

# FRAUD, FANCY, FACT:

WHICH IS IT?

AN ENQUIRY INTO THE MYSTERY OF

SPIRITUALISM;

WITH A NARRATIVE OF PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

BY MRS. ERIC BAKER.

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## WHICH IS IT?

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Few subjects, not acknowledgedly of public interest, have of late years more attracted the attention of intelligent and inquiring minds, than the great mystery of Spiritualism, as partially revealed to us through the instrumentality of mediums.

Its origin, nature, and tendency, have been frequently and eloquently discussed both by its partisans and opponents; the former regarding it as a key to the secrets of the unseen world, a link between the living and the dead; the latter, attributing its startling phenomena to mere human ingenuity and manual dexterity.

It has been the theme of many an ingenious theory and much scientific investigation. But the speculator and philosopher have alike failed in satisfactorily explaining the agency by which wonderful, nay bewildering results have been obtained. A cause must nevertheless exist; the absence of trick established, (and I trust to be enabled to prove from the recital of my own experiences, that striking phenomena have been produced which, while exciting the astonishment of all by whom they were witnessed, left their minds fully impressed with a conviction of the honesty of the medium,) and belief in supernatural influences rejected, where is this cause, in the existence of which, (whatever its nature,) all must agree to be sought?

If a too easy credulity be indicative of a *weak*, obstinate disbelief is by no means the proof of a *vigorous* mental organization. "A presumptuous scepticism," says Humboldt in his *Cosmos*, "which rejects facts without examination of their truth, is, in some respects, more injurious than an unquestioning credulity." It appears to me that the arguments hitherto brought forward by the antagonists of Spiritualism, can be supported neither by the testimony of Scripture nor that of human experience.

It is truly astonishing to see individuals who, in the ordinary business

of life, exhibit not only keen discrimination, but also excellent judgment and sound common sense, and from whom, therefore, a calm investigation of facts might be expected, loudly express their disbelief in the truth and supernatural origin of spiritualism, without having witnessed its phenomena; stigmatise mediums as impostors, while wholly ignorant of their powers or mode of employing them, and remain proof against the weight of copious, clear, and corroborated testimony offered to them by persons whose veracity is above suspicion, and whose depositions on all other subjects they would accept without a scruple or hesitation. "Impossible," say they, "such things cannot be!" Is such a strong prepossession, I would ask, either fair or philosophical? Has any one so profound an acquaintance with the laws of matter as to be certain that no agencies can have play, but those which are recognised by our philosophy? Can any human being, without grievous presumption, decide on what *is* or what *is not* impossible? Who shall say whether, albeit unknown to human ken, there may not exist a power which, under certain conditions, may counteract the operations of the universal laws of gravitation and equilibrium, and effect invisibly what we on earth accomplish by means of known and natural agencies? That the days of miracles are past, is a hackneyed phrase, not unfrequently heard from the mouths of the sceptical—a groundless assertion, the common credence in which has taken rise in the daily increasing practical turn of men's minds, for which a number of causes might be adduced, and a certain narrowness of mental vision, consequent on the concentration of their faculties upon the things of sight and sense,—those lying beyond their limited horizon being regarded as altogether fabulous. If by the term miracles, is to be understood merely the wonderful deeds performed by the Saviour when on earth, the commonly-used expression which I have quoted, is undoubtedly correct. But giving the word its evident and most comprehensive signification, that is, applying it to every action of which the character is totally distinct from those of every-day life, and for the performance of which the faculties and strength usually allotted to man are insufficient, I should be rather inclined to maintain that miracles, or events in contradiction to the commonly so-called laws of nature, have occurred in all ages of the world's history. In the present age there is a thorough disbelief in the supernatural—that is, in an arbitrary departure from the universal and established laws of nature, as understood

and recognised by human science and philosophy, or any special interference with the order and harmony of the universe as appointed by an omniscient God. The phenomena known as spiritual manifestations, appear to lie *without* the limits of any law of nature with which we are acquainted. I will, therefore, call them rather *extra* than *super*-natural. But as I have before observed, shall it be therefore asserted that they may not yet be under the domination of, and regulated by, some law, although our finite philosophy has been as yet unable to ascertain its nature, or even its existence. Have the most complicated operations of nature, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge, the minutest secrets of the universe, indeed been revealed to us? Shall He, who "laid the foundation of the earth," and "shut up the sea with doors,"—who causeth the "day spring to know his place," and "binds the sweet influence of Pleiades"—take man, the erring child of dust, into his counsels, nor act but in strict accordance with the rules established by finite understanding? The supposition is too presumptuous to be for a moment entertained.

My present object and endeavour is not so much to explain spiritual phenomena, as to prove their reality; and when we deny the existence of a power, greater than that of science, and dispute to Him who established the laws by which the harmony of the universe is maintained, the right of either wholly abrogating, or partially modifying them, according to his pleasure, then, and not till then, may we cry, "Impossible! such things cannot be!" That persons professing to be mediums, have imposed on many by spurious manifestations, is beyond a doubt; that such impositions render caution doubly necessary in receiving and examining the testimony of witnesses, is also certain; but the existence of falsehood does not prove the non-existence of truth, any more than the absurdities of a Charlatan, destroy our confidence in the physician.

Professor Powell, (than whom no modern writer has done more to disparage testimony in favour of the marvellous,) says, in speaking of the mysterious gift of tongues known amongst the followers of the late Mr. Irving, that making every allowance for delirium, or imposture, beyond all question, certain extraordinary manifestations *did* occur. Even granting that they could not be explained by any known form of nervous affection, or on the like physiological grounds; still that they were in some way to be ascribed to natural causes, yet, perhaps, little known, is what no one of

dispassionate judgment could deny. I desire the same candid investigation for the evidence which I am enabled to bring forward on the subject of spiritual manifestations. "Any thing," says Mr. Melville, "short of a known impossibility may be substantiated by evidence;" while Isaac Taylor declares, that we ought not to reject the almost universal belief of occasional supernatural interference, until we can prove an impossibility. Both Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Abercrombie declare, that on a certain amount of testimony, we might believe any statement, however improbable. "In appreciating the evidence for any events of a striking or wonderful kind," declares Professor Powell, (and to this I give my entire assent) "we must bear in mind the extreme difficulty which always occurs in eliciting the truth, dependant, not only on the uncertainty in the transmission of testimony, but (even in cases where we ourselves were witnesses), on the enormous influence excited by our prepossessions prior to the event, and by the momentary impressions consequent upon it. We look at all events through the medium of our prejudices, and even where we have no prepossessions, the more sudden and remarkable any occurrence may be, the more unprepared we are to judge of it accurately, or to view it clearly."

Our after representations, especially of any extraordinary and striking event, are always at the best mere recollections of our impressions of ideas dictated by our emotions at the time; by the surprise and astonishment, which the suddenness and hurry of the occurrence did not allow us to reduce to reason, or to correct by the sober standard of experience or philosophy. Two causes of error on the part of even the most honest witnesses are here explained: the first is prepossession prior to the event. Now I am acquainted with many persons whose prepossessions were utterly opposed to the reality of spiritual phenomena; which phenomena, after repeated experiences, they were obliged reluctantly to acknowledge to be true. The second of these causes is the suddenness and hurry of the occurrence and surprise which it awakens, and the consequent incapacity to consider calmly, and examine deliberately; but I myself have had opportunities, such as have been given to few, of witnessing the manifestations daily for a period of two months; residing under the same roof with a celebrated medium (Mr. Home); the phenomena thus ceased to be either startling or unexpected, and left me ample time to reduce to reason my impressions, and correct them by the sober standard of pru-

dence and philosophy. A constant and careful reader of all that is written on the subject of spiritualism, my attention was attracted in the course of last year by an article in the *Cornhill Magazine*, entitled, "Stranger than Fiction," as also by a critique and attempted explanation of the incidents described in the same, which, under the title of "Spirit Rapping made Easy," and bearing the signature of "Katerfelto," appeared in the October and November numbers of *Once a Week*. These papers engaged my especial notice from the fact of my having witnessed, although under somewhat different conditions, all the phenomena they described; conditions which, as I shall endeavour to show, rendered the existence of trick and employment of jugglery impossible. I propose, therefore, now to examine (circumstances having prevented my doing so earlier) the incidents related, and their explanation, comparing them at the same time with my own experience.

To detail the circumstance which led to my acquaintance with Mr. Home would be foreign to my subject, and uninteresting to my readers; it will suffice to say, that for the space of two months we were inmates of the same house, and our party being composed of but three other persons, with whom from my childhood I had been on the closest terms of intimacy, I had ample opportunities of ascertaining, not only that Mr. Home was neither a "skilful conjuror," "clever ventriloquist," nor "superior player on the mouth harmonium;" that he possessed neither a "self-acting accordion," "magic lantern," nor "lazy tongs," but that had he been master of such divers accomplishments, and owner of these varied implements, he would have been incapable of employing them for the purpose of deception; while my long and intimate knowledge of those whose guests both he and I at that time were, precluded the possibility of suspecting them to be his "accomplices," or including them in the category of "accommodating dupes."

Other persons were freely and frequently admitted to these seances, whose names alone, did I feel myself justified in making use of them, would be a sufficient guarantee for the veracity of their assertions, and the candour of their testimony. I will now proceed to the examination of the *Cornhill* narrative, as quoted and explained in "Spirit Rapping made Easy."

Some seven or eight persons are described as being seated at a round

table in the centre of a drawing-room ; the windows *draped* with *heavy curtains*, and protected by *spring blinds* ; the space in the front of the window being *unoccupied*, and the circle closely packed ; some sheets of paper, pencils, an accordion, hand bell, flowers, &c., &c., were placed upon the table, and an intimation received through the spirits that the lights *must be extinguished*. Katerfelto invites attention to the words *italicized* as, according to him, they indicate important circumstances. "The tassel of the chord of the spring blind began to tremble," says the author of "Stranger than Fiction," "and slowly, and with apparent difficulty, the blind began to descend. A whisper passed round the table about hands having been seen or felt, the table cover was drawn over our knees, and I distinctly felt a twitch several times repeated at my knee, like the sensation of a boy's hand, partly scratching, partly striking and pulling me in play through the semi-darkness.

"Mr. Home's head was dimly visible against the curtains, and his hands might be seen in a *faint white heap* before him." Having quoted thus far from the *Cornhill* narrative, let us turn to the explanation offered by Katerfelto. "I am not surprised," says he (as a preliminary observation, after assuming that Mr. Home was previously acquainted with the furniture of the room, the manner in which it was disposed, &c., and that he arranged the spectators in such positions as best suited his own requirements), "that the lights were required to be *extinguished*. As for the performance of an elaborate class of tricks, it is necessary that the room should be as obscure as possible ; the instrument by which the blind was drawn down was probably a strong pair of lazy tongs, inserted at the side, and under cover of the thick curtains with which the windows were draped ; to the same instrument (worked, in all probability by Mr. Home himself) must be attributed the raising and drawing of the table cover over the knees of the spectators, the twitching, scratching, pulling, &c. We are told that Mr. Home's hands might be seen in a *faint white heap* before him ; that is to say, they were probably held one over another, so that there could be no visible diminution of the heap if one were withdrawn." The writer of the *Cornhill* mystery next observes what appeared to be a large hand under the table cover, "which, with the fingers clustered to a point, raised it between him and the table ; I seized it," he adds, "and felt it very sensibly, but it went out like air in my grasp."

The indefatigable lazy tongs are again declared to be at work, only covered this time with velvet or caoutchouc. "It was as black as pitch," goes on to say the author of "Stranger than Fiction," "but we could just make out a dark mass rising awkwardly above the edge of the table, and clumsily emitting a sound as it passed over into the space beneath. A quarter of an hour afterwards we heard the accordion beginning to play when it lay on the ground." This the writer of "Spirit Rapping made Easy" also explains, by assuming that Mr. Home was, in all probability, a superior performer on the mouth harmonium, to which instrument are to be attributed the charming sounds for which the accordion obtained the credit. In contradiction to these statements, I will observe, that *darkness* is by no means a necessary condition of spiritual seances, inas-much as some of the most remarkable phenomena which I have witnessed took place at a table, in the centre of which a large Carcel lamp was burning during the whole seance; in a room never previously entered by Mr. Home, and with the furniture of which he could not, therefore, be acquainted; a room, of which the windows were neither protected by spring blinds, nor draped with heavy curtains; while so far from placing the spectators in such positions as might best suit his requirements, his invariable answers to the questions occasionally put to him of, "where shall I sit?" was, "Wherever you like." With regard to his own position, he was always careful to place his hands on the table during the manifestations, in such a manner as both might be seen; while his feet were always drawn away as far as possible from the table beneath his chair, a circumstance to which (aware of the disposition on the part of many to attribute the phenomena to trick) he frequently drew attention.

To refute the assertion that the sounds attributed to the accordion proceeded in fact from a mouth harmonium, played by Mr. Home himself, I will relate a fact witnessed by myself and five other persons: an accordion was placed on the ground, but not quite close to the table at which we sat, and at some distance from Mr. Home. After some preliminary chords of singular sweetness, it performed a piece of music actually composed by the father-in-law of one of the circle, a well known composer and teacher of music in former years, a lady present having been one of his pupils, who immediately recognized the composition. The room being

amply lighted all the time, Mr. Home could hardly have made use of his harmonium undetected.

It has been asserted by the sceptical, that during the consultations of the alphabet, for the purpose of obtaining communications and answers, the medium is always observed to keep what is called a "sharp look out," on the eyes and hands of the consulters. In contradiction to this statement, I will say, that I received on one occasion, a long, interesting, and even important communication (inasmuch as it threw some light on a family affair, which had always been involved in considerable obscurity), from the spirit, (for so it declared itself to be), of a very near relation. Unwilling that those present should be made acquainted with the subject of our communication, I held the alphabet in such a manner as to screen it from every one present, while the letters necessary to the formation of the answers were indicated, not by the ordinary raps, but by gentle pressures on my knees; the hands of this spirit were distinctly visible, both to me and several other persons, and not only repeatedly and warmly pressed my own, but at my request, those of other individuals present.

Katerfelto's ingenious theory of velvet covered lazy tongs, cannot I think be maintained before the simple fact, that on one occasion our circle being composed of six persons (not including Mr. Home), six hands were visible at one and the same moment, those of Mr. Home being in their usual position. The appearance of these hands was perfectly natural; part of the arm was also occasionally seen draped in a kind of gauzy transparent substance, looking something like the hanging sleeve of a white *péignoir*; the hands were also warm to the touch; on being strongly pressed they appeared to dissolve. I invariably observed that the communications received were always accompanied by physical manifestations, indicative of the peculiar conditions and occupations of those by whom they were professedly made when on earth (assuming the hypothesis of their being departed spirits), thus the near relation of whom I have spoken, at the time of his death an officer in the navy, was always preceded by extraordinary movements on the part of the table, representing with strange exactness, the tossing and rolling of a ship, and accompanied by noises imitative of the straining of the masts, and creaking of the timbers. An officer who had served in the Crimean War, whose name

(which has been much before the world) is synonymous with all that is to be honoured and esteemed, being on one occasion present, received communications from two brother officers killed in action, which were accompanied by remarkable manifestations in the form of a prolonged rumbling noise, exactly resembling the discharge of artillery, interspersed with the sharp cracking sounds of occasional musquetry. On another occasion, Mr. Home was observed to shiver violently, as though seized by a sudden cold, and on being questioned as to this symptom, he replied that a spirit was present who had *met his death by water*; this spirit proved, in fact, to be that of the brother of a lady present, who had been drowned while bathing. The communications we received were always strikingly characteristic of those by whom they were made, and in strict accordance with the opinions they had always in life expressed; the rapidity and clearness of their replies to *mental* interrogation was also remarkable in the extreme. I have also seen communications made by means of the alphabet in several languages, Polish amongst the number, with which neither Mr. Home nor any one present (except the individual communicated with) was acquainted.

Physical demonstrations, such as the elevation of large and heavy tables, the displacement of chairs and other pieces of furniture, without the aid of any visible agency, have been so frequently described in the various interesting and able works which have been written on the subject, that any details which I could mention would be superfluous. I will only say that I have frequently seen a large round table, supported by a claw, rise and remain suspended at a height of two feet from the ground, for at least thirty seconds, all our chairs, Mr. Home's included, having been previously withdrawn from it to some distance, so that nothing might impede its movements; it frequently tilted over, until its surface formed an inclined plane, at an angle of about  $45^{\circ}$  or more, the lamp and other objects remaining all the time upright and motionless: for this Katerfelto accounts by saying, that a *velvet* cloth would neutralize their tendencies to slide, and to this I will reply by stating, that the table of which I speak was at no time covered by a velvet cloth, and that I have seen the same manœuvre performed by a table with an *uncovered marble top*. It has been remarked that it is a pity spirits cannot dispense with tables. I have heard the most distinct rappings on walls, floors, chimney

pieces, nay, on pillows, and without the formation of any circle; while at breakfast, sitting round the fire, and at the dinner table, on which I have seen the glasses, decanters, &c., &c., violently agitated.

Having now given a simple exposition of a portion of the phenomena of which I have been myself a witness, I will in the words which form the title of these pages, address one interrogation to my readers: Fraud! Fancy! Fact! *which is it?* If the former, the fraud must lie either with the witnesses or practitioners, that is, we must suppose that persons of high attainments, cultivated minds, spotless character, and known probity, have borne a willingly false testimony, by describing incidents which never occurred. So preposterous an idea cannot be for a moment entertained. The hypothesis, therefore, of deception on the part of the witnesses rejected, remains the charge of imposture against the medium; that, I think, may be disproved by carefully examining the article in *Once a Week*, from which I have so largely quoted, and comparing it with the personal experiences which I have detailed, and which prove that although those conditions, which, according to the writer of the above-named article, must all be observed in order to ensure success to the cheat, were at the seances at which I was present, entirely dispensed with, the phenomena *did yet occur*.

The more popular and charitable suppositions acquits the testimony of wilful falsehood, but ascribes the impressions received to delusions, and a disordered fancy; I am inclined to doubt that hallucinations *can* exist of a nature sufficiently powerful to induce a belief that sounds have reached the ear, and objects been presented to the sight, that movements have taken place, and communications been received, all at the same time and place, when in reality, no such sounds have been uttered, no such objects visible, no such movements made, nor communications received; but assuming that, mysterious as it appears, such self-delusion be possible, I would inquire, who are the persons most subject to hallucinations? The persons most susceptible of receiving impressions through the medium of a disordered fancy, are generally young, credulous, impressionable, and imaginative; while the causes of hallucinations are an excited curiosity, a dominant idea, expectant attention, &c., &c., and a nervous, excitable, or hysterical temperament. But witnesses can be referred to, who were neither young, superstitious, nor fanciful, whose pulses "making most

healthful music," proved their freedom from any such bodily conditions as could help to account for their credulity. The names of men could be cited whose age was mature, whose habits those of sober thought, who were accustomed to the calm investigation of facts, &c., and whose health was robust.

It might be shown that the dominant idea of many amongst them was, that the manifestations were a humbug, and that their attention was expectant, only for the discovery of the cheat.

The fact (granting that it be one), that the imaginations of different persons may be disordered for the first time (as far as our powers of judging extend), and disordered exactly at the same time, and in the same manner, has been ascribed to sympathy and contagion. Our knowledge of the extent and nature of sympathetic or magnetic influences is so limited, and the subject, involving many others, is so obscure, that I do not presume to say that these supposed effects are *impossible*; but in order to accept this explanation of certain manifestations, we must suppose that sympathy and contagion can enable a person to arrive at knowledge, new not only to all others present, but even to himself, until announced by rappings; so that facts of which till then he was utterly ignorant, have been verified by subsequent inquiry. An attempt has been made to explain this by what is called automatic mental, and automatic cerebral action, whereby ideas long slumbering in the mind or brain are unconsciously recalled by the involuntary action of the cerebrum; ideas, which although once impressed upon the mind, had been all but utterly obliterated, so as to appear, when again the objects of consciousness, entirely new. But without enlarging upon this most difficult subject, I would reflect on the nature of automatic action: an automaton is a machine, constructed to perform certain definite operations, the production of a voluntary agent who causes it to work in a certain way; it has no will of its own, cannot act *ad libitum*, cannot adopt itself to contingencies, or accommodate its operations to any change of circumstances? Now, the supporters of the theory of automatic action suppose it to suit itself to the numberless contingencies of casual conversation, and to supply a person with answers to widely different questions, proposed by persons with whose thoughts he has no acquaintance. Clearly this cannot be. Dismissing, then, the attempted solution of the problem, either by the aid

of fraud, or the complicated, though less repulsive one of fancy; and embracing the only remaining alternative, that of believing the manifestations to be literal facts, realities, as opposed to fancy, fraud, collusion and illusion; where is this cause to be sought?

Objects inanimate in themselves have been suddenly roused into animation and movement, without the aid of mortal hands; invisible fingers have produced harmonies, sweeter and more thrilling than those which human genius can inspire, and human skill perform. Assertions have been made, which subsequent experience has verified as facts, *mental* inquiries, unclothed in words, have met with clear and intelligent replies; secrets have been unfolded, and circumstances of startling correctness revealed.

One explanation yet remains unexamined, that of supernatural interference, through the agency of departed spirits; and who shall dare to assert that this is *impossible*? No one of average sense, or common freedom from prejudices, will positively assert what he is unable to prove. It is not my intention to quote any of the well authenticated cases of the reappearance of the dead which are extant; most of them are probably well known to my readers; obstinate sceptics may, indeed, deny that well authenticated cases *do* exist, but numberless individuals of sound and competent judgment maintain the contrary, and such evidence is at least worthy of attention.

Without sifting the evidence adduced from the earliest periods in favour of spiritual appearances, I shall merely endeavour to prove, that a belief in the *possibility* of intercourse between the visible and invisible world, and in the apparition of disembodied spirits, has been a matter of belief from time immemorial; a few examples drawn from the highest of all sources, Sacred Writ, will suffice. Before citing the instances in question, a few observations on the existence and nature of Mediums may not be displaced. In what the peculiarity of a Medium's organization consists, of what nature is that extraordinary gift which enables its possessor to act as a connecting link between the spirit and the flesh, and while yet a denizen of earth, to hold familiar intercourse with the inhabitants of other and higher spheres, is impossible to define; and speculations on the subject would lead me beyond the limits within which I propose to confine the subject of these pages.

The appellation is a modern one ; but persons possessing such powers have probably existed in all ages ; the Witch of Endor being the first of whom we have any record.

The dealers in familiar spirits, so frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, must also, I think, be considered as such, and should not be confounded with magicians ; the phenomena produced by the former being the consequence of some faculty or power inherent in themselves, while the latter were, as we read, obliged to have recourse to enchantments and invocations in order to summon a wished-for apparition. In the case of the Witch of Endor, nothing of the kind was employed, for which reason, I think myself justified in supposing her to have been a Medium. I do not, however, include in the category of Media either the priestesses of the Druids, or the pythonesses of the Greeks ; their oracles and predictions being probably altered while under the influence of magnetism. From the ashes of the dealers in spirits arose the much persecuted race of sorcerers and witches ; many of these no doubt were impostors, and many self-deluded ; still there can be no doubt (and the annals of many a witch trial bear witness to the fact) that extraordinary manifestations and phenomena *did* frequently take place, and which, like those of the great modern mystery, could not be explained either by mechanical skill or any recognized law of physics.

As in the days of Paganism, every unusual occurrence had been attributed to the influence of the Gods ; so the superstitions of the Middle Ages sought a solution of the problem in a supposed league with Satan ; and the consequent persecution was grievous in the extreme.

The belief in the supernatural common to all countries, and held by persons of all religious denominations, had in the 17th century attained its highest development, and degenerated into the blindest superstition. To this circumstance may, I think, be traced the ever-increasing scepticism of later years. From believing everything, men believe nothing ; from affirming and receiving absurdities, they pass to a denial of facts ; reactions acting ever in extremes. I have said that a belief in supernatural interferences and appearances have been prevalent in all ages, and have alluded to the dealers in spirits, of whom the Old Testament makes such frequent mention, showing that communications with the beings of an invisible world were of common occurrence.

In the New Testament, we read that the disciples alarmed at the appearance of the Lord walking on the water, cried out—"It is a spirit!" and again, the persons assembled in Mary's house, when informed by the damsel Rhoda, that Peter, (having been miraculously delivered from prison) was standing at the gate, exclaimed, "it is his angel or spirit!" Had spiritual apparitions or appearances been *wholly* unknown, or even of rare occurrence, surprise would not have elicited the exclamation I have quoted. I think also that the request addressed by Dives to Abraham, that Lazarus might return to the earth he had quitted, and preach repentance to his brethren, a strong proof in favour of the reappearance of the dead, inasmuch as Dives would scarcely have requested what was either impossible or unheard of. The establishment of rules for exorcism by the early Christian Church proves the then existent belief in spiritual possession, the only term by which the close and mysterious rapport existing between certain peculiarly organized individuals, and the beings of an invisible world, was designated. It is but reasonable to infer that what *has* occurred may occur again. The experience of the past can alone aid us in judging of the present and the future. It has been asked "Why, if this intercourse between the living and the dead be possible, has it not been employed, as it obviously might be, on a large scale for the benefit of the world?" How is it that so many secrets, of which the disclosure might be eminently advantageous, but which the dead only could reveal, remain to this hour secrets still? I would answer, does it follow that no power can exist, but such as can be turned immediately to some profitable account? And is it clear that spiritualism has attained its highest development, or that mediums may not arise of higher powers than those who now astonish the world, and that spiritual manifestations, better understood and more universally believed in, may not become in time of great and general utility? A quotation frequently brought forward by the sceptical is, that "as the tree falls so shall it lie;" this expression meaning, according to them, that the spirit shall remain in the sphere to which, on its liberation from the flesh, it is transported. Now, the text bears, I think, another and less material interpretation, and means, that a spirit on leaving the world, not only becomes invested with privileges inherent to its new state of being, but carries with it, purified from earthly dross, its feelings, sympathies, and moral condition. This being the case, why

should they not feel the desire, so common to all, of visiting the scenes with which they have been familiar, and gazing on the forms they have loved when on earth? We know little of the conditions of the future that awaits us; but I think we err in imagining them to be wholly unlike those of our material existence. I believe, on the contrary, that it will, in many respects, bear a close analogy to it, and look upon death to be less a change than a transition. We change, it is true, the scene and material elements of our existence, while retaining those of the inner being. Let it not be supposed I offer these observations with the presumptuous intention of explaining the great mystery of the soul's passage from mortality to immortality; I only wish to show that spirits are capable of feelings and desires, and that, therefore, their reappearance is but a natural endeavour to satisfy them. The prepossession existing against a spiritual explanation of the manifestations, is not merely that of the *understanding*—the *feelings* of the sceptical are quite as adverse to the fair investigation that we ask for as are their preconceived opinions. "We should not wonder," says Mr. Melville, "if much of that dogged resistance which is opposed to the best authenticated narrative of apparitions, may be traced to men's repugnance to being brought into contact with the invisible world. They instinctively shrink from communion with a state which their irrepressible fears people with dark and fitful imagery; and it is, therefore, with them, a sort of self-defence, to take refuge in a thorough scorn of the possibility that spirits which are verily around them might assume human shape, and become on a sudden visible and real." It is possible, nay probable, that the reappearance of those around whose bed of death we have mourned—whose inanimate forms we have with pious care laid in their narrow bed, and followed to their last abode, might produce in us a sensation of *awe*, arising mainly from our ignorance of their actual condition, of the motives which had induced them to return, and also (although few would, perhaps, avow it,) from a kind of impression, the consequence may be of some vague nursery traditions, that the appearance of apparitions must necessarily be attended by alarming circumstances, and unearthly sounds, their forms being clothed in the ghastly habiliments of the grave. But the mind once divested of childish fears, the conviction fully established that the bonds of affection exist unbroken beyond the grave, that the spirit released from earthly trammels has yet retained its earthly sym-

pathies, would there be no consolation in the thought that our loved and lost ones take the vacant "chairs beside our hearth!" mingle (albeit unseen), familiarly amongst us, the guardian angels of our home, hover around our pillows in the hour of mortal anguish, cheering our souls by a sense of their unseen presence; support our faltering steps in the "valley of the shadow!"—sustain our fainting forms in the "swelling of Jordan," and bear us company until we reach the regions where the sorrows of parting are unknown. I would only, in conclusion, earnestly call the attention of such as have hitherto disregarded it, or merely considered it in the light of imposture to the great *mystery which has arisen in the land*; entreating them to accord it at least the same share of notice as has been bestowed on it by the thinking and scientific men of other countries.

If the perusal of these pages prove the means of inducing but *one* individual to investigate rather than cavil, to lay aside a contemptuous scepticism for a humble spirit of inquiry, to devote more attention to the spiritual elements of his being, than to its more material condition, I shall not feel that my pen has been assumed, nor my labour bestowed, in vain.

G. B.

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