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BLAKE'S EARLIER VISIONS.

Blake was born November 28th, 1757, at 28 Broad Street, Golden Square, London, at a time when Regent Street had no existence. He died in 1827. His father was a moderately prosperous hosier, and Blake throughout his life was a struggling artist, poet and engraver. Near Dulwich Hill, while quite a child, he had his first vision. Sauntering along he saw a tree filled with angels, their bright wings bespangling every bough like stars. According to his biographer, Gilchrist, he related the incident on his return home, and only through his mother's intercession escaped a thrashing from his honest father for telling a lie. He soon therefore discovered that the paths of mediums are not paths of pleasantness. During his apprenticeship to an engraver he was sent for a time to Westminster Abbey and various old churches, to make drawings from the monuments and architectural features, and while engaged in this quiet and congenial occupation, who can tell what phantom forms of the heroes of long ago passed before the eye of the youthful seer? In after-life he used to tell that he once had a vision of Christ and his Apostles, but at the time he probably said little of the experiences which he had so soon discovered to be likely to subject him to persecution.

BLAKE AND MR. JOHN VARLEY, THE ASTROLOGER.

In later years he was in the habit of drawing the portraits of the spirits he saw, in the presence of Mr. John Varley, uncle of the Mr. C. F. Varley so well known to the readers of these pages. John Varley was one of the founders of the new school of water-colour painting; he was a remarkable man, an astrologer, and a landscape designer of much delicacy and grace. Gilchrist says of him :—

"He was the author of more than one memorable nativity and prediction; memorable, that is, for having come true in the sequel. And strange stories are told on this head; such as that of Collins, the artist, whose death came, to the day, as the stars had appointed. One man, to avoid his fate, lay in bed the whole day on which an accident had been foretold, by Varley. Thinking himself safe by the evening, he came downstairs, stumbled over a coal-scuttle, sprained his ankle, and fulfilled the prediction. Scriven, the engraver, was wont to declare, that certain facts of a personal nature, which *could* be only known to himself, were nevertheless confided to his ear by Varley with every particular. Varley cast the nativities of James Ward, the famous animal-painter's children. So many of his predictions came true, their father, a man of strong though peculiar religious opinions,—for he, too, was 'a character,'—began to think the whole affair a sinful forestalling of God's will, and destroyed the nativities."

John Varley was a genial, kind-hearted man; he implicitly believed that Blake saw spirits; there was a strong intimacy between them, and during the last nine years of Blake's life they were constant companions.

HOW THE LIKENESSES OF THE SPIRITS WERE DRAWN.

Gilchrist, in his *Life of William Blake* (Macmillan & Co., 1863) Vol. 1, thus describes the conditions under which the spirit portraits were drawn:—

"At Varley's house, and under his own eye, were drawn those Visionary Heads, or Spiritual Portraits, of remarkable characters, whereof all who have heard of Blake have heard something. Varley it was who encouraged Blake to take authentic sketches of certain among his most frequent spiritual visitants. The visionary faculty was so much under control, that, at the wish of a friend, he could summon before his abstracted gaze any of the familiar forms and faces he was asked for. This was during the favourable and befitting hours of night; from nine or ten in the evening, until one or two, or perhaps three and four o'clock in the morning; Varley sitting by, 'sometimes slumbering, and sometimes waking.' Varley would say, 'Draw me Moses,' or David; or would call for a likeness of Julius Cæsar, or Cassibellaunus, or Edward the Third, or some other great historical personage. Blake would answer, 'There he is!' and paper and pencil being at hand, he would begin drawing with the utmost alacrity and composure, looking up from time to time as though he had a real

sitter before him; ingenuous Varley, meanwhile, straining wistful eyes into vacancy and seeing nothing, though he tried hard, and at first expected his faith and patience to be rewarded by a genuine apparition. A 'vision' had a very different signification with Blake to that it had in literal Varley's mind.

"Sometimes Blake had to wait for the vision's appearance; sometimes it would come at call. At others, in the midst of his portrait, he would suddenly leave off, and, in his ordinary quiet tones and with the same matter-of-fact air another might say 'It rains,' would remark, 'I can't go on,—it is gone! I must wait till it returns;' or, 'It has moved. The mouth is gone;' or, 'he frowns; he is displeased with my portrait of him:' which seemed as if the Vision were looking over the artist's shoulder as well as sitting *vis-à-vis* for his likeness. The devil himself would politely sit in a chair to Blake, and innocently disappear; which obliging conduct one would hardly have anticipated from the spirit of evil, with his well-known character for love of wanton mischief.

"In sober daylight, criticisms were hazarded by the profane on the character or drawing of these or any of his visions. 'Oh, it's all right!' Blake would calmly reply; 'it *must* be right: I saw it so.' It did not signify what you said; nothing could put him out: so assured was he that he, or rather his imagination, was right, and that what the latter revealed was implicitly to be relied on,—and this without any appearance of conceit or intrusiveness on his part. Yet critical friends would trace in all these heads the Blake mind and hand,—his *receipt* for a face: every artist has his own, his favourite idea, from which he may depart in the proportions, but seldom substantially. John Varley, however, could not be persuaded to look at them from this merely rationalistic point of view.

"At these singular nocturnal sittings, Blake thus executed for Varley, in the latter's presence, some forty or fifty slight pencil sketches, of small size, of historical, nay, fabulous and even typical personages, summoned from the vasty deep of time, and 'seen in vision by Mr. Blake.' Varley, who accepted all Blake said of them, added in writing the names, and in a few instances the day and hour they were seen. Thus: '*Wat Tyler, by Blake, from his spectre, as in the act of striking the tax-gatherer, drawn Oct. 30, 1819, 1 h. p.m.*' On another we read: '*The Man who built the Pyramids, Oct. 18, 1819, fifteen degrees of 1, Cancer ascending.*' Another sketch is

indorsed as '*Richard Cœur de Lion, drawn from his spectre. W. Blake fecit, Oct. 11, 1819, at quarter-past twelve, midnight.*' In fact, two are inscribed '*Richard Cœur de Lion,*' and each is different. Which looks as if Varley misconstrued the seer at times, or as if the spirits were lying spirits, assuming different forms at will. Such would doubtless have been De Foe's reading, had he been gravely recording the fact.

"Most of the other Visionary Heads bear date August, 1820. Nearly all subsequently fell into Mr. Linnell's hands and have remained there."

THE GHOST OF A FLEA.

John Varley, in a curious book long out of print, and lent us for the purposes of this article by Mr. C. F. Varley, describes how "The Ghost of a Flea" was seen and drawn by Blake. The work is entitled "*A Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy*" (London: Longmans, 1828), and the following is the paragraph relating to the vision:—

"With respect to the vision of the ghost of the Flea, seen by Blake, it agrees in countenance with one class of people under Gemini, which sign is the significator of the Flea; whose brown colour is appropriate to the colour of the eyes in some full-toned Gemini persons. And the neatness, elasticity, and tenseness of the Flea, are significant of the elegant dancing and fencing sign Gemini. This spirit visited his imagination in such a figure as he never anticipated in an insect. As I was anxious to make the most correct investigation in my power, of the truth of these visions, on hearing of this spiritual apparition of a Flea, I asked him if he could draw for me the resemblance of what he saw: he instantly said, 'I see him now before me.' I therefore gave him paper and a pencil, with which he drew the portrait, of which a fac-simile is given in this number. I felt convinced by his mode of proceeding, that he had a real image before him, for he left off, and began on another part of the paper, to make a separate drawing of the mouth of the Flea, which the spirit having opened, he was prevented from proceeding with the first sketch, till he had closed it. During the time occupied in completing the drawing, the Flea told him that all fleas were inhabited by the souls of such men as were by nature blood-thirsty to excess, and were therefore providentially confined to the size and form of insects; otherwise, were he himself for instance the size of a horse, he would depopulate a great portion of the country. He added, that if in attempting

to leap from one island to another, he should fall into the sea, he could swim, and should not be lost. This spirit afterwards appeared to Blake, and afforded him a view of his whole figure; an engraving of which I shall give in this work."

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.

The same kind of general power seems to act upon many mental mediums, and to express to their consciousness the same principles in different ways. By writing mediumship, by trance, or by clairvoyance as in Blake's case, departed spirits with great names are to the fore, and seem almost to be at the beck and call of the sensitives. In some cases it is certain that the spirits are not the persons they say they are, for mythological personages believed by the mediums to have been historical characters, have been seen in this way. At other times true and definite information, previously unknown to the mediums, has been given through this channel, showing that the phenomena are not always altogether subjective in their nature. The probability is that Blake's visions were due not to one, but to various causes, the nature of which it will take years of research in psychology to unravel. With seeing mediums there appears to be but one controlling spirit; this spirit mesmerises them, and what the spirit thinks the medium sees. Hence many extraordinary visions.

THE SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF SPIRITUALISM.*

BY EPES SARGENT.

Constantly recurring facts, which have stood the test of more than thirty-three years of ridicule, denunciation, and antagonism, must be admitted as having within them some stubborn elements of vitality, if not of scientific verification.

What is science but a collection of truths, suggestive of an inference? According to John Stuart Mill, the language of Science is, "This is, or This is not; This does, or does not happen. Science takes cognizance of a phenomenon, and endeavours to discover its law." Surely, under this ruling Spiritualism has a scientific basis in its proven facts.

The man claiming to be scientific, who imagines that he knows all the laws of nature so thoroughly that occurrences like clairvoyance and direct writing cannot take place without transcending the boundaries of scientific recognition, is himself under a hallucination

* We have received from Mr. Epes Sargent a copy of his excellent new book, *The Scientific Basis of Spiritualism*, (Boston, Mass: Colby & Rich), also proof sheets of the preface, from which the above article is taken.—ED.

more serious than any which he affects to deplore.

The neglect in all ages of the world to treat these and cognate facts with fearless, scientific scrutiny, has been productive of incalculable mischief. In ancient times, the assumption that all that comes from the unseen world, certified by seeming miracle or preter-human power, must be from God or from gods, led to all sorts of theosophic impositions, superstitions, spurious revelations, and wild delusions.

In mediæval times, and during the witchcraft excitement, monstrous cruelties were practised under the sanction of law through the failure to recognize that nothing occurring in the realm of nature can be supernatural, and that all phenomena whatever are subjects for cool scientific investigation and analysis. Certain remarkable psychic phenomena were construed as Satanic and unnatural, and an ancient Hebrew prohibition, founded in ignorance, was made the excuse for punishing with death innocent persons suspected of producing in others, medially affected, any inexplicable manifestations of abnormal power.

In our own day, though belief in spirits has been repudiated extensively, the credulity of unbelief threatens new dangers. By dismissing the phenomena as impossible, unnatural, or supernatural, specialists in science,—who, however eminent in their own departments, are ignorant of the first rudiments of the psychophysical science, now inchoate,—instead of checking superstition by their scornful attitude, are really giving it its excuse for being. Persons experimentally sure of the phenomena, finding that they can get no guidance or light from men of science, qualified by laborious study and experiment to explain the occurrences, either put premature constructions on what they witness, or yield a too hasty credence to the assurances of some medium or medial pretender claiming a divine or high spiritual inspiration. Even so it was in the old days of oracles, seers, and myths, and so it may be again, with variations, unless a science, at once searching and liberal, reverent and intrepid, shall interpose to prevent such a revival, and protect the unwary from the frauds and delusions to which a little display of medial power may lead.

The attempt made in 1876, in London, by Professor Lankester, a specialist in physical science, wedded to the materialistic monism of Haeckel, to put a stop to the phenomena through Henry Slade, the medium, and to do this by the strong arm of the law, was simply

an act of superstition, prompted by the same fanaticism (taking the form of unbelief instead of belief) which actuated the proceedings of "Matthew Hopkins, of Manningtree, Gent.," the famous English "witch-finder" of the year 1645. The first scientists of Germany at once exempted Slade from Lankester's suspicions; and Zollner says, in reference to Slade: "The physical facts observed by us in his presence negatived on every reasonable ground the supposition that he, in one solitary case, had taken refuge in imposture. In our eyes, therefore, he was innocently condemned,—a victim of his accuser's and judge's limited knowledge." The recent remarkable occurrences in open church at Knockmore, in Ireland, where hands and living figures have mysteriously appeared, show how important it is that these phenomena should no longer be evaded.

Rationally studied and interpreted, unmixed with delusions self-generated or imposed by others, Spiritualism is the one safeguard against all superstitions. It shows that the unseen world is as much within the sphere of universal nature as our own; it is the solvent of many mysteries that have perplexed philosophers and stultified historians; it shows that not spirits, but our own misconstructions and unchecked passions, are what we have most to fear. That bad persons have entered its ranks, and that flighty persons have brought it into ill-repute,—that it has been used to deceive or mislead,—should make the obligation all the more obvious to the generous mind to help to sift and co-ordinate its facts and arrest its abuses.

It is, therefore, with regret that I find so liberal a champion of truth as R. W. Emerson recommending *ignorance* as the best policy in regard to a subject which, in the hands of fanaticism or imposture, has been the cause of such great disasters and mistakes, public and private, as far back as history goes. In a recent article on "Demonology," this distinguished writer remarks: "There are many things of which a wise man might wish to be ignorant, and these spiritual phenomena are such. Shun them as you would the secrets of the undertaker and the butcher." *Et tu, Brute?*

This is all wrong, ideally, really, and morally. Even the comparisons by which the sentiment is illustrated are vitiated by unsoundness; for however our æsthetic sensibilities may recoil, what is it but pusillanimity to ignore "the secrets of the undertaker and the butcher"? Have we no care as to how the cast-off body of the beloved one may be disposed of? Are we indifferent as to what sufferings may be in-

flicted on the poor brute whose life is to minister to our carnivorous appetite? The sentiment has no saving grace; it is hollow and spurious. Not by trying to make us shun the truth as something disagreeable will the philosopher deter any but the timid or weak from finding out all that is genuine and demonstrable in phenomena foreshadowing a continuous life for man.

Contrast the advice with that of Dr. John W. Draper, the well-known professor of chemistry and physiology in the University of New York. Referring to the mysteries of life, he says: "God has formed our understandings to grasp all these things. I have no sympathy with those who say of this or that physiological problem, 'It is above our reason.'" And, as if anticipating these supersensual phenomena, which our Concord sage would have us shun, the eminent physiologist tells us, that the application of exact science to physiology is "bringing into the region of physical demonstration the existence and immortality of the soul of man, and furnishing conspicuous illustrations of the attributes of God."

Mark too the language of the venerable German philosopher, I. H. Fichte, uttered a few weeks before his death in 1879: "Notwithstanding my age and my exemption from the controversies of the day, I feel it my duty to bear testimony to the great fact of Spiritualism. No one should keep silent." A worthy utterance from the son of the illustrious contemporary of Kant, and the inheritor of his sire's splendid endowments!

The progress of modern Spiritualism has been something marvellous. In less than forty years it has gained at least twenty millions of adherents in all parts of the world. Adapting itself, through its eclectic affinity with all forms of truth, to all nationalities and classes, and repeating its peculiar manifestations everywhere among persons ignorant of its forms and its antecedents, it presents the features of a universal truth, the developments of a grand, transcendent science, confirming all the traditions and intuitions of the soul's immortality, and heralding a dawn before whose light every other science, relating to the nature and destiny of man, must seek to orient itself hereafter.

We have received many communications from dissatisfied members of the British National Association of Spiritualists. Several are much irritated that they were asked to promise to subscribe during 1881 to save it from death, without being informed of the attacks to be made upon good workers after their promises were given. One most ungraciously and probably erroneously says that the tongues of lady managers have been at the root of recent dissensions, and another sincerely hopes that Mr. Campbell's consignment of the Association will be put in force.

Correspondence.

THE NEED OF THE HOUR.

Sir,—Every Spiritualist, who has, by dint of circumstances or natural desire, to move in society, will more or less painfully feel estrangement from former associations. People who remain chained to the materialistic views of the age, bark like dogs at those who are under suspicion of being Spiritualists, and their insults denote a change of former friendly relations, which not unfrequently effect a lasting break, but in every case disturb the enjoyment of sympathy and fellowship.

I believe and trust that the formation of a "Society of Spiritual Progressionists," a title which excludes no sect or creed, would meet with many sympathisers. If Spiritualists of means would band together, and consult about a club or place of social union for our fraternity, I believe that salutary influences from the other side would probably strengthen the growth. I will not deny the main difficulty, the harmonious blending of diverse ranks of society and education, for the material plane has become so keenly defined in its various departments, that the formation of a club is not unlike the task of a child, whose patience is pleasantly exercised by the putting together of the curiously cut pieces of one wooden picture. The result is nice, but the pieces are fixed. Without advocating a muddle of uncongenial elements, I hold it possible to constitute an association, which would expel impure intrusions by its own moral worth, and I feel impressed to place my suggestion before your readers, in the hope to meet responses.

CHRISTIAN REIMERS.

London, January 3rd, 1881.

MATERIALISATION.

Sir,—Your correspondent at Simla seems to desire some theory that would account for the soon made and soon scattered bodily forms presented by spirits, and may like to know of one supplied by J. Boehme. I cannot find the passage in his works, but I have read it within the last few days, and am sure of its purport. He says that spirits can by astral influences help themselves to simulated bodies for a short time, but that these are necessarily transient, only lasting so long as the stars remain in the figure in which they stood when the semblance was produced. It might seem invidious to add that he speaks here of unblessed spirits; but such is the case, and happier ones are not presumably what Ignatius called "incorporeal demons."

As to the greater openness of ignorant or savage people to supersensual impressions, it has always appeared to me one of the strongest proofs of the mediumistic nature of man: so long as the mind is not fully engaged with a multiplicity of mundane excitements, people on the other side of the veil can easily reach it; but surely we are as little likely to hear the monition of a spirit in the hurry of modern mental life, as a whisper of a friend in a densely crowded street. Then again, the habit of stringent self-control and fixity of purpose which high cultivation necessitates, must make us very impervious to the influence of any spirits except those of whose society we are unconscious members. Congeniality of taste and identity of purpose make *their* promptings—which no doubt we often follow—undistinguishable from motives of our own.

Speaking of these spiritual societies, which Swedenborg taught me to believe in, it may interest some reader of Mrs. Woodforde's very interesting paper to be reminded that Swedenborg tells us that "every society

in heaven appears collectively in a human form ;" and that "an entire angelic society is called an angel, and Michael and Raphael are angelic societies so named from their function." He says also that every society in heaven has its opposite in heaven's spiritual antipodes. In some plane of spiritual life John King, alias Henry de Morgan may be an instance of this collective individuality.

A. J. PENNY.

MISS BURKE'S CONCERT.

Miss Burke's Concert will take place on Monday night next, at eight o'clock, in the theatre of the Dilettante Club, 7, Argyll Street, Regent Circus, when it is hoped a large number will attend. During the period of her secretaryship to one of the spiritual organisations Miss Burke made many friends, who probably on this occasion, the sole purpose of which is to give her an opportunity of meeting her friends, will be present. The programme, consisting of vocal and instrumental music and reading, will be novel and attractive. Tickets are issued by consent at 38, Great Russell Street, London.

SPIRIT IDENTITY.

The following remarks are from the pen of Mr. J. Simmons, who has had so much experience in the observation of the remarkable phenomena which took place in Henry Slade's presence:—

In listening to the expression of ideas coming from intellectual and well-meaning persons, it is at the same time interesting and surprising to notice their widely differing opinions regarding the phenomena and philosophy of Spiritualism. Some admit the phenomena, but have no settled convictions as to their origin; while others accept the theory of their being produced by spirits, entertaining grave doubts of their being able to establish their identity.

Having had abundant opportunities for observation during the last fifteen years, please allow me to submit for the consideration of your readers the following:

About two weeks ago, Mr. H. J. Newton, of this city, sat alone at the table with Dr. Slade, when a message was obtained through independent writing, signed J. W. Edmonds.

Mr. Newton took the slate containing this message to the Spiritualists' Conference in the Harvard Rooms, where he exhibited it, explaining the manner in which the writing was produced.

In the discussion which followed, this point was raised: That, as a literary production, it was so far beneath the ability of the reputed

author that it was a scandal upon his name to ascribe it to him.

That the independent writing occurring in the presence of Dr. Slade often resembles his own, is a feature which has been observed by many investigators; while at other times not the slightest trace of his penmanship is perceptible.

So, also, in the materialisations. I have seen a hand show itself from underneath the table, at the opposite end from where Dr. Slade was sitting, his left hand joined with my hands on the top of the table, his right holding the slate under the corner of the table, which, being forty-two inches in length, the impossibility of its being Dr. Slade's hand was self-evident. Notwithstanding all this, the hand, wrist, white cuff and end of coat-sleeve so exactly resembled Dr. Slade's that I would have felt sure they were his had he been in a position to have rendered it possible.

At other times, under similar conditions, hands have appeared differing in size and shape, from that of a small child to those of immense proportions, the drapery at the wrist showing appropriate variations.

At the sittings for form materialisations only one instance occurs to me when Dr. Slade and the person sitting with him both said a face appeared at the aperture in the curtain resembling the Doctor in every particular.

The independent voices occurring in his presence exhibit variations in tone, while at times the whisperings, so close and penetrating to one's ear, are so like his voice as to make you feel that his organs are being used to produce the sound, though you know positively that neither Dr. Slade nor any other person is at the point from which the voice proceeds.

Subsequently to the discussion referred to respecting the message signed J. W. Edmonds, the gentleman who raised the point of its inferiority came here and had a sitting with Dr. Slade, at which there was obtained a message signed by the name of a person, giving his age, name of the street and number of the house at which he had lived. Taking the slate containing the message, this gentleman went to the place indicated, where all the statements contained in the message were verified; also the handwriting was, on comparing it with specimens obtained at the house, found to be in the handwriting of the person purporting to have written the message on the slate.

If, in all these phases of the phenomena, that which appears to be evidence of the

medium's individuality is so plainly visible at times, while at other times it is entirely eliminated, is it unreasonable to suppose that the giving expression to ideas may be similarly affected? Not until one has given this subject much thought, aided by repeated experiments, can he (or she) by any possibility be in a condition to take a philosophical view of the case, nor are his (or her) opinions as a rule worthy of serious consideration.

Therefore I think myself warranted in saying the difficulties pertaining to the question of identity are greatly lessened by increasing our knowledge, whereby we are able to make due allowance for imperfections, and for which those possessing little or no experience regard us as being over-credulous.—*Banner of Light.*

SPIRITUAL MIRACLES.

MR. LAURENCE OLIPHANT'S NEW BOOK.

Mr. Laurence Oliphant, in his lately published very interesting and ingenious book entitled "*The Land of Gilead*," gives at page 426, *et seq.*, a curious account of some "Dervish Miracles" he witnessed last year (1879), at Damascus, "at all times a centre of occult knowledge."

INSENSIBILITY TO PHYSICAL PAIN.

There is a certain Sheikh Ruslan Aboutou, who resides in a quarter of Damascus, known as the Maidan, and celebrated for his mystical powers, which he was prevailed upon to exhibit to Mr. Oliphant and a large party, including some ladies. The Sheikh, a tall handsome man of about fifty, with a bright intelligent eye, and decidedly pleasing expression, received them at the door of his court-yard, which was already tolerably full of native spectators and of persons who were to take part in the performances, and they took their seats on a divan in an apartment, on one side open to the court, while from the other doors led into the house. After pipes and coffee, the Sheikh went into an inner room, and reappeared with a bundle of long iron skewers; beckoning to a dervish, he made him open his mouth and proceeded with the utmost coolness to pass a skewer from the inside through each cheek so that the points could be plainly seen protruding. He then performed a like operation on a remarkably handsome youth of about sixteen, his son, whose large clear eyes remained calmly fixed, and whose countenance in no line indicated the slightest pain. Not a drop of blood flowed in either case. The two victims stood quite unconcerned with their

mouths pressed back, and the projecting skewers showing the points through their cheeks.

CHEWING A LIVE SCORPION.

Leaving them in this attitude, the Sheikh went again into his room and brought a small square box, from which he took a scorpion of unusual size, its vicious tail curling and striking its own back as it writhed between his fingers. This he handed to another dervish, who instantly dropped the lively reptile into his mouth, crunching it with great apparent gusto; being as large as an ordinary land-crab, it was a big mouthful, and seemed to whip up into a sort of lather, as he chewed it with a perfectly impassive countenance.

Mr. Oliphant now suggested that the company, being satisfied in regard to the skewers, would feel more comfortable if they were extracted; as it was unpleasant to see two men with their cheeks trussed, and seeming to be grinning inanely with their mouths pressed back, the Sheikh, after taking long deep inspirations and muttering incantations, jerked out the skewers. The points were bloodless, and the outside of the cheeks showed only a slight induration like that of a cicatrised wound; there was no redness or inflammation.

THE FIRE-TEST IN DAMASCUS.

A brazier of burning charcoal was then brought in, and the charcoal fanned into a blaze. The Sheikh then went through an invocation, and suddenly with his bare feet jumped upon it and stood there for a minute, the livid flame curling round his feet. The moment he got off, the scorpion-eater and two or three other dervishes rushed forward and filled their mouths with the red-hot charcoal, which was again fanned, the smell of burning flesh becoming powerful and sickening as they crunched the glowing morsels. The nerves of the lady spectators now began to fail, and when the Sheikh produced a larger iron skewer with a heavy iron ball attached to one end, and proposed to run it through a man's throat from the front, bringing it out at the nape of the neck, there was a general scream of horror and dismay. The Sheikh in vain protested that the operation would be absolutely painless and showed the indurated spots on the sides of the man's neck through which the instrument had often passed. The repugnance of some of the party was not to be overcome. The Sheikh then pushed down the man's waist-cloth a little below the waist and revealed a row of cicatrices which made a semi-circle extending round the body. He then drew a curved

knife about eight inches long and nearly two broad from a sheath, and proposed to plunge it to the hilt in the man's stomach. It had a short wooden handle about four inches in length, and there was no possibility of the blade slipping back into the handle. But here again he was stopped by a cry of horror from the ladies; the Sheikh and the man himself, who seemed to consider his credit at stake, protested, and there was a general look of dissatisfaction on the part of the native spectators. Mr. Oliphant examined both the scars and the knife; the former were thin beautifully healed incisions, and the latter sharp as a razor and of the finest steel. The party however were determined to see no more, and made rather an ignominious exit, leaving the Sheikh bewildered and somewhat indignant at their pusillanimous conduct.

THE SHEIKH'S ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF.

The next day the Sheikh visited Mr. Oliphant, and had a long interesting conversation with him. He said he was the hereditary descendant and spiritual chief of the Order of Bedawi, which numbered about 10,000 dervishes. These were scattered throughout Islam and in all classes of society; he named one of high rank; the Order was secret to a great extent, though some openly professed membership. Its founder was Sheikh Said Ahmed el Bedawi, who lived about 200 years ago, and is buried in the Church of the Crusaders at Tantah in Egypt. He had been initiated into these mysteries, but it was not professed that they originated with him, the power to perform them dating back to an unknown period, and coming still further East; it was generally hereditary and was to be cultivated by much intense prayer and concentration of will. It was the same power which had been exercised by the sages and seers of the Bible and other sacred books, and was not confined to his Order, nor absolutely to Moslems. In great abstraction he sometimes passed into trance, when he saw and conversed with the Sheikh el Bedawi, but it was never permitted to him to reveal what passed at the spiritual interviews. He went on to say that the peculiar strength of the Bedawi lay in their power of dealing with fire, and that if Mr. Oliphant would stay in Damascus long enough he would show him men going into a fiery furnace, and coming out as unscathed as Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. He also explained that the power of healing incisions and preventing the flow of blood resided in the saliva, to which a healing power had been imparted by an

initiatory draught after a rigid mystical probation; so that wetting a finger with the tongue, and pressing it on a wound instantly stopped effusion of blood and healed it. The Sheikh further observed that though these practices were not recognised by the Koran, they were permitted for a special purpose, and this was to convince unbelievers that the powers claimed by seers and holy men of old were not mere fables, and remarked somewhat slyly, "Where would Christianity be without the belief in the possibility of such powers, seeing that it is built upon miracles and wonderful occurrences received upon the evidence of the senses of persons, probably more easily deceived than ourselves, who lived ages ago?"* On this Mr. Oliphant remarks with regard to the modern lofty scientific scepticism as to the evidence of one's own senses and those of others, that there must be a limit to such scepticism, or one would be left without any ground for believing in anything.

One of the party with Mr. Oliphant subsequently witnessed a similar performance at Aleppo, when he saw the knives plunged into the bodies of dervishes, leaving only a cicatrix without any effusion of blood, and was unable to discover any deception in the matter. Mr. Oliphant also met an English medical man who had lived all his life in the East, and who had repeatedly seen, and had abundant opportunities of examining the piercing the throat with the skewer, and the plunging the knife into the stomach, and told Mr. Oliphant he was utterly unable to explain how it was done without causing death, much less the effusion of blood, or to account for it by any trick or sleight-of-hand operation.

SECRET CIRCLES IN INDIA.

So far Mr. Oliphant, who does not seem to be aware that identical wondrous feats are and have immemorially been practised in that furthest East, whence the Sheikh informed him the power originally came. There are secret circles in India in which, it is whispered, such miracles may be witnessed, and very likely Madame Blavatsky could, if she chose, have something to say upon the subject.

MANIFESTATIONS IN TARTARY.

In 1844, the two Lazarist fathers, MM. Gabet and Hue, effected their adventurous journey through China, Tartary and Thibet to the mysterious city Lha-sa. On the account of their travels being published, none of the

* Compare John ix. 6. Luke xxii. 51, Mark xvi. 18, Acts xxviii. 3.

strange stories contained therein excited more incredulity and ridicule, tempered with scientific compassion, than the "barbarous ceremonial," they report having witnessed in the Lamasery of Rache-Tchurin in Tartary. Encountering a great crowd of pilgrims journeying towards the Lamasery, they were told that a "Lama Boktè" would the next day manifest his power there; "Kill himself, yet not die." The fathers accordingly resolved to witness the ceremony, and they describe it thus. On the appointed day, the pilgrims assemble in the great court of the Lamasery, where an altar is raised. The Boktè, who has been preparing himself for many days with prayer and fasting, abstaining from all communication, and observing absolute silence, at length appears, seats himself upon the altar, and takes from his girdle a large knife, which he places upon his knees. At his feet numerous Lamas, ranged in a circle, commence invocations; as they proceed the Boktè begins to tremble in every limb and gradually work himself up into frenzied convulsions. The Lamas become more and more excited, and their voices at last become a wild confused outcry. Then the Boktè suddenly throws aside the scarf which envelopes him, unfastens his girdle, and seizing the sacred knife, slits open his stomach in one long cut. While the blood flows in every direction, the multitude prostrate themselves, and presently the Lamas resume, but now calmly and gravely, the recitation of their prayers. The Boktè takes in his right hand blood from his wound, raises it to his mouth, breathes after it, and then throws it into the air. He next passes his hand rapidly over his wound, closes it, and everything resumes its pristine condition, no trace remaining of the diabolical operation. "These horrible ceremonies," say the good Fathers, "are of frequent occurrence in the great Lamaseries of Tartary and Thibet, and we do not believe there is any trick or deception about them; for from all we have seen and heard, we are persuaded that the devil has a great deal to do with the matter." Only the lower Lamas engage in them; the higher ranks, though disapproving, do not prohibit them, for much the same reasons as those alleged by the Sheikh at Damascus. Amongst other *siè-fu* (supernaturalism), the Lamas also "break irons red-hot, and lick them with impunity, and make incisions in various parts of the body, which an instant after leave no trace behind."*

* Travels in Tartary, Thibet and China, by M. Huc. Vol. I. chap. ix. English Translation.

The foregoing instances are recent and of our own days; in noticing the curious similarities between the accounts it should be remembered that they occurred at opposite ends of Asia, and that the respective actors, dervishes and lamas, may be safely assumed never to have heard of one another. But wondrous as the accounts are, they are quite distanced and thrown into the shade by old narratives of trustworthy men, far separated by time and space, and who had assuredly never heard of one another.

CHINESE JUGGLING EXTRAORDINARY.

Old Ibn Batuta of Aleppo, the well-known Moorish traveller, whose gravity, veracity, and intelligence are undisputed, and whose wanderings in India, China, and other countries of the far East are still quoted as the best evidence for the manners and customs of the courts in those countries between about 1340 and 1350 A.D., relates that, when at the court of the Viceroy of Khansa in China, he was present at an exhibition of jugglers held in the palace-courtyard. The performer took a ball, to which a long thong was attached, and threw the ball up in the air so high that it went out of sight altogether, only a little of the end of the thong remaining in his hand; he then desired one of the boys who assisted him to lay hold of it and mount. He did so, climbing by the thong, and went out of sight also! The performer then called to him three times, and getting no answer, he snatched up a knife, as if in a great rage, laid hold of the thong and disappeared also. By-and-bye he threw down one of the boy's hands, then a foot, then the other hand, then the other foot, then the trunk, and lastly the head! Then he came down himself, puffing and panting, with his clothes all bloody, kissed the ground before the Viceroy, and said something to him in Chinese. The Viceroy gave some order in reply, and the performer taking the lad's limbs laid them together and gave them a kick, then the boy got up and stood before the company. "All this," says old Ibn Batuta, "astonished me beyond measure, and I had an attack of palpitation like that which overcame me once before in the presence of the Sultan of India when he showed me something of the same kind."

AEROSTATIC PERFORMANCES IN BATAVIA.

Now compare with this the account given by Edward Melton, an Anglo-Dutch traveller, of the performance of a Chinese gang of conjurors which he witnessed at Batavia in 1670. After describing very vividly the well-known *basket-trick*, he proceeds, "But now I am going

to relate a thing which surpasses all belief, and which I should never venture to describe had it not been witnessed by thousands before my own eyes. One of the gang took a cord, and grasping one end in his hand slung the other up into the air with such force that its extremity was beyond the reach of our sight. He then immediately climbed up the cord with indescribable swiftness, and got so high that we could no longer see him. I stood full of astonishment, not conceiving what was to come of this, when lo! a leg came tumbling down out of the air. One of the conjuring company instantly snatched it up and threw it into an open basket standing by. A moment later a hand came down, and immediately on that another leg. And in short all the members of the body came thus successively tumbling from the air, and were cast together into the basket. The last fragment we saw tumble down was the head, and no sooner had it touched the ground, than he who had snatched up all the limbs and put them together into the basket, turned them all out again topsyturvy. Then straightway we saw with these eyes all those limbs creep together again, and in short, form a man, who at once could stand and go just as before without showing the least damage! Never in my life was I so astonished as when I beheld this wonderful performance, and I doubted now no longer that these misguided men did it by the help of the Devil." A quaint old wood-cut accompanies this account showing the man ascending the cord and the dismembered limbs falling down.

These narratives, so closely tallying in details, were written by men at long intervals of time and place, the later writer certainly knowing nothing of the older.

The Emperor Jehanger in his *Memoirs* also describes similar wonders performed in his presence, and after close scrutiny pronounces them inexplicable. The power for these more astounding manifestations seems for the last century or more to have become extinct or dormant in the East. Enough however has been adduced to justify the presumption that there are powers latent in humanity unfathomed by the College of Surgeons or the Royal Society.

W.

31st December, 1880.

MR. J. G. COATES has done more than anybody to promote a knowledge of mesmerism in Scotland, during the past two or three years.

DR. SLADE, after several years' travelling round the world, and narrowly escaping an English prison, has settled down again in New York, rejoined by Mr. Simmons.

A PUBLIC NEED.

From information received by us from many different quarters, it is clear that those Spiritualists who seek for peace and harmony in the movement would be glad of some reading-room and meeting-place open daily in London, but not connected with strife and aggression, and limited in its action to the purposes for which public libraries are ordinarily established.

The existence of such a centre under a few competent managers, and devoted only to the objects stated above, would not merely be a most welcome gathering-point for those who desire peace, but would save very considerable expenditure annually to the movement. For instance, if Miss Burke were to be offered the post of secretary, thereby preventing the lamentable loss of her public services to Spiritualism, the total annual expenditure for all purposes would be but £170, including the use for one year, for a trivial sum, of an already established library. With but £80 or £90 in hand, a start might be made.

If readers of these pages who are willing to support such an establishment by donations or by becoming members will write to us, their letters shall be handed over to some of those already known to feel the want of such a centre, and who are not connected with *The Spiritualist* newspaper. To promote harmony the suggested establishment should not be connected with any existing undertaking, and have no ends to promote but those which everybody admits to be good.

SPIRITUALISM AND THEOSOPHY.

BY COLONEL HENRY S. OLCOFF, PRESIDENT OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

(Continued).

THE EDDY BROTHERS' MANIFESTATIONS.

The room of the ghosts was a large chamber, occupying the whole upper floor of a two-storey wing of the house. It was perhaps twenty feet wide by forty long—I speak from memory. Below were two rooms—a kitchen and a pantry. The kitchen chimney was in the gable-end, of course, and passed through the *séance* room to the roof. It projected into the room two feet, and at the right, between it and the side of the house, was a plastered closet with a door next to the chimney. A window, two feet square, had been cut in the outer wall of the closet to admit air. Running across this end of the large room was a narrow platform, raised about 18 inches from the floor, with a step to mount by at the extreme left, and a hand rail or baluster

along the front edge of the platform. Every evening, after the last meal, William Eddy, a stout-built, square-shouldered, hard-handed farmer, would go upstairs, hang a thick woolen shawl across the doorway, enter the closet and seat himself on a low chair, that stood at the extreme end. The visitors, who sometimes numbered forty of an evening, were accommodated on benches placed within a few feet of the platform. Horatio Eddy sat on a chair in front, and discoursed doleful music on a fiddle and led the singing—if such it might be called without causing Mozart to turn in his grave; a feeble light was given by a kerosene lamp placed on the floor at the end of the room farthest from the platform, in an old drum from which both heads had been removed. Though the light was certainly very dim yet it sufficed to enable us to see if any one left his seat, and to distinguish through the gloom the height and costumes of the visitors from the other world. At a first sitting this was difficult, but practice soon accustomed one's eyes to the conditions.

After an interval of singing and fiddle-scraping, sometimes of five, sometimes twenty or thirty minutes, we could see the shawl stirred, it would be pushed aside, and out upon the platform would step some figure. It might be a man, woman or child, a decrepit veteran or a babe carried in a woman's arms. The figure would have nothing at all of the supernatural or ghostly about it. A stranger entering at the other end of the room would simply fancy that a living mortal was standing there, ready to address an audience. Its dress would be the one it wore in life, its face, hands, feet, gestures, perfectly natural. Sometimes, it would call the name of the living friend it had come to meet. If it were strong the voice would be of the natural tone; if weak, the words came in faint whispers; if still more feeble there was no voice at all, but the figure would stand leaning against the chimney or hand-rail while the audience asked in turn—"Is it for me?" and it either bowed its head or caused raps to sound in the wall when the right one asked the question. Then the anxious visitor would lean forward, and scan the figure's appearance in the dim light, and often we would hear the joyful cry, "Oh; Mother, Father, Sister, Brother, Son, Daughter," or what not, "I know you." Then the weird visitor would be seen to bow, or stretch out its hands, and then seeming to gather the last strength that remained to it in its evanescent frame, glide into the

closet again, and drop the shawl before the hungry gaze of the eyes that watched it. But, sometimes, the form would last much longer. Several times I saw come out of the closet an aged lady clad in the Quaker costume, with lawn cap and kerchief pinned across her bosom, grey dress and long housewifely apron, and calling her son to the platform, seat herself in a chair beside him, and after kissing him fondly talk for some minutes with him in low tones about family matters. All the while she would be absently folding the hem of her apron into tucks, and smoothing them out again, and so continuing the thing over and over just as—her son told me—she was in the habit of doing while alive. More than once, just as she was ready to disappear, this gentleman would take her arm in his, come to the baluster, and say that he was requested by his old mother, whom we saw there, although she had been dead many years, to certify that it was, indeed, she herself and no deception, and bid them realize that man lives beyond the grave, and so live here as to ensure happiness then.

ON Wednesday evening, last week, on the occasion of the twenty-second anniversary of the birthday of his eldest son, Mr. C. F. Varley, F.R.S., and Mrs. Varley entertained at dinner, at Bexley Heath, Kent, about a hundred guests, among whom were Mr. and Mrs. William Crookes, and Mr. Harrison; also Mr. Charles Varley, who in his younger days was a juvenile friend of William Blake, the painter, whose psychological experiences are set forth in this number of *The Spiritualist*.

SPIRITUAL PHENOMENA IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:—A correspondent writes from Victoria, British Columbia: "As I wrote you, some time ago we were having some very extraordinary developments, but unfortunately we admitted some new element, and from that time our manifestations declined. Although we have now got rid of what we considered to be the cause, still our sittings are barren of results, consequently we are ceasing to take much interest in the matter. Since Slade was here we have had no medium, and I fear there is not likely to be one soon."

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR WORKERS:—It is instructive to mark the treatment of some of those who do a large amount of public work in Spiritualism. Mr. Joy, who had laboured hard for one of the organisations, found himself divorced from his honorary secretaryship. Miss Kislingsbury was next attacked, then Dr. Carter Blake, who had given weeks of gratuitous work to aiding in cataloguing the library, and in conducting *séances*. The next onslaught was upon Mr. Harrison, and the last one upon Miss Burke, although nobody has any fault to find with her. Those who initiated all these attacks were mostly one small knot of persons, and to what record of good works of their own for the movement, are they able to point?

Answers to Correspondents.

B.—We do not desire to insert anonymous letters about a medium being controlled by Gods and Deities, unless he explains himself and puts his name and address at the end.

H.—Mr. E. D. Rogers, Mr. E. T. Bennet, and Mr. Morell Theobald, are prominent Christian Spiritualists.

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF PROFESSOR ZÖLLNER'S EXPERIMENTS.

LIST OF ENGRAVINGS.

FRONTISPIECE:—The room at Leipsic in which most of the Experiments were conducted.

PLATE I:—Experiments with an Endless String.

PLATE II:—Leather Bands Interlinked and Knotted under Professor Zöllner's Hands.

PLATE III:—Experiments with an Endless Bladder-band and Wooden Rings.

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