

# ROCHESTER KNOCKINGS!

DISCOVERY

AND

EXPLANATION

OF THE

SOURCE OF THE PHENOMENA GENERALLY KNOWN

AS THE

# ROCHESTER KNOCKINGS.

Here's a knocking indeed! \* \* \* \* \* Knock! knock! knock! \* \* \* \* \*  
Who's there i' the name o' Beelzebub? \* \* \* Who's there i' the devil's name?  
Knock! knock! knock!

MACBETH.

BUFFALO:  
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## PUBLISHER'S NOTICE.

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To meet the wishes of many who have expressed curiosity to know something further respecting the exposition of the *Rochester Knockings* than is contained in the communication published in the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser, February 17th, 1851, the undersigned have republished the editorial article contained in the Buffalo Medical Journal, of March 1851, to which a few notes have been added, and an appendix containing several articles relating to the subject, which it is thought will interest the reader.

GEO. H. DERBY & CO.

 For Contents see third page of Cover. 

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# DISCOVERY

OF THE

## SOURCE OF THE ROCHESTER KNOCKINGS.

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*"Nec Deus intersit, nisi dignus vindice nodus,  
Inciderit"*—

*Horace, Epis. ad Pisones.*

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[From the Buffalo Medical Journal, No. for March, 1851.]

All our readers have heard of the *Rochester Knockings* that have occasioned not a little stir in different parts of the country during the past two or three years. The *knockings* were first manifested in a family of the name of Fox, then residing in a small town in the western part of this State, and the removal of this family, shortly afterward, to Rochester, whence have emanated many of the marvelous stories connected with the subject, has secured for that city the honor of forming the adjective in the title by which they are commonly mentioned. The *knockings*, however, have not been confined to Rochester, but have been heard in some other places. They accompany members of the Fox family in their peregrinations, of course, but we understand that other persons than those belonging to this family have assumed to be *media* for similar supernatural manifestations. (A.)

Being regarded by the credulous and superstitious as phenomena produced by the agency of departed spirits, indicating their presence, and furnishing a means of communication with them, it is not singular that, however ridiculous the subject may seem to persons of well balanced minds, to those of a different mental cast it assumes a different aspect, and becomes invested with great interest and importance. In every community persons are to be found who are fond of indulging and cultivating a

love for the marvelous, and who are ready to believe that a supernatural agency is involved in whatever transcends their comprehension. Such tendencies are by no means found in connection exclusively with low intellectual powers and small attainments. On the contrary, it is not infrequently the case that persons of education, of reflection, and even of superior mental endowments in some respects, are led astray by what appeals strongly to the mental qualities underlying an unfortunate excess of credulity. The chicaneries of mesmerism, the faith inspired by revelations like those of Davis, etc., sufficiently attest the truth of the remark just made. We might also quote, as illustrations, the transient success of homœopathy, and other kindred medical delusions. The annals of every age furnish abundance of examples, showing the absurd extravagances into which men may be led who allow unrestrained scope to the imaginative and superstitious elements of the mental constitution; showing, also, the astonishing extent to which cunning impostors are able to take advantage of these elements of human character. Based, as are the various delusions, impositions, and humbugs, that prove successful, upon qualities of mind which it is not to be expected will soon cease to be predominant in certain individuals, albeit science and knowledge are progressively advancing, and despite the accumulated lessons of experience, we are not to suppose that the future, more than the past and present, will be devoid of instances exemplifying human weakness and folly like that to which reference has been made. (B.) But to return to the *Rochester knockings*. We have not taken pains to ascertain how extensively belief in their supernatural character has prevailed. Many of our readers are probably better informed on this point than ourselves, as our pursuits do not permit us to keep up with the times in matters of this kind. That many well meaning persons have been beguiled and carried away with this subject, we know, and that not a little time, money, thought, and feeling, have been expended in the efforts to hold communion, by *rappings*, with inhabitants of the spirit world, is a fact but too apparent to any one who looks into newspapers. The imposition, unfortunately, is not to be considered merely a successful but harmless experiment on the exhaustless fund of human credulity. Among other serious consequences, we have been told that several cases of insanity have originated in the mental excitement occasioned by fancied intercourse with the spirits of departed friends.

The imposition, which had already escaped detection for several years, would still find plenty of dupes, if the *mysterious sounds* were to continue unaccounted for. The absurdity of the professed spirituality of the knockings can undoubtedly be fully proved in a variety of modes, but the only

effectual preventive of the farther progress of the humbug is to determine satisfactorily their nature and source. To do this is to strike at the root of the delusion, by rendering it as ridiculous as the explanation is simple. We are not aware that the curious and (in other than a literal sense) striking phenomena have been, as yet, accounted for. To what extent they have been made the subject of investigation, by physicians, we cannot say. As we are prepared to unravel the mystery, we trust our readers will not think the subject unworthy the space which we propose to devote to it, more especially as the sounds possess interest in a physiological point of view, apart from the remarkable imposition to which they have been made subservient.

Two members of the celebrated family of *Rochester knockers*, recently made their debut in this city, accompanied by the noisy spirits, and commenced operations, drawing crowds of visitors, at a dollar a head, many of whom were impressed with the wonderful revelations interpreted from the *raps*, and several intelligent persons became converts to the doctrine of the spiritual origin of the sounds. From motives of curiosity we were led, with some of our colleagues, to pay them a visit, and, we must confess, we were surprised and puzzled by the loudness of the sounds, the apparent evidences of non-instrumentality on the part of the females, and the different directions from which they seemed to emanate. Close observation, however, of the countenances and deportment of the two females, led to the conviction that the production of the sounds involved a voluntary effort by the younger sister of the two—a girl about seventeen years of age, the elder sister (who is said to be a widow) being about thirty-five. The latter was apparently the *managing partner*, conducting the spiritual communications, while the former, it was clear, was the performer, i. e., the one that produced the knockings. Assuming the above as a point of departure, by the process of reasoning given below, the diagnosis was, that the sounds must necessarily be articular. This conclusion, and the process by which it was arrived at, were stated to a number of persons directly after the visit. The question, then, was, how such sounds could come from joints. The snapping of the phalangeal joints of one hand by lateral motions made with the other hand, is familiar to every one. Some persons have the power to produce the same snapping by means of the muscles inserted into the phalangeal bones, without any aid from the other hand. Dislocated bones return to their place with an audible snap, as all surgeons know. A patient once consulted us for a loud noise in his joint produced by walking. Almost every one has occasionally, by an accidental oblique movement of



the lower extremities, caused a loud report in the knee joint. These facts suggested themselves, but works on physiology, anatomy, and dislocations, were consulted, in vain, for any account of loud noises like the *Rochester knockings* originating in the articulations. While pursuing these inquiries, which had been unexpectedly provoked, we chanced to meet with a person who said that his wife could produce similar sounds. He did not then know in what way they were produced; his wife had, in jest, kept him in ignorance on this point. At our request he immediately went home to ascertain, and returned with the information that the noise came from the knee joint, and that we were at liberty to satisfy ourselves with respect to this fact, and also of the mode in which they were produced. Accordingly, at first alone, and afterward accompanied by Drs. Lee and Coventry, (in concert with whom the prior investigations were conducted,) we visited the lady referred to, and on the following day the subjoined exposition was communicated for one of the daily papers of the city.\*

TO THE EDITOR OF THE COMMERCIAL ADVERTISER:

Curiosity having led us to visit the room at the Phelps House in which two females from Rochester, (Mrs. Fish and Miss Fox,) profess to exhibit *striking* manifestations of the spiritual world, by means of which communion may be held with deceased friends, &c., and having arrived at a physiological explanation of the phenomena, the correctness of which has been demonstrated in an instance that has since fallen under observation, we have felt that a public statement is called for, which may perhaps serve to prevent further waste of time, money, and credulity, (to say nothing of sentiment and philosophy,) in connection with this so long successful imposition.

The explanation is reached, almost by a logical necessity, on the application of a method of reasoning much resorted to in the diagnosis of diseases, viz: *reasoning by way of exclusion*. It was reached by this method prior to the demonstration which has subsequently occurred.

It is to be assumed, first, that the manifestations are not to be regarded as spiritual, provided they can be physically, or physiologically accounted for. Immaterial agencies are not to be invoked until material agencies

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\* In transferring that communication to our columns, we have corrected an error in the account of the displacement of the joint which produces the sounds. The exposition was drawn up hastily, and published at once, in order to check, as promptly as practicable, the farther progress of the imposition, and the mechanism was not so fully ascertained, as it has been by subsequent examinations. We will thank editors of medical Journals who may notice this matter to copy the anatomical explanation from this article, and not from the newspaper, and to make the correction referred to, should they have already quoted the first statement.

fail. We are thus to *exclude* spiritual causation in this stage of the investigation.

Next, it is taken for granted that the *rappings* are not produced by artificial contrivances about the persons of the females, which may be concealed by the dress. This hypothesis is excluded, because it is understood that the females have been repeatedly and carefully examined by lady committees.

It is obvious that the rappings are not caused by machinery attached to tables, doors, etc., for they are heard in different rooms, and different parts of the same room, in which the females are present, but always *near* the spot where the females are stationed. This mechanical hypothesis is then to be *excluded*.

So much for *negative* evidence, and now for what *positively* relates to the subject.

On carefully observing the countenances of the two females, it was evident that the sounds were due to the agency of the younger sister, and that they involved an effort of the will. She evidently attempted to conceal any indications of voluntary effort, but in this she did not succeed:—a volutary effort was manifest, and it was plain that it could not be continued very long without fatigue.

Assuming, then, this positive fact, the inquiry arises, how can the will be exerted to produce sounds (rappings) without obvious movements of the body? The voluntary muscles are the only organs (save those which belong to the mind itself) over which volition can exert any direct control. But the contractions of the muscles do not, in the muscles themselves, occasion obvious sounds. The muscles, therefore, to develop audible vibrations, must act upon parts with which they are connected. Now, it was sufficiently clear that the rappings were not *vocal* sounds: these could not be produced without movements of the respiratory muscles, which would at once lead to detection. Hence, *excluding* vocal sounds, the only *possible* source of the noises in question, produced, as we have seen they must be, by voluntary muscular contractions, as in one or more of the movable articulations of the skeleton. From the anatomical connections of the voluntary muscles, this explanation remains as the only alternative.

By an analysis prosecuted in this manner, we arrive at the conviction that the *rappings*, assuming that they are not spiritual, are produced, by the action of the will, through voluntary muscles, upon the joints. (C.)

Various facts may be cited to show that the motion of joints, under certain circumstances, is adequate to produce the phenomena of the *rappings*;

but we need not now refer to these. By a curious coincidence, after arriving at the above conclusion respecting the source of the sounds, an instance has fallen under our observation, which demonstrates the fact, that noises precisely identical with the *spiritual rappings* may be produced in the *knee joint*.

A highly respectable lady of this city, possesses the ability to develop sounds similar, both in character and degree, to those professedly elicited by the Rochester imposters, from the spiritual world. We have witnessed the production of the sounds by the lady referred to, and have been permitted to examine the mechanism by which they are produced. Without entering, at this time, into a minute anatomical and physiological explanation, it is sufficient to state that, owing to relaxation of the ligaments of the knee joint, by means of muscular action and pressure of the lower extremity against a point of resistance, the large bone of the leg (the tibia) is moved laterally upon the lower surface of the thigh bone (the femur) giving rise, in fact, to partial lateral dislocation. This is effected by an act of the will, without any obvious movement of the limb, occasioning a loud noise, and the return of the bone to its place is attended by a second sound. Most of the Rochester rappings are also double. It is practicable, however, to produce a single sound, by moving the bone out of place with the requisite quickness and force and allowing it to slide slowly back, in which case it is noiseless.

The visible vibrations of articles in the room situated near the operator, occur, if the limb, or any portion of the body, is in contact with them at the time the sounds are produced. The force of the semi-dislocation of the bone is sufficient to occasion distinct jarring of doors, tables, etc., if in contact. The intensity of the sound may be varied in proportion to the force of the muscular contractions, and this will render the apparent source of the rappings more or less distinct.

We have witnessed repetitions of experiments in the case just referred to, sufficient to exhibit to us all the phenomena of sounds belonging to the Rochester rappings, and without further explanations at this time, we append our names in testimony of the facts contained in the foregoing hastily penned exposition.\*

Feb. 17, 1851.	University of Buffalo.	} AUSTIN FLINT, M. D., } CHARLES A. LEE, M. D., } C. B. COVENTRY, M. D.
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\* The object in publishing the above communication was to prevent (if possible) the farther progress of what, if the facts set forth in the exposition are credited, cannot but be deemed a gross and pernicious, as well as a remarkable imposition. Fully satisfied of the verity of the explanation submitted, the subscribers did not hesitate to



The disclosure announced in the foregoing communication occasioned not a little excitement among those who had become interested in the *knockings*. The correctness of the explanation was not only called in question by these, but was doubted by many who had not hesitated to look upon the matter as a gross deception. The Rochester *Ladies*, of course, stoutly denied the imputation that the sounds proceeded from the joints, or were produced by any agency of theirs, and, the next day, they inserted in the daily papers the following card:—(D.)

### ROCHESTER KNOCKINGS.

TO DOCTS. FLINT, COVENTRY AND LEE:

GENTS,—We observe by a communication in the *Commercial Advertiser*, that you have recently made an examination of a highly respectable lady of this city, by which you have discovered the secret of the “Rochester Imposters.” As we do not feel willing to rest under the imputation of being imposters, we are very willing to undergo a proper and decent examination, provided we can select three male and three female friends who shall be present on the occasion.

We can assure the public that there is no one more anxious than ourselves to discover the origin of these mysterious manifestations. If they can be explained on “anatomical” and “physiological” principles, it is due to the world that the investigation be made, and that the “humbug” be exposed. As there seems to be much interest manifested by the public on this subject, we would suggest that as early an investigation as is convenient would be acceptable to the undersigned.

ANN L. FISH.

MARGARETTA FOX.

The invitation thus proffered was accepted by those to whom it was addressed, and on the following evening, by appointment, the examination took place. After a short delay, the two Rochester females being seated on a sofa, the knockings commenced, and were continued for some time in loud tones and rapid succession. The “spirits” were then asked “whether they would manifest themselves during the sitting and respond to interrogatories.” A series of *raps* followed, which were interpreted into a re-

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treat the imposition as such, and to call it by its right name. “Good motives and justifiable ends” seemed to require this course. In so doing, however, we have no desire to judge, or make war with individuals. We leave those concerned in the imposition to the tribunal of conscience.

The communication is dated from the University of Buffalo. It is hardly necessary to say, that, by this, it was intended, simply, to express to those readers to whom the names of the subscribers were unknown, the fact that they are connected with the University. It was not expected that any one would infer the exposition to have emanated from the University, or that the University could in any way be compromised by it. This statement is made to avoid an occasion for misconception. For the merit or demerit of the exposition, the persons whose names are thereto appended are alone responsible.

ply in the affirmative. The two females were then seated upon two chairs placed near together, their heels resting on cushions, their lower limbs extended, with the toes elevated and the feet separated from each other. The object in this experiment was to secure a position in which the ligaments of the knee joint should be made tense, and no opportunity offered to make pressure with the foot. We were pretty well satisfied that the displacement of the bones requisite for the sounds could not be effected unless a fulcrum were obtained by resting one foot upon the other, or on some resisting body.

The company, seated in a semi-circle, quietly waited for the "*manifestations*" for more than half an hour, but the "spirits," generally so noisy, were now dumb. The position of the younger sister was then changed to a sitting posture, with the lower limbs extended on the sofa, the elder sister sitting, in the customary way, at the other extremity of the sofa. The "spirits" did not choose to signify their presence under these circumstances, although repeatedly requested so to do. The latter experiment went to confirm the belief that the younger sister alone produces the *rappings*. These experiments were continued until the females themselves admitted that it was useless to continue them longer at that time, with any expectation of *manifestations* being made.

In resuming the usual position on the sofa, the feet resting on the floor, *knockings* very soon began to be heard. It was then suggested that some other experiment be made. This was assented to, notwithstanding the first was, in our minds, amply conclusive. The experiment selected was, that the knees of the two females should be firmly grasped, with the hands so applied that any lateral movement of the bones would be perceptible to the touch. The pressure was made through the dress. It was not expected to prevent the sounds, but to ascertain if they proceeded from the knee joint. It is obvious that this experiment was necessarily far less demonstrative, to an observer, than the first, because if the bones were distinctly felt to move, the only evidence of this fact would be the testimony of those whose hands were in contact with them. The hands were kept in apposition for several minutes at a time, and the experiment repeated frequently, for the course of an hour, or more, with negative results: that is to say, there were plenty of *raps* when the knees were not held, and none when the hands were applied save once, as the pressure was intentionally somewhat relaxed, (Dr. Lee being the holder,) two or three faint, single *raps* were heard, and Dr. Lee immediately averred that the motion of the bone was plainly perceptible to him. The experiment of seizing the knees as quickly as possible



when the knockings first commenced, was tried several times, but always with the effect of putting an immediate *quietus* upon the *manifestations*.

The proposition to bandage the knees was then discussed. This experiment was objected to, on the part of the friends of the females, unless we would concede that it should be an exclusive test experiment. We were not prepared with appliances to render the limb immovable, and therefore declined to have it considered such a test. This was the experiment anticipated, and one which, we presume, the females thought would end in their triumph. A bandage applied above and below the patella, admitting of flexion of the limb, will probably not prevent the displacement, as we have but little doubt had been ascertained by the Rochester females before an examination was invited. Should it become necessary to repeat experiments in other places, in furtherance of the explosion of the imposition, we would suggest that the bandage be not relied upon. Plenty of roller, with lateral splints, firmly applied, so as to keep the limbs extended, and render the joints immovable, would doubtless succeed in arresting sounds so far as they involve the knee joint. It will be observed that, in our exposition, we do not claim that this joint is exclusively the source of sounds, and had our experiments, which were first directed to this joint, failed, we should have proceeded to interrogate, experimentally, other articulations. This, however, as the reader will note, seemed quite unnecessary. The conclusion seemed clear that the *Rochester knockings* emanate from the knee joint.

Since the exposition was published, we have heard of several cases in which movements of the bones, entering into other articulations, are produced by muscular effort, giving rise to sounds. We have heard of a person who can develop knockings from the ankle, of several who can produce noises with the joints of the toes and fingers, of one who can render loudly audible the shoulder, and another the hip joint. We have also heard of two additional cases in which sounds are produced by the knee joint. We have not, as yet, had an opportunity to make a personal examination in any of these cases, or to hear the sounds. The exposure of the imposition opens a new and curious field of physiological inquiry, and we would commend the subject to those who have leisure and facilities for prosecuting it. *Articular*, as well as *articulated* sounds, seem to claim an investigation which they have not heretofore received. Had the facts which the detection of this trick has developed, been contained in anatomical or physiological treatises, the progress of the deception would have been arrested long ere this. Doubtless these facts are not entirely new—they must have been

observed in other cases, the histories of which have escaped record. That sounds so loud should originate in the way we have ascertained that they are produced, would surprise even the medical listener, and perhaps seem almost incredible. It is readily conceivable how, to other than medical listeners, the phenomena should appear, not only inexplicable, but in a high degree mysterious. The remark was made by many, after the explanation was published, that it required almost as much stretch of the imagination to believe that such sounds could be produced in joints, as that they involved a supernatural agency. The anatomical conformation of the knee joint is evidently most favorable for the production of loud sounds by displacement. The broad articular surfaces offer considerable space for lateral motion, provided the ligaments are sufficiently relaxed, and the requisite motor force is properly applied. The relative shortness of the outer condyl of the femur favors the outward displacement, and true dislocation in this direction would be likely to occur, were it not for the numerous strong ligaments which render this the strongest articulation in the body. Owing to the great protection afforded by the ligaments against injuries, to which, from the position and relations of this joint, it is particularly exposed, dislocations are, in fact, very rare in their occurrence. The displacement occasioning the *knockings* is sufficient to remove the ridge of bone which divides the two articular surfaces of the upper extremity of the tibia, from its situation in the sulcus between the condyls of the femur, and to carry it, more or less, upon the surface of the outer condyl. This movement gives rise to the first sound, and the return of the bone to its place causes the second sound, which, in the *Rochester knockings*, generally follows quickly upon the first. We are unable to explain fully the precise mechanism by which the displacement is effected. In the case of the lady of this city who reproduces the *spiritual rappings*, the bone slips outward with very slight voluntary effort, and it is not easy, from her own account, or by manual exploration, to determine the particular muscles that are brought to bear upon the joint. In this case the displacement occasionally occurs, in bending the limb, when no effort is made to produce it, but, under these circumstances, it is not generally attended with much noise. The bone returns to its place directly the muscular effort which has produced the displacement ceases. To develop sound the displacement must take place with a certain quickness and force, and the latter may be graduated, in some measure, at will. A fulcrum for the foot appears also to be requisite, as already stated. The lady just referred to is now able to produce the sounds in one knee only. In early life she had this power in both

knees. From the number and volume of sounds produced, it is evident that both the knees of the Rochester rappers now in this city are endowed with sonorous powers. It might be supposed that the frequent repetitions of these displacements would produce, after a time, irritation and disease within the joint. In the case of the lady of this city they are followed by some soreness, but in early life, when she was in the habit of practising them daily, more or less, she experienced no pain, nor any unpleasant consequences, and she was then able to develop louder sounds than she can at present. How rare are instances of that peculiarity in the condition of the joint, which admits of the audible phenomena, that have given origin to the new science of *spiritual rappings*, we are unable to say. That they are not common, is evident from the fact that the Rochester imposture has eluded detection so long; and that instances of a similar idiosyncrasy do occur, is shown by the fact that several *rappers* have appeared in different parts of the country. It is a sad commentary on human nature, that the latter should prefer to have adopted, and carried on, the imposition, when they discovered their peculiar power, rather than disclose the secret, and thus put a stop to the progress of the deception. Mrs. P., the lady of this city, to whom we are much indebted for the means of establishing the exposure to the satisfaction of the public, thus, deserves honorable mention, and the thanks of the community. (E.) A difficulty with some persons who have visited the *Rochester rappers*, in believing the sounds to be articular, arises from the idea that the *raps* come from different quarters of the room, at a distance from the place at which the females are stationed. This difficulty involves several explanatory circumstances. In the first place, the sounds do not really come from a distance. It may seem that this is so, but it is a delusion, arising from not appreciating, correctly, some of the laws of acoustics. We do not ordinarily determine the direction from which aural impressions are received, save by the conjoined exercise of other senses. Variations in the supposed distance of the source of sound may be imitated, simply by variations in intensity of the sound, provided the source be not obvious to other senses than hearing. Upon these principles the deceptions of the ventriloquist are based. The ventriloquist does not transmit his voice in different directions, and at various distances, as is vulgarly supposed, but he graduates its intensity so as to make it appear more or less remote, concealing, at the same time, all the external evidences that *he* makes the sounds, and he relies upon directing, by his conversation, the attention of the audience to particular places, for the success of his effort to make it appear that the sounds proceed



from these places. The knee knockings are muffled by the dress, and the slight movements are also thus concealed; hence, females make the best impostors in this line. The *raps* are then conducted by whatever solid substances are in contact with the limb, or body. The *Rochester knockers* prefer that their visitors should be seated around a long table, they sitting at one extremity of the table. Placing the limb, then, in contact with any part of the table, the knockings seem to be upon the latter. But if the limb is in contact only with the floor, the sounds will appear to come from below. The Rochester females, when they wish to give exhibitions of the sounds, sometimes stand near a door. If they touch the door with a limb, or rest against it, the sounds seem to come from the door, and the door may be felt to vibrate. If they stand at a little distance from the door, the sounds appear to come from below. The *raps* do not, in reality, ever appear to come from much distance, unless the delusion is aided by a vivid imagination, or a degree of credulousness very easily operated on. The loudness of the sounds will, aside from the degree of motive power and quickness by which the displacement is effected, depend on the conducting properties of different bodies in contact.\*

That part of this scheme of imposition, which relates to the communications made by means of the *knockings*, opens a field of curious inquiry, not devoid of interest and importance. Admitting that the sounds are shown to be physically produced, and dependent on the volition of those engaged in conducting the deception, some, who have been impressed by the degree of penetration manifested in the accuracy of certain of the responses, and the striking character of the fancied revelations, will ask, 'How are these phenomena to be accounted for?' In accounts that have been published by many—we doubt not well-meaning and, on most subjects, sensible persons—there are statements which, to the reader who does not see fit to deny *in toto* the veracity and intelligence of the narrators, certainly must appear extraordinary.† We do not propose to discuss at length this view of the subject. To do this does not belong to us, and would be inappropriate in the pages of a medical journal. We will offer but a few remarks.

Having traced the *knockings* to their source, explained the mechanism

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\* See, in appendix, letter of Prof. Lee to Editor of N. Y. Tribune for the laws of sound relating to this subject.

† The reader who may have any curiosity to read accounts of some of the marvellous revelations that have been published, is referred to the two works mentioned in note (A.)

of their production, and thus divested them of their supernatural character and of all mystery, the field of inquiry, just referred to, presents an aspect different from that which it had prior to the exposition. While the origin of the sounds was unknown, the belief in their spiritual derivation would be entertained by those whose mental constitution and habits favored credulity in such matters, and the communications would be received with a corresponding degree of faith ; and even some, not over credulous persons, might reason themselves into the conviction that the sounds must be due to intelligent, invisible spirits, from the apparent utter impossibility of accounting, on any other hypothesis, for the information thereby obtained. But assuming that the deception is unmasked, and the mode in which it is conducted satisfactorily explained, it follows, of course, that the communications are part and parcel of the humbug, and it only remains to show how it is that they are of a character to occasion surprise and astonishment. This question might be disposed of, so far as the present subject is concerned, by saying that phenomena of the same character, and equally extraordinary, occur in connection with fortune-telling, into which it is not professed that spiritual agencies enter, and which no one supposes to involve aught beyond human sagacity. The question covers all the various modes of imparting pretended supernatural revelations.

Much is due to the laws of probabilities alone—in other words, many of the wonders are coincidences, which always occur in a series of random guesses. This plain fact is not always recollected, viz : That whenever a response involves either an affirmative or negative, the chances that it will be right or wrong are exactly equal. Guesses under such circumstances, in the long run, will be as often true as false. It may be admitted, however, that the whole philosophy of the matter is not resolvable into the laws of probabilities: other reasons must therefore be given.—Several reasons suggest themselves, some of which we will mention, without attempting to assign to them, respectively, their precise force.

A person of close observation and great shrewdness, can acquire a degree of skill in furnishing communications purporting to be spiritual, which can hardly be appreciated by one who has not given much thought to the subject. This is a kind of acquirement not sought for, except by those who mean to make it subservient to deception ; and, therefore, by most persons is but little understood. Let an individual of proper capacity, make it a business to study the significance of every slight movement, intonation of voice, and expression of countenance, as criteria of concealed thoughts, and let this pursuit be prosecuted for years, under the incentives

afforded by the love of gain or applause, and the fear of detection, and the tact thus acquired, will be likely to develop results that appear almost incredible, and by the superstitious are regarded as divinations. This is one consideration to which not a little weight belongs. (F.)

Another explanatory consideration is as follows : Persons resorting to oracular communications, in proportion as their minds became excited, and full credence secured, can hardly fail to exhibit, in various ways, indications which are so many clues by which a practiced observer is led to apprehend facts supposed to be completely hidden. A person, who has been much interested in the *knockings*, and who believes that there exists a kind of mesmeric relation between the females and the questioners, by means of which the knowledge of the latter is perceived by the former, informed us that he observed those persons who had full faith that they should obtain true responses, generally got them, while those who were incredulous were unsuccessful. We do not doubt the correctness of this observation, and it is fully explained by reference to the consideration just stated.

They, too, who become converts, are anxious to explain any errors and incongruities in the Sibyline responses, and are ready to accept explanations, which are only pertinent, by a large latitude of construction. They have an eager desire that what they seek to have communicated shall be communicated, and are ready to adopt any kind of interpretation which will secure the credit of the spirit which condescends to hold intercourse with them. It is sufficiently obvious to those who have made the *art of discovering truth by observation* a subject of study, that a pre-conceived notion often gives a bias even to the exercise of the senses. Not a few of the *false facts* of science are thus derived. Persons are apt to see precisely what they have pre-determined they shall see. How much more is it to be expected that this self-deception will be operative, when, instead of the sober realities of scientific research, the credulous mind is in pursuit of information to be imparted by miraculous means ! (G.)

Again, the impression produced by successful hits in any of the arts of soothsaying or conjuration, is naturally greater than is consistent with a due regard to the failures. The number of the latter is forgotten, while the former are remembered, and thus acquire an undue preponderance.—More especially this consideration will apply to the prodigies related in written narratives, taking cognizance of those things which are only wonderful when isolated. The principle is the same as that upon which certificates of secret nostrums appeal to the confidence of the public. Admitting the certificates to be authentic, and even true in point of fac



we have only the extraordinary cures, without any of the host of cases in which the effect of the remedy was either nugatory or pernicious. These cases may predominate immensely over those in which benefit was attributed, while the latter, if considered exclusively, seem to furnish an overwhelming mass of evidence.

We might add to these considerations, others ; but we have already said more upon this branch of the subject than we had intended, and perhaps more than the indulgence of our readers will lead them to excuse. We must offer as an apology for according to the subject so much space, in addition to the reasons before assigned, the personal interest in it growing out of the part we have taken in the detection and disclosure of the source of the Rochester Knockings. In engaging in this investigation, we literally followed the scriptural injunction, to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits." The result is an exposition, the correctness of which rests, in the first place, upon a train of reasoning which we claim to be in itself conclusive ; and, in the second place, upon demonstrative evidence, tested by experiments which may be readily repeated and extended in all places where the *knockings* may be re-produced. It remains to see whether this result will succeed in bringing the career of this singular species of imposture to a close, and thus to say the least, diverting the current of credulity into some new channel.

Certain physical phenomena in addition to the knockings, are said to be occasionally produced in connection with the latter ; such as moving of tables and chairs ; opening and shutting bureau drawers ; pulling the hair, etc., of persons assembled to witness the exhibition, and various other palpable demonstrations of what is claimed to be an unknown and mysterious agency. With regard to these phenomena we have only to say that none of them have fallen under our observation, nor are we aware that any have, as yet, been exhibited in this city, although we understand it has been intimated that they will appear by and by. Assuming that such phenomena do take place, we leave for others the task of explaining the mechanism by which they are produced.





## N O T E S.

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NOTE A, PAGE 3.—The curiosity of some of our readers may lead them to desire further particulars respecting the rise and progress of this remarkable imposition. We copy the following account from a publication entitled "*History of the strange sounds or rappings, heard in Rochester and Western New York, and usually called the MYSTERIOUS NOISES, which are supposed by many to be communications from the spirit world, together with all the explanation that can as yet be given of the matter.*"\*

"The sounds were first heard in a small village named Hydesville, in the town of Arcadia, Wayne county, New York. The house where they were heard was occupied, during a part of the years 1846 and 1847, by Mr. MICHAEL WEEKMAN. During this time, Mr. W. states that, one evening about nine o'clock, as he was preparing to retire for the night, he heard a rapping on the out-side door. He opened it, but saw no one. In a few moments, the rapping on the door was repeated, and was louder than at first. He immediately stepped to the door, and opened it; no person was to be seen. He went into the street, and looked about the house, and returned, without seeing any one. Soon the noise was repeated, and, failing, to see any person, he placed his hand on the latch of the door, in order to open it immediately, should the annoyance be continued. Again the rapping was heard—he felt the door jar, and sprang into the street. No person was to be seen any where in the vicinity.

"Excepting a manifestation to the daughter of Mr. W., then some eight years old, nothing unusual is reported to have been seen or heard by him while he occupied the premises.

"The family of Mr. JOHN D. FOX moved into the house on the 11th of December, 1847. Their former residence was Rochester. They heard

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\* Published by D. M. Dewey, Arcade Hall, Rochester, March, 1850.

the rapping first, the latter part of March, 1848, one evening, after they had retired for the night. It seemed to be in one of the bedrooms, and sounded as though some one was knocking on the floor, moving chairs, &c. Four or five members of the family were at home, and they all got up, to ascertain the cause of the noise. Every part of the house was searched, yet nothing could be discovered. A perceptible jar was felt by putting their hands on the bedsteads and chairs; a jar was also experienced while standing on the floor. The noise was continued that night as long as any one was awake in the house. The following evening they were heard as before and on the evening of the 21st of March, the neighbors were called in for the first time.

“The following is an extract from Mrs. Fox’s statement, made soon after the occurrences narrated took place:

“‘On Friday night, we concluded to go to bed early, and not let it disturb us; if it came, we thought we would not mind it, but try and get a good night’s rest. My husband was here on all these occasions, heard the noise, and helped search. It was very early when we went to bed on this night; hardly dark. We went to bed so early, because we had been broken so much of our rest, that I was almost sick.

“‘My husband had not gone to bed when we first heard the noise on this evening. I had just laid down. It commenced as usual. I knew it from all other noises I had ever heard in the house. The girls, who slept in the other bed in the room, heard the noise, and tried to make a similar noise by snapping their fingers. The youngest girl is about twelve years old; she is the one who made her hand go. As fast as she made the noise with her hands or fingers, the sound was followed up in the room. It did not sound any different at that time, only it made the same number of noises that the girl did. When she stopped, the sound itself stopped for a short time.

“‘The other girl, who is in her fifteenth year, then spoke in sport, and said, ‘Now do just as I do. Count one, two, three, four,’ &c., striking one hand in the other at the same time. The blows which she made were repeated as before. It appeared to answer her by repeating every blow that she made. She only did so once. She then began to be startled; and then I spoke and said to the noise, ‘count ten,’ and it made ten strokes or noises. Then I asked the ages of my different children successively, and it gave a number of raps, corresponding to the ages of my children.

“‘I then asked if it was a human being that was making the noise? and if it was, to manifest it by the same noise. There was no noise. I then asked if it was a spirit? and if it was, to manifest it by two sounds. I heard two sounds as soon as the words were spoken. I then asked, if it was an injured spirit, to give me the sound, and I heard the rapping distinctly. I then asked if it was injured in this house? and it manifested it by the noise. If the person was living that injured it? and got the same answer. I then ascertained, by the same method that its remains were buried under the dwelling, and how old it was. When I asked how many years old it was?

it rapped 31 times; that it was a male; that it had left a family of five children; that it had two sons and three daughters, all living. I asked if it left a wife? and it rapped. If its wife was then living? no rapping; if she was dead? and the rapping was distinctly heard; how long it had been dead? and it rapped twice.'

"Mrs Fox asked if the noises would continue if she called in the neighbors that they might hear it? There was rapping the same as when it was supposed affirmative answers were given. MRS. REDFIELD, the nearest neighbor, was first called. The children had informed her previously, that strange noises were heard in the house, and she went, thinking to have some sport with the family. She found the girls very much agitated. Mrs. Fox said, 'Mrs. REDFIELD, what shall we do? We have heard the noise for some time, and now it answers all our questions, and we cannot account for it.'

"Mrs. R. heard the sounds, and commenced asking questions, which were answered correctly, greatly to her astonishment. She says the girls continued to be much frightened, and she told them not to be afraid; if it was a revelation from the spirit world, it was not to injure them. One of the girls said with much feeling,—'We are innocent—how good it is to have a clear conscience.' (!!)

"Messrs. REDFIELD, DUESLER, HYDE, JEWELL, and their wives were subsequently called during the same evening. They asked many questions, and received answers. Questions relating to the age, number of children, &c., of the persons present, are said to have been answered correctly. Mr. Fox and Mr. REDFIELD remained in the house during the night. Mrs. Fox and her daughters spent the night at the house of one of the neighbors.

"A report of the strange noises heard in the house of Mr. Fox, spread throughout that part of the town the next (Saturday) morning, and a large number of persons assembled, and remained at the house during the day. No noises were heard until evening, when the sounds commenced as before. A committee was appointed to investigate the matter, and a great variety of questions were asked and answered.

"On Sunday morning, April 2d, the sounds were heard, and they continued to be made throughout the day. This is the first instance in which they are reported to have been heard in the day time. Sunday evening, and throughout that night, no noises were heard.

"Several individuals received answers to questions intimating that a murder had been committed in the house, and that the body was buried in



the cellar. The following statement relating to this matter is signed by Mr. WM. DUESLER.

“ ‘I went over again on Sunday, between one and two o’clock, P. M. I went into the cellar with several others, and had them all leave the house over our heads ; and then I asked, if there had been a man buried in that cellar, to manifest it by rapping, or any other noise or sign? The moment I asked the questions, there was a sound like the falling of a stick, about a foot long and half an inch through, on the floor in the bedroom over our heads. It did not seem to bound at all; there was but one sound. I then told Stephen Smith to go right up and examine the room, and see if he could discover the cause of the noise. He came back and said he could discover nothing,—that there was no one in the room, or in that part of the house. I then asked two more questions, and it rapped in the usual way. We all then went up stairs, and made a thorough search around the rooms, but could find nothing.

“ ‘I then got a knife and a fork, and tried to see if I could make the same noise by dropping them, but I could not. This was all I heard on Sunday. There is only one floor, or partition, or thickness, between the bed-room and the cellar—no place where any thing could be secreted to make the noise. When this noise was heard in the bed-room, I could feel a slight tremulous motion or jar.

“ ‘There was some digging in the cellar on Saturday night. They dug until they came to water, and then gave it up. The question had been previously asked, whether it was right that they should dig on that night? and there was no rapping. Then, whether it was wrong? and the rapping was heard. Whether they should dig on Sunday? no rapping; on Monday? and the rapping commenced again. However, some insisted on digging at this time, and dug accordingly, but with no success.

“ ‘On Monday night heard this noise again, and asked the same questions I did before, and got the same answers. This is the last time I have heard the rapping. I can in no way account for this singular noise, which I and others have heard. It is a mystery to me, which I am wholly unable to solve. I am willing to testify under oath that I did not make the noises or rapping which I and others heard; that I do not know of any person who did or could have made them; that I have spent considerable time since then, in order to satisfy myself as to the cause of it, but cannot account for it on any other ground than it is supernatural. I lived in the same house about seven years ago, and at that time never heard any noises of the kind in and about the premises. \* \* \*

“ ‘I never believed in haunted houses, or heard or saw any thing but what I could account for before; but this I cannot account for.

(Signed)

WM. DUESLER.

“ ‘April 12, 1848.’

“In a pamphlet, published at Canandaigua, in 1848, by E. E. Lewis, certificates corroborating the foregoing statements are given, signed by the following persons:

“ ‘John D. Fox, Walter Scotten, Elizabeth Jewel, Lorren Tenney, James Bridger, Chauncey P. Losey, Benjamin F. Clarke, Elizabeth Fox, Vernelia Culver, William D. Storer, Marvin P. Loser, David S. Fox, and Mary Redfield.’

"At one time, when those investigating wished to ascertain a certain name, the spirit was asked if it would rap for the initial letters when they were named. The reply was in the affirmative; and when the alphabet was called over, there was rapping at particular letters. Soon the experiment was carried still farther, and by request entire names and sentences of considerable length were spelled out. A signal for the alphabet is made when the spirit desires to communicate in this way. The signal is five raps in quick succession.

"The following brief statement in regard to the manner in which the use of the alphabet, in these communications, was ascertained, is signed by several members of the family:

"During the first inquiries to learn the name of the person who was represented as the injured spirit, it was asked if it would rap at the initials of his name. It rapped in the affirmative, and on calling over the letters, it rapped at the letters C. R.; and at a subsequent period, David Fox, one of the family, spent several hours in communication with it, and learned the whole name; and afterwards Mrs. A. S. Fish learned that five successive raps was an indication, or signal, to repeat the alphabet, when questions were asked, to which a simple negative or affirmative would not be a correct reply without qualification.

"It is thus that directions are now given in answer to questions; and often it voluntarily calls by the signal for the alphabet, and communicates entire sentences, many of them interesting, and of considerable length.

"MRS. ANN L. FISH,  
MRS. MARGARET FOX,  
C. R. BROWN,  
DAVID S. FOX."

"Rochester, March 6th, 1850.

"Soon after the occurrence of the events heretofore related, a part of the family removed from Hydesville to Rochester, and resided with an older sister—Mrs. Fish—who has been a resident of the city some years. The rappings were then heard in both places, and communications were as readily made in one place as in the other. It may here be remarked, that when the sounds first began to attract attention, and during the investigation at Hydesville, they were heard in the presence of any member of the Fox family. They were also distinctly and repeatedly heard by persons who were examining the house when every member of the family was absent.

"It was not long, however, before the noises were made more freely in the presence of the two youngest girls, one named MARGARETTA, the other CATHARINE. When the noises first commenced, Margaretta was about fourteen years of age, and Catharine about twelve. The elder of the two first removed to Rochester. The sounds were made freely when she was with her sister, Mrs. Fish."

The production of the rappings at Rochester having given rise to considerable excitement, a public meeting was called, and two committees, successively, chosen to investigate the matter. Ex-Chancellor Frederick Whittlesey, and Dr. H. H. Longworth, were members of one of these committees. Both committees failed to arrive at any rational explanation of the extraordinary sounds.

Subsequently, as we learn from a publication entitled "*Singular Revelations. Explanation and History of the mysterious communion with spirits, comprehending the rise and progress of the mysterious noises in Western New York, generally received as spiritual communications*,"\* the rappings have been heard in several families in Rochester, and in other places in the vicinity. They appear to have made considerable progress in Auburn. From the work just mentioned, we take the following extract, relating to their development in Auburn.

"The first of its being heard in this city was when the youngest daughter of Mr. Fox visited our boarding house. (!!) After she returned, it was heard for some time in the presence of several who had heard the sounds in her presence, and in a few months spread to several families, where it has gradually grown more free. Hardly a week passes without our receiving authentic information of some new place where these occurrences have commenced. We are informed of at least six families in Auburn, who hear more or less of the same sounds.

"In almost every place where it has commenced, there has been at first but a few sounds, and generally much more faint than after it becomes more common.

"It is a very common occurrence in the family and social circles, to be talking of some matter connected with this strange development, or some kindred subjects, and for all in the room to hear a distinct rap — perhaps two or three — as if confirming what was said. This is generally the way it commences at new places.

"It may be proper here to remark, that persons of any considerable degree of investigating powers stand in no fear of being deceived, as the sounds have never yet been imitated, nor do we believe they can be. Persons who have heard but little of them, and who have very vivid imaginations and large organs of wonder, may, at times, mistake some other sounds for the genuine ones, or those produced by the spirits; but a person who is not over imaginative, never."

The *rappings* have also been manifested in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and other sections of the country, of which we are not aware of any accounts having been published, save in newspapers, which are not at hand.

The publications mentioned may be consulted by those who wish for a more detailed history of the progress of the imposition. Other works

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\* By Eliab W. Capron and Henry D. Barron. Auburn, N. Y., published by Capron & Barron. Second edition.



may have been published relating to the subject, which have not fallen under our notice.

The Fox family, or a portion of the family, visited the city of New York a short time since, and were well patronised. Examinations were made in that city, with a view to detect the true source of the mysterious sounds, which proved unsuccessful.

NOTE B, PAGE 4.—It is often observed that persons who, on many subjects, display a skeptical turn of mind, are among the first to attach credit to what, by the majority, is deemed too absurd and improbable to be believed.

And the opinions of such persons are sometimes permitted to have considerable weight, from the fact that they are supposed to be remarkably slow in adopting what admits of doubt. Writers on mental philosophy, we believe, unite in attributing to similar qualities of mind, an excess, both of skepticism and credulity. The old adage that 'extremes meet,' is here emphatically true. He who is excessively skeptical is, of necessity, credulous, and he who is noted as a credulous man in some things, will be likely to be a skeptic in others. Skepticism, in fact, may involve a far greater amount of credulity than belief. To reject the evidence of revealed religion, for example, requires a greater degree of credulousness than the belief which is a legitimate result of a candid examination of this evidence. The principle in the philosophy of mind which has been stated, will serve to explain the apparent incongruity presented, when one who denies the miracles of the Bible, insists upon the spiritual origin of mysterious sounds !

NOTE C, PAGE 7.—In justice to a matter of fact, we re-affirm the assertion that the conviction of the *knockings* being due to the joints, was entertained prior to the instance in this city, which confirmed the correctness of the conviction, coming under our observation. We are aware that some colloquial critics have intimated that the instance just referred to was first observed, and the reasoning subsequently adopted. We could show the incorrectness of this assertion by several persons to whom the conviction was stated, together with the logical proof by which it was arrived at, on the afternoon and evening of the day of our first hearing the *Rochester Knockings*. The case that was met with on the day following, demonstrated the correctness of the conclusion already formed, but did not suggest or lead to them. We are not, however, the less under obligations for the opportunity which that case afforded of establishing our positions to the satisfaction of others.

It may be said that this statement diminishes the force of the demonstration, inasmuch as there is room for the supposition that the fact was ob-

served under the bias of a prior conclusion. If the fact of the essential identity of the rappings, in both cases, depended exclusively on our assertion, this would be a legitimate criticism, and should have weight with those, to say the least, who have not confidence in the observers from personal knowledge. The sounds, however, have been heard and compared by several persons in every way competent to make observations of that nature, to whom the objection could not be made that they were already committed to an opinion as to the method in which the knockings were produced.

We claim that the train of reasoning, to one acquainted with the human organism sufficiently to appreciate it, is conclusive, *assuming that the sounds are not spiritual*. But some may say, and it has been said, 'you have no right to assume that the sounds are not produced by spirits.' It would be perfectly fair to meet this objection by saying that in so far as spiritual, or, in other words, miraculous interposition in the causation of physical phenomena is concerned, the burthen of proof lies exclusively with those who affirm its existence. And, in the nature of things, the existence of a spiritual causation cannot be proved, except by negative evidence. It does not admit of demonstrative proof in a scientific sense. It is, therefore, purely an assumption on the part of those who make the affirmation, until, to say the least, the phenomena referred to such a source, have been shown to be explicable in no other way. In making the *knocking phenomena* the subject of investigation, we were perfectly right in excluding the spiritual hypothesis. Do we allow such an hypothesis in prosecuting a scientific investigation of any physical phenomena? Our scientific treatises would present quite a new aspect if, whenever any phenomena were found not to be resolvable into known laws, they were to be set down as the results of special volitions of spiritual existences!

We have reaffirmed the fact of the reasoning having preceded the demonstration, simply because it is true, without reference to the question, whether the correctness of the exposition be strengthened or weakened by it.

NOTE D, PAGE 9.—The "spirits," themselves, did not sustain the *knockers* in their denial, if the following anecdote be true, which we give, in substance, as it was related to us:—Shortly after the exposition appeared, several persons being assembled to hold communion with the *rapping* "spirits," one of the visitors inquired if the "spirit" with which he was in communication would reply to a question which he had written, either affirmatively or negatively. Assent was signified by *raps*; and the "spirit" proceeded to rap at successive letters of the alphabet named, until *yes* was spelled. This denoted an affirmative reply to the question. The



latter being now read, proved to be an inquiry whether the knockings were produced by the knee joint ! The "mediums," as they term themselves, however, have a resource in an emergency like this. The "*spirits*," they say, do not respond correctly, save to proper questions, asked with the expectation of being truthfully answered. In other words, they are not to be trifled with. It is at once obvious that this is an expedient readily available in any failure when persons who have not full faith in the spirituality of the *knockings* are in communication. If persons are sufficiently credulous to have full faith, they will be ready enough to overlook failures, or to explain them away in some mode or other. The experience of the "mediums" has no doubt abundantly confirmed the truth of the latter remark.

The same resource proves convenient in other difficulties. For example, when, at the examination invited by the *Rappers*, to test the correctness of the exposition, the results fully substantiated the positions assumed, the only alternative was to throw the responsibility on the "*spirits*." These disembodied existences have their whims and humors like incarnate mortals. They do not choose to *rap* when the "*mediums*" are placed in positions in which, agreeably to the explanation offered, it would not be expected that *knockings* could be produced ; or under circumstances when the movements necessary to the sounds would be apparent ! !

It cannot, by the way, fail to strike the mind of every reflecting reader, that *rapping* is a very clumsy, not to say, discreditable way of holding *spiritual communications*. If *spirits* can *rap*, it would be expected that they could also *speak*, or, at all events, produce sounds more spirit-like than those arising from the friction of bones and cartilage ! Strange, too, that they should confine themselves so rigidly to such peculiar noises, instead of varying their *raps* with their changing humors ! The excuse that the "*spirits*" are frequently guilty of falsehood, although very convenient, as has been seen, to help the "*mediums*" out of an embarrassing predicament, is an assertion which cuts in either direction. In matters pertaining to the future, or which are unknown to the "mediums" and questioners, what assurance is there that the "*spirits*" speak the truth ? If they are not infallible, the correctness, or incorrectness of the communications, in all cases, is to be determined by the *private judgment* of those who receive them ! In the history of the imposition it is stated that the *spirituality* of the *knockings* was publicly announced by instructions of the *sprits* themselves. This was a reliable communication made by some "*spirit*" of veracity, but the confession that the sounds were made with the knee-joint was made by a "*lying spirit*" !

NOTE E, PAGE 13.



In order that the reader, not versed in anatomy, may form a better idea of the organs and mechanism involved in the production of sounds with the knee-joint than can be readily conveyed by a verbal account, we have introduced the wood-cut on the preceding page, representing all the bones of the lower extremity excepting those of the foot.

The upper bone is the *femur*, or thigh bone, the largest bone in the body. The rounded head, at the upper extremity, attached, by what is called the *neck*, to the shaft of the bone, forming, with the latter, an obtuse angle, enters into the hip joint. The lower extremity enters into the knee joint. This extremity is expanded so as to form two lateral projections, which are called *condyls*. The outer condyl (fig. 2,) is the broadest and most prominent. The inner condyl (fig. 1,) extends lower than the outer. Between the two condyls there is a depression, or *fossa*.

The two bones of the leg are represented in the other figure. One of these bones only enters into the knee joint. This bone is called the *tibia*. The upper extremity of the tibia is large, and expanded on either side, forming what are termed the two *tuberosities*. The upper surfaces of both tuberosities are smooth, for the purpose of articulating with the *condyls* of the femur. Fig. 1, indicates the upper surface of the outer tuberosity, which is fitted to the external condyl of the femur (No. 2.) Fig. 2, indicates the upper surface of the other tuberosity which receives the inner condyl of the femur (No. 1.) Between the two tuberosities of the tibia is a projecting ridge of bone, the *spinous process*, which, when the bones are in contact, enters the corresponding depression, or *fossa*, between the two condyls of the femur.

In the living body the articulating surfaces of the condyls are covered with a layer of cartilage, a yielding, elastic substance, commonly called *gristle*. The articulating surfaces of the tibia are also covered with the same substance, which is thicker at the sides of the surface, thus forming an excavation for the reception of the condyls. The surfaces of the two bones thus in contact are invested with a firm, smooth membrane, which is kept moist by a little ropy fluid, to facilitate motion, and prevent injury from friction.

From the formation of this joint, in so far as the bones are concerned, it would naturally occur to the observer that dislocations should be of frequent occurrence. The bony conformation of the joint is not such as to afford much security against displacement. This, however, is provided against by the patella or *knee-pan* in front, and by numerous strong ligaments passing from one bone to the other in different directions, and sur-

rounding the joint on every side. By this arrangement the joint is, in fact, rendered the strongest in the body, dislocations being extremely rare.

The protection of this joint being thus chiefly due to the ligaments, it is obvious that, in proportion as the latter may be defective, or elongated in some persons, the extremities of the bones are susceptible of more or less displacement from their proper positions. This must be the case in the Rochester females of the Fox family, and in others who can produce the rapping sounds with the knee joint. In the instance in this city, in which we have been permitted to ascertain the mode in which the sounds are produced, the displacement, which can be effected by the muscles at will, is such, that the upper extremity of the tibia projects half an inch, or more, in a lateral outward direction. The ridge of bone between the two articulating surfaces of the tibia must be removed from its situation between the condyls, and rests upon the outer condyl (fig. 2.) This movement is accompanied by a loud noise, and the return of the bone to its place is attended by another equally loud sound. These are the two characteristic sounds of the *Rochester knockings*. Having first heard them as made by one of the family of Rochester Rappers, and afterward by the lady who made no secret or mystery of the mode in which they are produced, the similarity was immediately recognized. Indeed, it was impossible to mistake the identity, as the character, as well as the succession of the two sounds, is striking and characteristic.

Many persons are able to produce a similar displacement of the bones of the fingers of one hand by a force applied with the other hand. This, as the reader is aware, is often practiced as a habit, and in proportion as the habit is indulged, the displacement becomes greater in degree, and is made with more facility. The movement of the bones, in this case, is attended by a sound, which is often pretty loud. This familiar illustration is a representation, in miniature, of the mechanism, and the sounds produced by a similar movement of the bones composing the knee joint. The former is typical of the latter, requiring only to be magnified to render the exemplification complete. Any individual in whom the conformation of this joint, as respects the ligaments, admits of sufficient lateral motion of the expanded surfaces of the bones in contact, by the action of the muscles of the lower extremity, may become a *rapper* ; but the facility with which the requisite motions are made and repeated, as also the loudness of the sounds, will doubtless depend not a little upon practice. Like any feat of legerdemain, performed by the voluntary muscles, the more it is practiced, the more skillfully and successfully it is done.



The constant practice of this accomplishment, must tend to impair the strength and healthy tone of the joint ; and we suspect if the movements of the younger members of the Fox family are observed, it will be found that their gait will show a weakness in this portion of the locomotive apparatus.

The rapidity with which the sounds follow each other, is an objection offered by some to receiving the explanation which refers them to the joints. If done by the voluntary muscles, however, it is not strange that they should be produced in rapid succession. It is not a difficult act if the condition of the joint admits readily of the displacement. The lady, in this city, who has been referred to, can make the knockings nearly, in fact quite as rapidly as the *Rochester rappers*.

The conformation of the knee suitable for *rapping* is certainly not very common. But it is probably not so rare but that, when it becomes generally known that the sounds proceed from the joints, many places will be found to furnish instances. We infer this, from having heard of several cases already in this vicinity, during the few days that have elapsed since the exposition was made public. This conformation is a peculiarity of organization, which, like other similar anomalies, may extend to different members of the same family. The lady of this city to whom we have referred, had an aunt who possessed the same ability to dislocate the knee that she has. It is not, therefore surprising that two members, at least, of the Fox family are *rappers*.

The difficulty of conceiving that sounds so loud as the *Rochester knockings* can come from the knee, or any other joint, leads many to suppose that the problem of the *knockings*, is not yet solved. We confess that, even to one who has made the human organism an object of study, this, at the first blush, appears to be a valid difficulty. It vanishes, however, when we take into consideration the size of the bones forming the joint, the extent of articulating surfaces, and the number and size of the muscles of the lower extremity. The femur and tibia are the largest bones in the body ; the articulation is much larger than any other, being from ten to twenty times as large as the finger joints, and the muscular power bearing upon the movements of the knee, directly, and indirectly, by acting on the bones as levers, is very great. These are elements which it requires some consideration to estimate, and which by those not acquainted with Anatomy and Physiology, it would hardly be expected should be fully appreciated.

From the circumstances just mentioned, there is no other joint in the body, probably, which is capable of yielding such loud sounds as the knee ;

other joints, however, may emit sounds by a similar mechanism. Some of the mysterious noises perhaps are produced by other joints. We do not claim that all the *rappings* heard in different places are produced at the knee; but, as stated in the context, the result of the examination of the members of the Fox family now in this city, goes to show that this is the source in that instance.

NOTE F, PAGE 16.—In a communication published in the Daily Courier, of this city, over the signature H. [George Haskins, Esq.,] the author states that while the “spirits” were replying to written questions, by rapping, as he pointed with his pencil to a series of various words and figures, among which the answers sought for were included, he observed the *raps* were invariably made whenever he intentionally allowed the pencil to rest upon the paper longer than usual.

While we were witnessing the phenomena, at our first and only visit, except when invited to test the correctness of the exposition, we noticed that generally the *rap* came in the interval between designating one figure, or word, and the next in succession. This gave room for selecting either that might chance to express the correct answer, and thus increased the probabilities of success in guessing.

A critical observer in studying the countenances and actions of the two females while the performance was going on, could not fail to perceive that while the younger was striving in every way to conceal the voluntary act by which the sounds were produced, and to assume the different positions favorable to the production of the *knockings*, the senior sister was intently engaged in determining when the raps should occur. The two sisters are never separated while the manifestations are going on.

NOTE G. PAGE 16.—The idea of being able to hold converse with the spirits of deceased relatives and friends, it is needless to remark, is eminently calculated to excite powerfully a mind impressible by what claims to be supernatural. There is scarcely any delusion to which the assent of the understanding would be more willingly yielded than to this. In this fact we may find reason for the readiness with which many persons are duped, aside from an innate love of the marvelous and mysterious. The imposition avails itself of one of the strongest of the yearnings of the human heart, and from this feature it derives not a little of its success. A person persuaded of the reality of a communion with those who had been honored or loved when living, is, assuredly, not in a frame of mind suited for an impartial observer, or a candid reasoner. Nor are the reports of such persons worthy of much confidence, admitting that they do not designedly deceive,

but are perfectly honest in their declarations. They are not credible witnesses, because they cannot, if they would, divest themselves of emotions, which must necessarily distort their perceptions, and bias the judgment, and are therefore incompatible with a philosophical investigation for truth. A large share of the wonders attested by the converts to the doctrine of the spiritual origin of the *Rochester rappings*, are at once disposed of, by allowing proper weight to the consideration just stated.

The individuals engaged in conducting the *spiritual manifestations* appreciate the importance of investing the performance with as much solemnity, and formality, as practicable. This is shown by the subjoined regulations prescribed by them, which, as the reader will perceive, evince considerable shrewdness:—

“Attention is respectfully called to the ensuing rules of order”:—

1. All persons present at interviews are expected to observe the order and decorum, which should characterize meetings of religious solemnity and importance.

2. No controversies with reference to the truth or falsity of the communications should be entered into during their continuance.

3. All persons should follow, without delay or discussion, all directions given with reference to conduct, position, &c., as compliance with directions given generally ensures satisfactory manifestations, while neglect or refusal, generally results in their partial or complete cessation.

4. When any individual indicated by the spirits is in communication with them, no other person should interfere, as this often occasions discontinuance of the manifestations.

5. The ladies in whose presence the manifestations are made, will use their best exertions to satisfy all enquiries; but since the manifestations, alike in their commencement, character and duration, are *above their personal control*, they cannot promise that all persons, or all inquiries, will obtain answers, no manifestations being made, *except at the SPIRITS' WILL*.

Terms of admission *one dollar*. Interviews may be obtained at the following hours:—9 to 10 A. M., 11 to 12 A. M., 3½ to 5 P. M. No admittance after these hours, or after the interviews have commenced. Gentlemen will please provide tickets at the office.”

The “spirits” do by no means hold communion with all who invoke their presence. This being understood, the persons, as well as the most favorable occasions, may be selected at discretion, which is a matter of no small advantage, as will be at once obvious. At the time of our visit, there were nearly twenty persons seated around the table. Of these, while we

remained in the room, the "spirits" were willing to communicate with only one. We thought, at first, that the selection was a judicious one for the "spirits," but the result proved otherwise, for scarcely any of a series of questions was answered correctly, until, at length, the questioner stated that he was fully satisfied, and declined any more interrogations.



## APPENDIX.

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LETTER BY PROF. CHAS. A. LEE.—The subjoined letter by Prof. Lee, was addressed to the editor of the New York daily Tribune, and published in that print on the 26th ult. It contains a brief statement of facts, relating to the exposition, which have already been presented in the article by the editor of the Buffalo Medical Journal. But the author enters more fully into a consideration of the laws of sound involved in the explanations of the fact that the *raps* appear to be made upon different objects, and in different quarters of the room. The editor of the Tribune, in his comments on the letter, says: "Dr. L's explanation of the manner in which sounds have seemed to be produced at a distance from the persons by whose physical efforts his theory (?) assumes that they actually were produced, appears sufficient."

### THE "ROCHESTER KNOCKINGS" EXPOSED.

PHELPS HOUSE, Buffalo, Friday, Feb. 21.

*To the Editor of The Tribune:*

Knowing that you have taken much interest in the "Rockester Knockings," so called, and believing that you, together with thousands of others have been grossly deceived by certain members of the Fox Family, I feel it my duty to make to you this communication. You will have noticed an article in the *Buf. Com.* of the 17th inst., headed "Exposition of the Rochester Knockings," to which my name, in company with the names of Prof's. Flint and Coventry, is appended. I need not go over the ground there occupied, nor repeat the mode of reasoning by which the results were arrived at, nor describe more fully the particulars of the case of Mrs. P., who has the power of producing the same sounds, and by which, the truth of our position was demonstrated. You will also have noticed in the same paper of the 18th, a "Card" from Mrs. Fish and Miss M. Fox, inviting us to test the truth of our theory, and denying the charge of their being impostors. On the evening of the 18th, we accordingly attended at their rooms, in compliance with the above invitation. Some eight or ten individuals, including three ladies, friends of Mrs. Fish and Miss F. were present, and at our request, Mr. N. Rogers, of the Phelps House, Mr. Marshall, Attorney at Law,

and Judge Stow. The preliminaries being arranged, we asked "whether the 'spirits' would be present and communicate with us through the evening." After an interval of a minute or so, "raps" were heard, and continued in quick succession for some time, which Mrs. Fish declared to be an affirmative answer. This was repeated, so that there would be no mistake as to the willingness, on the part of the "spirits," to accommodate us. This being settled, Mrs. Fish and Miss Fox were requested to be seated on chairs, their limbs extended, and their heels resting on cushions. The reasons for placing them in this position were stated, viz: That we believed, in order that the raps should be heard, that the feet should have some solid support, serving as a *fulcrum*; else the contraction of the muscles of the leg would not throw the bone (head of the tibia) out of place; or, if so, no sound would be heard, unless the concussion, or vibration, which would be thus produced, could be communicated to some sonorous, or vibrating body. While thus seated, more than fifty minutes elapsed, during which no "raps" were heard, though the "spirits" were urged and called upon by Mrs. F. to "manifest" themselves. A part of this time, Miss Fox was allowed to seat herself on the sofa, her limbs and feet resting on the cushions of the same. No sounds having been heard, it was suggested that the ladies be allowed to take any position they pleased, and see if any "raps" were then heard. Accordingly, they seated themselves on the sofa, their feet resting on the floor, when immediately a loud succession of "raps" followed, and continued for several minutes. We then proposed to try another test; so, seating ourselves before the ladies, we grasped each of their knees firmly, so as to prevent any lateral movement of the bones; the "raps" immediately ceased, and were not heard while the knees were thus held, except near the close of the experiment, which continued once forty minutes, when two slight sounds were heard, on slightly relaxing my grasp, while at the same time I distinctly felt the heads of the bones grating on each other, and the muscles contracting, which, though a very positive kind of evidence to me, I am aware is not so satisfactory to bystanders.

I should state that our hands were removed several times from the knees during the trial, and "raps" were always heard during the interval of removal. At the close of the sitting, which continued till past 11 o'clock, Miss Fox was much affected and shed many tears, which excited much sympathy on the part of some of the gentlemen present. I need not add, that our position was triumphantly sustained, and that public opinion here, is now almost universally on our side.

On the evening of the 19th, a party of ladies and gentlemen met at the house of Prof. F., when Mrs. P., the lady whom we accidentally discovered to have the power of "rapping" in her knees, was present. During the evening all the phenomena of the "Rochester Knockings" were produced, the sounds being exactly similar in character and degree to those produced by the Foxes. I should state, perhaps, that the sounds are produced, not as first suggested, "by the muscles inserted into the upper and inner side of the large bone of the leg (the tibia) near the knee-joint, being brought into action so as to move the upper surface of the bone just named, laterally upon the lower surface of the thigh bone, (the femur,) giving rise to a partial lateral dislocation," (*Commercial Advertiser*, Feb. 17;) but the partial dislocation consists in the movement of the *tibia* outward, partly occasioned, I believe, by pressure on the foot, there being great relaxation of the liga-

ments about the knee-joint; but chiefly by the action of the muscles of the leg below the knee. At least this is the fact with regard to Mrs. P., for by placing the hand on the side of the joint, the bone can be felt, at the instant the loud double rap is heard, slipping out laterally, and as suddenly slipping back again; although, by an effort of the will, it can be made to glide back noiselessly, so that only one "rap" is heard. But this can be repeated in pretty rapid succession for a long time, although it requires evidently considerable practice to attain great skill in this new and hitherto mysterious art

You may very naturally ask why has not this physiological phenomenon been known to physicians before? I answer, that it has, so far as the smaller joints are concerned. Every person, almost, can snap the finger-joints; many, also, as Mr. Burr, can snap their toe-joints, and some their ankles, producing a pretty loud "rap" when placed in contact with some sonorous body; but the same phenomenon is very seldom met with in the larger joints, as the knee; and when it is, it has escaped particular observation, and not been made known to physicians, as it neither requires, perhaps, nor admits of medical aid.

But it may be said by some, that the above explanation is not altogether satisfactory, inasmuch as these "rappings" are heard in different parts of the room at the same time; or sometimes on the table, then the door, then the walls of the room, and at a distance from the "rappers," &c. After spending several hours a day, for three days, with Mrs. Fish and Miss F., during which the "raps" were invariably heard, whenever called for, without, as I recollect, a single exception, I found that in no one instance did the sounds seem to proceed from the door, unless Miss F. was near enough to touch it with her heel; nor did the sounds seem to proceed from the table, unless she was near enough to the leg of the table to touch it with her foot; but generally, they proceeded from the floor, apparently in her vicinity, although the floor could be felt to vibrate at some distance from her, just as the whole table would vibrate when she placed her foot against one of its legs. Much of the confusion and error on this subject arises, doubtless, from an ignorance of the laws which regulate the propagation of sounds. We should recollect that sounds may be propagated in various ways, as

*First:* By *reciprocation*, as vibrations are excited in a sounding body, when it is capable of yielding a musical tone of definite pitch, and another body of the same pitch is made to sound near it. As examples of this, if two strings of the same length and tension be placed alongside of each other, and one of them be sounded with a violin bow, the other will be thrown into reciprocal vibration; or if the same tone be produced near the string in any other manner, as by a flute or a tuning-fork, the same effect will result. So also glass tumblers are made to sound by a violin, played at some distance. Two watches, which do not tick alike, will soon beat in unison when placed near each other on the same table. On the same principle, sonorous bodies, as iron-blowers, pianos, &c., may be made to give forth sounds in the same room where the "raps" are made, at some distance from them; and a gentleman of respectability informs me that he has noticed this phenomenon in the room where the ladies were exhibiting here.

*Second:* We may have vibrations of *resonance*, which occur when a sounding body is placed in connection with any other. Here one or more parts will be thrown into reciprocal vibration, even though the tone of the



whole be different, or it be not capable of producing a definite tone at all. If we place a tuning-fork in vibration, upon a table or sound-board, we find that, though the whole board has no definite fundamental note, it will divide itself into a number of parts, which will reciprocate the original sound, so as greatly to increase its intensity; and the same sound-board will act equally well for tuning-forks of different degrees of pitch, although when smaller bodies are used for resonance, it is essential that there should be a relation between its fundamental note and that of the sonorous body, otherwise no distinct resonance is produced. These principles are well known to scientific musicians, and they are occasionally illustrated in rooms where these "raps" are produced.

*Third:* Sounds, however, can strictly be said to be propagated, only, by vibrations of *conduction*, and in this way, for the most part, are the sounds produced by the "rappers" propagated. Thus, when Miss Fox "raps," her feet resting solely on the floor, the sound, in consequence of the clothes falling closely about the feet, is somewhat muffled, and the vibrations being propagated to the floor in every direction, it is almost impossible to decide, where they are most intense. Those having a nice musical ear, can generally locate them directly in her vicinity; but, if the attention is drawn to another part of the room, then, as in the case of ventriloquism, the sound seems to proceed thence. This power of distinguishing the *direction* of sounds, it is well known, is chiefly acquired by habit, and varies exceedingly in different individuals. Thus, when these "raps" have been heard, I have often known them to be located in different parts of the room by different persons present. We judge of the *direction* of sound chiefly, if not altogether, by the relative intensity of the impressions produced by the two ears respectively.

If the sounds, then, be produced under circumstances where the same impression is made on both ears, or auditory nerves, then we are wholly unable to designate from what quarter they come. This often happens in a small room, where there are many vibrating bodies, when these muffled "raps" are heard, although we have generally been able, by close attention, to locate them in the vicinity of Miss Fox. So, also, our idea of the *distance* of a sound is altogether an acquired perception, depending principally on the loudness or faintness of the sound, if we have no other indications to guide us. When we are entirely ignorant *how* a certain sound is produced, and how intense it might be expected to be, we have no means of judging of the distance of the sonorous body from us, and we may suppose that a sound proceeds from a remote part of the house, when it is actually located a few feet distant only. A shrill railroad whistle, made several miles off, appears to be quite near to us, while a dull sound appears remote, although made in our immediate vicinity. These principles, which are often overlooked or unknown, will serve, I believe, to explain all the varieties and phenomena of sounds connected with the "Rochester Rappings," and to reconcile the various clashing opinions which have been made with regard to their location, &c.

I hope I need make no apology for this communication, which is solely for the purpose of subserving the interests of truth, by clearing up a mystery which has thus far baffled many enquirers, and which has been productive of much evil in the community.

I am, very respectfully, yours,

CHARLES A. LEE, M. D.



## RAPPINGS AT THE ANKLE, BY MOVEMENTS OF A TENDON.

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Since the article taken from the Buffalo Medical Journal was written, an instance has fallen under observation, in which *rappings* are produced at the ankle joint by the movements of a tendon. A young man of this city is able to develop pretty loud sounds in this situation, which are very similar, in character, to the *Rochester knockings*. We have been allowed to examine the *modus operandi* in this instance. We have heard of two other instances in which sounds are produced in a similar manner. This may be the mode pursued by some of the numerous *media of spiritual communications* scattered about the country. It is, therefore, important to be prepared to detect the imposition when practised by means of this mode of originating mysterious noises. We take this occasion to repeat, it is not contended that in all the instances of *spiritual rappings*, the bones entering into the knee joint are the instruments of sound. Some rappers, doubtless, use the knees, as do the Foxes, others may use the toes, others the tendon, as will be presently described, and others, perhaps, other joints, or possibly other tendons. The sounds, it will be thus perceived, are not exclusively *articular*, as was at first supposed, but they may be *tendonic* as well as *toeic*! All, however, have these features in common, viz.: *they are voluntary, and produced by the will acting through voluntary muscles upon moveable parts with which the latter are connected*. This new field of scientific inquiry has been too recently opened to have ascertained all the different ways in which sounds may be originated in accordance with the principle just stated.

The *rappings* at the ankle joint, which we have called tendonic, are explained as follows:—A muscle, called the *peroneus longus*, arises from the upper part of the leg, just below the knee, and terminates in a long round tendon, or sinew, or chord, which passes through a groove in the back part of the bony protuberance constituting the outer ankle, (*malleolus externus*.) The tendon then arches forward, passes under the foot, and is attached to the middle of the sole. In most persons this tendon is firmly fixed in the groove by ligaments, but in those who are able to rap by means of this agent, it is not closely confined, but may be moved forward for the space of an inch or more, by contraction of the muscle with which it is connected, and the contraction of this muscle may be produced by an exertion of the

will acting exclusively on it. The quick and forcible movement of the tendon over the outer ankle bone causes a sound, and a second sound occurs when the tendon returns to its place. The proximate cause of the sounds is essentially the same as when they are produced in the joints. As in the latter case, the extent to which the movement may be effected, the facility and force with which it is done, and the corresponding loudness of the sounds, will depend not a little on practice. The young man referred to, cannot recollect the time when he began to *rap*; and during his youth he was daily in the habit of producing the sounds more or less frequently. As it was impossible for persons in the same room to refer the sounds to their true source, they were supposed to proceed from different directions, and he was thus accustomed to derive much amusement from the exercise of the trick. The requisite movements are made, as in the case of the knee, with no visible motion of the limb. On grasping the leg, however, the muscle is plainly felt to contract. By pressing the finger on the outer ankle, and preventing the slipping over it of the tendon, no sound can be made.

The sound produced in this way is not so loud as that emanating from the knee.

A fulcrum for the foot is not necessary for this kind of *rapping*. The plan of placing the *rapper* in a position to prevent sonorous displacements of the bones of the knee joint, would, therefore, not suffice to detect the imposture.

If the *rapper* depended on this tendon, the way to strike the "*spirits*" dumb, would be to grasp the legs or ankles with the hand. The humor of the spirits would not permit them to make any *manifestation* under these circumstances!

The frequent repetition of the movements of the tendon necessary to produce the sounds in this case, do not occasion pain or irritation, more than the semi-dislocations of the knee joint, especially if the practice be kept up. The parts become inured to the friction, precisely as in the case of the finger joints, which some persons, as is well known, are continually *snapping*.

## EXPOSITION BY SHADRACK BARNES—TOEOLOGY!

A series of articles have lately appeared in the New York Express on the subject of the *spiritual rappings*, signed *Shadrack Barnes*, containing some rich illustrations of the practical working of the new science. Since our exposition was published, the writer, who has adopted the above signature as a *nomme de plume*, has favored us with several letters, from which we are permitted to give extracts, and also to make free use of the articles referred to. The writer has adopted the explanation, originating, we believe, with Mr. Burr, a public lecturer, which refers the *knockings* to a peculiar motion of the toes. Mr. Barnes (using the assumed title) states, that he can himself make loud rappings with the toes, and reproduce most of the phenomena of sound which are exhibited by the Fox family and others. Since our attention has been called to this method of producing sounds, we have met with an individual who is able to make them in that way with facility, and without any visible movements. The sounds resemble those of the Rochester knockers, but are not so loud, nor do the vibrations appear to be so readily communicated to doors, tables, &c., in contact with the limb. They seem to us, in fact, to be pretty good imitations of the spiritual rappings, rather than the veritable rappings themselves. We think it highly probable that this method of rapping is adopted by some of the numerous *media* in different parts of the country, and it should, therefore, be understood by those disposed to interest themselves in the explosion of the imposition. With this view, we shall avail ourselves of the private letters of Shadrach Barnes. "A chief difficulty," he remarks, "with the knee explanation is, that not one person in ten thousand can do it. If you consider the number of '*media*,' it would seem that so large a portion, who can produce sounds by these means could not be found."\* He continues, "the same effect would be the consequence, if the toe doctrine is correct, which you have observed with the Rochester ladies; that is, if you hold the knees, they cannot rap without being detected by the motion of the muscles; and with a thin shoe, the rapping would be faint and readily detected by observation, if the heels are placed on cushions. I have tried all these things myself. I can rap loud with my heels on a pillow or cushion, or while standing on a bed, and I can also rap quite well with my feet entirely off the floor. But in all

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\* It is doubtful if this objection will apply. We have already heard of four persons in this vicinity who can rap with the knee joints.



these cases the muscular movement would be too apparent to permit any *earthly* hands to grasp my knees. I have seen published statements of discreet matrons, who have disrobed the damsels, and caused them to stand *en chemise*, on pillows, and still the sounds were produced. It will be found that in all these cases, these ladies have been permitted to stand in their *shoes*. The sounds always partake of the nature of the locality of the feet. If the "*medium*" stand on a carpeted floor, the sounds are muffled somewhat, but if on an unclad floor, they are more sonorous; a marble pavement is the vehicle of just such "*spiritual*" sounds as my own toes produce. Persuade the medium to stand on a tin pan, or a sheet-iron vessel of any kind, and the sounds are regular *metallic* sounds. All efforts *then* to persuade the spirits to rap on the wall or table, or at a distance, will hardly be available, because there can be no mistake as to the locality of a sound so definite in its character, and hence the wary ghosts will not attempt it. The convenience of female drapery enables the ladies to place their feet in a great many positions. By tucking the foot under, and sitting upon it, the sounds are as if on the chair, the vibrations are clearly perceptible, but the 'honest searcher after truth' is more than ever bewildered as to the precise location of the "*raps!*" So if the rapper sits at a table contiguous to one of its legs, she can easily, and without any motion that could be observed, place a foot against the table leg, *then* the rapping is on the table, the vibration is plainly felt, and the intensity and quality of the sound will depend upon the position of the foot, whether against the top or bottom of the table leg. The common centre table is most convenient, the horizontal portion to which the upright shaft is attached, serves for a very good resting place for the feet."

"Can you conceive of anything more amusing than to sit with a 'circle' of 'rappers,' and to throw in an occasional rap! rap! of your own, in answer to some interrogatory? The joke is, that the priestess does not object, for the 'counterfeit presentment' cannot be distinguished from the genuine. I have said that I can rap *loud*; and that, with all *looking at my feet*, no motion can be perceived. I will go further, and say, that with a few weeping women, in the belief that I am a 'medium,' and a few befogged harmonial philosophers, I can rap while they have their hands on my feet, and not be detected. I mentioned that I thought pulverised soap stone would stop the rapping. This substance is used by boot makers to facilitate the *sale* of tight boots. Its effects on leather are curious. I venture the following prescription for the disease:—R. Pulv. *Sapolapis*, q. s. Introduce into the toe of the shoe."



As we have remarked, it is altogether probable that some of the *spiritual rappers* may employ the toes in the mode mentioned by the writer of the foregoing. It is therefore well to be aware of this source of sounds, in conducting examinations for proof of the fact that they are occasioned by volition, acting upon voluntary muscles. Let the toes be looked after on such occasions, as well as the knees and other joints. Some may produce sounds both with the knees and toes. In the case of the younger sister of the Fox family now in this city, however, we are fully satisfied that the rappings come from the knee.

The fact of such loud rappings being produced by the toes, ought to satisfy those persons who think it incredible that the Rochester knockings can emanate from the knee joint, the physical conditions for the production of sound being very much greater in the latter.

We proceed to give the developments contained in the communications by Shadrach Barnes for the N. Y. Express. The facts contained in the following article speak for themselves. The person to whom the fictitious letter was addressed, La Roy Sunderland, is Editor of a weekly periodical entitled the *Spirit World*, devoted especially to "*communications from spirits!*" The extent to which this remarkable imposition has been carried is truly astonishing. A large portion of the community who have taken no pains to look into the matter, are probably not aware of the progress it has made.

We copy the article from the Buffalo *Morning Courier*, retaining the introductory remarks prefaced by the Editor of that print.

THE SPIRITUAL RAPPINGS.—The following article from the N. Y. Express, written over the assumed name of "Shadrach Barnes," exposes the infamous humbuggery practised by Mr. La Roy Sunderland, one of the great "spiritual rappers" of Boston. It is a remarkably rich development, and should be read by every one who has been to see the "rappers" here, or who has any curiosity on the subject. A few more exposures, such as this, will so nauseate the public with the "science" that they will look upon all its "professors" with a feeling that we will not take the trouble to name:—

In former communications on the subject of "Mysterious Rappings" a few facts and observations have been presented in a plain way, with a view to show the knavery of this blasphemous imposture. Without attempting to argue that rapping and kicking are indecorous and unseemly ways for disembodied spirits to adopt for the purpose of making themselves known, I have been willing to receive their manifestations in any way they may choose to adopt, and have never resorted to any indiscriminate cry of humbug and collusion, without fair investigation. It has been shown that the infinite variety of get-offs, subterfuges and evasions would prevent any

thing like a fair investigation, and that a resort to pious frauds to try the spirits, has been absolutely necessary. The *similia similibus*, "hair of the same dog will cure the bite,"—humbug for humbug—system, has thus far been productive of the most satisfactory results.

The following correspondence is a practical application of this method, and is at the same time interesting as showing that Boston "ghosts" are no more reliable than the spirits of Rochester or Brooklyn. The first letter, signed Phebe Newell, was written by myself. If in this vast city there should chance to be any other Phebe Newell, I wish it distinctly understood that she had no agency in the following *orthographical* production. The personal identity of Shadrach with Phebe can be fully established. And so if there be discovered any Mary Ellens among the Perkinses, they are no children of mine, unless they are out of their heads, and flitey, and with their "dear Mother Newell" all the time,—and even then I shall ignore the *maternity*. But here is the letter of the afflicted *Phebe, verbatim, et literatim, et punctuatim*.

"respected sur I send one dollar if you please ut have some questions respecting of my daughter which departed this lif january the 19. 1851 i brot her up from a child she was a daughter too me her name is mary ellen Perkins and was 19 when she dide my mind is exercirsed very much in respect of her state of mind in a religious point of view which if you Communion with spirits in the other world she was flitey and out of her head as the poet sais afflictions soar long time she bore physician was in vain send me a letter i want two here if her state of mind is happy no more at present

PHEBE NEWELL

new Yorc sity feb, the 31 st 1851.  
mr laroy Sunderland."

This letter, enclosing one dollar,\* addressed in characteristic chirography to Mr. La Roy Sunderland, Boston, was read to a friend, and by him deposited in the post office, postage paid, Feb. 13, 1851.

The following is Mr. Sunderland's reply:

ELIOT-ST., BOSTON, MASS., }  
½ past 10, A. M., Feb. 15, 1851. }

My Sister Dear:—I have this moment laid your letter before the SPIRITS, and received the following answer:—Tell her, Mary is happy and with her dear Mother Newell all the time. I watch over her for good; and I love her now more than ever. I will be near her and stand at her right hand when she reads your answer. She must not grieve. I will soon make sounds in her presence when she is alone, which she can hear, when she will know it is me."

"And I understood the spirits to say that you was not her own mother, but she loved you as her own, and she said she came here to tell what to

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\* This is the fourth dollar I have paid for *spiritual* information. I am free to admit in all instances I have received a *quid pro quo*. S. B.


say to you when I answered your letter. In the Sphere where Mary has gone none are miserable, but all are as happy as they possibly can be."

Yours truly,

LA ROY SUNDERLAND."

"It is not often that I attempt an answer to letters like yours, but I suppose I was attracted to Mary's sweet spirit to gratify you. She has stood by me while writing, as I believe."

This "gem from the spirit land" comes written on what may be called, I suppose, *Spiritual world paper*. The sheet is surmounted with an engraved vignette, in which are clouds in fleecy plenitude, and in their midst is a series of three concentric circles. In the inner circle is a triangle, within which is a gas light burning. "Wisdom," "Love," "Will," appear on the shadowy triangle, while "Truth," "Goodness" and "Justice" are well bestowed in the background as *outsiders*. The following is printed beneath:

 "For Information in answer to all Questions respecting SPIRITS, and the Future Destiny of the Human Race, read the paper with the above title (Spirit World.) It contains communications produced by Audible responses from the Spirit World; explains the use of Spiritual manifestations, and the conditions on which they are made. Pledged to no Traditional Dogmas in Theology, Philosophy, or Science, it acknowledges no authority but the INFINITE HARMONIA, and takes for the scope of its mission the universal diffusion of Goodness, Justice and Truth. Published weekly (\$1 per volume,) at 28 Eliot street."

Mr. Sunderland is the *Ursa Major* of the Spiritual doings at Boston. His paper contains all that is late and interesting from the upper spheres. He tells us the communications he receives are audible, truthful and reliable *responses* from Angels, and often speaks of the assistance he derives from these celestial visitants in the discharge of his Editorial duties. It seems he believes he was "attracted by Mary's sweet spirit," and she stood by him while he was writing! I may as well state that I was not conscious of any spirit standing by my "*right side*" whilst reading the letter from Mr. S. So I am inclined to think Miss "*Mary Ellen Perkins*" was not at my right hand, though she may have been '*over the left*.' As to "audible sounds" which are to be vouchsafed to "*dear Mother Newell*" while alone, by this shadow of a shade, *Miss Perkins*, I can only say, bring on the *sounds*! *Phebe* "is willing."

The late Braintree suicide has called public attention to the consideration of some of the consequences of the delusion. No person can read the artless statement of the poor girl, (George Sand,) left behind her, without being filled with commiseration for the deluded victims, and contempt for the heartless sharpers who deceived them.

The report of the Superintendent of the different Insane Hospitals will furnish another chapter. We shall continue to "try the spirits," considering it to be right to expose all the trickery and villainy we can get hold of. The delicate morality of the Providence Post will, I suppose, be shocked by the spurious letter of "Mrs. Newell." I can't help it; it is a part of the *similia similibus* system that provides for "*tests*" which cannot be thwarted by Peter Funks or "Philosophers." The original letter of Mr. Sunderland is in the hands of the editors of the Express, and also a copy of Phebe's



epistle, in *her* own caligraphy. Now let us see how these *spirits* will get out of this trap. The "*lying spirits*" game won't do this time; and it will hardly be worth while to cry out "error i' the bill."

SHADRACH BARNES.

The following letter from "Shadrech Barnes," relates to the foregoing communication:—

"Since the publication of the above correspondence, I have been much amused with the grave explanations of the 'faithful,' and the ingenious excuses, curious subterfuges and endeavors, to get 'Brother Sunderland' out of the snare.

"As might be expected, the old story of attributing all to the machinations of 'lying, discordant or insane spirits,' is most prominent. There is too much harmony for discordant, too much 'method in the madness' for insane spirits, and while the mendacity is sufficiently apparent, we are inclined to believe its origin is a long way this side of Styx.

"It so happens this plan for trapping Sunderland was devised with especial reference to this objection, after reading his own rules for judging of the *reliability* of spiritual communications as published by him in his 'SPIRIT WORLD.' After the long and philosophic expositions of spiritual communications with especial reference to their being genuine, with the assistance, as he avers, of celestial visitants, one would suppose he was so completely *au fait* in matters of ultra mundane converse, that no 'goblin damned' could by any possibility fool him. But a few week since a 'circle' of 'Harmonial Philosophers' met at his house, and after successfully evoking the 'venerated spirit' of the late Dr. William Ellery Channing, by his assistance and approval, proceeded to establish the *LAWs* by which the correctness and reliability of spiritual communications could be determined. Now after a careful examination of the labors of these sapient codifiers, I unhesitatingly declare that this case of 'Phebe Newell' is clearly 'within the *statute* in such case made and provided.'

"According to these *laws*—much depends on the 'medium'—'When the 'medium' is low or surrounded by mortals and spirits who are *low* in the sphere of knowledge and goodness, the responses through such mediums must correspond, and consequently be more or less discordant.' 'All mediums are known and estimated according to their works.' Much depends on attraction, a kind of spiritual affinity—the general principle of which seems to be that 'birds of a feather flock together.' Thus, 'spirits who have not progressed very far may be attracted by *congenial spiritual affinities* in the human world to appear or to respond in *borrowed names*.'"



"This masquerading policy seems to obtain quite generally among the spirits. One writer and exponent says: 'there are gangs of unprogressed spirits from the first, second, and third spheres, whose minds are dark,' who are opposed to this 'diffusion of knowledge,' and he intimates these chaps hang around, and keep off the more respectable and refined celestials who are disposed to make communications. The same writer says, these *scamps* are in the habit of *lying* about their location, as well as names, 'because they do not wish it known that their grade is so low in the other world!' and he gravely suggests, that when we find these unprogressed spirits disposed to put on airs, we must treat them kindly, 'gently reprove them, ask them questions as to their avocations, anxieties, hopes, associations,' and their views on matters and things in general; and finally, 'ask them to tell us candidly what sphere they *are* in.' Another writer says, he has found that the best way is to deal harshly, to scold at these graceless interlopers, and by such means compel them to own up, and doff their *aliases*.

'I have so much confidence in the skill and judgement of Mr. Sunderland, that I presume he availed himself of a 'medium' who was *reliable*, and not *low*, or such as would attract any 'congenial spiritual affinities' like those *unprogressed sans culottes*, of 'kingdom come,' just mentioned, when he received the consolatory message from 'Mary Ellen Perkins' to 'dear Mother Newell.'

"'All mediums are known by their works,' and the 'works' of Sunderland's 'mediums' hitherto, have been considered marvelous in the extreme, both for goodness and knowledge. This medium has attracted the spirit of the lamented Dr. Channing; and La Roy says, at one spiritual sitting, where his medium and another were present, the spirits said there were 'more than three hundred angels present!' Such an extensive delegation from the unseen world would seem to imply that Mr. Sunderland is not wanting in ultra-mundane friends, and the only mystery is that they should so far forget their duties as guardian spirits, as not to cry out—'Beware of counterfeits!'

"Among the *laws* established by the 'circle' of spiritual Solons, it is laid down 'that *reliable* responses are never to be expected from spirits, between whom and some one in the circle, some direct RELATION can not be shown to exist.' Now, as the imaginary 'Miss Perkins' had no direct relation with 'Brother Sunderland,' it has been doubted whether this message was from a reliable spirit. The same difficulty has been suggested in regard to the spirit of Dr. Channing, by a correspondent of Sunderland. La Roy disposes of this man of little faith very quickly, by saying there was a 'direct

paternal relation' existing. 'ADVICE' was given; and, he asks triumphantly 'can ADVICE be given and received without ANY relation?' The case of Phebe is perfectly plain now. 'Mary Allen' gives Mather Newell advice and consolation; and if sceptics will doubt the genuineness of 'Miss Perkins and her message, they will be compelled to presume that Mr. Sunderland has been humbugged, both in *spirit* land and *Yankee* land; a conclusion, by the way, which seems fully warranted by the facts. If he was *not* 'attracted by Mary's sweet spirit,' and if she did not stand at his side when he wrote to *Sister Newell*, I should be inclined to think that perhaps Mr. S. was *attracted* by the dollar enclosed in 'Mrs. Newell's' letter; and, considering that he might minister to a mind so much 'exercised,' without resorting to the usual mummery of calling up spirits, he wrote himself down an *ass*, at the same time he wrote to Mrs. Newell; and his promise of *sounds* to the trusting Phebe is a draft in perspective on the credulity of the imaginary old lady. The hint, in Phebe's letter, that 'she was a daughter to me,' was snapped up very greedily, and the marvelous discovery that 'Mary Allen' was not an '*own child*,' was set forth as an instance of remarkable spiritual ken! In this instance, as in every other where it has been tried by myself, leading questions, interrogatories suggestive of the answers have produced replies corresponding. Afford the mediums the inducement and means to deceive, as they suppose, and they immediately avail themselves of it. The knowledge imparted is just what the mediums have to give forth. Attempt to humbug the medium in a bungling manner, or purposely let them 'smell a rat,' and '*lying* spirits' are off in a twinkling, and the '*good* spirits will rap reproof suitable to the occasion! Any man possessing two grains of common sense, sufficient to rub together, and, by attrition, develop the newest modicum of *mental* electricity, may determine the *laws* which govern these pretended marvels. There need be no consultation of the musty tomes of magic lore, no wierd incantations, no 'mewings of *brindled cats*,' no calling up of venerated spirits. Humbug the humbugs.

"SHADRACH BARNES."

The following extracts, from communications, by the same spirited writer, for the *New York Express*, will interest the reader. Shadrack Barnes proves himself fully competent to "try the spirits," and to develop results perfectly satisfactory to all save those who are hyper-credulous, and who are, unfortunately, committed in their belief in this astonishing humbug:—

"For the ultimate purpose of eliciting truth, it became necessary to make use of the *pro tem*. deception I have described. Finding how readily cor-

rect hints were appropriated, false ones were tried. The story of the drowned sister, and the anxiety of the family, and all that, were fabrications, designed to show, which they certainly do, that if *inducements are held out to deceive, these 'spirits' avail themselves of them; that the information they afford is according to the knowledge of the Rappers, that the answers are their answers*, and that these revelations and marvelous manifestations are not such a long way 'above the controul of the ladies as many suppose. All these rappings were on the floor, and in the immediate vicinity of Mrs. B.'s feet. The rappings were single, differing from those of the Fox family.\*

"St. Paul would not rap on the table, nor in any locality except beneath the feet of the lady.

"Upon mentioning these facts to a gentleman who was a firm believer in these revelations, and well acquainted with the 'medium,' I was told that I had been deceived by lying 'spirits.' some 'goblins damned'—who had stole the livery of the apostle for the occasion! Certainly the lying is sufficiently apparent. This plan of ascribing incorrect replies to lying, irregular, and discordant spirits, is a common and convenient subterfuge. That 'lying spirits' could so readily assume the style and name of St. Paul as to deceive the Medium, and those faithful exponents, the Doctor and friend, is indeed strange! There was no hiatus between the communications concerning the *drowned sister*, and those elaborate accounts of the manners and customs of the Spirit World. The former portion of the session was regarded as conclusive evidence of the reality of the spiritual *mission*. These considerations derive some importance just now, from the fact that it is said a book of 'Spiritual Expositions,' derived from St. Paul, with this same lady as a 'medium,' is about being published, and I believe something of the kind from this source has already been printed. It becomes, therefore, a matter of grave investigation how far we shall be able to distinguish those 'gems from the spirit world,' so abundantly vouchsafed by the 'counterfeit presentments,' from the veritable revelations of him 'who fought the beasts at Ephesus.'

"The Fox family, while in this city, were humbugged in a manner similar to that detailed above. Some more management was required. *Foxes* are proverbially on the look out for *traps*. Their long experience had learned them to be on the *qui vive*. They had the first intimations that disembodied spirits could communicate with the living by audible sounds! It was in this family that the ghost of that 'pedlar who was buried in the cellar, first made his complaint, and who would not rest until the neighbors dug for his bones!' The pale, cadaverous man who officiated as door-keeper at the hotel, was furnished with a few hints in regard to a *deceased sister*. As this was my first appearance with 'Spiritual Rappers,' some general survey was requisite. But when it was my turn to make the usual interrogatory, 'Will the spirit converse with me?' I got no answer—the time for the 'Session' expired, the spirit rapped 'Done,' and I was but little wiser. So three sessions passed. Each day the door-keeper, when he took the dollar, informed me that most persons obtained some communication; and he thought I must ultimately succeed in getting a reply to my queries. The fourth session had already passed without any more demonstrations

\* We have lately met with a case in which the sounds on the knee were produced, not by a lateral displacement, but by a movement backward and forward. In this case the knocking is single.—*Ed. Buff. Jour.*



than before; the spirits had rapped out 'Done,' and the ladies were about leaving the table to call for the rappings on the door as was their custom, when my faithful door-keeper came in and asked if I had received answers to my inquiries. He was answered negatively. 'Well,' said he, addressing the ladies, 'if this gentleman is ever going to have answers, I should think it high time.' He then wished me to put the question again. This was done with much humility, and I need not add, with much faith, and a prompt rap, rap, was the reply! Ques.—'Will the spirit of my sister converse with me?' Two raps. To make all sure,—'Is this the spirit of my departed sister?' Two raps. By writing down figures, I learned that she was 27 years old at the time of her death. This number, 27, was obtained by peculiar intonation, and was the age agreed upon with a friend who went with me. I asked if spirits could move from place to place, if they could converse, and was answered in the affirmative. Ques.—'Are these spirits acquainted with the spirits who make the manifestations at the house of Dr. Phelps, at Stratford, Conn.' Ans.—Two light raps.

"A gentleman called attention to the fact that this response was by faint rapping, and Mrs. Fish said it meant they were slightly acquainted. Without being able to discover the relation between slight rapping and slight acquaintance, I must conclude this is the correct explanation.

"Ques.—Are these spirits acquainted with the spirits who rap at the house of Mr. Salsbury, in Mina, Chatauque county, of this state. Answered by two raps.

"This is the first I had heard of such demonstrations at this place. The name and abiding place of Mr. Salsbury were alike portions of a pious fraud to 'try the spirits.'

"The moving chairs and tables, and other physical demonstrations, I believe, was not attempted by the Foxes while in this city. It must not be forgotten, that whenever this thing takes place, it is customary for spirits to call for the 'dark circle.' The lights must be extinguished! Believers answer the cavils of the worldly, in regard to this 'dark circle,' by saying they are instructed by the spirits, that these demonstrations require a visible appearance of the ghostly power that produces them, and as the world is not yet prepared for their appearance, the darkness is a requisite. Yet many of the faith say they have seen tables and chairs moved in broad daylight! but they make no mention of the visible appearance which the spirits declare to be a necessary concomitant."

As evidence that these denizens of the "upper deep" can be led along, "sold" and humbugged as readily as the "earth earthy," I give you the following:—In company with two friends, I attended by invitation, a "spiritual session" at the house of a gentleman in Brooklyn. Mrs. Benedict was the "medium." We agreed upon a plan to "try the spirits" beforehand. The substance of which was, to act on the doctrine of "*similia similibus*"—humbug those who attempted to humbug us. I was to be a believer; my friends, open to conviction, willing to examine. When we were ushered into the presence we were very fortunate in finding the ground unoccupied. The worthy Doctor in whose dwelling these marvels transpired, was a firm believer. He gave us an account of the strange developments and extraordinary sayings of the spirits, which of course we swallowed without hesitancy.

As soon as we were seated around a table, profound silence for a few moments was observed, in order to give the spirits an opportunity of



coming around, then a few faint rappings were heard, immediately in the vicinity of Mrs. B.'s feet. The Doctor then asked in a lugubrious tone, if spirits were present, and more indefinite rapping was the reply. This, however, was so vague and unreliable that another time of profound silence was required. During this time of stillness our Doctor received two or three shocks, apparently so violent that he nearly leaped out of his chair. This was a strong attack upon our gravity, but by biting lips, &c., we managed to live through it, and maintain our faces with the most becoming longitudinality.

The spirits, however, were not inclined to converse freely with the Doctor, and at his suggestion, I asked if the spirit would converse with me. The reply was three distinct raps, which with this "medium" means Yes. Question—"will the spirit of my sister converse with me?" No answer. Question—"will any spirit converse with me?" Answer—three raps. The Doctor said this was Paul; he knew the raps! To be sure of it I asked—"is it the spirit of St. Paul?" Three raps. Question—"is the spirit of St. Paul acquainted with the spirit of my sister?" Three raps. Question—"will the spirit communicate with me for my sister?" Three raps. Question—"will the spirit of St. Paul inform me of the manner of my sister's death?" There was no reply, and without pressing the question, I remarked casually with much apparent sincerity, that my sister was lost on the steamboat Erie which was burned a few years since on Lake Erie, near Silver Creek; that our family had felt much anxiety to know the circumstances attending her death.

The Doctor wished to know if the body was ever found, and was answered in the negative. Question—"will St. Paul inform me of the manner of my sister's death?" Answered by a succession of raps which was interpreted as a call for the alphabet. The alphabet was repeated, and the Apostle to the Gentiles spelled out "jumped overboard!" Question—"was she in company with any one?" Three raps. Question—"if I call the names of several persons, will the spirit indicate by a rap, when I mention the right one?" Three raps. "Was it Julius Holmes?" Three raps. "Did she leap into the water at his request?" Three raps. "With him?" Three raps. Question—"were they engaged to be married?" Three raps. Question—"what was the age of my sister at the time of her death?" The "spirit" did not seem inclined to reply, and I took occasion to ask one of my friends, very casually, if he "remembered how old *Clarissa* was?" he said 21. I corrected him; positively averring her true age to be 23, and the spirit settled all doubt by promptly rapping 23!

I may mention here what the reader has already anticipated, that this drowned sister of mine was a creature of the imagination. I never had a real sister, and the gallant Julius Holmes, who leaped with his betrothed from the burning wreck into the waves, is as shadowy as the most ethereal phantom. A grave looking man, who it seems was an amateur in this kind of "Spiritual Philosophy," now came in and plied the good Saint with divers queries of an ethical and religious nature. Many of these questions I put myself, and in all cases prompt replies were given.

In answer to questions, or rather in most cases by rapping assent to what the Doctor would say, much "wisdom in solid chunks" was given forth. Thus, (Doct. loquitur,) I suppose spirits constantly progress in the world of spirits, (rap, rap, rap.) They hold communion with each other,

(rap, rap, rap.) In their own sphere? (rap, rap, rap,) and instruct each other, (rap, rap, rap,) and instruct and guide those in the sphere below, (rap, rap, rap,) and attract them to the higher spheres, (rap, rap, rap,) and so on. Question—can spirits move from place to place? Three raps. How? by attraction? Three raps. 'Through the nervous fluid? Three raps. Question—do spirits know the thoughts of the living. Three raps. And do they suggest thoughts? Three raps. Question—are they acquainted with the feelings, motives, and wishes of those who interrogate them? Three raps. Doctor—and I suppose they commonly sympathize with those they have left behind, (rap, rap, rap,) communing with them, (rap, rap, rap,) and they feel for them in their afflictions, (rap, rap, rap.)

We learned also that spirits never sleep, that they never feel the passion of revenge, nor anger. The Doctor and his friend were much astonished at the wonderful wisdom evinced by the answers of the spirit. They made many comments.

Question.—“Are there any spirits in the world of spirits who are any more miserable than they were here?” Alphabet called for and an answer spelt out—“They suffer in mind until they are submissive to the love of truth.” This reply, especially, called forth the most extravagant encomiums. It was a remarkable answer, such a volume of thought in so few words! Of course, we gave our assent,—“they suffer in mind,”—mark that, “in mind.”

Question.—“Do spirits require sustenance or nourishment.” Answer spelled out—“Light, harmony, and an increase of wisdom!” Another gem from the spirit world! Was there human being who could answer thus?

Many other sayings of the spirit were duly chronicled and commented upon.

One of my friends asked a question which the spirit did not answer. He desired to know if the spirit could inform him what it was he had lost a few days since—something he prized highly—“could the spirit tell what it was?” No answer was given; the transition to such earthly considerations was too sudden. So my friend intimated that he doubted the reality of these marvels! Then the “spirit was grieved,” we got no more communications, and he only consented reluctantly to “bid the gentleman good bye,” by a few courteous raps.

SHADRACH BARNES.

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## THE ELECTRO-MAGNETIC THEORY!

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Some who have become interested in the *Rochester Knockings* are inclined to refer them to an *electro-magnetic* influence. The anatomical explanation, it would seem, is altogether too simple to be credited. The claim of being *spiritual manifestations* exceeds somewhat the amplitude of their credulity, but they are persuaded there is some mysterious agency involved in the production of the sounds, and it better suits their love of the marvelous, to imagine that an imponderable force, aside from the will and

the muscles, is necessary to the exposition. The following article from the *Daily Express* of this city, contains a series of propositions developing the electro-magnetic theory, which we insert as a curiosity in its way. It will not be expected by the reader acquainted with the rudiments of the branch of physics treating of electricity and magnetism, that the merits of the theory will be gravely discussed:—

THE PHENOMENA OF THE "ROCHESTER KNOCKINGS." We visited the room of the Rappers during their sojourn in this city—not for the purpose of investigating it in its scientific relations, or of believing in its relation to the spirit world—but from a native Yankee curiosity to see the Rappers, hear the noises, and then guess how it is done. From our observation, we are rather heterodox in regard to the anatomical *expose* of the Medical Faculty of the University of Buffalo. It is scarcely within the range of our credulity to believe, after what we have seen and heard, that the sounds proceed from dislocated joints or the rapping of distended and contracted ligaments—and we are equally incredulous as to their being manifestations from the Spirit World—and what they are, or whither they come—we leave for future discussion when we have more time and have given the subject a more thorough investigation.

There are those among us, aside from the Medical Faculty, who firmly believe that they have discovered the phenomena of the "knockings."—They attribute it to animal electricity, or magnetism, and in the exercise of *faith* we think, rather exceeding the Professors—and at the same time, like the Professors, emphatically disclaim all belief in the existence of any spiritual agency.—Like all other infantile efforts to develop science or evolve new theories, the believers in animal electricity groping their way to the full light of public confidence, unaided by any decisive experimental manifestations to serve as tapers in their pathway. It is due to the believers in this new theory of "Knocking," that they should afford the public "the reason for the hope that is in them," in this regard, and we give the following suggestions or propositions from a gentleman who has been a close observer of the Rappings, and has examined the subject with the sole desire of satisfying his own mind what agents produce the sounds and manifestations.

1st. That all men receive and evolve Electricity. Some more—some less.

2d. Some men have power to retain, and evolve, this fluid, in greater or less degree, by act of *their own will*. In a modified form, in the human body, it is vulgarly called Animal Magnetism.

3d. The *habit* of controlling or evolving this fluid increases the *power* to do so.

4th. It is a modified form of Electricity that is the agent in producing the various magnetic phenomena.

5th. Some men are charged with this subtle fluid beyond their ability to retain, and it escapes when they are in the vicinity of conductors. It does not require absolute contact with conductors, but passes through air a limited distance.

6th. When this fluid escapes, and passes into any sounding substance, it makes a detonation.



7th. Some men are charged positively, some negatively with electricity. Two persons charged, one positively and the other negatively, by standing near each other, will produce rapid movement of the electric fluid, and if a circle is made, an electric battery will be formed, of which they are the opposite poles.

8th. In the battery thus formed the fluid is under the control of,

*First*—The positively charged person.

*Secondly*—The person to whom the power is transferred by will of the first.

9th. That the imaginary conversation with departed spirits, is a mode of exercising this power when transferred.

10th. That the answers are the detonations produced by the electromagnetic fluid, discharging itself against or into the sounding substance, and the discharge is at *the will* of the questioner, when he expects, desires, or firmly wills an answer.

11th. In this way the phenomena of question and answer are explained, and are demonstrated to be subject to the laws, and liable to all the misapprehensions of Animal-Magnetism or Clairvoyance.

12th. So far as regards the movement of chairs, tables, &c., it is only necessary to admit that Electricity (Animal or Material) is a  *motive*  power, and can be made subservient to the will to conceive that it may produce the results claimed.

An ingenious friend expresses his unqualified admiration of the above theory (like the old romances founded on fact) and regards its applications to the phenomena of *rapping* as among the most trifling of its merits. He suggests a great number of others, out of which we give two or three as specimens. Truly we are a great people, and live in the 19th century !

By selecting eight or ten strongly electrical persons and arranging them in a circle, with hands grasped right and left, like the connexions in a Grove's battery, a living circuit is obtained, which may be substituted for the cups in the Telegraph, and will produce animal electricity of such tension and force, as to pass through wires several hundred miles in length, and work at the most distant stations the machines of Morse, Bain, or House, at a greatly reduced cost ! It is probable that a single individual, if of a very nervous temperament, after sufficient practice, might be able, by a strong effort of the will and without any aid from the battery, to send his own message directly through the wires ! It has been suggested that for telegraphic purposes very *wiry* persons would be found preferable !

A caveat for this invention has been filed at Washington, with the intention of taking out a patent when it is perfected. The proceeds of the sale of the patent right are to be divided equally between ourselves and the author of the suggestion, we taking the larger half, as is usual in such cases !

If eight or ten persons are arranged as above, on placing another individual between the extreme right and left—the poles at the distance of about two feet—he will experience a very severe shock, when, by the

electrical accumulation, the extensor muscles of the positive and negative poles are suddenly put in motion. If any one doubts this fact, we are ready to prove it on him, by a practical demonstration — by what may be termed literally a knock down argument.

Indeed the same thing may be verified still more simply, by first tying the doubters hands behind his back, and then bringing both fists with great force against each side of the head, in the region of the temporal bone. The effect which follows is not, of course, to be ascribed to the momentum or motion; but to that which produces the motion, viz., the electricity. It is a well known fact, that heavy charges of this fluid, such as a flash of lightning, are capable of knocking down men, and even tearing to pieces the most substantial buildings, directly and without the agency of any other substance; and it should not be regarded as strange, therefore, that they should be able to do it through the intervention of another force.

Still more beautiful is the application of these principles to the science and art of education. Is a scholar lazy or dull? A deficiency of electricity is the cause: and instead of being scolded and lectured (remedies of acknowledged inefficiency,) the plain indication is to supply the deficient force and to charge the system with the lacking electricity. The common electric machine will accomplish this, if turned long enough, or it may be effected still more readily by electrified medicines, such as galvanic rings, pills, and plasters. The bodily vigor and courage of the knights of romance (erroneously ascribed to their rough mode of life and temperance) is, without doubt, due to their habit of wearing steel and iron armor, the metallic electricity generated by which, like a universal galvanic belt, supplied the nervous force, which makes their feats of strength and endurance fables to the men of this generation. Should the method suggested fail with the dullest boys, the teacher may, by a strong effort of the will, send a shock across the room against the head of the unlucky urchin, with a loud "detonation" or report, which will serve the double purpose of directly quickening the dormant energies of the culprit, and of indirectly opening the eyes and ears of the other pupils. In case again this should fail, he may apply the electricity through the muscles of the right arm, by directing the palm of the hand or the fist forcibly against the side of the dull head, or by the intervention of a ruler or twig of birch. The discovery of this last method is due to that old Hebrew, King Solomon, a man who looked deeply into the causes and reasons of things, and who was very wise for the age in which he lived; but there is no evidence that he understood animal magnetism and electricity, or was therefore acquainted with the *mode* in which his remedy works he cure.

## THE COCK-LANE GHOST.

Fancied visitations of spirits have generally been predicated on *mysterious noises* produced with the design of deception, or otherwise; and numerous stories might be gathered of delusions that have prevailed, more or less, until the strange sounds supposed to involve a spiritual agency have been traced to their true source, and their origin explained. In connection with the *Rochester knockings* the inquiry arises, whether *noises* of the same description have entered into impositions of a similar character heretofore practiced. Our acquaintance with the history of humbugs is not sufficient to authorise us to say in how far the imposture which we have exposed is entitled to the merit of originality. We take it, however, to possess novelty from the fact that if many instances had occurred in past time, they would have been sought out, as means either of confirming, or disproving the spiritual claims of the *knockings*. One instance, however, must be familiar to most of our readers by the title at least. The imposture of the "*Cock-lane Ghost*," which occurred nearly a century ago in London, resembles, in several particulars, that which has lately emanated from Rochester. The *Ghost of Cock-lane* manifested itself by *knocks*, and communications with it were held through their intervention. The knocking spirit accompanied exclusively one person, a young girl, and the knocks were only made while she was in bed. She was the "*medium*" according to the modern nomenclature. The bed was observed to shake violently when the rapping occurred, which was considered to be the effect of the spiritual presence! This imposture occurred during the life of the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson, who, it is well known, with all his learning and intellectual acumen, evinced, on some points, a superstitious turn of mind. He was thought, at first, to be somewhat inclined to give credit to the apparition; afterward, however, he assisted in detecting the deception, and published an exposition in the newspapers.

The reader of the foregoing pages, who is not already familiar with the Cock-lane Ghost story, will be interested in it from the points of similitarity already referred to. We, therefore, give it at length, as related in a work entitled *Memoirs of extraordinary delusions, by Charles Mackay*.\* The

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\* In two vols., 12mo., published by Lindsay & Blakeston, Philadelphia, 1850.



real source of the mysterious noise in this famous instance appears never to have been understood. Mr. Mackay says, "the precise manner in which the deception was carried on has never been explained." He is disposed to think that the knocking was made on the wall by the mother of the girl who was the medium of the manifestations. It is hardly probable that this could be practiced without detection. By others the sounds were thought to be due to ventriloquism. This explanation is not reasonable. From the history, we entertain little doubt that the sounds were produced by the girl, acting through the muscles, upon moveable parts, as in the case of the Rochester knockings. It might be suspected, even, that the Rochester rappers obtained the hint of their operations from the Cock-lane Ghost. The reader who is satisfied of the verity of the discovery of the source of the Rochester rappings will, we think, agree with us that the same explanation most satisfactorily accounts for the phenomena in that curious instance of imposture, which, although proved to be a deception, and the parties severely punished, has remained unexplained for nearly a century!

The following is the narrative:—

At the commencement of the year 1760, there resided in Cock Lane, near West Smithfield, in the house of one Parsons, the parish clerk of St. Sepulchre's, a stockbroker, named Kent. The wife of this gentleman had died in childbed during the previous year, and his sister-in-law Miss Fanny, had arrived from Norfolk to keep his house for him. They soon conceived a mutual affection, and each of them made a will in the other's favor. They lived some months in the house of Parsons, who, being a needy man, borrowed money of his lodger. Some difference arose betwixt them, and Mr. Kent left the house, and instituted legal proceedings against the parish clerk for the recovery of his money.

While this matter was yet pending, Miss Fanny was suddenly taken ill of the small-pox; and, notwithstanding every care and attention, she died in a few days, and was buried in a vault under Clerkenwell church. Parsons now began to hint that the poor lady had come unfairly by her death, and that Mr. Kent was accessory to it, from his too great eagerness to enter into possession of the property she had bequeathed him. Nothing further was said for nearly two years; but it would appear that Parsons was of so revengeful a character, that he had never forgotten or forgiven his differences with Mr. Kent, and the indignity of having sued for the borrowed money. The strong passions of pride and avarice were silently at work during all that interval, hatching schemes of revenge, but dismissing them one after the other as impracticable, until, at last, a notable one suggested itself. About the beginning of the year 1762, the alarm was spread over all the neighbourhood of Cock-lane, that the house of Parsons was haunted by the ghost of poor Fanny, and that the daughter of Parsons, a girl about 12 years of age, had several times seen and conversed with the spirit, who had, moreover, informed her, that she had

not died with the small-pox, as was currently reported, but of poison, administered by Mr. Kent. Parsons, who originated, took good care to countenance these reports; and, in answer to numerous inquiries, said his house was every night, and had been for two years, in fact, ever since the death of Fanny, troubled by a loud knocking at the doors and in the walls. Having thus prepared the ignorant and credulous neighbors to believe or exaggerate for themselves what he had told them, he sent for a gentleman in a higher class in life, to come and witness these extraordinary occurrences. The gentleman came accordingly, and found the daughter of Parsons, to whom the spirit alone appeared, and whom alone it answered, in bed, trembling violently, having just seen the ghost, and been again informed that she had died from poison. A loud knocking was also heard from every part of the chamber, which so mystified the not very clear understanding of the visitor, that he departed, afraid to doubt and ashamed to believe, but with a promise to bring the clergyman of the parish and several other gentlemen on the following day, to report upon the mystery.

On the following night he returned, bringing with him three clergymen, and about twenty other persons, including two negroes, when, upon a consultation with Parsons, they resolved to sit up the whole night, and await the ghost's arrival. It was then explained by Parsons, that although the ghost would never render itself visible to anybody but his daughter, it had no objection to answer the questions that might be put to it, by any person present, and that it expressed an affirmation by one knock, a negative by two, and its displeasures by a kind of scratching. The child was then put into bed along with her sister, and the clergymen examined the bed and bed-clothes to satisfy themselves that no trick was played, by knocking upon any substance concealed among the clothes. As on the previous night, the bed was observed to shake violently.

After some hours, during which they all waited with exemplary patience, the mysterious knocking was heard in the wall, and the child declared that she saw the ghost of poor Fanny. The following questions were then gravely put by the clergyman, through the medium of one Mary Frazer, the servant of Parsons, and to whom it was said the deceased lady had been much attached. The answers were in the usual fashion, by a knock or knocks:—

“Do you make this disturbance on account of the ill usage you received from Mr. Kent?”—“Yes.”

“Were you brought to an untimely end by poison?”—“Yes.”

“How was the poison administered, in beer or purl?”—“In purl.”

“How long was that before your death?”—“About three hours.”

“Can your former servant, Carrots, give any information about the poison?”—“Yes.”

“Are you Kent's wife's sister?”—“Yes.”

“Were you married to Kent after your sister's death?”—“No.”

“Was anybody else, besides Kent, concerned in your murder?”—“No.”

“Can you, if you like, appear visibly to any one?”—“Yes.”

“Will you do so?”—“Yes.”

“Can you come out of this house?”—“Yes.”

“Is it your intention to follow this child about everywhere?”—“Yes.”

"Are you pleased in being asked these questions?"—"Yes."

"Does it ease your troubled soul?"—"Yes."

[Here there was heard a mysterious noise, which some wiseacre present compared to the fluttering of wings.]

"How long before your death did you tell your servant, Carrots, that you were poisoned?—An hour?"—"Yes."

[Carrots, who was present, was appealed to; but she stated positively that such was not the fact, as the deceased was quite speechless an hour before her death. This shook the faith of some of the spectators, but the examination was allowed to continue.]

"How long did Carrots live with you?"—"Three or four days."

[Carrots was again appealed to, and said that this was the case.]

"If Mr. Kent is arrested for this murder, will he confess?"—"Yes."

"Would your soul be at rest if he were hanged for it?"—"Yes."

"Will he be hanged for it?"—"Yes."

"How long a time first?"—"Three years."

"How many clergymen are there in this room?"—"Three."

"How many negroes?"—"Two."

"Is this watch (held up by one of the clergymen) white?"—"No."

"Is it yellow?"—"No."

"Is it blue?"—"No."

"Is it black?"—"Yes."

[The watch was in a black shagreen case.]

"At what time this morning will you take your departure?"

The answer to this question was four knocks, very distinctly heard by every person present; and accordingly, at four o'clock precisely, the ghost took its departure to the Wheatsheaf public house, close by, where it frightened mine host and his lady almost out of their wits by knocking in the ceiling right above their bed.

The rumour of these occurrences very soon spread over London, and every day Cock Lane was rendered impassable by the crowds of people who assembled around the house of the parish clerk, in expectation of either seeing the ghost, or of hearing the mysterious knocks. It was at last found necessary, so clamorous were they for admission within the haunted precincts, to admit those only who would pay a certain fee, an arrangement which was very convenient to the needy and money-loving Mr Parsons. Indeed, things had taken a turn greatly to his satisfaction; he not only had his revenge, but he made a profit out of it. The ghost, in consequence, played its antics every night, to the great amusement of many hundred of people and the great perplexity of a still greater number.

Unhappily, however, for the parish clerk, the ghost was induced to make some promises which were the means of utterly destroying its reputation. It promised, in answer to the questions of the Reverend Mr. Aldritch of Clerkenwell, that it would not only follow the little Miss Parsons wherever she went, but would also attend him, or any other gentleman, into the vault under St. Johns Church, where the body of the murdered woman was deposited, and would there give notice of its presence by a distinct knock upon the coffin. As a preliminary, the girl was conveyed to the church, where a large party of ladies and gentlemen, eminent for their acquirements, their rank, or their wealth, had assembled. About ten o'clock



on the night of the 1st of February, the girl having been brought from Cock Lane in a coach, was put to bed by several ladies in the house of Mr Aldritch; a strict examination having been previously made that nothing was hidden in the bedclothes. While the gentlemen, in an adjoining chamber, were deliberating whether they should proceed in a body to the vault, they were summoned into the bedroom by the ladies, who affirmed, in great alarm, that the ghost had come, and that they heard knocks and scratches. The gentlemen entered accordingly, with a determination to suffer no deception. The little girl, on being asked whether she saw the ghost, replied, "No; but she felt it on her back like a mouse." She was then required to put her hands out of bed, and they being held by some of the ladies, the spirit was summoned in the usual manner to answer, if it were in the room. The question was several times put with solemnity; but the customary knock was not heard in reply in the walls, neither was there any scratching. The ghost was then asked to render itself visible, but it did not choose to grant the request. It was next solicited to give some token of any sort, or by touching the hand or cheek of any lady or gentleman in the room; but even with this request the ghost would not comply.

There was now a considerable pause, and one of the clergymen went down stairs to interrogate the father of the girl, who was waiting the result of the experiment. He positively denied that there was any deception, and even went so far as to say that he himself, upon one occasion had seen and conversed with the awful ghost. This having been communicated to the company, it was unanimously resolved to give the ghost another trial; and the clergyman called out in a loud voice to the supposed spirit that the gentleman to whom it had promised to appear in the vault, was about to repair to that place, where he claimed the fulfilment of its promise. At one hour after midnight they all proceeded to the church, and the gentleman in question, with another, entered the vault alone, and took their position alongside of the coffin of poor Fanny. The ghost was then summoned to appear, but it appeared not: it was summoned to knock, but it knocked not; it was summoned to scratch, but it scratched not, and the two retired from the vault, with the firm belief that the whole business was a deception practised by Parsons and his daughter. There were others, however, who did not wish to jump so hastily to a conclusion, and who suggested that they were, perhaps, trifling with this awful and supernatural being, which, being offended with them for their presumption, would not condescend to answer them. Again, after a serious consultation, it was agreed on all hands that, if the ghost answered anybody at all, it would answer Mr. Kent, the supposed murderer; and he was accordingly requested to go into the vault. He went with several others, and summoned the ghost to answer whether he had indeed poisoned her. There being no answer, the question was put by Mr. Aldritch, who conjured it, if it were indeed a spirit, to end their doubts—make a sign of its presence, and point out the guilty person. There being still no answer for the space of half an hour, during which time all these boobies waited with the most praiseworthy perseverance, they returned to the house of Mr. Aldritch, and ordered the girl to get up and dress herself. She was strictly examined, but persisted in her statement that she used no deception, and that the ghost had really appeared to her.

So many persons had, by their openly expressed belief of the reality of the visitation, identified themselves with it, that Parsons and his family were far from being the only persons interested in the continuance of the delusion. The result of the experiment convinced most people ; but these were not to be convinced by any evidence, however positive, and they, therefore, spread abroad the rumor, that the ghost had not appeared in the vault because Mr. Kent had taken care beforehand to have the coffin removed. That gentleman, whose position was a very painful one, immediately procured competent witnesses, in whose presence the vault was entered and the coffin of poor Fanny opened. Their deposition was then published ; and Mr. Kent indicted Parsons and his wife, his daughter, Mary Frazer the servant, the Reverend Mr. Moor, and a tradesman, two of the most prominent patrons of the deception, for a conspiracy. The trial came on in the court of King's Bench, on the 10th of July, before Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, when, after an investigation which lasted twelve hours, the whole of the conspirators were found guilty. The Rev. Mr. Moor and his friend were severely reprimanded in open court, and recommended to make some pecuniary compensation to the prosecutor for the aspersions they had been instrumental in throwing upon his character. Parsons was sentenced to stand three times in the pillory, and to be imprisoned for two years : his wife to one year's, and his servant to six months' imprisonment in the Bridewell. A printer, who had been employed by them to publish an account of the proceedings for their profit, was also fined fifty pounds, and discharged.

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### CONCLUDING REMARKS.

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In the article taken from the Buffalo Medical Journal, it is stated that intimations were thrown out shortly after the exposition was made public, of wonderful phenomena, in addition to the *knockings*, shortly to be produced. These promises, it is currently reported, have been fulfilled. Bells and gongs placed under tables, have been rung ; chairs have been moved ; persons have been pulled about, by invisible hands, etc. It has been seriously argued against the correctness of the exposition of the *knockings*, that it does not cover these subsequent *manifestations*, as if, forsooth, there was, of necessity, any connection between the two classes of phenomena, and as if persons engaged in the *rapping* imposition might not superadd various other juggling tricks to help along the deception. As remarked in the article referred to, these feats of legerdemain are left to others who have the disposition, leisure, and ability necessary to discover and explain the manner in which they are done. To suppose that such fooleries involve other than physical agencies, is to attribute to *spirits* a very dignified occupation ! The recreations of the higher order of existences, according to this idea, are of a very frivolous kind. As a clerical friend has remarked, the character of the

phenomena reputed to take place, suffices to disprove the spirituality of their origin, for they are beneath the dignity of angel or devil. As tricks of juggling they are quite inferior to, and certainly not less inexplicable, than those exhibited by Mons. Adrien, Signor Blitz, or any of the *magicians*, so called. The latter are exhibited with the understanding that they are deceptive, while the former are confined to those already prepared to believe in their spiritual causation. Nor is there any thing new in the production of these phenomena, and, for purposes of imposition, their being attributed to ghosts. The reader who has any curiosity on this point, if he will consult *Mackay's History of Popular Delusions*, will find accounts of similar performances carried on, for mischievous purposes, many years ago. The chief difference between the modern tricks and those of former days, consists in this — while those engaged in the latter were made to feel the majesty of the law, the former are well patronized, and thus turn out to be a good money making enterprise. It may be doubted whether the credulity of mankind has diminished with the progress of civilization, but there can be no question that there is a far greater degree of toleration, in respect to such matters, now, than formerly.

The exposition by the three "University Professors," has now been for some time before the public, and has called out, as was to have been expected, various newspaper commentators. Nothing, however, has appeared, calculated to disprove the correctness of the explanation. It would be strange if those engaged in the imposition, together with some of those interested in consequence of being committed in its behalf, should consent to yield the field without defending it with such small artillery as they can command. To the latter, more especially, the consolation of wasting some ammunition should be accorded. With this view of the matter the firing (keeping up the figure) will not be likely to be returned, while the reasoning and the facts upon which the exposition rests, remain unaffected.

That they who have become infatuated with the delusion would be speedily convinced, assuredly was not to be looked for. Nothing is plainer than that a portion of mankind are determinately bent on being humbugged, and that a more unwelcome office cannot be tendered, than to open their eyes to the fact of their having been duped. The object of the exposition was not to convince such persons, but to prevent, if practicable, the further progress of this method of imposing on the credulous. To take pains for that end will probably prove a thankless task, but this is of no consequence so that the end be attained.

To some it may seem that it was hardly worth while to interfere with the



continued success of the humbug. 'Let it go on,' it may be said, 'and if persons are willing to be duped, it is their own business.' Some, even, look with a lenient eye on the deception, because it is so cleverly conducted, and has eluded detection so long. Even an imposture appeals to the sympathies of many when it is carried on with boldness and singular address. These apologies might be less out of place if made in behalf of an ingenious hoax, got up in mere merriment, and which possibly would even prove useful in gauging the gullibility of society. But this is something more than a clever joke. Aside from the audacious blasphemy of the pretended communications with invisible spirits, it is a matter affecting profoundly the minds of not a few of those whose faith in the spiritual origin of the sounds is secured. And this result is contemplated in the imposition. Witness the rules of order [see page 33] in which the same solemnity which should characterize religious meetings, is enjoined. Insanity and suicide are among the effects already developed. An incident occurring at one of the sessions in this city, may serve to illustrate the heartless cruelty of some of the revelations. A mother, who had lost a child by drowning, goes to make inquiries of the departed spirit. The mode of death is correctly designated; then follow the questions 'was the child thrown into the canal?' 'was it done in anger?' to each of which an affirmative answer is returned. The person thus accused of homicide, is afterward designated among a list of names; and the lady then remarked that the person designated had been suspected by her of throwing her child into the canal. She left the room apparently in the full persuasion that her child had been wilfully destroyed through the agency of the child of a neighbor. Assuming, as we may do, that the sounds by which this information was communicated, were voluntary on the part of those who call themselves '*mediums*,' the reader will make his own comments on the character of such a transaction.

Taking the nature and consequences of the imposture into consideration, none can doubt the importance of resorting to appropriate means to arrest it. This can be done by verifying in every place visited by the Rappers, the principle involved in the Exposition which has given rise to this publication. This principle is, *that the sounds are produced by the will acting, through voluntary muscles, upon some of the moveable parts with which the muscles are connected.* The situation of the sounds may be different in different cases; but let an intelligent committee, embracing one or more physicians, subject any *medium* to careful examination, and the true source, in every instance, will not fail to be detected. The reader of the foregoing pages will have perceived that the *knockings* may emanate

from the *knees*, the *ankles*, and the *toes*. These sources are to be interrogated by experiments calculated to prevent the sounds from being produced, or to detect the motions of the parts producing them. Placing the medium in a posture in which she can get no fulcrum for the foot, will probably prevent all knee manifestations, and if this should chance to fail, let the joint be rendered immoveable, the limb being extended, by gutta percha splints and an abundance of roller bandage. To put a quietus on toe-rapping let the feet be denuded, and elevated, so that no pressure with the foot is practicable. The *tendonic* movements of the ankle may be seen if the part is closely observed, and if not seen they may be felt, as well as the contraction of the muscle on the outer part of the leg which causes the movements. We are inclined to the belief that in most instances the rapping will be found to come from one or more of these sources but it is by no means improbable that other joints, or tendons, may be available for this species of deception.

To prove that the sounds are voluntary, and to point out the simple modes in which they are developed, suffice to expose the imposition, without taking the trouble to explain any superadded marvels. If the former are due to deception, the latter are equally so, as a matter of course, whether explained or not. The claim to supernatural agency rests on the mystery of the *knockings*. This claim would be considered valid by many credulous minds, so long as a writer advocating the spiritual origin of sounds could say, "men of the most acute discrimination have long been engaged in the investigation, intelligence and skepticism, sharpened by the suspicion of fraud, have not failed to institute every ordeal afforded by the resources of science and art, till sensible and candid men have been forced to abandon all idea of tracing the mysterious phenomena\* to any human device." If the principle of the Exposition be true (and of its truth we have no more doubt than of any scientific deduction sustained by irrefragable proof) the assertion contained in the foregoing quotation can no longer be repeated. To establish the truth of the principle to the satisfaction of the public, provided the imposture be not abandoned, must be left to the co-operation of others; and, as respects the result, the authors can have no special personal interest therein, save what pertains to the consciousness of having been instrumental in whatever good may be connected with it.

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\* Quoted from a pamphlet on the "Rappings" published in New York, by a writer who signs himself "A Dweller in the Temple."

## CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE.
Editorial Article from Buffalo Medical Journal,.....	3
Notes,.....	19

## APPENDIX.

Letter by Prof. C. A. Lee,.....	35
Rappings at the Ankle, by movements of a tendon,.....	39
Exposition by Shadrach Barnes—Toeology,.....	41
The Electro-Magnetic Theory,.....	52
The Cock Lane Ghost,.....	56
Concluding Remarks.....	61



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