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E.I.

INCIDENTS  
OF  
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE;

FROM  
NOTES TAKEN WHILST INVESTIGATING THE NEW PHENOMENA  
OF SPIRIT LIFE AND ACTION.

ADDRESSED TO FRIENDS,

BY A  
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

[Snow, Herman]

NOT PUBLISHED, BUT PRINTED FOR GRATUITOUS DISTRIBUTION.

BOSTON:  
GEORGE C. RAND, PRINTER,  
NO. 3 CORNHILL.  
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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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I HAVE but a brief word to say in explanation of the following pages. Having a large circle of friends, especially among the ministers of the denomination to which I belong, it is but a natural wish on my part to impart to them some of the light I have received on a highly important subject of enquiry.

The claim is that spiritual beings — those who have left the material body for the spirit life — are now permitted, not only to hover around us as the ministering spirits of God's love, but also, by means of certain sensible phenomena easily understood by those who have given to the subject a due degree of attention, are able to hold frequent and familiar intercourse with those in the body.

It will be readily conceded, I think, that if there is any truth in this claim, it assumes at once a highly religious character, and hence it comes within the especial sphere of those whose vocation it is to *study and impart* religious truth and spiritual influence. And hence my anxiety to bring a subject, which has so deeply interested me during an investigation extending through nearly a year, before my brethren of the Christian ministry. I at first sought to do this through the leading religious journal of our body, but my attempt was deemed inconsistent with the character and purpose of that journal. The course I have now adopted seemed the most feasible and efficient one that then remained to me. The result is now before my friends, and it remains to be seen how it will be received. I am fully conscious, however, that the claim set up will be utterly denied and scoffed at by some, and I can easily imagine the smile of derision, or perhaps the frown of contempt, that will rest upon the brow of many a friend and ministerial brother of mine, when my subject is thus brought gravely forward for defence by one who, for the last ten years, has been accustomed to stand up as a teacher of religious truth. I can only ask and hope that such will have the firmness and patience to hear me through before they press a sweeping denunciation against my present position. Others there are, and *not a few*, I think, among that class of Christians with whom I have been accustomed more immediately to associate, who keep their minds open to *all sincere* claims of new truth, however strange and startling; and who will read with pleasure and candor the statement of personal observation and experience, that forms the substance of these pages. It is the thought of this class which, more than all else, has encouraged me to



go on with my attempt, feeling that with *such*, at least, my efforts will not be wholly in vain.

There is still another class — many of these also brother ministers — who, like myself, have looked into this subject with some good degree of thoroughness, until they have discovered beneath much mistake, much error and extravagance, mingled perhaps with some deception — the gleams of a most beautiful and precious truth. These friends will not, I think, regret to find that another has undertaken what, from various causes, they have not felt called upon to do. I have found the subject so extensive, even in that part only that has been brought beneath my own especial notice — that in order to avoid undue length, I have been obliged to study great brevity, often as I fear at the expense of sacrificing, in some degree, the full understanding and force of the facts stated; whilst I have been compelled, for the same reason, to resist the temptation constantly before me of entering more fully into the argument for the defence of my present position, and also of answering some of those objections that are now afloat in the popular mind — the most of which are very easily disposed of by one who is in any considerable degree acquainted with the subject. To all who would like to see the whole subject ably and candidly treated, I would recommend a recent work entitled “*Spirit Manifestations*,” by Rev. Adin Bullen, of Hopedale, Mass.

H. S.

*Montague, Mass., November, 1852.*



INCIDENTS  
OF  
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

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THE undersigned takes the liberty of submitting to his friends generally, and to his brethren of the Christian ministry especially, the following statement of facts in regard to a subject of singular and striking interest. I allude to the new developement of our day, generally known as "Spiritual Manifestations." It is now nearly a year since my first experience in this matter, and during the most of this time, I have been deeply interested, and making earnest efforts at investigation. The result is, that I now find myself a firm believer in the reality of this new mode of spiritual intercourse. I do not, of course, mean that I believe in *all* the claims that have been advanced, of this character; on the contrary, I am of the opinion that much which purports to come from unseen minds, does in reality come, either partly or *wholly*, from minds in the body. But what I mean to express as my present belief, is *this*: that under *favorable circumstances*, genuine communications thus come from minds now existing in the spiritual body. And furthermore, I believe that with due attention and study, this subject may become so well understood, that such spiritual communications can be fully relied upon, and be made a most important means of the world's enlightenment and moral elevation. I am very sure that this, my belief, has not



come from any especial tendency toward a love of the marvellous, nor from any natural leaning toward a blind credulity. On the contrary, as my most intimate friends will bear me witness, I am by nature, strongly inclined in the opposite direction—so much so, that in early life I was for a long time a decided skeptic in regard to the generally received faith of the Christian world. Neither do I think that my conviction has come from a careless and hasty investigation. During most of the time since I became interested in the subject, my situation has been quite favorable for a thorough and candid investigation. Especially was this the case during a residence of about three weeks in the family of a friend and relative. Here was a very good medium, and one in whom I had good reasons for putting implicit confidence. During my stay in this family, every facility was afforded me for a searching investigation. Not a day passed, without affording me the opportunity of trying experiments, in such ways as were most satisfactory to my own mind. Often my communications were received whilst no other person was present, but the medium and myself. Indeed, some of my most striking tests were answered while I was thus alone with the medium. And here I might as well say, as another important preliminary remark, that most of the incidents which I shall now relate, occurred in private families, with whom I was more or less acquainted, and in whom I had that degree of confidence, which seemed to preclude the suspicion of deception. In several instances the medium power has been discovered and developed by myself, in families who have been previously almost wholly unacquainted with the subject. Also, I wish to remind my readers, that these incidents are mostly of *my own* experience, and to state, that those which form the exceptions to this statement, are such as can be sustained by testimony which to my mind is fully reliable. I trust that it will appear in the end, that it has been only from the force of *facts*, too obvious to be denied, and too stubborn to be passed over with impunity, that I have been led to adopt my present new and most happy faith.

I now proceed to give the promised sketch of my personal experience. At first, my mind was strongly repelled from having any thing to do with the matter. I had, it is true, many of my most intimate and dear friends in the spirit world, but I could not



possibly think that they would have any thing to do with such manifestations as I then supposed these to be. It was, I think, mainly from a sense of duty — mingled, perhaps, with a *little* curiosity — that I was at first induced to improve a favorable opportunity to see something of the new wonder. But, as I can now plainly see, my mind was far from being in a proper condition for a *fair* investigation. Hence, like many others whose attempts I have since witnessed, I was excessively critical and captious in my attempts to *expose* the matter; for I had then no thoughts of becoming a believer.

My first tests were not very satisfactorily answered — the reasons of which I can now well understand — and I went away with my skepticism *confirmed*, rather than *removed*, and with the comfortable feeling that I had performed an unpleasant duty, and that I could now, with a fair conscience, speak of the whole matter as either an undoubted delusion, or a gross *imposition*. Several weeks elapsed in this state of mind, during which, like many others of a similar experience, I was not slow to speak, and with great confidence, of what I had witnessed, and the consequent conviction — or rather, as I should now say, of my wilful self-confirmation in a previous prejudice.

It was in this state of mind that I made the visit in my friend's family already noticed, and it was there that I first became seriously interested in the enquiry, and at length deeply impressed with the probable reality of the alleged new method of spirit intercourse. It was not, however, until after several days of constant experiment, nor until the patience of my friends, who were already firm believers, was nearly exhausted, that I began to show signs of relenting in my obstinate skepticism. But from *that* down to the present time, during my steady efforts at investigation, the evidence has been constantly accumulating, until at length I am as firmly convinced upon *this* as upon almost any other article of my faith.

I will now glance briefly at some of the more remarkable incidents of my experience during this period of my investigation:

I will first speak of those which tend more especially to illustrate the character of the material sounds and movements,



and to show that they are not caused by the conscious power of persons in the body. These consist mainly of the following : —

1. Certain movements of chairs, tables, and other articles of a similar character, in answer to the requests, oral *or mental*, of persons present ; or, as is often the case, without any such request, but wholly unexpected to all. Or, still more frequently, those movements occur as a response to a calling of the alphabet, for the purpose of spelling out messages from some invisible presence. In this way I have set for hours together, with no one but myself and a good, reliable medium present, and with a common-sized light-stand between us, one hand of the medium upon the stand would be amply sufficient to give it a power which I could not wholly resist with *both* of mine in my sitting posture. I have then requested the medium to put both her hands on also, and to try to *help me* hold the stand. This was, as I doubt not, attempted in good faith, but it did not seem to make the least difference ; the power exerted seemed fully equal to what it was before. It appeared that another will had glided in, and taken the full control of her own powers for the time — a will and power which were more than equal to mine, when seated as above.

With the same medium, and similarly situated — with one hand upon the stand, one leaf of which was up — in emphatic answer to a question, I have seen the stand move with such a sudden and powerful impulse, as to be thrown upon the floor with a force sufficient to split the top almost entirely asunder ! I have also, at other times, witnessed a power exerted in this way, fully equal to the ordinary exertions of a strong and healthy man. The most remarkable instance of this kind within the limits of my own experience, was the following. With myself sitting in a common chair, my feet being entirely off the floor — a large-sized light-stand in front of me, with the medium's hands resting lightly on the top — the invisible power exerted was sufficient to shove me along some five or six feet, on a *carpeted* floor. This took place at the house of a friend, in the presence of several witnesses, among whom was a teacher of long established and excellent repute, who had never seen anything of the kind before, and who expressed his astonishment in words like these : “ Do



you call that simple electricity! You might as well say that a mouse bores the Hoosac tunnel." In all these movements, it should be remembered, there were constant and striking manifestations of an invisible intelligence, which when properly consulted, would tell by whom and for what purpose the hidden force was exerted.

The most striking facts which I have received on the testimony of *others*, upon the point now under consideration, are stated in the following card, which appeared in the Springfield Republican some time last Spring. I copy it entire, with the single remark, that the individuals who have given this frank and honorable expression of their honest convictions, are, as I am told, gentlemen of respectable standing and undoubted veracity. The clear testimony of any one of them would doubtless be sufficient to establish a fact of the most important bearing in any of our courts of law, even if it involved the life of a human being.

[From the Springfield Republican.]

#### THE MODERN WONDER. — A MANIFESTO.

The undersigned, from a sense of justice to the parties referred to, very cordially bear testimony to the occurrence of the following facts, which we severally witnessed at the house of Rufus Elmer, in Springfield, on the evening of the 5th inst. : —

1. The table was moved in every possible direction, and with great force, when we could not perceive any cause of motion.

2. It (the table) was forced against each one of us so powerfully as to move us from our positions, together with the chairs we occupied, in all, several feet.

3. Mr. Wells and Mr. Edwards took hold of the table in such a manner as to exert their strength to the best advantage, but found the invisible power exercised in an opposite direction to be quite equal to their utmost efforts.

4. In two instances, at least, while the hands of all the members of the circle were placed on the top of the table, and while no visible power was employed to raise the table, or otherwise move it from its position, it was seen to rise clear of the



floor, and to float in the atmosphere for several seconds, as if sustained by some denser medium than air.

5. Mr. Wells seated himself on the table, which was rocked for some time with great violence, and at length it poised itself on two legs, and remained in this position for some thirty seconds, when no other person was in contact with the table.

6. Three persons, Messrs. Wells, Bliss, and Edwards, assumed positions on the table at the same time, and while thus seated, the table was moved in various directions.

7. Occasionally we were made conscious of the occurrence of a powerful shock, which produced a vibratory motion of the floor of the apartment in which we were seated; it seemed like the motion occasioned by distant thunder, or the firing of ordnance far away, causing the tables, chairs, and other inanimate objects, and all of us, to tremble in such a manner that the effects were both seen and felt.

8. In the whole exhibition, which was far more diversified than the foregoing specification would indicate, we were constrained to admit that there was an almost constant manifestation of some intelligence which seemed, at least, to be independent of the circle.

In conclusion, we may observe, that D. D. Hume, the medium, frequently urged us to hold his hands and feet. During these occurrences the room was well lighted, the lamp was frequently placed on and under the table, and every possible opportunity was afforded us for the closest inspection, and we submit this one emphatic declaration: *We know that we are not imposed upon nor deceived.*

WM. BRYANT,  
B. K. BLISS,  
WM. EDWARDS,  
DAVID A. WELLS.

I may add, that since the above occurrences, this same medium, as I have it on good authority, has been raised *entirely from the floor*, and held in a suspended position by the same kind of invisible power!



2. The sounds, or "rappings," as they are usually called. These are certainly very peculiar, and most persons who hear them readily admit that they are different from any thing they have ever heard before. I have heard them, from the most slight and refined vibrations up to a sound as loud as that of the common, neighborly knock at a friend's door. I will give the following incidents upon this point. On one occasion, I called upon a family of my present congregation, who had as yet known but little, or nothing, concerning these manifestations. They, however, seemed inclined to look into the subject, and as usual in such cases, I signified my willingness to help them. On adopting proper means, it was soon apparent, that there were two good mediums in the family; and on the evening of our first trial, we had not only the table movements, but also the *raps*, so distinct that we were able to establish the usual affirmative and negative signals, and to communicate by questions and answers, and also by using the alphabet. All this was much to the astonishment of the family, especially the mediums, who manifested their surprise in a manner not to be misunderstood. Subsequently, in the same family, I witnessed a thorough trial to detect the origin of these sounds. The investigator was an intelligent relative of the family, who was a decided skeptic upon the subject; the result was that he was compelled to admit that the sounds were not caused by any person *visibly* present. At another time, with a good and well-developed medium, and some three or four others, sitting around a table in the middle of an ordinary sized parlor, we were surprised to hear the sounds *commence* on a side table, fully up against the wall of the room. Presently they were heard upon the floor, and finally, at our request, they were made distinctly upon the table before us. On another occasion, whilst sitting in a room with a good trance medium, one other person only being present, the medium was suddenly entranced, whilst sitting upon a sofa with no object before her. With my own hands, I took a small stand and set it in front of her, she in the meanwhile remaining perfectly quiet, and the stand not coming in contact with her. Within the space of perhaps half a minute, the raps came distinctly upon the top of the stand, and I went on to ask questions and receive commu-



nications. Another instance of a somewhat striking character occurred at a public lecture. It happened that I sat next to a powerful medium, and as soon as the lecture was commenced, the responsive sounds were heard upon the floor beneath our feet, so loud as to attract the attention of some who sat at the distance of some twenty or thirty feet, notwithstanding the sound of the speaker's voice, and the usual disturbances of a large audience. I give the following incident, as nearly as I can recollect it, from the published statement of Mr. Rufus Elmer, of Springfield, Mass. One of the Telegraph operators of that place entered a room in which was in session a circle for receiving the manifestations. He took his seat *outside* of the circle, and presently made a mental request something like this: that if the spirit of a certain young man, to whom he had formerly taught the telegraphic art, was present, he should like to have some intimation of the fact. Immediately the sounds upon the table were changed into an exact imitation of the usual telegraphic call on Springfield. In some surprise, and thinking that this might possibly be from accident or the force of imagination, he asked for further proof, still *mentally*, when the telegraphic calls upon Hartford, New York, and other places, were given in quick succession! All this while, the company at the table, being wholly unconscious of these mental requests of their visitor, were quite at a loss to know what was intended by these new and peculiar sounds.

3. The other of the three classes of material phenomena that have been brought especially under my notice, is the writing movement, including the preparatory exercise. Some few are *natural* mediums for writing, and require none of this preparatory exercise. But with most persons the case is different, and I have witnessed some instances of singular involuntary action on the part of those who were under spirit training for this order of the medium office. Sometimes the hand is made to move very slowly at first, and thus the result *gradually* assumes the shape of writing; but *generally* there is quite a violent and long continued exercise of the hand and arm, before the work of preparation is completed. I have witnessed many instances of this kind of preparatory exercise, but as there has not been much



variety, I shall not multiply illustrations of this character. One only perhaps will suffice. Two ladies, both respectable school-teachers, were present, one of whom had been for some time undergoing this kind of discipline. On this occasion, her hand was seized as usual, and made to move in various fantastic ways, much to the amusement of the other lady, who was almost wholly unacquainted with these spirit manifestations. But on putting *her* hands on the table, she found, much to her astonishment, that *they* also began to move in a similar manner! After a while, the first named lady complained of being tired, upon which I courteously requested the spirit to let her rest for a while, when her hand immediately became quiet. Presently, however, she happened to remark, that she felt quite rested, when her hand was instantaneously again seized, and the violent exercise resumed! I will mention another instance, of a somewhat different and more striking character. In *this*, the preparatory discipline was carried on in a summary manner. The hand and arm were immediately penetrated by sharp, shooting pains, too severe almost to be borne. It was not, I think, more than fifteen minutes from the time the person first put her hand upon the table, before *it*, with the whole arm, became completely paralyzed, so far as she herself was concerned. She could not move it in the least, yet it was quite readily moved by the *invisible* intelligence, and a very near approach was thus made toward actual writing during this first brief trial. When requested by myself, however, the spirit would move the hand and arm in almost any direction, and when at length the desire was expressed, the powers were quickly restored to their natural condition.

I will now glance at some of the incidents of my experience, which go to show more especially the character and action of those unmistakeable manifestations of *mind*, that have formed by far the most interesting part of these efforts at investigation. No one who has paid even the slightest attention to this matter, can help seeing that *there is mind*, and often of the most decisive character, at work behind these phenomena. The only, the *all-important* enquiry is, do these sure signs of intellect come from minds *in* or *out of* the body? I will leave it for my friends to judge what in this respect, is the bearing of the following facts.



I have probably received *in all* communications purporting to come from spirits enough to fill an ordinary sized volume of from one to two hundred pages. These have exhibited a great variety as to the style and substance of the compositions, from the simple and touching language of childhood, up to the earnest and elevated productions of the educated Christian philanthropist. The distinguishing characteristics of most of these have been their elevated tone of thought and feeling, and their faithfulness in rebuke, blended with a gentle and loving spirit. Also, there have been constantly manifested the true signs of *sympathy*, when the circumstances were such as to justify this feeling. I speak, be it remembered, of *my own* experience only; I know that in other instances communications have been received of a very different character — a difference which I think might easily be accounted for, at least to a very great extent. In my own case, however, I have known but few exceptions to the above statement. In one instance I was present, when there was a depth of religious feeling manifested in a little circle, whilst receiving the earnest and touching appeals of an invisible friend, which I have seldom, if *ever*, known to be equalled, in the whole course of my experience as a Christian teacher. I should like much to transcribe from my notes a sketch of that evening's exercises, *all* of which were of a decidedly religious character, but the reasonable limits of an address like this will not permit of it, nor indeed of *any* extracts from the abundance of communications which I have in my possession. This variety in the character of the communications was strikingly exhibited in what was received in the family already spoken of, and where the messages were all received through the same medium. In fact, my notes of what took place there seem to exhibit many of the characteristics of a regular drama, with some ten or twelve *invisible* actors, whose characters are well sustained throughout.

I have frequently witnessed great *firmness* on the part of the invisible presence. It is true, that they will *generally* conform to all reasonable requests made by those communicating with them; but in several instances, wherein I am very sure there was no insincerity on the part of the very few friends present, and when *all*, the medium included, were anxious to obtain certain responses,



the result, has been an entire failure, the will of the invisible intelligence fully outmastering the combined wills of those in the body, and remaining firm to what was deemed reasonable and right by the former. One thing that has struck me quite forcibly in the course of my investigations, has been the frequent occurrence of incidents like *this*: A circle of firm believers in the reality of this mode of spiritual intercourse would be sitting, engaged in spelling out messages from some unseen friend, either with the movements of the table, or with the raps in response. In such cases, there being no skeptical person present to stumble at such a course of action, it is quite common for each one of the company to aid the somewhat tedious process by trying to *conjecture* the partly spelled word. Sometimes this would work very well, the word when rightly chosen being always confirmed by the well understood affirmative signal. But often has it happened, that no one present was able to think of the right word, and we have been obliged to await the further unfolding of the communication as dictated by the invisible presence. Frequently I have witnessed the most obvious marks of surprise exhibited by the whole company, the medium included, at some striking and unexpected turn of the message; also repeated instances, when the whole company have, for a time, mistaken the meaning of what was being received, and have, perhaps, been led into a complete puzzle, from which it has taken some time and attention to become freed, when there have sometimes followed very obvious signs of rejoicing on the part of the spirit communicating. One case of this kind occurred when I was entirely alone with a medium in whom I had full confidence. We both mistook the *middle* for the close of a sentence, and being somewhat surprised at the import conveyed, we paused for some time, asking questions, &c. We did not understand precisely the difficulty, however, until we resumed our usual method, when the rest of the sentence was added, and a meaning presented wholly different from our first impressions, and perfectly consistent with what had previously been received from the same spirit, who was an intimate friend of my own. This instance, occurring as it did when I was wholly alone with a reliable medium, did much toward convincing me, that there was another mind present beside those in the body, and



to whose guiding influence I was indebted for the strikingly characteristic message I then received. On two instances at least, I have received communications for some time after the medium was so far in a natural sleep, as to be obviously unconscious of what was taking place around her. These were when using the alphabet, with the movements of the table in response. As the drowsy state came on, the motions became more slight, until at length, when sleep had fairly overcome her, and the muscles of the arm were wholly relaxed, the movements entirely ceased, and we could of course proceed no further. *The clearness of the communication*, however, was not impaired in the least, so long as the motions of the table continued perceptible.

Frequently, and for a long time in succession, I have seen a medium engaged in private intercourse with some spirit friend, — the questions being asked *mentally*, and answered by the usual mode of response. This intercourse has at times appeared to be *perfectly absorbing*, giving generally, but not *always*, great delight. The exceptions in such cases have been, perhaps, when some request has been denied, or some rebuke administered.

I may as well speak, in this connection, of the well established fact, that *mental* questions are invariably — with a *true medium* — answered with equal facility with those which are put in audible words. In order to this, however, it is absolutely necessary that the mental operation be distinct and clear to the perception of the spirit communicating, — otherwise, mistakes are sure to follow. This danger may be avoided by having the questions written out at the time, and then the mental movement will be of such a character as can be clearly perceived by the invisible person who is expected to answer it. I have seen this fact tested in a great variety of cases, besides my own repeated personal experiments, and so strikingly correct on some occasions, have the questions put in this way been answered, that I have known a person of an honest open mind to be convinced of the reality of the intercourse by the very first evening's experience.

Closely related to the above, has been another form of experiment that I have witnessed on two occasions. In *these*, the eyes and ears of the medium have been effectually closed, and while in



this condition, questions have been put, or requests made, in a low tone of voice, so that the medium must have been entirely ignorant of what was done or said. And yet our tests have been answered equally well as when the medium could hear the question, or the calling of the alphabet.

On one occasion, with a good rapping medium and myself only, present, I received a beautiful and touching message from a near friend now in the spirit world, in the following manner. The medium sat at one end of an ordinary sized parlor table, engaged in sewing. My position was at the opposite end, with an alphabet card in my hand, turned up toward myself. With my pencil I passed rapidly and *silently* over the card, and when the right letter was reached, very clear and loud raps came almost directly beneath my hand !

I will close this part of my subject by stating the fact, that with only myself and another friend present, with a reliable medium — neither of us having any poetic turn of mind — some touching and beautiful lines of poetry were received ; lines which, in the opinion of some well qualified to judge, would do no discredit to our first English poets. For the last six months I have made diligent efforts to find out the origin of these lines, but as yet I have been unable to trace them to any earthly source, or even to find a person who had previously seen them.

The last incident occurred while the medium was in what is called a "trance," — a state which may perhaps be properly designated as a spirit clairvoyance. And this reminds me that there is yet another phase of the medium office, with which I have been somewhat familiar, but concerning which I have as yet said nothing. Indeed, there are several other modes of communicating with which I have become slightly acquainted, but which I shall be obliged to pass wholly over in this hasty review of the subject. I must, however, add a few words in regard to the trance condition. *This* seems to be an extension of the common clairvoyant condition into the regions of spirit existence, and to be induced by spirit power, acting, as is probable, in a manner somewhat analogous to that in which the common clairvoyant state is induced by persons in the body. At all events, no *visible* agency is employed to entrance the subject, but the claim



is, that this is done through the power of the same intelligence whose purpose it is to communicate. When fairly in the condition, the *spiritual* vision seems to be opened, and those in the spiritual body who come near to communicate, are clearly seen and accurately described, so that they can generally be recognized by their friends. In addition to the modes already described, communications are then *impressed* upon the mind of the medium, and *spoken* through the usual vocal organs of the medium; or, sometimes, as in the case of the poetic communication just noticed, they are *chanted* with a sweetness of tone peculiar to that condition. With a good medium, this trance state is, I think, the most interesting and impressive of all the different modes of communicating. In my own experience, *hours upon hours* have glided swiftly by whilst I have listened to the astonishing things that have thus been brought before me of spirit thought and spirit *form*. I have known *others* to be similarly absorbed *far into the hours of night*, — persons who, whatever may be thought of *myself*, would not be very readily suspected of self-delusion. Some *touching* scenes, also, I have witnessed of this character. On one occasion, in the family of a friend, who had previously seen nothing of the kind, a medium, who knew nothing of the history of the family, was entranced, and described the invisible friends of the family in a manner so life-like, and the messages received were so affectionate and characteristic, that all were immediately overcome, even unto tears.

Such are some of the incidents of my experience in what I have had to do with this most interesting subject of enquiry. I do by no means intend to imply that *all* my experiments have resulted thus satisfactorily. On the contrary, it is but fair to say, that I have witnessed many failures, no little extravagance, and once some deception. This other view of the subject comes as a natural consequence of the novelty, the strangeness, and intrinsic difficulties of the subject, and does not, I think, seriously invalidate the reality and importance of that which bears the striking marks of genuineness. Still, if it be thought by any, that, in the ardor of my present firm belief, I have given too high a coloring to the favorable view of the subject, I ask them also, as a simple matter of justice to *the whole* matter in question, to leave room in



their minds for the considerations which follow. 1. That the weight of proof, as it rests in the mind of the personal investigator, is greatly increased by innumerable little incidental occurrences, which it is wholly impossible to notice in an article like this, — the *full* force of which cannot indeed be conveyed at all excepting to the mind of an actual observer. And yet, to my mind, some of these trifling incidents have been, perhaps, the most striking of all the manifestations of a present intelligence beyond the visible circle ; at all events, when taken in connection for weeks and months together, they form a weighty proof of the reality and truthfulness of the claim advanced. 2. I would suggest for the consideration of my readers, what might reasonably be expected from the nature of the case, that *much* of my experience has been of a character too strictly and peculiarly personal, — too *sacred* I might say, — to permit of its being laid fully open to the public gaze. But this much I will say, that if almost any one whose eyes may fall upon these pages, and who, like myself, has many loved ones in that spirit home, had been blessed with such *real, unmistakeable* tokens of the invisible presence and sympathy of those same living friends as I have been — that person could not, I think, long seriously doubt of the *reality* of the beautiful and most happy experience. At any rate, the most striking and convincing proofs have come *to me* in this way.

It does not enter within my present design to discuss *at length* the reasonableness of the claim thus advanced, nor to answer the objections that have been urged against it ; many of these, however, are the mere cavils of ignorance and inattention to the subject. My aim has been rather to present a statement made up mainly of the facts of my own experience, to the end that thoughtful and candid persons who have not had my opportunities for personal investigation, might make a just use of these facts in the formation of their own individual opinions. I am unwilling, however, to close without expressing a few of the most obvious and important thoughts of my own mind in its present relation to the subject under consideration. The length, however, which this article has already reached, admonishes me to be brief.

It will be seen that there are but *two* important steps in this investigation. The first question to be decided is, do the material



movements and sounds come from the agency of persons in the body? If not, they must, at least, come from some subtle and active agency not yet well understood. And perhaps it *might* do to assign the whole matter over to electricity, magnetism, mesmerism, or to some other power *almost*, if not *equally* mysterious with the asserted agency of invisible spirits, — *were it not for one insurmountable difficulty*. I allude to the unquestionable fact that the singular phenomena in question are *not* impulsive and blind in their action; on the contrary, they convey, in the most clear and decisive manner, the manifestations of *mind*. The electric telegraph, with all its wondrous power, cannot convey *one line* even of connected thought without an intelligent mind to guide it. Nor is it possible for electricity in any other form, or any other element, however subtle, to do the same thing without a similar help. This must be admitted by all. But it so happens that connected messages *do* come through these phenomena, — messages, *some of them* at least, of far more striking import than any that come through the agency of the electric telegraph. Now, whence come these messages? This is the other and the *decisive* question. For if it be satisfactorily proved, that they do not come from the minds of those visibly present, then they must come from invisible minds, and this is the sum and substance of the claim advanced. I ask my readers to bring the incidents already noticed, and others that may come to their knowledge, to these two decisive points of the enquiry. If my friends will but do this faithfully and candidly, I cannot but think that they will find sufficient cause for being somewhat impressed with the *probability*, at least, that these may indeed be *spiritual* manifestations. Not that I am so sanguine as to suppose, that, with *many*, *absolute conviction* will follow such a course of reasoning, for, judging from my own experience, I do not think it very likely that many will be decidedly convinced, without the opportunity, to some extent, of personal observation and investigation. Still, a train of thought like that just suggested, may do much to prepare the way for a fair and earnest personal effort after the truth upon the subject.

For my part, I cannot understand the extreme reluctance felt by most persons against admitting the claim to *spiritual*



agency in these manifestations. The class which I have more especially in mind, have, for a long time, been accustomed to admit the virtual presence and silent agency of departed spirits; and yet, when at length a claim, certainly not *wholly* without rational support, is advanced, that a mode has at length been permitted of a sensible manifestation of that presence, almost any evasion — almost any *absurdity*, even, — is resorted to, rather than admit the full and natural force of the facts. Take, for instance, the following case — authenticated beyond reasonable doubt. In a highly respectable family of Charlestown, Mass., an ignorant Irish girl, who could neither read nor write, was accidentally discovered to be a medium. A pen was put into her hand, when written communications were readily given through her, in their usual variety and striking import. I have been informed, that other similar developements have been witnessed in young children who had not yet begun to learn the art of writing. Now, how is this fact to be accounted for? Shall we, after the manner of some, maintain that through an extraordinary power of will, aided by some mysterious mesmeric connection between some one of the visible company present and the medium, the message and the controlling power to write it were both given? shall we do all this, and yet receive with a sneer the claim that an *invisible* will and power, which, from the nature of the case, can come into a vastly more close contact with the acting agent, can do the same thing? Is *such* a course an indication of true wisdom and candor? And yet the man who attempts to account for the host of stubborn facts now of daily occurrence, without admitting the claim of spiritual agency, will often find himself in a position scarcely less absurd than this. The fact that the force and the intelligence in such cases are invisible to our mortal vision, cannot surely long perplex minds of ordinary information, for is it not a well established fact in nature, that all the most striking manifestations of intelligence and power, are also from invisible sources?

The *strangeness* of the whole subject of this inter-communication of visible and invisible beings by material means, is a difficulty over which many seem to stumble. But it may well be doubted whether this is a becoming state of mind in persons living in this 19th century — this *perfect age* of wonders. Surely, when such



striking developements are constantly taking place in the *material* world around us, it ought not to be thought so very strange, when something of a similar character is discerned upon the borders of the *spirit* existence. On the contrary, it is but reasonable to expect, that the manifestations from that unseen life would be far more mysterious than any, even the greatest wonder of an earthly nature. And yet, placing the two side by side, and striving to look at them impartially, even as if the claims had been advanced simultaneously — *which* is the more wonderful, and intrinsically incredible, the thought of holding instantaneous communication with my friend thousands of miles distant on this earth, or, with my friend who may be very near me, though in the *spiritual* instead of the *natural* body? Let each one decide this question for himself; to *me* the cases seem very similar, and in their intrinsic character about equally credible, and I am decidedly of the opinion, that twenty years ago I should have had the general consent of mankind to the justness of my position. Is it not plain, that all that can justly be claimed in consideration of the startling nature of any alleged fact, is that a corresponding weight of evidence be brought forward in its support? In the case now under consideration, I am firmly convinced that such a weight of evidence *will appear* to all who take the trouble faithfully to investigate for themselves. And *this*, let me add, is not a matter of so much difficulty as it is generally thought to be. It is by no means necessary to seek the presence of some noted medium, of whose moral integrity, perhaps, but little is known. On the contrary, the necessary means are very near us, — often in our very homes. As the result of my own experience, I should say that more than one half of our families have within themselves a medium power, which might be developed and made use of by a very little attention to the necessary and easily ascertained means. I have tried this repeatedly in families of my acquaintance, and generally with success to a greater or less extent.

It is often necessary, however, that several should act together at first, until the capacity of some one individual is more fully developed, when it is generally better that one only should act as the medium. And were I to attempt to convince a family of intelligent and sincere persons, *this* is the course I should choose above



all others. I would make my experiments within the limits of their own family circle ; nor do I think that, with proper time and patience on the part of all, I should often wholly fail.

It is thought by many, that this alleged fact of spirit and mortal intercourse, is opposed to the facts and doctrines of our sacred writings. I cannot stop now, to controvert this position in full. I can only say, that, to my mind, there is in the Bible at least as much in *favor*, as *against* the claim under consideration. My especial design in this connection is to remind the reader of the undoubted fact, that in those early Bible times, such intercourse *was* of frequent occurrence. I refer not only to the visits of a superior order of angels, but also to an intercourse with those who have once lived upon the earth, as in the instance of Moses and Elias with our Saviour and his apostles, upon the Mount of Transfiguration ; and also of some of those who conversed with John the Revelator. Can it be clearly shown that such intercourse is less *possible* now than it was then ? For my own part, I can recall no clear intimation in Scripture, nor can I imagine any sufficient *reason* for making us believe, that with the close of Bible history the heavens were utterly and for ever shut up from mortal vision, and all sensible intercourse between men and spiritual beings forbidden. If I am not greatly mistaken, *this*, which has for so long a time been passively received, is, after all, but a mere and generally permitted *assumption*.

Is there then anything in the nature of the case to make it *improbable* that such intercourse should be permitted to prevail at the present time ? I think not. On the contrary, I can discern some reasons that seem to favor the *probability* of such a development in the order of God's providence. It is surely the design of the good Father that the world shall be delivered from its present sinful and wretched condition, and all men be elevated, enlightened, and saved, through the power of His truth. Christ and his religion are the appointed instruments for this, and amply sufficient are they for the work to be done, if but *rightly and faithfully applied*. But how has it been in this respect ? Let ecclesiastical history, and the present condition of the world answer this enquiry. More than eighteen hundred years have elapsed since Christianity first began its warfare against the errors



and corruptions of the world, yet how little has been done! Are the centuries before us to bring no more efficient and quick relief than those behind us? If *not*, then alas for poor sinning and suffering humanity! I suppose that most philanthropists are expecting better things than this; if not, I fear that their hands and their hearts would alike fail them. But whence is to come this more sure and swift relief? Is it to be expected from the ordinary operations of our long established religious institutions? These may do *something*, it is true, and philanthropic organizations something more; but unless the whole be quickened with some new and life-giving power, I fear that it will be but little better than the dead burying the dead. If this be doubted, let the dull formality of our Sabbath worship, as it is seen in most cases, and the consequent emptiness of our churches—containing, on an average, not much more than one-third of the entire population,—let *these*, and other equally discouraging facts relating to the *philanthropic movements* of the day be summoned to sustain my position. Is it strange, then, that under these circumstances, God in His mercy should suffer some new element of life to enter among the dry bones of an existence so unpromising and spiritually dead? This existence, as it now prevails in the world, is almost wholly material *in fact*, and the *faith* in the unseen and spiritual, in most cases, much more closely resembles the doctrine of the Jewish Sadducee than that of the true Christian believer of the early Christian ages. Is it strange, I repeat, that under these circumstances, God should once more interpose, that His children may be speedily delivered from their degraded and unhappy condition? And what more efficient instrumentality can be named, than the one now in question? Is it strange that, when it is found that humanity is but so poorly able to help herself, with all the helps hitherto afforded,—the good Father should permit the heavens to stoop once more for the relief of His children? not *this* time, however, so much to impart *new truth*, as to give new life to the *old*?

And this suggests my closing thought. It is not, I say, the apparent and main object to reveal new truth, although there is, *incidentally*, as it were, much light reflected from the spirit home, making manifest to us *especially*, far more beautiful and cheering



views of death and the immortal spirit life. Yet it is not for this that our heavenly visitants rejoice most of all to come. It is rather to instruct the ignorant, to warn the sinful, the indifferent, the unfaithful; to sympathize with the suffering, the wronged, the down-trodden; but above all, to comfort the afflicted, to bind up the broken heart of the mourner, the forsaken and lonely—it is for objects like *these* that the inhabitants of that bright spirit home come to us. They come by permission of the good Father himself, and with the greatest joy and delight do they speak wise and gentle words to their brothers still in the flesh.

And who can for a moment think that words thus spoken, if received in true faith, can be uttered in vain? For my own part, I cannot believe it possible, that this faith in the presence and actual intercourse of departed spirits—especially of departed *friends*—can be truly received as a living faith without the soul's being touched, and elevated to a higher and more spiritual tone of thought and feeling. Certainly, so far as my own observation and experience have gone, this has been the case,—and some striking instances of this character have already become known to me. I confidently expect to see this new agency far more efficiently employed in this way, and for the glory of God, and the good of men generally. One important effect which must follow the general prevalence of this intercourse with spirits, will be the quick dispersion of these old errors in Theology—especially those concerning death and the future state—which have for so long a time thrown their dark shade over the religious faith of the world. And what a relief must this be! To name a single illustration:—probably there has been no single cause of human suffering equal in its effects to what has come from *false* views of death. The testimony of those who, of all others, ought to know, removes at once all such falsities, and shows us that this event is a far different thing from that which mortals so much dread.

But what, it may be asked, is to come of all this strange commotion? I answer, if it be *of man*—if it be nothing but one of the many delusions which are from time to time evolved in the world's progressive history—it will have its brief day, and then die out, and leave nothing but an ill-sounding name behind. But



if, on the contrary, it shall prove to be *of God*, as I firmly believe it is, — if it shall prove to be a genuine developement in the world's religious education, — then, all the shafts of ridicule, and all those more serious efforts at opposition that the perverted ingenuity of men may employ, cannot stop its progress. The Press may continue to pander to the grossly material tendencies of the people, and follow up, never so closely, with its volley of low jokes and small wit, and the self-constituted wise ones of the earth may stand aloof, and call the whole matter trivial and utterly unworthy the stoop of their dignity, — yet stubborn facts will still remain stubborn facts; they can neither be *scouted* nor *winked* out of sight; they must be openly met, and honestly disposed of. Until this is done, let not the wise glory too much in their wisdom. The time has been, and may be again, when it shall be said, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and the things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are.” It may, indeed, be beneath the haughty self-sufficiency of certain oracles of wisdom, to condescend to look seriously into such simple and absurd affairs, but it will still remain true, that the way to wisdom is along the path of humility, and, as in regard to God's spiritual kingdom, so of the kingdom of His truth, that whosoever would enter therein must become as a little child. It is very easy to follow that truth when some great and popular thing is required, but when the course lies through some despised Nazarene country, it is *not* so easy, and many stumble thereat, and follow the truth no longer.

Let the following be said, in all *humility* indeed, yet with the firm assurance which belongs to an individual consciousness of well established truth; the leaders of popular thought are but little aware of the power that is thus growing up in their very midst — a power which, however despised and scorned at the present time, *may* yet take from them their hereditary kingdom, and give it to others. A very few years only have elapsed since the first gleams of this new light from the spirit world became visible, and yet even now it has spread itself with greater or less clearness over our whole land. Almost every community contains



its hundreds and thousands of sincere believers and faithful defenders. And these adherents to the new faith are by no means, as a general thing, of the more ignorant and superstitious classes; they are, on the contrary, many of them of the most elevated and earnest minds of the age. Periodicals are also springing up, and other publications are being issued with almost unprecedented rapidity, devoted to the defence and developement of the new spiritual philosophy.\* But more striking and important still—judging from what is taking place within my own sphere of observation—there are individuals in all parts of our country, who are now undergoing a most singular and impressive process of discipline, preparatory to becoming the agents of some new and more efficient interference in behalf of degraded, down-trodden humanity—individuals who, under the training, not of the dry, technical theology of the schools, but under the immediate instruction of teachers from the higher spheres—are destined to become zealous and self-sacrificing apostles of God's love to man. I allude to the developement of the higher order of mediums, which is generally conducted by the spirits of those who, while on earth, were actively engaged in works of Christian philanthropy, and whose design it now is, to prepare instruments to work with in the new *spiritual* effort about to be put forth, to make manifest the beauty and power of God's truth in the redemption and elevation of mankind. It is not, however, mainly to the kind of mediums and manifestations already described, that I now allude. These *material* demonstrations are to be regarded as but the beginning—the *mere alphabet* in the great work of spirit instruction. These serve, it is true, the purpose for which they are designed; they serve as the primary influence toward convincing men of the reality of spirit presence

\* The following have already become known to me, and I presume that there are still others in existence. Three weekly papers, viz.: the "Spiritual Telegraph," S. B. Britton, Editor, New York; the "New Era," S. Crosby Hewitt, Editor, Boston; and the "Light from the Spirit World," P. E. Blond, St. Louis. The monthly publications are the "Shekinah," S. B. Britton, Editor, New York, and the "Spirit Messenger,"—the last of which purports to be wholly conducted by spirits, through R. P. Ambler, Medium, Springfield, Mass. Of books and pamphlets devoted more or less exclusively to the same cause, I have recently seen a list of nearly forty, to which additions are constantly being made.



and agency in human affairs. But processes like these are too imperfect and slow to answer the ardent longings and active energies of these invisible servants of the Most High. Hence, still higher developements in the mode of spirit intercourse are being unfolded, and even now, not only do spirits write rapidly through mortal agency, but some are found who can *speak* as the spirits give them utterance. This is generally either *partially* or *wholly* in the trance condition already described, but not *always*, as I understand it. Some minds there are, so susceptible to spirit influence, that, with certain deep, soul searching influences brought to bear upon them by their invisible instructors, the thoughts of spirits may be made so to blend with their own, and to direct their speech, that their words shall have a power and eloquence of more than earthly origin and efficiency. They are such as *these*, probably more than others, that are to become the especial instruments of those noble departed ones of earth, who are themselves the agents of those who stand in the more immediate presence of the Holy One, and wait upon Him to do His will. And when, by this searching influence from above, the truths of our religion shall be freed from their attendant marks of human perverseness and error, — *then* may the work of humanity no longer linger in the stupor of death. Then may the work of moral reform be carried on with true wisdom, and without those narrow prejudices and bitter contentions that do now so mar its beauty and destroy its power. Then may the time not be *so far* distant, when the great truth that mankind are “brothers all” shall be universally felt, and each one love his neighbor as himself.

But my work is done. If it shall prove that this humble effort is made instrumental in turning the attention of others to a faithful investigation of this subject, the end and the reward of my labors will be fully attained.

HERMAN SNOW.