

*Balch*  
MESMERISM.

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A LETTER TO MISS MARTINEAU,

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

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## MESMERISM.

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MADAM,

It was not my intention to break in upon the series of your published communications on the subject of Mesmerism; but having now seen your third letter in the "Athenæum," I cannot longer delay addressing you. You are my countrywoman; we are natives of the same town; and though personally unknown, we must ere long appear at the same tribunal, to render up our respective accounts of talents committed to our trust. Deeply impressed with this, I forego my previous purpose of offering a few comments to the public generally, and address myself to you. May the all-seeing God be present with my spirit while I write, and with yours, and those of all others, while they read what I feel constrained to say!

Into the nature of Mesmerism, as practised and recommended by you, I shall no otherwise enter than as an unlearned person. With its supposed medicinal effects, described in your first letter, I shall not now interfere. If it be what I firmly believe it to be, this is indeed but a small matter,—a mere bait to lure the unwary into a deeper snare. My business is not with what you state to have been your own experience of its efficacious powers in soothing pain and overcoming obstinate diseases; but with the supernatural manifestations in the case of another individual, which forms the subject of your second and third papers. I say supernatural, because you are so placed as to constrain me to come to

one of the following conclusions, in the affair of the person whom you call "J.:" either,

I. You are guilty of wilful falsehood; or,

II. You are the victim of a cunning deception practised by others; or,

III. The effects produced are beyond the scope of any existing agencies in nature, unless operated upon by some power altogether superhuman.

The first of these suppositions you will indignantly disavow; and I also acquit you of it.

The second you will be scarcely less eager to reject; and I freely admit that your statements do not warrant such a conclusion. You have known the individual for years; you are acquainted with the amount of her intellect, and the extent of her acquirements; and are, therefore, a competent judge of her capacity for enacting such a part as, under this supposition, she must continually sustain. I do not disbelieve any part of your narrative, therefore I am reduced to the necessity of regarding the affair as one of a supernatural complexion.

And, if supernatural, it is most assuredly diabolical.

This, of course, you do not admit: yet you profess yourself wholly unable to offer any explanation of what is daily occurring in your own experience, and under your careful observation. You say, "I hope we shall have wisdom and self-command henceforth to prescribe nothing to a power so obscure, and at present beyond our dictation. We can summon and dismiss it, and may, therefore, contemplate it without fear. But we have no power over the nature of its manifestations." All your remarks have the same inconsistent tendency. You testify to the presence of some mysterious influence, originating, as you believe, in your own will, or that of other persons; obeying a summons, the nature of which seems to consist in an earnest desire for the presence of that power, an acquiescence in its actings, and an unqualified submission to its behests. You believe that you can dismiss it also at will; though it is easy to prove, on your own showing, that the invoked influence is not always so passive under your hands; that it does not invariably go at your bidding; and in the same breath in which you boast of this command over your invisible attendant, you deprecate the assumption of authority to prescribe to a

power so obscure and beyond mortal dictation. That it is the policy of this agent to yield a general obedience, no less to your mandate of dismissal than to your summoning will, I can well believe. May God in his infinite mercy open your eyes to the tremendous character of the "power" to whom you feel that you cannot authoritatively prescribe, but with which you are so dangerously tampering.

You are, of course, a believer in Divine revelation; you receive the Bible as the Word of God, and are content to bow to its inspired enunciations? I put this interrogatively, because I know not enough of you to assert it positively. If you have been ensnared by Infidel principles, then, alas! you are led captive by Satan at his will, and he can use you in whatsoever way he shall choose for the furtherance of his dark designs; but if, with me, you hold that the Word of God is the one sure and certain test; that it is at all times, and in all cases, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;"\* if you believe that "to the law and to the testimony" all disputed points, touching spiritual things, should be brought, and admit that, "if they speak not according to this Word, there is no light in them;"† then we have a common and a firm ground on which to stand, and I can with confidence invite you to investigate the matter by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

There exists a wide-spread practical disbelief in the existence, or, at least, in the vast power and active agency, of Satan: and even among those who do not question his being or designs, there is a too general rejection of Scripture testimony, as applicable to our times, of the devices by which he can extend his influence over man. The very mention of unlawful arts, practised by means of infernal aid, now excites a smile, even on the countenances of those who are taught constantly to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one." Accordingly, when Mesmerism is stigmatized as a branch of sorcery, we are met with an exclamation, "How can you be so weak as to believe in witchcraft?" I confess myself so weak, I glory in being so weak, as to believe in every word that the Lord God hath spoken. I believe

\* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

† Isa. viii. 20.

and am sure that Pharaoh's magicians did, by the power of the devil, imitate the miracles wrought by the hands of Moses and Aaron, up to a point at which the Lord arrested them.\* I believe that when the Israelites were Divinely commanded—"Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," † witchcraft existed, and was within the reach of those to whom the command was given. I believe that the woman at Endor, to whom Saul in his extremity had recourse, maintained unlawful commerce with evil spirits, and by their help did many marvellous things. ‡ I believe that when Simon Magus is said to have bewitched the people with his sorceries, he really did what the Scripture declares him to have done.§ I believe, because the Bible says it, that the damsel who followed Paul and Silas, with an artful testimony to the truth of their doctrine, was possessed with a spirit of divination; which spirit being cast out, the gains of her masters were gone.|| I believe that when the Apostle wrote his enumeration of the works of the flesh, ¶ including therein "witchcraft," he wrote it for us, for you and for me, as much as for the Churches in Galatia. And, finally, I believe, and I pray God to imprint the truth on your heart also, that without the gate of the heavenly city, excluded for ever from the presence of God, are "sorcerers," together with "whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." \*\* This is an awful sentence. Those who falsely pretend to the exercise of supernatural powers are condemned, together with their actual possessors.

Thus compelled to believe, not as a matter of opinion, but of faith, that the crime of sorcery is within the reach of man's daring wickedness, and that Satan, when it suits his policy, will labour to entrap us into it, as readily as into any other form of rebellion against God, I proceed to notice some of the most prominent characteristics of this devilish device, as developed in the case that you are bringing before the public. But I must first state a fact that cannot be too generally known,—one that I shudder to record; for it amounts to the one

\* Exodus viii. 18.

† Exodus xxii. 18. Deut. xviii. 10—12.

‡ 1 Sam. xviii. 9.

§ Acts viii. 9.

|| Acts xvi. 16—19.

¶ Gal. v. 20.

\*\* Rev. xxii. 15.

unpardonable sin that cannot be blotted out,—blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.\*

A book on Mesmerism, published in French, and written by a Frenchman, contains this fearful assertion: after stating that Mesmerism prevailed among the ancient Egyptians, the wretched writer proceeds to remind his readers that Jesus was in Egypt; and then asserts, that there he learned the magic art by which he effected the miraculous cures recorded in the Gospels. The magic arts practised in Egypt of old were those which the God of heaven denounced as involving in the penalty of death every Israelite who should participate in them. They were positively declared to be of the devil; and as such they are described, and the people of God warned against them as damnable, even to the last page, almost the last sentence, of the Word of God. By this Satanic power, by the power of Beelzebub, your Mesmerist asserts, that Jesus cast out devils, and performed his wonderful works; and do you not shrink from identifying yourself, from connecting yourself in any way, with a system that treads so near upon the awful verge of "*Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.*" Oh! can you dare to lead the steps of the unwary to such a gulf as this? Will you assist to bring upon the souls of our unbelieving multitudes in these days, who might but too readily catch at the horrible suggestion, the condemnation that fell upon some, who of old spake words like these? Surely you cannot know the depths of Satan to which you are now enticed. Pause, ere it be too late. This French Infidel, in the same spirit, and to the same end, proceeds, as he vaunts, to prove from Mesmerism, that the soul of man is a material substance. In the English translations of these diabolical books, prepared for circulation among us, such passages are omitted: the time is not yet come for stripping the hideous demon of all his disguises. England is not yet ripe for a professed rejection of God, and an open acknowledgment of Satan, like that which speedily followed upon the reception of Mesmerism in France.

You give us, in your statement, first, a marvellous account of the cure wrought upon yourself by Mesmeric influences. This I pass over, merely observing, that

\* Mark iii. 22—30.

what man, by deep research and practised skill can do, it would be strange indeed if the supernaturally gifted author of Mesmerism, a fallen angel, could not easily accomplish. I wish now to enter upon the case of "J.," an uneducated young girl of nineteen, five years resident in the house with you, to whose simply honest and artless character you bear strong witness, and who became the second subject of these Mesmeric manifestations in your household. She was first treated for a pain in the face; and this led to your making her the object of daily, or rather nightly, experiments, the result of which you detail. Now of this girl, I do not hesitate to say, that she is, at those times, "possessed by a spirit of divination," as was the damsel who followed the apostles; and the character of the possessing spirit must be gathered from some brief, but very startling, notices of what occasionally transpired.

Of these, I select three. First, the girl was enabled accurately, minutely, to describe an event that *had* occurred at sea, but the particulars of which could not yet have reached her. This she saw, as in a vision. Who doubts that she might have seen it all, within an almost unspeakably short space of its occurrence, by means of "the Prince of the power of the air?"\* He, of course, moves with the swiftness of spirit unincumbered with matter, and he, or any of his subordinate angels, could have set before the mental eye of the possessed person what he had just witnessed. Cases of this kind are authenticated beyond a reasonable cavil, in the history of the Delphic and other oracles among the Pagans of old; and, upon such hypothesis, the thing is at once explained; upon any other, unless a revelation from above, it is, if not a cheat, utterly inexplicable.

I am ready to admit, that so far as the simple phenomenon is concerned, of alleviating bodily pain, and of so lulling into repose the nervous system as to induce a torpid state, there may be nothing supernatural. Influences, not yet fully discovered by the investigations of philosophy, may exist, and be communicable from one individual to another, operating perhaps, by electricity, to an extent hitherto unsuspected. The marvellous conformation, the sur-

\* Eph. ii. 2.

prising power, acting by deliberate volition, in the electric eel, confirm this theory; but I beseech you to mark the limit of my admission,—it is strictly confined within the boundaries of physical and mental operation. When your somnambules describe events occurring at a distance; when they reveal the seat, and the nature, and probable termination of diseases impenetrable by mortal skill; when the uneducated and uninformed express themselves with elegance and perspicuity in terms the signification of which they are still ignorant of in their natural waking state; and, above all, when they prove, as invariably they do, that mind and memory present a perfect blank with regard to the transactions of their entranced hours; then, Madam, I tell you, without hesitation, that the body, which you have thrown into such torpor, becomes the helpless, passive, unconscious, polluted receptacle of an evil spirit, who uses the organs of speech and motion in that wretched individual for the manifestation of his own craft, and subtlety, and super-human powers.

In proof of this, i.e., that the spirit so acting is the rebellious spirit of all evil, I proceed to transcribe two passages, one from your first, the other from your second communication, concerning this poor girl. I beseech you to note them well, with their inevitable inferences, as bearing upon revelation and faith; for I would fain hope that you are not knowingly spreading among your countrymen and countrywomen the worst venom of asps, the very poison of hell.

First,—and I give the statement entire,—you say,

“It is almost an established opinion among some of the wisest students of Mesmerism, that the mind of the somnambule mirrors that of the Mesmerist. Of course, this explains nothing of the operation of Mesmerism, but it is a supposition most important to be established or disproved. One naturally wishes to find it true, as it disposes of much that, with the hasty, passes for revelation of other unseen things than those which lie in another person's mind. It certainly is true to a considerable extent, as is pretty clearly proved, when an ignorant child,—ignorant especially of the Bible,—discourses of the Scriptures and divinity when mesmerized by a clergyman, and of the nebulae when mesmerized by

an astronomer; but we have evidence in 'J.' that this is, though often, not universally true. I will give an example of each.

"On Saturday, October 12, she had told us that she now 'saw the shades of things' that she wanted to know, and that she should 'soon see clearer.' The next evening she went into a great rapture about the 'gleams' becoming brighter, so that she should soon see all she wished. The light came through the brain,—not like sunlight, nor moonlight;—'no, there is no light on earth like this:—the knowledge she got 'comes astonishingly, amazingly, so pleasantly!' 'How is the Mesmerizing done which causes this?' 'By all the powers at once.' 'What powers?' 'The soul, and the mind, and the vital powers of the body.' Then, as we inquired, 'The mind is not the same as the soul. All are required in Mesmerizing, but the mind most, though Mesmerism is still something else.' 'Those three things exist in every human being (the soul, the mind, and the body), separate from one another; but the faculties belonging to them are not the same in everybody; some have more, some less. The body dies, and the mind dies with it, but the soul lives after it. The soul is independent and self-existent, and, therefore, lives for ever. It depends upon nothing.'

"Here I prompted the question, 'What, then, is its relation to God?' She hastily replied, 'He takes care of it, to re-unite it with the body in the day of judgment.' *Here I was forcibly and painfully struck with the incompatibility of the former and latter saying,* not (as I hope it is needless to explain) for any waiting on her lips for revelations on this class of subjects, but because *it was painful to find her faculties working FAULTILY.* As I felt this disappointment come over me, an expression of trouble disturbed J.'s face, so ineffably happy always during her sleep. 'Stop,' said she, 'I am not sure about that last. All I said before was true—the real *Mesmeric* truth. But I cannot make out about that last. I heard it when I was awake—I heard it in church,—that all the particles of our body, however they may be scattered, will be gathered together at the day of judgment; but I am not sure.' And she became excited, saying that, 'it bothered her,' what she knew and what she had heard being mixed up. Her Mesmerist dispersed that set of

ideas, and she was presently happy again, talking of 'the lights.' This was the occasion on which some traces remained in her waking state, and she told a fellow-servant that she had been dreaming and talking about the day of judgment.

"Now here her mind seemed to reflect those of both her companions (though I was not aware of being *en rapport* with her). Her Mesmerist had it in her mind that a somnambule at Cheltenham had declared man to consist of three elements; and J.'s troubling at her own mingling of ideas from two sources, seems to have been an immediate echo of mine. Such an incident as this, shows how watchful the reason should be over such phenomena, and explains the rise of many pretensions to inspiration. It requires some self-control for the most philosophical to look on a person of moderate abilities and confined education, in the attitude of sleep, and unaware of passing incidents, but speaking on high subjects with animated delight, exceeding anything witnessed in ordinary life,—it requires some coolness and command of self to remember, that what is said may be of no authority as truth, however valuable as manifestation."

I have given the passage entire, Madam, without omission or interpolation, merely marking with italics that on which I desire to fix the attention of every person who reads these pages. It seems to me, that the spirit whom you had summoned to this nocturnal conference, being startled and agitated by the sudden introduction of the name of God, "hastily," as you express it, uttered a known truth; and because for once the devil spoke truth, you would not believe him. Can it be that you deny the doctrine of the resurrection of the body? I am utterly at a loss to comprehend you here. Do you doubt that "the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible?"\* Do you forget that "THIS CORRUPTIBLE must put on incorruption; and THIS MORTAL must put on immortality?" Your gifted instructor, the sleeping servant girl, most truly tells you that the soul lives after the body's death—lives for ever; to this you do not object; but when, in the next breath, she tells you that God will, at the last day, re-unite the soul to its risen body, you are troubled, you are pained, you conceive

\* 1 Cor. xv. 52, 53.

that her faculties are working *faultily*; and the evil spirit loses his self-possession too, for *he* "believes and trembles."\* He dreads what you may next say, for there is an inseparable connexion between "JESUS and the resurrection;"† and a flash of heavenly glory threatens to invade, to extinguish in deepest darkness the "gleams" from beneath that dance about your poor abused victim. Nay, Jesus is the resurrection and the life;‡ and had not your Mesmerizing companion "dispersed that set of ideas;" or, in plainer words, ceased to terrify the evil spirit, some "manifestation" might have followed that would have shaken your nerves beyond the soothing powers of any operator.

I confess that what I have now quoted confirmed me beyond the admission of any reasonable doubt, both as to the reality and the nature of these manifestations. The awkward attempts of the spirit to neutralize the truth inadvertently or compulsorily uttered; the troubled, half-aroused state of the poor somnambule; the observation that she was incited to make on the following day, to a fellow-ménial, and which was duly reported to you, together with your own very unphilosophical and inconsistent endeavour to reconcile contradictions; and far worse, the sly, subtle, yet palpable hit that you aim at all real inspiration, by means of this remarkable interruption of your proceedings, all will, I humbly hope, be laid to heart by such as fear to transgress, and prove that HE, whose great and terrible Name was lightly introduced, is overruling the excess of evil to the production of some good.

I now come to another instance of what I must call the truly devilish tendency of the work; an outward step in the career where I pray God you may have grace given you to pause and turn. Remember, I am taking it for granted that your veracity is unimpeachable. I believe what you state to be exactly what you have experienced, and seen, and heard. If deception exist anywhere, it proceeds, of course, in the first instance, from the father of lies; but this appears to be a deeper work, fulfilling our Lord's prediction of those who should arise, and "show signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect."§

\* James ii. 19. † Acts xvii. 18. ‡ John xi. 25. § Mark xiii. 22.

Again, I allow you to speak for yourself; and again I demand close attention to what follows:—

“One singular instance of *rapport* between J. and her Mesmerist I have witnessed, under such unexceptionable circumstances as to be absolutely sure of it. When J. was dancing, and taking this room for a ball-room, she took her Mesmerist for her partner, allowed herself to be conducted to a seat, &c., assuming a ball-room air, which was amusing enough in one with her eyes sealed up as motionless as if they were never again to open. Being offered refreshment, she chose some mesmerized water, a glass of which was on the table, prepared for me. It seemed to exhilarate her, and she expressed great relish of the ‘refreshment.’ It struck us that we would try, another evening, whether her Mesmerist’s will could affect her sense of taste. In her absence we agreed that the water should be silently willed to be sherry the next night. To make the experiment as clear as possible, the water was first offered to her, and a little of it drank as water. Then the rest was, while still in her hands, silently willed to be sherry; she drank it off—half a tumbler full—declared it was very good; but, presently, that it made her tipsy. What was it? ‘Wine—white wine.’ And she became exceedingly merry and voluble, but refused to rise from her chair, or dance any more, or go down stairs, for she could not walk steadily, and should fall, and spoil her face, and, moreover, frighten them all below. I afterwards asked her Mesmerist to let it be porter the next night. J. knew nothing of porter, it seems, but called her refreshment ‘a nasty sort of beer.’”

Here I pause: the Lord hath said, “It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto him by whom they come!”\* Are you, Madam, prepared to encounter the “woe” annexed to the placing of such an “offence,” such a stumbling-block as this, in the way of weak believers, and of giving to the enemies of the Gospel so fearful an occasion to blaspheme? Whether you are conscious of it or not, this last incident was devised by Satan to pour contempt, or to throw a soul-destroying doubt, on the miracle of Cana in Galilee.† You, or your companion in these perilous doings, acted upon a suggestion of the Evil One, to *will* a glass of water

\* Luke xvii. 1.

† John ii.

into wine: and though no change took place, perceptible to any mortal sense, the same presiding spirit had power over the possessed girl to imitate in her the effects of an intoxicating draught; and by her mouth he told you that what he had tempted you to will was actually accomplished. When I read this passage, horror itself gave way to the burning indignation of my soul at so infernal a travestie on the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; branding at once your familiar spirit as one of the *false* Christs, whose aim it is to try to deceive the very elect. Perhaps this did not even occur to you; perhaps in the infinite and unsearchable mercy of Him whom you thus wrong, it may be made the means of opening your eyes to the real character of what you are engaged in. I perceive that the devil apprehended the rousing of some Christian to an open protest against such covert blasphemies, and told you the tale of an old woman making cataplasms for a monk's feet two centuries since, with the reward of her benevolence; and encouraged you by contrasting the liberality of these days with the bigotry of former times, adroitly insinuating that witchcraft is not now amenable to the law of the land; or at least, that nobody would revive the operation of such cruel, and, in one sense, truly absurd statutes: but remember, there is a law, eternal, immutable, and which can by no means be evaded,—a law that will try us all when that hour comes of which the Scripture speaks, when the dead, small and great, shall stand before God; and not one soul shall escape the condemnation that we all have incurred, excepting those whose names are found written in the Book of Life.\*

The one object of Christ's first coming into this world was to destroy the works of the devil;† and the one object of Satan is to mar, and, so far as he can, to defeat, the work of Christ. It is impossible to read your statement of what has befallen those of your own household without being struck with its manifest tendency, apart from all the foreign theories that openly blaspheme the Lord, to undermine the first principles of the Christian faith. Whether the facts be as you believe them to be, or whether all may at last turn out but a cunning deception practised upon you, still wherever your statement is

\* Rev. xx. 12, 15.

† 1 John iii. 8.

received as true, the effect is equally pernicious; and therefore, if it be a lie, it is no common lie; but one that perils the salvation of such as believe it. I am aware that gross deceptions of this kind are practised, and from time to time publicly exposed, rendering the whole craft a matter of ridicule to many: but this also serves to throw the unwary off their guard; and where they go to laugh, they may remain to doubt, to disbelieve the Gospel, and to perish. Oh that I could impress your mind with the thrilling reality of your present danger! Deceiving, deceived, or possessed, surely presents a very awful alternative. You do not appear to have gone so far as others into these depths, and your way of escape is more open. I ask of you to bow the knee in believing prayer to Him before whom every knee must and shall finally bow, even Jesus, "who through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil;"\* Jesus, who "hath ascended on high, leading captivity captive, and received gifts for men, *even for the rebellious*;"† Jesus, to whom "all power is given, both in heaven and on earth," and who will yet appear in great glory to sit on a throne of judgment before which both you and I must stand.‡ I beseech you to ask of him power to free yourself from every snare, and grace to help in this day of need—the greater need because you seem unconscious of it. Do not reject my words; they are those of truth and soberness, and I have no motive in writing them but the earnest desire that I feel to warn my fellow-Christians of the nets spread for their feet; and this I have done by submitting to their investigation two or three fragments of those nets, in extracts from your published statements. Believing, as I do, the existence of diabolical arts at this day in Egypt, in India, and other lands of darkness, and seeing what was the birth-place, who were the promulgators of this Mesmeric delusion, I cannot but raise even my feeble hand to resist its spread in my own country; more especially when the hand of another female is employed to scatter it far and wide.

I request your pardon, if, in any instance, I have appeared personally uncourteous: the cause of my glorious Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, is very dear

\* Heb. ii. 14.

† Psalm lxxviii. 18.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 10.

## MESMERISM.

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MADAM,

A FEW days since, your letter to Miss Martineau was put into my hands, and I read it with deep regret. Having perused your former works with great pleasure, and being convinced that they have been the instruments of much spiritual good, I felt grieved that you should have passed so rash a judgment on a subject which has met with the sanction of so many of the wise and good in our own land, and on the continent; of those who are not only intellectually capable of investigating such mysterious phenomena, but who have approached the investigation in a prayerful spirit, looking up for direction to Him from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. The arguments which you have used against this science and its supporters are such, that I feel convinced you must have sent forth your letter without due consideration. The clear and close reasoning to be found in your former publications, is a proof to me that a calm and deliberate examination of the contested points would have led you to a different conclusion, or at least to a modification of the sweeping censures so liberally sprinkled over this small tract.

I took it up, expecting to find an attempt to prove the supernatural and diabolical nature of the agency employed, but instead of this, I find Mesmerism prejudged, asserted to be satanic, and at once condemned without the shadow of evidence.

In the commencement of your letter, having acquitted

Miss Martineau of propagating falsehood, or being the victim of deception, you say "the effects produced are beyond the scope of *any existing agencies* in nature, unless operated upon by some power altogether superhuman." Can it be that we have so deeply studied the existing agencies of nature, that none remain unknown to us, or imperfectly developed? The wisest men that our country has produced, have spent their lives in searching into these hidden and mysterious agencies, and felt at last that they know comparatively nothing.

Even had all the secrets of the material world been disclosed to our gaze, can we explain the deep things connected with the mind of man? To use the appropriate language of a modern poet,—

Who the secrets can unravel,  
Of the body's mystic guest?  
Who knows how the soul may travel,  
While unconsciously we rest?

While in pleasing thralldom lying,  
Sealed in slumber deep it seems,  
Far abroad it may be flying:  
What is sleep? and what are dreams?

What is thought? in wild succession  
Whence proceeds the motley train?  
What first stamps the vague impression  
On the ever active brain?

Who has given any thing worthy of the name of an explanation of the nervous system, and its connexion with the immortal mind? Who can tell us how that mind can act upon the body in which it tabernacles, so as to cause even the slightest motion of the hand? The will prompts, and the muscles obey its behest, but who can trace what "agency" is at work, the medium between the purely spiritual essence, and the naturally impassive and inert particles of matter connected with it? Who can account for the thrill of pleasure, or the chill of fear, which, by a single glance of the eye of another, can be caused to vibrate convulsively through the whole of our mental being, and to re-act upon the

bodily powers, even to the utter prostration of their energies.

Is not this one mind acting on another without the medium of speech? and is it not placed *en rapport* with another, so as to partake of its thoughts and its feelings, its hopes and its agony? and who is bold enough to say that such an agency is satanic, because it baffles the wisdom of the wise?

What are the ordinary modes of communication between mind and mind, but those of speech, or written language?

The organs of speech, by the action of the nerves, can excite those undulations which convey sound, and the nerves of hearing receive them. The hand, under the influence of the nervous system, can produce characters fitted to reflect the undulations of light, so as to give a definite impression to the organs of sight, and thus suggest the thoughts of the writer; not a motion of the human frame can be produced without developing those undulations that accompany or effect electrical action: and why is it "unnatural, pernicious, and devilish," to imagine that when the brain, the centre of nervous power, is thrown into strong excitement, it may give to the nerves throughout the body a capability of receiving impressions, to which, under ordinary circumstances, they are insensible,—can cause them to be acted upon by undulations, electrical, or otherwise, set in motion by the nervous energy of the party *en rapport*, and thus giving an indication of his thoughts and feelings in a manner somewhat similar to the silent speaking of the eye, but far more powerful.

There is nothing more miraculous in this, than in the ordinary method of human intercourse, but being unusual, it suggests to one who has not patience to reason on so abstruse a subject, that it is unnatural.

Truly, we are fearfully and wonderfully made! our mode of existence is beyond our knowledge, nor shall we "know even as also we are known, until we see Him as He is."

Still, if we are to disbelieve all the natural occurrences around us, which we cannot trace to the existing agencies of nature, or to impute them to the prince of the power of air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of

disobedience, the duty of the professor of natural science would be but to expound the handiwork of the arch-enemy, and every unusual affection of the nerves must be affirmed to be a genuine case of demoniacal possession.

To such a creed as this, the prejudices of the age of the first James, and the extravagancies of the witch-finders, would be no unapt parallel.

What are the laws of nature, as we are pleased to call them, but the results of a number of phenomena which agree in their main properties?

We say that an apple falls to the ground by the law of gravitation; but what is this but to assert that it invariably falls;—no approach has been made to the explanation of the fact!

We speak of electricity and magnetism; have such agencies ever made themselves manifest to the senses, except in their results? and who can explain how a fluid, so called, can act upon the muscular tissues,—can cure diseases, or if sufficiently strong, extinguish life? Must we reject these sciences because they cannot be proved to take place by the agency of gravitation, or the laws of chemical attraction?

Mesmerism lays claim, and justly too, to be recognized as a *distinct natural agency* in itself;—an agency at work at all times, as generally, perhaps, and as subtly as electricity, but only at intervals showing itself in extraordinary developments; and since well-authenticated instances are on record of persons under the influence of disease giving off electrical sparks, and exhibiting all the phenomena manifested in those acted upon by frictional electricity, so cases of natural mesmerism, somnambulism, clairvoyance, and the exaltation of the mind, now miscalled mesmeric prophecy, are so numerous, that no one who reads them carefully, and without prejudice, can, if he argues fairly, deny that the substantial features are the same.

There are few that have not met, (among their own immediate friends) with natural somnambulism. Servants have performed their household work with closed eyes, and in the dark; students have composed essays,—merchants have written invoices,\* and actions requiring

\* See Dr. Macnish's *Philosophy of Sleep*, and *Chambers' Journal*, No. XXXIV. New Series.

the perfect use of the mental, as well as bodily power, have been performed so frequently, and before so many witnesses, that to give instances in proof would be superfluous. These are the effects of disease; but when it is asserted that the same things can be brought about by sleepwaking artificially produced, the assertion is received with the incredulous smile, or the open charge of infernal agency.\*

But to examine the case at issue, assuming with yourself, that there was no deception on the part of "J." Few persons have attended the beds of the sick and dying, without remarking how extremely susceptible such persons often are to the slightest sounds. An instance is recorded by Dr. Filippi, of Milan, respecting Signor Valdrighi, who, being visited by his medical attendant (Dr. F.) was injudiciously told by him that he was in no danger, and that his case was hopeful. The physician left the room, and proceeding through two other apartments, stated in a low tone to the patient's friends, that their relative would not survive the night.

Immediately the sick man's bell rang violently; he had the doctor recalled, and reproached him severely for deceiving him in his last moments. The servants of this gentleman assured Dr. Filippi, that during his illness he had frequently told them all that they had been talking of in the kitchen, which was even more remote from the sick room than the apartment before alluded to.

Was it the Evil One who whispered these things in his ear? or was it not rather, that as some of the functions of the body failed, the soul, immortal and unaffected by disease, took firmer hold on the senses remaining open to its exercise; that the vital force retreating from the limbs, concentrated its intensity on the auditory nerves, and thus rendered them preternaturally, *mesmerically*, sensible? And might not J.'s organs of hearing have been so unusually excited, through the temporary sus-

\* The mesmeric vision, or clairvoyance, especially, has been gravely and grandly pronounced to be physically and physiologically impossible. How can we reply to this? Only, I suppose, as Pascal did to some one who asserted that it was impossible for God, being so great, to busy himself about our little world; "Il faut être bien grand, den juger." To decide such a question we must be great indeed.—*Facts in Mesmerism*, p. 265.

pension of some of the other senses, that she could hear the statement of her mother in the room below, and unconscious of the source from which she derived her knowledge, give the substance of the whole as if it were a vision,—the sinking vessel, the “queer boat,” and the drowning boy, suggesting themselves to her mental eye, as the tale proceeded. Analogous cases occur every day with ordinary sleep-talkers. I have known instances in which conversations have been held with persons talking in their sleep, and on awaking, they have given an account of what was said, as their remembrance of a dream.

The explanation above given, may, or may not, be the correct one; but at all events, it connects it with a similar occurrence under the influence of sickness; and be it remembered that Mesmerists lay it down as a law, that they are able to produce by certain treatment, a state of body and of mind similar to that which is sometimes naturally caused by disease and nervous excitement of the system, and if this is received as truth, the whole charge of satanic agency must be abandoned.

Distinctly, then, refusing to admit the necessity of superhuman agency in these phenomena, let me examine the next step in your argument, “and if supernatural, it is most assuredly diabolical.”

What is there, in the vast number of cases recorded, that can lead to such a conclusion? Has the fallen spirit so lost his malignity, that like our divine and blessed Redeemer, he goes about doing good, and healing all manner of diseases?

Look at the statistics of Mesmerism.

In London, at St. Albans, Chatham, Cheltenham, Ryde, York, Chelmsford, Portsea, Sandwich, Portsmouth, Southampton, Exeter, Highgate, Hinckley, Sheffield, Rotherhithe, Wallington, Walsall, Northampton, Bradford, Stourbridge, Wolverhampton, and many other towns in England; in Scotland, and Ireland; in France, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and Russia, cures have been effected of the most surprising nature. Maladies of an appalling and distressing kind, have yielded to its influence—an influence exerted by physicians, scientific men, barristers, private gentlemen, members of the peerage, and above all, by pious clergy-

men, and humble Christians, who, using this *agency* in firm reliance on the superintending power of God, and with *earnest prayer* that its employment might be blessed, have raised their hearts to Him in thankfulness for being directed to "Mesmerism, the gift of God," from whom comes every good and perfect gift.

What ulterior benefit could have accrued to the cause of the Evil One from the use of an agent which tends so materially to assuage the ills that flesh is heir to? What is the legitimate result to which it leads, but gratitude to Him, by whose gracious providence it has been called into exercise?

The Rev. C. H. Townshend, in his preface to his truly philosophical work, entitled "Facts in Mesmerism," gives an instance which I cannot forbear to quote.

After describing the happy effects of this power in calming the sufferings of a beloved friend, he says: "Yet he owed a deeper debt than this to Mesmerism. It had reclaimed him from the hardest infidelity. Of a singular organization, R. T. the most amiable of human beings, approached the nearest to an Atheist of any I had ever met with. He seemed to want the very faculty, which says at once, "A God must be."

\* \* \* \* \* "Who then, that saw him leaning over his Bible as he sat, for an hour or two of an evening, propt up by pillows on every side; calm, even under the attack of periodical fever,—triumphing over mortal infirmity and pain,—rejoicing, while we inwardly mourned, and whispering patience and comfort to all around him;—who, that beheld his strength made perfect in weakness, but must have said, "The hand of heaven is here." And this faith, this wondrous patience, "this holy comfort springing out of tears," were, as he himself told me, attributable, under divine providence, to Mesmerism."

"For having seen mesmeric phenomena, to which he could not refuse his assent, he was led, step by step, to recognize the mighty truth of spirit predominant over matter; consequently of a ruling spirit creating and sustaining all things. He, who sees and ministers to the spiritual wants of all his reasoning creatures, had adapted this remedy to the peculiar and painful disease of the intellect under which R. T. had laboured; and touchingly he said to me, "I rejoice that Mesmerism was the

that you deny the resurrection of the body?" but on attentive examination, I found that it would bear another construction. I am not personally acquainted with Miss Martineau, nor do I know if I am correct in my conjectures, but it appears to me that she doubts not the resurrection of the human frame, but that the *very material atoms* committed to the grave, shall all form part of the glorified and risen body;—a view apparently suggested by St. Paul, when he says, in illustration, "Thou sowest not *that body that shall be*, but bare grain," and God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased Him,"—the *germ* of the bodies of those who sleep in Jesus being made the *nucleus*, around which shall be gathered the constituent parts of a spiritual body, fashioned like to that of the glorious Redeemer.

Again: Miss Martineau says, "Such an incident \* \* \* explains the rise of many pretensions to revelation." This I cannot consider as a "sly, subtle, yet palpable hit at all real inspiration," but conclude that it refers to so-called prophets and inspired persons in later days, such as the Holy Maid of Kent, who lived in the reign of Henry the Eighth.\*

The passage in the letter alluded to will evidently bear this interpretation, and that charity "that hopeth all things," will prompt us to believe so, unless further evidence to the contrary is afforded by the authoress herself.

May not the painful discrepancy alluded to in Miss M.'s letter be that between the statement, that the soul is *self-existent*, and *depends on nothing*; and that *God takes care of it* till the day of judgment. Should this supposition be true, what need is there of the gratuitous assumption, that the mesmerisee, acted upon by the nervous system of the mesmeriser, and through that agency placed "en rapport" with his thoughts and feelings, becomes the helpless, passive, unconscious, polluted receptacle of an evil spirit?"

But admitting, for the sake of argument, that the contrary is the fact, and that Miss M. does not believe in the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, so fully revealed in Holy Scripture, would that affect the science which she advocates? If a medical man discovers a fresh remedy, or a new method of surgical manipulation, are we to reject his discovery because he happens to be a materialist?

\* See the Rev. G. Sandby's *Mesmerism and its Opponents*, ch. 7.

It is a notorious fact, that one of our best medical works contained in the first impression, an awful assertion, which, as it was withdrawn, *I do not feel justified in repeating*; but are we to say that every one who studies physiology after this, connects himself with infidelity, and will bring upon himself the woe denounced against those who throw a stumbling block in the way of God's people?

It must be allowed, that everything which is useful is liable to abuse. The facts (not the theories) of geology and astronomy, have furnished weapons for bad men against our holy religion; though, when thus misapplied, they have failed of their intended effect, and recoiled upon those who employed them. But surely no one would bring it as a charge against these undoubted phenomena, that infidelity had for a moment troubled with its filthy garments the pure waters that flow from the well of truth; nor would they suspect all who advocate these important sciences of being leagued with those who seek to subvert Christianity.

If mesmeric experiments were universally connected with socialist or infidel lectures, or if such deluded men were their only advocates, we might indeed pause and tremble; but these are the exceptions, and not the rule. Look into the ranks of its supporters, and you will find many who would not count their lives dear unto them, if they were called to give them up in defence of the gospel. It is true that infidelity, which poisons all it approaches, will lay hold of this, as well as of every other means to diffuse its venom, but as well might you call on the medical profession to lay aside the use of remedies, because they are sometimes administered with an oath, instead of a prayer for their success; or to discard the lancet because it is used by men who absurdly tell us that the soul is material, and that death is the end of man's existence.

Again, you say "England is not ripe for a professed rejection of God, and an open acknowledgment of Satan, like that which speedily followed upon the *reception of Mesmerism in France*." The latter part of this sentence is not historically correct. The doctrines of Mesmer were submitted to a committee of the French academy in the year 1784, and were examined by men, many of whom took part in the disastrous events that followed. But what was their decision? They accredited the facts, but denied the theory. Their report tended rather to check the spirit of

enquiry; and as the awful tide of infidel revolution swelled and rolled towards them, Mesmer and his manipulations were forgotten: nor was it till 1831, when another committee of physicians and learned men decided that "it ought to be allowed a place within the circle of the medical sciences," that Mesmerism could be said to have been *received* in France.

And not only on the continent but in our own country, every day adds to the facts and the stability of Mesmerism.

Much as I regret that its phenomena (mixed up too often with quackery and imposition), should be exhibited by public lecturers for paltry gain, instead of being employed solely to alleviate the diseases which are rife around us, still I cannot but rejoice that it is making progress. Its remedial powers are everywhere acknowledged, even by those who, like yourself, have purposely thrown them into the shade, to bring forward the more unusual and less useful effects, which have been placed in an unnatural light, in order to scare the timid, or to induce the weak believer to turn his back upon the investigation of truth.

It cannot be too often repeated, that the power which can assuage and cure diseases, such as paralysis and epilepsy, hitherto considered as nearly beyond the power of medicine, and which has been made the instrument, under the Divine blessing, of smoothing the dying pillow, and turning the sceptic into a simple believer of the truth as it is in Jesus, cannot but be the gift of God; that the remarkable mental developments which sometimes, though not invariably accompany it, and which had *all been observed* in diseased persons before Mesmerism was practised, have no relation, directly, or indirectly, with the powers of darkness, but might, if rightly understood, impress us with a deeper sense of the wisdom of our great Creator.

Who has not felt, with the author of the beautiful lines before quoted, such an enquiry as the following arise in his mind, respecting the saint just freed from his tenement of clay:

In the sudden, strange transition,  
By what *new and finer sense*,  
Shall she grasp the mighty vision,  
And receive its influence?

I profess not to be wise above that which is written, nor to explain what is not revealed; but if we see, even here

below, the mental powers of one person acting on the intelligence of another without the intervention of the usual organs of sense, we may more easily conceive how the spirits of the just made perfect can have intercourse with each other before the resurrection of the body. May not we also gain from this fact, an intimation of the manner in which those who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation may have a knowledge of our thoughts, and, by the command of Him who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, infuse into our minds suggestions that may enable us to resist temptation, and countervail the workings of our corrupt nature.

This may furnish a reply to the sceptic who sneers at the doctrine of the ministry of angels, and give to the believer an idea, indistinct it is true, but still consistent with the Scriptures, of the communion of the saints who sleep in Jesus.

My only aim in publishing this letter has been the hope that some weak brother may have a stumbling block removed out of his way; that some one whose mind has been distressed with doubts as to our blessed Saviour's first miracle should have those doubts removed, and be taught that revelation need fear nothing from the discoveries of science; for truth, whatever form it may take, comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variable-ness, nor the shadow of a change; and that the more we study God's works, in the light of God's word, the more we shall grow in knowledge and in grace: nor can I believe that He would permit his believing children, who earnestly seek his direction and his blessing, to retain, even while imploring wisdom from above, a lie in their right hand.

I must again, before I close, express my regret that a person for whom I feel such deep respect as yourself, should have written in a manner less guarded than you have usually employed, and the hope that you may, on mature deliberation, be brought to modify your views, and no longer throw an obstacle in the path of a remedial process so eminently suited, under God's blessing, to prove a benefit to mankind.

I am, Madam, yours, &c.

5th March, 1845.