

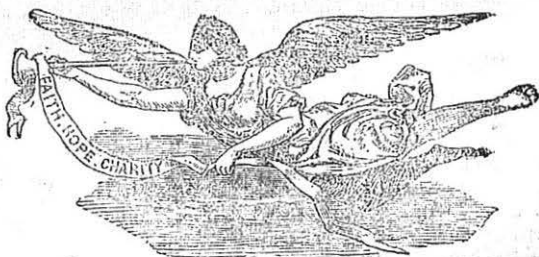
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"If this counsel or this work be of men, it will
come to nought;
but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."—Acts v.

Something ABOUT SPIRITUALISM.

By "COMMON SENSE."

Herein is shown what SPIRITUALISM really is. The
Opinions of Mr. SPURGEON, Mr. W. HOWITT,
and others, are given; the Mysteries in connexion with



THE BROTHERS DAVENPORT
are explained; and full Instructions are laid down.

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(1865)

SOMETHING ABOUT SPIRITUALISM.

By "COMMON SENSE."

"*SPIRITUALISM and COMMON SENSE!*" we hear people exclaim,—"What in the world has Common Sense to do with *Spiritualism*?" We answer: It has *much* to do with it. In the first place, Common Sense has to do with facts; and *Spiritualism is a fact*. Moreover, Spiritualism stands in such close relationship to man, that even our popular Baptist minister, Mr. SPURGEON, has repeatedly told us in his sermons that we are surrounded with Spirits on every hand. "Well," but Mr. Spurgeon does not mean to say—"Stay, Friend: we have heard that kind of thing before—you will pardon the interruption,—but we take Mr. Spurgeon to be a minister who decidedly means just what he says, and we will tell you what that is. He speaks, in one of his published Sermons, concerning "timorous" people: and he says, when speaking of the night time, "It is then they fancy that spiritual creatures walk the earth; though, if they knew rightly, they would find it to be true, that

*Millions of spiritual creatures walk this earth,
Unseen, both when we sleep and when we wake;*

"and that at all times they are round about us—not more by night than by day." Language can be no plainer than this. Ministers of every denomination continually preach of spiritual existencies; people as well as priests sing praises to the Father of spirits for permitting these heaven-sent messengers to watch around them while they sleep; and prayers are offered up, all over the world, in a form established by law, that these spiritual beings may "succour and defend us on earth." And what comes of it all? Ask anyone, Churchman or Dissenter, if he thinks it possible that spirits can, in any way whatever, make it manifest to us that they exist, or that they can do anything at all for us, and, if you get an answer at all, see if it is not, in the most silvery, commiserating, self-satisfied tone of voice that it is possible to imagine, in effect something like this:—"My dear Sir, the age of miracles has gone by: we don't need them now: and, surely, you don't mean to say that "you believe in such things as *spirits*!" Alas! how great the change when the Sunday coat is put off, and when fashionable worship has been put aside for a week. It is with priests as it is with laymen, if it be not worse. And this is called Religion. When will the people be wise enough to insist that their preachers shall be teachers, and that in the golden hours of a Sunday morning some useful lesson shall be taught—some precept that shall last the week. We will just give a specimen, now, of what may be found in the *National Reformer*, the principal Journal of a party whose religion is not founded on a spiritual basis at all. In the number for October 8, 1864, the Editor says, "We know nothing of, neither do we believe in, Spiritualism." If anyone can point to language like this in any of the so-called religious journals of the day, we should like to see the thing done. Such language as this, is all that can be wished for:—*We know nothing of the thing, and, of course, we can't say that we believe it.* But the advocates of the paper in question are styled *Infidels*—unbelievers,—when they, professedly,

do not know, and therefore cannot *believe*; and those who call them by this name are, *professedly*, *believers*, when, the fact is, as a rule, they can neither be said to *know* or to *believe* anything at all about this subject which is at the very bottom of their creed. If there be aught in the term "infidel" that savours of *reproach*, it must be applied to him who has that for a creed, to be uttered with the lips, which is opposed and disbelieved and denounced by him in his daily walk and conversation. Christian! you have been told to "*Prove all things*," and to "*Hold fast that which is good*:" see, then, that you do it inasmuch as it lies in your power. But you say, "*Spiritualism is of the Devil!*" We ask, How can you *imagine* that you *know*? Was knowledge *born* with you? and shall wisdom *die* with you? If so, you belong to a different race of beings to that of which we form a part. Again, you say, "*Spiritualism is trickery, conjuring, humbug!*" But, do you *know* this? or, by whose authority do you say this? Oh, you asked your *minister*! And you did not like to ask him whether he *knew*, because you might have displeased him. Would you lean upon a stick before you had satisfied yourself that it was not rotten? Then why trust to a man without having first satisfied yourself that he is competent to give you a manly, straightforward, unprejudiced, and honest *opinion*, at all events? And in such times as these, we know that if Truth be wanted, the way to get it is to ask as few questions as possible, and to consider that a bold and determined investigation is the surest course to adopt. The Reverend HUGH McNEILE, M.A., states, in one of his Sermons, when speaking of Mesmerism, "*I have not seen anything of it; nor do I think it right to tempt God by going to see it.*" This, of course, is sheer ignorance and superstition; and if people choose to be led (or misled) by those who go through the world with their eyes shut, they must be content to be classed with beings who believe that "*Vælsior!*" means, *to stand still* or *to go back*. Englishmen! if you want to *know*, do not ask people who cannot tell you. We tell you that *Spiritualism is a fact!* and, what is more, we can put you in the way of *proving* it for yourselves. But here is the difficulty. Those who really *know* what *Spiritualism* is, through having investigated the matter, are called *mad*—*altogether mad*; those who may have expressed a determination that they *will* investigate for themselves, are looked upon with pity as though they had a *weak point* somewhere that would *give way* in time; but those who have *not* looked into the subject at all—who would not for the *life* of them be seen to have *anything* to do with such '*absurdities*'—who are altogether *above* such '*foolish*' things—are just the very people (in the opinion of the world) who are eminently qualified to teach others all about it! So that if we appear to know *much*, half the world will call us *mad*; and if we were to seek to appear to know *nothing*, and therefore to be *eminently qualified* to teach, the other half of the world would have good reason to pronounce us to be *mad*! We profess, then, to know *something* about it, and to be willing to teach that half of the world who shall call us "*mad*" if they find our professions to be unwarrantable or unwise.

Spiritualism, then, is not an *art*; but, a *science*. It is, however, not a science for the sensualist—for him whose most serious reflections are upon the correct adjustment of his cravat—for him whose highest aspirations are somewhere amidst the smoke of the rank weed, or fixed upon the colouring of the meerschaum bowl. It is not for him

who, although arrived at manhood's estate, has not spent five consecutive minutes of his life in the contemplation of the mysterious connexion subsisting between *spirit* and *matter*. No: it is for him whose mind is habituated to the consideration of the question whether there be not, over and above the ordinarily recognized *Laws of Nature*, some *other Laws* with which we are comparatively unacquainted, and of the working out of which we find reputed evidences in every corner of the earth. In fact, it is *not* for the idler or the coward, but for him who has "a will to do, a soul to dare." Spiritualism stands in relation to man and a future state of existence, as the electric agency between him and a far off country; and, just as by means of a telegraph with its various signals we can gain intelligence from unseen men and women—*spirits in the flesh*,—so, by a variety of means, can intelligence be conveyed to us by those unseen *spirits* of whom Mr. SPURGEON has spoken. Spiritualism stands in the same relation to immortality *preached*, as the pictures in a book stand in relation to the text: as the book is illustrated and made plain through the pictures, so is a future life for man made evident to the senses by means of Spiritualism. We hear of immortality—not free from dogmas repugnant even to *human* nature—from lips that can afford us no information respecting the *evidences* or the *manifestations* of this great fact which are being granted to man at his own fireside. But we can have these evidences for the seeking; and where two or three meet together, in sincerity of purpose, to learn Nature's truths, who shall say that good results will not follow? In the domestic circle, then, we meet. Is it said that we dare not contend that this is so *sacred* a place as the "House of God?" We claim that if there be one place on earth more *sacred* than another, it is that place which would be the last to be *profaned* by anyone:—it is *home*. And let him who denies the claim we set up learn what *home* is, for he cannot know. And if there is one *Object* more sacred than another, it is that of having communion with those of whom we can truly say "they are not lost but gone before,"—with those, possibly, who may, while in their mortal tenements, have contributed to our necessities, and who are even now permitted to be our "ministering spirits." We meet at *home*, then, to receive *Spirit Manifestations*. And here let him who is a stranger to the highest sentiments and the purest affections of mankind take counsel:—Enter not into the midst of those with whom your feelings are not in unison; and, if you should be of those who can hold up to derision aught that is pure and holy, or that is held to be so by others, follow this subject no further, until you shall have become more fitted for it. "And is it really *possible*," we hear some thoughtful one exclaim, "that we can obtain any advantages from Spirit Manifestations?" Well, you shall just hear what *one* person says about it: although we could give the opinion of many as well known as he. WILLIAM HOWITT says, "Spiritualism 'has been to me, to my own family, and to a wide circle of relatives and 'friends, the most substantial blessing of existence.'" We come, now, at once, to the question: premising only that, as it is as sacred a subject as any with which we can have to do, it should be investigated under no other conditions but those which "COMMON SENSE" would dictate as being in accordance with it. The first thing necessary to be done is to select the place and appoint the time offering the least liability to anything like interruption or annoyance; bearing in mind that ever

fact depends upon certain conditions, and that it would be a very strange thing indeed if *disorderly* conditions resulted in anything but *disorderly* facts. Punctuality then recommends itself, and requires nothing to be said about it. And now, what is the frame of mind that suggests itself to every intelligent person as befitting the occasion? Unquestionably it is just that in which a man would feel conscious of possessing and of showing forth the *dignity* of manhood, and not the frivolity of youth. Be serious; be watchful; be prayerful. But don't misunderstand us, here. You want no *book* to tell you what to pray for and how to do it; neither do you want a lengthy harangue in which God is besought to do everything that the supplicant can think of just in the way that we mortals think advisable, and which God, unquestionably, will do in His *own* way as He always *has* done. No: if you have nothing to pray for, pray for nothing; but if you have a "*sincere desire*," either "*uttered* or "*unexpressed*"—on your lips or in your heart,—that God's blessing may rest upon your endeavours to learn His truth, *that is prayer*. And in this sense we repeat, *be prayerful*. And what should be done, *then*? Why, the hardest thing of all for an Englishman to do,—*wait*. Do n't begin to think that you are not earning any *money*: *that* will not do. If your occupation should be that of a "*Penny-a-liner*" to some popular *Standard* or other, have nothing to do with this matter: for you can't *wait*! *Seventy* such gentlemen have lately proved to the world that they could n't wait a *quarter-of-an-hour* for certain *Spirit Manifestations* said to be possible and probable if they did! But, instead of exhibiting even so small an amount of patience as this, one of the number unblushingly informs the world that that which is vulgarly called "*chaff*" was thrown at the gentlemen who superintended the meeting "*by bushels*," and that they had "*a rough time of it*;" and after this he flings the firebrand of infamy at the feet of these gentlemen by telling the world not only that the manifestations expected, *in this quarter-of-an-hour only*, did not take place, but that "*it was never intended that they should*." Here we find the DAVENPORT corn measured by the *Standard* bushel. Well, then, should these words fall in the way of any such writer as he of whom we have been speaking, we beg leave to suggest, respectfully, that he light his cigar with the paper upon which they are printed, and that, instead of accepting any inadvertent invitation to witness phenomena ascribed to spirit agency, he betake himself to some locality where, perchance, if he dip his pen in blood and write therewith, it may be significant of scenes that he may witness which shall suit the depraved taste of the people for whom he caters, and the describing of which shall delight him more and, perchance, *pay* him better. The fact is that people in a hurry *can't wait*. Do not be in a hurry, then. But now, as we do not deny that time is of some moment to the most of us, we will speak of those conditions which will tend to economize it. Be sure, then, that, if possible, we get some member of our family who is of a "*sensitive*" nature to be with us at our meetings. This description of person is easily distinguished: the word *sensitive*, to an observer of Nature, expressing almost completely, by itself, what we mean. We may frequently observe persons whose organisation renders them peculiarly susceptible of external influences of all kinds; and yet, whilst, like the *sensitive plant*, they shrink from the rude touch of a hand, they can no more be said to be in any abnormal or diseased condition than the *plant*.

No: they are, in fact, *gifted* with a certain exaltation of the senses, rendering them the very opposite of some dull, unimpressible people to whom we might talk for a week and then imagine, for aught that is to be seen to the contrary, that we had succeeded in producing about as much effect as though we had been talking to a post. Having, now, the advantage of being able to depend upon the presence of a *sensitive* person, either a relative or a friend, nothing more remains to be done but to provide a pencil and paper to be used if wanted. "*Nothing more!*" we hear someone exclaim, "*Why, Professor Anderson has just now completed some very expensive machinery for producing spirit manifestations.*" Indeed! we reply: and do you imagine that this conjurer expects to get *SPIRIT* manifestations from his own *MATERIAL* instruments? You need not imagine anything of the sort: for he knows better than that. He knows that the statement involves a flat contradiction; and, besides, when you go to a *professed* deceiver for the truth, how do you know if you get it? how do you manage to expect to get it? No: if there are spirits, let them *make themselves manifest* to us; for, if there be none, all preaching is in vain. And now for the *Manifestations*. Spirits will manifest themselves in various ways. For example: if we sit round a table, and place our hands lightly upon its surface, we shall find that, if the necessary conditions are attended to, we shall not have to wait long before the presence of some unseen intelligence can be clearly proved. *The table will be moved!* "*Moved!*" exclaims someone. Yes, again we say, *it will be moved!* Thousands of persons have *proved it*, in their own homes. And now, *we have only to realize the fact that these unseen beings can see and HEAR us*, and how easy to have communications from them! We have only to *ask* and we shall *receive*. *Arrange, then, with them, the method which shall be adopted. Speak to them as though you saw them.* And, for example, *ask them to move the table in any manner that you may think fit to suggest, as an interesting means of proving their power, and of establishing, beyond all doubt, the fact of their presence in your midst.* Request them, if, in reply to a question you may put, they wish to give an *affirmative* response, to move the table a certain number of times—say, *three*; if they wish to reply in the *negative*, to move it *once*. Ask them if they will communicate with you *by means of the alphabet*. If they reply in the affirmative, repeat the letters distinctly, and the table will be moved, or some other signal be given, when you arrive at the several letters composing the words the spirits wish to convey to you, which may be easily and profitably read *when the message is complete*. And now, *have no fear, if anything should take place which should appear strange to you. Remember that the power which spirits possess is over and above the ordinary course of nature: hence, the facts to which they give rise are supernatural. Do not interfere, then, in any way, and all will be well.* Spirits have the power, and seem to be fond, of communicating with us by *making use of the arm, or the hand, of a "sensitive" person, to convey to us information in writing.* As soon as the "*sensitive*" has thus, for instance, been brought into requisition by spirits, he or she is clearly a "*Medium*." The "*Medium*," then, must be *prepared to be used just in the way which the guiding intelligence thinks fit.* Spirits have the power, one after another, to write through the hand of the Medium, *each spirit manifesting distinctive peculiarities of style.* Spirits have the power of putting the Medium into a state of *trance*, and, then,

one after another, of *speaking, and manifesting striking peculiarities of voice*. We have repeatedly witnessed this kind of manifestation in the case of a young lady, an Infant-school Mistress; and we have had the pleasure of listening to *as many as thirty distinct speeches*, from as many different spirits, occupying, altogether, about *two hours* in the course of one evening, in the presence of many friends. In these instances, however, *the Medium's own spirit was, generally, withdrawn from her body by other spirits*, instead of being put to sleep, or entranced; so that she was, in fact, enabled to enjoy *the realities of a spiritual state of existence*, whilst her body was being used by spirits some of whom were once our intimate earthly friends. And, what is worthy of notice, she was, invariably, *most reluctant to return and to repossess her own body*. Spirits have the power, when they have withdrawn the Medium's spirit, not only to take "possession" of the body, but to permit it to remain, for a length of time, *tenantless*, and, therefore, to *all appearance, DEAD!* We were requested, some years ago, by some of the leading medical gentlemen of England, to give them an opportunity of witnessing these phenomena. On our second visit to the West End of London, before twenty of these gentlemen, various *manifestations* occurred; and, amongst the number, that one of which we have just spoken. The Medium's spirit was withdrawn, *with a sigh, just as we notice when a person dies*, and her body remained *spiritless, for more than twenty minutes, in the presence of these gentlemen, who satisfied themselves as to her bodily condition by touching her fixedly opened eyes with a feather, and by using sundry other means well known to medical men*. *The body of the Medium was growing cold; the medical gentlemen had anxiety depicted on their countenances; more than one requested us to "bring her to," doubtless fearing that she might be a veritable corpse!* It so happened that we knew better than this; and we therefore told these gentlemen that what they saw before them was done by spiritual and not by human agency, and that we had nothing more to do with the matter than to take charge of the body and to prevent experiments being tried in ignorance of the real state of the case. *In a moment, the usual sigh being heard, her body was taken possession of by a spirit who had been accustomed to do this, and the body thus re-tenanted by a living spirit (though not its own) immediately rose from the prostrate condition in which it had been lying on the floor, and, manfully standing up, a speech was delivered on the subject of Spiritualism,—with what effect upon the audience God alone knows.* Suffice it to say, these gentlemen, at the end of the meeting, *denounced this sensitive young lady as an "impostor," in her hearing!* Thus must Mediums be prepared to have their feelings wounded: knowing, as they do, that they are but instruments in the hands of *higher powers*, and also that, in a large proportion of the manifestations, they are utterly *unconscious of all that has taken place through their instrumentality*, until afterwards informed of it by the person under whose care they may have thought fit to place themselves. We may observe, in passing, that these medical gentlemen, *who had no faith in us*, told us that, if we persisted in "*doing*" this, we should "*dress this young lady to a lunatic asylum!*" We knew just what value to put upon this caution; and, the fact is that, after having spent some years, most praiseworthy, in the self-denying duties of a "*Medium*," this young lady has shown no sign of "*insanity*" whatever, unless the taking to herself of a worthy

husband be considered to be such! Spirits have the power to speak to us audibly, without using the human organism; they have power to make sounds as feeble and yet as distinct as the ticking of a watch, or as loud as though produced by a blacksmith's hammer; they have power to open prison doors, to roll away stones, to untie knotted ropes, and to confound the Materialist with his own clumsy weapons; they have power to make themselves visible, and tangible too, as well to people who are not sensitive as to those who are,—sensitives always having the advantage; they have power to produce lights easily seen by Mediums in a room from which all natural or artificial light is excluded; they have power to write as it were on the wall, or in a mirror, a crystal, or a water-bottle, as fast as a School-mistress may read, and quicker than some Phonographers can write; they have the power to produce scenes in like manner, which Mediums, in their wakeful state, in a darkened room, shall be enraptured with, and shall describe in glowing language; they have the power to cause the prophetic visions of the night, the phenomenon of somnambulism, and the spectral forms of animals and birds which are seen by many at times when Death is not far off; they have the power of conducting the spirit of man himself as it rises, like the winged insect from its chrysalis form, to an atmosphere and a life to which it was a stranger; and they have, therefore, the power to "minister" to man through life, and to convince him, if he will but be convinced, that his mortal form shall "put on immortality," and then to accompany him, at this eventful point of his life's history, amidst the scenes of which he may have had a foretaste or a foreknowledge by means of Spiritualism.

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