

KNOCKS

FOR THE

KNOCKING S.

BY HEMAN BURR.

I've caught a hundred devils.

OLD PLAY.

• Be there any honest men left, Hal?

FALSTAFF.

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TO THE READER.

IN this little book will be found the history of the unmistakable detection and exposure of more than fifty of the pretended spiritual mediums.

In every instance where close examinations have been allowed, fraud has been detected in producing the noises and moving the tables.

The mediums whom I have detected were those to whom the Rappers took me for the purpose of convincing me of the truth of Rapism, and were what they regarded the "best" and "strongest."

The detections were made almost invariably in the presence of some of the more intelligent and candid believers, who are referred to as witnesses of the justice of my reports.

For more than two months I have spent all my time examining the "best mediums" which are to be found in five of the States where Rapism prevails most—and in no single instance has any cause but *fraud* and *delusion* appeared behind these effects.

It will be perceived by the next chapter that it *was* the intention of my brother to write an essay on the Rappings for the forthcoming new series of the Nineteenth Century, but he gave up the idea and placed in my hands such papers as he made out, with his consent that I should make whatever use of them I pleased. I have availed myself of his kindness, and have incorporated his reports with my own without deeming it necessary to encumber the pages with notes of explanation.

In this book I use the word Rappers to signify, not only the mediums, but all who believe in the spirituality of the manifestations.

I have not been able to get into these pages more than one third of the *facts* and *evidence* which I have gathered, that will go to prove most conclusively the fraud and delusive theory of the Rappings.

I can now produce "mysterious rappings" seventeen different ways, which tricks I have learned by the detection of so many mediums. They are all described in this book.

A LETTER FROM C. CHAUNCEY BURR.

DEAR BROTHER,

I HAVE made up my mind not to write the Essay of which we talked, about the rappings. The game is hardly worth the powder; and it is meddling with a nest of hornets, which it is extremely unpleasant fighting, to say the least. And then you cannot convince these *mystagogues* of their errors. They will not be convinced. You have already seen with what evasion and dishonesty many of them get off when you have detected their mediums, and how they finally fall to lying like an army of devils, when they can skulk and evade no more. There are, to be sure, a few people of real worth and intelligence connected with these "manifestations," but these have generally a peculiar organization, thoroughly unfitting them for the imperious demonstrations which alone can guide us safely in the investigation of a new phenomenon. The people of this class are of a dreamy honest turn, and can little suspect the sinfulness of this world, which I grieve to say, after the fashion of Sir John Falstaff, is terribly "given to lying." These well-meaning people have ever been found up to their ears in all the chicaneries which different *epochs* of the world have clung to, and they will be found there until the crack of doom, and after doom is cracked, I am afraid, for all that you will be able to do to save them. Your experience in the world must have taught you that these people will run after some novelty, if it is nothing more than live lions stuffed with straw, fire-eaters, bottle-conjurors, or the fish-skin mermaids and gnome flies of P. T. Barnum. Especially will they run after ghosts, devils, or any thing else beyond the soundings of the possible and the experimental. They live simply in the *myths* of all realities. They will not be content with the *realities*. This kind of people will always be in the world, and we may as well let them alone. It was but just now that Science was boasting loud enough that it had killed off witchcraft, banished the ghosts from the face of the earth, and cast Beelzebub into the bottomless pit, when lo! the witches, the ghosts, Beelzebub, and the devil himself come frisking, with all manner of unheard-of antics and "manifestations," into our philosophical presence, to tell us that they are not floored yet. And can you not see that they never will be floored while there remains this cast of mind on earth so fitted to believe in them. There is in your philosophy no "*presto*, change and begone" for these things. I tell you that "Old Nick" is not yet done with the world—not yet driven down to a final feeding upon the sulphuretted hydrogen of his own hell, but holds now a most respectable kingdom (or devildom) in the brains of many good people, where he gets better living, and plenty of *fresh air*.

Now the spirits are fairly begun they too will have a reign. You will soon hear of "haunted houses" again in all directions. Whenever men believe such things possible there will be enough of the "manifestations." And I can plainly

see that these "harmonial philosophers" are destined to have a good time of it for a few months. They will believe anything that the spirits or Jackson Davis tell them. If Davis should discover, in one of his harmonial flights, the rays of the star that appeared to the three wise men of the east, they will believe that too; and it will not surprise me to hear that they are passing round at their "sittings" a phial-full of the real sweat of St. Michael, which he shed when fighting the devil. If the "spirits" should bring them a nose of the seraphim that appeared to St. Francis, they would stick it on their own faces, and swear that they had worn it an hour and a half at a time, to the great comfort and edification of the "harmonial circle."

It is simply a loss of time to reason with such people. Like Mr. N. P. Willis they "begin with believing," and you might almost as well write a pamphlet to set right the incoherent dreams you had last night, as to write one to convince these "rappers."

It is very probable, however, that a plain statement of the *impositions* and *tricks* which we have detected, would put some honest people in the way to detect the same things themselves, and might do some good. And if you think it worth your while to get up such a pamphlet, all the notes which I have made in my lectures, and the reports of the examinations of the mediums, are at your service.

***** You will allow me to suggest that you are safe enough in admitting, if you please to do so, that spirits *can* come back "from that bourne whence no traveller returns," and kick over light stands, and rattle about under chairs and tables, and then throw the knockings upon the task of proving themselves to be such a manifestation. This will be a summary way enough of using them up; for they have in no instance come up within sight of the very lowest line of evidence which would prove them to be such a manifestation. ***** Set down the truth as you have discovered it, without stint or favor. And then make up your mind to be well enough abused, for the Rappers already number in their ranks all the firey odds and ends of all the exploded *isms* and *ologies* which have kept this American pot of ours boiling and simmering for the last ten years. You will strike a nest of hornets. But strike it if you will. You have time—I have not.

KNOCKS FOR THE KNOCKINGS.

CHAPTER I.

PRODIGIES.

IF we do not say that the Rappings claim to be *miracles*, we must admit that, to say the least, they claim to be *prodigies*. Either they are not traceable to natural causes at all, or they are not traceable to those causes which are in regular and ordinary operation.

Now before any such prodigies can be admitted we must take into the account

1st. The number and agreement of the narrations.

2d. The degree of confidence which the observers and witnesses of them merit.

3d. The possibility of tracing the alleged prodigies to some trick of art, or to the operation of some law of nature already understood.

These points will be discussed in the three following chapters of this book.

The reader should be reminded also that to prove a *prodigy* there is required a thousand fold more evidence than there is demanded to prove a simple fact of ordinary occur-

rence. The amount of evidence demanded increases in exact ratio with the uncommonness of the event. If a man says he saw an eagle flying over the town yesterday, we may easily believe him. If he says he saw a flock of a thousand eagles we should have hard work to believe him, because we know that eagles do not go in flocks; but still we might say that the thing is possible, because eagles do fly in the air. But if he says that he saw a flock of a thousand eagles swimming in the Atlantic ocean ten feet below the top of the water, we are bound *not to believe him*, whatever may have been his previous reputation for veracity and sanity. It is much easier and safer for us to believe that he could be deceived, or that he would deceive us, than to believe that so strange and unnatural an event did really take place.

In this imperious way are we to judge of the Rappings. The *unnaturalness*, *unreasonableness*, and *unfitness* of these alleged manifestations make it impossible that cautious and candid people should believe in them. They are just as eccentric and contradictory to all that we know of the relations of *spirit* to *matter*, as the sight of eagles flying under the water is contradictory to our *knowledge* and *experience* of the nature of wings and water.

In order to justly doubt the spirituality of these manifestations we, in fact, are under no obligation to account for the exact cause of the sounds. We are not obliged to know *how* these tricks are done. If they contradict all that we do know of spirituality and materiality,—if the badges of *fraud* are on them, we rest safely enough on the assertion that they are only the result of trick or delusion, until a common observation shows them to be a real phenomenon.

Neither are we obliged to know all the sources of fallacy by which sincere people may be deceived. It is enough for us to know that they *may be deceived*; and it is much easier for us to believe that they *are deceived* than it is for us to believe the prodigy of the rappings.

CHAPTER II.

THE NARRATIONS.

IN estimating the degree of confidence to which these alleged spiritual manifestations are entitled, we must very discriminatingly take into the account *the number and agreement of the narrations*.

1. How many persons of the more cautious and less imaginative class have seen these things?

2. And how many of the whole number who have seen them agree that they are marvelous?

It is a well known fact that the manifestations have generally been conducted in such a manner as to preclude the possibility of any considerable number of the most intelligent and sharp-sighted people having an opportunity for a critical and thorough investigation of them. It is a very common occurrence for the "spirits" to spell any man or woman out of the circle whom the medium knows to be very skeptical. Many times I have seen some doctor, minister, or lawyer sent home before the spirits would make any manifestation at all. And it is acknowledged by the Rappers themselves that the "best and highest demonstrations" are obtained only when all present are believers.

So that comparatively few of those who are best fitted to detect the imposition, have enjoyed an opportunity of seeing and testing the manifestations.

And it is giving the Rappers all they deserve, to say that not more than *one in ten* of this number have ever been impressed with any favor whatever for the spiritual theory.

By every rule of evidence which is regarded in courts of law, and which has been adopted by scientific men in the investigation of new phenomena, this Spiritual pretence is found wanting in the first step of its existence.

CHAPTER III.

THE WITNESSES.

WHAT degree of confidence are the witnesses, who testify to the extra-mundane character of these manifestations, entitled to? Are they a class of people remarkable for steady, even discriminating, mental habits? or are they generally a people which is always found running wild into every chimera which is hatched in the prolific brain of deceit and imagination? We know that there is a large class of such people to be found everywhere. We may call them *Mystagogues*, for they are always engaged in some misty region beyond the line of rigid experience, and the imperious demonstrations of philosophy.—Are the Rappers generally of this class? Mormonism, Millerism, Davisism, and all manner of *isms*, find a very large number to believe in them very devoutly; and are the Rappers quite generally of this same cast of mind? No matter how much credit we may be pleased to give some of them for honesty and

common virtue, but are they of those peculiar mental habits which incline them continually to the restless world of mystery and imagination? If they *are*, then we know that we may not rely with any very great safety upon their wonderful stories. Men will generally find plenty of evidence to prove to their own satisfaction and great edification whatever they very strongly believe.

I have now before me an article written for a paper in New Bedford, loudly declaring that the exposé which I recently gave of the Rappings in that city was a failure. The author signs his name "B. F. Hatch, M. D.," and he closes his article by informing us that—"I had years previous to any notice having been given either in Auburn or Rochester of the Rapping, made the remark in my public lectures that I fully believe that the time *WOULD COME* when the inhabitants of earth and the spirit world would hold free communication."

I desire to have it understood, that it was no part of my mission to New Bedford to convince "B. F. Hatch, M. D." If he has been waiting so many years in the belief that these "manifestations" would come, it undoubtedly requires a greater miracle to undeceive him than the manifestations themselves amount to. "B. F. Hatch, M. D.,"* is probably a fair specimen of the general witnesses in favor of the new "Harmonial Philosophy"—a man who has been waiting for many very miserable years for these *heavenly visitations*, which have come at last under the chairs and tables of innumerable kitchen girls. Such men will *Hatch* more devils

* I heard of this gentleman when I was in New Bedford as formerly a Universalist preacher and lecturer against small beer, who has recently become an Eclectic doctor, and lest he should lose some of his titles, he has engraved on the head of his cane, "Rev. Dr. B. F. Hatch, M. D."

and hobgoblins in a single year than all science will be able to lay in half a century. When the reader comes to the chapter on the "Spirits in Providence," he will perceive how little confidence can be placed in the miraculous stories of the believers. He will perceive how men, generally honest, deceive others, by first allowing themselves to be deceived. Mr. Brittan, in the Tribune, declares that my brother explains the Rappings by calling all the witnesses "liars." The reader will perceive from what I have written that this is a total misstatement of my position, as it is also of my brother's. I have not regarded them generally as intentional deceivers; but I have contended that, for the most part, they are cast in a particular mould of mind which makes them incompetent witnesses in cases where their faith and imagination have become greatly excited. When you arrive at the chapter in this book on the spirits in Fall River, you will find a very striking illustration of the justice of this remark. Two or three gentlemen of first class intelligence and respectability, came to tell me that they had just seen a medium who produced effects that "no human being could explain." Among these tricks was one which was deemed a double proof. A slender young girl, they said, would simply place her fingers on the table, and "it would fly round the room with such power that three strong men, when they seized hold of it, were dragged about by it as though they were puff-balls, and they had no power to stop it." But when I was allowed to try the thing myself, I found that there was no truth whatever in the statement of the extraordinary power which was claimed for the Medium. For I instantly stopped the table in its spiritual flight with the strength of *one hand*, and the next time with a single

finger, although the spirits pulled and tugged at it until the *Medium was red in the face*. And these were the powerful spirits which, if I might rely upon the serious word of several sincere and honest men, had repeatedly "dragged three strong men like puff-balls about the room." And I solemnly declare that, in every instance of all my numerous examinations, the marvelous stories related by these witnesses have come out in the same way.

But the witnesses will exclaim, with astonishment—"Don't we know what we have seen?" "Must we not believe our own senses?" Yes, undoubtedly, if you are sure you have your senses. But as things sometimes go, it is not a very safe business to trust to what men call their senses. A Rev. Spiritual Rapper of New York, a man of genius and *hon-esty*, so far as a hot-headed intolerable dogmatist can be so, declares that when he is exhausted now, two little spirits come with a kind of red-looking fluid and administer it to him, whereupon he is instantly refreshed, and inspired with remarkable physical energy. No doubt *his senses* tell him all this. But we say that his senses are not reliable. An eminent artist of New York, a Rapper, also declares that he has recently seen a "large angel with a child in her arms, flying over the Washington parade ground." What is this man's testimony, in his present frame of mind, worth in any case of fact which concerns his peculiar delusion? I am persuaded that you will say, "not much." And yet, such is the degree of enthusiasm with which a large majority of these witnesses have entered upon the defence of the Rappings, that they are scarcely less imaginative and eccentric in their seeings than the two witnesses above named.

This, then, is what I have to say about the witnesses for

the Rappings. They are generally *reliable* when they testify to things that are not miracles or prodigies in their nature. If they tell us that they dined on roast beef yesterday,—that they went to church last Sunday, or that they saw an eagle light on the top of Trinity steeple, we should believe them. But if they say that they saw a million of codfish swimming in the air, a mile above the earth, we are not at liberty to believe them. In charity we may say, if we please, that they are *mistaken*, but we cannot believe their story. Before so strange a thing as this can be believed, it must become a matter of general observation, and there must be a general agreement to the fact by the witnesses. There has been much general observation of the prodigies of the Rappings, and there has been no general agreement to their extra-mundane character, by those who have observed them. So that if we give the Rappings all the latitude its disciples claim, they are still found wanting in the balance.

CHAPTER IV.

PHYSICAL MARVELS.

BUT, granting that all the manifestations which the Rappers claim to have seen were really produced, *is it not possible to account for them by some trick of art?* Are they *necessarily* spiritual?

After all, are these manifestations, in any respect, more wonderful than many other pretended supernatural things which have often occurred in the world, and which have already been unmistakably traced to tricks of art, and entirely exploded? Give the Rappers all the latitude they desire for the scope of marvelous stories,—grant that tables have turned themselves over, and chairs danced hornpipes, can we not, in the combined history of *trick* and *delusion*, match and overmatch them all, by marvelous stories which have again and again been explained and accounted for by mundane causes? If this question is answered in the affirmative it will be quite fatal to the Rappings. And it *will be answered in the affirmative*. I, for one, have never been able to discover anything that is at all marvelous in these pretended hyperphysical transcendencies. The history of the “French Prophets,” the “Seekers,” the “Ranters,” the “Jumpers,” the “Whippers,” the “Convulsionists” of St. Medard, the “Adamites,” and a great many other “Spiritual” fanaticisms, gave us tales of far more wonderful “spiritual manifestations” than the Rappers have yet recorded,—

and yet we know that those "manifestations" were soon cleared up, the wonderful *facts* explained, and the delusions stopped.

The history of the cunning Rabbi Barchshebas, who for some time made many credulous Jews believe that he was the Messiah, is a history of far greater wonders than these Rappings, and yet the trickster was soon exposed. The world is familiar with the history of at least a thousand of these "spiritual" pretences and pretenders, that were a hundred fold more marvelous than this silly jugglery of the Rappings, which have all been found out and settled long ago.

Ten years ago, there was a "spiritual manifestation" in Halifax which put the wisest heads of Nova Scotia at bay for a whole year. The chief trick of the "spirits" was to throw gravel stones from the sky through the windows. It was estimated that over one hundred thousand panes of glass were broken out by these ærial spirits. Immense crowds would gather about the houses which were suffering the vengeance of these "spirits," and gaze with horror upon the infernal "manifestations." Ministers preached about them on Sunday, and the old ladies crept together at tea parties to talk over the machinations of the devil and his imps.

But it came out at last that the real "spirit" was a ragged little Irish girl, who had arrived at infinite skill in flitting small gravel stones, which she would throw with such precision and power as to break pane after pane of the glass; and this she would do while standing in the very midst of the gaping crowd, which was looking up horror-stricken to the clouds from which the invisible "spirits" hurled their missiles.

The poet Whittier has recorded the *facts* of a "spiritual manifestation" which once occurred in the town of Newburyport, and the haunted house, he says, is now standing in Market street. He says, "here lived a sober old couple, William Morse and his wife Elizabeth, and their grandson, a roguish lad of fifteen, who proved to be the author of the mischief. The whole neighborhood was filled with consternation by records of strange disturbances in this dwelling—doors opening and shutting; pots and kettles dancing on the floor; the dinner pot, after being hung on the fire-place carefully by the good wife, persisting in turning itself over, and emptying the pork and cabbage into the fire; the bed clothes flying off as fast as they could be put on; and the great wooden wheel turning itself up-side-down, and standing on its end in a manner very unseemly and improper for Puritan housing-stuff. *A sea-faring man, named Powell, detected the young mischief-maker, and put an end to the disturbance.*"

The same author records another "spiritual manifestation" equally as marvelous as the above, which occurred in New Hampshire several years ago. These "invisible spirits" were distinctly heard "to talk in small squeaking voices," and "the house was literally thronged from all the adjacent towns to hear the chattering of the fairies." But it was shown at last that the "spirits" were "the landlady's three slatternly daughters," who had been trained by their mother to perform these tricks, by which she had gratified a natural disposition to deceive, and made a few dollars besides.

Now these spiritual manifestations throw the knockings entirely into the shade. And in the next "chapter" there is

the history of a recent spiritual display in France, which goes infinitely ahead of any thing we have had in the same line in this country. And the "medium" is now in prison for the offence. It will be perceived that the *police* were completely deceived after they had made the most thorough investigation, and gave up that the manifestations "were made by spirits." The account was translated from the "*Courier des Etats Unis*."

CHAPTER V.

SPIRITUAL KNOCKINGS IN FRANCE.

ABOUT the middle of the *Rue Nanjac*, stands a small white house, with green blinds, and a garden and small yard in the rear. Only two families occupy the house.

During the last fortnight events of the most extraordinary character have occurred in the garden, in the rooms, and especially in the kitchen chimney of the ill-fated dwelling, and the whole neighborhood had been thrown into the highest state of excitement. People talked of nothing but ghosts and hobgoblins. Fear took possession of every heart, and crowds congregated day and night, in front of the little house with green blinds, anxious to solve the awful mystery.

Now, these are the facts which occurred at the little house, with green blinds, throwing the honest tenants into dismal consternation.

One day, at sundown, at the hour when the soup kettle is placed on the fire, to warm up the soup for dinner, a stone suddenly fell through the chimney smashing the earthen pot,

scattering the coals about the room, and spilling the broth over the hearth.

The first time this thing happened, it was supposed that some fragment of brick or mortar having become detached from the chimney, had fallen down into the fire-place. This was a sufficiently natural supposition, and had we been the tenants, we would certainly have indulged it ourselves.

A new kettle, however, had scarcely been replaced upon the fire, when another big stone came like a thunderbolt through the window, dashing the panes to atoms, and striking right in the middle of the kitchen, to the utter astonishment of the honest tenants, who could scarcely believe their own eyes. The inside shutters were instantly closed, and the family gathered around the hearth, to inquire into the meaning of these mysterious attacks, and what invisible hand could have thus smashed the soup kettle, and broken the window glass. Courage returned after a while. Perhaps, suggested one, it was only some boy at play, who threw stones on the roof, and against the window.

We would have thought just so.

This suggestion seemed to dispel the fears of the good tenants, and they set about to prepare anew their supper, when, oh, horrors! the hearth is inundated, the fire is extinguished, a dense smoke fills the room, and a considerable quantity of water is seen running down the chimney!

A general rush is instantly made towards the garden, in search of the evil spirits who dared thus to disturb the peace of inoffensive citizens. But at the same moment the back and front windows flew open, the glass was smashed to atoms, and in every room the stones came in like hail, strik-

ing several of the little children, and inflicting severe wounds upon them.

The family were in consternation, and shut themselves up, carefully closing all the inside shutters, which resounded with a constant hail of stones. Nobody went to bed that night.

The next morning, a complaint was made to the *commissaire de police*, who is supposed to have the power to rout all evil spirits. The commissary came, accompanied by the Deputy Sheriff, the Judge of Instruction, the clerk, and in fact the whole judiciary. Every one was submitted to a severe cross-examination, careful search was made in the garden, in the yard, in the rooms, the neighboring houses, adjoining gardens and yards, the roof and the chimney; but to no purpose. Nothing was found, not the slightest trace of spirits, ghosts, hobgoblins, witch, or conjurer.

The magistrates returned, believing it perhaps a mystification or a hallucination. But how could it be possible? There were the stones piled up in the chimney, and scattered about the rooms. There were the windows pasted up with paper, in place of the broken glass, and a child was laid upon the bed, with the wound in its head bound up. These facts could not be denied.

During this and the following days, it rained stones from the garden and the yard, and torrents of water poured down the chimney, and inundated the kitchen in such a manner that it was impossible to cook the dinner; and yet the evil spirits, so extremely subtle and cunning, succeeded to evade the most minute search, and escaped all possible investigation.

One evening, their wickedness went even so far as to throw

down the chimney a dead cat! This it was supposed would be a finishing stroke, and a truce of some days tended to confirm the hope. But alas! the respite did not last long. The spirits resumed their infernal racket, and that, too, under the very eyes of the police, who spared no effort or means to surprise them. They carried their audacity to the last extremity, but we must here remark, that they seemed to address themselves only to one of the tenants, a man named Landon, an officer of the excise. It was at first thought to be some grudge against him, but afterwards he began himself to be suspected of making the disturbance. It was not so, however, as it was proved afterwards.

"About eight o'clock, night before last," says a paper, "the Naujac street affair became more complicated. An evil spirit, in the shape of a bully some six feet in his boots, succeeded in gaining admittance to the house, under the pretence of being a law officer. Once in the house, this spirit administered to officer Landon a lesson in pugilism, which would have done honor to a professional knight of the ring. Landon was not disconcerted, however, and believing that this time, he had at last got hold of the real witch, he defended himself bravely, and furrowed the face of the ghost with his sharp nails, leaving marks of the bloody conflict upon the face of the evil spirit."

This event, as wonderful and unaccountable as the dead cat which fell through the chimney upon the soup kettle, produced the deepest sensation in the neighborhood. "It cannot be denied," all said, "that it's the devil in person who has appeared and taken possession of the house with green blinds."

The police remained on the spot night and day, and made

the most thorough search in the recesses, presses, closets, under the beds, in the bedticks, the cupboards, and finally they explored the chimney and the cellar, but nothing, nothing, nothing!

In short, the police were completely at fault and dumb-founded, when a sudden inspiration of the victim of the devil, led to a discovery of the mystery.

The devil had taken another short respite, and his victim, Landon, was walking quietly in his garden, entirely off his guard, when the infernal game was again renewed in his house. All of a sudden, a stone came from the direction of the window, then two, then three, to the utter dismay of the good lady, and the discomfiture of the soup kettle, which she was busily skimming. Alarmed, she run out, and carried the stones to her husband, who could hardly believe his own eyes, for he had had thick gratings put on the outside of the windows, and the stones which *must* have come through the gratings, were twice as large as the interstices!

This was witchcraft, magic or the doings of the devil.

Landon now conceived the idea of hiding himself under his bed, but he discovered nothing. At last, not knowing what to do, he said to himself, "Who knows but our servant girl is a witch? for, according to all laws of nature, these stones could never have come through the gratings. Either the girl or the devil must have thrown them."—Thereupon the victimized tenant undertook to examine carefully the girl's eyes, for it is well known that there is something peculiar in the eyes of witches.

However, he could discover nothing satanic in them. He then questioned her. At first she replied calmly; but afterwards, suspicions having been expressed, she was angry,

screamed, wept, sobbed, called Heaven to witness that she was not a witch, and that the accusation was shameful and infamous.

The anger of the young girl, far from convincing the exciseman of her innocence, only strengthened his suspicions. "I have it," said he, rubbing his hands. He then spoke to her in a kind manner, declared that he had seen all, threatened exposure to the police, and obtained a complete confession.

"The young girl," says a Bordeaux paper, "has made a full confession. She is the sole witch, who, for a whole month, has disturbed with her *diableries* the house with green blinds and the whole neighborhood.

"This kitchen *magicienne*, improving a moment when her master could not see her, took a stone and let it fly. It was this which broke the glass and fell inside the window. There was a large vessel filled with water in the corner of the chimney, and when all eyes were turned in another direction, a large quantity of it was thrown by her up the chimney, to come down again, laden with soot, inundating the hearth and the kitchen floor. The dead cat made its appearance through the same process. These tricks, learned of a fortune teller, in whose employ she once was, the girl has played off, week after week, without being detected by the most cunning; and she carried with her to prison, where she is safely locked up, the consolation that the discovery was not made, at least, by the police."

There was a spiritual manifestation quite as "unaccountable" as the above, which appeared in Norwich, Conn., about twelve years ago. The haunted house was that of Mr. William Laws. The devils had their way with it for several

months, and the people came in from the neighboring towns to witness the wonders. At length a little boy on the premises was found to be the real devil, and he was sentenced to four years imprisonment for the offence.

CHAPTER VI.

SPIRITS IN PROVIDENCE.

THE most unaccountable stories have gone the rounds of the newspapers, about the doings of the spirits in Providence. The Rochester Rappings were not a priming to the terrible blasts of these Providence spirits. And from the astonishing things the Tribune related of these "manifestations" I was induced to go to this scene of enchantment, to behold for myself the disclosures of the spirit world. I was told there were three hundred Mediums in the city, and I put myself into the hands of those who were believers, desiring them to show me some of those wonders of which I had heard so much. Most of my investigations were conducted in the presence of Clement Webster, Esq., editor of the *Daily Post*, a gentleman of the first position as a man of genius and integrity, and to whom I refer with confidence as a witness to the justice of my reports.* These reports were made out either at the time when the investigations were made, or as soon after as I could reach my hotel.

* In cases where Mr. Webster was not present I have named the witnesses.

Medium No. 1. Mrs. ———, aged about thirty years.

I was taken to this woman's house by Mr. H., who was an enthusiastic believer in the spiritual origin of the manifestations. He informed me that this lady was regarded as the "strongest Medium in Providence." He was confident enough to introduce me by name to the Medium, who instantly answered him, that she doubted if they would get any manifestations, as she was quite unwell. There were already two gentlemen in the parlor, who had come some forty or fifty miles from some country town to consult the spirits. These men, with two or three believers, were permitted to sit down at once, to see if the spirits would "respond;" and I was invited into the kitchen to wait until the spirits should be made manifest. After waiting half an hour, Mr. H. came out and told me that they had had "some very good responses," but that the spirit of General Jackson had loudly announced himself, and on being asked if Mr. Burr should be allowed to come in, he had very firmly responded, "keep that man out." But the Medium thought that perhaps I might be allowed to enter if I would take my seat as a quiet spectator, and not attempt to apply any tests. So with my hands and tongue tied by a spiritual injunction, I was admitted. I was shown to a seat on the sofa, and directly behind a broad-shouldered man who sat exactly between me and the Medium. One of the countrymen was conversing with the spirit of his grandfather. This spirit-grandfather seemed to me to be a very capricious kind of fellow who delighted in confusing and teasing his anxious and doting grandchild. He very positively assured the man that he was his guardian spirit—was the spirit of his grandfather; but when he was asked to rap his name, he positively refused

to do it. After a great deal of coaxing, however, the grand-papa consented to rap out the number of years he had been in the spirit-world. It was the wrong number by ten or twelve years. The answers to the questions which were put, were almost invariably wrong. The Medium failed many times when I could have answered correctly myself from the manner of the questioner. I at once perceived that the sounds produced by this Medium were unlike any I had ever heard before in the "Rappings." They had none of the deep, muffled tone, and round, full volume of the original. Indeed they were not *Rappings* at all; and the moment I heard them, I supposed them to be the result of slight friction by the shoes, on the legs of the chair and table. I knew that if a little noise was made on the leg of a rocking-chair, the sound would be conducted to the extremity of the place on which it was made, and would seem to be on the top of the chair-back. And the same with the table. As an experiment, I put my foot against the chair of the man before me, and instantly produced the exact sounds; and the gentleman who was calling the alphabet took my sounds to be the real "*spiritual* responses," and put down the letter at which I rapped. This produced a very visible flush on the Medium's cheek, and she exclaimed in an excited tone, that "those noises were not on the table." After this little interruption, the "responses" became very confused, and finally ceased for a short time. Then there was a call for the spirits to move the table; and I distinctly saw the left foot of the Medium, which had been all the time back under her chair, slide out against the foot of the table, and in about a minute the table was moved slowly about four inches to the right. After this "manifestation" I went to my hotel. This

Medium would never consent for me to be present at another sitting, though I had not spoken a word, nor stirred from the seat which was given me on the sofa. But I had imitated her sounds so that the questioner could not distinguish any difference between hers and mine, and this was probably the offence which made her refuse to sit again in my presence. She charged half a dollar of each person who came to her "sittings," and I sent word to her that I would give her fifty dollars, if she would produce any manifestations in my presence which I could not detect the cause of, and expose. But on no terms would she make the trial.

A week after my observation of this Medium, she was clearly and unmistakably detected in producing the *raps*, by Dr. Comstock, of New London, Mr. Owen, a wealthy and influential merchant of Hartford, and Mr. Wright, who is one of the wealthiest gentlemen of Rhode Island. These gentlemen visited her in the afternoon, for the purpose of satisfying themselves whether there was really a spiritual manifestation in the knockings. There was a large circle at the table, and after the spirits were in full blast, Mr. Owen got up and went to the fire, and stood directly behind the Medium's chair. He quietly looked under the chair, and distinctly saw the woman making the noises by the friction of the heel of her shoe against the chair-post. By a wink he brought Dr. Comstock to the spot, and the doctor had the pleasure of watching, for some little time, this wood and leather spiritual manifestation. Then Mr. Wright went to the corner of the room, and sat down on the floor, and there had a distinct view of the same trick. He exclaimed, "If that lady will make a single sound on either that table or chair when she stands or sits away from them, I will give

her fifty or five hundred dollars." Mr. Owen then, on the spot, declared what he had seen, and the Medium cried, and the spirits took their departure for the time.

In another place I shall give more illustrations of the palpable impostures of this Medium.

Medium No. 2. Miss ——, aged nineteen.

This, I was informed, was the first Medium in Providence, and was still regarded as "one of the strongest," although two hundred and fifty had become Mediums since she began rapping. The Medium did not know me.

Question. "Is there any spirit here which will communicate with me?"

Answer, (by raps.) "Yes."

Question. "Who are you?"

Answer. "I am James."

Question. "James *who*?"

No answer.

Question. "Are you a relative of mine?"

Answer, (by raps.) "Yes."

Question. "Have you any word for me?"

The alphabet was called, and "*I watch over*," was regularly spelled out, and the next letter rapped at was "o," and the next "y," which the Medium said meant "you," but the spirit had made a mistake and put the "o" before the "y."

Question. "If you are a relative of mine won't you spell your name?—I don't remember any such relative.—Will you be so kind as to tell me your name?"

Answer. "No," which was signified by silence.

Question. "Is the spirit of my sister *Sarah* here?"

Answer. "Yes."

Question. "Do you love me as much as you did in life?"

Answer. "Yes."

Question. "Do you always know what I am doing?"

Answer. "Yes."

Question. "How long have you been in the spirit world?"

Answer. "Six years."

I never had a sister Sarah.

A very grim looking man now took his turn.

Question. "Will the spirit tell me whether it has ever seen such a being as the devil in the spirit world?"

Answer. "I have not."

Question. "Have you ever seen or heard of such a place as hell?"

Answer. "No."

Question. "If there were such a place or such a being would you have known it?"

Answer. "Yes."

Question. "Do I understand you to say that you do not believe there is such a place in the spirit world?"

Answer. "Yes."

This answer seemed to give great satisfaction to the grim questioner; and it must be confessed that such intelligence direct from the other world, is very comforting to sinners.

At 3 o'clock, P. M., of the same day, by request of a friend, I visited this Medium again. After I left in the morning she was informed who I was, and she desired that I might be sent for again, at the same time enjoining secrecy as to the fact of her knowledge of me. But I went to her house knowing that the Medium had sent for me. As soon as I entered the parlor there came a very confused rapping, and the alphabet was called, and "Burr" was spelled out.

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"Burr!" exclaimed the Medium, and her friends, "Who is Burr?" Great astonishment was expressed by all the rappers in the room, and the Medium declared that she could not understand what it meant. But the alphabet was called for, and the responses read "He is here in the room." "Why," said the Medium, "is this Mr. Burr? You see, sir, the spirits knew you when we did not." I, too, feigned astonishment, and said that it was "wonderful." And, indeed, the composure and seeming honesty with which the Medium and all parties kept their faces was wonderful.

The sounds produced by this Medium were like those which I heard with Medium No. 1. And I was sure that she could not produce them if her feet were not in contact with the table-leg or chair-leg. I desired her to sit with her side to the table, so that I might be sure that her feet were not against the leg. In this position she could make no sounds on the table, but they came on the chair. I then requested her to place her feet out away from the chair and keep still where I could see them. In this position she could not produce a sound on either *chair* or *table*. At five several times this test was made, and in every case she failed to get any sounds. I once requested her to stand up in the middle of the room, and in this position she could not produce the rappings. Mr. Pitkin, a professor in the high school at Taunton, testified that while this Medium was exhibiting in that place, he positively caught her producing the sounds with her feet, against the legs of the chair and table. Clement Webster, Esq. editor of the Daily Post, was present at most of the investigations with this Medium.

Medium No. 3. Miss —, aged twelve years.

The peculiarity of this medium was, that the table was not moved, nor the raps heard, except when the medium's hands were on the table. The spirit of my grandfather announced himself, but he refused to spell his first name, and made a mistake of several years in estimating the time since his death.

The sounds heard with this medium, were unlike those of the other mediums of Providence, and unlike any which I had ever heard elsewhere. They were so very low as to be hardly audible. And in a few moments I discovered that they were produced, sometimes by a slight jarring of the creaking old table, but generally, by the friction of the thumb nails, which were brought together as the hands were placed on the table. The way this last trick was detected, was by a quite accidental observation of the fact, that the blood came and went under the nails as the thumbs were pressed together. I instantly placed my hands on the table and produced the same sounds.

The next demonstration was the moving of the table. Both of the medium's hands were on the table, and in about three minutes it began to move slightly on its castors. I took the medium's seat and placed one of my hands on exactly the same place which her's had occupied, and produced a much greater movement of the table without any perceptible muscular force.

Several other demonstrations, equally as shallow and ridiculous as the above, were afterwards made, every one of which I performed myself, by taking the medium's place, even with greater effect than was claimed for the "spirits."

After I made public the detection of this medium, her father became very clamorous and abusive, and offered to bet five hundred dollars that the little noises would be heard on the table, and that the table would move when his daughter was not touching it. I sent him word that I was not in the habit of betting, but I would deposit five hundred dollars in the hands of a committee, and if any such manifestations, as he claimed, should take place in my presence, the money should be his. But at this offer his valor, Bob Acres like, oozed out of his fingers, and I got for a reply, that he would not have me in his house again. Clement Webster, Esq., was present at the investigation of this medium. The uncle of this medium, who is a highly respectable merchant of Providence, testifies that he has several times detected his neice in these same tricks.

Medium No. 4. Miss —, aged about sixteen years.

Rev. Mr. Clark attended me at the examination of this medium. The girl evidently thought me a believer, and took little pains to guard herself from my observation. She wore short clothes, and from my seat I distinctly saw the motions of her foot in making the raps on the leg of the table. Rev. Mr. C. was conversing with what purported to be the spirit of a friend some months dead, and when he called for some "stronger demonstrations," the medium pushed her foot up under the table, between the end of the drawer and the frame of the table, and kicked the drawer into the face and eyes of the gentleman who sat at the other end. All this I saw, as the man in the play says, "with my own eyes."

Medium No. 5. Miss —, aged twenty-three.

This medium was invited to the house of Dr. Webster for the purpose of giving me an opportunity of witnessing the manifestations which, it was said, through her, had been generally very satisfactory. Her manner was to lay her hands on the table when the rappings were going on. My brother watched her feet, and I watched her hands, and while she was thus watched, she did not produce a single rap. We were requested to go into the other room for a few minutes. In our absence, we were told that the spirits rapped beautifully. But when we came back to watch, all responses ceased. Again we went out. Again the raps came in our absence. Again, when our eyes were on the hands and feet of the medium, the raps ceased. The next day I was requested to visit this medium at her own house, and while she was thus watched, still she could not rap. With this medium there was never any kind of a rap produced in my presence, although several hours were spent in the trials.

Medium No. 6. A little girl ten years old.

I had heard the most unaccountable things of this Medium. She would just place the ends of her fingers on a table, on which a person was sitting, and it would instantly begin to dance about the room in the most fantastic manner. A gentleman who said his weight was two hundred and thirteen pounds, told me that he sat upon the table with his whole weight, and as soon as "this feeble little girl placed her hands lightly on it, it began to fly around the room so swiftly that he had hard work to hold himself on." And the

father of this Medium, I was told, was sure that she would obtain the \$500 reward which I had offered for any of the marvelous manifestations which I could not explain without the help of spirits. I placed myself on the top of the narrow pine table, which was the bewitched piece of housing stuff, and "the innocent little girl" placed her hands on the table. From the most careful watching of her hands I could not see that the Medium was pushing at all, and yet the table did creak and sway under me, though it did not move. At length, however, I perceived a muscular straightening of the Medium's back, which showed me that she had ingeniously thrown her whole weight against the table, and I very quickly jumped off, when the table flew over, and the innocent little girl flew with it, and pitched heels over head on the floor. This was a convincing proof to the whole company that the "innocent little girl" was pushing with all her might against the table at the time I jumped off. The father of the child did not pretend to claim the reward. Mr. White and his sister, both of whom were believers, attended me at the detection of this Medium. I also detected her in producing the raps with her thumbs, and pointed it out to Miss W., who plainly saw the trick herself.

Medium No. 7. Was a boy fifteen years old.

Mr. Pierce brought this Medium to my hotel. I detected him in producing the sounds once with one of his fingers, while his whole hand was on the table, and once he made them with his foot against the bottom of the table.

This same Medium was afterwards detected by a circle of Rappers at the house of Mr. H., and Mr. H., exclaimed,

"is it possible that you have been deceiving me all the time—does Mrs. W. deceive me, too?"

Other Mediums.

Seven or eight other Mediums were examined by myself and brother with the same success; but the details would occupy space in this book which is needed for other *facts*.

Mr. Webster, of the *Daily Post*, informed me that he had detected three Mediums himself—and that he had once produced the sounds himself, in imitation of the pretended Medium, and deceived the whole circle so completely, that the lady who questioned his sounds, said "it was the most satisfactory interview she had ever had with the spirits."

Rev. Eli Noyes, who is known as one of the most learned theologians and accomplished scholars in New England, informed me that he had detected fifteen or sixteen Mediums in the very motions which produced the sounds and moved the tables. In a letter which this learned gentleman sent to my brother, he says—"I have examined sixteen cases of the Rappings, all of which proved perfect failures. I have never heard sounds, nor seen tables move, which might not have been accomplished by persons in the room—and whenever I have heard noises, I have detected the motions which produced them."

In a letter which the same gentleman contributed to the "Morning Star" a few weeks before the date of the above, he says "I have heard no noises which I could not produce myself, and *I did produce such in four different ways so as to effectually deceive the whole company.*"—This distinguished clergyman told my brother that from the ingenious tricks which he had detected, by the investigation of so

many Mediums, he was quite sure that he could delude the whole town if he chose to play the impostor.

A talented and excellent lady, whose name has already appeared in this book, called on my brother when he arrived in Providence, to tell him the wonderful and satisfactory manifestations which she had witnessed herself from the spirit world. She was confident that he "must be convinced of the reality of these things if he examined the Mediums of Providence."

My brother gave her a few tests by which he wished her to try her Mediums. In four days afterwards he received a letter from the lady, from which I am permitted to make an extract. "Honored Sir, since my conversation with you on Saturday, I have had interviews with two Mediums, one of whom I am convinced is honest. I could, by none of the tests which you gave me, discover any fraud. *In the other case I did detect imposition.*" In a long letter she tells how she caught the girl in making the sounds—she imitated them on the spot, and then exposed the Medium to the circle.

This letter was dated February 10th, and March 2d another letter was received, from which I make the following extract. "I confess to you that I am at length well satisfied that nine-tenths of the Mediums are impostors." In another part of the letter I read—"I have just detected a brother and sister making the Rappings. They have succeeded in deceiving a number of very intelligent people. One gentleman of this city has made the offer to the boy's mother to adopt and educate him as his own son, on account of this extraordinary power, which the child possesses, of calling around him the spirits of the dead."

My brother furnished this lady with a series of sealed ques-

tions, and offered the sum of fifty dollars to any Medium through whom the spirits should answer *one* of them correctly. After these questions had been going before the best Mediums of Providence for nearly two weeks, a letter is received, stating that all have thus far failed. And she says, "The want of success has much lessened my interest in the subject; and after a few more such trials I shall let the whole matter rest for the present, and turn my attention to something more satisfactory than these manifestations now are to me."

This lady is certainly the most talented female whom I have ever found believing the Rappings. And she had the honesty and the courage to apply resolutely the tests which have resulted in the detection of so many Mediums.

Were it not that this chapter is already prolonged to an undesirable length, I could add as much more evidence in the way of *facts* concerning the spirits in Providence. But it is believed that enough is here given to show any honest man that there is no evidence to believe that "spirits" have anything to do with these manifestations there. I was there three weeks diligently searching for the strongest spirit displays, and there was either an effectual *driving* to the wall, or *nailing* to the wall, of every medium which came under investigation. Either the "spirits" were *stopped*, or if the manifestations went on, the *tricks* were detected. And in order to make sure work of it, after all these exposures, I still offered the mediums another chance, by the following advertisement in the Daily Post:

"WILL THE SPIRITS MOVE THE TABLE?"—Having in every instance detected the *physical* cause of the various manifestations called spiritual rappings, whenever I have been al-

lowed the privilege of making a thorough examination, and still hearing of most marvelous accounts of various articles of furniture being moved without any possible known physical cause, I have deposited fifty dollars in the hands of Clement Webster, Esq., which shall be given to any medium who will produce in my presence *any form* of such manifestations, for which I cannot detect a *known physical cause*. The examination shall take place in some parlor in which the medium is a stranger, and a committee of gentlemen of candor, known to the whole community, shall be selected from the learned professions of this city, to decide upon the results of the investigation.

Monday, March 3d.

HEMAN BURR.

Although nearly every medium in the city was Rapping for money, at the charge of fifty cents a head, not one dare except the challenge. This was regarded as the final surrender of the spirits. The Rappers, no doubt, continue to mutter and scold, and some of them to lie, but their "spirits" are under. And this city, the reader must not forget, was the head quarters of the hobgoblins.

A description of the intelligence of the spirits in Providence will be found in another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

SPIRITS IN BRIDGEPORT.

Owing to the general character of the Rappers in this city, (there are three or four individual exceptions to this remark,) the cause has never progressed in their midst beyond a little circle of most inglorious obscurity. It is the tattered remains of a little nest of mesmerists, who, several years ago, threw away the Bible for Davis's Revelations; and among other feats which were heard of the "spirits" here, we were told that they were in the habit of throwing the Bible into some dirty place, as a-straddle the top of the kitchen door, and removing Davis's Revelations to its place on the shelf.

The first Medium I saw in this place was a little girl about eight years old, the daughter of an excellent family. She had an aunt who was a Medium, and the child undoubtedly learned the tricks of her. The child's mother was absent from home some ten days, and during the time she was mostly in the company of this medium aunt, and when the mother returned, her child, too, was a medium.

I noticed that this little girl could never *rap* when sitting in a chair. She would never attempt it, except when seated on a little foot-stool; and I at once suspected the reason to be that when sitting in a chair her feet were exposed, or possibly her feet must rest on the floor when she produced the raps, which was impossible in a chair. I was boarding in the house, and saw this little girl several times a day for

nearly a week, and I could always stop the raps by lifting her up from the stool, or placing her feet out where I could see them. This fact left no doubt on my mind as to the manner in which she produced the sounds.

The next medium was Miss —, aged about thirteen years, and I had but one interview with her. I was not permitted to make any examination, for the spirits distinctly rapped out that I must not. The medium said she was willing herself, but she must "obey the spirits." My brother afterwards placed the Rappers in Bridgeport in such a dilemma that they were almost forced by the popular sentiment of the audience, at the controversy between himself and Mr. Brittan, to insist that this Medium should submit herself to an examination. The trial was to take place at Barnum's hotel. The Medium was attended by some eighteen persons, most of whom were believers. My brother told the crowd that there could be no test with so many present, for he had no means of knowing how many of them could make *raps* when he should place the Medium so that she could *not* make them. He would, therefore, name some four or five of the company whom he *did know*, (and three of these were believers,) and go into another room with them and the Medium, and then he would give the Medium fifty dollars for every rap she could produce while her hands and ankles were held in the manner of the test. The Medium positively refused to do this. The whole company of Rappers coaxed her, but it was no use; she would not after all submit to the test. The believers then wanted to know if it would not be "satisfactory, if the spirits would answer a mental question?" He instantly wrote a question on a card and placed it blank side up on the mantle-piece, and said,

“yes, if the spirits will answer that question correctly, I will still pay the Medium the reward, and recall, to-morrow, all I have ever said against the spirits.” The Medium was then taken into the other room, attended by the ladies, and the “spirits” were asked if they would try to answer Mr. Burr’s question? They answered “No.” They were then asked if Mr. Burr should be allowed to try the Medium, and they answered “No.” Thus, to the very visible mortification of all the Rappers present, ended the trial. There was, at this time, but one other Medium in Bridgeport, Mrs. —, and she positively refused to allow any tests to be applied by me. The following deposition, however, will throw some light on her spirits. It is the confession of a hard-working mechanic, who came out honorably in the end, and exposed the imposition.

Bridgeport, Feb. 4th, 1851.

I hereby certify that for the space of about three months, I was what is called a Medium in the phenomena of Spiritual Rappings, and I believe that I was considered as good as any of the “Mediums” in Bridgeport at the time. And I further declare that all the time I produced the sounds voluntarily with my toes and shoes, and other tricks of art; and the answers which I made to mental questions, in which department I was considered most successful, were the result of close watching of the person’s countenance, guessing, and a careful noting of hints inadvertently given.

I furthermore declare that I have seen Mrs. Porter produce the sounds with her feet. I also declare that while Mrs. Porter’s foot was braced against one side of the table, I was able the better to lift it by acting upon the other side, and I do solemnly declare, that several times both in the *light* and in the dark circles, I lifted and otherwise moved the table in this manner.

I also affirm, that I went into this business, in the first place, to see if I could not myself do all that was claimed for

the spirits ; and after I had produced all the phenomena, I gave it up, and exposed it.

I furthermore state, that while Mrs. Porter was in a pretended clairvoyant state, I rapped for medical prescriptions, she naming the list of remedies, I rapping to certain medicines which were given, as I am informed, with success.

LEMUEL J. BEARDSLEE.

Fairfield County, Bridgeport, Conn., Feb. 4, 1851.

There personally appeared before me, Lemuel J. Beardslee, and made solemn oath to the truth of the foregoing statement and affidavit. Attest,

WM. H. NOBLE, Justice of Peace.

At the time I was in Bridgeport, the famous Medium, Gordon, had left that spiritual region and gone east. But he was several times detected in his tricks before he left. Mr. Edwards, a citizen of B., arose voluntarily in the public debate, and testified that he was willing to make oath to the following statement : He was one night at Gordon's spiritual circle. The spirits ordered all the lights out of the room. Gordon at the time was sitting stiff at one end of the table, mesmerized, as he said, by the spirits. Soon after the lights were put out, Mr. Edwards felt that the table was rising up—he got down under it to see what was going on beneath, and caught hold of Gordon's leg in the very spiritual act of lifting the table. The Medium tried hard to disengage himself from the grasp, but the man held on, and called out for a light. The Rappers rushed out after a light, and when they came in, Mr. Edwards showed them very conclusively that he had caught a spirit by the leg, and he held it fast. The Rappers threatened to ruin Edwards' character "if he ever told of this," and the night after he

made the facts public in the hall, he was pursued by a *spiritual Rapper*, and twice knocked down in the street.

Among the beautiful manifestations which used to come to pass in the dark circles at B., was this one : The white wings of spirits were heard rustling in the still air, and felt fanning the feverish brows of these ethereal Rappers, who were mourning that they were still encumbered with the flesh ; and a divine unction came unto their mesmeric souls on these spirit-wings. These heavenly visitation continued in the dark circles for several weeks, when, on one occasion, Mrs. Jackson Davis, who is a woman of uncommon talent and shrewdness, thought the spirit lingered long above her head : she suddenly threw up her hand, and caught hold of Gordon's wrist, and discovered that the white wings of the spirits were only this fellow's pocket-handkerchief.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPIRITS IN NEW YORK.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Horace Greeley is the self-created Attorney-General for the hobgoblin society of New York, and a Mr. Partridge, a match-maker, his secretary, and Rev. T. L. Harris, the Plenipotentiary Extraordinary from the spirit world, yet the spirits are still most shabbily treated by the Gothamites, and in all this great city they can find no place or spot where they can utter themselves except in the darkened room of this benevolent match-maker. Here they speak daily through the feet and ankles of little Katy Fox. There philosophers and divines, and poets, must go to converse with such as Channing, Edwards, and Poe; and, as the little girl is but poorly educated, and spells badly, the spirits of these divines and philosophers are compelled to spell badly too; and even old Lindley Murray himself is obliged to ride rough shod over the grammatical rules he spent his life in establishing.

And then such is the horrible skepticism of this horrible infidel Gotham, that the whole spirit world is compelled to manage with every species of cowardly adroitness and worldly cunning, to keep from lying most abominably in even the few scanty communications it can make to us miserable sinners on the hither side of Jordan. They discovered that so great is the mortal unbelief in them that most of their revelations were mistakes and lies, and so they directed their

secretary, the man Partridge, to take down the names and address of all parties who come to speak with them, and then they will appoint the time when they are ready to wait upon them, and inform secretary Partridge of the fact, and secretary Partridge will inform the parties. Secretary Partridge says that sometimes they wont receive a party for weeks or months after the name and address is given them, and some people they wont see at all.

And, now, after all this wise and just præcaution which the benevolent spirits have made to keep from rapping out so many mistakes, the wicked and unbelieving Gothamites do publicly and profanely affirm that they believe that this whole arrangement is a cunning ordination of the secretary himself, in order to give him a fair chance to learn what may be learned of the parties before the spirits receive them. And some men in Gotham have even gone so far as to speak out loud, and ask, what have the spirits of my dead to do with this crazy fellow Partridge? do they not know that I love them, that day and night I have never ceased to mourn their loss, that in light and in darkness my soul has gone after them, and in divinest communion has yearned towards them, and, in the true language of the soul,—*thought* and *emotion*,—conversed ever with them? Why, then, do they tantalize me, and put me off, and refuse me, except through the rounds of this *stranger* Partridge? How came he to be the keeper of my dead? Where are his credentials?

In order to try the confidence of secretary Partridge in the ability and power of the spirits, I sent him the following note, upon which he has the cunning to conduct, like the thief in the cellar, who, when he was caught, refused to an-

swer any questions, because, as he affirmed, he "had nothing to say."

MR. CHARLES PARTRIDGE:—

In order to have an opportunity of examining the Medium concerning whom you write such miraculous things, I will deposit in the hands of an impartial committee the sum of fifty dollars, which shall be paid over to you whenever the Medium will produce, in my presence, any manifestation for which I cannot detect a physical cause and trick. Or, I will write and seal up a series of questions, and if the Medium, or the spirits, will answer *one* of them correctly, I will pay the same amount, which shall be disposed of by you, for the benefit of the Medium, or for the spread of Rapism, or for any object of charity which you may please to name. The committee shall be mutually agreed upon—and the investigation shall take place in some parlor where the Medium is a stranger, between the hours of ten, A. M., and three, P. M. You will perceive that I do not offer to *bet* this amount, but I offer it as a free donation to any object worthy of your charity. If the Medium can stand the tests, by which I have detected nearly fifty other Mediums, she will vindicate the cause of Rapism, convince many people, who now honestly believe the whole pretence is an imposition, and contribute something to some worthy cause of charity. If she is detected in producing the manifestations by tricks of art, many honest people may have their eyes opened to the fact, that they have been deceived and deluded. Truth and justice is my object.

HEMAN BURR.

New York, March 16th, 1851.

The poor evasion by which the Rappers get over their refusal to meet a public test, is, indeed, poor and mean enough. "*The spirits wont be challenged.*" "*The spirits wont allow themselves to be doubted.*" "*The spirits have no anxiety to convince skeptics.*" "The spirits have their own rules and

laws, and we must be governed by them." Then we reply that, the spirits must be cursed fools themselves, or believe us to be so, to demand that we shall shut our eyes, and open our mouths, and swallow them whole, without knowing whether they be our friends, or devils, or whether they are anything at all, but a profane and impious piece of jugglery. If one of our earthly friends should treat us in this manner, we should say that he was *drunk*, or *crazy*, or a downright *fool* and *villain*. The reader is at liberty to class the "spirits" of New York in either of these departments.

CHAPTER IX.

SPIRITS AT FALL RIVER.

I HAD heard terrible stories of the doings of the spirits at Fall River. The newspapers had recorded the history of two deaths, and one case of horrible insanity, as the result of the rapping excitement. And private gossip had beat Munchausen all to tatters by accounts of the spirit powers. When I arrived in the place, I learned that the spirits there did not *rap* at all, but they made all their communications by moving tables. These tables they would drag about the room against the utmost strength of as many men as could get hold of them. And another trick, in which the believers put most confidence, was what did, indeed, seem to be a miracle, as they told the story. The Medium, a young girl, would place her hands on the top of the table at one extreme edge, and while two gentlemen put the weight of their hands

exactly on the middle of it, it would lift itself up under the Medium's hands, directly following the motions of her hands up and down. This was the first really wonderfully looking thing which I had ever seen in the Rappings. When I first witnessed the feat, a gentleman, who went with me, exclaimed, "Mr. Burr, I guess your money is gone—she has earned the reward which you have offered." And it was evident that the pretended Medium *did not move the table*, and the honest looking men, who had their hands on the top of the table, exactly in the middle of it, could not, one would think, possibly do it. But I requested them to keep the "weight of their hands" off the table, and let the Medium, alone, place her hands as before. She did so—but the table did not move this time. I was told that the spirits could not move so heavy a table, unless there was more electricity on it than the Medium alone could furnish. I then desired one of the gentlemen, who went with me, (the landlord of the Exchange,) to sit down opposite to me, and see if the electricity from our hands would be any aid to the spirits, or the Medium; but it would not do. We next tried our skill to see if we could not lift the table in the same way it was moved when the other honest men (one of whom is a deacon) had their hands in exactly the same place. *We performed exactly the same trick the first time trying*, and a shout of laughter burst forth from a portion of the witnesses, at our unexpected success. The Rappers acknowledged that we had successfully *imitated* the feat of the spirits. The next demonstration, was the movement of the table about the room with the Medium's hands upon it. One large man told me that he, and two other gentlemen, had been dragged about the room as though they were puff-balls,

by this same table. This astonishing "*fact*" had been much talked of by the Rappers in Providence, and now came the trial. Instead of one Medium, there were two with their hands on the table; and the perfect success with which I nailed the spirits to the wall in this trial, has been told in the chapter of this book on Witnesses. I remained in Fall River two days, waiting to see if any other Mediums were disposed to see if the spirits would help them to earn the five hundred dollars reward which I had offered there. None came. Without occupying more space in this way, I will simply say, that in eighteen towns where I went hunting the spirits, the results were the same in every case.

CHAPTER X.

MARVELOUS STORIES.

IF we were to put any general confidence in the great and marvelous stories which we hear from many persons who come to us from the Rappings, and which we read in some of the newspapers, we should be compelled to believe that the world is full of devils as the sky is of sunbeams in June. In one place we hear that the spirits tip over tables when nobody is near them, lift bedsteads up to the chamber floor, make the chairs dance about the room, boil meat in cold water, and throw the shovels and tongs through the window. In New York we heard from "good authority" that the spirits had repeatedly and palpably kissed women in dark circles, pulled a Mr. Patridge's nose when he was asleep, thrown Mr. Willis' boots and pantaloons out of a

chamber window, hid Horace Greely's white coat, bruised a man's eye, up at Mrs. Nichols' cold water establishment, and torn an editor's breeches all to pieces. We did not hear what young lady was the Medium at the time these marvels occurred, but the Rappers had the fullest confidence in their truth.

The foregoing pages must have convinced the reader that there is no confidence to be put in these marvelous stories. They are, to say the least, such exaggerations of the real tricks, that they become *lies* in their effects upon the credulous. I have seen the best of the Mediums in the five states of the Union, where the spirits have flourished most, and have heard the most unaccountable marvels related, on "good authority ;" but when I came to see these Mediums, no such great deeds were done. I have, in all the places where the spirits have been most rife, offered from fifty to five hundred dollars reward to any Medium through whom any manifestation whatever should be made, for which I could not detect a physical cause.

The reward has been offered in New York, Providence, Pawtucket, Taunton, Fall River, Bridgeport, Woonsocket, Worcester, Springfield, Lowell, Hartford, Norwich and New London, and several trials have been made, with perfect success, on my part. Not a single Rapper has claimed the reward at the result of the trials.

I have no doubt that many persons have seen furniture move when the Medium did not do it. For, in several instances, when I had the Medium in charge, I have detected other persons in the act of producing the tricks. My experience has taught me, that to be perfectly sure of not being deceived, there should be nearly as many persons to *watch*

as there are Rappers in the circle. I have known members of a committee who have traveled several miles to investigate the Rappings, to even produce the tricks themselves, and effectually impose upon their companions, and allow them to report under the delusion. In a journey after these spirits through five states, the marvelous stories have all come out *tricks* or *delusions*.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EVIDENCE.

THESE "manifestations" claim to be the work of spirits,—the spirits of our departed friends,—but what is the evidence of the pretended fact?

We hear *raps*, and see furniture moved, for which we cannot account. But how does this prove that "spirits" do it? Do we know any law by which finite mind or spirit can move bodies, except through an organized and living body? Will the Rappers be kind enough to inform us of any known possible law, revealed in either science or experiment, by which WILL can *rap* in dead matter? Even grant that you can not detect the cause of these manifestations, still it is, philosophically, as absurd to refer them to spirits, as it would be to refer them to infinitesimal particles of moonshine. We know as much of a law in the one as we do in the other, by which such things could come to pass. Suppose some philosopher should take it upon him to affirm that these doings are not the work of spirits, but of

certain imponderable gases, set free by the constant combustion of carbon, hydrogen, and ammonium in the human body; I, for one, should like to see the piece of work the Rappers would make in refuting him. This ground is as good as their's. And we could all look on at the controversy with as much unconcern as the woman did at the fight between her husband and the bear, not caring a "cent which beat."

We hear *raps*, therefore there are disembodied spirits at the business—that is the logic. Suppose that we take the liberty to remind these fogheads, that, in as much as we know nothing of any law by which disembodied spirits can *rap* in dead matter, but *do know* laws enough by which *embodied spirits* can rap and produce all manner of wonderful juggles, *we*, therefore, prefer to believe that all these marvels are the works of embodied spirits.

But I shall be told that, in some cases, reliable people hear these raps, and feel them when they are alone. Still the answer is, that, as we know nothing of a law by which spirits may do such things, but do know all about a law by which a man may *think* he sees, hears, tastes, and feels what has no existence except to his imagination, we are bound to explain the effects, not by what we do not know, but by what we *do know*.

These *raps* are, however, explained, and the fact that the mediums no longer dare submit themselves to investigations—the fact that fifty or sixty of the best mediums in the country, have been detected in all their tricks, is an effectual explosion of all the mystery there ever was in the tricks.

CHAPTER XII.

INTELLIGENT ANSWERS.

THE newspaper accounts of the remarkable answers which have been made to mental questions, are either total fabrications, or such exaggerations of the real facts, as to be falsehoods in their effects. If the person who consults the "spirits" is a firm believer, and he calls the alphabet himself, it will be very easy for the medium to get his story, from the tone of his voice, the expression of his face, and other manners, which will plainly tell when he has arrived at the right letter of the alphabet. I have many a time watched a man spell out his own secrets in this manner. And many a time I have known the Medium to fail, when I could have answered the question right myself. Beyond this, there is no remarkable intelligence in these "manifestations." The correct hits fall far short of the success of ordinary fortune-telling. The reader will perceive that if the questions require a simple *yes* or *no*, the Medium's chance is just even, to answer half of them correctly. But if he puts the question in a manner to require a *sentence* for an answer, he will find the Medium never succeeds, except by the manner I have described above, or from some knowledge which she possesses of his history. I have seen all the best Mediums in the country, from the "Rochester girls" round through the haunted towns of New England, and there is not one among them all that can answer a mental question, if it is put in a

way to be a fair test. I here make a standing offer of \$500 to any Medium who will answer me a single mental question, which I will put under seal. I will offer it to any *convocation of Mediums*, so that they may summon together all the "spirits" which they all can command, and have the united wisdom of all the spirit world which they can draw after them.

In order to show the reader the real character of the intelligence which is exhibited at these spiritual circles, I will introduce a paper which was furnished me by George Manning, Esq., of Columbia, S. C., who is one of the most accomplished scholars in this country. The Medium was the No. 1. of Providence, who has already been described in this book, and who is considered the "best Medium" in Providence.

"On being introduced to the Medium, I asked Mrs. ——— if the spirits of great authors could be produced. She replied in the affirmative, and I asked for Dante. On the lady telling me he was present, I repeated a portion of his poem, the "Inferno," and asked if the spirit knew by whom it was written? the rapping indicated that the spirit did not know. I then asked in what language I had spoken, and the rappings spelled *Latin*, instead of Italian. I then asked several questions in Italian, but the Medium assured me that the spirits never answered *Latin*, it being a popish language. Finding that Dante had ceased to know any other than the English language, I asked, in that tongue, what works he had written; but he had forgotten them, leaving the material world more conservative of his fame than he was himself.

I then asked for the spirit of Gallileo. The Medium had evidently heard of his name before, and said that he was the inventor of spectacles. I addressed the supposed spirit in Italian, French, and Spanish, but he had forgotten each of them,—even, to not knowing their names. The philoso-

pher said that he was with 'Julius Cæsar, Brutus, and *other foreign authors*,' 'in the third circle,' and was perfectly happy!

Julius Cæsar was called up and was quite ignorant of Latin, so much so, as to declare that Italian was Latin. He was very intractable, and refused to say more than that "he and all the great heroes of Rome and Greece were very happy, and rapidly rising in heavenly favor."

Mr. Park, of Georgia, an old bachelor of nearly sixty years of age, was told that he had been twice married, that his first wife was his guardian angel, that he had been the father of seven children by her, five of whom were living, and of four by his present wife. The spirit spelled Mary as the name of his first wife. She said that he had five sons and four daughters, two of whom were married. Mr. P. left the house, exclaiming, in well-feigned astonishment—'wonderful! wonderful!'

GEO. MANNING,
Columbia, S. C."

And it was indeed a most astonishing piece of news from the spirit world, which made an old bachelor of sixty years, the unexpected father of a numerous progeny, and the husband of two wives, of whom he never heard before.

And this is a specimen of the best doing of the "spirits," through one of the "best Mediums" in the country, when the Mediums have no clue to the history of the questioner, and cannot gather the story from his manner.

The public has heard astonishing accounts of the fortune telling of the "Rochester girls," and, notwithstanding so many persons, have published account after account of their total failure to give the least satisfaction, yet the Tribune keeps up a regular catalogue of the wonderful things they do, either anonymously, or by persons whose names had better be left out for the sake of the "spirits." But I

can give the reader a specimen of the best fortune-telling these girls ever do, from the pen of Ludlow Patton, Esq., the husband of Abby Hutchinson, of the gifted and pure-minded "Hutchinson Family." The Tribune has published some unaccountable mysteries which were rapped out to this family at Rochester, and from a letter which Mr. Patton, who was a member of the family at the time, has sent my brother, I am able to lay the real facts before the public. As so much has been said and published about the results of this family's visit to the "spirits," I feel that it is an act of justice, both to the family and the public, to publish portions of this private letter. The reader should be informed that one week before this family arrived at Rochester, the Mediums had learned the story of its domestic sorrows, by the death of Benjamin, and had gathered so much of its domestic history as would enable them to rap some truths.

New York City, January 14, 1851.

MR. C. C. BURR,

Dear Sir:—Last evening I attended your lecture on *Spiritual Rappings*, and was much pleased with your remarks. Having had some experience in these matters, I thought I would give you an account of what I have seen and heard. * * * *

We arrived in Rochester, Saturday, October 5, all well, except Judson had a slight cold. Gave a concert same evening, at the close of which, we were waited upon by Mrs. Fish, who said that Jesse, a week before, had arranged it with her that we should have a good interview with the spirits, at her house. * * * *

The spirit that was on hand, Mrs. Fish said, was that of Benjamin Hutchinson, concerning whom Jesse told her a week before, so that most of the answers from this spirit were correct; but still many answers were *wrong*. When this was the case, Mrs. Fish would say that it was in all-

swer to some thought some one present had in his mind. Then she would ask one of her friends if he had not been thinking thus and so. He would say, yes! and thus she would explain away the mistake. At other times, she would say, it was some other spirit that was talking. Then she would look on the table, and ask if some other spirit was present, besides Benjamin, and the answer would be, yes! So they would go on talking with this new spirit that came to talk with some of Mrs. Fish's friends. Pretty soon Benjamin's spirit would come back again, and some more questions would be asked, and the answers were generally satisfactory, till after a little while some troublesome questions were asked, and Benjamin spelt out, by the alphabet—"DONE!" and done it was, for Mrs. Fish said she had a headache, and that it was not best to continue the interview, but that to-morrow the spirits had promised to come again. So we adjourned till the next day.

In the afternoon, Judson, who had thought favorably of the Knocking interview, unbeknown to us, called on a Mr. Hazard, who was one of the morning party, and claimed to have been recently made a Medium, and requested Mr. Hazard to magnetize him. Judson had never before been able to go into the magnetic sleep, although many attempts had been made upon him. After Mr. Hazard had made one or two passes, knockings were heard in the room, and Mr. Hazard remarked that they were to have help from the spirits. One or two more passes were made, and Mr. Hazard called to Judson, that the spirit of his brother Benjamin was magnetizing him, so Judson went off into a magnetic sleep, under the impression that the spirits put him in that state. While in this sleep, he says, he went to heaven, saw and talked with God, conversed and embraced his brother Benjamin, heard the angels sing, &c. When he came out of this sleep, he was again told that the spirit of Benjamin put him to sleep, and took him to heaven. So on the next day when we went to Mrs. Fish's, Judson was a firm believer in the spirits and their knockings, and actually believed Benjamin talked to him through those knocks which he heard. Judson wrote off numerous questions, about one half of which were answered right—the others were answered, either

wrong, or else the spirit spelt out, "*Am not permitted to answer.*"

Mrs. Fish said, to test the matter, we might call up other spirits. So Judson called up his father-in-law, who promptly answered to his name, but the answers he gave were unsatisfactory, and he soon spelt out, "*Talk to Benjamin.*" Then we brought up Benjamin again, but he made so many mistakes, that Mrs. Fish began to look around to see what was the matter. Suddenly she found occasion to go out of the room, after which, things worked some better. But Benjamin got tired, and spelt out, "*DONE.*" He said we would all *soon* become "*Mediums,*" that is, he would soon come and knock to us, so that we should not be obliged to go to a third person to converse with him.

To test the matter still further, my wife wrote several names, among which, was the one she wished to converse with. Mrs. Fish told her to point her pencil to each name, and the spirit would rap to the right one. She then pointed to the names, and the spirit rapped to the third one. To make the matter perfectly sure, the spirits rapped to the same name again. The name was that of a lady friend of my wife's, *who is now living in New Hampshire in the full enjoyment of her usual excellent health.* Mrs. Fish said the spirit my wife wanted, must be in such a *high sphere* that it could not be reached. We called for *loud* demonstrations of the spirit's power. We had heard tell of very loud noises, furniture, books, and the like flying around the room. Mrs. Fish said it was *not* always that the spirits would do as we wished, but *she* would call upon them to raise up in the air the table around which we were sitting. Some immediately got out of the way, wishing not to be upset by the sudden movement of the table, but some of us held on to the table, and the consequence was—it moved not. Then Mrs. Fish called on the spirits to hold the table down to the floor, but it wouldn't stay down, because we took hold of it and raised it up. We were stronger that time than the spirits. During this interesting interview with these flesh and blood spirits, they told us we should go through the West, and have crowded houses at our concerts, and that at St. Louis we should meet with no opposition worth speaking of. What

wise spirits! The fact is, we went no further West than Cleveland, Ohio. * * *

Jesse, unbeknown to us, telegraphed to La Roy Sunderland to come to Milford and see Judson. Sunderland came with a long face and solemn voice, telling Judson that the spirit of his departed brother Benjamin appeared to him in the night, telling him to come up and relieve him, that he had the power to do so, &c. This shows the dishonesty of Sunderland. He knew well enough that it was *Jesse's Telegraph Dispatch* that sent him to Milford, and not the spirit of Benjamin. But it's all part of the game carried on by these impostors. Jesse and Judson still believe in the spirits, but John, Asa, Abby, and myself think we have seen a little too much imposition practiced, to swallow down this new doctrine of Spiritual Knockings.

I have given you some facts of my own observation. Now one from somebody else. Wm. L. Crandall, an editorial friend of Syracuse, asked the spirits to answer the question which he would write. He wrote this—"Are these knockings a humbug?" The answer was, "Yes!" So the spirits themselves have confessed it.

Yours for the truth,

LUDLOW PATTON.

This is a piece of the "spirits'" best doing at Rochester. Mr. Patton is a son of the Rev. Dr. Patton, and is a gentleman remarkable for his sincerity of character. It was his regard for the truth which induced him to address my brother the above letter. And the reader can perceive the evidence of fraud which appears in every line of the spirit-communications to this gifted family. What are we to think of four or five *mystagogues* who write in the Tribune the "mighty answers" which they have had, when we *know there is no such wonderful intelligence there.*

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CHAPTER XIII.

RELIGION.

It is a remarkable fact, that all the spirits of this country are *heterodox* in their theology, and most of them are downright *infidels*. The spirits of Auburn are *quasi-orthodox*, but still *heterodox*. And all the other Rappers in the country are making fun of them, and shrewdly hint that they "know enough about that cirle at Auburn"—they have "heard about that little nest of fools"—and "the paper they have put out, shows what they are," &c., &c. Does this allow us to suppose the Rappers know there is *fraud* at Auburn? And certainly I agree with the Rappers, that the paper they they have put forth, as coming from the spirit of Paul, and Shelley, is a very silly thing. The spirits of Bridgeport are horrible, disgusting infidels, advising people to throw away their prayer-books, and keep away from church. In Providence they are all infidels, but not quite so coarse. There is a place, however, in this city called "Christian hill," which is the dwelling-place of a nest of Millerites, and as these people deny that there is any immortal spirit in wicked men, their spiritual manifestations have to come from the spirits of devils. At this place I conversed with the great devil himself—and, among other things, he informed me that "the spirit world is full of distilleries," and he "drinks three barrels of gin a day." He also assured me that all these rappings which pretend to come from

our guardian spirits, are the work of his little devils, which are yet too young and weak to be employed in any higher business, and that he never goes to these circles himself.

All the rest of the spirits of New England are silly, ignorant infidels. There is no plan, no theory, no system, to their revelations, but all is fragment, chaos, and jumble. And the reason is, that the Mediums are all, *without an exception*, of this low class of minds. And the pretended revelations of the spirits of great men, invariably come down to the plane of the Medium's thoughts. In Providence, the spirit of Franklin rapped out "yes sir-ee" to me; he spelled his words shockingly, and finally got mad, and told me to "mind my own business." At Rochester, the spirit of Channing spelled touch, "*tuch*," and used singular nouns with plural verbs.

And the Rappers expect us to receive this trash as coming from the spirits of great men. And they expect us to give up our Bibles, and receive our religion from a swarm of ignorant, lying, unprincipled girls, rapping under chairs and tables.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PROFANITY.

WHEN cultivated men shrink back with horror from the idea of receiving this silly juggle as coming from the spirit world, the Rappers begin to profane the word of God, and misapply such passages as the one that speaks about God's choosing the "*weak and foolish*," &c. Then they institute a comparison between those noble, brave, pure minded, and gifted apostles, and these unprincipled kitchen girls, which are the Mediums in this atrocious blasphemy of the Rappings. In all America, I have not seen a single Medium who enjoys a reputation of first rate integrity. I do not believe there is *one* whose word might not be sifted, so as to be wholly set aside in a court of law. Even Horace Greeley says, in a private letter to Mr. Capron, which was shown about Providence, "*I am dubious about the spirits—the Mediums lie so.*"

The Rappers also compare these rappings, and the kicking over of chairs, with the miracles of Christ.

To say nothing of the disgusting profanity of this comparison, let us look at the silly ignorance of it. The miracles were performed in the public street, where all the people could see and hear for themselves—they "were not done in a corner." But these Rappings *are* done in a corner,—in very little corners,—to which the known skeptic has no ac-

cess, and where you are denied the privilege of searching to see if fraud is not at the bottom of the whole.

To assert that the Almighty intends to reform the religion and feelings of all mankind in this petty larceny manner, is the most horrible and disgusting piece of profanity which the world ever saw.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW THE RAPS ARE PRODUCED.

THE everlasting defence which is set forth, for the Rappings, by the correspondents of the Tribune, is, that "these peculiar sounds are heard simultaneously all over the country." But the statement is false. The raps which are heard in different places, with different Mediums, have no likeness whatever to each other. In fact, the only *raps* which are heard at all, are from the Rochester girls, or from those who have been with them; all the rest are *frictions*, or *ticks*, or *saps*. I have detected the origin of these sounds in the joints of the knee, ankle, toes, shoulder, wrist, thumb, and fingers. Those who have made *raps* by the wrist, thumb, or fingers, have invariably placed their hands on the table when producing them. Many of the Mediums of New England produce the noises by the friction of their thumb nails, as both hands are placed on the table in a manner to hide the thumbs from view. The sounds they produce are exactly like the *ticks* which are produced by the telegraphic operation. One man made himself a Medium by ripping the sole of his boot partly off, and pouring in a

compound of rosin and pitch, and then replacing the sole. The least motion of his foot produced a great number of small, sharp cracking noises, which were his spirits. Others produce the raps by drawing the great toe up on the bottom of the boot or shoe; the sounds are very distinct, regular and loud. One Medium produced them by using the two middle toes precisely as any man may use his fingers, throwing one top of the other, and springing it back with force upon the sole of his boot. By far the larger portion of the Mediums in Providence produce the noises by friction against the legs of chairs and tables. The manner has already been described in the chapter on spirits in Providence. The sounds will be heard on the table or on the chair-back, so long as the Medium is in connexion with the bottom of either. But stand them apart in the middle of the room, and they can produce no sounds, unless they have learned new tricks since I saw them. In this respect, the Mediums who produce their *raps* by the knee, ankle, or toe joints, have a great advantage, for they can rap anywhere. As Dr. Lee's article on joint rapping has been very extensively published, I need not explain the matter here. I will only remark that when he held the Medium's knees, he commanded also the ankles and toes, for these last joints cannot be used to rap with any force without producing motions in the muscles about the knee, which would tell very plainly what was going on. Dr. Lee's *facts* and *arguments* have never been answered. All the noise which the Tribune makes with its nameless scribblers on this subject, amounts to nothing. Dr. Lee says, "I could not be mistaken;" and he certainly need not be mistaken, any more than he could be mistaken in feeling the grating of a broken bone which

he is called to set. And the only answer which the Rappers make is simply to say, "We don't believe him, because we do not believe the sounds can be made in that way." This is simply to oppose the mere conjecture of a dozen ignoramuses to the experimental knowledge of one of the most learned men in the country. Those who have witnessed my exposures of the Rappings, know that perfect showers of sounds *can be produced by the use of the joints.*

CHAPTER XVI.

SHORT KNOCKS.

WE are asked if it is probable that so many persons can be deceived, and if so many are *deceivers*? Let the history of the thousands of *impostors* and *impositions* which have abounded in every age of the world, answer the question.

The Tribune wants to know, if these *raps* are produced by joints, how we shall account for the intelligence conveyed by the sounds,—and thinks if my toes are so intelligent, I had better get them patented. I have thoughts of doing so, to suit the *patent heads* of some gentlemen of the times, for, if their heads were of ordinary kind, they would be able to see that the joint rappings are equally as intelligent as the *tongue*, and convey all the intelligence of the Medium's brain. And this is all the intelligence there *is in the rappings.*

"There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or consulteth with spirits, or a necromancer,

(doresh hammethim) *i. e., one that seeketh unto the dead. For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord.*—Bible. This “seeking unto the dead,” and consulting with spirits, is condemned, in the word of God, as being of the same sin as “divination,” “witchcraft,” and “sorcery.” In fact the Mediums, and all the Rappers, are committing precisely the sin of *sorcery*.

The spirits inform us that it is by the means of electrical disturbances that they are able to *rap* and *move furniture*. But it is evident that these wise spirits do not know that these chairs and tables, which they kick about, are non-conductors of electricity, and to talk of moving them in the manner *they* claim, is just as ridiculous as it would be to talk of kicking them over with a sunbeam. And again, since there is as much electricity in the bodies of a circle of unbelievers, as there is in a circle of Rappers, it is a fair question to ask the spirits, why they cannot produce the same disturbances with the former as with the latter?

If the spirits of our departed friends are permitted to communicate with us, why should they not come directly to us, in the midst of the pure silence of our love for them? Why should they force us into the presence of ignorant and sensual strangers, and tantalize us with a low and public exhibition of themselves, and help the sinister and the profane to speculate with our love? If the spirits of my pure and gifted dead were permitted to converse with me, in any other language than *thought* and *emotion*, I will not believe that they would charge me a dollar for the privilege, and compel me to suffer the mortification of finding them dragged about in the fetid atmosphere of common vulgarity and ignorance. In Providence there is a place where the spirits of Channing

and Poe are found every night, thumping through the extremities of a slatternly Irish servant girl. God forgive the fools who can believe in the *possibility* of such an abomination.

The Rappers are continually braying about the "materiality" and "non-spirituality" of all who do not accept the juggle of Rapism. After hearing this continued *cant*, it is enough to make the devil laugh to look upon the stupid, greasy throng of mortal flesh, that swells the total bulk of Rapism. It is true that the few intellectual men, who are engaged in this business, are, generally, of a spare frame, indicative of a feeble and diseased nervous system, but even they do very wrong to imagine that the absence of a strong and healthy body is an evidence of *spirituality*. Has not the common sense of mankind immemorially described all *devils* and *witches* to be *lean* and *fleshless*? And were not the *cherubs* always painted as round and plump as Dutch cupids?

The only real and pious defender of Rapism I saw in Providence, was a weak little man, who enjoys the two-fold existence of being a homœopathic doctor, and a homœopathic preacher. He gives, during six days of the week, minute doses of physic, and, on the seventh, minute doses of religion, in galvanically prepared *pills* of Jackson Davis-Universalism.

There are some people who claim that they hear *singing*, and see *forms* from the spirit world. Undoubtedly they are just as sincere in this belief oftentimes, as the man with delirium tremens, is sincere in what he sees and hears. Jungstilling describes a pious female in Germany, who saw and

conversed with spirits in a diseased nervous state. He says, "at length the angels began to sing, and the pious soul sang with them; and what was it? A miserable ballad-singer, and a common national air."