

SPIRITUAL TRACTS, No. 8.

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# FALSE PROPHESYING.

BY JUDGE EDMONDS.

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New York:

1858.

## FALSE PROPHESYING.

FROM THE SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH.

NEW YORK, *February*, 13, 1858.

C. PARTRIDGE, Esq. ;

*Dear Sir*—Spiritualism has thus far encountered with success the opposition of the Press, the Pulpit and the Professor, and it seems now as if its worst foes are to be found among its believers. Against them, as against its avowed opponents, it is our duty to struggle. Therefore it is, that I request you to publish the following correspondence. The mediumship of Mrs. P\*\*\*\*\* is becoming too questionable to warrant us in passing it over in silence.

Yours, etc.

J. W. EDMONDS.

—, *December* 31, 1857.

JUDGE EDMONDS .

*Dear Sir*—Pardon me for addressing you at this time, stranger as I am ; but knowing the zeal with which you investigate science for the benefit of your fellow-man, I am induced to lay the case of a lady-friend of mine before you, and ask your advice.

Some few months since, a lady in your city (Mrs. P\*\*\*\*\*) told this friend of mine that she would live only sixteen months; and as she had been previously told by Mrs. P. many truths touching her past history and life, she was induced to, and absolutely does, believe that her time is fixed to the day specified, notwithstanding a tolerable good constitution and good health, and only about twenty-one years old.

The effect is as might be expected in a person who has little

to do but to dwell on prospective ills and pains—a gloomy state of melancholy.

Now, sir, as you have spent much time in patient investigation of this matter—the truth or falsity of which I am unable to decide, even to my own satisfaction—and as there have, no doubt, similar cases come to your notice, I would in her behalf ask, to what or to whom are we to look for a remedy?

Is it true that the day of one's death can be foretold? And if so, is it right that the gift should be so illy bestowed as to be used to make monomaniacs? I think that if the phenomenon called "Spiritualism" emanates from an All-wise and Omnipotent Creator, its proper work is to make mankind happier and better, as indeed all His laws, when properly understood and obeyed, universally tend.

I have seen considerable of Spiritualism, and I have been forcibly struck with the faithfulness and truth with which the past has been portrayed and described; but I have never yet seen any more ability to lift the veil which hides the future displayed by "mediums," than by other and far different systems of reasoning.

Will you, therefore, not for the gratification of idle curiosity, but for the benefit of one who already suffers much, and will probably increase in mental anxiety and unhappiness, give us the benefit of your study, experience, and observation, touching the case. Your opinion alone on the matter would be valuable, as coming from one who has devoted so much labor to its investigation.

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Very respectfully your obedient servant, ———.

NEW YORK, *January 3, 1858.*

MR. ——— :

*Dear Sir*—I wrote you a hasty note in reply to yours of the 31st of December. I now avail myself of my first leisure to write more at large.

It seems from your note that your friend places reliance upon

the unwise predictions of Mrs. P\*\*\*\*\*, that the period of her life is limited to sixteen months. Such a prophecy, to any at all acquainted with that medium, or at all familiar with spiritual intercourse as manifested through the mediums of the day, would give no uneasiness, simply because they would have learned how much or how little reliance to place on such an attempt at prediction.

But the difficulty is, that we have been taught falsely what is the condition of man immediately after death, namely, that he is instantly and greatly changed, almost, if not quite, into a state of perfection ; and therefore we expect great perfection in anything coming from the Spirits of the departed. So that when we become satisfied that it is such a Spirit that speaks, we are at once induced to rely on what it says.

In other words, we combine our erroneous ideas of Spirit-nature as derived from our education, and our ideas of the Spirit-teaching as derived from the reality before us, and from the two sources form our judgment. Of course such judgment must be wrong, because it is grounded on an erroneous basis.

It is liable to be wrong, for this reason : One of the first lessons which Spirit-intercourse teaches is, what is the real nature and condition of the Spirit after death—that it does not become changed by death, but is, for a while at least, precisely what it was on earth, and is destined to progress there as it had to here, and can not be instantly clothed with infinite, or even any greater, knowledge in any respect, than it had here.

This, I say, is the very first lesson which the intercourse teaches. Yet there are very many who will not stop to learn that lesson, but led away by the fascination of the intercourse, overlook the important question, "From what kind or condition of intelligence does this intercourse come?"

Now, if such a prophecy had been made to me, as was made to your friend, I should have made these inquiries before placing any reliance upon it : Who are you who predict this ?—how do you know it ?—what evidence can you give me that you are the individual you pretend to be ?—what is your condition of intelligence to enable you to know it ?—what is your condition as to

purity of purpose, to justify me in supposing you to be influenced by good motives?—and how am I to know that you are not influenced by some evil motive?

Did your friend ask any of these questions? For if she did not, she made herself very liable to be deceived. On the other hand, if she relied upon her previous notions of Spirit-nature, she skipped over the very ground-work of the knowledge that was proffered to her, and took for granted as true what was indeed an error. And if, without taking the necessary pains to learn how far Spirit-intercourse is to be relied upon, she yielded her belief to what was said, she betrayed a credulity which, in all the relations of life—in all intercourse with mortals or with Spirits—can not fail to mislead.

It seems to me that this was her first error. She did not stop to inquire what reliance was to be placed on Spirit-intercourse, but yielding to her preconceived opinion of the perfection of Spirits, she took it for granted that what they said must be right.

Now there is no truth more earnestly inculcated by Spirits, and by all intelligent and well-informed believers, than this; that the intercourse is not, and can not, be perfect; that it comes from those who are far short of perfection; that it comes through mediums who are not even perfect as such; that it does not, and can not speak “by authority;” and that in everything it says or does we *must* use our own judgment, and it is a sin in us to omit to do so.

I send you two pamphlets\* which I have published on this topic, which enter more at large into the subject. Let your friend read them, and also pp. 39 to 48 inclusive, of my “Introduction” to my second volume on “Spiritualism,” and she will see the necessity of not surrendering her own judgment, but of exercising it on all occasions.

And when she comes to exercise her own judgment, she may ask: How she is to know that the Spirits have not the power of prophecy as to the duration of her life? I will answer as far I

\* The pamphlets sent were two Tracts I have published; one entitled “The Uncertainty of Spiritual Intercourse,” and the other “The Certainty of Spiritual Intercourse.”

can. Yet I beg you and her to understand that I do not claim to be authority on this topic, for I as yet know but too little myself, to venture to assert that I am certainly right. I can only state my opinion, and leave you to judge of its correctness.

Let us ever bear in mind, that spiritual intercourse is not supernatural, but in compliance with fixed laws affecting the whole human family. We may understand those laws as well as any other that operate around us, and it is our ignorance of them alone that causes us to be astonished at their operation. What astonished the aborigines of America at the white man's power, but their ignorance of the gunpowder he used? What now could amaze a savage of the Rocky Mountains more than a steam-engine, to us a familiar thing, but to him a marvel, because of his ignorance of steam and its laws?

It is true that Spirits can foretell future events. But to what extent? Not, certainly, to an unlimited extent, for that belongs alone to Omniscience. What, then, is the boundary? A very simple one, it seems to me, and the same which bounds our power to foretell even when in the form.

For instance: I prophesy that you will go to Detroit next week! I do so because I know it is your intention to do so, and I merely say you will execute your intention. Still it is in me a prophecy. So I prophesy that at a certain hour you will go from your office to your home. I know that you are in the habit of doing so to get your meals, and reasoning from cause to effect, I prophesy truly an event which actually happens.

Now, as I understand it, that is exactly what Spirits do when they prophesy, *and no more*. They tell us events which will be the result of their own action, or reasoning from cause to effect, they tell us the probable result. And as they have great power over events on earth—affecting them far more than we have been taught to believe—and as they frequently have a greater knowledge of causes than we have, so to that extent their power of prophecy is greater than ours.

But I do not believe that, in any case, they can foretell the hour of our death, save only one, and that is where we have some fatal disease about us which they discover, and from which

they reason, as any doctor would from the same premises, that ere long it must terminate life. How often do our doctors thus prophesy by the sick bed !—and I have never yet found any reason for supposing that Spirits can do any more. So much they doubtless can do ; when seeing the actual reality of an existing disease, they reason as to its termination, and they do more in this respect than mortals can, only when—as is often the case—they obtain a better knowledge of the disease existing within us.

Still, you and your friend may ask whether that may not be her case ? Of course, I can not say with certainty, nor can she unless she has made of the Spirit who prophecied, the inquiries which I before mentioned as those she ought to have made.

But I will express my opinion that she is not thus afflicted with any disease to justify any such prophecy, and simply because of the source through which the prophecy comes. Mrs. P\*\*\*\*\* has prophesied so many things that have never come to pass, that prophecy through her is a great farce, and no one acquainted with her mediumship would give it one moment's heed.

Still you ask : Why should she indulge in false prophecy to her own mortification ? I will tell you. She has medial powers and Spirits can speak through her. But she has very little mental culture or mental discipline. She understands none of the laws governing the intercourse, and exercises no control over it. On the other hand, she gives herself passively up to the influence, and lets it do what it pleases with her, and of course it runs away with her. She is a public medium for pay ; all kinds of people go to her, and she thus surrounds herself by all sorts of influences. She might control the consequences, if she had been taught how, but she thinks she must be passive to the influence when it comes, whatever it is, and the consequence is that her mediumship is shorn of its usefulness and is quite as frequently doing wrong as right. She thus makes herself accessible to foolish or mischievous, or malevolent Spirits, who do commune through her, and cause her to say and do many unwise and injurious things.

Now it is very likely that some such Spirit was present when

your friend was at Mrs. P\*\*\*\*\*'s, and seeing her wonder at it all, was disposed to amuse himself at her expense. You will find here in life, people who will do just so, and get up a little fun for themselves without thinking of, or caring for, the hurt they do others. So it was with this Spirit. He meant to have some sport in frightening the woman, but he did not dream it would go so far. He is now sorry enough for it. But he can not correct the evil he has done, and to him it has been a severe lesson by which he will profit, and by which also your friend may profit ; for while the incident teaches the Spirit how wrong it is thus to sport with the happiness of others, it may teach your friend to beware of that credulity which misleads so many, and which causes them to jump to conclusions before they have obtained knowledge enough to form correct ones.

Spiritualism is like everything else connected with man : properly guided and governed by his intelligence, it is a means of happiness and advancement to him ; ungoverned or misguided, it injures or destroys. Fire, left alone in its fury, is a destroying element ; cared for and governed, it is a valuable servant to man. The water that bears us along on its bosom, may drown us unless we take care. So it is with spiritual intercourse. Governed and directed wisely, it is indeed a blessing. Misguided it may do much mischief. Man's freedom is to choose which form of it he will have.

In the mean time, it is a pity that any medium should permit herself to be used for hurtful purposes. As mediumship is the result of physical rather than moral organization, the remedy is in a great measure in the hands of the medium alone. Others can not prevent mediumship. We can, however, do something to restrain its power of doing mischief. The accompanying words in the SPIRITUAL TELEGRAPH of the 19th of December, will show you what the friends here have deemed it necessary to do in Mrs. P\*\*\*\*\*'s case :

"The manifestations by or through Mrs. Harriet P\*\*\*\*\*, lately have been so changed and questionable that we feel called on to disclaim any supposed indorsement of her present Spirit-mediumship."



Now if you will be so good as to present these views to your friend, and bid her be of good cheer, for she has much happiness and a large sphere of usefulness in store for her, and let me know what is her condition after this, I will be much obliged to you.

Yours, ever, J. W. EDMONDS.

—————, January 22, 1858.

JUDGE EDMONDS :

*Dear Sir*—Yours of the 3d and 7th were received, also the pamphlets; and in behalf of my friend, for the relief it has given her, as well as explaining some of the phenomena which have hitherto been a mystery to me, we are all under great obligations. In fact, like your legal friend and correspondent of the pamphlets, I little expected you would devote at least so much time and pains in answer to my letter, presuming your standing among the advocates of Spiritualism in the United States must necessarily favor and sometimes afflict you with a very extensive correspondence.

I have delayed replying to yours thus long, that I might report the effect on Mrs. ——— (as I shall call my friend, as she would rather not have her name given in full).

Previous to, and at the time of, my writing to you, she earnestly persisted that the prophecy had no effect upon her, and was not the cause of her melancholy, and I am very much of the opinion that she believed what she said. But since reading your very kind letters there has been so decided a change in her countenance and general appearance, as to be observable to all acquainted with her. And not only have her spirits been improved, but her general health also, which had materially suffered, has materially improved.

It was, in fact, as much the bodily disease as the mental which I sought to relieve, and the one depended so much on the other, I thought it the most desirable course to treat both together; and although not a practicing physician, but an oculist, I usually

prescribe treatment for most of the physical debilities of my own family. But I really deem your prescription deserving far the most credit in her case.

Another effect your letter has had, viz. : to direct her and me, and perhaps through us, others, to a more satisfactory and reasonable explanation of the phenomena of Spiritualism. Mrs. ——— told my wife that on that subject her mind was greatly relieved and many difficulties explained away, and that on her return to New York she should pay you a visit, by which you see that she herself is now convinced of the unhappiness caused by the prophecy.

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Yours truly,

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