

THE TABLE AND THE TURNER;

OR,

WHICH OF THE TWO IS POSSESSED?

CONTAINING

REMARKS ON THE PAMPHLETS OF MESSRS. CLOSE,
DIBDIN, GODFREY, "A PHYSICIAN,"

ETC., ETC.; WITH

CERTAIN PROPOSED TESTS,

WHEREBY TO ASCERTAIN, IF POSSIBLE, WHETHER

TABLE-TURNING AND TABLE-TALKING

IS OR IS NOT

DIABOLICAL.

"Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise
it shall teach."—"There is no breath at all in the midst of it."—HAB. ii. 19.

"Remember this, and show yourselves men."—ISA. xli. 8.

BY

AN ANXIOUS ENQUIRER AFTER TRUTH.

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GENTLE READER,—

I believe such is the term by which an author is accustomed to address those who honour his meditations with their perusal, and I can but hope, that nothing I may advance on the subject of Tables and their Turners, will offend the “gentlest” of all those who may condescend to peruse *mine*. It is not often that I venture forth from my quietude in order to search into the secrets of other men’s motives or other men’s proceedings; neither do I presume, where so many “Doctors differ,” to suppose that I can throw any great illumination upon subjects of deeply learned philosophy, or still deeper spiritual agency. But, if I may be an instrument, however humble, in the hand of a Power higher than mortal, in doing the least good, or in preventing the least evil, in regard to a practice which, in one form or other, is engaging the deepest attention of thousands and tens of thousands, in other lands as well as in our own; is filling the minds of many of the wisest and the best of men with serious and growing alarm; is peopling American asylums with victims; (has already driven *some* of our *own* countrymen into madness; 500, at least, it is said, are in American madhouses, and some twenty have committed suicide;) has confirmed too many in their scepticism and infidelity; and even, we fear, damaged the faith of *some* of whom we had hoped better

things;—if, I repeat, I may do the least good, or prevent the least evil, I shall not have taken up my pen nor made my enquiry in vain, and shall be vastly more than repaid.

It is but fair that I should set out with stating, that I assume the title of an “Anxious Enquirer,” because I am really, like Diogenes of old, in search of honesty and honest men, in regard to a matter, treated, according to different writers, under every variety of phase, between the extremes of *direct Satanic agency*, and the *veriest human deception and humbug*; and because I am, as yet, very far from satisfied with anything or with all that I have either *seen*, or *heard*, or *read*, concerning this mysterious table-turning, or this still *more* mysterious table-talking. Nor need my readers be surprised at this, when I tell them that, on opening just now, almost at random, four or five pamphlets on this subject, I find one writer—a Physician—who “*had given himself up entirely to the task of investigation for a month*,” declaring, that though doubt of the existence of the phenomena was no longer admissible, yet that “they cannot be attributed either to electricity, galvanism, caloric, or terrestrial magnetism;” another, confirming the Physician’s view, asserting that “experiments have been tried, and yet, as far as he is aware, *not the slightest indication of electricity* has been detected.” Whilst a writer from Bath observes, “It does not seem to us at all contrary to common sense, that this mysterious, and wonderful, and yet certainly not Satanic agent (*i. e.*, electricity), may produce those surprising effects which so many of us have witnessed.” Again, “What is it in a glance of an eye which makes another quail? the eye is merely the instrument. And in common language, we speak of ‘*electrifying any one* ;’ and I see nothing at what common sense has to cavil, at the idea of a fluid being as easily communicated by a *glance* as by a *touch*.”

A fourth author, whose pamphlet has passed through three or four editions, demands, "if steam can propel a vessel, why may not electricity rotate a table—say, rather, a mountain, for its power is boundless?" and then, as if recollecting that he is dealing with the case of electric power in the human body in the case of table-turning, he asserts, that the existence of such electricity, and the extent of it in such human frame, may be demonstrated in the following way:—"Let a youth or a girl," he says, "stand on a chair within reach of a gas jet, the legs of which chair have been previously insulated in glass tumblers (as non-conductors), then, let them be rubbed briefly with a piece of cotton flannel or a lady's muff, over legs, arms, and body; this will superinduce in them a current of electricity so inflammable, that, by extending the tip of the finger to the gas (*i. e.* to the jet when the gas is turned on), they will be enabled to light it themselves." So that, as he further argues, "we are nothing more than a dormant lucifer, awaiting friction from the hand of science to extract our igneosity," or fiery qualities. It is but fair to you, gentle reader, to add, that the story and the feat are alike American; but still the writer declares, you have "only to try it, and you will find it as easy as the turning of a table"—provided the child be not touched after rubbing, nor allowed to turn the gas himself.

And so, taking up the religious or spiritual part of the question, we have Mr. Close, and other pious men, totally denying all diabolical agency; and Messrs. Gillson, Godfrey, Dibdin, and many more, just as positively maintaining that the phenomena can be attributed to *nothing else*. I may well, therefore, for the present, at any rate, remain in doubt, and maintain my character as an "Anxious Enquirer."

It may be, however, gentle reader, that I am

constitutionally somewhat sceptical, as my assumed title implies, but yet I know how most thankfully to appreciate any information, founded on experiments that may be relied on, from trustworthy, and honourable, and religious men. And you must forgive me, if I continue for a season, a searcher after truth, enquiring, yet misgiving—anxious, yet apprehensive, when I tell you, that, fortunately or unfortunately, as the case may be, I have seldom been what the world calls “lucky,” either passively or actively, in experiments in any way akin to table-turning or table-talking. So unyielding to me has been the shilling suspended by a human hair on the tip of my thumb over a glass tumbler, that it never would strike the hour on the tumbler, or tell me the time of day, as I have again and again seen it and heard it, most politely do, *somehow or other*, from the pulsative thumb of others, who, I do not believe, had a whit more respect for the said shilling than myself, or would have laid it out to better advantage—never once has it obeyed my wishes, however honest and sincere I may have been in their indulgence or expression. No house-door key, tied up in a book and left to depend—one portion of its ring or handle on my little or fore-finger, and the opposite portion of the same ring on the corresponding finger of some fair damsel or whiskered friend—has ever been known to obey my word of command, or to move a grain of its metallic substance either right or left, north, south, east, or west, to please me. I cannot say, with “A Physician,” in his book on table-moving, that my gold watch, suspended by a chain of the same metal, and held in my hand in a perpendicular position, whilst my elbow rests on a solid surface, ever did, or ever will describe, under the influence of my will, oscillations of any and every kind, in a straight line and in a circle, sometimes accelerating and sometimes lessening its mo-

tion; or that a gold ring, tied to a thread and held in like manner, in the centre of a glass, will, at my mental command, touch such points of the inner sides as often as I wish. I have tried these things in vain. I doubt whether I could be mesmerized, when in full health, fairly and honourably. And I am not sure that any electro-biologist could ever electro-plate me with a single coating applied by his benumbing and bewitching craft.

All this is matter of mere opinion, uttered, believe me, without an atom of pride or self-conceit, and perhaps to be confuted, if I were placed under the trial. Moreover, I have tried, on two or three occasions, in connexion with others, to turn my own or their tables, and either I did not succeed at all (so that I was led to doubt the matter altogether then), or I succeeded so very partially, that I distrusted my neighbours, or half suspected myself of not being strictly passive; and whenever I have been a witness to the attempt on the part of others, and taken no part in it myself, I have found some wag-gish lady or gentleman, who loved a bit of fun, obliged to admit, that "perhaps there was a little twisting, though scarcely worth calling so," in the direction agreed upon and commanded to, the flexible piece of furniture. So that I am, as you see, gentle reader, a novice as to personal observation and success, and am dependent, far more largely, upon what I have read and heard, than upon any thing in which I have myself been a participator. May I not, then, fairly continue to prosecute my search as an "Anxious Enquirer after Truth?"

Unhappily, too, now (and this makes me really the more anxious), now, since the subject of table-turning and table-talking has been by so many men, holding (as I have always supposed), in the main, sound religious and scriptural opinions, openly and publicly pronounced to be wicked and diabolical, I

have some sturdy compunctions of conscience, which, dragging into the same category with table-turning, both mesmerism and electro-biology, and such like, forbid me to think that I should be justified, at present, in accepting a challenge from any electro-biologist or mesmerizer to let him put me comfortably to sleep, or to make me do, as a youth in my locality lately did—namely, declare and stand to it, that the rum was water, and the water brandy, and that “the moon was (after all), made of green cheese.”

So that I am literally “out of court” with my present views and feelings, as far as regards the obtaining the satisfaction I desire, immediately, and through, and in, my own person. It is clear, therefore, I cannot venture on table-talking, nor assure myself in *propria persona* of the truth or falsehood—the reality or the trickery—of the aforesaid operations.

Nevertheless, it is but fair to state, that, as far as I have heard with my ears, and seen, and read in lectures and pamphlets, I have been led to draw a great and wide distinction between table-turning and table-talking—a difference involving the *spirit* in which the operation is often undertaken—the *means* used for arriving at results, and, finally, the *results* themselves; and, so far contrasting with, or, at any rate, differing from each other, as to lead me to think, that *table-turning* may be (I do not say it is), a very harmless and innocent amusement and speculation, whilst *table-talking may be a grievous and a bitter sin*. For, table-turning, depending, as one may well believe, in its results, on certain physiological causes—mesmeric, electric, or what not—need not, by any means, be Satanic: and the “little child” might play at table-turning and find no deadly “asp” concealed to wound it in its tenderest point; and “the weaned child might put its hand” upon the moveable mahogany, and twirl

and twist about with it at its pleasure, without discovering, from any damage done—bodily, or mental, or otherwise—that it had been having dangerous dealings with “the Cockatrice’s den.”

“Of table-turning,” says a writer in the *St. James’s Chronicle*, “we say nothing; it may be true, or it may be false; but, even if true, its truth cannot affect religion either one way or the other; for, upon the hypothesis of its truth, it proves no more than a principle co-existent with animal life—such as those sincere Christian philosophers, John Hunter and Abernethy, admitted to be possible,—a principle *unconnected with our intellectual or spiritual nature*,—a principle analogous to ELECTRICITY, for which our bodies supply a medium without affecting mind or soul; or MAGNETISM, which, we know, makes way through some kinds of inert matter. Or, admitting that table-turning may be the effect of self-deception, under some superinduced mode of sensation, or the effect of some hitherto-unknown power of our physical constitution, there would be in this nothing to affect either our intellectual or our spiritual part, and nothing, therefore (as we have just said), to affect RELIGION either one way or the other.”

Depending, therefore,—as such a matter as table-turning may do, and as, without getting beyond our depths, we may very easily conceive it to do—upon agencies *natural*, we may acknowledge the *facts* brought before us, on testimony too full to be gainsaid, and too respectable to be pooh-poohed, and may admit that we are converts to the belief of *table-turning*, without losing ourselves in the vast field of agencies *spiritual*—whether Satanic or angelic, good or evil—comprehended under the larger question of *table-talking*, and without running any risk, perhaps, of damaging our religious peace, or shaking our religious belief, or exposing

ourselves to the just displeasure of Almighty God, by seeking "to be wise above what is written."

And here I cannot but think the pamphlet of Mr. Close, admirable, as it is, in its aim and spirit, and in much of its subject matter, signally fails; for in his attempt to prove—and I own he goes a great way towards the proof—that *table-turning* is not diabolical; still I think he has entered very slightly indeed upon the subject of *table-talking*; he has not brought the usual vigour of his mind to a plain dealing with *that* part of the story; and whilst, therefore, I cordially agree with him in his conclusions as to the *former* branch of this new and surprising influence, and gladly believe with him that *table-turning* is *not* diabolical, I am not able yet to come to the same satisfactory conclusion in regard to the *latter* branch of the same subject, namely, *table-talking*. There seems indeed, to me, to be an immeasurable distance between the two, in every point of view in which, as enquiring, and especially as Christian men, we are called upon to look at each; so wide indeed, and so vast as, in my judgment, to account for the many differing opinions formed as to an agency diabolical or *not* diabolical; and further to justify (if diabolical agency be conceded) the question which an anxious enquirer puts, "Which is the Possessed One, the Table or the Turner?" And, though it may seem a strange sort of medley, in the midst of a serious enquiry, to introduce a harmless jest, yet sometimes a jest introduced in an unjesting spirit, and fitting *into* the subject, gives point to an argument which might not be so well remembered without it; and if it is out of place, I must ask you, gentle reader, to forgive it, *for the motive for the mention of it is pure*. It has, I dare say, not a whit more of truth in it than most of the "Joseph Miller" cast, but you will see the point in it, and for that purpose I give it. An old gentleman, of

days gone by (would they were past never to return), when oaths were "as plenty as blackberries," and it was thought ungenteel to do without them, had great difficulty in getting on his over-coat, with the aid of his servant, and after a considerable entanglement, first in one sleeve and then in the other, he exclaimed in a passion, "John, I think the devil's in the coat." John, not daring openly and at once to remonstrate with his hasty master, and yet unwilling to let the rude expression pass altogether unproved, waited till he had fairly got his master safely into his garment, and when he had succeeded in securing him "close buttoned to the chin," slyly and quietly replied, "Yes, I thinks as how he is, Sir." Nor is this anecdote, I think, out of place, or foreign to our subject. For most assuredly our tables do not move of themselves; they bear the burden of our dinners, and do not stir a peg. A clumsy servant may sometimes upset a dish of soup on his master's superfine coat; or a careless maiden may topple the gravy on her mistress's "last new dress;" or a fidgetty child may turn topsy-turvy, into its own lap, dinner, and plate, and all; but we never yet saw a table, a real, good, solid, regular table, mahogany, rosewood, marble, or oak, so far inspired with evil whilst loaded with good, as of itself, of its own *mero motu*, deliberately to lift up a leg, any one of its four, six, or eight, as the case may be, no, nor if it had as many as a centipede, and do so rude a thing as to turn upon its heel, and throw the party doing justice to its oppressed and burdened surface into "most admired disorder." We have often heard of the table's *groaning* under the pressure of the good things of this life, but never of its lifting up its heel against its burdens or its oppressors. No, this is not the way the tables manage to effect their purpose; MAN MUST MAKE THE FIRST MOVE. But more of this bye and bye. To return to Mr. Close's

pamphlet. Mr. C. argues, in page 6, "that nothing appears more clear and certain than this, namely, that miracles were invariably wrought to authenticate a new revelation, or to attest a message or a messenger as sent from God;" and (page 8) "that supernatural interferences of Satan, and diabolical agencies, were never exercised except *coincidentally* with, and *antagonistic* to the miracles of God and His church; in a word, that Satan never was permitted to work physical miracles, *except when God also wrought them*, and then, only to make it apparent that he (i.e., Satan) was in all cases to be defeated;" and that "we have an instance and an emblem (in the case of Aaron's rod swallowing up the other rods) of the universal defeat which diabolical agency was *always* to sustain by the presence of a superior power." Now, agreeing, as I have said, in the main, with Mr. Close's opinion, that *table-turning* is not diabolical, still I think there is nothing in all I have quoted, to prove (supposing the diabolical hypothesis of *table-talking* to be true) that the time may not be at hand, quite near enough to satisfy and agree with Mr. Close's theory, when *that* diabolical agency may be defeated by a like superior power. Many of those sufferers in our Lord's time had been a "long while" in such sad case, before the agency of that "superior power" was displayed, in the defeat and dispossession of the devils. Now, Mr. Dibdin, in his Lecture on Table-Turning, including in that title the whole matter, replies (page 17) to Mr. Close's argument, as Mr. Dibdin quotes it, "that no such thing as casting out of devils has happened since the Canon of Scripture was closed in the first century," by introducing in disproof the 72nd Canon of the Church of England. "No minister shall, without the license and direction of the bishop, &c., attempt, upon any pretence whatever, either of possession or obsession, by fasting or

prayer, to cast out any devil or devils, under pain of deposition," &c., &c. And Mr. Dibdin adds, that this implies, "*of course*, that the possession of devils exists"—i.e., did exist at the time of the framing of that Canon. This "*of course*" is not, however, I fancy, quite such a "*sequitur*" as the pious lecturer supposes; for, in the first place, we have no historical evidence brought forward to prove that such possessions, as the Canon alludes to, were rife at the time; and we know, that laws are sometimes made in reference to events long passed by, and are kept on the statute-book for generations, long, as far as we can see, after the necessity for them has altogether ceased. A law was passed to prevent such foolish will-making, as was connected with "the great Thelluson Will Cause;" probably an Act of Parliament will, ere long, be passed to prevent, or to make illegal, all such "*devisings and bequeathings*" as those of the late Duke of Bridgewater (a case so lately argued and settled in the House of Lords); and centuries hence, should this world last so long, those statutes *renewed* may be found in the folios of Chancery, when the cases which caused them shall have been buried in oblivion, and people may wonder, why, in the name of common sense, such extraordinary statutes were ever required. And, in the next place, the case of this Canon is not quite applicable, either in reply to Mr. Close, or in relation to the subject before us. Not to Mr. Close, for though Mr. Dibdin quotes that gentleman as follows, yet I find no such statement in the pamphlet before me (3rd edition). "He (that is, Mr. Close) says, No such thing as *casting out devils* has happened since the Canon of Scripture was closed in the first century." I repeat, that though this is given as a *quotation* from Mr. Close, I find no such declaration in his pamphlet; perhaps the *spirit* of Mr. Close's argument is referred to, certainly not the *letter*; it

is safer and better, however, for a professed quotation to take none but the author's *words*, even if abridged; a trifling difference may pervert his meaning and intent. And, it is not quite applicable to the *subject*, for the forbidding of the 72nd Canon refers to a *personal* dispossession, and not to a *tabular* possession, the *casting out* of an evil spirit from a *human being*, and not the *raising of one* in a *wooden or marble table*; the one an act of mercy, a copy of His who went about doing good—of mercy brought home to our very senses in the relief of suffering humanity—god-like, Christ-like; the other, an act very doubtful as to its *lawfulness* at all, still more so as to its *use*, and brought about by means which we have surely every reason to believe God does not sanction, but disown. And therefore, it seems to me that the 72nd Canon could not mean to forbid what *in itself would be so great an act of goodwill*, but was rather directed against pretending empirics who *professed* to exorcise evil spirits, where, in fact, *no such possessions existed*, or where something was mistaken for them. And as the clergy, at that time of day, would be the parties called upon to try their powers of dispossession; hence, the licence of the bishop was made necessary, not surely *to prevent a real good*, but rather *to check an evil pretence*.

The quotation from Tertullian, which I take for granted to be correct, is far more to the point:—
 “Do not your magicians, &c., call ghosts and departed souls from the shades below, and, by their infernal charms, represent an infinite number of delusions? And how do they perform all this, but by the assistance of evil angels and demons, by which they are able to **MAKE STOOLS AND TABLES PROPHECY?**” Here Tertullian speaks in the present tense, and certainly his language seems to imply that something like the present movement was, in the third century, practised even upon **STOOLS AND TABLES!**

But, says Mr. Close (page 15) "*Natural wonders* should not be attributed to miraculous interference." Now, supposing Mr. Close to include the whole subject of table-turning and table-talking in this remark, we cannot help saying that this is a very begging of the whole point in dispute. The advocates for supernatural or diabolical agency say, "*Prove to us that these are NATURAL wonders, and we have done.*" "Anxious enquirers" need be anxious no longer—"Othello's occupation's gone." This is the very *q. e. d.* of the whole problem. But it does not satisfy them to be told these things: "*may be wonderful, and may be governed by unknown and undiscovered physical laws, and that there is no reason why they should not one day be satisfactorily accounted for upon principles of natural philosophy yet to be displayed.*" For, though Mr. Close's assertion may be perfectly true (giving up Tertullian if you please) that no wonders of this sort *have* existed, except during the periods of corresponding display of miracles from God; it does not surely follow, and it may be stretching the analogy much too far to say, that they never *can*, and never *shall*, exist, except under the same circumstances, again. The "mystery of iniquity" of the latter days may be a very Proteus, assuming all sorts of shapes and forms—an "angel of light" to-day, a demon of darkness to-morrow, but *always* a spirit of *evil*; and manifestations like those mentioned by St. Paul in 2 Thess., chap. ii., as "after the working of Satan with *all power, and signs, and lying wonders,*" may be, ere long, in full operation; and this very movement of table-talking *may* be a part of the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," as well as it *may* be a part of "some undiscovered physical laws." For we are nowhere told *how* that "deceivableness of unrighteousness" shall exactly display itself; and the very expression, "*all* deceiv-

ableness" seems to imply conformations and transformations, and all sorts of Jesuitical deception one can well imagine; such manifestations, therefore, we say (and we think Scripture does not contradict us) *may* be in full operation, first *before*, and then *cotemporaneously with* the great and mighty manifestation of the Lord Jesus, when "that wicked one shall be consumed with the spirit of His mouth, and be destroyed with the brightness of His coming."

But, probably by this time, you are beginning to wonder, gentle reader, when I shall enter more fully upon the subject of my original enquiry, "*Which is the Possessed One, the Table or the Turner?*" Now, though, taking into consideration the manifold arguments which have been suggested by different writers, both for and against diabolical possession, it may not be surprising that I cling a little longer to my character as "an Anxious Enquirer," not satisfied, at present, dogmatically to pronounce, "yea" or "nay;" yet I am bound to confess that my leanings, after deep deliberation, and the perusal of so much that has been said on both sides, are certainly in favour of the theory of "non-diabolical." They are in accordance with Mr. Close's *conclusions*, though not altogether dependent upon his *premises*. I rather incline to the "non-diabolical" view myself, from a close attention to some of the leading documents which have been brought forward to *support the opposite side*.

And, first, I incline to the view that table-talking as well as table-turning is not diabolical from the very fact, that has always pressed upon my own mind from the beginning, namely, **THAT MAN MUST MAKE THE FIRST MOVE.** Man must apply his hand before the table stirs. A thousand tables, yea, many thousands probably, are moving, night by night, at one and the same time; and, ac-

cording to the "diabolic" theory, a demon, an evil spirit, or a devil, is in each and every one of them whilst thus twirling around; and yet, till man lays his hands upon them, the demon either was not there at all, or, if there, apparently asleep and harmless. Human power commands or influences the superhuman, the greater so far controls the less, or the *superhuman* is still. Man must frame his lips to ask counsel of the wood, or stone, or brass, or iron, before that wood will manifest the slightest indication that it has anything to say to him. He must "say to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach," and run the risk of the prophet's "woe," before he meets with a reply. These drawing-room demons—the sorrow of the Christian, the mockery of fools—must be raised by human hands; and they cease their influence altogether, as far as we can see, as soon as those human hands are withdrawn. Nay, little children even, at an evening party, can succeed in raising these spirits (if the turning of a table prove it) with scarcely anything like an idea in their infant minds of what an evil spirit is, or what "diabolical agency" means, or who, if they had any such notion for a moment, would rush to bury their little heads in a mother's bosom, rather than run the risk of bringing forth "the naughty man" by touching the table with one of their fingers. And is it so, according to the "diabolic theory," that no demon (I know not that a Christian man need mince the matter), no devil is in the table, or shows himself to be so, till man interferes? Is the Satanic agency within, and yet asleep? Can it not, or will it not, move without the prior aid of man? Does it, in *other* things, wait for man's presumption? man's invitation? Must man apply the key to set the "infernal machine" at work? Must man present, or rather himself *be* the lucifer to light up the flame that, if diabolical, is tainted with the brimstone of

perdition? Did no one ever see a table turn, or listen (so to speak), to a table's counsel, to a table's divinity, a table's theology, to a table's prophesy of future events, to a table's prediction of *crimes about to be committed* (for even *that* has been asserted to me, and the very period for their commission named.) Does nothing of this kind take place, till man, busy meddling man, has, with his more than magic fingers, disenfranchised the spirit within? Does God himself, who is greater than Satan, never *permit* this agency to be seen, in and through the table, till human hands have handled it, and human tongues invoked it? Then, what, oh, what has not man to be answerable for, *if* the agency set free be devilish, be Satanic? For the reason then assigned under this first head, I am inclined to the opinion of Mr. Close, and desire to add my arguments to his, that table-talking is not diabolical, or rather that there is no demon in the table; that what there is of diabolical in the matter, is *in the man's own heart*, who, when his eyes are open to the acknowledged evil that is made of it, does not "let it alone." In such cases, the turner is the possessed one rather than the table.

But in the second place, I rather incline to the non-diabolical theory, notwithstanding some of the marvellous replies that are said to have been given by the table, from the very character of the questions which have been put to elicit those replies, and from the character of the replies themselves. For, surely without any offence to some of those anxious men whose Christianity we dare not question, whose motives we cannot impugn, and whose zeal for the honour of God and the welfare of souls, Christian charity which hopeth all things and is kind, forbids us for a moment to doubt: still must we affirm, there is something so truly ridiculous (and I say this with the profoundest reverence for the sub-

ject, and with all due respect to *them*), there is something so truly ridiculous in much of the examination between the catechizer and the catechized, that neither the one nor the other (it may be from the very novelty of the case) seems to have known what manner of spirit each was of. Surprised, and almost unawares led on, we think, must the catechizer have been, into asking one question after another, not perceiving at the time how closely allied to blasphemy such questions *under such circumstances* became. We have generally been taught, from our youth up until now, to look upon Satan as the great enemy of God and man, the very "god of this world," possessed, perhaps, equally with any of created Intelligences, if not beyond them all, of mighty powers, second only, *though at unmeasurable distance*, to those of God himself, "going up and down in the world," "like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour;" and we cannot, without a shudder which shakes the very soul, we cannot stand by the side of the questioner and listen to the folly and nonsense put forth in leading questions requiring the simple answers "yes and no," however mixed up with much to bewilder and perplex, without a feeling of the deepest pain; persuaded, as we are, that such a catechism between a minister of Jesus and the arch-enemy of God and man (*supposing diabolical possession*) is calculated to excite the laughter of the unthinking, the sneer of the infidel, the clamor of the profane, and the pity of the wise and good. It would be too tedious to quote. I can but hint at a few of the statements, and pass on. But, according to the table, the spirit "comes for a good purpose," "is compelled by God to come," and yet "is sent by the devil," "compelled to obey Satan," declares that "Jesus is the Christ," "is come in the flesh," and yet the Socinian who denied the Lord who bought him "was

a good man," and "it is right to go to a Socinian chapel," "that Christ is not God," "not man," "something between God and man," "*is not in heaven,*" but "*is in hell,*" "we are justified by works," "salvation is by faith *and* works;" "the pope is the head of the church," "it is right to pray to the Virgin;" confesses "he has told a great many lies," "and some truths," "sometimes right, sometimes wrong," sometimes "would give no answer to anything," &c., &c. Now, I confess, one expects to see a little more consistency with himself, even in an evil spirit who has had to do both with this world and the world of spirits, a little more of "cleverness" in the arch-enemy of man, or the agents he deputes to deceive. As it has been already observed by a writer at Bath:—"We must own that the spirits are in one or two points not quite so rational as they might be, and that the rappings, altogether, are very far removed from any approach to common sense."

Moreover, although in some of the recorded conversations, there is a cruelty embodied which we might well think to be Satanic, yet that cruelty is so connected with wretched bungling, as to send us back as "anxious enquirers," to consider whether it can possibly so be. For a spirit is called out; the man's place of abode whom he represents; his age, the place and period of his dissolution are given to the day and hour, and, in some cases, no such statements appear "*to have a fragment of truth in them;*" in other cases the very name is given, and sometimes a name so common as to be counted by thousands; and each family of that name, especially if the *Christian* name be found amongst any of them (and here is the cruelty) may feelingly and in bewilderment be led to ask, "Is it *my* friend, *my* husband, *my* Absalom, *my* son, who is thus pointed at as an inhabitant of yonder world of woe?" and spite of all

better hope, the thorn will rankle in the "wounded spirit," for fear it may be even so. Happily, for the sake of the living, these cruel revelations seem seldom to have been proved true, for one writer tells us "that every inquiry has been made to ascertain the truth of the statements, but without success;" still the questions and the answers are on record, in print, and I think we may well, without meaning the slightest unkindness to those who proposed or encouraged such manifestations, fall back upon our original enquiry and ask, "Which of the Two is Possessed, the Table or the Turner;" for, must not, at any rate, a *spirit of slumbering forgetfulness* as to the peace and happiness of numbers of living brethren, have unawares, and against the better judgment, taken possession of the turners, before they could originate, or if not originate, encourage such revelations as these? They will not do it again, for persuaded as they are of "diabolical agency" in table-talking, they implore you, like generous, and feeling, and Christian men, to have nothing to do with it more.

But, who can say what mischief has been in the meantime done to thousands, beyond, perhaps, all calculation, and probably beyond recal? not the less in danger or extent, because many of our own friends and neighbours, some of them of known experience, of unstained integrity, of deep piety, and whose judgment has never been questioned, men as free from silly credulity on the one hand, as from obstinate prejudice on the other, have become converts to that table-turning as a *fact*, which at first they pronounced a *folly*; and then, to that table-talking, as a *fact*, which at first they called and still consider a *sin*, but who, even yet, remain in the same state of doubt with thousands of "anxious enquirers," as to the diabolical agency concerned in either or in both. We honour the men, who, believing in the diabolic theory, have come forward to beseech us to let the

tables alone; and we should ourselves be ungenerous, if we were to be severe upon errors in judgment, in their detailing too fully and too precisely, and *too soon*, the means they had recourse to in their converse with what they think evil spirits; but they know as well as we, that a morbid curiosity is often excited by the very means used to allay it, and that where "tens" may have been induced to abstain from table-talking at the earnest request of those who have practised it, and some how or other have become frightened at the bugbears they have raised, "thousands" may be led to touch the forbidden thing, in consequence of the very publicity given to the exact mode and manner of dealing with the spirits, and from the record of the questions proposed, some of which (though, no doubt unwittingly put), are of so shocking, not to say blasphemous, a character, as neither they nor any other truly Christian man will ever think of putting again.

But we are all, more or less, but "children of a larger growth;" there is a touch of the same morbid curiosity in most of us, male as well as female, and I cannot therefore, but fear, lest the evil should be increased by the very means taken to repress it. I know an excellent and "honourable" lady, who, if she should read this pamphlet, will probably recognize the "anxious enquirer" by the little story I shall tell, who, once seated with her little daughter in her drawing room, with a just-gathered peach on the table, and having occasion to quit the room for a short time, called the attention of her little one to "the beautiful peach," and begged her "to be sure not to touch it whilst mamma was away," with sundry reasons why. On her return the forbidden fruit was missing, and it was elicited from those little lips, as honest in the confession as they had been ready at the sin, that the peach had been despatched, where probably most of us, after such a circumstantial pro-

hibition, should have expected it *would*; and when mamma, after sundry other interrogatories, put the home question, "My dear, what did you think when you were eating that peach?" "Oh! mamma," replied the little child, "I thought it *so good*, mamma, so very, *very good*."

And then, again, there is sadly too much of an incipient infidelity, to say the least of it, in so many young minds at the present day, on whom these table doings will terribly tell; and it is but poor consolation to a doubting spirit to say, in reference to many of the secrets supposed to be disclosed from and with regard to the other world, "Oh! but the devil was a liar from the beginning;" for the temptation at the time is this, "To what authority shall I, who have been led by many in higher positions, to doubt and hesitate, first about this doctrine and then about that, now as to the god-man character of Christ, and now as to the doctrine of eternal punishment and the full inspiration of the word of God; to what authority shall I go to prove to me in things of faith, and eternity, and another world, things *not evident to my senses*, that the demon in the table is the liar you tell me, when, alas! I have the full evidence of those senses in so many instances of *time*, and of *this world*, that this demon, if it be one, is, in accordance also with your own representations, so exceedingly right-ful and true?" It is a terrible process, but depend upon it, it is not an uncommon one. It is the primary lodgment, the thin end of the wedge, and who does not know "how great a matter a little fire kindleth?"

But now, *now* the matter stands, as regards the operators, on very different grounds; for no one of them who holds to the diabolic theory will ever again, surely, trespass on such forbidden ground in regard to things of heaven and things of hell; for whilst in sermons, and lectures, and newspaper correspondence,

they have solemnly declared their own conviction of the demoniacal possession, and are honest and sincere in *that*, they are, doubtless, equally honest and sincere in imploring their readers to have nothing more to do with table-talking, and mean to have nothing more to do with it themselves. And as the noble-minded Fenelon, when gazing on the corpse of his beloved and illustrious pupil, amid all the pomp of silent sorrow surrounding the bier in the persons of the great ones of the court, could feelingly and fondly declare, "There lies one for whom my affection was equal to the tenderest regard of the tenderest parent, and one, who loved me in return with all the ardor of a son; there he lies, and much of my hope of worldly happiness lies dead with him; yet, if the turning of a straw would bring him back to life, I would not, *for ten thousand worlds* be the turner of that straw in opposition to the will of God;" so do we honestly believe, that no truly Christian men (especially believers in the diabolic theory), who listen to the words of truth and soberness, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead," will venture again to ask of the dumb stone or the senseless wood, "Is there a God? is there a heaven? is there a hell? is Christ in heaven, or where is he?" for surely, if they do, they must be "withstood to the face, because they are to be blamed," and will expose themselves to the question which our title page presents, "Which is the Possessed One, the Table or the Turner?" and the answer will be patent and plain.

But I must hasten on, and try to bring my "anxious enquiries" to a close. And, admitting, as I most fully do, that I am as yet somewhat puzzled and perplexed, and (as I set out with stating) not in a position conscientiously to make a personal trial myself, I can still believe there are many as conscientious as I, who feel no such difficulty, and to them, as a

means, if it may but be so, of arriving at some degree of assurance and satisfaction, I would with all respect and humility propose the following TESTS. It may be, something of the sort may have been already done, but I am not aware of it at the time I write.

I. Let a party of persons of "riper years," well known to each other as being anxious after the truth, and nothing but the truth, and whose minds are not made up yet either way, take possession of a proper sized table in an uncarpeted room, and let two well-known clergymen or laymen, *not yet committed to either theory*, and whose character is above suspicion, be in the room, but *have nothing to do with the turning*, and let none else be present.

II. Let A take a handful of visiting cards, such as have been indiscriminately left by callers, say twenty or thirty; let him *place the printed sides downwards*, shuffle them well together, and then spread them out for B to take one. Let B go to the table in the presence of A, who shall keep his distance, and lay that card upon the table, face downwards, and ask the name upon it, the surname will be sufficient. Let B take a second and a third card and do likewise: taking care that neither A nor himself, nor the turners can have any evidence as to what the names respectively are *until the answer has been given*. Next, let the cards be again mixed and shuffled together by B, and let A take a part of them without counting, and lay them on the table, one covering another, and ask "How many cards are there? What is the surname on the top one, and on the bottom one?" and await the answer before he examines the cards.

III. Let a number of pieces of writing paper, exactly of the same sized square, have a series of numbers written upon them, *i.e.*, one number upon each, from one up to thirty. Let each paper be doubled or quadrupled up by A, exactly in the same form and

shape, then shake them all together in a bag; let B take out a portion of them without counting, or permitting A to do so; then let him ask the table, "How many papers do I hold in my hand?" lay one at a time on the table and ask their numbers separately. Next, let A take three or four indiscriminately from the bag and lay on the table, and ask, "What is the aggregate, or sum, of their numbers; what the number of the highest, what of the lowest?" no one in the whole party knowing anything about the numbers previously to the answers being given.

IV. As so much has been said about the Bible, let A and B get half a dozen books, one a Bible, and the others bound *exactly like it*, if clasped all the better, though none of the whole lettered; not lettered "Holy Bible," for that would be untrue of the *five*, not lettered anything else, for that would be unjust to the *one*; and we must not have recourse to deceit in order to get at truth. Let A mingle all the books together, and let B take one by one and lay them on the table, and test the point of an uniform cessation of divination when the word of God is upon it.

V. Let A hold a book in his hand, shut up, and let B insert a paper knife, and then demand of the spirit the page forced open.

VI. Let A or B dip his hand into a box of marbles, nuts, large sugar plums, or the like, and before counting them himself, place them on the table, either held in his hand or in a cup, and let him ask the table "How many are there?" and if the spelling be not too tedious an operation, let him also inquire "*What* are they?" though the last is not so fair a test, because the party proposing it knows the answer; and whatever satisfaction may arise from replies that are given to questions, especially leading questions, the true answers to which are known by the enquirers at the time of asking, it cannot be compared to that which arises from those cases in which

it is clear that not even the enquirers themselves, nor any connected with them, could possibly know whether the replies were true or not, till they had examined the hidden proofs, after the replies had been given.

Some of the above-named kind of tests will, I think, bring something to light, and if any friends, who have no conscientious scruples, will undertake the task, and kindly communicate the results to the public, I think some good would be done.

If, in regard to these proposed tests, or some similar to them, it be said by the determined advocates of the diabolic theory, that they are too common-place and undignified for spirits to deal with, our reply is, that hundreds upon hundreds of questions equally common-place, as to ages of children, of servants, numbers of door-plates in streets in London, how long parties have been married, how many children they have, &c., &c., have already been asked and answered, and all pretensions to a dignified silence fails; and if, therefore, the spirits should unaccountably refuse to give to these tests (tried by such parties) *any reply at all*, then we shall be inclined to say that "they die of their dignity," and that their obstinate silence is a delusion and a sham; if they should reply *correctly*, a very great point will be gained, and a great advance made towards a decision; if (making fair allowance for the "doctrine of chances") they should signally and uniformly fail, such failure will go far towards setting the question at rest with thousands of, at present, unsettled minds.

And now, gentle reader, I bid you and the subject, farewell. I will only, in conclusion, add a word or two.

First.—To those gentlemen whose pamphlets or opinions I have referred to in this of mine. Personally, I know none of them, except Mr. Close. If any of them should think I have said anything

at all "smartly" in regard to their mode of operation, and the sort of questions they have put, I beg to assure each and all that I mean nothing severe against *them*. I ask them to accept a very humble and Christian apology, if in anything they think so.

Secondly.—I would beg of those of my readers, who do NOT believe in the diabolical agency, still not to have anything to do with "TABLE-TURNING or TABLE-TALKING," even by way of experiment, if thereby they run the risk of "wounding a weaker brother;" and at all hazards to avoid putting such questions to a piece of wood, as are connected with holy and sacred, and eternal things, with God and Christ, and heaven and hell, "lest they fall into temptation and a snare" of the wicked one.

And, *lastly*, let me beseech those of my readers, who DO verily and indeed believe that table-turning and table-talking is diabolical, to "touch not, taste not, handle not," what is to them, at any rate, surely "an accursed thing;" lest they involve themselves in the awful condemnation of the prophet: "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of ME." "WOE unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach;" but let them rather apply to themselves the solemn warning of Moses to the children of Israel, in the 7th chapter of Deuteronomy, and pray for grace to act that warning out, "Thou shalt not take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein, for it is an abomination unto the Lord thy God; neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like IT; but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for (upon thine own conviction and confession it is a diabolical, and therefore) it is a CURSED THING."

I beg to remain, Gentle Reader,

6 FF 54 Sincerely yours,

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