gone outside of ecclesiasticisms and of Churchianity, which are very different things from Christianity. For none has Christ lived in vain, even for those who will not accept church views of Him, and though churches may repel, Christ is ever near to them, and He has children amongst those who know Him not. When Mr. Jefferson was asked respecting his religion, his memorable answer was, "It is known to God and myself. Its evidence before the world is to be known in my life: if that has been honest and dutiful to society, the religion which has regulated it cannot be a bad one."

THE MAID OF KENT.

One of the most curious and tragic episodes connected with English history in the reign of Henry the Eighth, is the narrative of Elizabeth Barton, "the Holy Maid of Kent," as she came to be generally called; "and whose cell at Canterbury," says Mr. Froude, "for some three years, was the Delphic shrine of the catholic oracle, from which the orders of heaven were communicated even to the pope himself. This singular woman seems for a time to have held in her hand the balance of the fortunes of England. By the papal party she was universally believed to be inspired. Wolsey believed it, Warham believed it, the bishops believed it, Queen Catherine believed it, Sir Thomas More's philosophy was no protection to him against the same delusion; and finally, she herself believed the world, when she found the world believed in her. Her story is a psychological curiosity; and, interwoven as it was with the underplots of the time, we cannot observe it too accurately."

Mr. Froude, dealing specially with this period of English history, has related the story somewhat more circumstantially than his predecessors, and appears to have consulted some original documents—especially the Rolls M.S.—to which he frequently refers, of which they were ignorant.

Following mainly the narrative given by Mr. Froude in the first and second volumes of his *History of England from the fall of Wolsey to the death of Elizabeth;* but with assistance from Lingard, Strype, and other authorities, we proceed to give the essential facts as far as we can now ascertain them, and, as far as possible, free from the obscuring comments and "views" which party and prejudice have cast around them.

Nothing is recorded in history of Elizabeth Barton till 1525, at which time she was servant at a farm house in her native village of Aldington in Kent; she is spoken of, as a decent person of ordinary character and temperament. At this time she was, in Mr. Froude's vague language, "attacked by some internal disease," and, he adds, "after many months of suffering she was reduced into that abnormal and singular condition in which she exhibited the phenomena, known to modern wonder-seekers as those of somnambulism or clairvoyance." We may remark by the way, that, Mr. Froude, though "defended with the armour of science," does not here exhibit very scientific accuracy in thus using "somnambulism" and "clairvoyance" as interchangeable terms; the phenomena these terms severally express, being, in fact, as distinct as those of electricity and magnetism. It may,

however, gratify the curiosity of some of our contemporaries, to learn what an accomplished historian, primed with the science of "our own time," has thought about these things; and so we present them with the following piece of "proverbial philosophy" by the author of the *Nemesis of Faith*.

The scientific value of such phenomena is still undetermined, but that they are not purely imaginary is generally agreed. In the histories of all countries and of all times, we are familiar with accounts of young women of bad health and irritable nerves, who have exhibited at recurring periods certain unusual powers; and these exhibitions have had especial attraction for superstitious persons, whether they have believed in God, or in the devil, or in neither. A further feature also uniform in such cases, has been that a small element of truth may furnish a substructure for a considerable edifice of falsehood; human credulity being always an insatiable faculty, and its powers being unlimited when once the path of ordinary experience has been transcended. We have seen in our own time to what excesses occurrences of this kind may tempt the belief, even when defended with the armour of science. In the sixteenth century, when demoniacal possession was the explanation usually received even of ordinary insanity, we can well believe that the temptation must have been great to recognize supernatural agency in a manifestation far more uncommon; and that the difficulty of retaining the judgment in a position of equipoise must have been very great not only to the spectators but still more to the subject of the phenomenon herself. To sustain ourselves continuously under the influence of reason, even when our faculties are preserved in their natural balance, is a task too hard for most of us. We cannot easily make too great allowance for the moral derangement likely to follow, when a weak girl suddenly finds herself possessed of powers which she is unable to understand.

From a letter of Archbishop Cranmer we learn that Elizabeth Barton "in the trances, of which she had divers and many, consequent upon her illness, told wondrously things done and said in other places whereat she was neither herself present, nor yet had heard no report thereof." The parish priest, one Richard Masters, and her master, who was the Archbishop of Canterbury's steward, carefully observed all that fell from her. "She spake words of marvellous holyness in rebuke of sin and vice," says the *Statutes of the Realm*, (25 Henry VIII., cap. 12); or as a narrative contained in the *Rolls House M.S.* expresses it, "she spake very godly certain things concerning the seven deadly sins and the Ten Commandments." This, coupled with the knowledge that she was of good character, and had had a religious education, satisfied them that it was not the devil who spoke in her, and as they could not conceive of any other alternative, they concluded her inspiration was divine, and her words the immediate utterance of the Holy Spirit; just as people now-a-days, looking at the alternative from the other side, conclude that because mediums do not speak the very words of God, they can be inspired only of the devil. It was consequently inferred that she had a divine mission and authority; and the Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom the matter was at once communicated, confirmed this idea, assuring Father Richard that "the speeches which she had spoken came of God, and bidding him keep diligent account of all her

utterances, directed him to inform her in his name that she was not to refuse or hide the goodness and works of God."

The Archbishop further directed that two monks of Christchurch—Dr. Edward Bocking and Dan William Hadley, should go to Aldington to observe her. They found her very ignorant, unacquainted with the points of doctrine then in controversy, or even with the lives of the saints. They instructed her and took note of her pregnant sayings, which were forwarded regularly to the Archbishop; some antiquary may possibly yet discover them in the Archiepiscopal Library.

Her trances sometimes were of several days' duration, and (as in many like instances) previous to them, as Hall tells us, "she could not eate ne drynke by a long space." After her trances, says Lingard, "she would narrate the wonders she had seen in the world of spirits, under the guidance and tuition of an angel." "Concernyng the perticularities" of which "revelations" there were subsequently, to quote Hall again, "sondery bokes, bothe great and small, bothe printed and written."

In one of her trances Elizabeth announced that the Virgin had appeared to her and had fixed a day for her appearance at the chapel dedicated to her at Aldington, promising that on her obedience she would present herself in person and take away her disorder. On the day appointed she was conducted to the chapel by a procession of more than two thousand persons, the whole multitude "singing the Litany, and saying divers psalms and orations by the way."

"And when she was brought thither and laid before the image of our Lady, her face was wonderfully disfigured, her tongue hanging out, and her eyes being in a manner plucked out and laid upon her cheeks, and so greatly deformed. There was then heard a voice speaking within her belly, as it had been in a tonne, her lips not greatly moving: she all that while continuing by the space of three hours or more in a trance. The which voice, when it told of anything of the joys of heaven, spake so sweetly and so heavenly, that every man was ravished with the hearing thereof; and contrarywise, when it told anything of hell, it spake so horribly and terribly, that it put the hearers in a great fear. It spake also many things for the confirmation of pilgrimages and trentals, hearing of masses and confession, and many other such things. And after she had lyen there a long time, she came to herself again, and was perfectly whole. So this miracle was finished and solemnly sung; and a book was written of all the whole story thereof, and put into print; which ever since that time hath been commonly sold, and gone abroad among the country people." *

Of course a modern historian, "looking back with eyes enlightened by scientific scepticism," considers this was all a cunning plot between the girl and her priestly advisers, to increase her reputation, and to add to the power and revenue of the church. Froude says: "Being now cured of her real disorder, yet able to counterfeit the appearance of it, she could find

* *Cranmer's Letter*, Ellis, third series, Vol. iii. p. 315.

no difficulty in arranging a miracle of the established kind." No evidence of her previous cure, or of this being an imposition, is given; but then, you know, it is better to believe anything rather than that a miracle has taken place.

After this, Elizabeth, by advice of her parish clergyman, became a sister in the priory of St. Sepulchre's, Canterbury. The fame of her "revelations" spread widely. "Divers and many," says the statute before quoted, "as well great men of the realm as mean men, and many learned men, but specially many religious men, had great confidence in her, and often resorted to her." We learn, too, that "the eccentric periods of her earlier visions subsided into regularity." Froude sneers at this, observing, in the margin, "she goes to heaven once a fortnight." But those who, instead of sneering, have investigated the phenomena of clairvoyance and trance, as they are now very generally presented, will see in this development of an orderly periodicity, a confirmation of the genuine character of the visions of Elizabeth Barton. Like our modern mediums, too, she had experience not only of the beneficent action of higher spirits, but also of the molestations of spirits of lower grade and who appeared to her in divers shapes. Offensive smells, and, on one occasion, a mark burnt into her hand, and which was publicly seen, were among the annoyances to which she was subjected. Of course it is easy to say that the burning was designed and fraudulent, and to hint at brimstone and assafœtida; but it is at least curious, and an "undesigned coincidence," which, according to Paley, is one of the strongest kinds of evidence, that the well-known cases of Dr. Pordage and of Lady Beresford are in these respects of an exactly corresponding character.

When the question of the King's divorce from Catharine, and his marriage with Anne Boleyn was agitated, Elizabeth at once, under the authority of her revelations, took sides against the King, and, we are told, "conducted herself with the utmost skill and audacity."

In his *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, Strype tells us, "She had the confidence to come before the King, and Cardinal Wolsey, and Archbishop Warham, and Bishop Fisher, to all of whom she talked much of her visions, and revelations, and inspirations. . . . She would ramble about the countries unto gentlemen's houses, and especially to houses of religion, chiefly those of the Observants. She would seem to be sometimes in trances, and then after them fall to her discourses and speeches, whereat some of the friars and others would seem to take great comfort. Being at Calais, invisible in Our Lady's Church, the Host was brought to her by an angel, who took it away from the priest while he was officiating at mass, that so King Henry, then present, might now

see in it a token of God's displeasure,—and then, on a sudden, was rapt over sea into her nunnery again. . . . When some came to her, it was said she would tell them the cause of their coming before themselves spoke thereof, as though she had the gift of knowing men's thoughts."

Far from imitating the hesitation of the pope and the bishops, she issued boldly, "in the name, and by the authority of God," a solemn prohibition against the King. "She even admonished Henry in person, at the command of her angel, that if he were to marry Anne Boleyn while Catharine was alive he would no longer be looked upon as a King by God, but would die the death of a villain within a month, and be succeeded on the throne by his daughter Mary."

She also informed Cardinal Wolsey, at the command of her angel, "that if he ventured to pronounce a divorce, God would visit him with the most dreadful chastisement." According to Froude, she "threatened even the pope himself, assuming in virtue of what she believed to be her divine commission, an authority above all principalities and powers."

This was, indeed, a bold part, and one not likely to be played by a serving wench, conscious that she was acting the part of an impostor. This is so obvious as to have wrung from Froude the following confession:—"While we call the nun, too, an impostor, I am forced to believe that she first imposed upon herself, and that her wildest adventures into falsehood were compatible with a belief that she was really and truly inspired. Nothing short of such a conviction would have enabled her to play a part among kings and queens, and so many of the ablest statesmen of that most able age. Nothing else could have tempted her, on the failure of her prophecies, into the desperate career of treason into which we are soon to see her launched." How this belief of hers "that she was really and truly inspired" can be reconciled with the theory of her systematic imposture and deliberate fraud,—how one who believed herself to be directly commissioned by Heaven, could deem it necessary to resort to petty artifices and conspiracies; or how, with this consciousness of a vile imposture, she, a poor illiterate girl, could maintain so lofty a bearing, bearding king, cardinal, and pope—how Adam Bede, Tito Meleme, and Joan of Arc could be combined in one character—is all a mystery too profound to be resolved by any one but an historian, "looking back with eyes enlightened by scientific scepticism." Either, however, this is so—he is by force of the facts "forced to believe this"—or, she was a genuine "medium," to use our modern word; but if the Maid of Kent, or the Maid of Orleans, or any instance of spiritual seership and revelation recorded in history was genuine, why, there may be genuine instances of these now.

But then, to "eyes enlightened by scientific scepticism," that is impossible, and, therefore—the thing is impossible, because it is impossible. Exactly so! Very plain indeed.

Into Elizabeth's alleged treasonable course it is not necessary to the present inquiry that I should enter. In those times of political excitement and crisis, crafty politicians may have used the maid and her revelations for their own purposes. From what we now know of the laws of magnetic control, we conclude it possible that by their powerful wills they may have exercised a psychological influence over her, and in this way have even impressed their own views upon the communications given by her when in trance, and made them assume a complexion they would not otherwise have borne. And as owing to the ignorance of spiritual laws, her "revelations" were regarded as of divine authority; as besides, she "was in correspondence with the Pope, had attested her divine commission by miracles, had been recognised as a saint by an Archbishop of Canterbury, and the regular orders of clergy throughout the land were known to regard her as inspired." The Government may, in those critical times, have deemed itself justified in taking measures to ward off what they may have felt a peril to the State, though it can scarcely be questioned that the course actually taken, was dictated less by the sense of justice, or even of political expediency, than by that spirit of vindictiveness which characterised the tyrant "who spared neither man in his anger nor woman in his lust." Be this as it may, Elizabeth and six of her "abettors" were arrested for treasonable conspiracy, arraigned before the Star Chamber, and "conviction followed as a matter of course." They were adjudged to stand during the sermon at St. Paul's Cross and to confess they practised an imposture. From thence they were led back to prison to await the royal pleasure.

In her solitary cell, in the absence of friends and sympathisers, borne down by the weight of argument and authority that, previously, in her private examination, Cranmer and Cromwell had brought against her, and with spirits broken in the near prospect of a terrible death, what wonder that Elizabeth, in the revulsion of feeling thus created, should see in herself nothing but a convicted impostor, and make confession accordingly; we know how a confession of guilt was wrung from the noble Joan of Arc under like circumstances.

At the royal instigation the House of Lords, with its usual servility, passed bills of attainder of treason against Elizabeth and those adjudged with her by the Star Chamber; and of misprision of treason against Sir Thomas More, the Bishop of Rochester, and others charged with having known of her predictions without revealing them to the King; it being presumed

against them that communicators of the prophecies must have had in view to bring the King into peril of his crown and life. "*The accused were not brought to trial . . . . . no defence was allowed*," says the historian.

Sir Thomas More, while he would not deny that he had believed the maid to be inspired, yet, with the aid of friends, contrived to make his peace with the King, and to have his name erased from the bill, by making the confessions required of him, and throwing himself unreservedly on the King's clemency; but stout old Bishop Fisher "disdained to acknowledge guilt when he knew himself to be innocent." Cromwell urged him to acknowledge his offence, and entreat the royal pardon. In reply, Fisher explained that he could not do so—he had committed no fault. He could not betray his conscience; the consciences of others he did not condemn, but he could not be saved by any conscience but his own. He justified himself in a letter to the House of Lords, affirming that on the most trustworthy evidence he had found the maid to be of good character; that he had conversed with her; that in her revelations she spoke not of any violence to be offered to Henry, but of the ordinary visitations of Providence; that there had been no attempt to keep her revelations secret; that she had herself personally apprised the King of the revelation made to her concerning him. He protested he was guiltless of any conspiracy. "He knew not, as he would answer before the throne of Christ, of any malice or evil that was intended by her or any other creature unto the King's highness."

But the House of Lords dared not listen to the voice of innocence in opposition to the royal pleasure; and though, for a time, Fisher's life was spared, he had to compound for his safety by the payment of a heavy fine to the crown. The solemn declaration, however, of one so informed, and so conscientious and fearless as this good bishop, should go far to exculpate the unfortunate Maid of Kent from the charges of her persecutors, and they altogether outweigh the prejudiced conjectures of modern historians "looking back with eyes enlightened by scientific scepticism."

The execution of the sentence of death against Elizabeth and her companions in misfortune was not long delayed; nor was it unexpected by her, as both the time and place of her death, together with the persons appointed to be present when she should receive the fiery crown of martyrdom, had been shown her by the angel. At her execution, at Tyburn, April 21, 1534, it is said she confessed to have been the dupe of her own credulity, but pleaded, in extenuation, that she was only a simple woman, whose ignorance might have been an apology for her conduct, but that the learned clerks, who had received and encouraged her revelations, should

have dispelled her illusion. Poor Elizabeth! no wonder if, under her burdens, and in apprehension of the fiery ordeal through which she had to pass, her faith failed her; but her very misgivings were, at least, a proof of her sincerity; and though she may indeed, have been deluded in considering her spiritual experiences as investing her with a Divine commission, those experiences were, doubtless, real; and it is, indeed, a pity that the learned clerks, to whom she so touchingly alludes, did not understand and appreciate them in a better and more discriminating spirit. T. S.

WHAT IS RELIGION?

A WORD PRELIMINARY, SETTING FORTH CHIEFLY WHAT RELIGION IS NOT.

By Thomas Brevior.

The inquiry, What is Religion? will, I doubt not, to many seem superfluous, if not, indeed, impertinent. What! it will be said, in this middle of the Nineteenth Century of the Christian Era, after all our preaching, tract-distributing, and missionary enterprise, and with all the machinery of our churches and religious societies in full operation; can any person in our midst, not grossly and shamefully ignorant, deem that such an inquiry is at all needed?* And yet, without depreciating the labours of earnest self-denying Christian men, or denying that the churches have done good, it may still perhaps be found that the very circumstances which, at first view, might seem to preclude all occasion for so simple and fundamental a question, in fact render its consideration not the less, but the more urgent. Amid the jangle of sects, the din of controversy, the confusion of tongues, and the multitude of counsellors, the simple wayfarer may well feel bewildered and ask, "How shall I decide when learned doctors so widely, and apparently so hopelessly disagree?"

This is a matter not for the consideration of the churches only, nor is it one in which we have no special concern; it is coming home to us as Spiritualists; and it is neither possible nor desirable to evade it. In the *Spiritual Magazine* for February, the editor says of certain speakers at a recent convention of Spiritualists, "they seem to think that Spiritualism is a new religion, and that it is their religion;" and he thereupon very ably, and I think successfully, proceeds to controvert that position.

* From a calculation recently made by Dean Ramsay, it appears that the number of sermons preached in Great Britain amounts to nearly four millions per annum.

The point thus at issue, however, suggests to my mind the necessity for a careful consideration of what I may call the previous question—that which I have placed at the head of this article; for until we have decided for ourselves what religion is, we are scarcely in a position to determine whether Spiritualism, or any other ism, is a religion at all, either new or old.

The question, I may say too, is not mine: it was recently put to me by a highly-intelligent Spiritualist with whom I had the pleasure of enjoying Christmas-day. The conversation naturally turned on the great festival that day celebrated throughout Christendom. I remarked on its antiquity, and its derivation from the customs of pagan Rome: my friend, who holds the view of Spiritualism attributed to the speakers at the Darlington Convention, hinted that I was surely becoming heterodox; and on my rejoining that though the celebration of Christmas was a good and venerable custom, an institution to be greatly respected, it no more formed a part of religion than the plum pudding with which in England it is generally associated, I was asked the question, "Well, then, what is religion?" The desultory character of conversation precluded the subject from being pursued far, but the article to which I have made reference having revived in my mind the question, I propose to make it the subject of a few observations, premising, however, that while I think Spiritualists generally will not dissent from the views I shall present, I do not presume to represent, either directly or indirectly, any opinions but my own; I feel somewhat dubious as to fairly representing even them.

I think it may facilitate and simplify our inquiry to eliminate what is foreign to, or but incidentally associated with, religion; to put aside and assign to their proper place those accretions and non-essentials which are too often confounded with its very substance, and which are interposing veils between our vision and the Divine reality. To remove, if possible, some popular misconceptions, alike of its enemies and its friends; to shew what is *not* religion, though too often mistaken for it, may perhaps, by thus dispelling the surrounding mist, aid the mind to discern for itself more clearly what religion essentially and truly is.

In a matter which so nearly concerns men, individually, as well as collectively, it is sad that they so generally take current opinions *en bloc*, or equally, with awful lack of discrimination, reject them and religion itself altogether in the lump. King Prescription, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, sends forth his heralds to cry aloud, "To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that the king hath

set up." To this mandate we may fairly reply "O King, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up, for we know that the smith with his hammer, and the carpenter with his plane, and the graver with his cunning art have fashioned them." But while we protest against this assumption of lordship over conscience in the name of religion, not therefore are we to confound the idols which men's hands or men's imaginations have made, with Him who made the earth and the sea, and all that in them is; nor yet with an opposite faction, conclude that because He does not come within the range of their telescopes, that therefore He is not.

Religion then, I affirm, is *not* a matter to be taken on trust, to be accepted (for if accepted it may be discarded) at the word of command; it is *not* belief at second-hand, and on mere authority. There is no such thing as religion by proxy, any more than there is eating one's dinner by proxy. If you think you have religion because you believe that somebody else believes it, you simply deceive yourself, you really believe only that some person or body is wiser in the matter than yourself: need I say that that is *not* religion.

Religion is indeed, in one sense, a precious inheritance, and is endeared by associations with the past, and strengthened by ties of sympathy; but, like the paternal estate, it needs continuous cultivation if we would reap the harvests it is capable of bearing. We cannot simply take to religion with the good-will of the business, the old furniture, and the family plate.

To assert, as some have done, that religion is all the invention of priests, for their own power and profit, is simply and strictly preposterous—a mistaking effects for causes—a putting the cart before the horse. As well assert that the custom of eating food is but the cunning, selfish device of butchers and bakers. The soul has its hunger as well as the stomach; if it had not needed its spiritual food, there would have been no priests. That (like the bakers and butchers) they often adulterate their goods, and serve them of poor quality, and at extravagant prices, proves only how urgently the world feels its need of spiritual supplies, and its present inability to dispense with even the poor and costly services such men can render; but it is *not* they who have created religion, it is religion which has created the need of them.

The denial of human authority as the source of religion cuts at the root of all mere Sacerdotalism and Ecclesiasticism, whilst it derogates nothing from the true function and office of the priest as the minister to man's spiritual requirements:—truly a noble function, but he is the servant of religion, it is the foulest usurpation and blasphemy where he affects to be its ruler and

judge, and to exercise lordship over conscience. Nor can this be within the province of any aggregation of persons, or of any corporate body, whatever its pretensions and antiquity. Religion is before and beyond, and deeper than all churches; it makes and unmakes, and remakes churches; itself only God-made in the constitution of human nature. Religion, then, is *not* priest-craft—is *not* Ecclesiasticism.

Nor, again, is religion merely Ritualism. Probably few, if any, would affirm baldly and nakedly that it is; but that which is *predominant* in a religious system and in its public celebrations comes to be not unreasonably regarded as its special characteristic: hence, to superficial observation, and often even in the estimation of sincere votaries, religion is chiefly a thing of ceremonial observances,—of genuflexions, ablutions, fumigations, vestments, decorations, mystic rites, and other bodily acts and external things. That rites and observances have their fitting place in private devotion and public worship is not here contested; what that place is, I hope hereafter to shew, at present I simply protest that Ritualism is *not* religion.

It has been remarked that religion is not the mere acceptance of other people's beliefs. I now go farther and affirm that belief, simply as such, and *separate from the moral element of faith*, or in other words, mere opinion about religion, no more makes a man religious, than his opinion about shoemaking makes him a shoemaker. For, traced to its origin, what is opinion but the outcome of a certain intellectual process: a man from certain data (reasonable or unreasonable as the case may be, but assumed by him as true) draws (logically or otherwise) certain conclusions according to the nature of the evidence presented to him, and of his mental powers, natural and acquired, exercised thereupon. The nature of the operation is the same whatever be the subject-matter. It is an intellectual problem (sometimes a terribly tough one), like a move in chess, or a proposition in Euclid, and there is about as much, or as little, religion to be got out of the process in the one case as in the other. I am not here discussing the question of the formation of opinion and the nature and degree of the responsibility on other grounds attaching thereto, and am far from asserting that opinion on any matter, and especially on so grave a matter as religion, is of no consequence; or that opinion has no bearing on religion, no moral side, no formative influence on character. I only here affirm that belief or opinion *per se* is *not* religion.

So again, history is *not* religion. And here I make no distinction (for I find none) between "secular" and "sacred." All history, rightly regarded is sacred. In the history of the Jews I see, in a marked degree, a record of God's providential

dealings; but is there no providence to be traced in the history of this our English nation from the landing of the Roman legions to the opening of our present Parliament? We may be edified with the histories of David and Jehosaphat, but may we not also learn from the histories of Alfred and of Cromwell? It may be true that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed; it is equally true that similar decrees went out from the British Parliament in the days of George the Third and William Pitt. These facts have their several values in relation to their respective subjects, but as simple facts of history they stand in more immediate relation to the politics of their respective periods than to religion. Nor are the supernatural facts of the Bible essentially different as matters of history, and in relation to religion, from those purely in the natural order. It is no more a matter of religion to believe that by an exercise of spiritual power the axe of the prophet's servant was made to swim, than it is to believe that by spiritual power Mrs. Marshall's table is made to float in the atmosphere of her apartment. That the Apostles cast evil spirits out of men, and cured many sick and impotent folk, proves the beneficent nature of the operating spiritual power; and when similar effects are wrought in our day by Dr. Newton and others it proves the same thing, neither less nor more. That some of the miracles of those days far surpassed any in these, is only (as it seems to me) proof of difference in degree, as, for instance, it may have required a greater degree of power to carry Philip from Gaza to Azotus than is put forth to carry Mr. Home round a *suite* of drawing-rooms. But whether differing in degree only, or in kind, and whatever view we may take of the value of miracle as an attestation of the authority of the worker, still the historical record of the fact is *not* religion. Whatever the supernatural fact itself implies, whatever important consequences attach to it, the outward transaction remains simply *history;* it must pass through a spiritual alembic ere it can be transmuted into *religion.*

What is said of history applies equally to literature, and needs therefore little, though it admits of much, amplification. The literature of a particular people is deservedly held in special reverence among us; it has been the nutriment of the spiritual life of successive generations; it has kindled the flame of devotion, and been the solace and the stay of men in all circumstances and conditions; it has been a chief means of promoting and keeping alive a knowledge of Divine things; but though it be a noble and honoured means to religion,—the *means* is not the *end.* The non-observance of this important distinction has led to much confusion of thought, and greatly prejudiced the right understanding and appreciation of religion.

Literature then, even the highest, is *not* religion. I content myself with simply indicating this position, without here attempting its elucidation and defence.

Again, and to close my list of negations, morality simply is *not* religion. I hope I need not say it does not conflict with it. Religion comprehends morality, as the larger comprehends the less, but not conversely. For consider that social duties may be performed from pride, ostentation, or a prudent regard to one's own interests. Men may practise honesty simply as "the best policy;" and only in so far and so long as they see that it is the best policy; when they no longer see it to be so they may take to picking pockets on the same principle. Good conduct may be simply a decent conformity to custom and conventional usage; not the natural outgrowth from any root of principle in the moral nature. A man may observe all the decencies and proprieties of life from a shrewd calculation that on the whole, and in the long run, it pays best. He may perhaps be right. It may be a good sound speculation, and yield a fair return on the investment. All I am now concerned with is, that whatever else it may be, it is *not* religion.

Finally, let us distinguish between the *universal* and the *particular*—between *religion* and specific *forms* of religion—the one constant, the other variable; as *language* is permanent and common, while *languages* differ even in structure, and are subject to modification and development. Particular forms of religion grow out of the special and varying needs and circumstances of humanity, and the different types of character of different races; they have their use and time, but as conditions change, and the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns, other and higher forms of religion, better adapted to the altered states and conditions take their place. The new wine of inspiration cannot be contained in the old skins, new bottles are needed and provided for it. Whatever in religion is local, partial, limited, lacks capacity of adaptation to the ever-changing conditions of individual social national life, and does not harmonize with their advancing knowledge and higher aims, is, in its nature, and of necessity, temporary; the universal in religion is alone enduring.

Many and strange are the faiths of men, but who shall say that, though it may be in different degrees, there has not been a pervading element of love and reverence, and heart-devotion in all, even when corrupted, and overlaid with bigotry and superstition? In diverse forms and creeds, while the accidents differ, the essential spirit and life may be the same. Men have worshipped variously Jehovah, Jove, and Lord; but in every age, in every clime, saint, savage, and sage, according to their

several intelligence, under different names and forms, have alike adored the All-Father, the universal Lord. Scepticism, when most sceptical, has involuntarily recognized the universality of religious faith, and even in its most scornful moods, done homage to it as an ineradicable element in human nature. Thus, Byron, in that magnificent passage in Childe Harold, where apostrophising " Ancient of days, august Athena," he exclaims:—

> Look on this spot—a nation's sepulchre,
> Abode of gods, whose shrines no longer burn.
> Even gods must yield—religions take their turn:
> 'Twas Jove's—'tis Mahomet's—and other creeds
> Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
> Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds,
> Poor child of Doubt and Death, whose hope is built on reeds!

And then, all unconsciously, in the next line outleaps the truth:—

> Bound to the Earth, he lifts his eyes to Heaven!

He has ever done so: he ever will—

> 'Tis the Divinity that stirs within us,—

the promise and the earnest of our immortality! Man, the child of Doubt and Death? Yes, but he is also the child of God! and if in regard to the immortal life his hope is built on reeds, then, indeed—

> The pillared firmament is rottenness,
> And Earth's base built on stubble.

By the original law of its nature, and still, despite apparent exceptions, and save in so far as it is corrupted by moral evil, the soul of man instinctively turns towards God, as the sunflower turns towards the sun. In the poet, whose mournful lines I have quoted, it was the struggle of this higher nature in conflict with baser appetites, forbidding him to rest in shameful thrall their willing slave, and prompting him to " the better," that was the source at once of his nobility and his wretchedness. Only as we enter into the life of religion, and the life of religion enters into us, can we gain the victory in this conflict, for it is ours also;—only so can our lives move in rhythmic measure to the Divine harmonies.

But are we to infer because religion is one, while religions are many, that all religions are of equal value, and to be regarded with the same complacency:—that it matters not what may be a man's religion so that he acknowledges a religion of some kind? Were it not that misunderstanding is so easy, I should deem that the question could hardly arise. True it is that even in times of densest ignorance and superstition, aye, and of unbelief, men have groped after God, if haply they might find Him who is not far from every one of us, and have erected their altars to the un-

known God; but Paul drew the true distinction when he said—"Whom ye *ignorantly* worship, Him declare I unto you." That religion which best—which most truly reveals to us the character of God—which gives us the clearest insight into our own spiritual nature; which finds us at our greatest depths; which meets most fully our soul's needs, is the religion which *proves itself* to be the truest, and therefore best. If any religion does this absolutely, or in so far as it does this absolutely, it is THE ABSOLUTE RELIGION.

REMARKS WITH REFERENCE TO CERTAIN PHENOMENA.

"We may, therefore, well hope that many excellent and useful matters are yet treasured up in the bosom of Nature, bearing no relation or analogy to our actual discoveries, but out of the common track of our imagination, and still undiscovered; and which will doubtless be brought to light in the course and lapse of years."—BACON.

IT is pleasant to let loose fancy in the future, and to picture the forms it may assume. The efflorescence and the fruit of present seeds of good then bloom before the eye, and we breathe the sweet air of a happier time. Until but lately, indeed, dark shadows marred the brightness of the vision. Over the highest region thick mists yet brooded, nay, storms seemed driving; for while in the present age all things belonging to the domain of intellect were seen working together with unprecedented activity for good, while therein new truths were being constantly, if slowly evolved, each tallying with and completing its forerunner, in the spiritual domain no sign had appeared affording ground for the anticipation that at some future time sectarian dissensions might cease, above all that harmony might be established between the sometimes conflicting teachings of religion and science. Despite, indeed, zealous efforts and gentle counsels on the part of would-be peacemakers, the painful discordance in those quarters must perhaps continue to increase, until both religion and science become animated by a new and broader spirit, until science enlarges her horizon, until religion enters the path of progress. If with attentive eyes we watch certain signs now gleaming, we may see reason to hope that such a movement in the latter as well as the former direction is not impossible.

It is generally considered, and by an illustrious writer has been eloquently argued, that religion, whether natural or revealed, is not of a progressive nature. In his essay on "Ranke's History of the Popes," Lord Macaulay combats the idea that the progress of knowledge must ultimately be fatal to false creeds, or must

throw new light on the question of what becomes of man after death. As a signal instance of the persistence of error in revealed religion, he points to the Church of Rome, drawing an impressive picture of the antiquity of that church and of the undeclining dominion she maintains; while in the stationary character of all evidence drawn hitherto from Nature concerning things spiritual, in the powerlessness hitherto of human wisdom and science to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, he sees proof that neither is natural religion destined to progress.

It may indeed be conceded that on the inquiry into a future state of existence no science has yet thrown the smallest light—that natural theology has made little advance since the dawn of civilisation; but it may be asked whether the time which has elapsed since that period be not too brief, to compel us to despair of ultimately attaining to any knowledge of our future destinies, too brief to warrant the conclusion of the inapplicability to man's highest quest of those methods which have guided him to truth in other paths of inquiry. The idea is now arising that the cause of the undiminished darkness overhanging all that relates to a state of existence after this life, may be that the right track has never yet been entered on; that the facts really affording in this direction materials for induction have hitherto been disregarded, that they nevertheless abound, that a higher enlightenment will cause attention to be turned to them and reveal their profound significance. From sedulous observation of the spiritual phenomena in their multiform aspects, from study of the more subtle and recondite physical laws brought to bear on those phenomena, will, there is reason to believe, emerge proof of the existence within the order of nature of forces forming a link and means of intercourse between this sphere of existence and the one immediately above, through which proof may be established of the immortality of the soul. From that very quarter now most hostile to the doctrine of Spiritualism may thus come demonstration of its truth; all unconsciously science herself, it may be, has led the way to the confines of another world; ere long, we may hope, will she unbar the portals through which light from that world has hitherto struggled with fitful and refracted rays.

As knowledge of things spiritual derived from the book of nature, must in its progress involve dispersion of superstition, and at the same time exposure of error wherever it may exist in the reading of revelation, a touchstone may thus by degrees be applied to the conflicting interpretations of the latter, which must sooner or later produce much modification in many quarters in religious opinion; and thus that Church which Lord Macaulay considers as likely to exist in undiminished power when the

metropolis of the British empire lies in ruins—that Church "so ancient that she carries the mind back to the time when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon," yet still so full of youthful vigour that "she is confronting hostile kings with the same spirit with which she confronted Attila;" may be about to undergo influences of a nature to affect her far more deeply than have done any of the assaults she has sustained.

To the miracles wrought in her communion the Church of Rome has ever pointed with devout and grateful exultation as signs from heaven attesting that she is the true church; those that have taken place beyond her pale, she has hitherto, amidst the general disregard of such occurrences, disposed of unchallenged as Satanic. Widely different will she find the task of dealing with the outside so-called supernatural when it comes to be viewed as the effect of law, as part of the order of Nature; indeed little as she yet dreams of its true character, the increasing hold its manifestations are taking of the public mind are beginning to excite her uneasiness and alarm; the reality of these manifestations, their *outward* similarity to those miracles she herself accepts, are not denied, but they are vehemently denounced by her press as a soul-destroying snare, the most artfully planned of all the devices of the Prince of Darkness. And yet this same truth from which she discerns only danger, and which when understood must indeed curb her high pretensions, may at the same time invest her with far higher titles to respect, than have hitherto been conceded to her by the world at large; her mode of dealing with religious enthusiasm and mysticism, her ready acceptance of such miracles as are wrought within her fold, the honours paid by her to those saintly persons to whose gifts they are ascribed,—all of which in Protestant and in free-thinking quarters has been looked upon as part of a polity organized with consummate skill for the purpose of retaining minds in darkness and in subjection to her rule,—may some time hence appear in a very different light, in one fully to relieve her from the reproach of hypocrisy and craft. Making every allowance for a certain inevitable amount of exaggeration and deception among her followers, her miracles on the whole will doubtless cease to be regarded with derision, the heroes and heroines of her now contemned hagiology, far from being viewed as mere monomaniacs, tools of an astute priesthood, will perhaps be recognized as beings who, wild and fanatical as they no doubt were, possessed still in a high degree those mystic powers which bring the mundane into communication with the supermundane; their relation to their church will perhaps be seen to have been genuinely such as ostensibly it was—that of gifted children to an august parent, by whom they were cherished and applauded in return for profound veneration and entire sub-

mission to her will. That cold and inconsistent doctrine which, while accepting the miracles of a remote period, rejects with scorn those of the present day, that semi-enlightenment and pseudo-perspicacity calling themselves rationalism, may then perhaps stand as much corrected as may, on the other hand, claims resting on the supposed exclusive possession of apostolical graces.

As to those minds disposed to make light of the religious sentiment, minds which, despite the enormous influence it has ever exercised over human affairs, despite the enduring institutions to which it has given birth, despite its universality, the outward signs of which in every land so forcibly strike the eye, from the dome which is the boast of the Eternal City, from the glittering minarets of Stamboul, from the fallen temples of a bygone world, to the village spire and to the rude altar of uncivilized man, still see in that sentiment but a weakness of human nature—to those minds proof may be afforded that it is an essential element of man's mental constitution, often indeed misled, but tending still towards truth, having its real, its fit, its correlative objects beyond this world; and thus may the general result be that conflicting sects and schools of religious opinion, guided by one common and ever-increasing light, may by degrees lay aside their differences, and unite in one harmonious and progressive movement.

Those to whom such views may appear visionary are entreated to examine the grounds on which they rest, investigation seriously and perseveringly conducted can hardly fail to convince reflecting minds of at all events the *reality* of the phenomena called spiritual, to prove to them (in the words of a distinguished mathematician) "that they are things which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence or mistake." Like Professor De Morgan, some may not indeed be able to adopt any explanation concerning them which has yet been given, but so far they will probably go with him as to recognise as their cause "some combination of will, intellect, and physical power which is not that of any of the human beings present." Now as this "combination" gives itself invariably out as a certain departed spirit, is it extravagant to believe that it may be really what it claims to be? and if departed spirits are a combination of will, intellect, and *physical* power, is it extravagant to hope that as Science advances, as her instruments increase in delicacy and power we may be able to enter more fully into communication with beings constituted as ourselves though of matter more refined? Such communication depends moreover obviously in part on some principle or property in the human being in certain individuals exceptionally

developed; is it unreasonable to anticipate that in time we shall arrive at knowledge of these mysteries of our own nature? Mysteries there are indeed within it now glimmering strange and startling inexpressibly—mysteries undreamt of by modern philosophy, though not unsuspected, nay to some extent known to the sages and hierophants of antiquity, distant as was their knowledge from that point at which any discernment could be obtained of their rationale; that point is possibly now being approached; converging lights from many quarters, from medico-psychology, from chemistry, from the study of the imponderables, may ere long reveal the existence of subtle elements, of ethereal agencies, of sovereign laws, compared to knowledge of which all present science may be but initiatory and rudimental.*

The neglect with which supermundane phenomena have in modern times been treated by the scientific world, is perhaps scarcely to be lamented when we consider that so recondite is that province within which lies their key, that until of late years labour would probably have been thrown away on their investigation; without disrespect to those to whom an incalculable debt is, it is gratefully accorded, due, it may be said that, intent on discoveries and inventions which have so wondrously extended the empire of man over matter, and added so largely to his physical and social well-being, men of science, like the bird of the fable, have cast away from them the gems of which they knew not the value, and which, had they divined their true nature, they would have hitherto been unable to render profitable to the world.

One cause of incredulity as to manifestations from another world, is the view (generally however much misrepresented) to which they lead of the future state; such revelations concerning it as we have from that source are no doubt at variance with received ideas, indicating as they do, a state similar in kind to this present life, and only a step higher in an ascending series of existences, one into which we carry our human nature, and in which progress is but gradual. This view, however little in accordance with the general conception of life hereafter, derives nevertheless support from analogy, harmonizing as it does with those views of physical progress opened up by geology, and by the study of organic forms from primeval times. It is agreed,

* The researches of Baron Reichenbach cannot fail to strike the student of spiritual phenomena; his experiments on the psycho-physico action of crystals—of the force, that is to say, emanating from them, termed Odyle, on sensitive persons, have suggested the idea that the proneness to second sight or spontaneous clairvoyance in certain regions, in the Western Highlands of Scotland for instance, may be owing to the highly crystalline formation there prevailing of the rocks, from which consequently unusually large quantities of the odylic force must be emitted.

as well by those who maintain that progress to be the result of distinct acts of Omnipotence, as by those who believe in a progressive principle imparted *ab origine* to the works of creation, that where in their series breaks were once supposed to occur, closer inspection has discovered links, carrying on the chain by minute degrees: to borrow the fine imagery of a distinguished naturalist, "we learn from the past history of our globe that Nature has advanced with slow and stately steps, guided by the archetypal light, amidst the wreck of worlds, from the first embodiment of the vertebrate idea under its old ichthyic vestment, until it became arrayed in the glorious garb of the form of man."

The law of gradual progress thus poetically set forth by Professor Owen, and which we behold stamped through every part of this visible sphere, may well be extended to the invisible, may well exist for the individual as for the species; nor would it be less in accordance with analogy to infer that the beginning only of such progress would be slow, that the further the advance, the more ethereal the surroundings, the more facile and accelerated it would become.

The common-place character of a large portion of the spirit-communications, the extravagant and turgid character of some, cease to perplex when we come to view them as proceeding from beings lately ordinary dwellers upon earth, and retaining still their earthly dispositions and ideas. True, the difficulty remains as to why some small portion at least of these communications should not bear the impress of transcendent wisdom and genius; the absence from them of anything equalling, far less surpassing the highest products of the human mind, argues, it must be admitted, some hindrance to intercourse with spiritual beings of an exalted order; may we not hope to overcome it? Meantime, as a necessary consequence of the unprogressed condition of the beings from whom a large portion of the communications proceeds, many of these do but confirm the members of each sect in their own views, while some have given rise to doctrines (such as in France that of Re-incarnation) from which Spiritualists as a body recoil. We must not indeed shrink from the admission that intercourse with the invisible world has been the origin of all superstitions, and all erroneous theologies; that to it even may be due their persistence for a while after they cease to harmonize with the general spirit of the society over which they once held dominion.

The most striking example of the latter species of influence is to be found in the fact, of which the evidence is ample, that such was the source of that imperial zeal which in the fourth century ran counter to Christianity, and sought so ardently the restoration of the ancient creed. History represents one of the

ablest of the Cæsars, whose mind, of a cast at once statesmanlike and philosophic, had been trained by Christian preceptors under a prelate's eye, as having been ensnared by crafty pretenders to superhuman science, and through their arts inspired with that devotion to Paganism which filled his soul. But to the reader familiar with spiritual phenomena it is evident even from the sneering narrative of Gibbon, that the apostacy of Julian, and his intense enthusiasm in the cause of the fallen faith, was in truth due to communication with the invisible world; spirits of departed pagans still clinging to their earthly creed, seem to have impressed him powerfully, visiting him, and conversing with him in the forms of the Olympian Gods; we may learn, says Gibbon, "from his faithful friend the orator Libanius, that he lived in a perpetual intercourse with the gods and goddesses, that they descended upon earth to enjoy the conversation of their favourite hero, that they gently interrupted his slumbers by touching his hand or his hair, that they warned him of every impending danger, and conducted him by their infallible wisdom in every action of his life."*

The teachers by whom Julian was seduced from the Christian faith, and initiated into the mysteries of intercourse with another world, belonged to that Alexandrian School which has excited the scornful amazement of modern historians by the alliance in its doctrines of the religion of Greece and of theurgic science with the Platonic philosophy. While its masters are admitted to have been men distinguished by profundity of thought and by austereness of manners, they are yet looked upon as either having become subject to the illusions of fancy in the attempt to penetrate beyond the limits assigned to human knowledge, or as skilful impostors; but to the Spiritualist it is evident that their supposed delusions were in fact insight into marvellous and darkly apprehended truths, while the sincerity of their religious convictions is proved by the steadfastness with which in opposition to popular sentiment they adhered to them, as well as by the labour and ingenuity they expended in forcing constructions adapted to the higher enlightenment of their time on the often gross and puerile conceptions of Paganism—in unveiling, as they believed, the sublime sense its legends symbolized. Thus ever religions no longer suited to their age would seem, ere expiring, to transmute themselves, to

> Die like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
> With a new colour as it gasps away.

Such changes, it would appear, are now beginning to come over Islamism.

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* *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. IV., p. 77.

That so much that is erroneous should have been allowed to proceed from spiritual sources on the subject of the highest import, is indeed an enigma; is it however more than one among the enigmas which in our present state of knowledge appear as insolvable as they are painful, when we survey the system in which we have our being?

The claim to be set off against the admissions which have been made, is that every doctrine which has emanated from the spirit world, and has been accepted by any considerable portion of mankind, has either established a moral code where none had previously existed, or has been an improvement on the one it superseded.

If we must not shut our eyes to the dangers of communication with another sphere, on the other hand we may feel confident that with the progress of knowledge they will pass away; the amount of light which has already been thrown on the nature of spiritual communications precludes their being received henceforth with unquestioning faith, precludes therefore the risk of their giving rise to new forms of religious error; the general characteristic moreover of the higher spiritual communications of the present day is the absence of dogmatic teaching, and the assertion that it is only as we advance in virtue and in the deeper paths of knowledge that we can attain to further light in the science of things divine—to any criterion as to truth in the interpretation of revealed doctrine.

If the idea of a future life only gradually progressive, and of which the first phase will be similar in kind to life here below, does not give rise to the same emotions which in rapt moments may fill the soul in anticipation of perfect rest and felicity after the ills of earth; on the other hand it is a view more fitted perhaps to give steady every-day support, to afford until the last hour an incentive to exertion, to divest that hour of all its terrors.

That "the better world" should in general excite so little ardour of aspiration, and be so unwillingly drawn near to, even in advanced years, seems a strange contradiction in human nature; may not the cause lie to some extent in the nature of the pictures usually, so far as they go, presented of that world? The little relating to it that falls from the pulpit, is but shadowy and chill, based upon some few indefinite scriptural expressions, and reflecting generally the views of that class of minds in which earthly aims and joys, if not more or less associated with sin, are at all events considered incompatible with the dignity and purity of life beyond the grave.

Poetical representations are but little better; one great master of song has indeed lavished his powers of expression in describing the celestial realms as overflowing with refined sensuous

delights, mingling and alternating with spiritual beatitude and with acts of homage to Jehovah. Crowned with amaranth, their golden lutes hung glittering by their side, the bright inhabitants of Milton's heaven appear gliding through eternity steeped in bliss without alloy; the song of rapture and of praise ever rises from their lips, and in the Divine presence an ambrosial fragrance diffuses through their frames "a joy ineffable;" "the solemn days" are spent "in song and dance about the sacred hill," "from dance they turn to sweet repast," and reposed upon flowers,

> They eat, they drink, and in communion sweet
> Quaff immortality and joy.

The picture is not unpleasing, yet is there something in the mode of bliss it represents which, despite the felicity of the pencil, is apt to provoke a smile; can we conceive the men and women of the earnest and busy world in which we live enjoying as the reward of a life well spent, an existence half saintly, half arcadian, such as this? Can we conceive them thus transformed? What, in such an existence, would become of many faculties and sentiments with which we have been endowed, which under favouring circumstances are found to be a source of such high and exquisite delight, and which in it would find no corresponding objects, no exercise.

Then again, how full of gloom is the language commonly used with respect to death; such expressions as the narrow home, the long sleep, implying as they do an intermediate state of indefinite duration, of nothingness, offer the very reverse of the picture which presents itself to the disciple of the new doctrine in connection with departure from this world; like the traveller bound to some fair region yet unknown, and

> Full of wonder, full of hope,

As he looks forward to the new scene as one immediately to be entered into, as one adapted to his present nature—a higher phase of the eternal life begun on earth; for there, he believes, do all human faculties find wider scope in a system purer, more refined, more plastic to progressive force, more in harmony with the ideal; there he believes does the Spirit of Truth guide her followers with a brighter torch,—the Spirit of Beauty mould all things nearer to the archetypal forms; there shall we taste in higher perfection all that here fires or charms the mind; there the tender ties and sweet affections of our nature, not losing their special character will become only deeper and more intense; there from the supreme source will a more radiant light stream down.

The frame of mind to which Spiritualism leads is well fitted to enable us to remain calm under the attacks of its opponents; to smile patiently while sensible people, in entire ignorance of

the subject, pronounce it imposture, while religious people condemn it as impious, while perchance some silver-tongued sciolist utters to a tittering and applauding audience ridicule of nature's deepest and most wondrous laws.

Again, we are supported when we remember that the new doctrine is but undergoing what every great new idea—what every great discovery, has had to undergo ere it triumphed—scorn, derision, mis-representation; error is persistive, prejudice hard to be overcome, the boast of Cæsar has never been for truth.

Happily in these days the constantly accelerating movement of progress affords good hope that the victory of Spiritualism, so far at least as the recognition of the reality of its data, is not far distant; any day may bring forth such a discovery in the domain of science as to startle the most sceptical, and to throw a flood of light on the supermundane phenomena. Meanwhile not among the scientific alone are those labourers in the field unconsciously preparing the way; the present day is fruitful of works the result of researches so ably and perseveringly conducted into the history of remote times as to throw light upon much in it which had hitherto been confused and obscure. In some of these works the writers have had to deal with the so-called supernatural, and while it is curious to observe their perplexity before it, their various attempts at explaining it away on rationalistic principles, it is gratifying also to find collected and arranged by their diligence an array of facts which will afford valuable materials for future generalization. Among these volumes, foremost in interest from the spiritual point of view, are the histories of Islamism and its Founder which have recently issued from the presses of England and Germany, and which, in the work entitled *Mahomet et le Coran*, have been summed up and presented in a form attractive to the general reader, mingled with interesting disquisition from his own pen, by M. Barthelemy Saint-Hilaire. In the biographical portion of this work, the materials of which have been winnowed by writers, the bias of whose minds is so strongly opposed to the mystical, and who have rejected, they inform us, whatever of that nature rested on uncertain tradition, we nevertheless find the supermundane source of Islamism standing out in the clearest light; in it we find the narrative of the origin of the *Coran*, of the dream of Mahomet in which he beheld an angel giving him a book which he enjoined him to read,—of his awakening and feeling, as he expressed it, that "a book had been written on his heart." We find the account of the apparition almost immediately following of the angel, with the annunciation "Oh Mahomet thou art the Prophet of God, and I am the Angel Gabriel;" of the re-apparition some time after of the same messenger to relieve him of his doubts,

from which moment he was confirmed in the faith he ever after so fervently maintained in his divine mission. Nor is the burning language passed over in which he sought to impress on others the depth and earnestness of his convictions; the passage of the *Coran* is quoted in which he exclaims, "J'ai juré par l'étoile quand elle se couche votre compatriote n'est point égaré; il n'a point été séduit; il ne parle pas sous l'empire de ses passions aveugles. Le *Coran* est une révélation qui lui a été faite; c'est le Terrible, c'est le Vigoureux (l'ange Gabriel), qui l'a instruit. Il planait, se maintenant en équilibre, dans la sphère la plus haute; puis il s'abaissa et resta suspendu dans les airs. Il était à la distance de deux arcs ou plus près encore; et il révéla au serviteur de Dieu ce qu'il avait à lui révéler. Le cœur de Mahomet ne ment pas; il l'a vu."

We are also told of the profound trances into which Mahomet fell, of his sudden fits of inspiration, of the fearful paroxysms (so significant to the initiated) which with more or less violence accompanied them, of the exhaustion which followed. It is related that when one day Abou Becr remarked the grayness of the prophet's beard, he answered in a tone of emotion: "What you say is true, it is Houd and her sisters who have whitened it thus early." And who, asked Abou Becr, are her sisters? They are, replied Mahomet, the Inevitable and the Smiting. He thus indicated three chapters of the *Coran*. M. Barthelemy Saint-Hilaire points with complacency to the absence on the part of those admitted to the intimacy of Mahomet, of any testimony to the miracles popularly attributed to him, and above all to his own declaration that he was endowed with no power to work them. That he should not have been so endowed, in no way lessens however the force of the evidence as to his having been an instrument for communication with the invisible world. The combination, through one individual, of its various modes of manifestation is indeed comparatively rare. Without any other signs than those above mentioned, we have abundant proof that he who in the eyes of his latest biographer appears one of the greatest of men, who founded a religion which with all its faults is immeasurably superior to the religious ideas which it superseded, who, having lived twelve centuries ago, has left over vast portions of the earth an impress which it retains unimpaired to this day, was in fact that mysterious, that by the generality derided and reviled being—a medium. Some future historian, of temper as philosophic as his predecessors, and guided by lights which to them are wanting, will doubtless analyse and appreciate anew the character and career of Mahomet. No other theme may perhaps better illustrate the mingled results for good and evil which may flow from influence from another sphere.

The non-arbitrary character of the spiritual phenomena, their subjection to law, have in these pages been much urged; and it may indeed be affirmed that independently of spiritual declarations there is no uncertain ground for the inference that they are part of the order of nature, for as all scientific research concurs in proving the accidental or anomalous to have no existence in the visible universe, so, guided by analogy, may we conclude that the same principle of order is extended to that more mysterious region whence these phenomena proceed; and intimately connected as they obviously are with subtle physical and physiological conditions belonging to this sphere, of a nature not more apparently insolvable than were once other problems which have received solution, argument still strictly inductive warrants also the conclusion that they are not beyond the boundary of investigation, and that their laws will be ultimately disclosed.

In a striking passage of his Essays the late Mr. Baden Powell seems to glance at the spiritual manifestations then just beginning to attract attention. In the present state of science, he remarks, "of all subjects that on which we know least is perhaps the connexion of our bodily and mental nature, the action of the one on the other, and all the vast range of sensations, sympathies, and influences, in which those affections are displayed, and of which we have sometimes such extraordinary manifestations in peculiar states of excited cerebral or nervous action, somnambulism, spectral impressions, the phenomena of suspended animation, double consciousness, and the like. In such cases science has not yet advanced to any generalisations; results only are presented which have not as yet been traced to laws; yet no inductive inquirer for a moment doubts that these classes of phenomena are all really connected by some great principle of order."

"If, then, *some peculiar manifestations* should appear of a more extraordinary character, still less apparently reducible to any known principles, it could not be doubted by any philosophic mind that they were in reality harmonious and conspiring parts of some higher series of causes as yet undiscovered. The most formidable outstanding apparent anomalies will at some future time undoubtedly be found to merge in great and harmonious laws, the connexion will be fully made out, and the claims of order, continuity, and analogy, eventually vindicated."* As to the reality of the data on which these speculations rest, each must examine, and judge for himself.

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* *Essay on the Spirit of the Inductive Philosophy*, p. 109.

ORIGIN OF "THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT."

(*Bombay Guardian.*)

We are indebted to a friend for the following interesting communication:—

The following translation of a Hebrew hymn is copied from one of the publications of the Percy Society. It is originally written in Rabbinical Chaldee and has a sort of lifting measure. No doubt many will be surprised to find that the familiar nursery tale, which has been told to amuse children, in England, for many generations, has had so serious an original:—

A TRANSLATION OF A HYMN FROM THE SEPHER HAGGADAH, FOLIO 23.

1.

A kid, a kid, my father bought
For two pieces of money. A kid, a kid.

2.

Then came the cat and ate the kid
That my father bought
For two pieces of money. A kid, a kid.

3.

Then came the dog and bit the cat
That ate the kid, &c.

4.

Then came the staff and beat the dog
That bit the cat, &c.

5.

Then came the fire and burned the staff
That beat the dog, &c.

6.

Then came the water and quenched the fire
That burned the staff, &c.

7.

Then came the ox and drank the water
That quenched the fire, &c.

8.

Then came the butcher and slew the ox
That drank the water, &c.

9.

Then came the angel of death and killed the butcher
That slew the ox, &c.

10.

Then came the Holy One, blessed be He,
And killed the angel of death,
That killed the butcher,
That killed the ox,
That drank the water,
That quenched the fire,
That burned the staff,
That beat the dog,
That bit the cat,
That ate the kid,
That my father bought
For two pieces of money. A kid, a kid.

The following is the interpretation:—

1. The kid, which is one of the pure animals, denotes the Hebrew nation.

The Father by whom it was purchased, is Jehovah, who represents himself in this relation to the Hebrews. The two pieces of money are Moses and Aaron.

2. The cat denotes the Assyrians, who took the ten tribes.

3. The dog is symbolical of the Babylonians, who destroyed the Assyrian monarchy.

4. The staff signified the Persians, who destroyed the Babylonian kingdom.

5. The fire indicates the Greek Empire, under Alexander, which destroyed the Persian.

6. The water denotes the Roman power, which destroyed the Grecian.

7. The ox is the symbol of the Saracens, who destroyed the Roman power in the Holy Land.

8. The butcher is the Crusader, who drove the Saracens off the Holy Land.

9. The angel of death is the Turkish power, to which the land of Palestine is still subject.

10. The commencement of the tenth stanza is designed to shew that God will take signal vengeance on the Turks; immediately after whose overthrow the Jews are to be restored to their own land and live under the Government of their long-expected Messiah.

SPIRITUALISM AS VIEWED BY CHRISTIANS WHO BELIEVE THE FACTS AND DOCTRINES OF SPIRITUALISM.

THERE seem to us many reasons for treating this subject, but two appear most prominent and of most practical importance.

There prevails among the majority of men an impression that a belief in Spiritualism implies a superstitious mind, and it is therefore good to shew that it in reality implies a search through experiments into the true nature of man's soul and spirit. A knowledge of oneself in these points may and indeed must modify religious belief, but the experiments preceding this knowledge never can. Thus the first reason of importance that Christian Spiritualists are bound to shew, is that what they are really doing is done in order to set their inner selves, their true and permanent individualities, free from any lower laws than those involved in their own enduring existence.

But our second reason is, if possible, of greater weight. Every Spiritualist, Christian or other, feels that converse with the spirit-world brings him in reality nearer to the source of all spirit-life. But the nearer you draw to the Infinite, the more you must feel your littleness as a finited creature. This being so the Spiritualist learns humility by observing at every increase of love and light how infinite is the distance between him and the author of all true life. Hence, when his soul is thoroughly penetrated with this truth, he becomes aware that he can neither out of the experience of spirit-agencies construct a true faith, such as has been called a religion of Spiritualism; nor can he, if already a Christian, modify his Christianity by any positively new revela-

tion. In brief, a Spiritualist cannot logically declare himself in possession of any new truth concerning God, whether he be a Deist or a believer in a divinely human lord of mankind. Anything he can ascertain is too remote from that innate consciousness by which we see nature as a unity of various phenomena, and God as the author of nature, which is, as it were, but a shadow of his substance or creation coming to a close in the finality of laws.

And thus we arrive at the conviction that the Christian who has received the testimony to external and material proofs of the internal and spiritual world, may have his faith quickened by this testimony. But he cannot have faith produced in him by it, because it is no witness of God as a Redeemer. Even in spiritual healing, he finds only a manifestation of an eternal verity. So having life, he may get new food for it, but the food cannot be assimilated if he have no life. Of course, if churches abounded in life and were free from mere doctrinalism or ritualism, these signs and the food of life would "follow," but precede they never ought, if they ever can.

The unbeliever, however (and the Christian Spiritualist is too well aware of his own weakness in faith to use the word in any but its most necessary sense), cannot come to belief by these new facts of Spiritualism. If he appear to do so, it is because the seed of belief was in him, and the spiritual facts brought to it light and warmth, to shew its lovely foliage, and kindle its aromatic blossom. Now if Spiritualism cannot create a faith, much less can it form a church; for a body of mere Spiritualists calling themselves a church would be a body without a soul, a mere corporation with every vice of every individual member and not one virtue of any single one. So as knowledge has grown, and it has been observed how signs of Spiritualism have attended every new manifestation of religious life, every true Spiritualist has clearly seen, that it was impossible to form any new ecclesiastical or even worshipping body without at once sinking into idle or gross superstition. But more than this, he has been led to observe that the spirit of existing bodies of all sorts, by the exclusion of spirit-experience and the missing of the real aim and upshot of such investigation, is tainted and diseased by the same superstitious feeling. The reason of this is obvious—it is equally superstition to accept spirit dicta for truth, and to refuse to investigate spiritual phenomena because you accept a dogma, which must of necessity but imperfectly express a spiritual truth. So, whether it be the over-statement of the grace of the sacraments, or of the efficacy of faith to salvation which we accept, it is alike a superstition beneath the dignity of man, and a breach of the reverence the human intel-

lect owes to the Source and Giver of all reason and perception. For surely, "if the life is more than meat" much more is the spirit than the sacramental water and wine; and if the wind of doctrine may carry a soul about unsteadfastly, faith must be an uncertain basis in comparison of the conviction, that the spirit of man lives for ever in the spirit of God.

We only desire to write these words as a caution to avoid enthusiasm, and as a direct denial on our parts of our being guilty of superstitious folly in our spiritual enquiries. If it be found desirable at any future time, we will treat of the true benefits of Spiritualism.

THE SPIRIT OF RATIONALISM.*

Mr. Lecky's purpose in writing is entirely different from Buckle's. Buckle wrote with the deliberate intention to state and maintain a doctrine respecting the social progress of mankind. He had a theory of human development to promulgate, and in the portion of the general introduction to his great work which the public was permitted to see, he occupied himself mainly with laying down his fundamental dogma, that human affairs were rigidly controlled by law, and that the track of law ran undeviatingly along the line of practical knowledge, The influence of the moral sentiments on the movement of human affairs he reduced to the lowest point; the freedom of the human will he denied; and he sternly remanded to the sphere of effects most of the phenomena which have generally ranked among causes. He began, therefore, where Mr. Lecky ends; or, to speak more exactly, he assumed as established results what Mr. Lecky presents to the distant goal towards which modern speculation is obviously tending. The latter is a historian rather than a philosopher of history. The very feeble attempt to touch the problem of freewill, in the preface, is almost the only interruption to the stream of narrative that bears us rapidly and charmingly over the whole field of European thought and life.

Not that the book before us is devoid of ideas. It is animated throughout by a vital idea which gave it birth, and which quickens every paragraph to the end; but the idea is too large and luminous to have the character or the effect of a dogma. It is in brief this: that the intellectual and social movements of

* *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe.* By W. E. H. Lecky, M.A. D. Appleton & Co. Two vols.

mankind as shewn in history, are controlled by "certain tendencies or predispositions, resulting from causes that are deeply imbedded in the civilization of the age, which create the movement, direct the stream of opinions with irresistible force in a given direction,—and, if we consider only great bodies of men and long periods of time, exercise an almost absolute authority." Rationalism, by this definition, is a subtle spirit of thought, an unconscious mental bias, tendency, or principle, an undercurrent of reason, setting with general steadiness in one course, silently sapping the foundations of institutions, systems, laws, creeds, practices, which seemed to be firmly planted in the conviction and reverence of men, and powerfully but quietly compelling them to substitute natural for supernatural causes in explaining the occurrences of history, reason for authority in religion, and the natural conscience or arbitrary systems of ethics in social life.

How this intellectual movement is started we are not told, nor is it of consequence that we should be; the innate curiosity of the mind explaining it sufficiently. Mr. Lecky strikes the current while it is flowing, and describes the way in which it is swollen and accelerated. In this description he exhibits his breadth of view. He allows to every contribution its full value. Knowledge, thought, impulse, feeling, passion, genius, conscience, will, are accepted as agencies in creating and shaping the controlling spirit. The action of special circumstances and of individual characters is indicated. The cunning predispositions of the reason take up all the faculties of the mind, however crossing and recrossing, however colliding and clashing, and turn them with steady pressure towards the point whither it tends itself. The propelling cause lies beneath human consciousness, and the changes it effects by its unseen hand are often so hidden as to seem unaccountable. Vast alterations are wrought, in the face of all expectation and of all probability. One age *finds it impossible to believe* what another age *found it impossible to disbelieve*, and it can assign no reason for its scepticism save its presence and power. Arguments follow the causes they appear to lead, and are a part of the conquest that they seem to achieve. The reformer is a feature of his own reformation. The discoverer marches behind his discovery, and the victor does not so much gain his victory as announce it. This is Mr. Lecky's truth; not a new one, but a very vital and suggestive one, and one that is fairly unfolded and illustrated now for the first time. Of the extraordinary intellectual wealth of the book the volumes themselves can alone convey the least idea. We can only suggest the scope of the argument and the character of the illustrations.

In order, we presume, to exhibit his doctrine by the strongest light, Mr. Lecky applies it first to two subjects which once were sustained by authority and belief, which now are almost abandoned by authority and belief, and in regard to which *the change from plenary assent to almost plenary dissent*, is to be explained only by the altered attitude which the human mind has unconsciously assumed under the influence of impressions not immediately connected with the subjects themselves. These are *witchcraft* and *miracles*, both treated under the general title, "*The declining sense of the miraculous.*" Two happier illustrations of his idea could not have been chosen; for the material is copious, the facts are abundant and striking, the literature is marked, and the opposite poles of thought are abruptly brought into a surprising conflict. Mr. Lecky presents with great power the force and character of the popular belief in witchcraft; traces it to its sources; follows it in the turns of its history; lays bare its deep strong roots in the prevailing religious credence, in the spiritual philosophy of centuries, in the Bible; shews how widely spread and how vital it was in the convictions of all men; how implicated it was in the radical faiths of Christendom. He details the arguments by which it was supported, and exhibits in masses the enormous accumulations of evidence that had gathered about it. The wisest men in Europe shared it; the ablest defended it; the best were zealous foes of all who assailed it. To disbelieve it seemed to be impossible. No man of any account disbelieved it for hundreds of years. Lord Bacon could not divest himself of it. Shakespeare accepted it, as did nearly all his most enlightened and gifted contemporaries. Sir Thomas Browne declared that those who denied the existence of witchcraft were not only infidels, but also, by implication, atheists. There were noble protests against the superstition, but they had no effect. Reginald Scott's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, published in 1684, was bold, exhaustive, masterly, and popular; but in effect it was powerless. On a sudden the belief declined all over Europe, all over the world of mind. It was not argued down. There stood the piles of testimony unexamined; there were the trains of reasoning unexploded; there were the Bible texts unexplained; there were the parent dogmas far enough from being extirpated. To the expressed beliefs of the mightiest intellects no opinions of anything like equal weight were opposed. Demonstration was still mainly on one side; but people who could give no reasons for their incredulity were stubbornly incredulous. There existed the same reasons for earnestness of faith; but the earnestness could not be excited. Interest in the subject was dead.

The same fate awaited the promiscuous belief in miracles.

For ages universal and inevitable, it has become limited and difficult. Once compelling the mind's assent, *it now is retained only by the mind's compulsion.* The miracles recorded as performed by the saints of the Romish Church were countless in number—the Bollandist collection containing about 25,000 lives, and each life is a tale of miracle from begining to end—miracles attested and accredited by solemn oaths of witnesses. Even Edward Gibbon was staggered by the array of proof in their favour. "The implicit undiscriminating acquiescence with which such narratives were once received has long since been replaced by a derisive incredulity. The very few modern miracles which are related are everywhere regarded as a scandal, a stumbling-block, and a difficulty." Why? Is scrutiny more keen than it was? *It is far less keen.* Is the evidence less? *It is equal, to say the least.* Have the books written against miracles surpassed in ability the books written in their defence? *On the contrary, they have been fewer and feebler*, written with less vigour, less learning, less definiteness of philosophical theory, less intensity of moral conviction. They have nearly all perished; but their cause is gained. It was virtually gained before they were produced, and their production was merely a sign that the human intelligence had silently *moved on to another ground, where the natural and not the supernatural held sway.*—*The Nation.*

MR. SOTHERN AND SPIRITUALISM.

PROCEEDINGS have been taken by Mr. Sothern against the *Spiritual Times*, in respect of two passages in the article which was quoted in full in that journal from an editorial article which appeared in the *New York Sunday Times* of the 31st December last; and by means of that publication in the *Spiritual Times* Mr. Sothern's character is no doubt seriously challenged in the two points alluded to. For this the editor has made the fullest apology, as indeed he ought as a gentleman to do, and without the slightest reservation.

In this journal the passages complained of were not inserted, but the material words were expunged, and their place supplied by asterisks, and it was not intended that a prejudice should be raised against Mr. Sothern in those matters.

We are bound however to say, that as a contrary impression prevails with Mr. Sothern, to the fullest extent that such impression is well founded, either with him or others, we entirely repudiate and retract any charge or intention to make a charge

on those matters, which were out of the knowledge of the writer of the article, or of any one known to us. So much we feel bound to say in justice to Mr. Sothern with regard to those two inculpated points, and if we could use more expressive language we would do so in repudiation of any such charges against his character.

But this New York article was produced in answer to Mr. Sothern's letter to the *Glasgow Citizen*, in which he uses the most opprobrious epithets against this journal and against Spiritualism and Spiritualists. Spiritualism, he says, is a delusion, a snare, and a swindle, and Spiritualists are personally guilty of imbecility, irreligion, fraud, impudent chicanery, and blasphemous indecency. We do not know if the proverb that one man may steal a horse whilst another may not even look over the hedge, be true, but surely Spiritualists are to be allowed to be angry at such epithets as these, even if they cannot appeal to the law. But in addition to these charges, Mr. Sothern professed to expose the hitherto believed doings of the famous Miracle Circle of which he was a member, and gave an entirely new version of its proceedings, on his personal veracity. It is mainly in answer to this that the New York article was written; and it was a great and culpable error, that in reproducing it in this journal every word on the other subjects was not rigidly expunged. This is what requires an apology to him and withdrawal, and which is fully tendered to him. But surely there is something which he also should say in withdrawing the offensive charges which he has made, and with respect to which the written testimony of several of the members of the Miracle Circle has been received. These gentlemen's written declaration leaves the matter in no doubt as to Mr. Sothern's position in America with regard to Spiritualism, and which position is utterly at variance, as his companions allege, with the facts he states in his letter; and upon this question of Mr. Sothern's veracity as to the Miracle Circle, rests the whole basis of his opprobrious statements against Spiritualists. There remains also the attitude which Mr. Sothern has taken up in London in playing what he may call hoaxes, at Holloway, Maida-hill, and St. John's-wood. He certainly should feel himself bound to apologize for all these things, but whether he do so or not, there is no difficulty on our part in making the amplest apology to him for any reference being made to the two paragraphs in question.

The above was written before the hearing of Mr. Sothern's proceedings against our publisher and Mr. Coleman. We only wish to add that Messrs. Kent, the publishers, are quite innocent of any knowledge of the contents of the Magazine.