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Spirit-Intercourse :

CONTAINING

INCIDENTS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

WHILE INVESTIGATING THE NEW PHENOMENA

OF

SPIRIT THOUGHT AND ACTION;

WITH

VARIOUS SPIRIT COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH HIMSELF AS
MEDIUM.

BY

HERMAN SNOW,

LATE UNITARIAN MINISTER AT MONTAGUE, MASS.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God."

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Spiritism.

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P R E F A C E .

THIS little volume has been prepared with more especial reference to a class of readers, who have as yet known but little of the modern Spirit Manifestations, excepting through the channels of popular prejudice. Still, it is to be hoped that the work will not be without its measure of interest to those who are well-instructed believers in this great revelation of a later age. At all events, it may prove to be a useful volume for such, to lend to the *candid* skeptics within the circle of their acquaintance.

A part of the matter here made use of has already found its way into print, but not in such forms as to make it probable that any considerable proportion of the volume has already met the eye of that class of readers whom I have had more especially in mind in its preparation.

The address to friends, which forms the body of Part I., was printed for private circulation; about six months ago. Only a small edition was struck off; and, as there has been

some demand for the pamphlet above the supply, and as many of those friends into whose hands it had fallen have since expressed their decided opinion that its further circulation might be serviceable to the cause of truth, I have thought best to give it to the public, much in its original form, but with a copious Appendix, to illustrate and confirm the principal facts, as stated in the original pamphlet.

Several of the articles included in Part II. of the present work have been published in periodicals devoted to the new spirit-movement; but these also have received further illustration in an Appendix.

This volume is published in the full faith that the general position maintained, viz. that spirits do hold sensible intercourse with mortals, is correct. I am not, however, quite so well satisfied on one point as I might wish to be, — I mean as to the *extent* to which this may prove to be an immediate blessing to mankind. Certain it is, that the present moral condition of the world is such, that it is not very easy for spirits of the higher conditions to communicate *directly* with the inhabitants of this earth. Consequently, the general character of the communications is not of so high an order as may be expected when the many obstacles now in the way of a free and correct intercourse with the higher spheres shall be removed.

But it is quite likely that I am over-cautious in my thought upon this point. At all events, I am very sure that, even now, a powerful influence on the welfare of man is being exerted in this way, — an influence which is of a superior character, and far more effectual than that which for many ages past has come from the ordinary course of religious instruction, as pursued in most parts of Christendom.

This little work is now given to the public, in the sincere hope that it may further the cause of truth by throwing light upon some important points of the new and most interesting inquiry of which it treats.

H. S.

Boston, July, 1853.

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PART I.

THE INVESTIGATION ;

OR,

**INCIDENTS OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE ADDRESSED TO
FRIENDS.**

With an Appendix.

INTRODUCTION TO PART I.

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 natural that I should wish to impart to them some of the light I have received on a highly important subject of inquiry.

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 fairness and patience to hear me through, before they pass 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 which 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 which 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 Ballou, of Hopedale, Mass.

H. S.

MONTAGUE, MASS., November, 1852.

PART I.

THE INVESTIGATION.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

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 development of our day, generally known as "Spirit-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 spirit-intercourse. I do not, of course, mean that I believe in *all* the claims that have been advanced, of this character: on the con-

trary, I am of the opinion that much which purports to come from unseen beings 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 spirit-body. And furthermore, I believe that, with due attention and study, this subject may become so well understood, that such spirit-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 had 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, doubtless, with some 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 cherished 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 inquiry, 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.

MATERIAL SOUNDS AND MOVEMENTS.

I will now glance briefly at some of the more remarkable incidents of my experience during this period of my investigation. And first, I will 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 sat 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 invisible 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 any thing 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

* See Appendix A.

any of our courts of law, even if it involved the life of a human being.

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,

* See Appendix B.

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 communications.

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 one other 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, 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.

MANIFESTATIONS OF MIND.

I will now glance at some of the incidents of my experience, which go to show more especially the character and action of those unmistakable 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 inquiry 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 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 state-

ment. 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 an invisible presence. It is true that spirits will generally conform to all reasonable requests made by those communicating with them; but in

* See Appendix C.

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 un-

folding 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 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

* See Appendix D.

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-named 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 still 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

* See Appendix E.

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, 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 inquiry. 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

* See Appendix F.

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, unmistakable tokens of the invisible presence and sympathy of those same loving 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.

CLOSING THOUGHTS.

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 minds in an invisible form ; 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 inquiry. 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 *spirit*-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 spirit-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 developments 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

* Rev. Joshua Young, now of Burlington, Vt., was my informant in this instance. His statement was subsequently corroborated to me by Rev. Wm. H. Knapp, of West Newton, who is nearly related to the family in which the incident took place.

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 spirit-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 intercommunication 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 nineteenth century, — this perfect age of wonders. Surely, when such striking developments 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 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

* See Appendix G.

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 had 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 spirit-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, any thing 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 inquiry. 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 deliver from the dreary mazes of atheism; * to warn the sinful, the indifferent, the

* See Appendix H.

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 man 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 development 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

* See "Conversations with Invisible Friends," part ii.

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 development 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 development 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

* See Appendix I.

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 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 developments 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

* See Appendix J.

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.

APPENDIX TO PART I.

A. — PAGE 24.

THIS incident occurred at Greenfield, Mass. At least twelve or fifteen persons were present as witnesses. The individual especially referred to was Mr. Luther B. Lincoln, of Deerfield. I am permitted to give his name, that those who wish to go beyond my own testimony may have the opportunity.

B. — PAGE 27.

The following additional incident has since been given me on the authority of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer, while on a visit at their house.

On one occasion, while a company were present witnessing the manifestations at their house, a heavy seraphine was raised several inches entirely off the floor, whilst no visible person was in contact with it. Only a part of the company witnessed this in the first instance; the attention of the others having been occupied in another direction. But, in order to remove the doubts

of those who did not observe the phenomenon at first, the demonstration was repeated to the entire satisfaction of all present.

But the especial object of this note is to give additional confirmation of the fact that mediums have been raised and suspended in the air by the invisible power. That D. D. Hume was thus raised, can be proved, as I doubt not, to the satisfaction of any reasonable person, who will take the trouble to apply to S. B. Brittan, editor of the "Spiritual Telegraph," New York city, on whose authority the fact has been given: That other instances of the kind have occurred can also be well established; but I shall now confine my attention to one in which the individual upon whom the wonder was performed is a personal acquaintance of my own. I allude to Mrs. Cheney, of Athol, Mass. The statement of this singular case is given in the words of Mr. Cheney, to whom I applied for this purpose. Let me say to the reader in advance, that both Mr. and Mrs. Cheney are persons of excellent Christian character. Of this any one can obtain ample assurance who will apply to Rev. S. F. Clark, of whose church they have long been respected members.

Extract from Mr. Cheney's Letter.

In the month of March, 1852, being at the house of Rev. J. J. Locke, in the town of Barre, Mass. ; one evening, as we were seated in a circle around a table, — I should say about a dozen persons being present, several

of whom were strangers to us, — all were listening to some messages that were being spelled out by raps on the table (which stood independent from the touch of any one), by the use of the alphabet. All was still and peaceful, the room well lighted, and no one expecting any thing unusual that I was aware of; when Mrs. Cheney's right hand began to rise very gradually and steadily, — up, up, — higher and higher, — till it seemed to raise her from the chair: still upward she was raised, until she swung in the open atmosphere between the floor and ceiling, and positively not coming in contact with any visible thing whatever.

Such are the facts in relation to the case, as near as I can state them. If any should doubt the above statement, I am happy to say that I am able to substantiate any part of it by reliable evidence.

Yours in the faith,

S. F. CHENEY.

ATHOL DEPOT, April 26, 1853.

C. — PAGE 34.

The sketch of the evening's proceedings alluded to is now transcribed, in part, with the hope that it may not prove uninteresting to the reader. Also, several other extracts are made from notes taken during this period of my investigations, — enough perhaps enough to show the general character of this kind of spirit-influence, as it is now brought to bear upon thousands of domestic circles

throughout our land, and in many other countries also. The extracts are as follows : —

Monday morning, March 29, 1852. — Last night we had a delightful, a holy time. We began with singing, and soon the table gave indications of a presence which proved to be J. M. Our singing seemed to give great delight, the movements of the table keeping time so as to look as much like singing as possible. Being requested, the spirit spelled out some acceptable tunes, which were sung according to our ability. Then came the following: "This is my delight. You cannot sing like us in heaven. We can hear every sound. Sing, will you? — sing all." (Singing.)

He was asked if he had any thing which he wished to communicate to any particular person present: the reply indicated that he wished to address all. The communication was as follows: "Must I come to let you know that I have not left you? for I told you I would warn you. (He had been with us before.) Did I not give you a warning that you all must remember? I cannot for ever dwell, if you heed my words not. . . . I have come to tell you how to be happy. Have I told you that my spirit was within every thought? You will be happy if you always consider that we know every evil thought. Sing me a good-night."

Here we sang an appropriate hymn; but the spirit still lingered. Prayer was proposed, to which a decided affirmative signal was given; and it was indicated that I should lead. I asked, Shall I read from Scripture first? "Yes." Will you refer to some passage? No reply.

Shall I read a Psalm? No reply. Shall I read from the words of Christ? A hearty affirmative. I then read from John xiv. and prayed.

Still the spirit seemed unwilling to go; and, on recurring to the usual means, the following words came to us: "I have listened to your sweet prayer, and I trust that our heavenly Father did. You felt every word as if it reached our heavenly home. Sing me away." (More singing.)

But the spirit went not; so I asked some questions. Have I a guardian spirit? "Yes." Who is it? "God." Have I any especial protector under him? "Yes." Who is it? Here the name of a very dear friend of my own was spelled out.

I then asked if he had any thing further which he felt ought to be said before he left. "Yes; I feel — oh! so happy! Will you for ever be like this? Will you all repeat yes? I would like to do all in my power. I do love you all. I cannot describe to you half that will come of this if you all do as to-night. Good news for my happy home!"

It was now nearly eleven o'clock, and we did not feel that we ought to detain the medium longer from rest; but still our heavenly messenger seemed unwilling to go. I therefore asked, — Will you say as briefly as possible what you think ought to be said, that we may retire to rest? Affirmative response, and then these words: "Have you all made up your minds to come to God? I will leave this holy word. No more."

We then bade our spirit-friend good-night, which was

responded to by motions of the table directed successively to each one in the room. In all my experience, I have never been conscious of an influence so deep and holy as that which seemed to pervade our little circle of that evening. It appeared almost as if the heavens were opened, and we could see the angels of God ascending and descending upon us.

Tuesday evening. — The following simple and touching message was received from the spirit of a little boy who died in one of our large cities. He was wholly unknown to all present.

“I had no friends to mourn for me; but now I have God and some of his children. I had no resting-place here below: was not God good to make my little spirit so happy? You all must love my little words. God has made my spirit to communicate with you freely.”

March 31, evening. — The following was addressed to his mother by a member of the family who had been in the spirit-world about four years: “God loves every sacred thought, mother. Do you think that I lived a good life? God will judge every spirit. You will not know all sin that you have committed: how quick you all will view them o’er at the hour of death! Mother, do not think that it will answer if you are only happy; — that it will suffice. . . . I have much more, but I cannot linger. Is not death a cold stroke to all who have not God’s love? . . . Will you not think of this solemn thought? But I have passed through death. I could live so as to pass through it more happily. You little know how I dreaded death. Mother, hear this of death.”

April 1. — The same spirit addressed his other parent as follows : —

“ Now I will speak to father. (His father was in the room in poor health, and now suffering severely.) I will not think that you must always live. I hope that you will come to meet me soon. Do you not, father, hope you will be more happy than I am? for I would, if I was here below. Father, do not think of pain here below. Father, I cannot judge the time you shall meet me, nor the time you shall die. . . . I want you to have God, before me, in every thought; for you know that he has said that he knows every thing: of course there cannot be any thing hidden from him.

“ I will speak to A. (his sister, who was not present). I shall not come to communicate again. Tell A. she must not go on without loving God. She heeds not Heaven; I know not why. I must not visit more, for God will not permit me more. I shall do my duty now. I come with all I have to express to all; will you not think and feel it my last? I cannot move A.! *Think* she will be more heavenly; but it is dark. . . . Those that wish not to come to God will not. Have you all made that promise to J. M., and God? (Here was an undoubted reference to our communication of Sunday evening.) Will you make it with me? But I wish you to make it with God rather than with me.”

April 2. — This morning Mrs. H. received the following touching communication from a daughter who had left the body many years since, and while yet in early youth : —

"Mother, do you feel as if your heart was full? Mother, I feel as if I could lie down in your heart; for it makes me so sad. Weep not when I come to love you so. Think you that God would ever cut you off? No: he loves every thought you express now. Mother, it is good to mourn from the heart. I will try to make you happy, dear mother. I cannot hear *them* saying dear mother (alluding to other children who had been somewhat wayward). Be gentle, and do our heavenly will. But I cannot love some who were so dear; for they heed me not. . . . I do love father. I knew that he loved me dearly; but God loved me better. I cannot kiss him now. Do you not think that my body has turned to dust? No rosy lips have you of mine. I can bring no form of your dear S. God, I say, loves me more than all below. What is this world of yours? A mere bubble on the water!"

April 14. — This same gentle and loving spirit visited the family again, and spoke to her father thus: —

"Father, do feel happy. I love you. My little spirit flutters around every pain. Father, my spirit says, I wish you above! Father, I do not come with that poor body you oft used to look upon with so much love. Dear father, I love every one; but, father, I know how you mourned for me. Father, do not let my poor body trouble you; for I can love you now. Father, do you all remember my little feet that used to ramble about this sinful world? . . . May God help me to every wise way! He will make some way that you may learn more of my little spirit. Do you ever feel as though God was not

present? I wish you, dear father, to think of God more than of our feeble spirits; for we have not the power to do any thing, if he does not permit."

One day, as we were receiving communications, the following message came unexpectedly to the medium and Mrs. H. : "Go to the poor man. You may think it a hard task. But I wish you to think how you would feel if it was all sin before you. I do wish all to be happy; but it is a vain wish."

This "poor man" is a professed atheist, whom they had previously visited. There seems to be some prospect that he will be delivered from his unhappy condition through these sensible manifestations of invisible life and intelligence.

D. — PAGE 37.

This communication began with a reference to the fact, that the individual could not speak during the closing hours of mortal life. It then continued as follows: "I went to heaven; and when I left you all alone, I left happy, for I knew that God had made me to be prepared. Was not this a happy thought? I do not wish myself back: here I have perfect peace. Do live a better life than I did, that you may be more happy." Here it was that both the medium and myself supposed the sentence ended, and were somewhat surprised at its purport, as it seemed to imply that the spirit was not so happy as, from previous messages, we had been led to think. The following conversation then ensued; myself asking some

of the questions, and the medium others. Are you not happy? "Yes." Are you not very happy? "Yes." Are there any with you more happy? "No." Do you see any that are more happy? "Yes."

After all this questioning, — the result of which did not serve to remove the perplexity from our minds, — on resuming the usual method, the rest of the sentence, "than you are now," was spelled out; thus giving quite a different meaning to the entire sentence, and one in perfect harmony with all we had received from the same spirit.

The sentence, in its finished state, stands thus: "Do live a better life than I did, that you may be more happy than you are now." To the reader, at first sight, it will doubtless seem as somewhat complicated, and even bungling, in its construction; but to myself, knowing as I did the peculiar circumstances of the case, it seemed admirably constructed for the accomplishment of its desired purpose. There is in it what I felt to be a deserved rebuke to myself for my inactivity, and the general depression of spirits under which I was then laboring, owing, though but in part, to ill health. There is also a striking manifestation of the beautiful humility of character which was ever apparent in the earthly life of the person in question. What I now refer to is that phrase which reflects back upon the spirit's own earth-life, and which seemed to say to me, "I do not mean to say that you are not as good and true as I was; but I wish you to live a *better* life than I did, that you may be more happy than you are now."

I have been thus particular in my notice of this incident, because it was one of those apparently trifling, yet really important occurrences, which, I think, cannot fail to have great weight with the critical mind : at any rate, it had with myself. It may be well to add, that, at the close of this message, the name was spelled out in full, to the manifest confusion of the medium, who thought it was a continuation of the message, but of which she could make nothing.

E. — PAGE 40.

The lines referred to are given below. I do not regard it as a necessary inference that they originated in the spirit-world, although my search for their earthly origin still continues fruitless. It is only necessary to suppose that they were the favorite lines, while on earth, of the spirit who gave them. I am very sure that they were entirely new to the persons present when they were first communicated. The medium, on this occasion, it should be remembered, was an illiterate girl of very limited reading, who was born and brought up in the neighborhood. She could not write three lines without making mistakes in grammar or spelling.

The critical reader will perceive that there is an apparent incompleteness in these lines ; and that they were not given entire in the first instance was shown from the fact, that, in another subsequent trance, they were given more in full, but were not taken down in their more perfect form.

They were entitled and given by the invisible intelligence as follows : —

“ JAMIE CAME LATE FROM THE SEA.

“ My heart, oh! how vainly it tries
From the grief that pursues it to flee!
By the side of some coral he lies,
In the deep green waves of the sea.
The last parting words that he spake,
They’re deep in my bosom enshrined.

Like ages the weary months passed;
But my heart would oft cheeringly say, —
He shall soothe and protect thee at last,
When thy bonny brown hair shall be gray.
How deceitful our hopes, and how fair!
Poor Jamie came late from the sea.

Gray then was my bonny brown hair,
But no soother was Jamie to me ;
The riot of fire in his veins
Destroyed the poor boy in his bloom,
And shrouded his wretched remains,
And buried my hopes in the tomb.”

F. — PAGE 42.

From my notes taken at the time, I make the following extracts in regard to this trance, or spirit-clairvoyant condition, premising that the medium spoken of is the same of whom frequent mention has already been made.

April 14. — E. went into the trance for the first time, and seemed distinctly to *perceive* the spirits. She did not, however, say any thing while in the condition, but seemed to regard the spirit-vision with an ecstasy of silent won-

der and delight. She moved around the room with eyes closed and arms extended ; whilst, with frequent starts of surprise, and an elevated, joyous expression of countenance, she gave vivid testimony to the brightness of the vision that was then hers.

April 16, a.m. — E. has just come out of another wonderful trance. She was put into it by the spirits, as we learned from the usual responses ; and they relieved her from it at their own time, and in their own way. No visible person was in the room with her at first but a girl of eleven years of age. She remained in the condition for nearly three hours, during which she discoursed most beautifully and sublimely of the spirit-phenomena that were present to her mental vision. The conditions of spirit-happiness and unhappiness seemed to be spread open before her, and at times she was apparently engaged in conversation with some of each of these conditions. I never conceived of a higher manifestation of pure benevolence and love than came from her at this time. Her expressions of compassion for the unhappy were most touching. At times she would upbraid the inhabitants of the celestial abodes for their apparent apathy in this direction, and expressed the wish that she might be permitted to go and minister to those sad ones, amongst whom she recognized some who were known to her before they left the earth-life. In her conversations with the invisible ones, we (myself and Mrs. H. only were present) could, of course, hear one side only ; but from this the intercourse appeared to be as real as if all had been spoken in an audible voice.

She described individual spirits quite accurately and minutely, among whom were Mr. H.'s and also Mrs. H.'s mother, both of whom had been wholly unknown to E. while they were in the body. But it is useless for me to attempt to describe what took place during this most striking spirit-manifestation. I regret much that I did not take full notes of all that was said on this occasion.

The awaking was not all at once; but the subject was at first brought back into the common clairvoyant state. Here was a change as if from heaven to earth! It was indicated by the very expression of her countenance, — much more by her words, which were now wholly of earthly things; whereas, in her higher condition, she neither saw any thing nor spoke of any thing, excepting that which belonged to the spirit-world. When fairly out of the trance, she seemed like one just awakened from a bewildering dream; whilst she listened, with utter incredulity, when informed of what had taken place during her unconscious state.

G. — PAGE 50.

Since this was written, many important facts have come to my personal knowledge bearing upon what has been considered in the preceding pages. I shall only allow space for the following extract from a letter written by myself at about the time the events occurred: —

POMFRET, VT., Feb. 6, 1853.

When I came to this place, about six or seven weeks since, there was not a single developed medium in the neighborhood;

but now, in more than half the families, there is a medium-power of some kind. Among those who have been thus developed under my direction is one for speaking in the trance, and one writing-medium in the person of a little girl between eight and nine years of age, who had but just begun to write in the natural way, and only after a copy. As a writing-medium, however, the sentences often come in a bold, masculine hand, without any knowledge on her part as to the meaning. She cannot even read what has been thus written, but depends generally upon an older sister as an interpreter.

Most of the mediums are more remarkable for their capacity to be used for the physical demonstrations. We have had some decidedly strong movements of this kind, to the no small astonishment of some of the people here, to whom such things had been previously known only through what to them was a very vague and uncertain rumor. In one instance, a full-grown person was tossed to the distance of two or three feet from the floor whilst leaning upon one leaf of a strong table, whilst the medium's hands rested lightly on the other. This process was repeated and kept up for some time; the person all the while making strenuous efforts to hold the table. The experiment was first tried of putting a boy of some ten or twelve years of age upon the same part of the table; but he was wholly unable to keep his position, so lively and powerful were the efforts of the invisible power.

In another instance, a full-grown man, weighing a hundred and fifty pounds or more, was treated to a short ride about the room, he being on the table, which was slowly moved along on the floor. In this latter case, the mediums were two girls of about eight and twelve years of age.

H. — PAGE 54.

S. B. Brittan, at the close of his recent controversy with Dr. Richmond, uses the following language upon this point : —

“The spiritual manifestations in this country have doubtless converted more intelligent skeptics and materialists to a belief in revelation and a future life, in the short space of three years, than have been convinced by the preaching of all the Christian sects in the last quarter of a century. I am conscious of the full import of this language, and would not have it understood as a mere hyperbolism. I am quite satisfied that the facts will warrant the most literal construction.”

It is possible that in the warmth of controversy this language may be somewhat too strong, though I am very sure that the writer would not intentionally mislead his readers in regard to matters of fact; and no one in the country has had greater opportunity for judging wisely upon this point. At all events, enough has come within the range of my own observation to convince me, that the influence of the spirit-manifestations has been very powerful in this respect. I know of one congregation (at Woodstock, Vt.) whose meetings for public worship I have attended, which is made up of probably one-half, who, before they became interested in the manifestations, were what are generally termed “infidels.” But *now*, prayer, reading the Scriptures, and religious instruction (mostly from invisible teachers), make an important part of their weekly exercises upon the Lord’s day; also, many of them now have stated worship in their families. And all this has been from the direction of what some still insist upon regarding as evil spirits! *

* Since this was written, intelligence has reached us that the celebrated Robert Owen, of England, has been converted to a belief in immortality through the same agency.

I. — PAGE 59.

The following is, I believe, a complete list of the periodicals devoted mainly to this subject at the present time (May, 1853). With the exception of the first upon the list, they have all been commenced within the space of a year : —

The Spiritual Telegraph, New York.
The Shekinah, a monthly magazine, New York.
The New Era, Boston, Mass.
The Journal of Progress, New York.
Light from the Spirit World, St. Louis, Mo.
The Spiritual Era, Ripley, Ohio.
The Illuminator, Detroit, Mich.
The Mountain Cove Journal, Mountain Cove, Ky.
The Seraph's Advocate, Syracuse, N.Y.
The Carrier Dove, Philadelphia, Pa.

I have also before me a list of bound volumes and pamphlets, amounting in all to about forty, all of which have grown out of the new phenomena.

J. — PAGE 60.

Below — also in extracts from letters — will be found an account of one of these speaking mediums, in whom I have become especially interested. There are various others already in the field, and their number is being constantly augmented. Congregations are also being gathered in most of the principal places of our country, who are, in this way, regularly ministered to by spirits.

“But by far the most interesting part of my experience, since I have been here, has come from the acquaintance I have formed with Mr. Austin E. Simmons, of Woodstock. He is a young farmer of excellent character, with simply the common school education of New England. He is naturally diffident, and without promise as a public speaker. Previously to his being developed as a medium, he had had the smallest possible experience in this respect. And yet, for some weeks or rather months past, he has been accustomed to stand before large audiences, on an average from four to six hours daily, as a medium for speaking in a trance. The discourses that thus come through him are exceedingly various, both in matter and manner. Often, as is perfectly apparent, several spirits speak through him in one trance, and his meetings are generally from one and a half to three hours in length. Indeed the spirit-control over him seems to be almost perfect, and hence the wonderful results. He has already been the cause of benefit to many, and of astonishment to many more. Doubtless he is destined to be an important instrument in the furtherance of the spirit-movement. I have just made an arrangement with him to go with me to Massachusetts, for a few weeks, on a mission for spirit-preaching.”

The following is part of a letter written immediately after the close of this exceedingly interesting excursion :

“That which interested *me* most was what took place in our private room, with no one but ourselves and invisible friends present. Here, our intercourse with the spirit-world was most

delightfully real. When thus by ourselves, a kind, loving, and *social* disposition was constantly manifested by our spirit-friends. Sometimes our communications would be by writing through Mr. S.; but oftener he would be put into his usual trance-condition, and, in this way, some perfect gems of spirit-thought have come to me. I regret exceedingly that I have not been able to retain these with sufficient vividness to enable me to give a transcript of them for the benefit of others. On one occasion of this kind, a circle of spirit-sisters, under the guiding influence of a dear friend of my own, came near, and, with the delicacy and loveliness of angelic life, spake to me of the peculiar condition and mission of their sex, as it should be on earth, and as it is in the spheres. On another, a loving spirit came and discoursed of the imperfect and low condition of the marriage-relation as it generally prevails in the earth-life, whilst the exceeding beauty and purity of this relation as it is found in the spirit-life was unfolded in all its wonderful loveliness. On these, as on the occasions of public speaking in the trance, it devolved upon me, as best I could, to give my friend a brief sketch of what had been said through him; for it is his misfortune not to be able to remember for himself. Indeed, during the speaking, his condition seems to be a near approach to absolute unconsciousness.

"The discourses which came through my friend in public were exclusively of a moral and religious character. And, although very various in language and manner, yet they were all pervaded by a spirit decidedly reformatory. An intense dissatisfaction with the present condition of the moral and theological world, and with the *past* also, since near the time of Christ, — was the leading characteristic of them all. It would seem that, to the more elevated inhabitants of the spirit-home, the Christian religion appears to be degenerated in our own day, even as was the Jewish religion in the time of Christ; and as with him, so with these ministering spirits, sent forth to do his will, they come not to destroy, but to fulfil; or, at least, it is but to destroy the gods of men that they come; whilst the true God, and all his *genuine* revelations, are treated with respect and reverence.

"I have alluded to the variety of style and manner which has been exhibited through Mr. S. in his medium-capacity. This is indeed the great wonder, especially as it is an easily ascertained fact, that naturally he is endowed with but very small powers of imitation. Yet when he stands up in public, as a medium for spirit-teaching, almost every style of public speaking is represented through him. Preachers, lawyers, and public orators, now in the spirit-life, seem to come in their own proper persons, with all their peculiarities of manner and accent, and to speak once more with a good degree of fluency and ease to their brothers in the flesh.

"In more than one instance have I recognized the genuine Irish accent, attended by some of the prominent peculiarities of Irish oratory; and, on one occasion, we were agreeably surprised at being addressed in the deep tones and touching pathos of Indian speech. This last was of a character so marked as to indicate, to a great degree of certainty, the presence of a representative of the American red men. This 'talk' was also exceedingly beautiful and appropriate, although the spirit which pervaded it was no longer the spirit of violence and of war, but of peace and love.

"Sometimes, though not always, the name of the spirit-speaker would be given; and, on several occasions, the individual has been recognized by those who had formerly been accustomed to hear the same voice, whilst he who used it was still of earth. An old Calvinistic minister, the first of the town where the incident occurred; a venerated Christian preacher and pastor, recently deceased; and a well-known member of Congress of this State, who left us during the past year, have thus been recognized by some one or more of the audience, since I have been with Mr. S. In one of these instances, — wishing to know how far the same impression prevailed among the hearers, — it was requested that all who recognized the manner as that of a particular individual now of the spirit-home, would manifest it by rising; when some twenty-five or thirty arose in different parts of the hall. It is worthy of remark in this connection, that, in two of these instances at least, the medium was wholly unacquainted with the style which was so successfully imitated through him."

It may not be amiss to insert here an extract from a communication given through Rev. John M. Spear, of Boston, nearly a year since, and before any such public-speaking mediums began to make their appearance. It is as follows : —

“NEW TEACHERS. — New teachers will soon appear in your midst. I have spoken to you already, my young friend, of books, *of books*. Little can be gathered from these. Teachers will come to you whose minds will be as wide as the universe; teachers whose faces will be turned upwards; teachers who shall receive from above that instruction which they so much need, and which they will bring down to those around them. Down into those books, with faces bent low, do teachers now look. But when they shall turn their faces upward, and there shall drink of the fountain of wisdom, and receive that as it comes fresh from the Father, from them, *from them*, shall flow streams which shall refresh and fructify the earth. Such teachers will come.”

PART II.

T H E F R U I T S ;

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OR,

VARIOUS COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SPIRIT WORLD.

With an Appendix.

INTRODUCTION TO PART II.

I AM fully aware of the strange, and, as I may say, *startling* character of the claim set up in the following pages. When I say startling, however, I mean only to those who have as yet paid little or no attention to the subject which I have now in hand. To myself, and many others of similar experience, this mode of receiving light from the spirit-world has become so common that even its strangeness has, in a great measure, worn off; whilst a delightful consciousness of reality remains with us as a permanent guest.

The claim is, that the several articles which make up the body of this part of my work did not come directly from my own mind, nor from any other mind now in a mortal body, but from minds who have passed onward into the unseen world, and who have made use of my material organism through which to express their thoughts to those who still remain on earth.

I will now give a brief outline of my experience in my medium-development and exercise, although a very brief sketch must suffice for the present. To give my expe-

rience in this respect in its fulness, would in itself occupy a much larger volume than this, and of such a character as might well cause many to wonder at the strange and striking developments that are now taking place upon the borders of the seen and unseen worlds. Such a history I may attempt to give at some future time ; but, for the present, the following concise statement must suffice.

From my earliest faith in the reality of this new mode of intercourse with spirit-beings, I have had a strong desire myself to become what is now well understood by the term, a medium. At first, however, I could get but little encouragement from my spirit-friends. They only gave me to understand, that I had a certain impressibility of mind which enabled them, at favorable times, to impart their thoughts to me. But, as from time to time I received communications from those friends, I was told that this impressibility of mind was constantly on the increase ; and in due time I was encouraged with the hope, that I might be able, through my own self, to communicate directly with the spirit-life.

At about the time now referred to, I had occasion to visit Cambridge, Mass., and to call upon a family who were all utterly strangers to me. In this family was a good writing-medium, although I did not know of it until after I had called. When this medium came into the room in which I was sitting, her hand was seized by some invisible power ; and these words were written, directed to myself : " You are a medium for impressions on the mind ; you will be a writing-medium soon."

And thus it proved to be in due time. On affording the usual facilities, such as devoting certain seasons to quiet and passive thought, with my hand placed in a writing-position, I soon began to perceive a slight, involuntary movement of my hand. Gradually this movement assumed, first, the form of letters, then words; until, at length, whole sentences were written out without the least conscious effort on my part.

At first, naturally enough, I was led to regard the productions that thus came to me, with great suspicion, especially as I found that my mind followed closely upon, and often in advance of, my hand.

It was not until after much exercise of this kind, resulting in many striking messages, of a character almost wholly foreign from my natural thoughts, that I became convinced that I really was a reliable medium for spirit-communications. When this conviction was fairly fixed in my mind, as may well be supposed, I was not backward in making a free use of my power, especially as I found my invisible helpers quite as willing as myself. And from that down to the present time, I have received in this way, almost daily, what could hardly fail to convince any sincere and ingenuous inquirer who should have my opportunities.

During all this while, a constant effort has been kept up for the purpose of deepening my medium-capacity; and, if I may believe those who have been the most constantly around me, I am now on the point of a still higher development in this respect, although, as a medium for writing, I am told, and apparently with correctness, that

I am now so well disciplined that even slight shades of thought can be correctly expressed through me by spirit-beings.

The most striking part of my experience has been the singular course of discipline through which I have been carried by direct agency of this same invisible company with which I have been constantly surrounded since I became a medium. This discipline is as real as it is singular and effectual for the purpose it has in view, which, as I understand it, is twofold, — viz. to elevate and strengthen individual character, and to develop, to its greatest extent, the medium-capacity. The history of this kind of effort remains yet to be written; and, when it is written, it will open to public view a new and most striking scene in the grand order of the divine wisdom, as manifested in the universe of spirit-life.

In making selections for this second part of my work, I have taken, from the large amount of matter which has come to me in this way, such articles as I thought best fitted to interest and impress that class of minds for whom my work has been more especially prepared. In the Appendix I have given slight sketches of the history of these articles, with some of the incidents which occurred during the process of writing. I will here make the additional remark, that, in my medium-capacity, I generally write quite rapidly, — much more so than in my natural way. It has interested and impressed me much to observe, during this rapid process, how suddenly the controlling influence would cease upon the occurrence of any error. Nothing further could then be done until the

error was pointed out and corrected. This has generally been done by letting my hand move passively over the page until it should be drawn gently down, and my pen or pencil be made to rest upon the wrong word or sentence.

I have been the more anxious to prepare this little collection of spirit-communications, from the fact that this very point — viz. the nature of what is received — is likely to be the point upon which the question, as to the genuineness and value of the spirit-manifestations, is to turn.

All — or, at least, *almost* without exception — who have paid any considerable degree of thorough attention to the subject, have been absolutely *driven* from the position, that mesmerism, electricity, or any other unconscious agent, could accomplish what is now being constantly witnessed in almost every town and city throughout our land. And, as to that old resort of opposers, once quite common, that the whole matter is an imposition, — this thought is no longer to be entertained for a moment by serious and candid minds.

There seems now to be but one way of escaping the full force of the claim advanced: it is to attribute all those striking manifestations of mind that are constantly exhibited in the new phenomena, either to a personal evil being as the controlling agent, or to the lower and unreliable human spirits. The former of these theories will not, I think, be entertained by many of those into whose hands this book will be likely to fall. And even some of those who have held most firmly on to the doc-

trine of a personal devil have recently been obliged to change their ground in this respect, and, instead of attributing this work to such a being, have adopted the theory that the communications come from departed spirits, but only from spirits of the wicked.

This last is the position taken by Rev. Charles Beecher, in his report recently read before the Brooklyn and New York Association of Congregational ministers, at their semi-annual meeting. It is certainly a position more easily maintained than any of the others occupied by those who reject what I deem to be the true theory. But those who advance thus far in the right direction will soon see the necessity of going further, unless, indeed, they believe that an evil tree *can* bring forth good fruit, and that grapes *can* be had from thorns, and figs from thistles. For most persons, however, it will not, as I apprehend, be so easy to believe that the good Father has let loose upon us all the bad spirits, whilst the good are not permitted to come near to help us.

The truth doubtless is, that, as this spirit-intercourse takes place according to certain laws of the spirit-life, so all kinds of spirits can avail themselves of it when the conditions are such as to favor their approach to mortals. Of these laws, that which has been called the law of affinity seems to bear the most imperative sway in the spirit-life; and it is by this law that decision is made as to the kind of spirits who shall communicate in any given case. It will be difficult, however, to find any spirits, who, under any circumstances, will confirm the leading doctrines of Calvinistic Orthodoxy; and it was on this

account, as is well understood, that Mr. Beecher, in the report just referred to, has given in his decision, that the communications must come from the "sinners," and not the "saints," of the unseen world. I am perfectly willing that this reason of his shall have all the weight it can have in an enlightened community: meanwhile, I ask of the reader a candid perusal of the articles which follow, that he may decide wisely whether they seem to come from such spirits as are intended by Mr. Beecher.

I do not wish to be understood, however, as claiming for these communications the virtue of "Orthodoxy," as this term is generally understood, however valuable this might seem in the estimation of some. On the contrary, it must be frankly confessed, that there has been, in these invisible friends of mine, a decided leaning toward what is generally termed "Radicalism," — so much so that my own views and feelings have, in some instances, been directly crossed. But this, as I understand it, is no sufficient reason for believing that these same spirits may not be wiser and better than either myself or Mr. Beecher.

Not by any means, however, that I regard the teachings of any human spirits, either in or out of the body, as infallible. But I *do* believe that those who have passed on into the more immediate presence of the great Fountain of truth are in the enjoyment of better opportunities for a more perfect knowledge of the truth; and hence I am ready to listen, with a good degree of deference, to what they may have to say, especially in regard

to things which have now become a part of their own experience, whilst to myself they are still in the future.

I close these introductory remarks with the earnest assurance, that, in the production of the articles which follow, I have had no conscious active agency ; my only effort having been to maintain as passive a state as possible, both as respects my mental and bodily powers. Hence I take to myself neither credit nor censure for the thoughts and sentiments therein uttered. In regard to the language, however, this should not be said so unqualifiedly ; for it is given me to understand, that this is generally *partially* found in the mind of the medium. Still, in my own case, there has been, in this respect, enough of the foreign influence at work to make the style more the style of others than of my own. But the reader will doubtless be a better judge of this than myself ; but he may rest assured, that whatever variety there is in the different articles came naturally — without the least effort on my part.

The same remark may be made in regard to the topical arrangement of each of the articles. My foreknowledge as to the order in which the thoughts were to be unfolded was but little, if any, more perfect than is that of one who is about to read them for the first time : indeed, it was with no small feeling of curiosity that I have been accustomed to watch for the opening of each successive paragraph, the character of which would not be known to me until several words, and sometimes the entire sentence, had been formed.

There is still another thought which claims a passing word in closing. It is this: when the oft-repeated question is asked as to who is the author of any given communication from the spirit-world, a question is asked which, as spirits say, is not easily answered. This is owing to the fact, that they are accustomed to act in harmonious circles, and thus almost every communication of especial importance is the product of many minds blended together in a beautiful harmony of thought and feeling. There is one individual, however, in such cases, who serves as the organ through which the thought finds expression; and usually the name of this one is given when any name is given. In my own experience, I have seldom asked for the names of my helpers; but sometimes they have been given voluntarily; and in such cases, as I am told, they can be more implicitly relied upon as genuine.

H. S.

PART II.

THE TRUE WISDOM OF REFORM,

COMMUNICATED FROM THE SPIRIT-WORLD.*

WE of these heavenly spheres cannot understand the apathy with which life upon earth seems to be regarded. So much seems waiting to be done, that we wonder how any can remain idle or indifferent. You of earth cannot fully see the subject as we do ; but you ought to feel more deeply the importance of your efforts to reclaim and elevate your fellow-men. Most men are so depraved in folly and error that they cannot feel the dignity of their mission, and they need some one to speak a living word to their souls, or they must still continue to slumber in wretchedness. You, and others like you, must meet their wants in this respect, or you cannot fully perform the work given you to do.

* See Appendix K.

We wish much to impress you with the great truth, that man is born for noble ends, which cannot be secured without mutual aid and sympathy. This thought should awaken every slumbering soul to new life and action. You cannot be too earnest in this respect, nor can you make too great sacrifices in order to meet with your highest reward. Now is the time to act efficiently in the good cause of human welfare. The harvest is now ready for the husbandman : will you not shake off your lethargy, and take hold of the great work with true and efficient zeal? We will help you with our invisible presence, and aid all your efforts that may tend to the good of men. Much may be done through spiritual effort, but we need material instruments to work with. You, and others like you, can coöperate with us effectually and gloriously. We need your help, and you need ours : shall we not thus coöperate with each other and with God? Must man suffer without help? Must we, who rejoice in glory, weep to behold his woes? Must we rejoice while he weeps? No : we must rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep, more and more, as we become exalted in our moral natures.

We wish now to speak of the duty of man toward his fellow. You must consider, in the first place, that many of the degraded are more to be pitied than blamed. They are not the merciless monsters we take them to be. Their hearts are much more capable of good impression than we think. They have fallen, it is true, into many wicked ways; but they can be recovered if we are faithful to our trusts, as the followers of him who came to seek and to save the lost. The means of doing this are not so difficult and doubtful as some would seem to imply. The way to do good to our brother-man is not so dark but that every sincere soul can find his way through it. We of the spirit-home can see it more clearly, it is true; yet you of earth need not be long in doubt, if you strive sincerely to know the path of duty. We cannot do the good work for you, but we can do it with you.

Must it be in vain that sincere men labor in the cause of philanthropy, on account of the misdirected efforts of some who have a zeal, but without knowledge? We have sought earnestly to do good among the mortal race of man; but our efforts have been defeated through the misguided zeal of some who seem to think *themselves* the perfect standards of

mental acuteness. But much may yet be done if we are willing to work wisely in the appointed way of God. Much will be done when men make up their minds to act with us in the great and glorious sphere of God-appointed duty.

We desire to make you, and others of your class, feel that you are instruments which ought to be in constant use ; for all should be instruments in much more than mortal agency. We wish you to feel the greatness of the work before you. We wish you to understand what God requires of you. We make no vain allusions, but speak the words of heavenly wisdom, when we say that you may be fellow-workers with us and with God in the great cause of truth and humanity. Is not this a worthy office ? Is it not one which should call forth your noblest thoughts and efforts ?

We wish now to say a word in regard to your duties toward God. It is not to bend the knee in meetings for prayer, which are so often as heartless as they are formal. It is not to make long your faces at the corners of the streets, on the day of public worship. It is not to meet together to concert vast schemes for human aggrandizement. But it is to let your souls so blend with all goodness that

you cannot help loving Him who is the source of all light and wisdom and excellence. When this shall be the case with you, it will not take long for you also to become wise and good and lovely.

You need much to have your hearts touched as with a living coal from God's altar. You need much more of that spirit of loving devotion which dwelt in him whose meat it was to do his Father's will. You cannot otherwise make yourselves pre-eminently useful to man, or acceptable to God. You must not think that I am addressing you alone. I mean every one who has the power to do good, and doeth it not.

We come now to speak a word in regard to many particulars in which men err in their efforts to do good. There is much more good intention than actual efficiency in the world. We wish, if possible, to say something that shall tend to remedy this deficiency. You, and such as you, should look well to the means you employ. You must not only labor, but labor wisely. There is no want of ways in which to act,—ways which are at once wise and efficient. Go forward, then, as the appointed instruments of God. Be guided by his hand, and you shall not fail to do the work of his appointment.

We of the spirit-home see plainly the mistakes into which men fall, and will try to make them manifest to our brothers in the flesh. In the first place, there is too much *self* mingling in men's actions, even in the best of causes. Strange is it that the beauty of virtue should thus be marred by the soiled hands of those who labor for its perfection. Let the cup first meet the platter with a bright face, and then may all be cleansed, and become pure and beautiful.

Most persons think that the great evil of society is in some especial external defect. But it is time for all to know that from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; it is time to understand that the great malady which afflicts the race has its roots deep in the hearts of men. You, and such as you, should probe deeply, that the wound may be healed, not slightly, but thoroughly. Now, in order to do this, the nature of sin should be better understood. This is not *always* a self-inflicted calamity, — much less is it ever a God-appointed curse. But the evil comes from ignorance much more than from wilful wrong-doing. Hence, the nature of the remedy is manifest: men must be enlightened concerning the will and ways of God. You cannot, so fully as our-

selves, understand the beauty which appears when all these are rightly understood and regarded. But you can surely understand, with painful distinctness, the godless ways of those who forget the wise order of nature in a grossly sensual life, — a life which, at its best estate, is nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit.

We wish much to impress upon the minds of all the great truth that *God reigns*, and that his laws must be observed, on pain of misery in all its untold forms. There is a most beautiful harmony extending throughout the whole of creation, where the will of the Creator is faithfully observed; but oh the discord that now reigns in some of its dark corners! We of the spheres lament most deeply that it should be so, and gladly would we do our part that the discord may be hushed, and the darkness dispersed.

Much of the sin and suffering that prevails in the world is owing to a want of knowledge in regard to the purposes of the Creator in the original designs of his creation. There is a harmony of design, which, if it could be rightly understood, would throw a shade of brightness over the whole of mortal existence. Much more is there of beauty than of deformity, even now, in what relates to the condition

and history of the human race. There is much that presents a bright side to the thoughtful observer. But still there is much also that is dark and discouraging to all who cannot see the end from the beginning. We of the spheres can look further into the order and progress of things than men in the body; and hence we have more faith in the ultimate triumph of truth, and in the overthrow of error and wrong. But yet our thoughts are most deeply and anxiously interested in all that is now taking place, the end of which is the elevation and happiness of man.

You, and such as you, can help this onward movement of the great cause of truth and humanity in various ways. You can help it by first helping yourselves, — by imbibing more deeply of that deep-dwelling life which can alone make you acceptable and efficient laborers in the field of God.

Much of the sin and suffering of man is owing to the imperfect operation of the social machinery in which all are involved. In order that this sin and suffering may be removed, it is necessary that the social machinery should be remodelled, or, at least, greatly repaired. Much may be done toward this by looking more deeply into the abuses which

now prevail to an extent so lamentable. This is indeed absolutely necessary, before much can be accomplished in the elevation of man. Much may be done toward this desirable end, by a wise attention to the vast amount of mental imbecility and ignorance that now prevails in your midst. You ought to feel deeply the calamity of human ignorance, and to strive earnestly that it may be removed. The great end of all effort should be to enlighten and elevate. It is this which should call forth the most earnest effort on the part of all who love God and man. You cannot feel too deeply upon this subject of human ignorance, nor can you labor too earnestly, or make too great sacrifices that it may be removed.

Again, you should feel that mankind are "brothers all," and that when one suffers all should suffer with him. This thought of human brotherhood lies at the very foundation of all philanthropic effort. It must be better understood and felt before much can be done toward human redemption. Jesus taught this truth most plainly; and deeply must all his followers feel it, if they would be true to the spirit of his life and death.

The great difficulty in the way of the necessary

state of mind is an inveterate selfishness, which looks only to the well-being of a very small number of God's children, — of those only who are included within the outer circle of self. This is a most inveterate evil in the way of all enlarged effort; and it must be removed, or we cannot succeed. Do you ask how it can be done? I answer, by making more deeply and universally felt the great truth just uttered, that the welfare of one is the welfare of all, and the welfare of all is the welfare of one. Much has always been said of the dignity of human nature; and this is just, — humanity is an undoubted nobility. But, if this be so, why refuse to recognize and honor that nobility, even when clothed in rags, and deeply degraded? Humanity can by no means lose her birthright through any such accidental circumstance. My brother, do you not know that God has made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth? and do you not feel that what God has ordained should not be slighted or disannulled? You, and such as you, ought to be firm and consistent in this respect. It will not do to despise the beggar and worship the prince, nor to make more distinctions than God himself has made. You should not fail to do battle

for the right, even in the face of titled nobility. You should do homage only to God's nobility, who are quite as often found with the oppressed as with the oppressor, — with the beggar as with the millionaire. Much that is said about the rights of man is useless, because it is not sustained by consistent practice. Much is mere bombast, — mere senseless sound. Much that is said about human dignity is to be classed in the same catalogue. All that is said and done in behalf of the race of man is but a mere trifle, compared with what should and must be done before the great work, in which angels and all good men are engaged, shall be fully accomplished.

It is sad to think how little progress has been made in elevated and consistent views of man and his destiny. We of the heavenly spheres look with pity upon poor, down-trodden, bleeding humanity, and would fain extend a helping hand; but we cannot approach so as to make our presence felt and regarded. You, and others similarly constituted, can supply the wanting link which shall connect us with our brothers in the flesh, and thus a great and lasting impulse may be given to the work before us.

We must now glance at the end which we have especially in view in our address. You are aware that the great object of all moral effort should be the elevation and happiness of individuals and of the race. But, in order to secure this, it is necessary that all should labor together as one individual. We must not lose sight of this thought in the remarks that are to follow. We must not think to promote the welfare of one at the expense of the many. We must not fail to act with large and liberal views, if we would act efficiently. We shall not fail, however, to secure the well-being of ourselves, when the well-being of the multitude is secured. But you should not think that every one must take care of himself; for this is the way to make it sure that no one will be truly cared for.

When we understand fully the great work before us, we shall not fail to labor effectually in the way of God's appointment. When we understand more perfectly the great evil in which the world is involved, we shall no longer labor to no purpose. We shall no longer strive to promote, first and foremost, our own happiness at the expense, as it may be, of the rights and happiness of those around us. The great difficulty in the way, I repeat, is an inveterate

selfishness, which looks not beyond a very narrow circle in the work of philanthropy. You are required to strive to correct this great mistake of mankind, and in your efforts you may rely upon such coöperation as we may be able to give. Not in vain will be our efforts thus to do good to the erring, suffering race of man, if we do but labor in the appointed way of wisdom and love.

Much has already been done toward spreading abroad more just views upon this subject of mistaken philanthropy. But much, very much, remains yet to be done, before the great work can be fully accomplished, — that work for which we would more perfectly prepare you and others, equally fitted to be instruments of good in God's hands.

In conclusion, let it be said, that, in order to attend fully to the great work of human welfare, it is necessary to be ready at all times to act efficiently and faithfully, each in his own appointed sphere. You, and many others, may act as our especial instruments and helps. Others still, who have not the capacity you have, can act in another, but a not less important way. All can indeed do something in the great work of humanity. But all are not equally favored with the means of acting efficiently in the

work. Yet all have some power of good; and according to what they have, so must it be required of them. You cannot feel so deeply as do we the greatness of the work of which we speak, but you ought to feel it far more sensibly than you do; for, without a deeper feeling, you cannot possibly act with the power and success of which you are capable. You must not, then, rest satisfied with your present state of thought and feeling upon this subject; but you must strive most earnestly, with the help of all the appointed means of God, to become more elevated and true to the grand ideas which should ever be before you. Then, and not till then, can you hope to become, and *to be*, what God has made you capable of becoming. Then only can you be in your real characters what you must be before you can enter with joy into the upper spheres of God's spiritual creation.

THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF OUR SPIRIT-HOME.

A SPIRIT-SERMON. *

1 COR. ii. 9. — “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

NEW and most striking are the developments of truth which time reveals. The most forcible statements which have been made in times past of the greatness and glory of God's universe are but as nothing, compared with the reality as made known by the unfolding of the grand reality from day to day, and from year to year. You cannot fully conceive of the beauty and order of nature until you have entered within her inmost shrine. But you cannot stand even at her outer portals, without having your eyes blinded and your mind entranced with the greatness and glory of this wide, most wide, — this deep, most deep, — grand, most grand order of God's material creation.

* See Appendix L.

We of the spheres cannot help wondering when we look down upon the most deep recesses of God's universe; for we see not as mortals see, but our spiritual vision takes in much, very much, that is wholly unknown to those still in the body. We see all those hidden springs of action which force the most trivial incident that takes place in the order of nature. We cannot help wondering that this most beautiful sight is not within the scope of mortal vision. Yet *all* may see enough to fill the soul with wonder and delight, if they will but look around and above them. You of earth cannot understand *fully* the smallest event which takes place in the unfolding of the Divine plan; but you can understand enough to make your souls most deeply sensible of God's love and unspeakable wisdom. You can see enough of the outward world to awaken within you sentiments of deep awe and adoration toward that Wonderful Being who inhabits all space, and gives life to every living thing. You can see enough of the world within your own forms to cause you to look up with wonder, and fall down with gratitude in view of the great Source of all things, visible and invisible.

My particular object at this time is to set forth

the magnitude and wonder of God's invisible universe. There is that in what is not seen by mortal eye which is fully adequate to call forth the greatest wonder even from angels and glorified spirits. You of earth cannot understand the greatness and glory of this invisible world, even in a degree sufficient to enter into the feelings of the lowest of our spirit-life. But you can understand enough to cause you to stand in awe of the Being who created and upholds all things of time and of eternity. You can understand what it is well for you to understand. You can know what it is well for you to know. You can see all that your eyes are capable of seeing. You can see all that can be brought within range of material organism. You can understand all that God has made mortal man capable of understanding.

My object in these thoughts is to introduce the grand theme of my discourse in a manner that shall impress your minds with the greatness of the material structure in which you now dwell, to the end that you may be able to see more clearly the point most obvious and important to us of the spirit-home. But you cannot understand with sufficient clearness the deepest thought of this discourse, to be able to

set upon it its true value. We will try, however, to give you a slight insight into things which to us are so clear and beautiful.

You must try, in the first place, to let your thoughts range freely over the wide expanse of the Grand Universe which is above and around you. Without letting your thoughts thus expand, you can by no means be prepared to take in the grandeur of that which to you is unseen and intangible. You cannot *see* the glory of our spirit-home: you must therefore strive, by engaging in suitable preparatory thoughts, to get your minds in a condition to understand and appreciate, in some slight degree at least, the glory of our most bright, most sublime abode. You cannot understand, in all its fulness, the grandeur of the material creation: how much less, then, can you understand the spirit-world! You cannot *understand* the smallest particle of matter of which your earthly globe is composed: how much less can you understand the innumerable and most wonderful things which go to make up the greatness and glory of the eternal world!

You of the earthly home cannot see the greatness of the thought we would impress upon your minds in all its grandeur; but you can, as we trust, see

enough of it to make your hearts glad with exceeding joy. We cannot but feel most deeply the distance which divides us from the plane of thought which you occupy ; and it is with great effort that we attempt to unfold, in some slight degree, the glory which is around us. But we will not despair of giving you some cheering glimpses of that which shall one day burst upon you with undiminished lustre and glory. You cannot but feel the strangeness of the effort which tries to make the finite and sensuous understand the infinite and spiritual. But still, if you raise your thoughts devoutly upward, it may not be wholly in vain that the effort shall be made.

The first thing to be remarked is the vastness of the theme before us. It is wholly beyond the grasp even of angelic thought. But still you can perhaps, with our feeble help, catch slight glimpses of its unspeakable greatness. There is nothing within the range of mortal observation that can serve to illustrate the greatness of our theme. It is not within the grasp of human minds, in the body or out of the body, fully to understand it. But we of the spheres can extend our glance much higher and deeper than can our brothers of the flesh. We can

behold above, around, and beneath us, all that the mind of man can desire or imagination conceive of. It is not to astonish that we thus speak, but it is to the end that you may feel deeply impressed with the goodness of that Divine Being who is the Head and Heart of all. We cannot dwell minutely upon the particulars which go to make up the sum total of this vastness of immensity. But our object will be accomplished, so far as can reasonably be expected, if we succeed in opening your minds to the extent of seeing, as with the eye of faith, the glorious greatness of this our spirit-home. You must not hope to *comprehend* the depth of the Divine plan as unfolded in the spheres; but you can know all that it concerns you to know, until your spiritual vision shall be opened, and you shall see face to face the things now unseen and unintelligible.

We next come to remark briefly concerning the purity of our new abode. It is not within the reach of mortal sight to behold what God has prepared for his faithful children, in the way of excellence and perfection of individual character. You who are still clogged with gross matter cannot appreciate the beauty and purity of our present life. It is not for us to speak in tones of censure and severe dis-

paragement of the grossness of most phases of mortal life, for we ourselves have also been in the body. But, when we compare the life that is there led with that which we are enabled to live in this glorious abode, we cannot but wonder at what is there seen and heard. It is sad indeed to witness the degradation into which most men fall, when they might, even in that imperfect state, rise to the condition of angels. We of the spirit-home cannot but feel sad when we behold the gross abuse which so generally prevails among men of the flesh. It is not for us, however, to speak the words of unqualified censure: on the contrary, we are much more disposed to pity than to condemn. But yet it must not be forgotten that the truth should be spoken under all circumstances, and we shrink not therefore from uttering our earnest remonstrance against most of the common ways of mortal life. There is not a single exception to the remark, that men do not come up to the extent of what God's love requires of them, even while surrounded with the imperfections of bodily existence. Yet in many cases we see those who are struggling manfully to do the work assigned them in life. Such are bright and cheering exceptions to the general mass of disobedience,

indifference, and folly, that prevails. And yet it is not in a sad and discouraging tone that we would speak upon this point, for it is in the order of nature and nature's God to bring that which is pure and elevated out of that which is for the time being impure and degraded.

Such are some of the thoughts that arise as we look down upon the vale of mortal man from our elevated position in the spheres of heavenly purity and love. But it is not to censure mortals, nor yet to exalt ourselves, that we are led to speak upon this point. It is rather that we may open in your hearts a fountain of deep and earnest endeavor, to the end that you may rise high toward the Source of light and love, even while yet encumbered with the weight of the flesh. It is that you may feel more deeply than did we ourselves, when in your condition, the greatness and grandeur of man's mission upon earth. It is that you may feel more deeply than did ourselves the exceeding glory that may encircle the hearts of mortal excellence. It is that you may set yourselves at work with due earnestness, that heaven may be won while yet on earth. It is that you may be made to see, in all its length and breadth, the glory that overshadows

those who live righteously and purely, while yet the imperfections and hindrances of earthly life are around them. It is that you may enter with joy, and not with sadness, the home of those whose earthly course is finished, and whose crown of victory won. It is that the future may open upon you brightly and gloriously, instead of being dimmed with the remembrances and most fearful remorse of the disobedient and self-degraded.

The next point to be considered is the exceeding beauty of our home. You cannot begin to conceive of this, even with the help we can give you through the poor instrumentality of human language. But yet we will try to bring before the mind some of the features that more closely resemble your earthly scenery. It is not without great hesitation that we make this attempt, since we cannot but fail, to a very great extent, to convey to you some of the least attractive features of our most glorious home.

The first feature that we will name is the exceeding brilliancy of the light with which we are surrounded. It is not so much its brightness, as its glowing beauty, that attracts the attention. It mingles its many hues in so many attractive forms, that the thoughts are dazzled and most highly elated at

the glorious prospect. It is not that the glowing brilliancy is more filled with gaudy or gorgeous coloring, but it is that the softness of nature's choicest hues is diffused throughout the entire range of the celestial spheres. The greatest possible harmony of scenery prevails. There is not a single jar of discord in all the glorious harmony of colors with which we are surrounded. There is not a single smile of nature which is not here seen in all its perfect loveliness. There is not one thought of God which is not here understood by the things he has fashioned so gloriously. There is much, however, that can in no wise be conveyed to your minds by such imperfect means as are at our command, when we attempt to commune with our brethren upon the earth. But much is now seen and felt by all who look with the eye of faith into that which is within the veil.

We come now to discourse concerning the infinite extent of the land we inhabit. It is not to be explored, in all its infinitude of extent, in ages upon ages of the most active and untiring energy. There are no limits to the scene of progression before us. Each onward step reveals more and more of the greatness and grandeur of the spirit-home. New

and more extended views open upon us in every direction, and we pause in utter amazement at the vastness of the region around us. There is no end to the beautiful openings of rich and most gorgeous scenery. It is enough to cause the soul to send forth her most thrilling bursts of praise at each onward step in the grand march of eternal progression.

We of the spirit-home are not unaware of the difficulty which mortals experience in striving to grasp the idea of the infinite with their finite minds. Nor is this difficulty wholly unknown among us of the spirit-home. Yet it is not with us a matter of so much difficulty as with you. We can look much further into the nature and extent of what is not visible to mortal sight, and can thus see more fully the relations of things seen and unseen. We can let our thoughts ascend gradually into the upper regions of unexplored thought, until we are enabled, in some good degree, to comprehend the vastness and grandeur of God's infinitude. We can let our thoughts fly forward upon the wings of imagination, until they let the unknown remain undisclosed, only for the purpose of renewed and more glorious effort hereafter. There is not a thought in the wide expanse of God's creation, which may not be ours

at some future stage of our infinite progression; and yet each thought of to-day is enough completely to fill and entrance the mind. There is not a thought of yesterday which can be lost from our expanded memories; and yet the thoughts already ours are such as no mortal can yet conceive of, even in the most faint outline.

When we consider these things, and try to impart some slight glimmering of our thoughts to our brothers in the flesh, we cannot but wonder and stand in awe at the magnitude and most unspeakable grandeur of the universe we inhabit. We are struck dumb with amazement, and our souls thrill with songs of praise, while we thus speak of the magnificent greatness of the inheritance which is ours.

We now come to speak of the wonderful variety of occupation which prevails in this land of beauty and rejoicing. No one here is idle, or listlessly employed; but all work together, and for a most glorious and harmonious end. All join in the great design of making all things work together for the good of man, and the glory of the Creator. All help in the great design, which, from the beginning, has been steadily unfolding, and which still continues to unfold, by which all shall at length be elevated,

and made more pure, and more worthy the inner sanctuary of heaven's magnificent temple. We are not, however, striving to exalt ourselves whilst others are trampled beneath our feet. We are not, like some of earth, striving to exalt the few at the expense of the many. But with us the law of impartial love prevails ; and, while one suffers, the others cannot remain indifferent or inactive.

We wish very much to show forth, as far as this may be possible, the reality of life's mission, as it is in time and eternity. But, in order to do this fully, much more time and opportunity must be ours than we now enjoy. We shall, therefore, only say, that, of all the objects presented to mortal minds, no one is true, and worthy their noblest efforts, but that which has for its end the unfolding and obeying the laws of God, as they exist in his material and moral creations. This only is the great end of wise and acceptable effort, as it appears to the vision of God and his attendant angels. This only is worthy the high and noble powers conferred upon man by his Creator ; and this alone it is which allies him in his labors with the labors which employ the efforts of those who have put off the mortal for the immortal organism.

We will now revert more particularly to the various employments which prevail in this our spirit-home. We are mostly employed in gaining deeper insight of nature's laws, as they are seen in material and immaterial existences. There is a beautiful harmony of development in all that exists under the superintending power of that same All-wise and Perfect Being, from whom all things originated. It is impossible for us to unfold to you, with the help of the ordinary language of mortals, the extent and beauty of this order. We can only say that it is perfect in all its phases of action. We cannot stop to dwell upon particulars; but suffice it to say, that so infinite is the variety of thought arising from this source only, that ages upon ages might be employed, and the theme still remain unexhausted.

We will now turn to other modes of occupation in which we are sometimes engaged. It is not easy to designate particularly each item of our labor; but it may be said that no time is left wholly vacant; for, when the severer exercises of thought and action are exhausted, we turn instinctively and joyously to the more easy and delightful themes of song and praise, and of worship in all its forms, as it prevails in this spirit-home. We are never idle

for a moment, excepting in those periods of repose which resemble somewhat your nightly rest and sleep. But in all the varied scenes of life there is no such thing as weariness,—of an unpleasant nature we mean; nor is there any suffering resembling in any degree the suffering which in mortal life comes of over-action and over-enduring. We of the spirit-home are not wholly insensible to a sensation of weariness of a certain kind, but it is only of that description which seems but to enhance the delights of our seasons of relaxation and amusement. For we do have amusements even in this land where all is light and joy. But the amusements which employ our lighter hours are only of such a character as tend to purify and elevate, no less than do our labors and studies. We must not attempt a minute description of these: suffice it to say that there is nothing upon earth which can afford the means of vivid and adequate illustration. We cannot, therefore, convey to your minds any thing like a just idea of what is done and enjoyed in this beautiful home of ours. But we will now turn our attention to another and a final thought.

There is no such thing as giving you a just description of the *minutiæ* of our heavenly abode.

We can only attend, and very briefly, to generals ; leaving the particulars to be studied and made your own, when your spiritual shall outgrow and throw off the material organism, and you also shall be one of that vast, inconceivably vast throng that is seen in all the explored regions of God's spiritual universe. And this is the thought which must constitute the theme of our closing remarks.

There is no such thing as numbering the vast concourse of ministering spirits who throng the abodes of the spiritual universe. It is not the extent alone that fills the mind with astonishment and awe, but it is also the innumerable company of rejoicing spirits who fill the infinite expanse of creation. You cannot imagine even a faint semblance of the reality, — so grand and so amazing is the spectacle presented to our spiritual vision.

It is not in our power to enlarge in this direction ; but we must leave the subject much to the force of your own imagination. We can only say that all is most bright, most glowing and wonderful. Thought may put forth her most potent efforts. Reason may struggle to grasp the subject within her strong embrace ; imagination may lend her most powerful aid ; but all must be well-nigh in vain : it cannot be

that the finite and sensuous can, in any considerable degree, understand the spiritual and infinite. A dim outline only can be given with all the aids of language, reason, and thought, which we possess, as our common means of intercourse.

Yet let not this humble attempt to display to your view a slight glimpse of the glories of our spirit-home be wholly in vain. But let it incite you to new efforts to attain some humble position, at least in these higher spheres of God's spiritual universe. Let not your hearts grow cold, nor your minds weary, in the contemplation of the glorious truths of this discourse. But let all your noblest powers and aspirations be awakened to their utmost strength, whilst you consider with devotion and delight the theme which we have thus brought before you. You need not fear that the contemplation of these high thoughts will unfit you for the sober duties of daily life. On the contrary, it cannot but arouse you to new effort in all those pursuits that are worthy and just. You cannot thus look upward without your vision becoming more clear, and your natural activity greatly stimulated in all that tends to promote your own good, and the good of those around you.

You will not, of course, consider the theme of my discourse as by any means exhausted. It is but just begun to be unfolded, and it would take more than mortal pen, guided by spirit-power, to do the work in all its glowing reality. But such as we have, and such as we could — that have we given unto you.

CONVERSATIONS WITH INVISIBLE FRIENDS.

In regard to the following conversations, I will say that *to me* they were almost as vivid a reality as any that I ever held with persons visibly present. It should be borne in mind, that I myself was the querist, and also the medium through which came the responses.

In regard to the intelligences from whom the answers came, my mind is not very clear, excepting that they were departed human beings. Some of them, I have reason to believe, were personal friends of my own, as I was plainly given to understand that this was the case. The leading influence in giving replies to questions of a theological nature purported to come from two individuals who were brother-ministers while they were in this earth-life; and some of the questions — as that concerning the

condition of infants in the spirit-world — seemed to come from feminine spirits.

It will be perceived that the first conversation begins with abruptness, the opening paragraph being simply a reply to a mental question asked incidentally, as it were, — like many previous occurrences of the kind. In the beginning, I had no thought of such an extension as afterwards took place; but, as I found my spirit-company inclined to be somewhat communicative, I kept up my inquiries until the results now presented to the reader were obtained.

It will also be perceived that there is not much regard to order in the arrangement of the dialogues: this comes, as a natural consequence, of the manner in which they took place. I have thought best, however, not to make any essential changes, but to leave them much in their original order: —

CONVERSATION FIRST.

You wish to know the *manner* of our presence when we communicate with you. It is not easy for us to describe this; but we will make the attempt to give you some ideas upon the subject, that may be of interest.

We do not always actually enter the room when we communicate with our friends in the body. But it must either be so, or else we must form some connecting link with the one who acts as medium. But generally we are in the room with you, especially when we write ; for this cannot be done without such an immediate presence.

Are you able to see material objects? and, if so, in what way, since your material organs of sight are no longer at your command?

You must not expect to know precisely *how* it is that we take cognizance of material objects ; for it is not easy for us to make this known to you. It must suffice to say, that we do see material objects, though only when some set of material organs is present. So also of hearing : we cannot of ourselves see material sights, or hear sounds ; but, with the help of persons still in the body, these are easily done. You wish also to know whether we can read without material help : after what has been said above, you will perceive that this cannot be done.

Can spirits of all conditions enter a room without the facility of some natural opening?

You must not think to understand this matter

fully ; but we will say that all classes of spirits cannot enter through solid substances. Only those who have become somewhat elevated in the spheres can do this ; but still, all can generally find some way of entering a room, if they are very desirous of so doing.

Does the external form of spirits — of infants, for instance — always remain the same as to size ?

You cannot understand this, either, in full ; for it cannot be so given. But it may be said that all retain, to a great extent, the external form they wore upon earth. But this is so beautified and elevated in appearance, that it often seems to be very different even in its shape and size. You cannot understand this fully ; but still you can know enough to make your hearts glad, when you consider what a glorious form you may soon wear, if you keep yourselves pure and elevated in your thoughts and actions.

Is the manner in which spirits take cognizance of each other, any more real and vivid than our mode of seeing each other in the body ?

You cannot conceive of the vast difference in our favor. It is much more real and vivid — our mode of perceiving our brother and sister spirits — than that which you of the earth enjoy.

Are there any evil-disposed or mischievous spirits that have it in their power to approach and communicate with us?

You cannot fully understand what you wish to know upon this subject either. It is not in our power to enlighten you much in this respect. It can only be said that none can approach to do you harm, if you keep your thoughts and feelings elevated and pure, and thus use the proper means to protect yourselves against them. You can always detect the presence of low spirits, from their willingness to speak on subjects of a low nature. An elevated spirit will not attempt to do what ought not to be done, even to gratify particular friends. You need not fear such influences if you raise your heart to God, that he may not suffer you to be tempted with evil.

Can it be explained, without implying deception on the part of spirits, how great men are said to be present, and to communicate, when what is communicated shows plainly that the great men are not present?

You must not think that we can give you all the satisfaction you wish upon this point. It may be said, however, that it is not *necessary* to suppose

deception, as there are other ways of accounting for such facts. You cannot understand the matter fully ; but you may know that it is not always the intention of the spirit to give a false impression. It is often an attempt, made in perfect innocence, to satisfy the wishes of those present. You cannot see it so, I know ; but, if you could see things as we do, the difficulty would disappear.

Do spirits of the higher spheres — those of the apostles for instance — ever communicate directly with persons upon the earth ?

Not often, if ever ; yet they not unfrequently do it intermediately, through the agency of those in the lower spheres.

Are the spheres so definitely arranged that they can be numbered ; and, if so, is the usual mode of reckoning with us of earth correct ?

You cannot enter fully into what I shall say upon this point. But it must be said, that there are no definite boundaries to each sphere, but that all blend together like the colors of a rainbow. The number of the spheres, however, is not so definite as the colors of the rainbow : they are, as it were, all one, and yet each is in a manner separate. The number usually made use of to give a definite

conception of the state of the case, is not the most appropriate that might be chosen. But the number seven will do about as well as any other. This mode of reckoning will serve to give a general idea of the elevation of any particular spirit; but the statements in this respect cannot be implicitly relied upon. There is a difficulty, in the first place, in deciding for himself, as to what sphere each spirit properly belongs to; for often we stand, as it were, upon the borders of two spheres. Then, again, we cannot always succeed in conveying to you the results of our own decision; for it is often the case, that we are in a certain sphere only for a time, and for some specific purpose as respects our educational development.

Do you mean to convey the idea, that, for this purpose of education, you are sometimes permitted temporarily to rise higher than where you properly belong?

Yes, but not often higher; for we generally descend for this purpose. You cannot get the full thought, however, and it is not necessary that you should: so we will not pursue the subject further.

Will you tell me what is thought in the spheres

concerning the popular idea, among mortals, of a personal devil ?

You cannot conceive of the dislike which such a thought awakens in our minds. It is so repugnant to all just ideas of God and his dealings with man, that we cannot harbor it for a moment. You cannot conceive of the horror with which all pure natures shrink from the contact with such an idea, — the idea that such a monstrous creation should come from the hands of the good God and Father of all. It is utterly repugnant to us, and is false in every particular as to the facts of the case.

What is the position in the spirit-world of those who die in infancy ?

They ascend directly to the higher spheres of this world, and become the companions of the pure and beautiful. They are not wholly instructed, however, in these higher spheres, but descend from time to time to receive the discipline and instruction which must be theirs in consequence of the immaturity of their being at the time they left the earthly body. You cannot understand fully the beautiful relation that here exists between these and the more mature spirits. But we wish to say a word to you upon this point. It is not, however, without

some reluctance that we make the attempt to represent that which is in itself so lovely and truthful; for we fear that it will greatly suffer in the imperfect efforts we may make.

You must try, in the first place, to let your minds expand into a sort of silent wonder, while in imagination you gaze upon the beautiful scene of loveliness and harmony that pervades our spirit-home, when infant innocence is with us. You cannot understand, even in a slight degree, the loveliness that is then around us. Forms of the most graceful proportions, and the choicest coloring, are all around us. This is especially the case when the privilege is ours of becoming teachers to these infant ones. You cannot but envy our position when you are told that some of us are thus employed during the greater part of our sojourn in the inferior spheres. You need not suppose, however, that these innocent beings are sent into the *lowest* spheres to receive any part of their education: far from it. They only descend as far as what are usually called the third and fourth spheres. There it is that they receive the rudiments of their heavenly instruction, and soon they ascend naturally and permanently to the higher spheres. Nor is it in vain that these

lovely beings visit us ; for they bring with them the sweet fragrance of the higher and purer abodes. They come to us for instruction ; but they instruct far more than they are instructed. They come with beautiful visions of truth and purity attending them, and we welcome them as you welcome the bright rays of a morning sun. We cannot think of the extreme purity of their natures, without becoming ourselves more pure and elevated ; and thus they draw us gradually, but surely, to where they, by virtue of their perfect loveliness, belong.

You cannot feel as deeply as do we upon this subject, although you yourselves may have been accustomed to the joyous prattle of these little ones upon earth ; but we trust that you can so far sympathize with us as to let your thoughts flow gently with our own. It is not mainly because of their extreme beauty of form that we are attracted toward them ; but it is also, and much more, from their perfect purity and simplicity of character. They are one and all the images of the great Source of purity ; and when they come to us, then, more than at any other time, does God himself seem to be in our more immediate presence.

You must not think, however, that it is always

our privilege to be thus blessed; for with most of us, it is not often that we are thus favored, — only when some special end is to be answered by their coming.

CONVERSATION SECOND.

Will you give me the views you now entertain in regard to retribution, and the final destiny of those who were peculiarly sinful and degraded while upon earth?

We are not now prepared to give our views in full upon these subjects, but will try to do something to throw light upon these important points of inquiry.

We of the spirit-home are accustomed to look upon death, and the entrance into this abode, as a thing of the deepest interest. We do not think it is the means of delivering the soul from all suffering, but only that it is a far better condition than that which is left behind. But, in order that a happy entrance may be obtained, it is necessary that the individual spirit should have already attained to a certain degree of moral elevation, — it is necessary that the soul should be, in some small degree at least, in harmony with the peace and purity of our new abode.

When this is not the case, it generally happens that there is much severe suffering, which comes as a necessary consequence of past wrong and of future hope. It is not that the soul is made more miserable than its condition naturally calls for; but it is that the spirits of wicked persons cannot, from the nature of the case, be otherwise than unhappy when they see thus plainly what they have lost, and how foolishly and wickedly they have lost it. And they cannot but see this when the light of eternal existence shines in upon them. They are the thoughts and feelings that then throng their memories, that are, more than all else, the cause of their unhappy condition. They are not, however, given over to despair, but the light of hope is still suffered to visit them; and such is the flood of knowledge and wisdom that is let in upon them from the higher spheres of God's spiritual universe, that they cannot long remain impenitent and hardened. They soon begin to see, in all its vividness, the glory that may be theirs, if, putting away their evil tendencies, they struggle after that which is pure and glorious.

They do not rise all at once, however; no, far from it. Theirs is a long and tedious course of discipline and instruction; and not until such a course

has been endured and enjoyed, can they rise to the more exalted positions of the pure and faithful. There is not a single instance, however, in which this course of discipline and instruction does not succeed in its merciful object. We speak this from the testimony of the spirit-company at large, some of whom have long been intimately acquainted with the lower abodes of these spheres.

You need not think, however, that the retribution for sin is a light matter. It is, on the contrary, a most serious and sad experience. Even many of those who enter much higher than the lowest conditions suffer the natural rewards, to some extent, of perverted minds and neglected consciences. But all this discipline and instruction is absolutely necessary, to the end that the soul may rise unimpeded in its unending flight of love and rejoicing. You must not think, then, that sin is a light thing,—that to do wrong is but a temporary evil. It is, on the contrary, an evil whose consequences must continue for ever; for at no time in the soul's upward progress can the effects of that evil be lost sight of, or be forgotten. It is something that must ever exert an influence in keeping the soul in a lower condition than otherwise might have been its lot.

Will you give me some light in regard to education in the spheres?

You must not expect to know much upon this subject; for our mode of instruction is so different, and the kind of knowledge so much more elevated, that it is difficult for us to give you any very just ideas upon the subject. You can, however, understand that part which is most nearly connected with your earthly ways of learning; and to that we will now turn our attention, though briefly.

It is not only a higher method of learning that we practise here, but also a much more elevated kind of knowledge that we gain. Yet in some things our education and yours bear a close resemblance. It is so, for instance, in what relates to the elements of natural philosophy, and the more elevated parts of natural science generally. You are not accustomed to look upon these matters, however, in so elevated a light as ourselves, nor can you understand so perfectly the relations that exist between the seen and the unseen of these sciences; yet you have nearly the same methods of arriving at the truths as have we of the spirit-home. You can even understand, more perfectly than ourselves, some particular things in the researches for scientific truth; but in

most things we are vastly above you in our opportunities for acquiring knowledge. You cannot understand better than ourselves any thing but the *minutiæ* of certain inquiries, whilst, in most of the more important principles, we are greatly in advance of you.

You cannot understand all that you wish to know on this subject, yet it may be seen by you that all the branches of general knowledge which are taught upon earth are taught here also to those who are introduced to the spheres in infancy ; and hence all the knowledge you may acquire in your rudimentary sphere is of some importance here also. Some kinds of knowledge, however, are much more important than others ; as, for instance, the knowledge of moral and mental philosophy, and other studies of a kindred nature. You will have no use here for the common branches of domestic education, of course ; but you will wish to know all about history, geography, and other similar studies ; for we still have much to do with earth and its affairs.

How is it with the different languages, — ancient and modern ?

You will not have much to do with them, excepting in so far as you may wish to communicate with

the different people of earth. You must not expect to *acquire* languages here; for that is no part of our study.

Can you give me any idea of the manner in which spirits converse?

You had better not attempt to penetrate so deeply into our affairs; for it can be of no use to you. There is, however, with us a common and universal method of holding intercourse, but of which you can form no just idea until you are permitted to make use of it.

Is there any thing that resembles our use of books in your spiritual training?

No, not very closely. We have, however, a much more perfect way of receiving and imparting knowledge. It is not much more like your method than that is like the method of the ignorant heathen. But still it bears a faint resemblance, so that we may be said to have what may be called our works of history, of biography, of poetry, &c. But they are works that do not remain in a stereotype form, as it were, but are constantly undergoing change and improvement. We have not much more to say upon this point; but you can ask further questions if you choose.

Will you tell me something about the worship of the spheres?

We do not have what you would call religious worship, i.e. any thing which resembles, in any considerable degree, your stated and formal acts of homage. But we have that which is far nobler, more beautiful and true. We have what might be called stated gatherings of those whose sole aim in coming together is to help each other to become more devout, and better fitted for a further elevation in the spheres. But, even here, there is nothing of that stiffness and formality which are seen even in the most perfect of your religious gatherings.

We have also our seasons of more intimate self-communion, but not as you have them; for they are far more real and thorough than yours. We can see more readily into ourselves, it is true; but still, we are more, much more, earnest and true in the matter than you of earth. It is not our choice, however, to speak in this self-exalting strain; only we must speak so, if we speak at all; for the truth compels us.

How is it with your music and singing?

Our music is infinitely beyond any that you of earth have heard or imagined. It is so much above

yours, that we shall not attempt its description, even in the least degree of its excellence.

What are your present relations to Jesus Christ? and how do they differ from those you sustained toward him while on earth?

You must not expect to know much more upon this subject than you now do. The truth is that we of the spheres are not *much* more nearly related to him than while on earth. He is so far beyond us that we cannot understand the exact relations that we do sustain toward him. He is ever in our thoughts as the great Model Man, and we are always striving to understand and experience more of that which dwells in him in all its fulness and unrivalled beauty. He is constantly engaged in our behalf, we know, in various ways; but these we cannot fully understand or appreciate. He is never far from us, and yet we cannot *see* him in the same sense that we see other spirits, although in a certain sense we do see him always.

Do you see him in the same sense that you see God?

No, not exactly that, but something that approaches it. He comes to us at times in an especial manner, and then the extent of his beauty and glory

of character is more fully seen and understood. But yet, after all we have said, it is impossible that you should have even a faint conception of the reality itself. You can only understand, as it were, the outside of the subject; whilst its internal realities and beauties must remain unknown to you, until that time when you shall be permitted to know as we know, and to see as we see.

You must not think that you have had any thing like a correct answer, and in full, to your question. But it is all we can do to help you in our present imperfect mode of intercourse with you. You must not ask more light upon this point at present.

CONVERSATION THIRD.

What are we to understand by the phrase "Holy Spirit," as used by Christ in his teachings on earth?

You are to understand all those influences which go to help man in his condition of trial and discipline. It is not merely one particular kind of help that is meant, but all those helps that are appointed by God for the welfare of his children. We of the spheres are accustomed to look upon these various instrumentalities with a true and earnest effort at

self-instruction, and so we think you ought to regard them. They are so many different ways of helping to raise the soul up to God; and, when we are permitted to use them, it should be with thankful hearts and with true and earnest efforts, to the end that we ourselves may be found faithful to our part of the work of self-elevation. We cannot always tell exactly what comes from this Holy Spirit of God, and what comes from our own faithful effort. These coöperate, and so blend together that we cannot distinguish one from the other; but this is not important, we think, for they all work together, or should work together, for the same high end, — even the elevation and perfection of our souls.

You of earth are similarly situated in this respect. You all have help of various kinds, of which we, as the invisible agents of the Most High, form a part. There are many other ways, however, in which you receive help; and all these may come under Christ's meaning, when he made use of the term in question. He certainly did not intend to indicate a person separate and distinct from the good Father himself: he intended rather to give his disciples to understand that they should receive divine help in various ways. He was only desirous that they should understand

this; for this was all that it was necessary they should understand. It is also all that it is necessary should be understood by his disciples of the present day. But still, it is doubtless well, so far as this is possible, for all to understand, as nearly as may be, the true philosophy of such divine interference in man's behalf; and at some future time it is our intention to enlighten you more at length in this respect. But what we have now said will answer the present end you have in view.

How does God himself now appear to you of the spheres, compared with what you knew of him while on earth?

He seems much nearer to us, and vastly more delightful is the intercourse we have with him. He is indeed the great Centre of all our aspirations and hopes. He is not only the centre of our hopes, but also the Source of all our joys. He is at once the centre of our hopes, and their fulfilment. He is not only our joy, but also our rejoicing. He is not only our delight, but also the cause of it. He is not only our praise, but also the source of it. He is not only our crown, but also he who crowns us. He is not only the desire of our hearts, but also the giver of the desire. He is not only the great end

of all our aims, but also the Being who gave us the power to exalt our aim so high. He is not only the end of all our struggles, but also the Giver of the strength which enables us to struggle and to gain the victory.

Thus it is, that, to us of these bright abodes, the presence of our God is the all in all of our very being. He is all that we wish for, all that we labor for, and *the All* in which we rejoice. You of earth cannot easily conceive, even in a distant resemblance, of the delight which this glorious Presence gives us. It is, as it were, the sun of the spiritual creation; only it is far more bright, comparatively speaking, than is the sun of your world to the material system. We cannot understand, it is true, the exact relations, — in all their particulars we mean, — which we sustain to this great and glorious Being of our soul's sublimest aspirations; but we can understand enough to set our souls into a perfect blaze of delightful adoration. We can see enough to permit of our being in a full rapture of earnest, most sincere and delightful worship at all times and in all conditions. You of earth can have but a very limited conception of the rapturous joy that thrills our souls when we think of the glorious career that

is before us, as we go on from glory to glory in our upward course, into the more immediate presence of that most majestic and glorious, most pure and perfect Being of our heart's most fervent desire. We are constantly engaged in efforts to become more and more fitted for that glorious, onward career; and it is only at times, and for special purposes, that we turn our attention to the regions below us. And when we come to you, for instance, it is that we may give you some slight glimpse of the glory that is ours, to the end that we may awaken within you some faint echo, at least, of that chorus of praise which fills our hearts, and is continually swelling deeper and yet more deep, louder and yet more loud, most harmonious and yet more harmonious, through the bright circles of spirit-life and rejoicing.

Do you, in your present condition, enjoy any thing which resembles our ideas of a sight of God?

We do not, and yet we do. We mean that with us there is a shadowing forth, as it were, of the Divine perfection in so vivid a manner, that it may perhaps be called a sight of the Divine Being. And yet there is no resemblance to your ideas of form: it is only a sight of his *semblance* which we enjoy.

In your condition, you see this but very dimly, and only in the more bright and glowing phases of nature; but here, that semblance is a glorious and ever-present reality. It is not only with us in our most joyous seasons, but also at all times and in all our varied relations and duties. You cannot understand this, it is true; but you can perhaps, with the aid of these thoughts, gain some faint gleams of the grand reality itself. But we despair of doing much to help you on a theme of such transcendent greatness and glory. We can only throw a few flickering rays of our heavenly truth into your souls, and thus perhaps do something towards enkindling a brighter and a more glowing flame of devotion in the inner sanctuary of your spiritual being.

CONVERSATION FOURTH.

Are your opportunities for a correct knowledge of the Bible greater than ours? and, if so, will you give us some of your thoughts, especially respecting the errors and abuses of this book?

You cannot understand *how* it is, yet it is doubtless true that we know perfectly in regard to the subject of your inquiry. We can therefore speak

with confidence upon this point, and reply in a way that shall enable you to understand us fully. It is not, however, our intention at this time to enter into a full examination of the subject, but only to give you a few of the most obvious and important thoughts in relation to this topic.

We may remark, in the first place, that what you call the Bible is not wholly what it claims to be. It is not, for instance, the "Word of God." It is, on the contrary, much of it, the words of men, — and of men not *always* of the highest stamp of moral and spiritual excellence. It is made up of a great variety of thought and principle, however, and must be used with discrimination in order to be used with wisdom and profit to the soul. It is not so much on account of its intrinsic incredibility, in some respects, as it is on account of its imperfect and low morality in certain instances, that we would advise a cautious discrimination in its use.

You must not think, however, that we intend to include in these remarks that portion of it which stands recorded upon the New Testament pages ; for these, for the most part, are the products of a high and spiritual order of minds. Some of these, however, were not fully enlightened in regard to many im-

portant subjects of thought. Hence it is not wise, nor is it right, to rely indiscriminately upon all that is found even within the folds of the New Testament pages. You must always strive to bring every alleged truth to the standard of reason, — in its highest and purest manifestations we mean. It is only by doing this that you will be able to arrive at truth in its purity, especially that part of it which is more important to your own individual spiritual welfare.

It is thus, for instance, with the account of what are called the miracles of the New Testament history. They are not yet rightly understood by any of those still in the body, whilst the general manner of regarding them is erroneous in the extreme. We shall not attempt at present a full elucidation of this subject, but shall reserve it for some future and more elaborate effort. All we shall say now is, that what are called miracles are only so in appearance ; i.e. there is no violation or interruption of the divinely established order of things, but only a deeper unfolding of those hidden causes which have been at work from the beginning.

Does not such a view of the Bible destroy its reliability in some important respects ?

Yes, it destroys its reliability where it is not reliable, but not wherein it is ; for God has given to all a sign of truthfulness in whatever comes before them, if they will but strive to see it. You cannot depend upon any thing that is not in accordance with the natural order of God's laws ; and you who cannot so perfectly understand these laws as ourselves, must use the light of reason which is in you. If you will but do this honestly and faithfully, you will not be led far away from the truth. You must not think that God has created you with the necessity of some written parchment to guide you. He has, on the contrary, written his law of truth and right upon your hearts ; and, if you will be true to your own natures, it will not be difficult for you to read it.

What, then, to us is the value of a written Revelation ?

It is valuable to you as a help toward clearing away your mental and moral blindness, — a blindness which has come through sin, and which will go again as soon as sin goes from you. You cannot understand the truth while in moral degradation : but when you are raised from this, through the aid of God's written law, then are you prepared to see

clearly into the hidden things of his unwritten, but most high and holy law ; a law which can never be disannulled or essentially changed. This it is which is written in living characters upon the hearts and consciences of each soul that God has created, and which sin only can blot out or deface.

What is the moral standard which you of the spirit-world acknowledge ?

We acknowledge only the standard which God has set up in each individual soul. He has given to us all an unmistakable sign of truth and right ; and, if we are only willing to follow the way thus indicated, there is no fear of our being led astray. We all have given unto us what you also have given unto you, — a sign of moral rectitude, and of God's unchanging truth, which he has established from the beginning ; and, if we wander from it, it can only be to our own most serious and irretrievable injury ; irretrievable, we mean, in the sense of an absolute loss of that degree of spiritual elevation which otherwise would have been ours. You cannot, it is true, recognize this law so fully and clearly as do we ; yet, if you are but true to the light which comes to you in your written word, you will soon become more like us in this respect, so that you can see

more clearly the things of God's truth without any such external guide. Nevertheless, it is doubtless true, that, with all its defects, that written law, as it is found in the New Testament records, is the best that could be given and received in the present condition of mankind generally. Yet it is no less true that it is within the reach of men so to rise in their moral natures, as to be above all such helps, even while they are yet in the body.

You should not think then, that when all men are thus endowed by nature with a true standard of God's truth and right, none are able to do what God requires of them without some infallible written standard. It is enough for you of earth to know, that what is thus given you is intended to answer your present necessities ; and that, when your condition shall so improve as to justify it, that higher standard shall be present to guide you into more lofty views of truth and right. You need not think, therefore, that when we thus speak of the uncertainty, in some respects, of your written Revelation, we are taking away the only standard by which you can judge of God's law. You have, on the contrary, that to fall back upon which can never fail nor mislead you. It is true that this higher standard

is but dimly seen at times, yet you can always see enough of it to answer your present wants; and, when these shall be supplied, others will soon become developed in your consciousness, and at the same time the standard before you will rise proportionably higher. And thus you can go on in an infinite series of progressive steps, until you shall at length be able to see and do all that God's perfect law requires.

Was Christ himself, as manifested in his life and teachings on earth, in accordance with that perfect standard of which you speak?

He was. The imperfection of your written standard arises from the imperfect means employed in its production. It was not because Christ himself failed to know, to teach, and to live the perfect law of God, but because those who were with him failed to understand the manifestations which came through him, that error and confusion, to a certain extent, prevail. It is not because of the imperfection of the Master, but of the disciple, that all is not clearly and perfectly portrayed upon the written page. When these imperfections shall be more fully understood and removed, then may the value of that written word be far more fully understood and

appreciated than it is now. Until then, it becomes every earnest and sincere seeker after truth to receive with some caution the statements he may meet with in his study of that word.

What is the value of God's perfect, unwritten law, in developing and elevating man ?

The value of that law cannot be computed or over-estimated. It is by the help of this alone that we are able to become elevated into harmony with the designs and purposes of the Great Lawgiver himself. We of the spheres are always on the watch for opportunities to become more and more fully informed in this respect; and not a season of thoughtful study elapses, without giving us a deeper insight into the most orderly and grand developments which are constantly going forward in the universe around us; and thus it is that we gain new light and strength, by which to become more and more fully developed and advanced into a closer resemblance to those who stand in the more immediate presence of the Great Being himself.

You cannot understand fully what it is to be thus highly favored; but still you can know enough of what we are striving to express, to enable you to become more perfectly harmonious with that pure

and perfect law of which we speak. You can become so far elevated as to be brought into a more near resemblance to what we are now being and doing. You can become so far above what you now are, as to be almost wholly what we of the spheres are so constantly beholding in the crowds of happy spirits around us. You can become so much more elevated than the great mass of mankind, that they shall seem to you even as you seem to the inhabitants of the higher spheres. You can become so much more pure, so much more devoted, and so much more loving, that you can feel in your own experience what a blessed thing it is to be brought under the influence of this grand system of harmonious development in the order of God's creation, animate and inanimate; and that you cannot but raise your songs of praise and thanksgiving to the great and most glorious Author of all things visible and invisible, of all things material and immaterial.

CONVERSATION FIFTH.

Will you give some of your present thoughts concerning what we of earth call death?

We think very differently about this from what

we did while on earth, — of that you may be assured. It is no longer an object which seems an evil; but, on the contrary, to us it appears as one of the greatest blessings which have been bestowed upon man. We do not, however, on this account, think the less of the life which is now yours; but to us even that life seems a grand and beautiful thing. But, when we call death a blessing, our thought is, that, as this event is the introduction to a life far more grand and beautiful, therefore it ought not to be regarded in any other light than as a blessing.

We shall not attempt at present a full description of what seems to take place at the time of this event. But we will give you a few of our most vivid recollections, as we now look back to the time when we cast off our earth-form, and passed on into our present spirit-existence. But it will be necessary, in the first place, that you should be informed that what takes place immediately before death (as you call it) is seldom remembered with a distinctness sufficient to permit of a description. It is almost always the case, that what then takes place is so dimly recognized by the struggling spirit, that, when at length it springs forth into the glorious freedom of this higher life, there is nothing to be remembered

excepting what seems like a long and confused dream. But when the event has thus fairly taken place, and we stand forth in all the brightness and buoyancy of the spirit-form, then the recollection assumes a more clear and definite shape. We do not so much mean the recollection of what preceded, as of that which immediately succeeded, the event in question. It is *then* so clearly seen that what has happened has been but another of those wise and beneficent changes in the order of nature, that we wonder much, when we look into the minds of our mortal friends, and see with what feelings of dislike it is still regarded by them. And when, in the process of time, we perceive one after another of those friends passing forward in the same grand order of progression, and are permitted to receive them into the embrace of our spirit-arms,—then our wonder is yet more increased, as, in our intercourse with earth, we behold the strange terror with which this same glorious change is regarded by those who still remain on earth. But it is not well for us to follow this train of thought farther at present, though all we have said is but a small part of what might be said, did the time and occasion seem to warrant it.

We will now add a few words upon a point of the

inquiry which by most mortals is regarded with the greatest dread. We allude to the suffering which is supposed to attend this event.

But, if this were rightly understood by you of earth, you would no longer shrink in such terror from what is before you. For the suffering which attends mortal dissolution is but a trifle compared with what most persons experience in the course of their earthly lives. There are instances, however, which seem to be exceptions to this statement, as those in which some peculiar lingering disease has so intensified the sensitiveness of the nervous system that the closing effort of nature to throw off the gross material body is the severest of mortal experience. But, generally, there is nothing but an apparent falling into a deep and not unpleasant slumber or trance. When this is past, the soul, with great joy, finds herself in regions whose brightness far outdazzles the powers of mortal thought." *

Will you give, a little more at length, your impressions on first entering your spirit-home?

We cannot do this in such a way as to make you understand, in any considerable degree, the amazement and delight into which we were thrown. But

* See Appendix M.

we will say that all that mortals have conceived of in their most exalted flights of thought, is more — far more than realized, the moment the spirit is fairly freed from the entanglements of the earth-form, and the brightness and freedom of the spirit-organism is assumed. But what is more especially surprising is the fact, that it generally takes some time for the individual to convince himself that he really is in the spirit-form. In most respects, it seems at first like the very same form we have been accustomed to, and that it has simply undergone some striking and unaccountable change.

When, in our own experience, these first sensations of strangeness had passed away, there came gradually over us a sensation of extreme delight to find that we were still in a tangible and regularly defined shape, notwithstanding we had passed the bounds of mortality. And when at length we began to make use of our new and most delightful organism, we were yet more enthusiastically enraptured with the change which had taken place; for we found that this organism had all the advantages of our former one, and none of its defects. But perhaps this last remark ought to be qualified a little, since absolute perfection of form is found only at

that point of man's career when absolute perfection of character is reached ; and this is not until a far more elevated condition than ours is attained. *

We will only say, in further reply to your inquiry, that, in what has just been said, there is nothing intended which implies that man cannot *fall* as well as rise in his spirit-condition. This is a truth which has been too often overlooked in the communications given from our spirit-world. It is a truth that ought not to be overlooked, either by those *in* or *out* of the mortal body ; for it is of a too serious nature to be thus left out of sight.

We trust that these imperfect efforts to make known to those of earth some of the thoughts of our higher life will not be entirely without good results. It is not often that we can speak to you in so clear and reliable a manner as we can through this medium.

* See Appendix N.

EXPERIMENTAL REFORM.

A COMMUNICATION FROM THE SPIRIT LIFE.

WHEN we of the higher life attempt to make known our thoughts upon important subjects to you of earth, we are often perplexed to find the right kind of language in which to express our thoughts. But we are so earnest to be doing something to help our brother-man in his earth-career, that we are ready to overlook this difficulty, and to go on according to the best of our ability with the imperfect means afforded us.

Our wish now is to say something concerning what you of earth call "Moral Reform." But, in our use of this term, we include somewhat more than is generally included in it. We mean, not only that which relates to the welfare of man in his moral nature,—as this phrase is generally understood,—but also what concerns his bodily or physical nature. For, to us, this seems hardly less important than

the other, since the two are so intimately connected, while in your earth-life, that it is not easy to help the one without at the same time helping the other.

But what we have now especially in view is in regard to what has generally been thought to be of minor importance among men. We mean that which is often called mental and moral discipline, in their connection with the proper discipline and growth of the body. And when we thus aim to express truths of vital interest to the human family, we trust that all who shall have the opportunity will not fail to aid us by their earnest efforts to carry out those truths in their daily intercourse among men.

We will now attend more directly to the subject of our discourse. When those who are now so much engaged in the things which concern their own private welfare shall be willing to devote a small portion of their time to the welfare of others, — then there will be one difficulty less in the way of those who are willing to devote *much* of their time in this way. But, as the matter now stands, it is a very difficult thing so to act upon mankind at large as to produce any very striking and extended effects. But we trust that it will not be

long before there will be a decided improvement in this respect. Meanwhile, what *can* be done *must* be done by those who have it in their power and in their hearts to do it. But we cannot expect much until some means shall be devised different from those now employed. And when we of the spirit-life meet with one who can help convey our thoughts to our brothers in the flesh, we are most happy to avail ourselves of the opportunity afforded us to give our own thoughts and efforts, in order that the efforts of those who may meet *our* efforts shall not be in vain.

We will say, in the first place, that what you of earth call "Social Reform" is not exactly what we have in our thought; but it is rather what might be called experimental reform. The importance of putting forth some effort in order to help those who are unable or unwilling to help themselves in some very important respects, cannot well be overestimated by such as are looking, not only to the good of those now on the earth, but of those also who shall be upon it in the ages to come. It is comparatively of but little consequence what is the condition of the limited number who now inhabit your globe. We say *comparatively*, for we do by no means intend

to imply that all those who are now in earthly existence should be considered as only fit to be used in experimenting for the good of the future ages. What we mean is simply, that when all is done that can be done, and all is still so far in the background that the philanthropist is well nigh disheartened and discouraged, — yet, when he looks forward to the myriads upon myriads of human beings who are to exist upon the earth in the ages to come, he will still have cause to take courage, and to go forward in the good work in which he is engaged. We will now attend a little more in detail to what we wish to say to our readers.

When all who are now engaged in what are called “Moral Reforms” are more inclined to act in harmony with their own theories, much will be gained to the cause of humanity. And when these same persons feel more deeply, far more deeply, their own want of that which they are so ready to urge upon others, then will there be a still greater gain to our cause. But, as the case now stands, it is not difficult to see that the inconsistency of the reformers themselves is one of the greatest obstacles to be removed.

But, when the time comes for it, there will be

such an effort put forth from our spirit-life as shall do much to carry forward the great work we have in our present thought. There are many now in your midst who are being prepared to be our helpers, by becoming at once the mediums of our thoughts to others, and our agents to act immediately upon the work we have in view.

It is not our intention at this time to enter fully into the details of our enterprise: we only wish to throw out our hints as to the nature of the work to be done, and also to furnish you with whatever present help may come from our assurances of sympathy and coöperation when our time shall have fully come.

We know that what we now say will be met by many with such thoughts as cannot but make us feel a little troubled, when we consider that the purpose for which we come is one that cannot but meet with the approbation of all who truly love our race. But we will not dwell upon this thought. It is one which is not so pleasant to us as some that we might entertain in its place. To some of these, then, we will now turn our attention.

And first we will remark, that, in all we have thus far said, we have not intended to convey the

thought that there is any thing in the means now employed by the reformers of earth which is, to any very great extent, at variance with what we ourselves have in our thought concerning the subject in question. We have only intended to imply, that there is not so much of wrong in theory as in practice. It has not often been the case, that the right mode of action has been consistently carried out, even to a very limited extent. And when we reflect, that, until this is done to a far greater extent, there will still be much, very much, remaining to be done before our hopes may be realized even in the limited degree we have now in mind, we feel most deeply the importance of our present thought.

We will now say a word more in regard to what has already been briefly mentioned:—we mean that which was said when we spoke of the strength of our desire to aid in this work of which we are discoursing. It is indeed with the strongest possible feeling of interest that we contemplate the present unhappy state of that world in which you of the flesh now live, and we are ever ready and most anxious to be engaged in some efficient way to do you good.

We do not expect that you will at once recognize

and avail yourselves of our agency,—at least not *consciously*. But we look forward to a time, not very far in the distance, when our presence and agency shall be felt and acknowledged in such a way as to cause the work of humanity to go forward with far more rapid strides than at present.

We will now offer a few thoughts in regard to the particular mode of action which we would recommend. It is somewhat difficult, however, for us to do this without occupying more time and space than are now at our command. We shall, therefore, speak briefly at present; and more fully, as we trust, at some future time.

What we wish especially to insist upon is the necessity of *combined* action; we mean a combined action of all who love God and man. It is a somewhat sad and discouraging spectacle which we at present witness, when we look down upon your earth, and see the discords and divisions which exist even among the most elevated and reliable of the friends of our race. But it is not our purpose to censure severely; for we ourselves have known the weakness of the flesh in this respect. We will rather say our word of cheerful encouragement; for we perceive that the day is dawning when these discords shall

grow less and less, until they shall so far cease as to be no longer an insurmountable obstacle in the way of a rapid progress of truth and love among men.

We wish much to impress upon the minds of men the great truth, that without harmony, — harmony of thought and act, — no great work can be done for the good of mankind. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that strenuous efforts be made that those sectarian and party organizations be utterly demolished, or so far modified, at least, that the members shall love the truth, the right, and the welfare of the human family, better than their own narrow views and modes of action. We speak severely on this point; for severity is not only justified but demanded in such cases. It is surely not enough for the man of a religious or reform party, that he become zealously active in the particular modes of action which are the cherished themes of his party. He should be willing also to look into and examine faithfully and candidly the particular views and methods of other parties, that his own mind may be freed from its narrowness, and so expanded and enlightened that he may be able to include within in it all that is wise and good of all other parties.

But we pass on to another topic of still greater

importance. We mean that which is intended when we say that it is needful for those who wish to *be*, as well as claim to be, the friends of humanity, to let all their old theories and old practices which are not consistent with the new light that is breaking in upon the world from time to time, pass wholly and for ever from them. For it is not in the nature of things that they can do much in the great work of to-day with such a weight of the rags of yesterday clinging to them. We do not mean that *all* of yesterday is a clog upon the efforts of to-day; far from it: we only mean, that whatever of the past is inconsistent with the brighter light of the present should be at once given up; for, if this is not done, there can be but little hope of energetic and successful action. We wish much to insist upon this point, for it is the great evil with which the true reformer has now to contend with. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is imperfect should be done away. We do not mean, however, that that which is perfect—absolutely we mean—has yet come upon the earth; but only that what is now there, and about to be there, is so much more perfect than most of that which is past, that it may be called perfect in a comparative sense.

But it will not avail much for us to dwell longer upon this thought; for the evil in question is so deeply and firmly rooted, that it will take a long time of patient labor, both from spirits *in* and *out* of the body, to accomplish its removal. This, however, is surely no good reason why each should not do his own humble part in the work.

But our present work is done. We did not intend this as an elaborate effort on the topic we have chosen, but only as a somewhat brief and hurried attempt to express such thoughts as seemed more especially called for at the present time.*

* See Appendix O.

APPENDIX TO PART II.

K. — PAGE 97.

A BRIEF explanation of the origin of this article seems called for, the more especially as it purports to have come from the spirit of one who, while on earth, was well known to many who may chance to read this volume.

Soon after I became developed as a writing-medium, this individual, who, while in his mortal form, was an intimate friend and fellow-student of mine, seemed to come and take a special interest in me as one of my guardian spirits. I received much at various times, which seemed highly characteristic of him as he was when he used to mingle with his ministerial brethren in their earthly gatherings.

When this article was begun, — and, indeed, until it was nearly finished, — I was not aware that a connected essay was intended. It was written a little at a time on different days, much as some other communications had been received from him. But, after several short articles had been written, I found, upon putting them

together, that they constituted a regular essay on a subject, the title of which was subsequently given.

When it was indicated that the article was finished, I was directed by my spirit-friend to copy and correct it, — with his assistance, — and then to send it to the “Shekinah” to be published. Upon the query arising in my mind as to whether it would be received, I was promptly assured, — through my own hand, as usual, — that I need not trouble myself about that; for that he (the spirit) knew the wants of the editor, and that the article would readily be welcomed to the pages of that periodical. My spirit-friend also requested me to have some fifty extra copies struck off, to be sent to certain of his friends, to be designated by himself.

At a convenient time not long after, the article was copied and amended accordingly. When this work was finished, I asked if there was any thing more to be done. The reply was, “Yes; I wish to add a few closing thoughts.” I then gave the use of my hand; and what is in the last paragraph, as the article now stands, was written. It was also intimated that the author wished to write a note to be put at the close of the article. The following was the result: —

“The above article comes from Rev. H. Withington, formerly of Leominster, Mass., but now of the blessed spirit-home. He does not feel *fully* satisfied with it, owing to the present imperfect mode of making known his thoughts. The article is, however, in the main correct.”

I now supposed, very confidently, that the work was finished; but, on asking if this was the case, the reply

was, "No; I wish to write an introductory note addressed especially to my friends." This note, as written through my hand, was as follows:—

"The one who dictates the following article is aware of the apparent strangeness of the attempt thus to make known his views upon a subject of this character to the inhabitants of the material world. But, at the same time, he feels the importance of what is here said so deeply, that he cannot refrain from making the attempt, however strange and doubtful the experiment may seem. To those personal friends who may receive a copy of this production, he would say, Do not lay it aside with contempt, as something which is in its very nature incredible; but rather read and ponder until you shall understand and feel the force of the great truths it contains."

I will only add that these directions were followed in full; the article having been readily received and published with the notes attached, as directed by the spirit-author. — See "Shekinah" for January, 1853.

L. — PAGE 111.

The following incidents connected with the writing of this sermon may not be without their interest to the reader, nor wholly unimportant, inasmuch as they show how foreign from my own mind have been some of the thoughts that have come to me in my medium-capacity.

At the time this discourse was written, I still had charge of a parish, and, although in poor health, was obliged to prepare regularly for my pulpit-duties. In this condition I was told by the invisible intelligences, that I should have a sermon communicated through me.

This was much to my relief, as, in my natural way, it was only with much effort and wear of body and mind that I was able to write, whilst in this way the effort was very trifling indeed. Let my disappointment be imagined then, when, after having proceeded a very little way only, I saw, at a glance, that the sermon, owing to the nature of the subject and the mode of its treatment, would be wholly unfit to preach. My disappointment found expression in an exclamation somewhat like this: "Do you suppose that I am going to preach such a sermon as this?" "No," was the quiet response: "if you are going to *preach* sermons, you must write them yourself." Subsequently, however, I was told that I might have the sermon printed if I chose, which I have accordingly done.

The style of language used in this discourse is, I am sure, quite different from my own natural style: indeed some parts of it were written not without some violence to my critical taste. At one time this feeling became so strong that I was prompted to offer a gentle remonstrance against some expressions which seemed more than usually out of harmony with my standard of taste. The reply was, "You must let us go on in our own way, or we cannot go on at all."

It should be borne in mind by the reader, that in these and all similar cases, wherein I speak of familiar converse with spirits, the answers to my questions, mental or oral, came through my own hand, whilst my sole effort was to be perfectly passive. Also, that when I wrote I was invariably alone, so far as visible company was concerned.

M. — PAGE 163.

The following upon the same topic is taken from what might be called my Spirit Diary : this is made up wholly of what has come from my spirit-friends, and has been kept, with but very little interruption, for the last six months : —

Nov. 21. — Whilst musing and querying in regard to the mysterious experience of death, the following was given me from my principal guardian-spirit :

“ You need not trouble yourself about *that* ; for it is not the fearful monster that most think it to be. It is not so bad to die, as to live in a state of alienation from goodness and truth. You must not expect to know the particulars of that event until you are called upon to pass through it. Few there are in this spirit-home who have any distinct recollection of what took place in that last struggle of mortal existence. It is not given us to know all the secrets of Nature’s dissolution. You may rely, however, upon what I tell you, that death is not so fearful a thing as most persons think it to be. The suffering at the hour of death is not what it is thought to be. The sensitive power of the body is generally destroyed long before the spirit fully leaves it.”

In answer to a question, — “ My opinion of Davis’s views of death is, that he has over-stated a most important fact. It is not true that the extasies of the spirit-life begin before the struggles of the body cease. But still it is doubtless true that the soul is generally in an unconscious state during the last hours of apparent

agony. There is an apparent cessation of being for a brief space, during the separation of the spirit from the natural body. This process sometimes occupies several hours, during which, as the experience of many testifies, the soul is in a delicious slumber of unconsciousness. The awaking, however, is so ecstatic, that the remembrance of the struggle of dissolution is often wholly gone to return no more for ever."

N. — PAGE 165.

Another communication upon this subject, as written in my Spirit Diary, is as follows : —

"When I left the material body, I was most happy : all was bright and glorious around me. My new home seemed so bright that I could not understand how my former life had been endurable. My mind was occupied with sweet thoughts and feelings. My heavenly friends met me with smiles of love most radiant and rejoicing. The love of God shone brightly around me, and I thought that I was for ever blessed ; my heart was filled with joy and praise.

"When I had in a measure recovered from this trance of delight, I was impelled to visit the earth to see how my friends were doing. I found them in great grief, and tried to console them ; but they could not understand my efforts : so I was obliged to leave them comfortless. I returned to my heavenly home, and went to my employment. My first work was to set my thoughts in order. My first lesson was to free my mind from all those mis-

takes into which I had fallen while on earth. You cannot conceive of the amount of curious thought that was given me to consider when my mind was thus prepared. My mind soon became much enlarged with healthy exercise. Much that was well understood in former years became invested with new interest. Much that was doubtful became clear under the light of my new home. Much that was mentally dark became light when my spiritual vision was opened, while truths wholly unknown when on earth were now unfolded to me in all their brilliant beauty. My spirit-sight was delighted with visions wholly new, and infinitely beyond all I had hitherto known. You cannot begin to conceive of the glory which then met my gaze.

“When my mental vision had thus become quickened, then I awoke to the dignity of life’s calling, and even the affairs of earth assumed an unspeakable importance, and I almost longed once more to enter upon the glorious earthly career of man. You cannot conceive how much more beautiful and important life seems from this spirit-point of view, than it does from your earth-position. You must not think, however, that all this is so much more beautiful than what you see, as not to leave in us a most earnest and longing desire to be with you at times, and to help you in your upward career toward the bright abode which is now ours. You must, on the contrary, feel at all times that we are anxious for your welfare, and are laboring for your good; and thus shall we still be helpers and comforters to our friends whom we have left behind.”

O. — PAGE 175.

The following came through me immediately after this article was finished, and was recorded in what I have called my Spirit Diary : —

“ You have now finished for us a work which, though it may not be so elevated in its vigor of thought as we might easily have made it, will yet answer the purpose we have in view better than it otherwise would have done. It will do good in more ways than one. It will, in the first place, show to the readers of the volume you intend to publish, that we of the spirit-home can do something to encourage the true friends of reform on earth, although we ourselves are considered as no longer belonging to its life.

“ The article we have just finished will also help toward convincing those who are in honest doubt as to the possibility of intercourse between our life and yours. It may not be the cause of absolute conviction to any ; but taken in connection with the others received in the same way, and which you intend to publish in your volume, it may have an influence more extended than you seem inclined to think.”

The article was written quite rapidly ; and owing to the earnest and reiterated requests I received, at brief pauses in the writing, to be perfectly passive in mind and body, I did not fairly take in the full sentiment of the piece until after a subsequent careful perusal. On closing this review, two thoughts were especially prominent in my

mind : I was puzzled in my efforts to find for the article an appropriate title, and at the same time I did not like its abrupt close.

On giving my invisible helpers an opportunity to relieve my perplexity, I received as follows : —

“You must not often expect our advice in matters of small moment ; but, in regard to the title of that article, we will say, that it may be well to call it Experimental Reform, though this does not exactly express the leading thought. But it will do sufficiently well, as it will serve to draw attention to the subject. And as to the manner of closing, we will say that it was our intention to close thus abruptly, that the article might not have the appearance of a labored effort, which it is not. But perhaps we may as well add a few words, in order to remove its apparently unfinished, or rather *unended* condition.”

The brief paragraph at the close was then written.

THE END.