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SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS IN GREAT POEMS.

THE GHOST IN HAMLET; WITH SOME REFLECTIONS  
ON THE CHARACTER OF HAMLET.

By THOMAS BREVIOR.

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THE religion and philosophy of Shakespeare is a matter about which his commentators and critics seem to be in hopeless disagreement. He has by these been variously represented as a Roman Catholic, an orthodox evangelical Protestant, a Sceptic, a Pantheist, an Atheist; whilst Mr. Roffe has lately shewn good reason for quoting him on the side of the Spiritualists. And as the many-sided Shakespeare brings before us times, countries, characters, circumstances, the most diverse—the ancient, the mediæval, the modern; kings, clowns, monks, cardinals, scholars, statesmen, warriors; Pagan, Christian, Jew; the prodigal, the misanthrope; the murderer, whose “offence is rank, and smells to heaven;” and the fair, the innocent, the good, whose memory is a perpetual benediction; so by his great genius and his broad sympathies with the common elements which underlie all the diversities of our human life, his insight has been clearer than perhaps any single mind has hitherto attained, and his plummet has sounded greater depths in our humanity than has perhaps been reached either before or since. Nor is his view limited to this sensuous life—this “bank and shoal of time;” his eye has glanced “from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth;” he has “bodied forth the shapes of things unknown,” and brought before us the people of the inner world—the sylvan fairies, “elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves;” the weird sisters, foul, malignant, who do “a deed without a name,” stirring up and tempting the evil thought within, and paltering with us in a double sense; the solemn shade of “the mightiest Julius,” and

That fair and warlike form  
In which the majesty of buried Denmark  
Did sometimes march.

All these, and more, come flocking at the bidding of a magician mightier than his own Prospero. No wonder, then, that in his infinite page each should find his own—that the most opposite beliefs and sentiments should be expressed—and that it should be difficult, if not impossible, to determine how far these are simply and purely attributable to the characters and circumstances of the *dramatis personæ*, and how far they are the genuine utterances of “the man Shakespeare,” speaking from behind the mask. To suppose that we can determine his moral identity—his spiritual self—by the study of this or that particular character, were scarcely less absurd than to suppose that he sketched the portrait of his outward man in the fat knight or the lean apothecary.

The few facts known of the life of Shakespeare, and a study of the poems and sonnets throw little or no light on the question, beyond what we may gain by a careful study of the plays. But though we may not sound him from his lowest note to the top of his compass, yet, listening with attent ear while he doth “discourse most eloquent music,” we may catch glimpses of his spirit,—may find indications and clues which may with advantage be followed out, even though we fail to pluck out the heart of his mystery. Thus, from a study of his plays, we may be sure that Shakespeare was no bigot, no narrow-minded sectarian; that he prized to the full sincerity in religion, and freedom in its exercise. He shews us the greed and duplicity of worldly-minded priests, he exposes their tricks and plots; but he shews us also the good, gentle friar who goes out in the early morning with his basket botanizing, and moralizing on

The powerful grace that lies  
In herbs, plants, stones, and their true qualities.

In Shakespeare there is no vulgar railing at priestcraft; no ridicule and scoff at the Puritans, like we find in the playwrights of his time: he treats with respect the falling Church of Rome; the most powerful plea for toleration is put by him into the mouth of the hated Jew. (*Merchant of Venice*, Act III, Scene 1.) Whatever his opinions may have been, we see in his plays the evidence of a spirit of moderation and liberality worthy of the “gentle Shakespeare;” and also, I think, a full appreciation of the higher principles and sentiments of Christian Spiritualism.

Without, however, entering upon the question of Shakespeare’s special religious belief, I shall endeavour to shew that in all its main points, his treatment of the supernatural is in entire harmony with the spiritual philosophy. I mean that, assuming him to have been a Spiritualist, we might expect him, when dealing with the supernatural, to have written about it as we find he actually has written. Not to go over too large a field of illustration, I confine my remarks chiefly to the play which on

this subject most naturally suggests itself; the one in which the supernatural is opened out most fully—*Hamlet*.

*Hamlet* is perhaps the most varied in its characters, the most rich in poetry, the most profound in its philosophy, and stands out the grandest study of psychology, among Shakespeare's masterpieces; and as if that it might lack no element of interest, one who has passed into the world of Hades, appears, under every circumstance that can add solemnity and impressiveness, to harrow us with fear and wonder, bringing to light the secret of undivulged crime, and finding and using the instrument of its punishment. He is the main-spring, the motive power in the action of the play, and illustrates the potential agency of spiritual beings to outwork effects in the realm of nature.

The Ghost, as Shakespeare apprehends, and has here presented him, is as much, if not more, a subject of psychological study and analysis as any of his flesh-and-blood characters. He is not the "airy nothing" the formless, passionless abstraction,—the "mathematical point," or "indivisible monad," of the metaphysician;—he answers to common belief and experience, rather than to the idle dreams of *pseudo* philosophy. He has a spiritual body corresponding at all points to the natural body. He comes

In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

This is again and again reiterated. Bernardo asks—

Looks it not like the king? Mark it, Horatio.

To which Horatio responds—

Most like:

It harrows me with fear and wonder.

And again, when Marcellus asks—

Is it not like the king?

Horatio answers—

As thou art to thyself.

And in recounting what he had seen to Hamlet, he says—

I knew your father, these hands are not more like.

When the Ghost appears, the soldiers have ample opportunity for observation. With "solemn march," "slow and stately," thrice the apparition walked

By their oppressed and fear-surpriséd eyes,  
Within his truncheon's length.

The most minute circumstances of its appearance are carefully noted—

So frowned he once, when in an angry parle  
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.

The expression of his countenance,—"very pale," "more in sorrow than in anger;" the beard, as Horatio had "seen it in his life, a sable silvered." Take note, too, oh, George Cruik-

shank, in the next edition of your *Discovery concerning Ghosts*, that on the platform before the Castle of Elsinore he appears

Armed at all points, exactly, cap-à-pé.  
Such was the very armour he had on  
When he the ambitious Norway combated.

Note farther, that when again he appears to Hamlet, during the interview with his mother, in her closet, with equal regard to fitness of occasion, he comes in peaceful guise—

In his habit as he lived.

The spirit of the murdered king comports himself with royal dignity; his bearing is “majestical;” he has a “courteous action;” and is offended with “the shew of violence.” But more than semblance, form, dress, bearing; he is his very self. Sent suddenly to his account, as he complains to Hamlet:—

Of life, of crown, of queen, at once despatch'd :  
Cut off even in the blossom of my sin ;  
Unhouselled, disappointed, unanelled,  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head ;

he carries into the other life his memories, affections, resentments and regrets. He conjures his son—

If ever thou didst thy dear father love,  
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

But in the same breath that he urges—

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not ;

He still shews tender consideration for her who had been the partner of his joys and cares, though she had so soon proved faithless to his memory:—

But howsoever thou pursuest this act,  
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
Against thy mother, aught ; leave her to heaven,  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge,  
To prick and sting her.

And in the closet scene he appeals to Hamlet—

O step between her and her fainting soul !

Sir Edward Strachey, in his *Essay on Hamlet*, concludes the Ghost to be merely a subjective apparition, seen by Hamlet in his mind's eye, rather than with the bodily organ. He says, “It must be understood as the embodying of Hamlet's own dreamy thoughts into an image, which, projected upon the dark mists which rise before the future hopes of his life, while the sun of the past has just sunk below the horizon—seems to him a visible spectre, presenting itself to the senses as well as to the mind.” That the Ghost is seen by others as well as by Hamlet, he considers but “a part of the dramatic machinery which is necessary to enable us to see it with Hamlet's eyes, and to sympathize

adequately with him in the belief in its visible presence: just as Hamlet speaks soliloquies, in order that *we* may know the thoughts which are passing within him." And he further infers this to be the right explanation "from the entire silence of the Ghost to all but Hamlet, as well as from his not being visible to the queen on a subsequent occasion."

That the Ghost is a merely mythical projection from the mind of Hamlet, and that all the direct and circumstantial corroborative evidence verifying its actual appearance is only dramatic machinery to excite our sympathy with Hamlet's delusion—this, however ingenious the hypothesis, is certainly not the impression actually left on the mind from a careful perusal of the play, or from witnessing a satisfactory performance of it on the stage; and we may therefore be sure that it is not the one Shakespeare intended to convey. And the more the play is studied, the deeper does this conviction become.

Every circumstance, to the minutest particular, is contrived with most masterly skill to render the appearance of the Ghost not merely credible but actual. "Two nights together, Marcellus and Bernardo on their watch" had been encountered by it at the same spot,

Upon the platform where we watched;

and at the same hour,

In the dead waste and middle of the night;

the exact point of time by certain indications carefully noted—

When yon same star that's westward from the pole  
Had made his course to illumine that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, the bell then beating one.

Nor does the Ghost appear only to these "honest soldiers." They, "in dreadful secrecy," impart what they have seen to Horatio, the friend of Hamlet. Horatio is represented, not as ignorant and superstitious, but as a modest man and "a scholar." He is fresh from Wittenberg, and has all his college lore about him, is conversant with Roman history, and with the politics of his age and country. When the guards tell him of the appearance of the Ghost, he is incredulous. Like Sir Edward Strachey, he says that—

'tis but fantasy,  
And will not let belief take hold on him.

But when he "with them the third night kept the watch," and finds that—

As they had delivered, both in time,  
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,  
The apparition comes:

he "trembles and looks pale," and, like many a sceptic at the

spirit-circle, when confronted with the reality he had denied, he asseverates—

Before my God, I might not this believe  
Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes!

Though the soldiers at the first appearance of the Ghost are

——— distilled  
Almost to jelly with the act of fear;

Yet, afterwards, and in company with Horatio, when again the spirit appears, their courage and presence of mind do not forsake them. Horatio speaks to it; Marcellus offers to strike at it with his partizan; and, though so great a critic as Goëthe tells us that Hamlet “is without the strength of nerve which forms a hero,” yet his resolute boldness seems rather to shew that he is endowed with “the Néméan lion’s nerve.” When Horatio tells him of the vision seen by himself and his companions of the watch, he says at once, unhesitatingly—

I will watch to-night;  
Perchance ’twill come again.

And on Horatio answering—

I warrant it will,

Hamlet rejoins—

If it assume my noble father’s person,  
I’ll speak to it, though hell itself should gape,  
And bid me hold my peace!

And with this resolution, with the same courage that he confronts Laertes, he confronts alone his “father’s spirit in arms,” addresses to him apt questions, and when the Ghost waves him to “a more removed ground,” he will not be restrained from following, and to the remonstrances and warnings of his friends he answers with dignity and force—

Why, what should be the fear?  
I do not set my life upon a pin’s fee;  
And, for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being a thing *immortal as itself?*

As is natural to a man with so startling an experience, Hamlet has his doubts as to the truthfulness of the Ghost, and his “intents, wicked, or charitable,” the spirit that he has seen may be a devil, assuming the shape that he has seen, and, perhaps, abusing him to damn him. He must determine this ere he can proceed; he “will have grounds more relative than this,” and he causes a play to be represented before the king in which is enacted the murder of his father under the circumstances, and by the means the spirit had affirmed it to have been done. And he bids Horatio—

When thou see’st that act a-foot,  
Even with the very comment of thy soul

Observe my uncle ; if his occulted guilt  
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,  
It is a damnéd ghost that we have seen,  
And my imaginations are as foul  
As Vulcan's stithy.

The guilty conscience of the king does betray him ; any lingering doubt there may have been in the mind of Hamlet that the vision was due solely to the "heat-oppressed brain," the working of an anxious, active mind, is at once dispelled. The integrity of the Ghost, and of the witnesses who vouch his appearance, is vindicated. That the Ghost is the veritable living spirit he claims to be, is proved not merely by his disclosure of "undivulged crime," but, and *à fortiori*, by his truthful relation of the *particular means* by which it was effected, and the attendant circumstances. This makes it what in modern parlance we call "a test fact," and one, too, of a very striking kind. We accept then, as fully sustained by evidence, Hamlet's verdict that—

Touching this vision here,  
It is an honest ghost, that, let me tell you.

In accordance with the testimony of history, sacred and profane, and of common experience in relation to the appearance of spirits in general, the comings and goings of the Ghost are sudden, on the instant, unobstructed by material impediments, and at "the witching time of night."

The season  
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

As in authentic instances of spiritual appearance, the Ghost does not, in the first instance, appear direct to the person to whom his errand is addressed : the relation of his intimate and trusted friend, flanked by the evidence of other attesting witnesses, prepares Hamlet for the dread disclosure which his father's spirit communicates to him alone, and confirms him in the assurance that the spirit he has seen is, indeed, no "fantasy ;" that it is not, as his mother would fain persuade him, and herself too—

The very coinage of your brain :  
This bodiless creation ecstasy  
Is very cunning in.

To this suggestion, Hamlet aptly responds—

Ecstasy !  
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music : it is not madness  
That I have uttered : bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will re-word ; which madness  
Would gambol from.

Those conversant with ghost-lore are aware that the haunting ghost—the spirit drawn to the old familiar places dear to it in the earth-life, or dragged thither, as it were, by some occult force—is generally one whose departure into the other world has

been premature, caused by sudden and violent means, cut off from earth, not only in the blossom of his sins, but in the plenitude of animal life and vigour. Such spirits appear to be able, in an especial manner, to clothe themselves with magnetic elements and essences so far gross as to be visible to the corporeal eye. But while spirits sometimes thus manifest themselves to the bodily senses, at other times, and perhaps more frequently, they are discerned only by the corresponding internal or spiritual senses; and in this case they are seen and heard only by those in whom these senses are open to perceive them. The appearance of the Ghost on the platform where he "held his wont to walk," and where he is seen simultaneously by all present, is an instance of the first kind; his appearance in the Queen's closet, where he is seen and heard by Hamlet only, is an instance of the second kind. To the Queen, Hamlet seems to bend his

eye on vacancy,  
And with th' incorporeal air to hold discourse.

When Hamlet addresses his father's spirit, the Queen asks:—

To whom do you speak this?  
*Hamlet.* Do you see nothing there?  
*Queen.* Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.  
*Hamlet.* Nor did you nothing hear?  
*Queen.* No, nothing, but ourselves?  
*Hamlet.* Why, look you there! look how it steals away!  
 My father, in his habit as he lived;  
 Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

*Exit Ghost.*

And this brings me to a point that, I think, must have struck every intelligent Spiritualist who has reflected on the character of Hamlet, though I do not remember to have seen it adverted to. Hamlet is prone to abstraction and reverie, he postpones action, is irresolute, vacillating, ardent, impulsive, very susceptible to external and, according to Shakespeare, spiritual influences; he sees and holds converse with a spirit at a time when to another it is neither visible nor audible, his soul is "prophetic," he has a true presentiment of his approaching death,\* has, in short, the temperament, character, idiosyncrasies, which in our day

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\* Presentiments are known to be frequently verified—a strong presumptive evidence of man's spiritual nature, and the special openness of that nature in certain persons to impressions from beings of the other world. Shakespeare repeatedly illustrates this. The "ill-divining soul" of Juliet sees Romeo "as one dead in the bottom of a tomb;" "high strains of divination" inspire Cassandra to cry aloud in warning—

"Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilium stand,"

And these presentiments, like the warning of the soothsayer to Cæsar to "Beware the ides of March," or of the weird sisters to Macbeth to "Beware Macduff," or the presentiment against which Hamlet struggles in vain, are but the shadows cast (from whence, if not from the spirit-world) before the events.



would indicate him to be, constitutionally, a medium. He is "Hamlet the Dane," and among the Danes, second-sight, ghost-seeing, and other evidences of mediumship have been, and to this day are, very prevalent. If then, in common with many of his countrymen, Hamlet had this endowment, we can the more readily understand how, in the closet scene, the Ghost was visible and audible to him alone; and how (for kinship, in general, is not only of the blood but of the spirit,) he would be specially *en rapport* with his father's spirit, and, hence, a most fitting instrument to work out his purpose.

The one o'ermastering idea of the Spirit is revenge. This impels him to earth, and to seek those through whom he hopes to be avenged. Who so fit to play the chief part in this as his son, young Hamlet? He is in just that temper of mind which can be acted on most effectively. He is stricken with fresh, deep grief at the loss of his noble, heroic father; he remembers the deep and honourable love borne by him to his now widow—his once "most seeming virtuous queen"—and he is "sick at heart" to find how unworthy his mother has proved herself of that tender affection that

Might not beteem the winds of heaven  
Visit her face too roughly.

His sad and painful meditations are disturbed and fretted at the unseemly wassail and revelry at the palace. He is, too, cheated of his royal inheritance—the crown. Dark suspicions and presentiments that he dare not utter flit across his mind; and, withal, he has to bear in silence the cold platitudes on the commonness of death, and reproaches on the fidelity of his "obstinate condolment," which is called "unmanly grief," shewing "a will most incorrect to heaven." With this heart-break, and a mind filled with suspicion and resentment, when the Spirit first discloses to Hamlet that

The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown,

'tis no wonder that he finds him "apt" "to stir in this."

That, intent on working out his fell purpose, the Spirit does not know, or does not consider, the consequences his action may entail on others, illustrates his limited perception of the future, and the blinding nature of passion in spirits disembodied as well as in those still in the flesh; points which authentic spirit-narratives sufficiently confirm. The whole plot and structure, the action and *denouement* of the play, hinges on the fact of spiritual intercourse having actually taken place, and on a communication, true in all its particulars, having been made to the living by the so-called dead.

It is to be observed that Hamlet's Spritualism is assumed throughout the entire play. When Horatio tells him of having but yesternight seen the King, his father, and begs him—

Season your admiration for a while  
With an attent ear; till I may deliver,  
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,  
This marvel to you.

Hamlet does not hereupon fire off a battery of jokes upon his friend, or deliver an essay on spectral illusions, but earnestly rejoins, "For God's sake let me hear!" and asks, "When was this?" "Did you not speak to it?" and, after further inquiries, adds,

I would I had been there;

and he resolves,

I will watch to-night—  
Perchance 'twill walk again.

And, when left alone, his reflection on the matter is—

My father's spirit in arms! All is not well.

Neither on this, nor on any occasion, does Hamlet call in question, or seem to doubt for a moment, that a spirit may appear. The knowledge he attains of the post-mortal life of man by experience of the actual living presence and revelation of one who had "shuffled off this mortal coil," does not originate his spiritual faith, it but confirms it, and gives it the assurance of certainty. He is a Spiritualist from the first; he believes in spirits, both good and evil; in angels and in guardian spirits.

When he first beholds the startling apparition of his father's spirits, he bursts into the apostrophe—

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

And his conviction that he is truly addressing a spirit, and his belief concerning spirits in general, is shewn in his further questioning—

Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin damn'd,  
Bring with thee airs from heaven, or blasts from hell,  
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
Thou comest in such a questionable\* shape  
That I will speak to thee.

And, again, in the closet scene with the Queen, when the Ghost enters, he exclaims—

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings,  
Ye heavenly guards!

This is represented, indeed, as the general belief. Laertes

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\* Conversable.

alludes to the dead Ophelia as "a ministering angel." Horatio says to the dying Hamlet—

Good night, sweet prince,  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

Even the wicked King, in the struggle of conscience in which his stronger guilt defeats his strong intent, invokes angelic aid—

Help, angels, make assay!\*

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare exhibits a spiritual agency blending, co-operating with, and using, natural agencies in working out the consequences of guilt. Hamlet is spurred to action, and his "almost blunted purpose" is whetted by his father's spirit. We may, I think, not unreasonably infer this to have been Shakespearian conviction from his illustration and enforcement of this truth in other plays. Macbeth's guilty ambition is aroused, and he is drawn on to his confusion by the witches and their "juggling fiends." The phantom dagger, "palpable to sight," marshals him the way to his fearful crime, and in his guilty ear he hears—

A voice cry, "Sleep no more!  
Glamis hath murder'd sleep; and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more—Macbeth shall sleep no more!"

So in *King Richard the Third*, the hardened hypocrite and godless tyrant, on the very crisis of his fate is wakened by the ghosts of all those whose bodies he had murdered: and their burden to him is "despair,"—

Despair, and die!

Cold fearful drops stand on his trembling flesh, and when Ratcliff would rally him with—

Nay, good my lord, be not afraid of shadows;

he responds with his favourite oath:—

By the Apostle Paul, shadows to night  
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard

\* The care and guardianship of angels is a subject of frequent allusion with Shakespeare. In *Measure for Measure*, Isabella exclaims—

"Oh, ye blessed ministers above,  
Keep me in patience!"

In *King Henry the Eighth*, the Duke of Norfolk says of Katherine's love for Henry, that she

"Loves him, with that excellence  
That angels love good men with."

In the *Tempest*, Gonzalo, the honest old counsellor of Naples, exclaims—

"Now good angels preserve the king!"

Even wicked old Falstaff has yet grace enough to say—

"For the boy, there's a good angel about him."

(*Second Part of King Henry the Fourth*, Act II., Sc. 4.)

Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers,  
Arméd in proof, and led by shallow Richmond.\*

To his antagonist, on the contrary, they appear with ministering  
and gracious influence, and the assurance that—

God and good angels fight on Richmond's side.

No wonder that with so fair an omen he tells the lords—

I promise you my heart is very jocund  
In the remembrance of so fair a dream.

How admirable, too, is that vision of the "blessed troop," seen  
by the dying Katherine. As it disappears she awakes, and she  
holds the following dialogue with her attendants:—

*Katharine.* Spirits of peace, where are ye? Are ye all gone,  
And leave me here in wretchedness behind ye?

*Griffith.* Madam, we are here!

*Katharine.* It is not you I call for:  
Saw ye none enter, since I slept?

*Griffith.* None, madam.

*Katharine.* No! Saw you not, even now, a blessed troop  
Invite me to a banquet; whose bright faces  
Cast thousand beams upon me, like the sun?  
They promised me eternal happiness;  
And brought me garlands, Griffith, which I feel  
I am not worthy yet to wear: I shall assuredly.

*Griffith.* I am most joyful, madam, such good dreams  
Possess your fancy.

*Katharine.* Bid the music leave;  
They are harsh and heavy to me.

(*King Henry the Eighth*, Act IV, Sc. 2.)

Mr. Birch in his *Inquiry into the Philosophy and Religion of Shakespeare*, argues that Hamlet if not absolutely an atheist, is a sceptic in religion, inclining strongly to Atheism; and, as Hamlet is evidently a favourite creation of the poet, the child of his mature thought, the one of all his characters who deals most directly and fully with the questions of life, death, and eternity; he infers that these sentiments of Hamlet's may be fairly taken as the poet's own.

But in this premiss, quite too much is assumed. True, there are passages in *Hamlet*, which, if they stood alone, might admit of the construction Mr. Birch puts upon them. In this, as in other of his plays, Shakespeare puts into the mouths of his characters "wild and whirling words," which seem to accuse Providence, but a careful examination will shew that these, in general, are spoken under sudden impulse—a temporary gust of feeling; or the action of the play evidences that they are due to some

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\* Professor Reed remarks, "The agitated dream of Richard on the eve of the battle of Bosworth Field, is supposed to have an historical foundation, and is treated by accurate historians as of actual occurrence. The story is, that Richard, rising from his fearful sleep, harassed and haggard, and disturbed, found it necessary as battle was about to be joined, to explain to his attendants the change which had come over his spirit, and which his looks betrayed."

narrow, partial view; the whole spirit, and much of the language goes direct to shew that

Accidental judgment, casual slaughters,  
Purposes mistook;

are overruled by a Providence which commends the poisoned chalice to the lips of those that mingle it, and fills up the gaps and inequalities in the administration of human affairs in that after life of which these very imperfections evidence the need. So, too, some of Hamlet's reflections, if we sever them from their place and purpose in the drama, seem indicative of a gross materialism, while, in fact, they are applied only to this our mortal life; not that he thereby denies the immortal, for he affirms the direct contrary, but that in moralizing on life, its weaknesses and its vanities, it is from its mortal side that these considerations are suggested.

The key to any difficulty of this kind is to be found in the fact that Hamlet realizes the two-fold nature and life of man; and that with the rapid movement of his active, and subtle intellect, in his deep meditations, he, sometimes by seemingly abrupt transitions, passes from the one to the other. It is in the same breath that he speaks of man as "the paragon of animals," "the quintessence of dust;" and as "noble in reason, infinite in faculties! . . . in action, how like an angel! in apprehension, how like a god!" He might thus let "imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he finds it stopping a bung-hole," and this be in no wise incompatible with the belief, that the mighty spirit who animated that dust, who "kept the world in awe," and whose ambition even the conquest of a world could not satisfy, was something other than the earth from which may have been made the loam to stop a beer barrel. Man is to Hamlet a being made with

Large discourse,  
Loking before and after;

to whom "capability and God-like reason have been given" not "to fust in us unused." He puts and answers the question,

What is a man  
If his chief good, and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.

And yet, if "spirit" be synonymous with "dust," if, when the poor player walks off the stage of mortal life, and the curtain falls upon the scene, all is over; what is he as regards his end, but "a beast, no more?" Surely Shakespeare did not mean this in bringing before us the ghost of the murdered king, and in representing Hamlet as holding visible and audible communion with the dead.\*

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\* I might strengthen this argument by reference to Shakespeare's treatment of the supernatural in other plays, but, in place of doing so, I shall content

The truth is, that in considering the character of Hamlet there is this important distinction, which some of his critics seem to have overlooked. Unbelief, or even scepticism, is not *pre-dominant* in Hamlet, but the converse. He is not an habitual sceptic, disturbed, it may be, by occasional misgivings that, after all, there may be a God, a Providence, a retributive hereafter; but a believer in these things, into whose mind, in certain moods, doubt, nevertheless, sometimes and exceptionally intrudes. This, however, is not its normal, healthy condition, but a morbid state; it is then, as he expresses it—

Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.

Shakespeare, it would seem, in this intimating his conviction that scepticism is at the root of infirmity of purpose, having neither the recklessness of Atheism, nor the noble courage of faith. It is a sickly hothouse plant, and has not the robust healthful life that springs from growth in heaven's free air and sunshine.\*

Hamlet is a meditative over-active minded man, deeply exercised with the problems of life, "looking before and *after*;"

myself with giving the following passage from a masterly *critique* on *Macbeth*, in Reed's *English History and Tragic Poetry as Illustrated by Shakespeare*:—  
 "It is hardly possible to conceive anything more wild and fantastic than the supernatural agencies which have so worked upon the guilty ambition of Macbeth, and it is therefore most remarkable that there should be such an air of truthfulness about them. They seem to be not the phantoms of a gross and absurd superstition, but credible realities, so naturally do they co-exist with human passions. This can be explained only by their being typical of something real. Few of us, I presume, are unwilling to believe that there is around us an invisible world, not the less real because we cannot perceive it, and I know of no reason why we may not also believe that the unseen world has its beings, who are mysteriously ministrant to either the good or the evil of men's lives. It is no figurative language when we are taught that powers of darkness are ceaselessly roaming about to tempt the souls of men; and it is only because our intellects are so materialized that we are slow to believe what rests upon other proof than the evidence of our senses. The spiritual world is as real, or rather more real, than the material, and, although we are not yet endowed with faculties to apprehend it, yet, with all its mysteries, it may be close to us and around us. Now, it is one of the functions of the imagination, as Shakespeare himself tells us, "to body forth the forms of things unknown," and "turn them to shapes," and thus the weird sisters may be regarded as incarnations, not merely of evil suggestions, but of the invisible tempters of mankind—the spiritual enemies to whose arts humanity is exposed. The tragedy, therefore, is at once an imaginative and most real representation of the career of human frailty yielding to temptation."

\* It will be observed that the jesting with and irreverent handling of sacred things in Shakespeare, is generally put by him into the mouths of fools, clowns, and debauchees. May not Shakespeare have been putting an apology for himself in this matter, when he makes Don Pedro say of Benedick—

"The man doth fear God; howsoever it seems not in him, by some large jests he will make."—*Much Ado about Nothing*, Act II., Sc. 3.

That Shakespeare was a diligent and devout reader of Scripture is fully shewn by the Rev. Charles Wordsworth, in his work on *Shakespeare's Knowledge of the Bible*.

of large and liberal thought, viewing questions all round; and hence, familiar with the arguments of the Materialists: they pass through his mind, and colour its surface, but they do not rest in it, and have no formative influence upon it. That *belief* lies at the *base* of his character is evident from the spontaneous and almost unconscious way in which it finds utterance in incidental remarks and soliloquies. In serious and solemn moments, he invokes God; he speaks with reverence of the canon of the Everlasting: thrice in one scene, (Act V., Scene 2,) he refers, believingly, to a special Providence:—"We defy augury; there is a special Providence in the fall of a sparrow."\* "Why, even in that" (the royal signet he used to defeat the plot against his life) "was Heaven ordinant." And again, to Horatio:—

Let us know  
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,  
When our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us  
There's a divinity doth shape our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.

We have seen that Hamlet, in presence of his father's spirit, distinctly affirms his belief in the soul's immortality, as assured beyond even the power of a spirit to peril or to injure; and in the last scene of the play the same faith is implied; when Horatio would drain the remaining poison, the dying Hamlet adjures him—

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story.

It is these spiritual beliefs,—the prohibition of the Divine canon; the voice of conscience "which makes cowards of us all;" †

\* The same doctrine and illustration occurs in the speech of Adam to Orlando, in *As You Like It*, Act II., Sc. 3.

† The sense in which Shakespeare meant it to be understood "that conscience doth make cowards of us all," may be illustrated by a passage in his *King Richard the Third*. One of the two men sent by Richard to murder Clarence, says of conscience:—

"I'll not meddle with it, it is a dangerous thing, it makes a man a coward; a man cannot steal, but it accuses him; a man cannot swear, but it checks him; a man cannot lie with his neighbour's wife, but it detects him; 'tis a blushing shame-faced spirit, that mutinies in a man's bosom; it fills one full of obstacles: it made me once restore a purse of gold, that by chance I found: it beggars any man that keeps it: it is turned out of all towns and cities for a dangerous thing; and every man that means to live well endeavours to trust to himself and live without it."

"*Second Murderer*. 'Zounds! it is even now at my elbow, persuading me not to kill the duke.'"

So far does conscience make a coward of the first speaker, that at the last moment he refuses to take part in either the crime or its reward.

Richard himself, when the spirits of Clarence and his other murdered victims appear to him in sleep on the eve of battle, all—

"Threatening to-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard;"

exclaims,—

"O coward conscience, how dost thou affright me!"

above all—

The dread of something after death ;

which according to Hamlet, restrains the intending suicide,—  
which makes us endure the burden of a weary life :—

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, . . . .  
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to. . . . .  
And makes us rather bear the ills we have,  
Than fly to others that we know not of.

These may not be the highest motives and suggestions which religion inspires, but they are such as naturally present themselves under the circumstances, and they are effective for their purpose.

Over the whole action of the play falls the awful shadow of Nemesis : we see in it the ramified and dire calamities that spring from crime: the echoes of the guilty deed bringing down an avalanche of ruin which involves the innocent with the guilty in a common destruction. Hamlet may be considered as a lay sermon, and a text for many sermons, on the moral principles of the Divine government of man. Its pervading principle is, that God's laws vindicate themselves in the moral, as in the physical world; both alike being so constituted as that man cannot evade the consequences of his acts. He cannot measure the extent, nor can he fail, in his own bosom to reap the harvest of the good or evil that he has sown. No seeming successful practice,—no position of power or privilege can hide "occulted guilt."

In the corrupted currents of this world  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by Justice;  
And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above:  
There is no shuffling, there the action lies  
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd  
Even to the teeth and forehead of our fault  
To give in evidence.

That is the law of the spirit-world: we know and are known; we see and are seen—not as we would appear, but as we are. Measurably, the law of retribution is operative even here. Our works follow, and overtake us; they are stamped in our consciousness, and we cannot escape their effects. Nature and spirit alike tend to manifestation. "The secret'st man of blood" cannot with cunning art hide the wicked deed. His "offence is rank, it smells to heaven," nor land nor sea will harbour it; stones will speak, and reeds will blab the secret;

Murder, though it hath no tongue, will speak  
With most miraculous organ.

And—

Foul deeds will rise,  
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.



## The "leperous distilment" not alone

Courses through  
The natural gates and alleys of the body

of its victim, it poisons also the conscience of him by whose treacherous fratricidal hand it was administered. Without and within wait the stern ministers of righteous retribution. The chance and careless words of a courtier lash the conscience of the guilty King; like Macbeth, his mind is "full of scorpions;" his soul is "limed," his "bosom black as death." His crime is as the poisoned tunic of Nessus; it swathes round his spirit; from it he cannot free himself. At times his better angel seems to strive with him, urging him to penitence and prayer. This is a beautiful and reverent allusion to a deep Christian truth in his soliloquy—

What if this curséd hand  
Were thicker than itself with brothers' blood?  
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
To wash it white as snow?  
Whereto serves mercy,  
But to confront the visage of offence?  
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,—  
To be forestalléd ere we come to fall,  
Or pardoned, being down.

But dragged down by possession of the effects for which he did the murder, he cannot repent, he cannot pray; and conscious that the evil will in him predominates, he rises from the ineffectual struggle and the attitude of prayer, with the confession—

My words go up, my thoughts remain below,  
Words without thoughts never to Heaven go.\*

We can imagine the young Hamlet and his "fellow student" and friend, the then incredulous Horatio, discussing with all the boldness of youth and freedom of college friendship the deep questions which in the pride of intellectual and newly awakened power, ardent and speculative minds delight to engage in, and from which we may be sure the nature of man and the existence of a spirit-world could not be omitted. And when in this play Horatio, in reference to the spiritual manifestations that have so staggered him, exclaims—

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

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\* So Angelo exclaims—

When I would pray and think, I think and pray  
To several subjects: Heaven hath my empty words;  
Whilst my intention, hearing not my tongue,  
Anchors on Isabel. Heaven in my mouth,  
As if I did but only chew his name;  
And in my heart the strong and swelling evil  
Of my conception.—*Measure for Measure*, Act II., Scene 4.

may it not have been in special allusion to his college scepticism, that Hamlet rejoins in words that should be a lasting rebuke to the arrogant conceit of "philosophical persons" who deem God's universe a petty stage of which they know all the characters and properties—

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.  
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

"Happy would it be, if, whenever a spiritual mystery is presented to our thoughts we did not reject it, because transcending our little knowledge it happens to be 'undreamt of in our philosophy;' happy would it be if we did not suffer doubts and suspicions, and sophistries of a sensualized scepticism to shut up the avenues of our souls, instead of opening the door wide to give the mystery a stranger's welcome."

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### SAINT HILDEGARDE.

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"BROUGHT up in great simplicity," with only the Psalter to read, a little girl in the first years of the twelfth century found herself clothed upon with wonderful gifts. Of delicate organization, and possessing a religious nature, little Hildegarde became, while almost an infant, a remarkable medium.

"When I was three years old," she says, "I beheld such a light that my soul trembled. In my eighth year I was admitted to a spiritual communion with God, and until I was fifteen I beheld many visions. At that time I felt surprised that while I saw internally with my soul, I also saw outwardly with my eyes, and as I never heard of a similar power in others, I endeavoured to conceal my visions as much as possible.

"When I was twenty-four years of age, a fiery light coming from heaven filled my brain and influenced my heart, like a fire which burns not, but warms like the sun; and suddenly I had the power of expounding the Scriptures."

It was not until her fortieth year that the wonders of her spiritual life became public, and the Catholic Church began to reap the benefits, as it has ever been ready to do, of spiritual gifts, thus adding a lustre to itself which the Protestant Church has never been able to gain, because of its unwillingness to engraft upon its sanctity any of the signs and gifts of faith.

Hildegarde was subject to trances, in which a strong man could not bend her body. Her physical system was ill capable of bearing her spiritual enlightenment, and she suffered greatly, but always with patience and faith. A ring preserved at Eibengen, bears the inscription, "I suffer willingly."

After her powers became known in the church, pope and cardinal, bishop and people, Jew and Christian visited her. She healed the sick by the laying on of hands, she knew the thoughts of others, she beheld future events, she had the power of leaving her body and shewing herself to those at a distance, thus proving herself a true disciple of the early father, St. Paul, who commended the gifts of clairvoyance, of prophecy, of healing the sick, and of working miracles.

In her letters, she says: "My soul rises in visions even to the depths of the firmament, and overlooks all portions of the earth and every nation. I do not see things with the outward eyes, nor hear them with the ears, nor receive them through other senses, but with my soul's eye; for I see them when awake, by day as well as by night. In the visions, I understood the writings of the prophets, the evangelists, and some holy philosophers, without human assistance. I explained much in these books, although I was scarcely able to distinguish the letters; I also sang verses to the honour of God without having had any instruction in singing, having never even learned a song."

After people began to come to her for assistance, her gifts became more perfectly developed. She gave counsel for bodily ailments, and she beheld the thoughts and feelings of others so distinctly that she could reprove them for secret faults. We are told that a spirit spoke within her that no one could gainsay. Jews became converted by her pious exhortations; and the nuns were led to greater sanctity by her reprovings. She often foretold the time of the death of those who came to her, and scarcely any one who sought her aid in sickness went away unaided.

A girl suffered from tertian fever that no medicine could abate; Hildegarde laid her hands on her, and she immediately recovered. "Bertha" was afflicted with a tumour on her neck: Hildegarde made the sign of the cross on the afflicted part and she was cured. She sometimes consecrated (magnetized) water and gave to the sick to drink, and they were healed.

"Ederich Rudolph had heard of her power, and on going to bed prayed for her assistance. In a vision she appeared to him in the very dress she at that time wore, and told him that his life would be in danger from his enemies if he did not at once leave the place. He instantly left; and those that remained were overpowered by their pursuers."

She is said to have foretold the divisions that were to occur in the Catholic Church, and princes and bishops received her words as oracles.

In the year 1179, when 81 years old, she left her frail body and entered the life of spirit realities. A medium of such rare gifts was not to be forgotten in the Catholic Church: she was

canonized as a saint, and made to prove the power and truth of the Catholic religion. Would that our own time could in like manner behold beauty and honour in such revelations and gifts without the superstitious reverence of the Catholic.

Why have all these beautiful histories been hid from the present generation? Why have they been clothed upon with doubt and distrust, until we have been made to believe they were one with the weeping statue and the winking Madonna, only to be laughed at and despised as tricks of a crafty priesthood. The holy gifts of the spirit were not more rare in the ages following the death of the disciples of Jesus, than in the days of their active mediumship; but the Reformation sealed up the records by its contempt and scorn, and we have to wait until some bold critic takes from behind the mask of superstition or of distrust, the sweet and saintly image of faith, and we exclaim with reverential awe, "Ever one and equal is the beautiful law of the spirit; ever bright and shining are the threads that connect the natural with the spiritual; ever fond and loving is the bending eye of heaven; ever true and perfect is the revelation of infinite good and beauty."

L. M. WILLIS.

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## WHAT CAN WE MAKE OF THESE THINGS?

"Yours is the writing on the wall  
That turns the tyrant pale."—MRS. BARBAULD.

LUC GAURIC

PREDICTED in the beginning of the sixteenth century, that John Beneventoglio would lose the sovereignty of Bologna. Beneventoglio put him to a cruel death for it, but it came true nevertheless. Gauric flourished under the pontificates of Julius II., Leo X., Clement VII., and Paul III. Mezeray and De Thou affirm positively that Luc Gauric predicted the death of Henry II. in a duel, and that he would be killed by a wound in the eye. This was fulfilled, not in a private duel, but in a single combat, in the course of a joust.

ST. CÆSAR.

In the year 552, died at Arles this saint, who had prophesied the French Revolution—an event then more than 1,200 years distant. He said the most infamous of treasons would disgrace France. The king would be made a prisoner. A great part of the west would be ravaged by enemies; France would be de-

graded by the crown being rent from the true line, and given to a man who had no right to it. The true prince would not only be kept prisoner, but overwhelmed with all sorts of miseries by his own subjects. There would be conspiracies; confederations of people and cities; and a host of opinions promulgated, unheard of before. Dependants and servants would rise against their masters, and seize and divide their property, stripping them also of their dignities. The church would be robbed of its temporalities; the churches profaned; the religious driven from their convents, the pastors from their pulpits; the people would be without spiritual guides; and for twenty-five months or more there would be no pope, no emperor in Rome, no ruler in France. The public good would be no longer sought, but every one for himself. The eagle would soar over all the world, and subdue many nations. He would be crowned with three crowns in token of his victories, but in the end he would re-enter his nest and never leave it again. France would be invaded on all sides, and suffer many calamities. The whole world, in fact, would groan with oppression, pillage and devastation, and the rightful prince would not regain the throne till Christianity had been restored.—See *Liber Mirabilis*, pp. 55-58.

## CARDAN.

This extraordinary man tells us in his work that he was possessed of four peculiarities: he could fall into ecstasy at will; he saw what he wished; dreamed of what was about to happen; and foresaw them by certain marks which appeared on his nails. In 1552, he was sent for to Scotland by the Archbishop of St. Andrew, who had been suffering for two years from a periodical difficulty of breathing, which had resisted all the skill both of the Scotch and the French physicians. Cardan cured him, but on taking his leave said—"Though I have been able to remove your malady, I cannot change your destiny, nor prevent your being hanged." This extraordinary speech was explained eighteen years afterwards, when he was hanged by the order of the commission of Mary the Queen of Scots.

## MADAME MAINTENON.

This extraordinary woman, wife, by a secret marriage, to Louis XIV., and who was born in the prison of Niort, said that when she was wife of Scarron the poet, Barbé, the architect and astrologer, told her that she would mount as near as possible to the throne of France, for she would reign over the king. In one of her letters to a Mademoiselle d'Antigni, in 1666, she says, "Behold me very far yet from the predicted grandeur." Yet it was all realized.

## THEODORE-AGRIPPA D'AUBIGNE'S DUMB PROPHET.

The grandfather of Madame de Maintenon had a youth in his service who was born deaf and dumb, but talked with his fingers. He had the gift of divination to such a degree that all the world was running to him to learn their fortunes, or to recover things lost or stolen. He told them their genealogies, their trades, their marriages, the number of children they had or would have; he named all the pieces of money that they had in their pockets, and their most secret thoughts. M. d'Aubigné forbade him strictly, and under pain of dismissal, to say anything of the kind to his children or servants, but, of course, in vain. He told M. d'Aubigné for a whole month every day what Henry IV. did—all his walks, his councils, the persons with whom he conversed—at a hundred leagues distance, and he found that he had been entirely correct so far as the outward facts went. The maid servants having one day asked him how long the king would live and what death he would die, he replied by his signs he would be killed in three years and a half, and he described the city, the street where this would happen, the carriage, and the two blows of the assassin's knife.

## THE GRAND HUNTSMAN.

The Black Huntsman of the Forest of Fontainebleau is said to have shaken the great heart of Henry IV. by crying to him "*Amendez vous!*" "We still are curious," says the Duc de Sully, in his *Memoirs*, "to discover what is the nature of the apparition so often seen, and by so many eyes, in the Forest of Fontainebleau. It is a phantom, surrounded by a pack of hounds, whose cries we hear, and whom we see afar off, but which disappears as we approach it." Perefice mentions the phantom, and the name of the Grand Huntsman.

## TYRTAMUS AND SOCRATES.

Tyrtamus, an African chiromancist, living in Athens, Socrates sent to him an exact drawing of the palm of one of his hands, in order to test him. He sent it by one of his disciples, who was to say it was that of a woman; Tyrtamus replied that it was the hand of a man who was inclined to thief. The answer was received with indignant laughter, but Socrates said the man was quite right—he had originally a strong bent towards theft, and had only conquered it by his reason.

## PREDICTION OF THE DEATH OF GUSTAVUS III. OF SWEDEN.

There was a young woman in Stockholm named Harrison who predicted by the grounds of coffee. Such was the success

of her divinations, that all the Court was ambitious to learn the future from her. Gustavus himself went to her, but, so soon as she looked at the coffee grounds she became greatly alarmed and refused to say what she had seen. The king bade her speak out, and assured her no harm should happen to her. "Sire," she said, "you will one day be assassinated by the man whom you will first meet on the North Bridge as you go out to-day." Gustavus appeared calm and even gay; talked a little while with Miss Harrison, and then hastened out, impatient to see the prognosticated assassin. It was the young Count Ribbing. The King, hastening up to him, said, "My dear Count, if I did not know your heart and your principles, I should suspect you, for I have just heard that you are one day to assassinate me." He then told him of the divination, and laughed over it, putting the young man quite at his ease. Yet it was this Count Ribbing in the conspiracy of Ankerström who actually stabbed him.—*Causes Célèbres.*

DAMIENS, ASSASSIN OF LOUIS XV.

Madame de Sainte-Rheuse, whose husband was Chief Commissioner of the War Department, and in whose service Damiens had been, had predicted to him by chiromancy, to which she was addicted, that he would end by being torn in pieces or quartered.

ROBESPIERRE.

This monster, who began by dreaming of the regeneration of the human race, and was sentimentally fond of poetry, believed that he had a guiding spirit, Chamael, and that, like Cromwell, he was inspired. If so, it must have been by Moloch.

FATHER BEAUREGARD.

This Jesuit father, in a sermon delivered in Notre Dame in 1756, declared that that church would be desecrated and turned into a temple of Venus; that when the rebels had run their career of Atheism and wickedness, foreign armies, and especially armies from the north, would come and put them down; their great chief would be driven out, and the lily restored—he said for ever—his enthusiasm outrunning his spiritual prompter. The MS. of this prophecy is still preserved at the Chateau de Susa in Switzerland.

JEAN-BAPTISTE MORIN.

This famous astrologer and drawer of horoscopes, was often consulted by Cardinal Richelieu. Cardinal Mazarin gave him a pension of 2,000 livres and the chair of Mathematics in the

Royal College. Hortensius asserts that Morin predicted to about six days the death of Louis XIII., and to about six hours the hour of the death of Richelieu; but the triumph of his horoscopes was in pronouncing, on seeing either Cinq-Mars, or his portrait, that that person would be beheaded.

: ANNE-MARIE-LOUISE D'ORLEANS, DUCHESS OF MONTPENSIER.

It was predicted in her infancy that she would by an imprudent action miss a very great marriage; would from her decisive character hold her head aloft amongst persons of the highest rank, but would end by being the victim of an ungrateful wretch, on whom she had heaped the greatest benefits. All this was accomplished to the letter by her secret marriage with the Duke of Lauzun, by which she missed being an empress, and was compelled to leave her husband for his brutal insolence.

GENERAL DU B——.

At an ambassador's dinner in Paris, in the time of the Empire, when a numerous and distinguished company was assembled, General du B——, after hearing several curious fulfilments of predictions, amongst others that of Gustavus III. of Sweden, said, "I myself have just had a prediction, which does not in the least alarm me. It was that I should very shortly be arrested; that, amongst my many correspondents, one of them in a neutral city, is about to betray me; that I am surrounded by thieves, who watch me continually, and will bring me into terrible misfortune; and, finally, on inquiring about my death, I was told it would be by fire. Another thing I had forgot, that I ought to burn certain papers, for, if I confide them to a woman, they will augment the proofs against me. Still, if I will quit Paris in three days, my destinies will be different. In short, Mademoiselle le Normand did not flatter me."

On the mention of the name of Mademoiselle le Normand, all cried out, "General, obey her warnings; the affair is serious:" and they related many striking fulfilments of the predictions of the sibyl. They urged him earnestly to quit the capital. He joked pleasantly with the ladies, and promised nothing. At that very moment his correspondence was known to the Government; the neutral city was Hamburg; his terrible misfortunes came in the shape of a loss of 60,000 francs, his arrest, and the giving up of his papers through fear. Fire, some weeks afterwards, terminated his existence.

DRYDEN, THE POET,

Cast the horoscope of his son Charles. He found that three



crises lay before him in his life, and he named the dates of them. In each he would be in imminent peril of his life. The first occurred when the boy was about ten years of age, and though Dryden took most careful measures against it, his son nearly lost his life: on the second day named, he fell from a tower of the Vatican, and was only saved by a miracle. On the third and last predicted day, he was drowned in swimming across the Thames.

## CHARLES I.

When Vandyke's triple portrait of Charles I. was sent to Bernini, the celebrated sculptor and architect, to enable him to execute a bust of Charles, the moment that he saw the portrait he said, "That man is born to misfortune." When Charles was brought up for trial in Westminster Hall, and was leaning on his cane, which had a golden head, this head gave way and fell off. The king was much troubled at the omen, and endeavoured to console himself by imagining that Hugh Peters, the fanatical Parliamentary chaplain, had been tampering with it.

## LAUD.

Shortly before his impeachment by the Parliament for his arbitrary acts, and principles destructive of the constitution, he records himself, in his diary, that going into his study where his portrait, "taken by the life," had fallen from the wall, and lay on its face on the floor—"I am," he said, "almost every day threatened with my ruin in Parliament; God grant this be no omen." It was only too true an one.

## DR. JOHNSON.

Mrs. Piozzi, in her anecdotes of the great lexicographer, says:—"I remember that at Brighton once, when he was not present, Mr. Beauclerc asserted that he was afraid of spirits; and I, who was secretly offended with this charge, asked him, the first opportunity I could find, what ground he had ever given to the world for such a report. He replied, 'I can recollect nothing nearer it than my telling Dr. Lawrence, many years ago, that a long time after my poor mother's death, I heard her voice call, "*Sam!*"' 'What answer did the doctor make to your story, sir?' I said. 'None in the world,' he replied, 'but suddenly changed the conversation.'"

## MADAME DE STAEL.

Madame de Stael must be reckoned in the list of Spiritualists. She believed that the spirit of her father was her guardian angel; and when her thoughts were most pure and elevated, she said it was because he was with her. She invoked him in her

prayers, and when any happy event occurred, she used to say with a sort of joyful gladness, "My father has procured this for me?"

She had a profound idea of the efficacy of prayer. Once when her little daughter was dangerously ill at Frankfort, she exclaimed, "Oh! what would become of a mother, trembling for the life of her child, if it were not for prayer?"

After her father's death, she went to Italy. And as she felt the balmy influence of the spring in this lovely climate, with a trembling superstition, she ascribed it to the intercession of her father.—(*Preface to her Life.*)

She makes Corinne say, "My impassioned excitement carries me beyond myself: teaches me to find in nature, and my own heart, such daring truths and forcible expressions, as solitary meditation could never have engendered. My enthusiasm then seems supernatural; a spirit speaks within me far greater than my own" (p. 45).

No doubt such is the source of all genuine improvisation.

#### SINGULAR EXPERIENCE OF SIR HUMPHREY DAVY.

In his "*Consolations in Travel, or the Last Days of a Philosopher,*" p. 69 to 72, Sir Humphrey Davy related shortly before his death, an appearance, which formerly in a wonderful manner restored his exhausted strength and continued his life. This took place in his most vigorous years of youth. He was attacked by yellow fever, and was so far gone that the physicians who attended him had given him up. Then, as he seemed to be dying, there appeared to him a youthful amiable form, which he always afterwards called his good angel. Five-and-twenty years passed over, and still the figure of the lovely being continued as vivid to his memory as if he had but just seen it. Livingly present, were ever that countenance ruddy with youthful bloom, those mild glancing azure eyes.

This female guardian angel came as a nursing one in his apparently dying hour, calming his pains by her presence, and still more by her consolatory conversation, full of the highest spiritual interest; and she thus infused feelings which gave back strength and life to the sufferer. This ministering spirit, whose extraordinary visit to his sick-bed, produced his convalescence much more by its psychical, than the physicians by their physical means, never forsook him in the greatest danger, and only disappeared on his recovery. It was a visit out of a distant, future world, for in that in which he was then living Davy knew no similar person. His affections were at that time fixed on a lady who had no resemblance to this whatever, but in many respects was the very antithesis to her.

Ten years afterwards, on a journey on the coast of the Adriatic, this very form of his good angel met him for the first time, as an actually living maiden. He saw her only, however, in a rapid passing glance, as if she came to recall to him the memory of her past presence, and to prepare him for a future re-appearance. Ten years after that, namely, twenty years after his first illness, and her first visit, he fell into another severe illness, was once more believed to be at the point of death, when this figure returned in the person of a really living woman, and by her cares restored him to health. So precisely was the image of the female figure of the two previous occasions, that he could detect no difference whatever; nor could he determine whether it was the original form, or the form of the second passing young lady that he had seen. But she awoke in him precisely the same feelings as in his first illness: his life and strength returned in the same manner, and he once more arose from the brink of the grave.

## LORD ERSKINE.

In the Life of this most splendid of forensic orators, as well as noblest of men, Lord Campbell relates this fact:—

“ This spring (1779), he joined the Home Circuit, where his fame preceded him, and he was immediately in full employment. Riding over a blasted heath between Lewes and Guildford, with his friend William Adam, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of the Jury Court in Scotland—whether from some supernatural communication, or the workings of his own fancy I know not—he exclaimed after a long silence, “ Willie, the time will come when I shall be invested with the robes of the Lord Chancellor, and the Star of the Thistle shall blaze on my bosom !”

Did Lord Campbell believe in “supernatural communication?” It would seem so, or why the supposition here uttered? At all events, this sudden prognostication of his future eminence, and of its particular distinction was fully verified. In 1808, twenty-nine years afterwards, he was made Lord Chancellor, and what is remarkable is, that he ascended at once to that eminence without passing through any other judgship, or any promotion at the bar, except that of a silk gownist; thus giving significance to his prophecy. He did not say “ I shall become a Judge, a Lord Chief Justice, or a Chief Baron, but simply Lord Chancellor, and possessor of the Order of the Thistle;” and these were his two sole honours conferred by the Crown; though it is true he was for many years Attorney-General to the Prince of Wales, and then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Green Ribbon was conferred on him by the Regent, I think, in 1815, six-and-thirty years after his prophecy of this distinction,

which was one of Scottish origin, appropriated to the Scottish nobility, but which, since the Union, it has been the custom to confer on two English peers. .

At page 669 of his *Life of Erskine*, Lord Campbell says, "He either was, or pretended to be, a believer in second sight and ghosts. Perhaps he worked himself up to the persuasion that he was sincere, in order that he might with a good conscience appear a very extraordinary man, and make people stare; but I suspect that he would, occasionally, with deliberation, mystify his hearers."

Now there is no reason whatever, to believe that Lord Erskine, either "worked himself up to a persuasion that he was sincere," or that he attempted "to mystify people to appear an extraordinary man." He *was* a very extraordinary man, and all his life long dared to say what he thought. After reading what Lord Campbell adds, one is much more inclined to believe that he himself invented an apology for introducing the following simple and serious narrative—a narrative at which we need express no wonder after the preceding prophecy, and its literal fulfilment.

There being a round of ghost stories in a large company at the old Duchess of Gordon's, when it came to the turn of Erskine, then Ex-Lord Chancellor, he spoke as follows:—"I also believe in *second sight*, because I have been its subject. When I was a very young man, I had been for some time absent from home. On the morning of my arrival in Edinburgh, as I was descending the steps of a *close*, on coming out from a bookseller's shop, I met our old family butler. He looked greatly changed—pale, wan, and shadowy as a ghost. 'Eh, old boy,' I said, 'what brings you here?' He replied, 'To meet your honour, and solicit your interference with my lord, to receive a sum due to me, which the steward at our last settlement did not pay.' Struck by his look and manner, I bade him follow into the bookseller's, and into whose shop I stepped back; but when I turned round to him, he had vanished. I remembered that his wife carried on some little trade in the Old Town; I remembered even the house and flat she occupied, which I had often visited in my boyhood. Having made it out, I found the old woman in widow's mourning. Her husband had been dead for some months, and had told her on his death-bed, 'that my father's steward had wronged him of some money, but that when Master Tom returned, he would see her righted.' This I promised to do, and shortly after fulfilled my promise. The impression was indelible; and I am extremely cautious how I deny the possibility of such supernatural visitings, or those which your grace has just instanced in your own family."

Surely nothing can be more like the honest truth, or more unlike "working himself up" or "mystifying," than this sober statement. Yet Sir Walter Scott said, "Tom Erskine was positively mad. I have heard him tell a cock-and-bull story of having seen the ghost of his father's servant, John Barnett, with as much gravity as if he believed every word he was saying."

Of course, he did believe it. Scott himself shews that he did not merely tell this at the Duchess of Gordon's, but at other times and places. It was a matter of his positive conviction; and the madness was only the same sort of madness with which all the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles of the Old and New Testaments were afflicted, and of which Sir Walter Scott himself gave some curious instances, as in the supernatural communication of the death of Terry the actor, in London, at Abbotsford, and of his own occasional clairvoyante condition. But Scott hated Erskine for his incessant and undaunted vindications of liberty and liberalism; and when he went to Edinburgh, after forty years' absence, would not attend the dinner given in his honour, though Erskine at that very dinner quoted and complimented Scott. Such are the sad little weaknesses of great men. Both Scott and Erskine believed in the supernatural; but one was an out-and-out Reformer, and the other was an out-and-out Tory, the foil of all his fine qualities, and which we can readily forgive him for their sake.

#### SIR EVAN NEPEAN AND THE REPRIEVE.

During the administration of the younger William Pitt, Sir Evan Nepean was Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. One night he could not sleep, yet he could discover no cause for his sleeplessness. He felt perfectly well; he had eaten nothing before retiring to rest, and had no case on his mind, nor his thoughts engaged on anything of importance, which might explain his sleeplessness.

About two o'clock in the morning, as it began to get light, weary of seeking sleep in vain, he arose and went into the Regent's Park, in order, after a walk of an hour or two in the cool of early morning, to endeavour to obtain the sleep he had sought in vain. At this hour few people were, naturally, abroad. He continued his walk, and soon found himself in the neighbourhood of the Home Office. He passed this once or twice, when, having a private key to a side door, he thought he would enter the office, which he did without any object whatever except the passing of his time. When he entered his apartments, he saw the journal lying on his desk, and he opened it mechanically without an idea of looking for anything in it; but the first thing

on which his eyes fell was this entry of yesterday—"Pardon for the condemned forger to be sent express to York."

To his consternation he recollected that though he had given the order to the head clerk, he had not received the acknowledgment of its receipt from the proper officer. At the same time the execution of the condemned was to take place on the morning of the next day. In the highest state of excitement Sir Evan opened the despatch book to see if the missing acknowledgment was by chance there. In vain! It was now past three o'clock. He hastened away to the house of the chief clerk, knocked him up, and asked him if he knew positively that the warrant for the pardon was sent to York. The clerk, startled and confounded, could not at once give any clear answer. "You are still asleep!" said Sir Evan, "Collect your senses; the warrant must be despatched." "I now recollect," answered the clerk, "that I handed the warrant yesterday to the Solicitor; he must have despatched it to York; it is his duty." "Very well; have you got the acknowledgment from him, that the pardon is actually sent off?" "No," said the clerk. "Then we must seek the Solicitor instantly. Come along. It is still early; we shall be sure to find him." The man lived at a considerable distance; not a coach was at that hour to be found. Both the gentlemen ran at their best speed, and arrived at the Solicitor's door just as he had got into his carriage to drive to his country-house. He thought he had left all his business in order, so that he could enjoy a quiet day in the country. The sight of the Under-Secretary of State at this unusual hour, startled him greatly, but he was in a terrible consternation when he heard the cause of the visit.

THE WARRANT WAS STILL LYING IN HIS DESK!

The delay was only made good by the most desperate exertions, and the order for the pardon arrived at York only just as the condemned entered the cart to be driven to the place of execution.

Sir Evan often related this circumstance to his friends, and he considered it as the most extraordinary event of his life.

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We have asked, "What can we make of these things?" The only answer is, What can we make of the wind that bloweth where it listeth? These facts start up in every quarter, in every class of mankind and womankind. In the court, the camp, the church, the chapel; in the halls of science, in the cabinet of the wit, in the boudoir of fashionable beauty; amongst kings, senators, saints, and sinners; amongst the learned and the ignorant—and all alike cry out "*Peccavi!*" when the fit is on them, however they may have joked and

laughed before. Men scorn superstition in their individual capacities, and yet very soon we are able to collect them into a cabinet of curiosities, demonstrating by their combined evidence that Superstition herself is Truth forcing them to confess her.

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### A DREAM OF THE WAR FROM VIENNA.

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IF truth give this story an interest I can vouch for that. An old woman in humble life had, by the early death of her daughter and son-in-law, been left the care of three young grandchildren. The poor creature accepted the heavy charge, and by unremitting toil and industry brought up the youngsters in humble comfort. The conscription, that terrible scourge of the Continent, took from her recently the eldest boy, and he was drafted into the Deutschmaster Regiment. The old woman was overwhelmed with sorrow when this war broke out, and her thoughts were ever with her soldier grandson. When the commencement of the fighting was first announced last week, she dreamed that night that her boy was wounded in a battle, and that she met him at the railway, and saw the blood oozing from the white bandages. She could no longer sleep, and awaking with a scream, she put on her clothes and went, long before day, to the railway station. She remained there for hours and hours, and people to whom she spoke almost laughed at her perseverance, for no wounded were as yet come down at all. Very weary the old woman went home at nightfall, and next morning again she dreamed the very same dream. There was the youngster in his soiled white tunic, and with his white bandages, and the blood still forcing its way through. It was horrible. She dressed herself again, and because yesterday she saw people look half slightingly on her humble working attire, she arranged and put on her little remnant of former finery, not from pride, but thinking it would gain her more respect and therefore more considerate answers to her inquiries for the idol of her heart. Poor old creature! It only made her ten times more ridiculous to shew herself in the strangely-shaped bonnet and faded robe of a long-past day. But she bravely took her post. On that day the wounded began to arrive, but no tidings of the grandson. The hours seemed interminable but it was only when she met a neighbouring lad and gave him a few kreutzers on his solemn promise to watch through the night that she was induced to go home. It would be strange but for the hold we know the anxious imagination has over the mind even in sleep that this third night the old woman dreamed her dream once again, and thought she saw before her at the railway terminus the young soldier with his soiled uniform, his

bloody bandages, and his ghastly pale handsome face. Once more at day-break, in the faded dress, the worn-out grandmother took her determined post. Omnibuses and waggons laden with wounded men passed out through the great iron gateways hour after hour. At last, at last, there is a scream, a young soldier jumps from a waggon, he clasps a fainting old woman in his arms, he shouts for water, he drops warm tears on the withered face, and then he laughs wildly, for she has opened her eyes and looks upon him and fondly clasps him; and kisses again and again his bandaged head and his shattered right hand; the exertion of the moment has disarranged the bandages and the blood is oozing out. There was not a dry eye in the whole crowd, and the bronzed soldiers around who had faced the battle and thought but little of their own wounds now wept like children. "My child, my child, are you much injured? Will you live? Will they let you home to me to nurse you?" "My wounds are but light, grandmother, and in three or four weeks I hope to be with the Deutschmeisters again to pay back these Prussians the reckoning I owe them." Poor Deutschmeisters! I believe they are annihilated to a man—a matter of great tribulation here, for the regiment was altogether recruited from Vienna.—*The Military Correspondent of the "Standard,"* 10th July, 1866.

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TO EMMA HARDINGE,  
ON HER LEAVING ENGLAND FOR AMERICA.

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O, brave true worker, in our dearth  
 Of earnest speech, whose words of power  
 Pleaded for justice, human worth,  
 God's laws; who, rich in dower—  
 The wealth of soul—with lib'ral hand  
 Bestow'dst thy gifts of mind and heart,  
 Sowing thought-seed throughout our land:—  
 Who, star-like, in thy sphere apart  
 Shot radiance down—Heaven's bless'd light  
 Of faith and hope—that souls above  
 Lift from earth's dust; dispelling night;  
 Filling our hearts with wealth of love;  
 Bearing truth's banner, wide unfurl'd.  
 God speed thee—near to us, or far;  
 In our dear isle, or His new world,  
 The hope of man—the free America!

T. S.



## L I F E   A N D   D E A T H .

WHETHER or no it be true, as Comte asserts, that every science of necessity passes through three stages—the theological, metaphysical, and positivist—we may be allowed to doubt; but his assertion is at least suggestive, and may enable us to trace the operation of great laws of development in human life and history which would otherwise have remained unrecognized. In the progress of European civilization, for example, we fancy it would not be difficult to describe three stages. The first is signalized by fierce conflict with the powers of nature, an epoch when the mere animal instincts bore unquestioned sway. Then as the relations of human society became more complex and the mind found leisure for inquiry into the what, the whence, and whither of its life, outward expressions became necessary to symbolize the speculations and conclusions of the inner man. Hence the thousand institutions of the Church and State which in their present condition afford no slight obstruction to progress in that third stage on which the world has entered.

To the readers of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus, verbum sat*. They will recognize in these few words the basis of his *Philosophy of Clothes*; and he maintains, as we all know, that the world's clothing is worn out—that it no longer gives expression to the inner life, but hangs about it in a dilapidated state, impeding healthful action. Every year confirms the saying. One form of belief and one institution after another is analyzed with relentless logic, found charged with poisonous ingredients, and swept into oblivion. How arose this same "victorious analysis," and is it ever destined to give place to the reverse constructive process?

The stage of fetish or nature worship is the first step in progress which history records or rather indicates. The second stage of social, political, and ecclesiastical symbolizations of man's metaphysical conceptions followed. But during this second period the human mind was so pre-occupied with its own creations that the outer world was utterly ignored or merely served as pabulum for the most absurd cosmical speculations. Rampant incoherence and corruption however contained their own proper cure; and the conviction dawned upon the more enlightened of our race, that the divine laws written upon the visible creation are deeper and truer than those of either priest or king. Thus did Europe enter upon the third stage of development in which life began to be based on science, and the energies of the cultivated intellect were unceasingly employed in clearing away the metaphysical cobwebs which for so many centuries had impeded its

development. But long after a theoretical figment has been argued out of existence, the forms and customs by which it was symbolized retain their hold upon the affections and allegiance of the world. This is eminently the case with all those varied associations which have gathered round the painful and mysterious phenomenon of death.

Half a century ago it was deemed heretical to doubt that death in every shape was other than the fruit of sin. By degrees, however, geology has wrought a conviction in every cultivated mind that death is the necessary action of a primary law which was in operation thousands of ages before the date assigned to Adam's fall. And it is vain to endeavour to draw a distinction between the human race and kindred forms of animated life in respect at least to the action of law upon their common inheritance—a perishable vesture of flesh and blood. Death then is man's appointed lot, not because he has sinned, but because he shares the corporeal nature of all the animal creation. This is but the first step in discovery on this momentous subject, but what a mass of delusion is it not destined to disperse! How large a portion of its sting does it extract from death! According to popular theology every bell that tolls is a ratification of the frightful and blasphemous dogma that this fair world of ours is under the curse of its beneficent and all-wise Creator; and, as Alger forcibly remarks, by painting such pictures as that of a woman, with "Sin" written on her forehead in great glaring letters, giving to Death a globe entwined by a serpent—or that of "Death" as a skeleton, waving a black banner over the world and sounding through a trumpet "Woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth!"—by interpreting the great event as punishment instead of fulfilment, extermination instead of transition, men have elaborated a melo-dramatic death which nature never made. To the intelligent observer, death bears the double aspect of necessity and benignity; necessity because it is an ultimate fact, as the material world is made, that since organic action implies expenditure of force, the modicum of force given to any physical organization must finally be spent; benignity, because a bodily immortality on earth would both prevent all the happiness of perpetually rising millions, and be an unspeakable curse upon its possessors.

Vegetable bodies die, that new individuals of the species may live, and that they may supply the conditions for animals to live. The individual beast dies that other individuals of his species may live, and also for the good of man. The plant lives by the elements and by other plants; the animal lives by the elements, by the plants, and by other animals; man lives and reigns by the service of the elements, of the plants, and of the animals.

The individual man dies—if we may trust the law of analogy—for the good of his species, and that he may fulfil the conditions necessary for the development of a higher life elsewhere. It is quite obvious that if individuals did not die, new individuals could not live, because there would not be room. It is also equally evident that if individuals did not die they could never have any other life than the present. In the timid sentimentalist's view, death is horrible. Nature unrolls the chart of organized existence—a convulsed and lurid list of murderers, from the spider in the window to the tiger in the jungle, from the shark at the bottom of the sea to the eagle against the floor of the sky. In the philosophical naturalist's view the dying panorama is wholly different. The wedded laws of life and death wield the merciful functions of God. Out of the charnel blooms the rose; nor is there poison which helps not health, nor destruction which supplies not creation with nutriment for greater good and joy. The foregoing considerations fathomed and appreciated, transform the institution of death from caprice and punishment into necessity and benignity.

A radical change in the prevailing methods of education must be the first step towards a dissipation of popular errors on this all-important subject. We believe the day is near at hand when that precious time now wasted at our schools and colleges over Greek and Latin verses and other equally unprofitable studies will be devoted to the study of the laws of life, and when it will be considered as disgraceful for a young man not to be familiar with the great principles of physiology, as it would be at present for him to be ignorant of his multiplication table. What marvel is it that our youth are unversed in natural science? How much do the erudite pedants of our universities know themselves of the simplest laws of nature and of health? Let their emasculated pulpit effusions answer. Does one sermon out of twenty preached by university men contain, I do not say a breath of spiritual truth (that might be asking too much), but even a genuine throb of nature, any sense of the beauty and strength of simple unsophisticated humanity? No, we are, as a rule, treated from the pulpit to second-hand religious sentiments, or to an exposition of the extinct metaphysics of the middle ages. But when a better era has been inaugurated what will be the consequence? Countless maladies originate purely in the insane and suicidal modes of living which prevail at present, modes of living which ignore the existence of man's body except as something to be abused and pampered. May we not hope that such diseases will in time be utterly unknown, and that our distant descendant will look upon us with the same pity with which we contemplate the savages who inhabited Britain two thousand

years ago. The frightful untimeliness of death will then be scarcely known. Men shall no longer only live out half their days, but each shall be gathered to his fathers like the shock of corn ripe for the harvest. Death will then appear to be what it is, simply a blessed transition to a higher state of being. And our departing brother will be regarded with feelings kindred to those with which we now look upon an emigrant, leaving misery and starvation behind, and going to a land with certain promise of plenty and happiness.

It may be objected that a large portion of the maladies that afflict our race have strictly a moral origin, and that no merely physical education would materially affect them. This is certainly true,—and the moral sickness requires indeed its own appropriate treatment, administered according to the laws of a divine and spiritual science. We believe that such a science is our inheritance. We are at least nominally Christians, and surely the profound religious experiences of eighteen centuries cannot go for nought. It remains then that we consider what light Christian truth and experience may shed upon our views of death.

We must be careful of confounding popular conceptions of the invisible world with the teaching of Christian philosophy. By the Divine Science we would be understood to signify those fundamental principles of spiritual truth which were explicitly revealed by Christ, and illustrated by His life, and are implicitly involved in the tenets of many who formally deny them. The vague notions of the effect of death upon the spirit of man, which have been current in the Christian world for eighteen centuries had their origin mainly in the orthodox Rabbinical schools of the Jews, but received a colouring from the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman conceptions of the future state.

In the poetry, history, and ethics of the Hebrews, contained in the Old Testament, may be discovered large variations and opposition of opinion. While in some books a rude indistinct belief in a future state is traceable, in others we encounter an unqualified denial of any existence after death. But the Hebrew ideas on this subject are tolerably consistent. The separate existence of the soul is necessarily implied by the distinction the Hebrews made between the grave or sepulchre, and the under-world or abode of shades. The words *Bor* and *Keber*, mean simply the narrow place in which the dead body is buried; while *Sheol* represents an immense cavern in the interior of the earth, where the ghosts of the deceased are assembled. When the patriarch was told that his son Joseph was slain by wild beasts, he cried aloud in bitter sorrow, "I will go down to *Sheol* unto my son mourning." He did not expect to meet Joseph in the grave; for he supposed his body to be torn in

pieces and scattered in the wilderness; not laid in the family tomb. The dead are said to be "gathered to their people," or to "sleep with their fathers;" and this, whether they are interred in the same place or in a remote region. It is written, "Abraham gave up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people," notwithstanding his body was laid in a cave in the field of Machpelah close by Hebron; while his people were buried in Chaldea and Mesopotamia. These instances might be multiplied. They prove that to be "gathered unto one's fathers," means to descend into Sheol, and join there the hosts of the departed. The ghosts in Sheol are described as being nearly as destitute of sensation as of strength. They were supposed to exist in an inactive, partially torpid state, with a dreamy consciousness of past and present, neither suffering, nor enjoying, and seldom moving.—Freed from bondage, pain, toil, and care they reposed in silence. At best it was a region, "where the wicked ceased from troubling and the weary were at rest."

By degrees the Jewish doctrine underwent considerable modifications and development. From Josephus we learn that the Pharisees believed "that souls have an immortal strength in them, and that in the under-world they will experience rewards or punishments according as they have lived well or ill in this life." The Pharisees also held the doctrine of a bodily resurrection. This is plain from passages in the New Testament. Jesus says to Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again." She replies, "I know that he shall rise in the resurrection at the last day." The correspondence between some Jewish and some Christian theological dogmas betoken the influx of an adulterated Judaism into a nascent Christianity, not the reflex of a pure Christianity upon a receptive Judaism.

It may be assumed as an undeniable fact, that orthodox views of death and of a period of separate existence of the soul, followed by a bodily resurrection to endless happiness or punishment, are really Jewish doctrines modified by Pagan mythology. We proceed to indicate what appears to us to be distinctively Christian doctrines, premising that we do not presume to conjecture the degree in which the teaching of Jesus Christ (of whom it is recorded that he grew in wisdom and stature,) was coloured by the intellectual atmosphere which surrounded him.

One of the dominant notes of the gospel harmony is undoubtedly a perfect disregard of physical and purely individual life. This is the cardinal truth expressed in those startling words, "He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that will lose his life for my sake shall find it." Such a habit of self-abandonment and freedom from the pressure of that instinct of

self-preservation, which is one of the strongest impulses of our nature, could only be brought about by a sense of life deeper and wider than any mere physical existence. Accordingly it is said further, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul, or life?" If we remember rightly, the very same word in the original is employed in both cases. What was this deeper life? It is clearly defined by Christ himself, and a portion of the New Testament is taken up in describing and illustrating its nature. Here is its definition, "This is life eternal that they may *know* Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." This knowledge, it is reiterated times without number, is attainable only by spiritual conformity to the Divine will and mind. And, as the essence of that will is love, "love of the brethren" is declared to be the central fire of the life of God within the soul. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in Him." This is that "enthusiasm of humanity" which the author of *Ecce Homo* maintains to be the substance of the Christian doctrine. By this we become children of God and "*partakers of the Divine nature.*" The words are not mine but St. Peter's. To be void of this universal love is to be spiritually dead, to be enclosed in the carnal prison-house of self. Hence the significance of the words, "Let the dead bury their dead." Christianity does not only *contain* distinctive teaching on Life and Death. The revelation of the *Divine* life in humanity is Christianity; as the discovery of the laws and conditions of *natural* life constitutes physical science.

To return to the point whence we set out:—If in the third stage of the development of civilization, human life is based on science, must not this science be two-fold, spiritual as well as natural? The discoveries of physicists are laying the foundations broad and deep for a truer natural life. Is it not high time to enter on the study of spiritual science, or those laws by which men become recipients of the Divine life, and which also bind them to each other?

What bearing the phenomena of Spiritualism may ultimately have on this divine science it is impossible to predict in these early days. That they have some important bearings, there can, I think, be little doubt. They shew for instance that so-called supernatural phenomena are really the result of natural law, and thus throw a flood of light upon the connection between the visible and invisible worlds, on the relations of men on earth to men in heaven; and again they tend to break down the walls of partition which have been reared by a cruel sectarianism between the hearts of Christians yearning for unison with all the "enthusiasm of humanity." And what a glorious change in all the

relations of life must such a Divine science produce, what a transfiguration of the Babylon of modern society into that New Jerusalem, which cometh down from God out of heaven!

S. E. B.

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## THE PRESENT POSITION AND PROSPECTS OF SPIRITUALISM IN ENGLAND.

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“When God,” says Bossuet, “wishes to shew that a work is entirely in his hands, he reduces everything to despair—then it goes on.”

“Die oft so destructiven und sich überhebende Zeitungs-Narrheit, welche glaubt, durch ein paar qualvollseichte Leit-artikel oder durch ein paar alte Feuilliton-Witze, die durch Jahrhunderte emsig gesammelten Schätze der menschlichen Wissenschaft und Kunst zu überglänzen.”—*Gottlieb Dämmerungs Katechismus des Lebens-Magnetismus*. Vienna, 1866.

THE substance of my motto is the expression of a scientific gentleman of Austria, in his *Catechism of Vital Magnetism*, in the present year. It is—“The folly of the newspaper press, often so destructive, and so far overshooting itself, which believes that by a few miserably shallow leading articles, or a few stale old Joe Millers, it can extinguish the treasures of human art and science collected with so much diligence through whole centuries.”

The present position of Spiritualism in England, were the press with all its influence, omnipotent, would be hopeless. After having taken every possible means to damage and sneer down Spiritualism; after having opened its columns to it, in the hope that its emptiness and folly would be so apparent that its clever enemies would soon be able to knock it on the head by invincible arguments, and then finding that all the advantages of reason and fact were on its side; after having abused and maligned it to no purpose, the whole press as by one consent, or by one settled plan, has adopted the system of opening its columns and pages to any false or foolish story about it, and hermetically closing them to any explanation, refutation, or defence. It is, in fact, resolved, all other means of killing it having failed, to burke it. To clap a literary pitch-plaster on its mouth, and then let any one that likes cut its throat, if he can. By this means it hopes to “stamp it out,” like the rinderpest.

Of late, too, the incautious zeal of some of the Spiritualists themselves, has enabled the lawyers to add their net of spiders' webs and their privileged lies to the efforts of the press, and have

contrived to render these gentlemen the most unpopular of men, and the most unwholesome animals they endeavoured to expose, the most popular. Everything has succeeded to a miracle, even in this age, in which miracles are denied, to cover poor Spiritualism with the mud of public odium. If the thing was what they pretend it to be, its doom would be inevitable. No thing or doctrine which was really false, could withstand this general and determined onslaught. It must perish of contempt. Here then comes the proof of whether this thing be false or true. The doctrine of Gamaliel is sound doctrine still. If a thing be false, it will soon die out; if it be true, that is, of God, they who fight against it fight against God, and there is no question as to who will be the victor.

If anything could annihilate Spiritualism, its present estimation by the English public; its treatment by the press and the courts of law; its attempted suppression by all the powers of public intelligence; its hatred by the heroes of the pulpits of all churches and creeds; the simple acceptance of even the public folly and wickedness attributed to it by the press; its own internal divisions,—in a word, its pre-eminent unpopularity would put it out of existence. But does it? On the contrary, it never was more firmly rooted into the mass of advanced minds; its numbers never more rapidly increased; its truths were never more earnestly and eloquently advocated; the enquiries after it never more abundant or more anxious. The *soirées* in Harley-street have, through the whole time that press and horse-hair wig have been heaping every reproach and every scorn upon it, been crowded to excess, by ladies and gentlemen of the middle and higher classes, who have listened in admiration to the eloquent and ever-varied addresses of Emma Hardinge. Meantime the Davenports, a thousand times denounced as impostors, and exposed impostors, have a thousand times shewn that their phenomena remain as unexplainable as ever on any but a spiritual theory.

What means all this? What does it indicate? That press, and pulpit, and magistrate, and law courts, have all tried their powers, and have failed. They stand nonplussed before the thing which they themselves have protested is poor, and foolish, and false, and unsubstantial. If it be so poor, and foolish, and false, and unsubstantial, how is it that all their learning, their unscrupulous denunciation, their vast means of attack and their not less means of prevention of fair defence, their command of the ears and the opinions of the multitude—how happens it that all their wit, and sarcasm, and logic, and eloquence cannot touch it? So far from shaking and diminishing it, they do not even ruffle a hair on its head, or a fringe of its robe.



Is it not about time for these combined hosts of the great and wise, the scientific, the learned, the leaders of senates, and colleges, and courts of law, the eloquent favourites of Parliament, the magnates of the popular press, furnished with all the intellectual artillery which a great national system of education, and great national system of church and state and aristocracy, accustomed to proclaim what shall be held to be true and of honourable repute by all honourable men and women,—is it not time, I say, that all this great and splendid world of wit and wisdom should begin to suspect that they have something solid to deal with? that there is something vital in what they have treated as a phantom?

I do not say to these great and world-commanding bodies, powers and agencies, open your eyes and see that your efforts are fruitless, and acknowledge your defeat, for probably they never will open their eyes and confess their shame; but I say to the Spiritualists themselves, dark as the day may seem to you, never was it more cheering. Leagued as all the armies of public instructors and directors are against it, never was its bearing more anticipatory of ultimate victory. It has upon it the stamp of all the conquering influences of the age. It has all the legitimacy of history on its head. It is but fighting the battle that every great reform—social, or moral, or intellectual, or religious—has fought and eventually won.

When the world laughed at Noah and his ship, he and his alone rode on the waters that he foretold, and re-peopled the world. When Moses was asked, "Who made thee a judge and a divider over us?" there stood in him the man who should be their judge, their lawgiver, and their invincible emancipator. When Christ was born in a manger, and after being spit upon and called a devil, was crucified, he was not thereby put down, but raised into the principedom of all life. Beware of thinking that you can tread out the vitality of the humble thing! The earth on which we are continually trampling is that which supports us all. The grass on which myriads of men and beasts are perpetually treading still grows green, and its blades, weak and bending beneath the weight of a fly, send life and strength through the hearts of flocks and herds, and so through the veins of the totality of man!

The fires, and saws, and axes, and wild beasts, and cauldrons of boiling oil and lead, were tried upon the hated Spiritualists of the early ages, then called Christians; the fires of the so-called Holy Inquisitions and of Smithfield were very hotly applied later; the dragoons of Austria mowed down the Protestants of Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia; and the Protestants, in their turn, hunted down with their Claverhouses and

Monmouths the Covenanters of Scotland, and attempted to explode their errors by the worse errors of iron boots and thumbscrews. The Quakers were beaten, nicknamed, robbed, imprisoned, whipped through towns, and hanged. Still later, the Methodists were stoned, dragged through horseponds and kennels, and maligned by every base and obscene invention; and did any of these things succeed in any other way than in causing the truth to succeed? Will our able editors and popular preachers, and eloquent orators, never look back a little at their ancestors who stoned the prophets, and at their other ancestors who built their sepulchres? Will they never make use of the history which it cost their parents and tutors so much money and labour to store them with? Shall their *liberal* educations be all thrown away upon them, and they remain for ever *illiberal* and blind? Shall we have to say to them as Franklin said to his contemporaries:—

I send you here a little book  
For you to look upon,  
That you may see your father's face  
Now he is dead and gone?

Shall the world ever remain the same blind fanatic, hating the new truth as it has done in all its ages, and still imagining its stupidity the height of sagacity?

It is within the memory of man, indeed, that all that is now ascribed to Spiritualism was ascribed to Methodism. I myself remember when to brand anything as especially odious and disreputable it was called Methodism; when to depict a man as a visionary, fanatic, and vulgar fellow he was dubbed a Methodist. Still more recently, the scapegoat of the world's sins and treasons was Radicalism; the "heir of all the ages" of scorn and detestation was Chartism; its professors were the buggaboos of naughty children, and the proud aversion of all good subjects. They who held such damnable political doctrines were dragonaded at Peterloo, in Manchester, cast into prison, and screamed at by loyal men and women as deadly traitors, and little better than thieves and assassins. For these sins Thomas Cooper, the author of the *Purgatory of Suicides*, Samuel Bamford, who preferred singing his

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to hurting anybody; William Lovett, the framer of the Charter, and one of the mildest and mildest-principled men living, and many others, were cooped up in prisons. Yet, already, all their doctrines except household suffrage are the doctrines of the most enlightened and most popular of our Members of Parliament, of Mill, Bright, Tom Hughes, Professor Fawcett, and

scores of others, who, if they have not arrived at household suffrage, have reached within £7 of it.

Courage, Spiritualists! You are not more unpopular, not more maligned, nor gibed and scoffed at than every advocate of a new step in moral, political, or philosophical reform has been before you. Oh! you have not yet obtained the honours of the same degree of martyrdom as many a brave band of the advanced ranks of truth have done before you! You have not yet been burnt, nor torn to pieces by wild beasts, nor pitched into cauldrons of seething oil or metal. If this enlightened and educated age hates and maligns you, it is only what its dear ancestors always did to "those of whom the world was not worthy." There is no way to the temple of Truth,—there never was and probably never will be a way to it, but through the wilderness of thorny lies, and amid the hissing of its serpents, and besmearing of the slime of its unclean reptiles. Would you be the children of Truth, and not share the perpetual heritage of Truth, suspicion, misconception and misrepresentation?

Oh, Truth! immortal Truth! on what wild ground  
 Still hast thou trod through this unspiritual sphere!  
 The strong, the brutish and the vile surround  
 Thy presence, lest thy streaming glory cheer  
 The poor, the many, without price or bound:  
 Drowning thy voice, they fill the popular ear,  
 In thy high name, with canons, creeds and laws,  
 Feigning to serve, that they may mar thy cause.  
 And the great multitude doth crouch and bear  
 The burden of the selfish. That emprise,—  
 That lofty spirit of virtue which can dare  
 To rend the bands of error from all eyes,  
 And from the freed soul pluck each sensual snare  
 To them is but a fable. Therefore lies  
 Darkness upon the mental desert still,  
 And wolves devour, and robbers walk at will.

Truth, the rejected, the insulted, the martyr of all times! contemplate a moment her history! Truth, who sprung full-grown and all-perfect from the bosom of Deity; who lives in His throne, and dwells for ever amongst His redeemed children and glorious saints in the highest heaven of truth and love;—Truth, who descending ever from her native paradise to instruct and guide mankind,—what has been her invariable reward? She has been trampled on by savages, hooted in the streets by the rabble, mocked at by the learned, denounced by the so-called wise, spurned and persecuted by the religious. Kings have issued their bloodiest edicts against her; Popes have fulminated their bans at her as a blasphemer; republics have enacted decrees of death and expatriation against her. She has been laughed at as fool and dreamer in the halls of science, shut out from the halls of the rich and happy, and thrust down and trampled on by the

ignorant multitude. So uniform is the fate of Truth in every age of the world, that if I saw a poor creature beaten, dragged by the hair, pelted with mud, scouted as an impostor, and jeered at as a zany, I should at once exclaim—"That is Truth! It can be no other! These are the perpetual, the inevitable circumstances in which she is found!" If I had not recognized Truth in Spiritualism before, I should at once have detected the eternal victim of man's ingratitude for her attempts to enlighten him, as soon as I saw it vilified and despited by the tongues and pens of the wise of this world. God has written in letters of light—PERSECUTION, on the heavenly brow of Truth, that all His true children may know her, amid whatever disfigurements and defilements her enemies may have flung upon her.

-And this is her glory and our consolation, that no amount of calumny and evil treatment can ever persuade her to desert the cause of unhappy mankind. Her course will still be incessantly onward over the stocks and stones, and amid the hisses and laughter of this world, awakening its honest slumberers, illuminating its honest enquirers, solacing its honest mourners: all day and every day, she is striving and calling aloud amid the crowds of misguided humanity, pointing and leading the way to peace, and with the meagrest success; but when men sleep, she is again at home in heaven, reaping the reward of her divine warfare—the fairest, the most glorious of God's children.

Dark, therefore, as appear the surroundings of English Spiritualism; determined as press and public are against it; unpopular as some mistakes of individuals have helped to make it, there is no cause for anxiety on its account, and there would be none were its path ten times gloomier. God strips His dispensations of all human favour, to shew the more clearly that they are His own. It is by their knocking from under it all mortal props that we are taught to know that a true cause has immortal support. Truth "is never less alone than when alone." When opposed or mismanaged by men, then it is at home with God. We are all too fondly and vainly apt to think that this and that depends very much on us and our co-operation. On the contrary, whatever is from God depends on God alone. When we have done all that we can, we are but unprofitable servants; and the same Hand that upholds ten thousand suns, and whirls around them millions of planetary worlds, will work out His designs in those worlds of never-failing instruments. There is no man of so much consequence in any work but, if he fall or fail, God has "five hundred good as he" to bring up in his place.

Thus it is that, whilst people have said, "Poor Spiritualism! its friends and its enemies together will reduce it to the lowest condition of weakness and disgrace;" it has been spreading and

growing more widely and rapidly than ever. The seeds of a divine truth are like the seeds of the Australian trees, which vegetate the more vigorously when a sharp fire has passed through the forest. It is winter which, for a time, checks all the life of nature, which kills the lurking vermin-hosts of desolation, and pulverizes the soil into a more recipient condition. We should be foolish to complain of the fires or the frosts which attack our great cause. They are but stimulants and vitalizers. The noble Christian poet, Cowper, knew better:—

Parent of Hope, immortal Truth! make known  
Thy deathless wreaths and triumphs all thine own.  
The silent progress of thy power is such,  
Thy means so feeble, and despised so much,  
That few believe the wonders thou hast wrought,  
And none can teach them but whom thou hast taught.

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### ELEVATION OF THE BODY LONG KNOWN IN SPAIN.

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WE have now before us a book, *Lucerna Mystica pro Directoribus Animarum, &c.*, composed by Joseph Lopez Ezquerra, a Spanish divine in 1690. It was published in Spain, and republished in Italy, with every sanction and recommendation that the highest clerical and theological authorities could confer. Our copy is one of an edition so late as 1722, printed at Venice under the patronage of the university of Padua. Now, this work takes for granted, as a phenomenon familiar to the Christian world, the supernatural elevation of the body, and proceeds to reason upon it as composedly as if the subject under discussion had never been embarrassed by a doubt. Four of the chapters are respectively headed:—

- “Of Matrimony, Spiritual and Divine.”
- “Of the wonderful Elevation of the Body which is wont to occur to Souls (animabus), being in the state of Spiritual Matrimony.”
- “Of the Author’s opinion of the cause of this Elevation of the Body.”
- “Of the Practical Instruction of the Director touching this Elevation of the Body.”

The argument opens with an unhesitating assumption of the facts:—“To enable us to deal with this wonderful elevation of body and spirit we must suppose, with all mystics, that some souls or spiritual persons sometimes experience certain divine vocations of such vehemence that they, being alienated from the senses, their bodies are simultaneously lifted into the air, and there continue suspended a long time, and are rendered so light that they are moved to and fro by the lightest flame or breath of air, as we read happened to St. Francis, St. John, St. Theresa, St. Catherine of Sienna, and a great many others, to which,

indeed, Spert-Carthusianus (*Select Mystic*, part ii., cap. 9), and P. Ferdinandus Caldera (*Theol. Myst.*, lib. ii.), bear testimony as eye-witnesses; the words of the last-named being, 'The body remains suspended and elevated from the earth, and wholly without weight; the countenance shining, ruddy, beautiful, and converted into a burning coal, from which may be inferred what is prepared for its eternal enjoyment, whence it appears as if made of crystal to the spectators.' The like is affirmed by Dr. John de Palafox, Bishop of Oxford, in *Suo Pastor*, noct von, cap. 12. Whilst, therefore, this elevation of the body is certain, and frequently observed, I find no slight difficulty concerning its cause and name among mystics. Concerning the name, because they sometimes call it ecstasy, and sometimes rapture, and (but less frequently) sometimes deliquium, from which much confusion may arise, and inconvenience to souls; for if the Master should direct a soul of this kind as a cause of deliquium, beyond doubt he might greatly err."

The author is clear that nothing less than spiritual matrimony can elevate the body, and he finds ample proof of his theory in the beatified countenance of the patient; for the rarefied individuals are to be treated as patients, and minute directions are given for their treatment under the liability. They are to be humiliated instead of exalted, to be addressed, not as saints, but as sinners, and to be constantly reminded of their ineradicable tendency to sin. Care is to be taken to keep such persons out of sight lest, perchance, these elevations should befall them in the sight of others; and when they talk to others let them above all avoid those conversations which they have found to lead to the elevation, and, when they feel the spirit moved, let them fly quickly, and withdraw to their privy chamber. If the elevation is so rapid as to give them no time for flight, let them be directed to lay hold of some post or column, or embrace some immovable object, lest the object should be elevated on high to the wonder of others.

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Pierre le Loyer, a French author, wrote a *Traite des Spectres et des Apparitions*, 1586. He says that an Arabian king, Avezoar Albruna, subsequent to Mahomet, having a bad eye which none of the physicians could cure, saw in a dream a celebrated physician, a deceased friend of his, applying remedies to it, and very soon after it healed. He says that Avicenna, the famous Arabian physician, was wholly of the opinion of Plato, that spirits can communicate with us, and benefit us.

## Notices of Books.

### VITAL MAGNETISM.\*

WE lately had occasion to mention Herr Dämmerung's *Letter on the Science of Od Force*. He has just published this little *Catechism of Vital Magnetism*, founded on the experiments of a long list of Magnetists and Spiritualists, including Reichenbach, Dubois, Raymond, Meisner, Mesmer, Stilling, Schubert, Kerner, Böhme, Merigioli, Hornung, &c. In this little volume, which probably does not cost a shilling English, are given definitions of the science, and simple explanations of the facts and doctrines of Animal Magnetism and Spiritualism. The great feature of the *brochure* is, however, the statements of the laws of vital magnetism, odyle, and spiritual phenomena, so far as they are yet known. This is the department which we may expect German men of science to endeavour first to explore, and which will be a work of the highest value if conducted in a spirit of impartial science, and free from the theological and anti-theological prejudices of these times. One or more of the imponderable forces is the great agent by which spirits divested of matter are enabled to communicate with spirits still enveloped in it, and to act on matter itself, through this so-called mediumship. The more we know of this active power or principle the better, so that we do come to know it, and not a number of plausible theories put forth instead of the actual knowledge.

Herr Dämmerung appears more familiar with American and French forms of Spiritualism than with English, except so far as the *Life of Home* has made it known. The theories of Andrew Jackson Davis, and Allan Kardec seem the most familiarized to Herr Dämmerung's mind—theories which in England are not regarded by any means as sound. One is rather surprised in answering the question, "What are the essential doctrines of the Spiritists according to Allan Kardec's teachings?" to be told that "Spiritism is a form of philosophy independent of every form of worship, and which busies itself with no particular dogma." Now, it is notorious that Kardec teaches adhesion to the Catholic Church, a point on which

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\* *Katechismus des Lebens-Magnetismus und der Organischen Electro-Magnetischen Strömungen, &c.* VON GOTTLIEB DAMMERUNG. Wien: 1866.—[*Catechism of Vital Magnetism and of Organic Electro-Magnetic Currents, &c.* By GOTTLIEB DAMMERUNG. Vienna, 1866.]

M. Pièrart has been very strong in his strictures upon him ; and, as to dogmas, the most prominent feature of Kardec's teaching is the mischievous and repulsive doctrine of re-incarnation.

We trust that a further acquaintance of Herr Dämmerung with the more Christian forms of Spiritualism will lead to a modification of his views, for we are glad to see that he bases his spiritual views on Christianity. His notions of the astral spirits—that is, spirits who originate and live in the ethereal spaces between the planets—are founded on no real facts with which we are acquainted. Spirits may, indeed, have come and told people that they are such astral spirits, as they have told them many groundless and fantastic things ; but we have no acquaintance with such spirits. That there are intermediate states and spheres, all communicating spirits, from Swedenborg downwards, assert ; but the communications of all reliable spirits to us confirm the theory of Swedenborg that all spirits who inhabit these spheres are the spirits of men born in the planets, and who have passed out of them by death. We can, therefore, only say that we have no proof ourselves of the existence of a distinct race of spirits called astral spirits, and have no faith in them.

Herr Dämmerung brings us acquainted, however, with the names of Magnetists and Spiritualists hitherto little known to us, as Dr. Repos, of Constantinople ; M. Gourges, of Mexico ; Dr. Bertheln, of Zittau, editor of the *Psyche* ; Peter Merigiolli, Silverio, of Madrid ; Dr. Hopkins, of Jamaica ; Wilhelm Knauer, of Pittsburg, successor to Otto Kunst, whom we regret to learn died about a year and a half ago. In him Spiritualism has lost an active labourer, who, more than any other person, made Germany acquainted with the Spiritualism of America. Another active Spiritualist whom Herr Dämmerung introduces here is Herr Constantin Wittig, of Breslau, who is engaged in translating the works of Andrew Jackson Davis, and other American Spiritualists, into German. This *Catechism*, besides these items of information, presents us with a view of Spiritualism as it at present exists in Germany.

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