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SIX MONTHS' EXPERIENCE

AT HOME OF

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SPIRIT-COMMUNION,

WITH

REPLIES TO QUESTIONS, SOLUTIONS OF DOUBTS
AND DIFFICULTIES, AND DIRECTIONS
FOR ENQUIRERS.

BY A TRUTHSEEKER.

"The inquiry of Truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it; the knowledge of Truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief of Truth, which is the enjoying of it;—is the Sovereign Good of human nature."—BACON.

"It is a saying of Professor Agassiz, that whenever a new and startling fact is brought to light in science, people first say, It is not true; and then, That it is contrary to religion; and lastly, That everybody knew it before. There must, therefore, be men who will bring to light the fact; there must be men bold enough to declare the fact to be the fact when it is questioned; there must be men firm and noble enough to bear the charge of infidelity when this fact is declared contrary to religion * * * If no man will speak unpopular truth, the very first step can never be taken, and spiritual progress becomes a vain dream."—THE REV. H. W. CROSSKEY.

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INTRODUCTION.

I publish these experiences, because, with very few exceptions, there seems to be a nervous dread of testifying to what is nevertheless, by so many, most firmly believed—nay, most surely *known*. “Spiritualists” are, indeed, in a minority at present, but, on that very account, it is desirable that every actual witness should add his testimony to the truth of the phenomena, belief in which is generally regarded as a symptom of some kind of weakness and the production of which is thought to indicate some kind of knavery. But what is a man to do when these phenomena come to him almost without his seeking them? He must either think it *wrong* to look into them, or go on to investigate. He surely cannot be *indifferent* and simply let the thing alone. When it came to me, I did not let it alone; and, though I have only gone a little way, I think we have found enough not only to justify but to urge me to say something on the matter. At all events, I only “speak that I do know, and testify that I have seen.” I believe there are thousands in this country,—to say nothing of the hundreds of thousands in America and France and Germany, whose experiences, at their own firesides, if told, would make mine appear unworthy to be even named. I do not know why these do not tell all they know; all I know is that the fact is as I describe it, and that thousands of intelligent, devout, and well educated people in this country are as convinced, by personal experience, of the reality of these phenomena as they are of any of the most ordinary experiences of daily life.

What I have seen has been chiefly in my own house. We were moved to enquire by no excitement, by no particular belief, by no particular interest in the subject even; certainly by no suggestion from without. We have never been excited, or awe-stricken, or enthusiastic; and a lady in my house, who was our first “medium,” cares but very little about it and has never once asked to sit for manifestations. We have simply been receivers; and what we have received we are neither ashamed nor afraid to tell. We

who have proof of the truth of these things do not ask for belief;—nay, do not wish for belief upon our testimony: but, to put it on the lowest ground, we do say that a case for serious investigation has been abundantly made out; and what we ask is, that earnest and sober-minded men and women shall seek for themselves. There is no need of professional mediums; and seekers need not go beyond their own firesides, as many thousands could testify. Let five or six who are like-minded give but one hour to it two or three times a week,—an hour snatched from gossip, or idling, or vain amusements,—and they would probably find all they need.

I will only add that though I may seem to make much of these outward manifestations, I do not by any means think that we *understand* everything concerning them,—still less do I think we shall end with them:—for there is much to be discovered both as to facts and as to the law under the facts: but we have received a charge to be faithful concerning *whatever* we receive; and we have the highest authority for believing that they who have been faithful over a few things shall be “rulers over many things.”

SIX MONTHS' EXPERIENCE, AT HOME, OF SPIRIT-COMMUNION, &c.

A few years ago there was a great rage for what was called "table turning;" and some distant rumours were heard of "spirit-rapping." The former gave much enjoyment of a certain kind to a vast multitude of idle people who went into the matter at "evening parties" for the sake of the joke, though of the latter, I think, very little was really ever known: but both, it was generally believed, gave ingenious persons an opening for much sleight of hand and led on to a great deal of very pleasant deception. It had its day, and then "good society" looked about for something else to amuse it. But I never saw anything of it: I never knew any one who had seen anything of it: but I had a general impression that the whole thing was "nonsense," and that serious "mediums" were either knaves or fools. But when "the rage" was all over and some years had gone by I was struck with a fact that seemed a thousand times more important than that at twenty thousand evening parties "the thing had been done,"—the fact, I mean, that both in America and England thousands of men and women of whose intelligence, truthfulness, purity, and shrewdness, no one could doubt were quietly rejoicing in what they called *the fact of spirit-communion*: and names "familiar in our mouths as household words" became associated with the "folly." I no longer thought all "mediums" and believers knaves or fools, but I drew the conclusion that it is possible to be very good and very clever and very sensible, and yet very fanciful. But, at last, the thing came to me where I should have least expected it:—it came to my own fireside. I had not to go seeking for a "medium:" I asked for the company of no professor: but it came. One day, at the tea table, I was reading aloud a paragraph on the subject, upon which I commented with

my usual shrug of the shoulders ; but this time we broke into a little conversation on the subject which led, a few days after, to " a sitting ;" a lady, a near relative of mine (for whose carefulness and truthfulness I can answer as for my own : but upon whose carefulness and truthfulness, as will be seen, *we do not at all depend*), and I being the only persons present. We sat at a small oval papier mache table, and in a few minutes it gave unmistakeable signs of moving, and presently it tilted rapidly and rather violently : and we got decided answers to questions. Most of these I forget but one is just worth mentioning. I went over the alphabet letter by letter and the table moved when I came to the letter we were to put down. I forget what my question was, but the answer seemed to be leading us nowhere, and so we left it for the night. The letters spelt were OAKT, and when we got so far I put the paper down, as we agreed it was a muddle. But in the morning my eye rested on the paper and it at once struck me that the first three letters formed the word "*oak*" and that the other word that was coming was "*table*." This did not strike us on the night before because, whatever our question was, I remember the letters did not seem at all to relate to it. But when we sat again I asked whether the words "*oak table*" were being spelt out, and the reply was given in the affirmative ;—the table we were using would not answer so well as a small oak table I used in my study.

I forget how it came about, but in an evening or two we were told, or we found out in some way, that "the spirits" could write through the lady I have referred to, whom I shall hereafter, in this narrative, call the "*medium*."* So she held a pencil, and in a few minutes her hand was violently moved, and presently, out of the chaos of confused lines and circles, a word came written in large characters "*Milly*" or "*Nelly*." We could not tell which, and the medium (who is a slow and deliberate writer and very matter of fact), did not know what it looked like, and did not seem to care. I asked for the word to be written again and it was plainly "*Melly*." I asked for Christian name, and it wrote "No matter : you don't know me." I asked "Were

* But since this was written another hand has also been used by our unseen friends—the hand of one who a few weeks before would not "believe", but who now simply says—"I have no choice".

you a man or woman on this earth?" and the answer came "man." And during our questioning he suddenly wrote, as we thought, "we must," and the medium said, "He is about to say they must go," but the word that came was "sing." This puzzled us both, but on looking at the word that seemed like "*we*" we saw it would do very well for "*you*." So I went to the harmonium, and the medium put her hand down to rest it; when, suddenly, it moved to the tune I was playing, and kept admirable time. This, of course, might be fancy or a thousand other things, but I mention it here because it has an interest for us; and it will be interesting to all who come to see that this writing (which, I now learn, thousands have abundant evidence of even in this country) is of a kind *that entirely shuts out the possibility of its being the unconscious action of the medium.** For instance, words and sentences are again and again written which neither of us can make anything of, and when we ask for these to be written plainer we get them at once, and we can then always see that the words we could not make out are sufficiently like the newly written words to be indeed the same. Indeed, in very many cases, *the writer does not know and cannot at first read what is written,—has, in fact, no idea of what is written.* Besides, the answers generally come in an instant, and are often *quite unexpected*, and sometimes give particulars quite unknown to, or opinions quite different from those held by either of us. We have tested this writing in every possible way, and we are as convinced of the reality of it as the work of intelligent beings beyond ourselves as we are of any of the ordinary facts of life. I copy from a record of some of our sittings a few out of some hundreds of questions and answers thus obtained:—

Is any one here known to us? *Yes.*

Name any one. *Your father is ever with you.*

Is there any one else here we know? *No.*

* So far from it being possible that this writing is due to an "excited imagination" or is the result of an excessive desire to produce the writing, we find that perfect calm and an absence of earnest desire are necessary, and, as far as possible, freedom from thought or any wish whatever. On one occasion, a friend, sitting with us, was told writing could be given through her: and, upon taking the pencil, the hand was indeed moved. We were sitting a little away from the light, and thought nothing *intelligible* had been written, but, on taking the paper to the light, I plainly saw a name. It was that of one quite unknown to the lady who had written it, who indeed thought with me at first that nothing *intelligible* had been written. Cases of this kind are common, and they quite exclude the explanations of "fancy", "unconscious muscular action" &c.

Can he communicate? *No.**

Does this depend on his will or power? *No.*

Does it depend upon us? *Yes, the medium.*

Do you know anything of the "spheres" some speak of as existing in the spirit-world? *Yes.*

Is it true then that the spirit-world is divided into spheres? *Yes.*

How many are there? *Eighteen.*

In what sphere are you? *The sixteenth.*

How many have you been in? *Two.*

[Another was asked,—In what sphere are you? *The fourteenth.* What sphere were you in when you first went to the spirit-world? *The sixth.*]

How long have you been absent from earth? *We do not count years here.* [But we got this information afterward.]

Why do you come thus? *I have no other way.*

Are you happy where you are? *Yes.*

How are you happy? *It is in myself.*

Do others assist in your happiness? *All.*

Are we ever entirely left alone without the presence of unseen spirits? *Never.*

Are we ever left by some? *Yes; they have their work to do.*

Can you answer a mental question of mine? *I want to but cannot. I cannot control my medium.*

How is our friend ——? *All is well.*

Do you mean she is better? *I do not know her; all things are well.*

Are good spirits ever watching us to see no harm can come of this communicating? *Always. Never have any fear.*

What becomes of little children who go from us? *They go to the land of flowers.* [At another time the answer came, very swiftly written,—*They go to the summer-land, or the land of flowers.*]

Do you know one gone from us? *No.*

Could you find out? *I could.*

* Since this answer came, the spirit calling himself our father has communicated. It was with very great difficulty he did so, by writing through the medium. This writing was so badly done that she had no idea of what had been written, and we had to "make it out," which after two or three minutes we easily did. It was a singularly comforting and touching message to one of us.

Will you? *I will.*

What do they in that "land of flowers," can you say?
I wish I could.

Why? for our sakes? *No.*

For yours? *Yes?*

Do the unhappy and the despairing in the spirit-world have teachers and counsellors? *They can make themselves perfect.*

Could we get answers by sounds? *Yes, with patience.*

Should we do better if we asked others to sit with us?
Yes.

It seems as though you had difficulty in writing through this medium? *She is too weak.*

You say you have your work to do. What is that work?
We watch over you on earth; that is one thing out of many.

Can you move the table as — can? *No.*

Why not? *It is the medium.*

How so? *That little child can control the medium better than I can.*

Is she here now? *She is always near you.*

Asking for certain tests, we were answered,—*I could do all you want me to do through another medium.* The words "through another" were so badly written that neither of us could make anything of them, when suddenly the medium's hand was literally flung on to the paper, and the words were written plainer. We could then just see that these *were* the original words.

Once we asked a certain spirit if it desired us to say anything to any one on earth. The answer was spelt out on the alphabet, "*Did you send my other message?*" and upon our reply in the affirmative it left us.

I have avoided as much as possible giving the replies which were simply "yes" or "no," and yet these are often the most instructive, since we can get *what information we want* in this way. But "yes" or "no" are no particular tests for those who do not believe. Those I have given may, more or less, be regarded as test replies, since they were clearly and swiftly given from an intelligence which elaborated its own thought and simply *used* the medium to write or point out the letters, the medium herself often not knowing what was being written or not being able to read

it when written, till we got the intelligible words repeated. But I add a few questions the answers to which were simply "yes" or "no."

Do we take you from your happiness when you come here? *No.*

Do you find that happiness wherever you are? *Yes.*

Do you know what darkness is? *No.*

Are you conscious of any changes such as correspond to our night and day, cold and heat? *No.*

Have *you* come to us because we were thinking and speaking of you? *Yes.*

Have you brought any good spirits with you? *Yes.*

Do you ever see any spirits that are not good here? *Sometimes.*

Have they any power to harm us? *No.*

Are you really very happy? *Yes.*

Is heaven like what you conceived it to be on earth? *No.*

Are you sometimes quite absent from the earth? *Yes.*

If I were to leave the body I should not be long finding you? *No.*

I should see you at once? *Yes.*

You say my father is present: can he influence me? *Yes.*

Has he power to suggest thoughts or throw light into my mind though he cannot communicate in this way? *Yes.*

Do you remember the objects you saw here on earth? *Yes.*

Can you see our bodies? *No.* (We expected "*Yes.*")

Our spirits? *Yes.*

These objects in the room? *No.*

Do you see anything that corresponds to them? *Yes.*

Some kind of spiritual representation of them? *Yes.*

Do some spirits desire to communicate more than others? *Yes.*

Are they in this respect like what they were on earth? *Yes.*

Have you real objects of sight in your world? *Yes.*

Outside of ourselves? *Yes.*

Apart from ourselves? *No!* (We expected "*Yes.*")

Do they answer then to your thoughts and affections and sympathies? *Yes.*

Do you in some sense create them then? *Yes.*

Do you know anything of space and time? *Yes.* (We expected "*No.*")

But are you hampered by them? *No.*

Is distance or nearness with you determined by sympathy or desire? *Yes.*

Then may we say that affections and conditions of spirit with you answer in some way to space and time with us? *Yes.*

Do you know how grateful we are for these communications? *Yes.*

Is it right for us to seek them? *Yes.*

Are we nearing the age in which these things will be more believed in and better understood? *Yes.*

Some of us think they will do much to save us from the growing materialism of the age? Is this so? *Yes.* [The replies to the last few questions and some others like them, were astonishingly clear, swift, and emphatic.]

Have you seen me before? *No.*

Having seen me, would you know my father, now in your world? *Yes.*

Do you think and speak of God in your world? *Yes.*

Have you clearer ideas of His personality? *No.* [Let it be remembered that the best spirits tell us *to depend on our own judgments.* They very often know little more than we do, and will give opinions very different from one another, according to their light, or the character of the media.]

Is it true that there are two separate places answering to some men's ideas of Heaven and Hell? *No.*

May the saddest and wickedest spirits rise to goodness and happiness? *Yes.*

Have they all aids and teachers? *Yes.*

Can you do anything answering to our moral wrong? *No.*

Can you disobey the law of your sphere? *No.*

Is that because yours is a high sphere? *Yes.*

Do you know anything corresponding to our weariness or pain? *No.*

Do you ever need any kind of rest? *No.*

Do other spirits know that you are communicating? *Yes.*

Does it give them pleasure? *Yes.*

Have you any idea how you move the table? *Yes.*

Do you do it by moving our hands? *No.*

By gathering, in some way, forces from us and using them yourself? *Yes*.

These questions were not all put to the same spirit. They are only given as specimens of the questions we ask—sometimes the replies were faint and doubtful and sometimes wonderfully emphatic,—a “*Yes*” being repeated again and again; and not seldom the table has gone quite over to the questioner.

These, then, are a few of the questions we have put and the answers we have received,—a few out of some hundreds. Sometimes the answers come rapidly and with almost startling violence: at other times, when the answers are obtained by writing, the hand and the pencil seem unable to begin, and the fingers and arm are curiously but not always painfully twisted for even two or three minutes. It is a curious fact that letters are often transposed. *No* is sometimes spelt “on” and *am* “ma”, for *heart* we have had “haert”, and for *husband* we have had “husabnd.” Once we got the following through the alphabet—U R yrev doog ot tel em omec: I ekil ot emoc: M—— si os ypah: lla os thgirb: M—— lliw nrael erom. The medium’s hands were moved to these letters with moderate speed. The words are all spelt backward; and we could not think what was coming. Why they were spelt backwards we know not: perhaps according to some law not known to us,—(something answering perhaps to our “negatives” and “positives” in photography) perhaps as a gratuitous test, for this backward writing and spelling is certainly to be added to the facts that shut out the theory of “unconscious muscular action” &c.

Very frequently we have “*U*” for “you” and “*R*” for “are”, as above, and some curious and unexpected attempts have been made to save time and convey ideas with the fewest possible letters. Sometimes an answer to an interpolated question will come in the middle of the answer to another question. Thus, having asked whether the “spirit” would give us sounds on the table, we got for answer, slowly, by writing, “*I will yes try*”. I thought the answer was finished at “will” and then asked another question, and the “*Yes*” was given at once while “*try*” came trailing after.

After two or three evenings in the company of "Melly" we had an experience that I thought would lead to the putting a complete stop to our investigations. Hitherto, everything had all been singularly pleasant and happy; and the influence during writing, the medium said, was simply like a very gentle electric current from the shoulder down the arm; but one evening we had a very disagreeable change. Her hand and arm were cruelly twisted, while the pencil, as if trying to write, went through several folds of paper and ripped them up. We gave it up for an hour or two, the medium being distressed and in some pain, the gentle sensation down her arm having been changed, she said, for a violent and continuous shock as from a very powerful battery. I then made an alphabet with large letters written on a piece of pasteboard, and a card pointer. With this we got to know the name of the spirit,—one whom we had known in the flesh, whose coming answered somewhat to her life on earth. The replies we got to questions and the messages sent by means of this alphabet were amazing. The medium's hand moved violently and with great rapidity from letter to letter, her eyes being hidden in her left hand, as she was still in pain and rather distressed. *She had no idea of what was being spelt out*, and yet the letters came as fast as I could write them.

We were careful to enquire afterwards of "Melly," whether any harm could come to us from such communicants, and we were distinctly told that we were not to fear. In this case there were special reasons why this spirit should come; and since that first evening she has come more than once, but we find we can control her easily, and, in time, good might be done to us as well as to her by her presence. I do not feel inclined to give any of the questions we put to her or any of the answers we received from her; but I believe no one could have witnessed what I did without coming to the conclusion that we were receiving communications from *some* intelligent invisible being. I might add, that we always know when she is present, for, in an instant, all the disagreeable symptoms of her presence shew themselves in the medium; and, when she departs, they as suddenly disappear. I will simply repeat that (although, of course, the experience is not a pleasant one), we feel quite

certain that no harm can come of it, and that, if we chose, we could at any moment, and perhaps permanently, compel her to leave us. But we are assured that no harm can come to us, and that the great essentials in these investigations are faith, charity, courage, purity, and love.*

Another spirit visits us now almost continually whose coming is always delightful, accompanied and followed by nothing but what is pleasant to all. This spirit, with no one near the table but myself and my sister, has carried or rather thrown it completely round our room. It delights in music and, with the table, will keep time to my playing, often ending by flinging the table along till it comes close up to me. Any one may smile who likes. We smile too, but we *know* that we have had every opportunity of proving that the thing is entirely beyond our control. This spirit can only write its name, and this it has done not only through my sister but, to their amazement, through two other persons out of the four who have tried. Sometimes, instead of its name, it will draw flowers in a very curious way. These came at first *utterly unexpected by us*. This spirit wishes us to test the reality of its presence in various ways. One evening I asked whether it or any spirits present could read my mind? and the answer was *yes*. To test this, I thought of a number, and *took my hands off the table*; and it instantly moved the number of times I had thought of. I thought of another, with the same result. This test has been often repeated, with curious results. Many of the attempts have been unsuccessful, but if not exactly correct there is generally some curious connection between the number thought of and the number given. Sometimes it is all wonderfully clear: at other times we seem in a fog. We are told that the difficulty is in us in some way; but the mistakes are often good tests; for whereas with our hands *off* the table the number has been given without a word being spoken, at other times with our hands *on*, the table persists in giving the numbers wrong *against our will*; so that *our* "unconscious" agency is utterly out of the question. There is nothing, I grant, particularly elevating in

* Since writing this, the influence of this spirit has greatly changed. She is finding light, and hope, and peace, in the company of her now discovered angel-guides; and we now learn, with thankfulness, that we can do good even to those we have hitherto deemed beyond the reach of our entreaties or our prayers.

this portion of our experience, but it is a portion of it, and it must take its place for what it is worth.

It is worth mentioning that both in the movements of the table and the writing, every spirit has its own peculiarities ; and some of these, particularly as regards the writing, are most remarkable. A small neat hand-writing, with a gentle influence, will *suddenly* be changed for huge massive letters, with a violent influence, which is of itself quite sufficient to show that a fresh communicant has arrived. Occasionally we get spirits who can give no account of themselves whatever,—who seem only to have just power enough to move the writer's hand on the table without giving anything intelligible ; and it is very curious to see how, sometimes, *all of a sudden*, an old friend will literally “rush” in.

We have not had intelligible “raps” or *sounds*, as we prefer to call them, yet : but they are promised, and, more than once, we have had them distinctly enough, but we could get no intelligible answers by them. But I have heard these sounds elsewhere under conditions that shut out all possibility of deception and with results that left no room for doubt. More than two hundred miles away from home, sitting with two persons who had probably never heard of my name,—who certainly did not know me,—I received before I had been in the room half an hour, the name of one who had been very dear to me, with a variety of minute and singular particulars concerning herself and others, accompanied by a singularly timely message ; and all given with a promptness that left no room for the shadow of a doubt.

With regard to the movements of the table I may say that I have seen *in a friend's house* (with no public “medium” or “professor” near), an immensely heavy dining table, with a man upon it, leisurely taken up nearly to the ceiling, and let down as gently as though it had been a feather, complying, moreover, with our request as to its particular movements ; and all this without a hand upon it. Of course this will be put down to some “trickery,” but we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and this is all we can do. In my own house, and with no one present beyond the medium, myself, and a visitor (a minister) whom she had never seen, whom I had not seen

for more than twelve years, and of whose relatives I knew absolutely nothing, we have received, within a quarter of an hour, communications from a spirit who gave his age at the time of his departure from earth, the year of his departure, the month, the day of the month, the day of the week, and a variety of other particulars, with a readiness and accuracy that could not have been more perfect if we had known every particular and had deliberately given the replies ourselves. The visitor I speak of had never witnessed anything of the kind before and I believe he sat down without any particular faith in it ; but with what faith he rose up, after nearly two hours communion *with the spirit of his father* I need not say. A very similar case occurred some little time after. I copy my account of it from a letter of mine in *The Inquirer*. "A gentleman was in my house whom I had only just seen two or three times before for an hour or two, whose surname I only just knew, but of whose family I knew absolutely nothing. The lady who sat in the room with us did not even know the little I have described. He was, in fact, practically a perfect stranger to us both ; and we three sat in a room by ourselves. He sat away from us, and the lady and I sat at a table in the room : the lady (who a little while ago was utterly incredulous) having a slate and pencil before her. I asked whether any spirit was present who knew our visitor. The answer, written by the lady with a violent but not painful movement of the whole arm and hand was 'yes.' 'Will you write your name?' I asked. L——, the name of our visitor, was written, in a strong, rough way. "Are you a relative of his?" I asked. The answer was again 'yes.' 'Please to write the degree of your relationship,' I said. Instantly the word came 'father.' I asked our visitor whether his father was really gone from earth, and he said *yes*. I then asked, 'Do you wish to give us some proof, through this lady who knows nothing whatever of you, that you are indeed the father of our friend?' A very vehement '*yes*' was the reply. I charged our visitor not to say a word till the replies came, when I would ask him if they were correct. And then I said 'Please tell us how long it is since you left this world.' A number was written, but so badly done that we asked the number through the table. I said, 'Is it years since you left this world?' '*Yes*'

(i.e. three movements, according to our understanding, three for *yes*, and one for *no*). 'Please to move the table once for every year.' *Eight* strong, distinct, equal, and unhesitating movements came. 'Is it eight years?' 'Yes.' I asked our friend if this was correct, as we knew absolutely nothing about it, and he replied it was. 'Is it more than eight years?' I asked. 'Yes.' 'Is it eight years and some months?' 'No.' 'Weeks?' 'Yes.' 'What month was it, then? was it January?' 'No.' 'Was it February?' 'Yes.' This also was correct. 'Did you go from earth in the night?' 'No.' 'In the day time?' 'Yes.' 'It was three o'clock in the afternoon,' said our friend. 'As another test of your personality,' I said, 'kindly give us your age at the time of your departure.' The table then gave sixty-one strong, decided, movements, and one feeble or hesitating one. 'Were you between sixty-one and sixty-two?' I asked. 'Yes.' I asked if this was correct, and our friend said it was. Now I simply ask attention to these facts,—that, all through, our visitor sat *away* from the table, that I could not even see him where he was sitting, that the replies were all immediate, clear and correct, and that the whole thing took not much more time than I take in writing this brief account of it." We have had several cases of this kind; and, more than once, a year, a month, and the date of the month, were given, which no one present remembered or knew to be correct at the time, but which only proved to be so after reflection or enquiry. I have even known such particulars disputed by the persons concerned, who nevertheless, after investigation, confessed "the table knew better than they did."

We have had communications from spirits who have only been gone from earth a few days. One evening, endeavouring to identify some one who was communicating I asked its age at the time of its departure from earth; and seventy-five firm steady movements of the table were given. I thought at once of an old friend lately gone, and asked for the first letter of his name quite expecting to get it, but to my surprise we got a letter which I could not at first identify as the initial of any one I knew, but on asking for the other letters I knew who it was; and the age was correct, as also the number of days since she left this world. Other

particulars were *not* quite correct. The singular thing about this is that we were not thinking of her but of a friend well known to us: so that the replies came *contrary* to the thoughts and full expectations of those who were sitting;—a proof sufficient, one would think, that intelligence not our own was at work.

And now I will briefly and frankly look at the objections that are generally urged against, or the questions that are usually asked concerning, these investigations: and though I do not profess to be wise in these matters I feel that it may be useful to myself and others if, in some plain way, I give some account of what *may* be said in reply to questions that nearly every one would feel inclined to put. But, before I do so, I would just mention that “table moving” and other physical manifestations are not all,—are, indeed, by advanced spiritualists, little cared for. I will give an illustration of a higher kind of spiritual influence and power. In the house of a friend, more than a hundred miles from my own home, a lady being present who had only known my *name* a few hours, and who knew absolutely nothing of me, told me in the presence of all what she could *see*. It was like the reading of a printed page, or rather like a description of a series of minute and exact photographs. She described a being who for fourteen years has been (I never knew why) the first in my thoughts, minutely picturing scenes and little incidents which I believe no one in the world knew or remembered but myself, concluding with the statement that this being had always particularly influenced me as one who had a “charge concerning me,” thus accounting for what I have always *felt* without being able to assign a reason for it.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ; SOLUTIONS OF DOUBTS AND DIFFICULTIES.

But how can these things be?

No one knows. No one professes to know. All we know is that, with the deliberate and careful shutting-out of everything that could possibly impose upon us, hundreds of thousands of good, sober-minded, well educated, intelligent, and by no means superstitious people, see undoubted manifestations of power and receive clear indications of intelligence which make it absolutely certain that unseen beings are availing themselves of certain conditions in us (though, at present, not understood by us), for the indication of their presence and the expression of their thoughts. *This we know*, if we know anything : all else is "the land that is yet to be possessed." But this question, "How can these things be?" opens up to us an enquiry which is of thrilling interest and of immense practical importance apart from the question of spirit-communion :—the influence, I mean of mind upon matter,—of the spirit upon the flesh. We need not be believers in spirit intercourse in order to be believers in unseen forces and the marvellous subserviency of matter to mind. The mystery of the movement of a table or of a "medium's" hand by a spirit is not really greater than the movement of my hand by my spirit. My body is the servant of my spirit : that is to say, my body is *my* servant, for I am spirit and not flesh ; and I simply use my bodily organs which, for beneficent and necessary ends, are vitally allied to my spirit during my brief sojourning here. We see this in other directions. It is not the seen cable that flashes the message across the Atlantic—thousands of miles in less time than it takes me to write the phrase "thousands of miles : " it is the unseen force, the mysterious power of whose very existence we are only just beginning to be made aware.

Granting that there *is* an immortal life and that intelligent beings, who are not spectres dolefully bereft of bodies, but real beings who know that the flesh is the real spectre ;* and granting that these beings *can* approach us, the wonder

* But, alas for us ! it is much to be feared that, with all our *expressions* of belief in the soul and the immortal life, we have a very imperfect hold upon any idea that gives us real knowledge and joy. We shrink from the idea of a "spirit"—of a "disembodied spirit !" and really, in our deepest hearts, do *not* believe that "the things which are unseen" are real and abiding.

is, not that they manifest their presence *at all* in the way of physical phenomena but that they do not manifest themselves continually : for so far from it being a marvel that spirit should act upon matter, it is a fact that matter is everywhere the servant of spirit in some form : so true it is, even in chemistry, that "the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal." But as regards the phenomena itself, it is a simple question of evidence : and it would be a marvel, far transcending all the reported marvels of spirit-communion, if the millions of earnest, honest, and intelligent men and women, *in all parts of the world* and without any knowledge of one another, are imposing upon themselves when they affirm that they have seen, again and again, in their own homes, extraordinary manifestations of power and clear indications of intelligence behind the power which leave them no alternative but to believe that unseen beings are near.

But is it not possible that some curious law may be at work which, while quite excluding spirit agency, would, if understood, show that all the phenomena are unconsciously produced by those who sit ?

If it were only a question of a moving table this *might* be so. For a highly-wrought or excited imagination, or a strong desire, *might* possibly lead to unconscious muscular movements. But the mere moving of a table is not what is relied on (though, even if that were all, it would be impossible to explain what thousands have seen,—the deliberate and repeated lifting or moving of heavy bodies without the application of any *perceptible* force). What is chiefly relied upon is the *intelligence* displayed behind the force,—intelligence which has been tested in every conceivable way by vast numbers of well-educated, sensible people who are as little inclined as the rest of mankind to be deceived by themselves or others. Intelligence is generally taken to indicate life and personality ; and if, therefore, some unconscious thing like a table, by certain signs, tells us what we did not know, communicates ideas we did not cherish, expresses wishes we were not prepared for, we can only conclude that some one is *using* the unconscious thing : and if that "some one" is plainly no spirit in the flesh we are shut up to the conclusion that it is a spirit out of the

flesh. It will settle nothing and it ought to satisfy no one to say "It is your fancy." Fancy will not lift heavy masses of dead matter without hands; fancy will not produce sharp clear sounds, in swift reply to questions; fancy will not tell you what you did not and could not know; fancy will not persuade you into something you did *not* expect and did not believe till you were obliged.

But is it right for us to look into these hidden things?

The answer to this might be—But *are* they hidden? What if God *desires* us to investigate that we may be blest with the knowledge of influences that now, by reason of our neglect or unbelief, are hidden from our eyes! There are many apparently hidden things that we have already looked into, only to find them store-houses of good, kept through all the ages until now, for us who by seeking have found. But the question of what is intentionally and mercifully hidden from us is really the question of what we do not and *cannot* know: for if we find it *possible* to investigate any fact or law of God, that is in itself a proof not only that we *may* but that we *ought* to seek in that direction; for whatever path God has *laid open* to us is laid open for us to enter in; and we ought to call no investigation "wrong" that God has made possible. There are, indeed, no utterly forbidden ways in nature except those which are by God shut up, so that we can neither walk in them nor see them. To behold them and to be able to approach them is to be invited into them. But, if there is any truth at all in the facts as they are here represented, we have direct and reliable testimony that it *is* right and that it is even our duty to enter into these investigations. We have asked the question of every intelligent and good spirit we have communicated with, and the answer, in the affirmative, has in every case been emphatic, immediate, and plain. But, apart from every other consideration, what is there in this communion to make it "not right"? It is only a superstition, born of ignorance and fear, that leads us to shrink from contact with the departed. If we really believed and felt that theirs was a real-world,—a world more real than ours,—and that they were beings like ourselves, only happier and dwelling in a clearer atmosphere and a

brighter light, we should be utterly rid of the old shrinking ; and, with the shrinking, would vanish the distance, the ignorance, and the dread. But I go farther, and affirm that it is not only "right" for us to pursue these investigations, but that it is a great *duty* which we ought to feel a very serious and urgent one. Let us beware lest we mistake an unworthy *fear of consequences* for a wholesome fear of doing wrong, and let us remember that we are in God's hands, and that it becomes us not to shrink from *any* thing He is shewing us, however unusual, unlikely, and impossible it may seem. We cannot tell what He has in store for us, or how near He may bring us to Himself even while we are on earth ; and if it be a fact that He is indeed permitting His unseen children to commune with us, be it ours to gratefully accept the blessing, fearing nothing but believing all things, while we seek in truth and love, knowing this well, that wherever we look "The pure in heart shall see God."*

But how is it that the possibility of Spirit-communion has only just been discovered?

Who shall say it has only just been discovered ? Believers in the Old and New Testaments should not say so : and careful readers of biography and history, after allowing an immense deal for fancy and fraud, will perhaps be willing to admit that there must be *something* under all the traditions of spirit-manifestation that have never "ceased from among the children of men." But even though we were indeed coming now to the discovery of the possibility of this spirit-intercourse for the first time, what is there in that to excite anything more than a prudent care and a very decided determination to thoroughly sift everything connected with it ? The truth is we are in the very midst of great discoveries : and it may be that this thing has been reserved for this age, with its enormous accumulation of material interests, on purpose to save us from being utterly overcome

* "Others also believed what they saw and heard, but could not think it right to 'dive into these secrets, or mysteries of the divine'. What they saw was beautiful, but too wonderful for them ; and they liked better to pursue the older and the beaten track,—that path underneath which the spirit has been trodden out of life, and life has left religion, and which blindly ignores the divine command, 'Seek and ye shall find : knock and it shall be opened unto you' The old and beaten way, perchance, has lasted long enough, and may have had its day ; for there are signs in the times now of the yearning for something that will bring us nearer and nearer still to the great Father of us all."—W. M. Wilkinsons "Spirit Drawings."

and absorbed by them? I can imagine the reply that some may feel inclined to make to this, but I am not dismayed at it. "And so," it may be said, "You propose to save us from the dominion of materialism by what is really an exhibition of materialism, under the name of *spiritualism*." But what if that is God's way of dealing with His children? and what if, meeting us in the path of our danger, He saves us in the very thing that might otherwise destroy us? We are everywhere asking for "solid proofs," and never before did men ask so persistently for these: never before were men less inclined to be superstitious or to put faith in things that could not prove themselves to "practical men." What, then, if this "asking" is to be followed by "receiving?" and if, as the result of this "knocking," the "door" is to be "opened"? But, however we may account for the fact (if fact it be) that now, for the *first* time, the possibility of spirit-communion is being discovered, it is certainly our duty not so much to ask why the discovery came not before as to see to it that we investigate it if now it has come at all. It is a simple question of evidence; and the facts, witnessed by many thousands of intelligent persons, should be enquired into and sifted, that the law or the delusion at the bottom of it all may be known.

But how is it that so few know anything about it or believe anything concerning it?

If this *were* so, it would be no argument against the reality of these manifestations, for nothing is plainer than that everything must have a beginning, and that the truth-finders must be in a minority before they can be in a majority: and we know that, with regard to *all* good and true things, believers and recipients are for ages few and far between. This is God's will, and it always has been so. But it is not a fact that but few know anything or believe anything concerning these things. The unbelief, the fear, and the thoughtless verdict passed upon these investigations by the world, indeed, prevent many making known what they have received; and keep up, at least in England, a kind of mystery and secrecy where if men were wise, judging justly and soberly of all things, everything would be as open as the day; but many thousands even in this country are ready to testify that, with every disposition to join the rest

of the world in unbelief, they *cannot* resist the overwhelming evidences that have *come* to them : while in America, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, live in the light of this new experience, founding churches, even, and building a pure faith upon it ; and this, without apostles or missionaries, but simply as the result of what intelligent men and women, thousands of miles apart, and without communication one with the other, have seen, heard, and received. In Russia, in France, in Germany, in Italy also—to say nothing of the millions in “The East”), many thousands, without any particular desire to spread abroad the tidings of what they have received, are earnest and intelligent “believers,” having daily personal experience of these things : and these all would say, “We speak that we do know and testify that we have seen.” And amongst these who, in our own and other countries, “believe,” are numbered many who, by their education, intelligence, and long service in every good cause, have earned such a title to respect, that their testimony ought, of itself, to furnish a reason for earnest and sober investigation. For more, no one asks : but for this we do ask, lest haply we miss the blessing of those who, being “not forgetful to entertain strangers, have entertained angels unawares.”

But what good is likely to be answered by it?

Perhaps not much if we are *perfect* in our faith and in our hold upon the life to come : not much if we have never lost a dear face that we cannot help thinking of as in the grave : not much if we are not hungering and thirsting to live as near as we can to spiritual things. But if there is in our hearts, what almost all at times must feel,—a secret hunger of doubt, or a weary sense of the awful distance that so far severs our “lost” ones from us that, however we may hope to be near them when all is over here, we cannot help feeling lonely now ; or if we ever feel it at all hard to walk altogether by faith, in hope of the glory that *shall be* revealed ; or if the hymn of our joy could be made sweeter and clearer and stronger by the triumphant word “I know” instead of the pensive word “I believe,”—then we can answer the question, with much assurance, though we cannot tell *all* the good this spirit-communion may yet do for us. We may not learn any great secrets thereby ; we may not

learn indeed anything beyond what we know (though this would hardly be the case), but it would be something to have clear and undoubted proof,—such proof as, in our present condition as dwellers in the flesh, would carry most certain conviction to us,—that our beloved ones whom we deemed far away were near: and especially if we could learn from them that their nearness to earth did not involve the sacrifice of Heaven, since they found their perfect bliss in the love of God, of good, and of each other in a Heaven that, for them, was everywhere. “What good will it do us?” Not much certainly, if we think only of the good of visible *use*: no more good than it does us to clasp the hand of a dear friend and look into his beaming eyes. But “good” is not all in what is spoken or done: and I think any mother who had “lost” her little one, or any orphan child who had been left to fight life’s battle alone, or any dear friend who trembles to look at an open grave, would hardly ask me “what good” it would be to us to know that the unseen ones can give us signals that they are supremely happy and that they are near. For, consider it; if we could but be really *convinced* of it, if we could be *sure* that the beings we thought had gone from us were near, if our poor word “I hope” could be changed for the triumphant word “*I know*,” if we could be, by themselves, assured of their happiness, and of their tender though never painful sympathy with us, if we could be made to feel that the life and light of Heaven are forever beaming into our cold dark world,—who will say that this would be nothing? Why, to some, it would be as “life from the dead.” And, for myself, however settled my faith may be in the reality of the heavenly world, I humbly confess that, as one who is still in the flesh and who is therefore most open to receive and most dependent upon the evidences of the senses, I gratefully welcome that which condescends to my weakness and appeals to that which is, at present, the chief source of my convictions, giving me such intimations of the nearness of unseen intelligent beings as convinces me of a fact in the ordinary way. But, beyond this, it is not possible for any one to say what may come of these investigations. We are, as yet, only feeling after the laws that govern us in our relationship to the spirit-world; and what God may be leading us on to we cannot say. He has led men on many a time before,

when they knew not whither they were going. We only know one thing, and of that we may be always sure,—that only good can come of following where God seems to lead : and He *does* lead us when facts show the way.

But how can we suppose that God permits immortal spirits to leave Heaven to come to manifest themselves in this way on earth?

But no one says they *do* “leave Heaven.” On the contrary, every spirit tells us that our idea of Heaven as a separate place, occupying space and bounded as a city might be, is a wrong one,—that spiritual conditions determine spiritual localities, and that place and time are not known to them in the same way and with the same results as they are known to us. Heaven is where love is, and where purity and heavenly spirits are : and, wherever these are, there is “joy unspeakable and full of glory.” And as for the question,—How can we suppose that God will allow them thus to come and manifest themselves? We can only ask, in reply, another question,—What if they are *sent*? What if the New Testament means what it says when it asks,—“Are they not *all ministering spirits, sent forth* to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation?” Or what if it means what it says when it tells us that “we also are surrounded with a great cloud of witnesses?” But this question—How can we suppose that God will permit it? is one that the simple facts must answer : and here it is enough to show that *it is so* ; and that, whether we can “suppose” it or not, it is plain that He *does* permit it, and allows us even to be told that it is all according to His will. But, in good truth, this difficulty arises only from our mistaken ideas of Heaven and heavenly joy,—from our inbred idea, too, that Heaven is a place “far, far away :” and so it startles us and makes us doubt, to be told that, to the good Father, we are but as one family, and that His children who have “crossed the flood” are not living idly in an idle world, but are “about their Father’s business,” and that, as they have told us again and again, they have their work to do, and that they not only can stretch hands to us from “across the flood” but can verily return to us again and again on missions of love and mercy. And yet we know that it *is* so, and that they come to us when we lay down

the poor body "to die," so that when we open our spirit-eyes we may find ourselves surrounded by the loved, the lost, but now the regained and the blessed for ever. *Is all this* what we suppose God cannot permit? Apart from evidence, it is what we should suppose a loving God *would* permit; *but now we know He not only permits it but desires us to see that it is so.*

But will the happy in Heaven want to return here to manifest themselves thus?

This question we have partly answered in considering whether God will permit them thus to come. It all depends upon our ideas of Heaven and of the joys of the blessed ones. If we continue to think of Heaven as a distant place, bounded by walls and shut in by gates, and of the heavenly joy of one that needs to exclude all else, then it will indeed be hard to think of a bright and happy spirit turning away from the scene of its bliss and coming down once more to our abodes of woe: but if we can once really master the true spiritual idea of Heaven and of heavenly bliss we shall emancipate ourselves from the limitations of earth and of the flesh and see that Heaven to a heavenly soul may be *wherever* it goes in the universe of its God. But surely the heavenly ones are not all selfishness and indolence, clinging to Heaven only as a "happy place," no more concerned with the needs and sympathies of earth! And surely if to be most like Jesus here on earth is to go about doing good, to be most like him in Heaven will not be to think only of pleasure, idleness and ease, so that it would be considered a hardship or a loss of bliss to go or to be sent to watch over those who are struggling still on earth! But apart from this, why should we think that spirits miraculously and in a moment change all their sympathies, all their tastes, and all their affections, when they depart from this earth, so that they no more think of what has been, but part abruptly and instantly from all their former life? To be "absent from the body" is indeed to be "present with the Lord;" but to be "present with the Lord" is not to go away from earth. Are we not always in Thy presence, O Father! and when Thou shalt presently promote us out of the body shall we not still have to look upward for ever, to fresh paths that may lead us nearer and nearer unto Thee!

But these facts, if facts they be, will change all our ideas of Heaven and Hell?

And why not? It is not the first time that the world has had to change its ideas of Heaven and Hell. There is a vast interval between the idea of Hell, as a pit where God keeps the large majority of His creatures alive only to torture them for ever with horrible fire and cruel fiends, or of Heaven as the lofty dwelling-place of a favoured few who look over the glorious battlements and see, with loud cries of triumph, "the smoke of the torment rise up for ever and ever," and the idea of Hell as only another school of discipline, where a loving Father seeks to purge His children of their sin that they may be worthy to see His face, and of Heaven as the source and centre of all light, beneficence, peace, and truth, and love, the final haven of rest and yet the endless sphere for the blessed activity of all souls. And yet we have travelled over all the ground that lies between these two ideas; or if some cling to the idea of an eternal Hell, they have given up the fire; and we but seldom hear now of Heaven as a place that resounds with shouts of triumph over the tortures of the damned. All that is changed. And, in good truth, it will not be a long step for us to take now, if we go on to see that the two *localities*, called "Heaven" and "Hell," have no existence except in the imaginations of men who are struggling on towards light; but that the life of the soul hereafter, while being determined by its life here and now, is a life of unceasing education, discipline, and progress; and that degrees of blessedness and of pain in the future world are as numerous as the varied spiritual conditions of the dwellers there. The bliss, indeed, of the pure and holy, the gentle and the beautiful, in the spirit-world is, in truth, such as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived;" but it is a bliss that does not need to *isolate* itself,—to shut out the sight of the outlying worlds of The Great King,—it is a bliss that is not conditioned by ignorance, and that does not depend upon selfish oblivion. And the sorrows of the impure, the ungente, and the morally and spiritually deformed, are woeful indeed; but they are sorrows that are self-inflicted, that grow out of the spiritual condition of the unhappy ones; and, before these, lie open all

the better ways that lead to purity and light and peace ; and, around these, wait nobler souls whose dear employment it is to help the fallen ones to rise. Vast spiritual intervals, indeed, answering to our limitations of space and time, lie between those who dwell in the light of purity and those who still abide in the shadow of evil ; but these are not intervals such as we think of when we think of space ; they are intervals of spiritual condition—of affections, of sympathies, and desires ; and these *create* the spirit spheres in which the spirits dwell, *even as they do here*. What if we have to “alter our ideas” of the other life, so as to admit of these facts ? We shall only have got rid of ideas which outrage reason, shock the heart, and falsify experience,—we shall have come to ideas which agree with all the facts of life here, and which are in accordance with our best and purest and noblest thoughts of God and the soul of man.

But if the spirits of the departed are near us they must be sharers in our misery.

And even so many a poor heart has cried out in the moment of its sorrow—Thank God, she is removed from the knowledge of all this woe ! But what if they see everything in a new light ?—what if they know the end from the beginning ?—what if, beholding us from their bright world, all God’s ways are made clear and plain, and what if the beauty of God’s presence makes all things new ? It is only what St. Paul saw when he said that “our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” And if that could be so to one who was even then borne down with the heat and burden of the day, how much truer will that be to our dear ones who *know* what St. Paul only *hoped* or *believed* !

But it seems an unworthy and degrading thing for spirits to manifest themselves in the way described, as producing physical and material phenomena.

So it does ; and only when we see how they must love us, to be led to take this way of convincing us that they are nigh,—only then shall we forget the apparent absurdity of

an immortal spirit moving a table or producing sounds upon it, and gratefully accept what we know to be a fact without complaining of the character of the means which are necessary to produce the kind of fact *we* need. If *we* were not in the flesh, and if *we* did not need appealing-to through the senses, and if we could receive signals in any other way, there would speedily be an end to what is now dismissed as the joke of "table turning" and "spirit rapping:" but, so long as this is the *most ready and convincing way* open to them, so long, if we offer the right conditions, shall we receive what we need. But, after all, what is there "undignified" or "absurd" in a spirit moving a table, if *it wishes to convey ideas to us and if it can readily do so thus?* We sit at the table together in the flesh,—pleasant faces gather there day by day, little children grow up around it, friends are invited to it, some of our kindest words are spoken around it, and many happy hours with old and young are spent about it. It is only *our* fault that it seems an "undignified" object for a spirit to move. It certainly is the most *convenient*, if we have to sit for these manifestations at all. It may be, however,—nay! it is almost certain—that in time we shall get beyond these methods of communicating and learn some other and apparently more dignified way: but meanwhile it would be as well for us to remember that, to wise minds and pure hearts, great ends can dignify the poorest means. Nothing is trivial that produces great results: and it shows littleness and not greatness of mind when unpretending means are despised. It is desirable that no one shall believe anything on this matter except as the result of his own experience, and "tables" are used simply because they are nigh at hand and available for all. If we had said,—some rare and precious vessel must be employed, we should have been challenged to use some more familiar thing: but now that a homely and convenient object is employed the objection is made that to use it is degrading and absurd. But it is a simple question of *fact*; and it is not for us to say what means are dignified enough for beings who perhaps think less of means than of ends, and who are too wise now to be very conscious of the limitations of our prejudice or our pride: for it is "our prejudice or our pride" that makes anything in God's world seem "common and unclean." At the same time, I desire to record my own conviction that these physical manifesta-

tions *do* belong to the lowest form of spirit-communion; that, in many cases, the spirits manifesting themselves in this way are not of a high order, and that if we are to find the true beauty and the true uses of spirit-communion we must press on to something beyond. This we are doing, and the results are even now at the door.

But why do not the spirits come to all?—Why this need of “mediums”?

Now in the first place, it seems hardly reasonable to ask for effects where they are not sought, and where the conditions are neither complied-with nor believed-in: and in the second place it is not at all certain that these manifestations would not come to all *if all would only seek to comply with the conditions which govern these manifestations*: and in the last place, no one can tell yet what is the law concerning “mediumship” or to what extent it might be developed *in all*. The probability is that, more or less, we are all “mediums” of some kind or another, and the certainty is that, more or less, all contribute in some way to the result where manifestations are obtained. But even though this were not so, does it not seem in the highest degree unscientific and illogical to complain that certain effects depend upon certain causes, and that the relation between the worlds of matter and spirit is a relation conditioned and governed by law? “If the spirits desire to communicate, let them,” men say,—“they probably know where to find us: why should we go seeking mediums?” It would be quite as wise to ask “Why should we go seeking telescopes or electric batteries?” Jupiter, indeed, may be over all our heads at the same hour, and all the electric forces are around us every moment; but if we would see the moons of Jupiter we must go to the telescope or construct one of our own; and if we would have any of the phenomena of electricity we must seek or make a battery. If these manifestations were a matter of favour, depending upon the unseen beings around us, it might indeed be urged,—“If they want to communicate, let them:” but their world is a world of law even as ours is, and their being, in relation to each other and to us, is a being conditioned from first to last by law. But, even as it is, who shall say that they have not all along been communing with us, though unseen and unfelt by us?—who can tell what

they have suggested to us or done for us, in so far as our conditions enabled them to influence and help us? And if they are ever to give us manifest tokens of their presence, that shall more directly indicate that they are nigh, who are we, living in a world as we do where every event and where every phenomenon is governed by unalterable and steady law,—who are we that we should complain when we discover that law obtains also in their high world limiting or determining their capacities and powers? Electricity is a fact without a cable; but the cable, as a vehicle, is required in order to send a message across the Atlantic; and spirit-communion is a fact without the conditions of “mediumship,” but these conditions are necessary for the production of the physical or material signals that the unseen ones are nigh. But, however this may be, let none complain that mediums are necessary who have not faithfully sought for themselves. Let us but give a hundredth part of the time to the *personal* investigation of this matter that we give to frivolous amusements; or let us give to it only our idle hours, and then we shall be able to say how far we *need* to seek mediums beyond the few who may be around our table every day. At all events, let not a world full of unbelievers, *who have never sought*, complain that there are so few that find.

But why do they not tell us something we do not know?

Why cannot they, or why will they not reveal some great secret or foretell some startling event or discover for us some mystery that would very practically prove the “messages” are indeed from intelligences other than our own? But what if they sometimes *have* told us these secrets? Without asking credence for all the idle tales that have always been floating about the world, is it not very possible that some of them have been true? Or what if our finding has depended on our seeking? “Ask and it shall be given you,” is the law of common-sense and nature as well as of the gospel. Yet how many have sought? Or what if the unseen beings who are near us *do not know* what we ask them to tell? Why should we suppose that they are omniscient because they are out of the body? Why should the mere fact that a spirit has been promoted out of the flesh into the spirit-world produce such a change in the spirit as to make it capable of prophecy or of the insight into material things

our demands involve? Again and again, they tell us "We do not know," or "We cannot explain it to you;" and why should we suppose that they *do* know or that they *can* explain everything to us? Many things they *can* explain, and that in a beautiful and wonderfully instructive way, as hundreds of thousands could testify, but we must remember that they and we use now two kinds of language, based on two utterly different orders of things; and it is not surprising if we sometimes find them unable even to spell a word: for in attempting it they are for our sakes trying to enter our circle of ideas,—to enter again, through us, into the limitations of earth, and to speak in a language they employ no more. For in the spirit-world the language is that of direct thought, and character, and sympathy, and love, and they have no need for the cold and hindering vehicle of what we call "speech." But as regards the telling of secrets, and the announcement beforehand of events, it may be enough to say,—1st, that several very extraordinary and well authenticated instances of this very thing exist; 2nd, that no one can tell to what extent, when men more generally open their minds to spirit-communion, these may be increased; 3rd, that there is no reason for supposing that spirits are necessarily all-knowing; and 4th, that they also are creatures of law, and that they communicate by permission of Him whom they also acknowledge as their Lord and King.

But such absurd communications are announced as coming from illustrious men.

This is quite true; and it is also true that a great deal is obtained, especially by inexperienced questioners, which is unsatisfactory. Now, as for the "bad spelling," that may be partly accounted for by what we have said before, that these unseen beings in communicating with us have to use us for the necessary words: and, in doing this, all sorts of mistakes occur; a very frequent and curious one being, what I have already noted, that words are sometimes spelt backwards;—an apparent absurdity, but often a remarkable test, as showing, where all present can be depended upon, that the words are indeed communicated, as no one knows what they will be till they are finished; and sometimes not then, at first. It is often a very difficult thing for a spirit

to remember or (what is more likely) to communicate an earthly name; at other times names and dates come with extraordinary speed and accuracy; this generally depending, though, as much upon the persons present as upon the spirit's power. But as regards the absurd communications received as from great men, such as poetry from Burns and speeches from Cicero, let it be freely confessed that in very many cases this may be pure deception;—deception, I mean, on the part of the communicating spirit! This opens up, I know, a wide and perhaps difficult question; but I cannot help it: it only opens up a part of the subject that *is* a part of it; and which it would be worse than foolish to conceal, "How then!" it may be said, "do the spirits tell falsehoods?" And why not? Consider how well we keep the spirit-world supplied with all kinds of quacks, pretenders, and vain-glorious beings; and then ask what right we have to be astonished or to complain when we find that even immortal spirits can jest or even deceive! But this need not excite alarm or disappointment, or lead any one to despair of getting any good out of the investigation of the subject; for never let it be forgotten that, as a rule, *we get a class of spirits like ourselves*. Truth commands and brings truth, and only in rare cases will truthseekers be long troubled with vain or deceitful spirits. And if, modestly and quietly, we seek for lowlier things we shall offer no temptation to the boastful ones to come and palm off their commonplaces as the last deliverances of a Plato or a Shakespeare. But, in any case, it ought fairly to be considered that, other things being satisfactory, these blunders, bad spellings, and absurd because unlikely communications, are really to be added to the facts that make up the evidence for the *reality* of these manifestations, as produced by beings other than those who, often to their own disappointment and dismay, receive what they plainly perceive to be nonsense, and what they would have ordered otherwise had they determined the communication that should come. It has been already stated that, at present, this fact of spirit-communion is valuable, not for what we are at present learning or receiving as additions to facts or knowledge, but for whatever influence is the result of the *certainty* that unseen beings are near. So that if, on account of some peculiarity of the conditions, we only receive as yet

mistakes or absurdities, still, if the evidence is clear that we *have received something*, the link is established, and it may be tested again and again, with the hope that as we come to understand more about the law that governs the fact we shall present truer conditions and get more valuable results: but in any case this is confirmed, that God is not the God of the dead but of the living, since "*all live unto Him.*"

This is all I have to say at present. No one will know better than myself that, compared with what others have experienced, what I have seen is but as a little hurried glimpse gained by one who has hardly reached even the threshold of the palace door. But I have seen enough to convince me that it is bright within: and, if I seem to have been over ready to give my very brief experience to the world, my excuse must be that *a little if really discovered here is a great deal,—that the first step is really the great step*, and also that so few seem inclined to give their public testimony to their belief in the reality of these things. What may be in store for us I know not, but it is something to know that we are ready for *all* that may come. We shall not spend much time over these investigations; we shall certainly not neglect any of our present duties for them: but we shall assuredly not be unmindful of the ancient word,—“Ask, and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.”

DIRECTIONS FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO SEEK.

Sit (from three to six in number) round a small table, with the hands *lightly* placed upon it; and wait. You may have to wait an hour; or you may not have to wait ten minutes. The influence will gather strength at every sitting, and, in time, what had, at first, to be waited for will come at once and with power.

When any decided sound or movement comes, ask questions. Fix upon a certain number of sounds or movements for replies,—say, *one* for no, *two* for doubtful, or *three* for yes. If names or words are wanted, repeat the alphabet slowly, pausing after each letter for *yes* or *no*. But if an age

or any *number* is wanted, the best way is to ask for sounds or movements to correspond. If the name of a month is wanted, go through the months, waiting for *yes* or *no*. If the day of the week, go through the days in the same way. If the day of the month, ask for the corresponding number of sounds or movements. In this way, it is generally easy to identify those who come.

The question should frequently be asked whether those who communicate can write through any one present, as, except for the sake of the *test*, the table is often the slowest and least correct method of communicating, except for numbers and *yes* and *no*. A better way still is to use a large alphabet on a thin board, with a light pointer (about the size of the hand) made of the same material ; upon this pointer the hand of the "medium" (that is, the person who can be influenced) is placed, and long messages, &c., are then easily and sometimes very swiftly spelt out. But all these things will be told to those who *ask*.

But let no one be disappointed at finding that the way is not altogether a clear and smooth one. Mistakes, contradictions, and failures, may come, especially at first ; and the light of the unseen world will seem to be struggling with the fogs of ours ; but let all be patient, cheerful, and watchful, remembering that a *little* gained here is much ; and then even that which seems *least* satisfactory will often afford the most singular of all proofs that the light is *indeed* striving to reach us where we stand.

Finally : let there be no excitement, no extravagance, no restlessness, no feverish impatience, in any direction : let all seeking be accompanied by modesty, quietness, and contentment ; let all remember that we *are* only seeking ; let no one give up his own judgment, or surrender his own reason ; and finally, let us patiently seek, and gratefully receive, and steadfastly persevere, and then, having obeyed the call to "Buy the truth," we shall cheerfully comply with the injunction to "sell it not."