

# MODERN SPIRITUALISM:

ITS CLAIMS TO INVESTIGATION.

WITH

AN ACCOUNT OF CERTAIN

REMARKABLE MANIFESTATIONS

IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WRITER,

AND

DIRECTIONS FOR THE FORMATION AND CONDUCTING  
OF SPIRIT CIRCLES.

BY

JAMES BROWN.

---

GLASGOW:

JAMES M'GEACHY, 90 UNION STREET.

LONDON: J. BURNS, PROGRESSIVE LIBRARY, CAMBERWELL.

## MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

There is, perhaps, no subject upon which so much misrepresentation and wilful ignorance exists as that of Modern Spiritualism. Originating, as we are told, about twenty years ago, in the little village of Hydesville, State of New York, in a family of the name of Fox, it rapidly grew, and was nourished by the wondering multitudes who flocked to behold its manifestations. Its infancy was spent amid great confusion and contention, amid the anathemas of the clergy and the fierce denunciations of the Press, yet it only received the greater notice, until in a few years the entire States were impregnated by the "*new delusion*." Thousands became converts to its faith, and amongst these were found some of the 'cutest Yankee intellects, and the most sagacious minds of the Western Hemisphere. Names are indicated; and if aught yet of virtue remains, since Shakspeare, in a name, certainly the weight of the testimony of those given in support of this new outgrowth of the 19th century, is immense. Doctors (clerical, medical, and legal), and shrewd scientific men, and scholars, all figure on the call-roll of Spiritualism; men high in influence and attainments, and men of mean rank—the horny-hands of labour—alike share the obloquy and shame of the name of Spiritualist. These, it is said, have already swelled to the number of eleven millions in the American Continent alone; and several millions in Europe and other parts have likewise embraced this resurrected belief in Spirit communion. At the present rate of increase—statistics being correct—who shall say where and when it shall all end? In the face of all the opposition it has received, it appears still to have an existence, and breaks out just when you imagine the last clod has been laid upon its grave.

We assume then, as self-evident and indisputable, that modern Spiritualism is a *fact* of one kind or other. It has become actualized in this 19th century, and there is no gainsaying its existence. We must give up the old position of ignoring it and denying its objective reality, for it has become a phenomenal fact in our midst, and it is but the exhibition of a vain folly we can no longer encourage to brand this gigantic movement as a merely mythical nonentity. Whatever be its claims and pretensions, it must and should be investigated as an existing *fact*, convinced as we are that the truth need not be dreaded in whatsoever aspect it may appear, whether stamped with the popular obloquy of the name of Spiritualism, or the yet more popular edifica-

tion of orthodox science. Looking, then, at Spiritualism in its present aspect, we are struck with one prominent feature—viz., the vast extent of its peculiar literature. There has grown up already, during the past twenty years of its existence, quite a host of Spiritualistic works, ranging from the meanest pamphlet to the most pretentious volume. It would be folly to deny that these are the products of much mental labour and tried experience, and that, too, of many who occupy no mean place in the literary and scientific world. In this country we have the names of Wm. Howitt; Mr and Mrs S. C. Hall; Professor and Mrs De Morgan; Professor Gregory; Drs Ashburner, Elliotson, Wilkinson, and others. In France and on the Continent, amongst others are—Allan Kardec, Baron de Guildenstubbé, Justinus Kerner, and Baron Holmfeldt. America, too, boasts of the number of her representatives. They are composed of men of all professions, creeds, opinions, and even colour. A few of these may be indicated. In his day Professor Hare did much by his pen in the cause of Spiritualism, so also Professors Mapes and Bush, and Governor Talmadge. But these have ceased from their earthly labours, at least, and their works alone remain. There are others still in the field, however, and still working for this great cause; and among these are more prominent at the present time—Judge Edmonds, of New York; Professor Brittan; Drs Grey and Child; Rev. Adin Balou; J. B. Ferguson; Robert Dale Owen, son of the great socialist, and many others equally important. All those have aided, and some of them extensively, in the production of that mass of literature which has for its aim the diffusion and elucidation of the Spiritualistic phenomena and philosophy. William Howitt's "History of the Supernatural" is indeed quite a mine of ancient and modern research. Mrs De Morgan's "Matter to Spirit," and Robert Dale Owen's "Footfalls on the Boundaries of Another World," are to the Spiritualist most invaluable, as is also Adin Balou's "Spirit Manifestations" and Wilkinson's "Spirit Drawings." Besides these, there are at present published in London, monthly, the "Spiritual Magazine," which is the recognised organ of the British Spiritualists, and "Human Nature," another journal also devoted to this cause. All these afford to the careful reader quite a mass of interesting and curious matter, and indicate the real phases and phenomena of the Spiritualistic movement. From these, also, may be learned what Spiritualism really professes to be; and as a true conception of this is all imperative to our inquiry, we may here enlarge upon it as briefly as possible.

The "Spiritual Magazine" very concisely and explicitly expresses its creed in its monthly declaration on its wrappers, as follows—

"Spiritualism is based on the cardinal fact of spirit communion and influx; it is the effort to discover all truth relating to man's spiritual nature, capacities, relations,

duties, welfare, and destiny; and its application to a regenerate life. It recognises a continuous Divine inspiration in Man; it aims, through a careful reverent study of facts, at a knowledge of the laws and principles which govern the occult forces of the universe; of the relations of spirit to matter, and of man to God and the Spiritual world. It is thus catholic and progressive, leading to true religion as at one with the highest philosophy."

Such is the broad and universal signification of the word and the system, but in its more generally understood acceptation, it is simply the doctrine of spirit action and communion, as maintained by modern Spiritualists. This doctrine they base upon the assumption of the reality of certain phenomena, of which they claim to be the observers and investigators. These phenomena, in their popular manifestations, have a two-fold aspect, and have been classified as physical and intellectual. The physical are those that present themselves to the sensuous faculties, and more especially apart from any direct exhibition of intelligence. Under such are considered all *preternatural* movements of ponderable bodies, as exhibited in the instances of hauntings and ghostly disturbances, &c.; all sights, sounds, and audible indications of a like order; and, in short, all exhibitions of a physical power acting in said supposed preternatural manner upon the plane of the human senses. Such is the physical phase of modern Spiritualism, the details of which have filled hundreds of volumes, pamphlets, tracts, newspaper columns, and every other channel of printed publication during the past 20 years. The reality of these phenomena is asserted by the most competent and credible witnesses. We are told by men of the most unimpeachable veracity, that they have heard and seen what it was altogether impossible for them to account for on natural principles. This has been the affirmation, too, of even high-classed *scientific men*. Heavy ponderable bodies, we are told, have been moved and lifted about by some agency, invisible and unknown; tables have been tumbled about, and even elevated without mortal contact to the ceiling of lofty rooms and in broad light. All this is asserted and much more; that chairs and sofas, and other articles of household plenishings have been moved about, and made to perform many curious evolutions; that pianos have been played upon, and guitars and other musical instruments, no human hand touching the same; that hand-bells have been rung, and carried from place to place, in the sight of scores of spectators; that doors and windows have opened and shut of themselves, and walls have been shaken, and glass and crystal have been broken, and oftentimes household confusion and destruction occasioned, as if to testify to the actual reality of the occurrences. It has also been affirmed, on the most reliable testimony, that peculiar noises have oftentimes been heard, and caused by no apparent earthly agent; that loud blows have been made upon tables, chairs, walls, ceilings, and floors, to the utter consternation of assembled throngs; that gentle knockings, and tap-

pings, and scratchings, and other noises have also been detected, when rats, mice, and other quadrupeds were *minus* the question altogether. Then we are told that voices have been heard, and groanings and shriekings, not explainable upon principles ventriloquial; and music, too, vocal and instrumental—when neither voices nor instruments were present that could have produced it; and, indeed, that noises and sounds, earthly and unearthly, conceivable and absurd, natural, human, and artificial, of every imaginable tone and quality and kind, have been, from time to time, produced in a manner, and under conditions that only rendered their occurrence the more mysterious, inasmuch as no cause, known or natural, could be found to account for them.

The same concurrent testimony is offered on behalf of still other phenomena, even the spectral and apparitional. Whether we read of American or European Spiritualism, it is all the same. It is in Boston as it is in Britain; it is in Florida as it is in France;—there are thousands who testify they have had the most actual experience of palpable spirit presence; that hands have been seen and grasped, and beauty-faced spirit forms have been beheld and handled as real and palpable entities. We are told even of material substances having been transferred from place to place, and in defiance of all the known laws of physics, passing through ponderable and solid bodies, without causing destruction or disintegration of parts. It is difficult indeed to indicate, even in the most general terms, the many different phases of the physical manifestations. Their reality being assumed, they certainly, many of them, rival the most marvellous miracles said to have been performed in the ancient times. Nor, if we turn to the other aspect of the subject—the intelligent—do we find a less cause for wonder. We have the same witnesses, honest and veracious, who are prepared to substantiate, by oath or otherwise, what they have themselves observed, and what they claim to have been their experience. They affirm that they have had a superhuman knowledge and intelligence imparted to them by a power they acknowledge and claim as spiritual; that spirit voices have spoken with them, and they have obtained a knowledge that could have only been derived from a spiritual source, and that they have had the most unquestionable evidence of the fact of spirit communion. They positively assert that they have witnessed, from time to time, ignorant savages and untaught men discoursing in languages not their own, and in tongues of which they had never heard a syllable uttered; that they have seen untutored negroes even holding converse with the learned and the wise, on matters far transcending their natural capacities even to conceive of. We have their declaration, also, in regard to the production of many marvellous documents of declared spirit-writing, and of automatic and direct paintings and drawings. It is asserted that some of these were

obtained without the instrumentality of pencils, pens, brushes, or colours, and almost instantaneously. We ourselves have witnessed some of these, and can speak as to their excellency of execution. There are many other manifestations besides the above which are represented under the intelligent aspect of the subject. We have not spoken of the communications received by means of the alphabet through the rappings and table tipplings. These are numerous and various, and composed, in part, of the veriest twaddle, and the most profound disquisitions in morals, religion, metaphysics, and philosophy. It has likewise been asserted that predictions have been often made, many of which have been realized, and sometimes only too truly. Another peculiar feature of intelligence is the recalling of past events to memory, and the communicating of past and private conversations, unknown at the time, but verified on subsequent investigation. This is certainly a high phase of the phenomena, and one that Spiritualists do well in making the most of. Looking yet at the subject in its higher psychological aspects we have the various exhibitions of trance, somnambulism, clairvoyance, prevision, &c. In these states, it is asserted, great intellectual achievements have been performed. Whole volumes of ethics, philosophy, and poetry, have been dictated and obtained, and although it is not claimed that these transcend the highest conception of natural genius, it is most emphatically contended that the manner of their production was abnormal, and their source preternatural.

The question of the reality of these phenomena, however, is one which must be considered. We have already spoken of the character of the witnesses who vouch for these things, and mentioned many names of note attached as advocates, even to the Spiritual theory of accounting for them. For ourselves, we do not consider *competent testimony* insufficient to establish their reality. By what other process were the ancient miracles established as true? We have them simply upon testimony—the competency of which is even questionable to many. We do not, therefore, consider it necessarily any evidence of incapacity and unreason in imitating the great mass of Christendom, whose confidence in a testimony to somewhat similar phenomena two thousand years old, is not yet altogether deemed an evidence of mental imbecility, and aberration. We must deprecate the conduct of those who affirm the unreality of these modern manifestations, without first having examined them. There is nothing for which the Spiritualist more urgently and constantly pleads than a candid investigation, alike of the testimony and the phenomena — the wholesale rejection of which we cannot but deem to be most unwarrantable, unwise, and reprehensible. We are not necessarily bound, of course, to accept these, but we do affirm we are morally required to consider before rejecting them, and that it is far more logical to accept the same, however marvellous after, than

it is to *reject* them *before*, investigation. When we assert, therefore, our entire confidence in the testimony offered on behalf of the reality of these phenomena, we do so advisedly, for it has been our earnest study for several years to arrive at a definite opinion on the matter. We have examined the evidence, and found it *conclusive*; we have investigated the phenomena, many of them, and have found them *real*. The ignorant credulity that believes all these to be merely the work of deception, and the arrogant presumption that would sit in judgment upon 15,000,000 of thinking human beings, and brand them as knaves and fools, we have no sympathy with whatever. Those possessed of such we sincerely pity, for censure might only inflame, and we shall rejoice if our humble effort at this time shall lead but one individual into the clearer light of truth from the cruel imaginations of such a delusion.

But we may now be met at this point of our inquiry by the remark—"Granting the reality of these phenomena, is it absolutely necessary that we should be obliged to accept the spiritual theory to account for them?" We would reply—"Many explanations have been offered regarding these mysteries, but there is none which is at all satisfactory and sufficient, save that offered by the Spiritualists." We have seen how the mere outcry of delusion is insufficient. Nor is the theory of imposition, fraud, and jugglery more satisfactory. These are but the modes of explanation preferred and put forth by the most superficial observers, or rather non-observers, of the phenomena. That there is imposition practiced in this as in every other great cause, no one knowing aught of the subject will deny; but that a more ostensible and correct theory is required is alike certain. Electricity and magnetism have been proclaimed as the all-sufficient expounders of the mysteries; but we would ask, when was it known that these physical forces, or any other of their correlates, were capable of manifesting a knowledge and intelligence independent of the human mind. Force of itself cannot originate thought, and it is surely a new faculty or quality discovered in electricity that would enable it to foretell a future event or recal a past one; and that would cause it to manipulate, in an intelligent manner, fine black lead pencils, and camel hair brushes, and steel pens, to the production of even high-class works of art and literature. Yet these and many others of a like nature are the common manifestations of Spiritualism. Clearly, then, electricity or earth and animal magnetism will not do, however far they may be instrumental in the production of certain of the phenomena. Clairvoyance has been suggested, but it only accounts, and merely in part, for the smallest fraction of the manifestations. Somnambulism, too, and electro-biology, and ventriloquism, do not explain one-tenth part of the real facts. Heavy tables and chairs, with men seated thereon, are lifted to the ceilings of lofty apartments, inde-

pendent of all these explanations ; and the mere assertion that such may be the result of some unknown or undiscovered laws of physics, is simply another way of confessing supreme ignorance of the whole matter.

The Spiritual theory comes next to be considered. In the examination of this hypothesis, we are at once taken into the plane of the inner life, and brought face to face with the denizens of the great intermediate or Spiritual world. That world we discover to be regulated by laws as immutable as our own, and by principles of Government as determinate as those of physical nature. We find no great gulf separating the natural from the Spiritual states ; they are each parts of one great whole, which is the one great universe of the Universal Father. Death is no annihilation, or even sleep, but simply mutation from the physical to the Spiritual plane of existence. In that sphere of life we are still men and women, with faculties and functions of being, retaining our peculiar characteristics, ideas, and even idiosyncrasies. We but cast off our chrysalis garments of clay, that we may be born into a higher nature, when our "mortal pang is over," and when the earth can retain no longer our physical presence. Thus the spirit of man may return to earth, and by pre-appointed conditions may manifest itself again in innumerable modes to its fellow spirits in the flesh. By a knowledge of these conditions of the laws of that inner and higher nature, spirits, it is claimed, do even now communicate with men. They are enabled even to operate upon material substances, and produce certain effects that we, in our blind ignorance of the laws of the higher life, call supernatural and miraculous. These effects and these manifestations have been peculiar to the history of every people on the face of the earth. In our superstition we have dared even to deify them, forgetting that even devils may work "miracles and lying wonders." Recognizing, as we do now, however, only one great natural universe of cause and effect in its spiritual and physical representations, we are not constrained to accept these modern mysteries other than physical effects produced by spiritual causes. Thus the mystery becomes soluble, and remains one no longer. Spiritualism, therefore, both as regards its physical and intellectual manifestations, becomes thus perfectly explainable upon natural principles, and there need be no shock to feelings, or faith, or religious sentiment by this theory. The whole Bible itself most certainly supports it, and it is alike agreeable to human reason. The great doctrine is this—that spirits are enabled by the laws of their own sphere to operate upon and affect the laws of our sphere, and thus produce certain manifestations cognisable by the human senses, and in harmony with human intelligence. By the application of this doctrine alone, will there be any solution to the seemingly inexplicable mysteries of modern Spiritualism ?

We have thus given our exposition of the modern phenomena. We have endeavoured to indicate that Spiritualism is no mean paltry move-

ment, but that it has the support of many of the leading men in science, art, and literature, and that it is thus an actualized fact. We have spoken also, in proof of this, of the wide range of its literature and influence. We have tried to indicate the several phases of its phenomena and modes of manifestation, and have urged the necessity of a careful examination of these before a judgment is pronounced. We have further declared our confidence in the testimony offered in support of the reality of these and of our own knowledge, from experience of the unequivocal fact of their reality. We have shown, also, what we believe to be the only sufficient theory of accounting for these phenomena, and have examined briefly a few of the other explanations that have been offered, and found them wanting. We might enlarge much further, for there are wide and illimitable aspects of the subject we have not touched upon at all. Only before concluding, however, would we seek to press one further point, the most important, in that it is the most practical, and best calculated to accomplish practical results. A few words will suffice.

We affirm, then, that a substantial *knowledge* of the facts and phenomena of modern Spiritualism is *obtainable by all*. There are conditions to be observed, however, in this science, as in every other, would certain results be achieved. While we believe that the spirits do much towards producing the effects, we believe also in the necessity of human co-operation. There are certain persons peculiarly and *physically* constituted to be found, through whom, in great measure, these conditions are obtained. These are called spirit mediums. We cannot here enter into the consideration of what it is that constitutes a medium, and why it is that such should be necessary. We can only affirm the fact. While we express, therefore, the desire that a full and candid investigation should be given to these phenomena, we believe we cannot do so more hopefully than by presenting the following

## DIRECTIONS FOR FORMING AND CONDUCTING SPIRIT CIRCLES.

1st. The number of members composing a circle should not exceed ten or twelve; four or six, however, is quite sufficient, and these, when possible, should be of both sexes.

2d. They should be persons of serious, honest, and persevering disposition, and should meet regularly and promptly two or three times every week at first for some time, till all the conditions are established, and if possible always in the same room. The doors and windows should be closed, and no draught allowed on any account, and a moderate temperature observed. Darkness also, in many cases assists the manifestations, but this we would not recommend, unless the utmost good faith subsists between the members.

3d. They should sit in the most passive and quiet manner round an

ordinary sized dining-table (not too large at first), with their hands resting gently on the bare surface for a period of about 30 or 40 minutes. It will generally happen, however, long before that time, that certain pulsations and vibrations will be felt in the table, followed by decisive movements, or knockings, or other audible and distinct indications of physical power.

4th. At this stage the greatest order and harmony should prevail, and some one should be appointed to preside over the circle and conduct the *seance*. Let this one address the *table* as he would an individual, and he will find it docile and obedient. It will turn or be still as requested, and give any number of movements that may be asked. Let it then be understood between the *power* that is moving the table and the circle, that *three* movements or knocks are to signify *Yes*; and *one* is to signify *No*. In this way it will be discovered who is the medium, if the one presiding repeats over the names of each in the circle till an affirmative is obtained. The right disposition of the members may be secured in like manner, for it may be necessary that some should leave the table altogether, and that others should change places.

5th. To obtain intelligent communications the alphabet may be introduced, and by repeating over the letters one by one till *affirmative* responses are received, and entire words and sentences obtained. This, necessarily, is a very tedious process, and requires great patience on the part of the members.

6th. This telegraphic system, however, is superseded by the discovery of a *writing medium*, or the use of the planchette. The *intelligence* operating may inform if there be such in the circle, or the members can individually try for themselves by holding in their hand a pencil in a perfectly passive manner upon a piece of paper ready for writing. One at least of the circle will be generally found to possess the power, but it will become developed while they continue to meet and have their *seances*. Other modes of communicating with the *spirits* will soon be discovered, but these we leave for experience to unfold. The first essentials are harmony, earnestness, and perseverance, and to ensure such, and the obtaining of higher class manifestations, it is advisable to begin the meeting by engaging shortly in devotional exercises. Without these primary qualifications we do not promise much success; with them, however, success is inevitable, for only by their exercise is mediumship ultimately acquired.

The above directions we would commend to the consideration of the candid investigator. By acting upon them in an honest and unprejudiced spirit, we are persuaded that his experience will fully justify our declaration that spiritual agencies are at work, and that they alone are sufficient to account for and explain the phenomena of this great modern science of Psychology. We add no more, but bid all who desire to be true to themselves and the truth, and who desire to participate in the great benefits that all reflecting minds must perceive to flow from this noble faith and fact of Modern Spiritualism—to pause! ponder! and investigate!

## EXTRAORDINARY SPIRIT MANIFESTATIONS.

The following narrative of *Facts*, which occurred in the experience of the writer, appeared first in the columns of the "*Dunfermline Saturday Press*," of 1st August 1868, and is here appended for the encouragement of those commencing investigations.

It was in the winter of 1863 that my attention was first called to the subject of Modern Spiritualism, by the publication of a small pamphlet, purporting to be a narrative of facts observed in London and in his own family circle, by a much respected councillor of our city. This brochure, which was intended by its author only for private circulation, became, through the instrumentality of the local press, at once the cause of much popular interest, curiosity, and contempt. Its matter was so extravagant, so novel, and in many points so apparently and madly absurd, that the community were at once divided as to whether their civil representative had gone insane, or become the mouthpiece of the "Father of lies" himself. In the height of the popular excitement, not well knowing what to think of the matter, but strongly averse to believing that our "Glasgow Magistrate" had either become the victim of hallucination, or the enunciator of scandalous and meaningless falsehoods, I prevailed upon two of my most intimate friends to join me in an attempt to reduce these most extraordinary statements to the test of experiment. It was with some difficulty we were able to obtain information as to how to proceed in "trying the spirits," but with a few mysterious hints from one of the *initiated*, whose acquaintance we fortunately made, we met, according to pre-arrangement, at the lodgings of one of my friends. With not a little nervous excitement and fearful foreboding, lest there should be some amount of truth in the appearance of ghosts, we formed our little circle. We first secured the door against intrusion, and having procured a little round table, sat around it, with the palms of our hands resting flatly and gently on the top. In silent suspense thus we waited, each animated with but one idea, one purpose, one resolve, to give a fair and honest opportunity for the so-called *spirits*, or magnetism, or electricity, or whatever else might be at work, to manifest before us what was said to have been performed in the presence of our intelligent Councillor. We were nigh despairing of success. Still we sat watchful and attentive. We had heard of heavy drawing-room tables having been lifted by the invisible power to the ceilings of lofty apartments; of heavy book-cases and pianos tilted about in the west-end mansion; of chairs drawn from beneath the occupants,

and doors and windows shaken; of all kinds of house plenishing and furniture having been tossed about, and, flying like kites in the presence of awe-stricken spectators; and we thought to ourselves—"What if any of these things were now occurring? What should we do? If they were *spirits* who thus manifested, how should we address them?" But all was still. We sat staring at each other, half ashamed of ourselves for our seeming superstition and credulity. At last, just as we were about to wind up our investigations into that great system, of which we had been told millions of thinking and intelligent men and women had examined, and had *not* found fabulous; just as our exhausting patience was about spent, behold a still small movement takes place under our hands. The table has become possessed as if with life, and slowly and gently rises from off the floor on one of its legs. I am paralysed at once with astonishment and dread; my companions are more composed. Slowly it descends again, and once more all is motionless. We are afraid to speak above our breath, yet we must give vent to our feelings. We address the dumb, motionless, and insensate piece of furniture, and bid it once more to perform its mysterious movement. As if in obedience to the request, once more we feel it glide under our fingers, and up it rises, then as gently descends again. This movement is repeated another time, and then, as if possessed of will, that mysterious *power* which animated the tripod mahogany refuses to perform. Not another motion it made that night—no, not for all our entreaties, and persuasions, and commands. We dispersed in silent reflection. I had merged into a region of new inquiry—a great field of research opened up before me, into which I must enter. I was already on the threshold. The great outside world ignored its existence; it denied its reality. What of that? I had touched the "hem of the garment," of a new truth (to me), and I must become possessed of the garment itself.

From that time to this, I have used every means at my command to investigate into these so-called spirit manifestations, to see whether, indeed, there was spirit agency at all in the matter. I have sat in *circles* times innumerable, and with scores of *mediums*. We were not long in meeting again at my friend's house, but this time our patience was not so severely taxed. Almost immediately the table began its movements—but now more decisive, more powerful, and, strange to say, more under control of our wills. It would go through all sorts of strange antics, spinning and dancing, and performing the most curious and amusing gyrations. We had not yet learned to interrogate the spirits. By the third *seance* we had obtained information as to how to put ourselves in communication. Then the most astonishing results followed. Names were spelled out alphabetically of deceased relatives and friends, and many strange people none of us had ever heard of before. Old associates, long forgotten, suddenly announced themselves, and some of them endeavoured to identify themselves by exhibiting, through the table, some of the peculiar characteristics they had been remarkable for while in the flesh. Soon after this, as we continued our weekly meetings, a new development of this strange power was obtained. We had by this time introduced to our circle another friend, a young man of most amiable disposition, and whose character for veracity and honesty was past all impeachment. As a quartette, we prosecuted

our investigations, in all good faith with each other, and each one more than another desirous of establishing for himself the truth or falsity of the *Spiritual theory*. The *facts* we could no longer deny; they were patent to the most common observation. It was at this time, then, that the new manifestation was obtained. This young man whom we had got induced to join us, shortly after his admission to our circle, became nervously affected in the arms. His hand moved over the surface of the table, as if forming characters on the mahogany. Procuring paper and a pencil, we put them before him, when immediately the latter was snatched up, and the hand wrote—while his eyes were closed—in bold, legible characters, the name of an old associate of his, some years deceased. Then succeeded, in the same curious manner, a long communication upon the condition of souls in the other world, and of the spirit's own condition, all couched in the most fervent and elevating language. For many subsequent occasions this same spirit, or influence, took possession of my friend's hand, and I have yet in my possession many of the beautiful communications then received.

The importance of the subject thus began more and more to expand, and I sought and found means whereby to gratify my further interest in it. I found many in the city who, like myself, had been prosecuting the study and enquiry, in the deep and earnest resolve to know the truth. About this time, too, I was privileged to make the acquaintance of a young lady who had been spoken of very highly as a physical medium. She was pleased enough to favour the proposal to hold a weekly *seance* at her house; and I, with one of our own circle, continued to meet there during one whole winter. Remarkable, indeed, was the manifestation of power exhibited through her. She was herself physically incapable of producing the effects we witnessed; and the idea of imposition or collusion on the part of others would not hold good in whatever way we liked to examine it. It was certain, too, there was no hallucination in the matter. We possessed and enjoyed all our faculties in their normal condition, and if aught, they were only quickened to the perception of the facts we observed. As I have said, the manifestations were chiefly physical. Thus, in order to test the amount of power that was at work in moving the furniture, I got under a small work-table that I could have easily held out in one hand, and found it impossible to lift from the floor for six seconds, though straining every nerve and muscle to the task. With my shoulder firm against the under side of the top, my hands clutching the claws, and my whole strength applied, I could not keep it up. The tips of the medium's small fingers only touched the top, and the exercise of her will were all that sufficed to overpower my united efforts. Yet, so soon as she or I said "Be light," the whole force was immediately removed, and I lifted the table with the greatest of ease. In like manner we tried an experiment with the piano. It was of the cottage construction, and very heavy. She stood before it with the tips of her fingers touching the top of the key-board lid, while it was *unlocked and quite loose*, and the instrument was dragged from against the wall, where it stood and reared up as if it would have fallen back. This it would do any number of times by request, and with the most astonishing precision. The power in operation seemed to be equal to that of two or three

strong men dragging it back from behind. Yet such agency was certainly absent, for the room was in a blaze of light, and all were observers of each other. Some have attempted to explain this to me by the theory of magnetism; but this certainly will not do; for if such only had been at work in this instance, then only the lid of the pianoforte would have opened, being on hinges and *unlocked*. Besides, the power, whatever it was, seemed to act in accordance with our desires; and sometimes even anticipated our requests. Oftentimes it would act quite unasked, and refused even to stop, though entreated upon. Thus it seemed to be in direct connection upon some altogether independent intelligence, and never yet have I seen or known it to deny that that was a spiritual one. With this same medium have I observed many other and even more remarkable manifestations. In broad day-light I have seen a large dining-table, about ten feet long, in a public hotel, where machinery and collusion were out of the question, with her fingers slightly resting upon the end of it, rearing and dancing to a merry tune played upon the piano, and keeping the most correct time. This feat, could it have been accomplished so accurately, would have required the power of two strong men, and lifting with their might under the end rail of the table; while her hands, as I have said, only *rested on the surface*. I have tested also, like Professor Tyndall, the effect of going under the table while the power was exhibited, and strange to say, I have observed an immediate cessation thereof, but not at all times, whatever the cause of it may be. Indeed, the first experiment mentioned in connection with this medium, was while I was under the table, and trying to lift it against the power keeping it down.

For a fuller test of power, I proposed one night that we should try to have the table to move without contact at all. Accordingly, we stood round in a circle, our hands joined and hanging at some height over the surface, and in a little while the table sprang up till it touched them, and then fell back. This experiment was repeated with a like success. In a similar manner we stood round the piano, and the key-board lid was thrown open, and some notes were struck. Sometimes we heard the wires twang inside the instrument. I may mention that the power was often much more manifest when the room was half darkened. Thus I have known the lowering of the Holland blind produce, while in the day-light, a marked effect on the manifestations. With the reason and the cause of this I have little to do in the meantime; I but mention the fact. Many of the experiments, too, were conducted while the room was totally darkened. A large dining table which stood in the centre of the room was often lifted entirely off the floor and carried round the apartment, and with such precision that no one was ever injured or anything broken. Only on one occasion did the table come down with a crash, but the circle had been broken by the medium having removed her hands. This was the only catastrophe. It usually came down from its aerial flight like the falling of a leaf, quiet and gentle. As I have said, we conducted these experiments during one whole winter, and in that time many other remarkable phenomena were observed. Rappings and scratchings were often heard on the table and other articles of furniture, and sometimes a cool and refreshing wind would fill the room where we sat, and at other times be experienced only by certain of the circle.

It would even be breathed on us by request, and pass round each member of the circle in succession. Besides the physical manifestations, this lady would often be influenced to the writing phenomenon. Thus beautiful and even poetic effusions would be obtained, and sometimes kindly and tender communications from some dear deceased friends. I had now long ceased to doubt that the agency at work was really spiritual. I had compared and accepted the testimony of other earnest investigators; I had studied the literature of the movement, and found the facts it declared and explained to be in harmony, not only with my own experience, but with that of all times, and with the miraculous narratives of Holy Writ. I could see no better theory to account for these manifestations than the self-declared one—the Spiritual. I was forced to resign all my scepticism. With intelligence I could not longer remain unconverted, and I would not wilfully belie the truth. The explanations that were offered to account for the manifestations were stupid and impotent, and only made the spiritual hypothesis appear the more acceptable and beautiful in my estimation. Several years have elapsed since then; yet have I never once found occasion to retrace my steps in the sublime spiritual faith, nor has aught ever yet occurred to give me cause that I may yet be obliged to abandon the noble truth. I have continued my inquiries, and with all kinds of mediums have I experimented. The one thing was ever the result—a confirmation of the truth of Spiritualism. I have heard mediums speak in the trance condition by the inspiration of spirits, and have seen them write and draw under conditions that were impossible to ignore. I have observed, and frequently, a young man in an almost totally darkened room, manipulate his colours to the most exquisite tints on a picture that has been examined by hundreds, and by them pronounced most remarkable. I have in my possession the *fac-similes* of two most beautiful works of art executed by the *spirits* in eleven and eight seconds respectively, and without any application of the medium's hand to the production of them whatever.

Hitherto, I have spoken only of my experience in connection with private mediums—friends who, like myself, were investigating the subject, and in whom there was no motive whatever that would prompt them to deceive; indeed, the most of them were entirely beyond suspicion. I have, however, also observed the manifestations in the presence of professional mediums, and in most cases with the most satisfactory results. That there are rank impostors who trade upon the imbecility and gullibility of the public connected with this movement, I would never deny; but such only, in my estimation, tend to substantiate the truth of it. The fact that there is a *counterfeit* only proves the existence of a reality, and should in no way whatever militate against it. The religious hypocrite is one who professes to possess the divine character, but his profession in no way disproves its real possession on the part of others. It is simply an attempt at personifying the real which already exists. Spiritual manifestations are counterfeited by impostors undoubtedly, but that only proves that impostors have found an unsullied truth that they can imitate and counterfeit as a paying speculation. While it is true then, that professional mediums in too many cases are impostors, it is none the less the case that many of them possess undoubted mediumistic powers.

Amongst other professional mediums I have seen, I may mention the Brothers Davenport and Mr Fay, and as there is a decided overcurrent of misconception and misrepresentation flowing against these young Americans, I may say that in my personal experience of them I have been satisfactorily convinced of the genuineness of the manifestations that take place in their presence. On their visit to this city about two years ago, I took every means in my power to investigate and test them to the uttermost. I visited them privately, and was present almost every night at their public manifestations; and I must beg leave to differ from those who assert, without having examined for themselves, that these gentlemen are only to be ranked amongst the professors of legerdemain, and as the perpetrators of a huge and unparalleled imposition. Nor can I acknowledge as truth what has so often been declared, that their manifestations "now form part of the stock-in-trade of almost every travelling conjuror." There have been certain clumsy imitations, counterfeits produced, but to classify these as equal and parallel to the genuine phenomena is at once to assert what is absolutely untrue, and to manifest a sheer ignorance, and thorough lack of observation, of the facts of the case. Until the several challenges, which have been given by the young Americans, have been accepted by any of the whole tribe of travelling wizards, and anything like a manifest reproduction of their manifestations, under similar conditions given, it is mere folly to say that they have been exposed. The fact belies the assertion; for they are at this moment just as popular as ever with those who are honest enough to judge for themselves. To those, however, who are beginning to investigate the subject of Spiritualism, it is much better that they should not flee to any professional medium, but rather with sincere and earnest endeavours to prosecute it in their family circles, where confidence and good faith is established, and where no harboured suspicion or distrust should be allowed to interfere with the harmony that necessarily must prevail, if satisfactory results are to be obtained.

I have but one word in conclusion. I do not ask any one to endorse my theory of spirit power to account for the facts I have given. This hypothesis I believe to be the only satisfactory one yet offered; but I do not thrust it upon any one. Facts always speak for themselves, and let each one form his own deductions from them, and be faithful to themselves and the truth.

JAMES BROWN, GLASGOW.