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DEVELOPMENTS

OF

"SPIRIT-RAPPING" IN ENGLAND.

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1. *Light in the Valley: my Experiences of Spiritualism.* By Mrs. Newton Crosland. (Routledge, pp. 228.)
  2. *Spirit Manifestations.* By John Snaith Rymer. (W. White, pp. 42.)

Public Library of Victoria

We have no intention to enter upon any elaborate discussion of "spiritualism," as it is called, but we do not see that it is quite right to pass by, in utter silence, two such works as these, which show that, for good or for evil, some intellectual men and women around us are not only firm believers in, but are circulating the results of, a series of experiments and alleged manifestations of a most remarkable kind. Moreover, we think we can trace in these publications some of that influence which is evidently at work just now to revive and extend Swedenborgianism in England. Most observant persons must have remarked that works upon Swedenborgianism have been very extensively advertised and circulated during the last year or two. We, ourselves, have received, within these last twelvemonths, more works of that class than we had received in a dozen years previously. What this may portend—whether it is simply an effort of one or two individuals, or the gradual and natural effect of certain principles and practices which have been cultivated among us of late years—we cannot say: we can only adduce the fact, and we deem it of sufficient importance to bring it forward thus publicly.

With regard to the two works before us, we may observe that they are—especially the first-named book—written in a very reverential tone, and, in some respects, stand out in favourable contrast to most other publications on the same subject. For ourselves, we must confess that we are very averse to meeting such publications with ridicule and banter—especially when they are reverentially written: we consider the subject far too serious, and even solemn, for that, whether they are founded upon truth or falsehood, delusion or deception. We see and hear enough to know that there is in them an element of great danger; physically, morally, and religiously—and we certainly observe what looks like fearful daring, and un-Catholic teaching upon doctrinal questions—but we also see that this rapid development of "spiritualism" has taken place at a time when materialism had well-nigh ejected that quality from many persons' minds; and therefore whether we look at this "spiritualism" as a judgment from God upon materialists and sceptics, or as a permitted development for counter-acting materialism and scepticism in certain minds, we cannot believe that we should be justified in treating it with contempt or levity. We commend the whole subject to the consideration and decision of those whose powers of mind and body are equal to the task, and whose function it is to deal with this and all other questions which affect the spiritual knowledge and welfare of the community. The

fact that "spiritualism" has led to insanity and other evils in America shows that there is a reality and a danger about it which call for timely, special, and judicious treatment, with a view to distinguish—if there be a distinction—between its use and its abuse. In Mrs. Crosland's volume there are some very wholesome and reverential cautions and warnings, as to the religious tone of mind in which experiments and manifestations should be approached and conducted; but, on the other hand, (and this is an important point) it does not appear to us that this has kept her and her friends from entering upon subjects which it would have been much better to have avoided, beyond what the Bible and the Church teach us concerning them. In what light does Mrs. Crosland intend her readers to regard the (somewhat Sabellian) "Discourse on the Trinity," alleged to have been received through the medium of "spiritualism"? As a Divine revelation of doctrine? If not, *what* is it? Is it inspired? Is it human, or Divine? fallible or infallible?

With these preliminary observations, we proceed to give some extracts from various portions of her volume—premising that Mrs. Crosland was formerly known as Miss Camilla Touimin, and author of several tales. The following extracts are from her Preface and introductory chapter—

"To all sorts of readers, however, it is due to give such an explanation of some terms used in the following pages, and to make such a brief assertion of my purpose, as may facilitate their appreciation of those revelations from the spiritual world, which may come upon them with an air of strangeness and novelty. In the first place, then, it must be distinctly borne in mind that spiritualists should not recognise in their vocabulary such a word as 'supernatural.' They may term certain astonishing spiritual phenomena 'superordinary,' if they please, because the conditions under which these phenomena take place are not those of ordinary every-day life; but to break a law of His own Divine Appointment is, we may be very sure, a thing the Great Law-maker never does. Yet, though laws of the natural world are not broken or revoked, we see them every day superseded the one by the other, but always the lower by the higher; and, under certain exceptional conditions, spirit has the power of acting on matter, of making itself apparent to humanity, and of revealing, and from time to time revivifying, by the Almighty's permission, those truths which it appears to have been part of His benignant plan never wholly to hide from His creatures." . . .

"Few students of history, or careful examiners of the progress of Christianity, can have failed to trace the slow but steady growth of material doctrines as a strong antagonism to Gospel truth; an antagonism, sometimes open and defiant, but more often subtle and specious, shooting from behind masked batteries of many sorts. In these latter generations it has become the invariable custom for 'philosophers' to deride the 'superstition' of their ancestors; for biographers to ignore the traditional credulity even of their pet heroes; and for historians to reject the very keys with which they might have explained the puzzles of the past. The result of this wide materialising of the human intellect has been such, that a spiritualist feels that, out of a hundred volumes which rest on our book-shelves, ninety-nine have been deprived of the most vital power which ought to have belonged to them, and if in the hundredth a few sparks of truth remain, they lie there unregarded, or are looked on as a blemish imbedded in the subject, like a dark vein in a sculptor's Carrara block.

"But even a worse result than the materialising of our popular literature has taken place. The infant mind has been brought under the cruel bondage of this iron age, and the God-given instincts of a child's dawning reason, gleaming forth even through the corruption of our fallen nature, are, in the large majority of instances, ignorantly but systematically quenched. Observe how a young child of warm heart and lively imagination delights in the exercise of its faculty of wonder; or, to be more exact of speech, one might say, observe how a young child of this description delights in exercising the

faculty we of denser souls call wonder ! For, properly speaking, a child does not wonder at the marvellous and mysterious. Its young soul leaps forward with ready understanding at the first intimation of an unseen world, and holds the sublime idea of 'God a Spirit' with a mental grasp so firm that sages might envy it. If, while this is still the case, children were taught religion, not from dry catechisms, but familiarly from God's Holy Book, wherein is full warrant for the belief that His angels are ministering spirits for the heirs of salvation, and, that their services being ordained and constituted by Himself, they are permitted to 'succour and defend us on earth,'—if children were so taught, were so helped to realise the truth of spiritual presences ever about them,—a truth their fresh hearts are so prompt to receive,—surely it is not foolishness to believe that there would be fewer fallings away from the pure faith of early years than we find to be the case ; and fewer and less terrible conflicts with the sophistries of scepticism and materialism than now abound in the world.

"But, instead of this spiritual teaching, so instinct with truth that the child's soul would, in most instances, respond to it as flame answers to flame, arrogant human reason sets about explaining the inexplicable. Not content with its own legitimate offices on which mental culture mainly depends, it dares to intermeddle with the affairs of the Soul, and, confusing and confounding first and second causes, generally conducts the young intellect into a bewildering maze, from which this same human reason can never extricate it. No wonder ; for human reason invariably searches earthward for its chart and its clue ; and the Soul's guiding stars always shine from Heaven. A young child's best chance for spiritual elevation rests, humanly speaking, on its own wilful upward gaze, and determined rebellion to the tyranny of reason.

"I would be the last to underrate the humanising, civilising influence of modern science ; but, like every other material good, it has its limits, and it has its drawbacks. The great evil attending it has been the materialising the popular mind. It has been forcibly said by a great master-mind, that 'a little philosophy inclineth a man's mind to Atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth it about again to Religion ;' and the diffusion of knowledge, as it is called at the present day, tends in a remarkable degree to the spread of a 'little' philosophy over a multitude of minds ; that little philosophy conducting them by the earth-spread chart to the bewildering maze of second causes, and making them therein so restless and so busy, that, by degrees, they forget the one great truth, that the motive power of all matter must be spirit. It is true that sentiments discarded from philosophy are permitted a habitation in the regions of poetry and art. For instance, it is thought a pretty conceit to say that 'heaven lies about us in our infancy ;' but only the Christian, who knows that his Master loves little children, and has declared that 'their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,' have any true understanding of the truth and beauty of that idea."

"Many merely moral people, who are considered by the world respectable members of society, but are not imbued with any strong religious feelings, still have a sort of vague idea that religion is a good thing, and consequently desire their children to be instructed in the tenets of the Church as by law established. But can we wonder that in the process of this cold teaching, all the vital force of Christianity is lost, and that young generations, so reared and nurtured, find no counterpoise of a living faith to the evil influences around them. No wonder the Bible is a hard book to those who refuse to receive it literally as well as spiritually,—to those who have heard so much of the peculiarities of 'eastern phraseology,' of 'allegorical allusions,' of 'optical delusions,' and are so in the habit of bringing everything down to the test of logic and the crucible of their own individual understanding, that they lose at last even the memory of childhood's faith, and its clear though infantile comprehension of the Omnipotent Spirit working by His legions of angels. Many such persons would be distressed to have it said that they disbelieved revealed religion, and yet they do systematically shut out from recognition those very revelations of God to man which make hope most earnest, and faith most strong, and the glory of a blessed hereafter most absolutely apparent.

"Surely there is a certain spurious humility that is wonderfully near of kin

to ignorant arrogance, unlike as at the first glance they may seem. Though we are told that there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, people who do not deny the authority of that assertion yet often exclaim that 'man is too insignificant for it to be possibly realised that angels are keeping account of his doings.' True, they do not deny that the Almighty Eye is able, from the heaven they place so far off, to scan our thoughts and deeds, but this acknowledgment is generally little more than an abstract idea, not an ever-present palpable reality. 'I am too humble,' says another, 'to think that angels, or beatified spirits, could ever desire to manifest themselves to me; and though I know we are taught that, in former ages, angels did hold intercourse with men, depend upon it all that sort of thing was done away with at the time of the Christian dispensation;—as if Christ's coming had put us farther away from God, instead of bringing us beyond all expression nearer!

"Is it not more arrogant than humble thus to attempt to measure the infinite mind by the pigmy gauge of the human understanding, and to resist those instincts of the supernatural, those spiritual promptings, which are the heritage even of the rudest savages, but which cold, polished materialism takes upon itself to stifle?"

There is much truth and sound sense in all this, and the lesson which we would urge from it is one that we have repeatedly endeavoured to enforce, viz., that the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the Baptized should be thoroughly and consistently taught to our children from their earliest years, as it is set forth in the Holy Scriptures, and in the Baptismal Service and Catechism. Angelic ministration is a most blessed thought and faith, for children and adults, but it must not be allowed to supersede or eclipse, in our hearts and minds, that still higher, more direct, and more abiding Gift, and Influence, of God the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not of your own? For ye are bought with a price: *therefore* glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?" It is a great privilege to know that Holy Angels are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, but it is a still greater privilege to know that God Himself, our Heavenly Father, is "about our path and about our bed." Mrs. Crosland proceeds to cite the cases of "Wesley, Baxter, and Cardan," as illustrating their experience of, and intercourse with, spiritualism, though their biographers thought it necessary to treat this feature in their character as a delusion. The next chapters are—"Theoretical Suggestions," "Bible Evidence," "Bible Illustrations." Speaking of Belshazzar's Feast, and the hand writing on the wall, which the authoress says many who talk of it do not believe, she observes:—

"Yet surely such sceptics would believe the literal truth of the story, if they could really know that there are hundreds of persons now living who have been touched by spirit hands, have seen the writing of spirit fingers, have beheld the spirit hands become incarnate, and move, and handle visible objects, and have then watched their material covering—for such, in some sense, I believe it to be—fade away, even as a thick feather of steam apparently dissolves into nothingness.

"I am one individual among these hundreds who have seen, and felt, and heard; and I write this little book because I, among others, have a truth to declare and proclaim, and I will not wrap in a napkin the talent of spiritual experience which has been vouchsafed to me.

"It is the more necessary for those who have been thus privileged to avow what they know, because life, at the best but short, is always uncertain, and it may not be part of the Almighty plan to continue these quite exceptional revelations, save at remote intervals. Be it remembered that the incarnated hands were displayed, on the occasion to which I more particularly refer, to eleven persons at the same moment, all of whom testified to seeing precisely

the same results accomplished ; but this is a different thing from ordinary spirit-seeing, and does not occur except by the instrumentality of such a powerful medium as Mr. D. D. Home. In his case it is evident that the spirits appropriate some sort of vital magnetic force from his body with which or by which to clothe the spirit members, and make them visible to every one present ; the fact that his *physique* permits this appropriation proves how exceptional that *physique* is, while the terrible exhaustion which invariably follows these displays exemplifies, in a very distressing manner, the cost at which they are made.

" I believe that many are sceptics with regard to revealed religion, mainly because, not having studied the Scriptures in the only temper—that of humble prayerful trust—in which the Spirit of God is likely to assist them, every step of their intellectual progress has led them farther away from the light. Satan has been well defined as the incarnation of ' intellect without God,' and it is not too much to say that intellectual training without religious faith, and the lowly and sincere worship of God, encarnalises the mind, and unspiritualises the soul, as much as does a career of crime. But even such unhappy victims to ' science falsely so called,' and to the knowledge that ' puffeth up,' might be stayed in their headlong course, if the very logic they so vaunt, and the reason that they deify, could be made servants to the truth hitherto denied. Such persons have always found it difficult to believe in miracles ; but if they could once understand that what they have considered miracles are among God's present dealings with His creatures, and but the fulfilment, instead of the rupture, of some of His most subtle laws ; surely it would then become ' reasonable ' to read the Bible with faith in the veracity of its authors, and ' logical ' to argue that what is now has been before, and will be again." . . .

" Perhaps no tenet of revealed religion has been so hard for human reason to receive, or has required so firm a faith entirely to realise, as the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. But believing, as we must, that the spiritual world is governed by laws as inviolable as those which rule the physical universe, the passages here cited raise up conjectures and suggestions which seem, as we entertain them, to root deeply in the heart that vital stem of Christian belief. It is in this respect that spiritual revelations have come, in these latter days, as a most merciful and benignant boon to comfort and strengthen the weak believer, and to startle the infidel into faith. St. Paul tells us, ' There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body,' and that at the last trump the ' corruptible must put on incorruption ;' the whole chapter in which the passages occur being too clear and distinct for there to be any doubt that the Apostle announced that the final change in the condition of the redeemed was to take place by the resurrection of the body. Some Christians believe that the soul remains after death in a condition of rest and oblivion until the resurrection of the body ; but there is much Scripture authority to be brought to bear in support of that opposite view which the experience of spiritualists compels them to take.

" I cannot but consider that the evidence of apparitions of the departed having appeared to the living is too strong for it finally to be rejected, even by the multitude." . . .

" I have been present on occasions of spiritual manifestations when spirits, professing to be the spirits of those I had known in life, have spelt out their names, and many curious circumstances connected with their histories which were unknown to the other persons present. On one occasion, information concerning a missing document was given, which on inquiry was found to be correct ; and I may mention, that it was information which no living person had previously been able to afford, and it was information which smoothed down family difficulties and disagreements. This could hardly have been the communication of an evil spirit, and it seems as little likely that a good spirit would have come implying a falsehood. Again, I cannot imagine that the messages we have received, messages urging on us the necessity of prayer, and faith, and holy living, could have come from Satan, or his must indeed be that falling house which is divided against itself. Still, it must be added, that we, like many others, have sometimes been deceived by false and frivolous messages, and have had reason to believe that a message commenced by a

spirit ministering for our good has been caught up and finished by an emissary of evil."

We now come to "Part II.," which was written some considerable time after the first part, and records "New Experiences," and we must say that we think it bears the appearance, in some parts, of being much less like the words of soberness and truth than the previous portion. Still it has some matter worth extracting:—

"I know there is a very general opinion afloat, that the believers in modern spiritual manifestations consist of silly, idle men and women, people in search of a new excitement, and ready to take up with any novelty that may provoke a sensation; I beg leave to say, that, so far as the experience of the last three years permits me to judge, it is precisely this latter class of persons who shrink away affrighted from the subject, refusing to believe and declining to investigate." . . .

"Not! they who are foremost among the believers in modern spiritual manifestations are by no means of the class denominated idle or silly; and though, in some details which it will now be necessary to give, I shall shield the personalities of my friends under those 'spirit names' which have been given them from the spirit world to mark their individualities, it is no breach of confidence to avow that with hardly an exception their human names as well as those of many other spiritualists would be recognised as famous in the world of art and letters; as eminent among clear-headed, high-minded, and indefatigable workers for humanity; or as those of brave defenders of their country whom their Sovereign delighteth to honour." . . .

"By a Drawing Medium I mean one whose hand is seized by the spirit power, and, a pencil being placed between the fingers, is made to execute a drawing more or less finished without the automatic artist exerting his own will, or knowing from minute to minute what is coming. I have seen such drawings in course of execution more times than I can remember. By a Writing Medium I indicate a person whose hand is similarly seized, but for the purpose of writing words and sentences, usually, in whatever language they may be, in a writing widely different from the ordinary handwriting of the medium, and, as in the case of the drawing, without any volition or mental dictation on the part of the operator." . . .

"Spiritualists may differ about the degree of pure and Divine inspiration which was the privilege of Emanuel Swedenborg; but none are likely to deny that he was one of the most extraordinary mediums of whom the world has any record." . . .

"That many of the stories concerning spiritual manifestations which have been current in newspapers and periodicals present a painful amount of profanity and puerility, I am as ready to admit as the staunchest anti-spiritualist can be to assert. But what does this fact prove? Only that by the law of affinity like attracts like, and that if persons are so light-minded and irreverent as to use the gift of mediumship for merely the idle purpose of eliciting the wonderful, and put themselves in the way of receiving manifestations without prayer, and without solemnity of heart, they will assuredly by their frame of mind—by the condition of their personal spiritual atmospheres—drive far away the angelic hosts whose mission is to, guard, to teach, and to purify, and at the same time will attract 'undeveloped spirits,' who appear to delight in cheating and misleading human beings.

"Again, from the strange questions which persons inclined to believe in the manifestations often first put to the spirits, it would really seem that they suppose disembodied spirits to be omniscient; forgetting that the whole universe is made up of the servants of God, each of whom moves in a prescribed orbit. Our own guardian angels and ministering spirits can generally tell us all that it behoves us to know; but it does not follow that they are acquainted with the affairs of strangers. And here I may observe, that by guardian angels I mean God-given guides, intelligences who have never been embodied on earth; and by ministering spirits are understood the beatified dead who have either known and loved us on earth, or are attracted to help us on our life-journey through some subtle affinity of nature or character." . . .

"If therefore, people seek spiritual manifestations merely from a desire to



witness the wonderful ; if they ask silly, worldly questions, instead of reverentially, and with prayer to be defended from evil, awaiting the manifestations which may be vouchsafed, they will, in all probability, be misled or deluded, or receive communications of so puerile a character, that the occasion and the privileges, which ought to be considered solemn, will appear profane or ridiculous." . . .

"The object of this book will have been quite mistaken if it tends to induce any one to seek for spiritual manifestations out of vain curiosity, or with a mind unspiritualised by religious feelings. People who are not called to take part in the work so strangely opening before mediums, would be wise to receive evidence with as little personal experience as possible ; but if, from a certain stubbornness of character, they must see, and hear, and examine for themselves, I entreat them never, under any circumstances, to hold parley with evil or 'undeveloped' spirits, and always to use an exorcism, worded and heart-dictated in the name of the Triune God, whenever they are receiving spirit messages or beholding spiritual manifestations. Let them not smile the incredulous smile of infidelity at my words ; I have *known* evil spirits to be exorcised and silenced when they have been tried in faith and found wanting. And I have known prayer for spiritual assistance and divine protection to be answered on the instant in a most astonishing manner."

The "*drawing* medium," whose works are introduced as illustrations to this volume, appears to us to have a decided tendency to artistic Romanism, if she be not in reality a Romanist, and we think that Mrs. Crosland's book would have appeared to much more advantage without those illustrations, and the letter-press relating to them, containing, as they do, so much evidence that the fancy has run wild under the excitement of "spiritualism" ; and there is little or no corroborative proof that the whole is not a personal delusion.

With regard to Mrs. Crosland's arguments for "spiritualism," derived from Scripture, we may observe that beyond the mere fact of the existence of spirits around us, and the occasional visible appearance of angels and spirits, we do not see much analogy between the spiritual phenomena of the Bible and the phenomena of "spiritualism," as described and illustrated by her and other writers of the present day. There is this remarkable and significant difference between them—in the Scripture narrative, angels and spirits are represented as sent by God to His faithful servants, without any kind of invocation or preparation on their part ; whereas, in the system of modern "spiritualism," there appears to be a formal anticipation and preparation by certain men and women—a "circle," or "medium"—as an *essential* condition of receiving spiritual influences, communications, and visible appearances ; and upon this the Bible is entirely silent. Of course we do not deny that God may, from time to time, change, or more fully develop, His plans in relation to such matters, but what we desire to point out is, that the Bible affords little evidence in favour of such manifestations as those set forth by "spiritualists," and no warrant at all for the *mode* by which spiritualists profess to obtain those manifestations. In reading such works as these, two distinct questions arise in our minds—1. Are these manifestations realities or delusions ? 2. Supposing them to be realities (and there is certainly the testimony of respectable persons that they are not altogether deceptions or delusions), is it lawful to take any active steps, or to allow ourselves to be made the medium in the hands of others, for the purpose of *procuring* or "invoking" these manifestations ? Granted that it is at all times—and especially in the present time—not only important, but a plain Christian duty, and a great privilege, consolation, and support, to realize the presence of Holy Angels ministering to our souls and bodies, and forming a real though invisible link between Heaven and earth, yet it does not follow that

we should, without Divine warrant, adopt any other special means than earnest prayer, and the endeavour to lead a holy life, in order that we may more fully realize the existence and presence of angels and spirits. God's rule is, *invisible* ministration. Have Christian men and women any right to make experiments, or to adopt any humanly-discovered plans, for the express purpose of making those ministrations *visible*? Is not that an interference with the Divine prerogative? And supposing that they succeed, does it follow that all which God *permits*, He *approves*? May not a more visible and tangible evidence of spiritual influence and intercourse, *when obtained by our own inventions*, lead us into the temptation of invoking and worshipping angels and spirits, and looking to them rather than to Him whose ministers they are, to "succour and defend us upon earth?" We are taught by the Church to pray that God would grant "that as His holy Angels always do Him service in Heaven, so by *His appointment*"—not by our own anticipatory mechanical preparations and organizations—"they may succour and defend us upon earth." We of course do not doubt that it is for man's advantage that the existence of angels and spirits should be confirmed by *visible* appearances, occasionally—for God has vouchsafed this proof at various times—but, constituted as man is, he appears to be unable to bear much of this visible manifestation, (for even Apostles and early Christians were "affrighted" at what they supposed to be a spirit) and it is observable that a large proportion of those who have indulged themselves in the reality or the delusion of those visible or tangible manifestations to which "spiritualism" lays claim, have thereby suffered in mind and body, and also, we believe, in faith and practice. An individual instance of (apparently) beneficial result, is no answer to this objection. Let us wait God's *time* and God's *way*, for all such manifestations, and then, whenever they come before us, though our flesh may be weak and trembling, our faith may be strong, and our prayer may be earnest, to invoke—not angels or spirits—but the protection and guidance of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, that we and others may fulfil the Divine purpose for which the manifestation has been permitted, or in mercy vouchsafed to us. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to Thy Word." When Mrs. Crosland, and the Clergyman who has selected texts for her, point to God's Word as a warrant for intercourse with spirits, we must also point to the same authority for warnings against practices which, so far as we can judge from the description of them, appear to bear more analogy to those against which the Bible warns us, than to those for which it supplies a warrant. Our Lord Himself has told His Church that false prophets shall show "great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." Mrs. Crosland's argument that the "spirits" to which she refers dictate good and not evil, and must therefore be God's Ministers, is not so sound as it at first sight seems, seeing that this warning of our Lord shows that even those "false prophets" should have such an appearance of religion in what they say and do that they would deceive the very elect of God, if it were possible; and, moreover, we are also told that even Satan, the author of all evil, can transform himself into an angel of light.

It is time, however, that we should turn to the second work whose title we have placed at the head of these observations. It is very brief, being, in fact, a mere lecture, and the principal use which we shall make of it will be to present our readers with some specimens of the experiments and manifestations of the "spiritualists" in this country. Before doing this, it may be well to explain to our readers



the most ordinary mode of obtaining the "spiritual" "communications" referred to. The parties having sat or stood round a table (with their hands placed on it, and all touching each other, we believe) they wait until a knock is heard, or the table moves: one person then begins the alphabet—asking in the first instance, perhaps, *who* the spirit is—and when a knock is heard, after uttering any particular letter, that letter is written down, and the alphabet is begun again, and this continues until an entire message is received; and every fresh question is answered by a repetition of this process of knocks and writing down of letters. Sometimes, a person who is a "writing medium" writes involuntarily, either in English or in hieroglyphical characters which only another "medium" can translate; and in this case there are no "knocks;" another "draws" involuntarily, and the symbolical or spiritual meaning is subsequently explained: but we do not hear that in either of these cases there is any independent confirmation of these interpretations and explanations.

The following are extracts from Mr. Rymer's Lecture:—

"Sir David Brewster, Mrs. Trollope the authoress, and her son Thomas Trollope, my brother a man of intelligence, a friend a collegiate, Mr. Home (in whose presence wonderful physical manifestations took place), and the members of my own family were present one summer evening. The table at which we sat was a long telescopic dining table, having two legs at each end and none in the centre. One end was occupied by Mr. Trollope, Sir David Brewster, and my eldest girl—Mr. Home sat about the centre on one side, having Mrs. Trollope on his left; I sat at the other end, the others present occupying the remainder of the table. There was no cloth or drapery of any kind—Sir David was invited to look under the table and make every investigation, and he did most properly avail himself of the opportunity afforded him by carefully looking under the table both before sounds were heard and during the time they were being made. On this occasion I find recorded in the handwriting of my brother a short account of what took place; I will give you it in his own words:—'Table moved from side to side,—raised at one end,—raised entirely from the ground,—Sir David tried to lift the table—sometimes he could not, at other times he could, or, as Sir David said, "*the table was made light and heavy at command.*"'

"I had purchased an accordion,—it was called for: hymns and tunes were played, and without any visible agency. After the party broke up, Sir David, in the course of conversation, said—'I should have liked if we had been all standing when the table lifted.' Sir David, Mr. Trollope and myself, then sat down to see if it were possible to move the table or raise it by our feet, but it could not be moved by the united efforts of the feet of all three. . . .

"Four of us sat in circle at a house in Chancery-lane,—the alphabet was called for,—the letters sounded, were '*Dear Sir, love God*'—'Dear, Sir' was a very favourite expression of a friend of mine. I then said,—is it my departed friend?—will you favour me with evidence of your identity?—meaning the gentleman alluded to—I went through the alphabet,—I could not make any words of the letters. I went through the alphabet again and again, and still the same letters but without meaning. I then took down these letters, '*Cette est tres vrais,*' and to our surprise the sentence was bad French,—'It is very true.' I have since ascertained from some of the members of his family, that, although no French scholar, this was one of a few French sayings he was in the habit of using.

"A man of repute in the literary world was at my house one evening to witness manifestations. It was said to him through sounds on the table 'We wish you to have faith in the'—and there was then placed in his hand, and by no seen agent, a paper cross, one of my children's book markers—'We wish you to have faith in the cross'—and this paper cross he begged might be given him. . . .

"We were told through the alphabet that my little boy was present in spirit. I had heard of spirits writing in America. Mr. Wolf, of Athens, county Ohio, writes—'*writing is done without human hands, the hand of the*

*spirit is visible while the writing is done*—I asked if the unseen being could write as on earth—he answered that he would try. I then took from my wife's writing desk a sheet of note paper, clean, and without any writing on it of any description. I borrowed a pencil from a lady friend who was at the table—the table had its usual cloth—on the cloth I placed the paper and pencil,—both moved as if by a breath of air; the brass fastenings of my table were then displaced one by one, and fell to the ground; the table was opened or pulled out, and by no human agency; every one in the room was seated at the table and had their hands on its surface. I then asked if I should place the paper and pencil on the table near the opening under the cloth,—three sounds, 'Yes'—I did so, and immediately the form of a small hand was seen under the cloth,—it was felt by some who placed their hands upon it,—the paper and pencil were then removed, the form of the hand disappearing at the same time. In a few minutes the same form of hand was again seen replacing the paper and the pencil, the alphabet was called for:—'Dear papa, I have *really done my very best*.'—I removed the paper and pencil, and on that paper was written—'Dear papa, dear mama,'—and signed 'Watt.' Watty was the name of my child. No one was aware that I intended to ask for this to be done; it was not pre-arranged even by myself; it was the thought of the moment. I have the writing, *delusion* therefore it cannot be,—deception or imposition it was not: you have the facts, judge for yourselves.

"At Sandgate in Kent we numbered thirteen: the table was elevated at least two feet; the accordion was played,—the tune was not known to any of us; we asked the name, and we were told through the alphabet that it was—'the Song of the Sea.'—A hand and arm in white drapery appeared, it was seen by all at the table on several occasions during the evening, and we had every opportunity of very carefully examining it. . . .

"And now let me relate to you some of the teachings—many of them in answer to questions asked,—sometimes through knocks on the table,—sometimes delivered in trance, and at other times by writing.

"When you join a circle have all your minds in a proper state, for if not it is much harder for us to come; *prepare yourselves beforehand by prayer*; we do not come for amusement, we come not as a wonder, not to astonish, but for a great mission on your earth; we come to teach and to sow the seeds of love, truth, and faith in your world. . . .

"Nothing is impossible for the great Jehovah to perform. The One that made the heavens and the earth, every flower, every tree, that One can and does send us to earth to throw the rays of His light upon mortals. How can ye doubt when we tell you that we are from God? ye know that by the fruit ye judge the tree, and the fruits that ye pluck from our trees, are all sweet, and good, and holy. The blossoms that fall from our trees upon you are pure white; then the tree cannot be an evil tree, for ye have had the fruits, and they are good. In the Word it says, try them, to see if they be of God. Do that; have no fear—let not such a thought flash across your mind, for it is like the lightning, although the flash is quick, it must somewhere leave a scorch. Dispel that thought, be assured that we are from that great God. We have been sent by Him to your world for one great mission. It will take time to fulfil that mission, but it will be accomplished; and then the mortal that now sees no God, no future home, then that mortal will bend his knees in thankful praise to Him and to us."

Setting aside the preliminary question of the facts of the matter, the great question which occurs to our minds upon reading such statements as that in the last paragraph we have quoted, is this—Is there any character or evidence in such manifestations as those narrated by "Spiritualists" which should lead us to believe that they have been Divinely chosen to accomplish, or that they can and do accomplish, what God's Word, God's Church, and God's Holy Spirit in the hearts of the Baptised, have not accomplished? We read in Holy Scripture that there was, in the time of our Lord and His Apostles, a whole sect, one of whose distinguishing characteristics and errors is thus described—"the Sadducees say there is no resurrec-

tion, neither angel nor spirit:" yet we do not read that either our Lord or the Apostles employed, or recommended, anything at all suggestive of, or analogous to, those means which "Spiritualists" claim and commend for the conversion of the Sadducees of our time. The same means which our Lord adopted to "put the Sadducees to silence," He employed to silence the author of all heresy and unbelief—"IT IS WRITTEN." "*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures.*"

If, as is alleged in these works, departed spirits are brought, by means of "spiritualism," to communicate to their relatives and friends the fact of their being happy in the world of spirits, is it not evident that Satan might lead those who are miserable to say that they were happy, and thus to lead relatives, friends, and companions, to believe that a more strict and religious life was unnecessary to secure happiness? Then, again, jurymen, in cases of murder, might be led to summon the spirit of the murdered man, or woman, to testify to the guilt or innocence of the accused, and decide by this rather than by the evidence. The same course might be adopted in other cases where suspicion was excited, and it was believed that departed spirits may have been near the suspected party at the time when the supposed offence was committed. These are only specimens of the evils which might follow if the system of "spiritualism" became general or popular. Whether it be true or whether it be false, it appears to us that these evils would result from it, and the fact that God has given us no warrant for adopting such a system is, we think, a plain intimation that it is not a safe or profitable system for man while he is still in the flesh.

[Reprinted from the "ENGLISH CHURCHMAN."]

## POSTSCRIPT.

Since the foregoing was printed, we learn from the newspapers that a Committee appointed at Boston (U. S.) to investigate "Spiritualism," have made a report that the "mediums" had all failed to prove the truth of their assertions, and the Committee add:—

"It is the opinion of the Committee, derived from observation, that any connection with Spiritualistic circles, so-called, corrupts the morals and degrades the intellect. They, therefore, deem it their solemn duty to warn the community against this contaminating influence, which surely tends to lessen the truth of man and the purity of woman."

We recommend that a Committee be appointed in this country to investigate the "facts" put forth by "Spiritualists."

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