

SPIRITUALISM VERSUS POSITIVISM :

BEING

A LETTER AND A CHALLENGE

TO

G. H. LEWES, ESQUIRE, PROFESSOR TYNDALL,

et hoc genus cæcorum.

BY

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SPIRITUALISTS.

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"Everywhere theories,—surmises,—conjectures. Oh, what would I not give to know something of the life to come,—if life to come there be!"—*Sforza*.

"My hyacinths would blossom if the moles did not eat up the bulbs at such a fearful rate. . . . I consider a mole's opinion of the structure and use of my hyacinths to be very much like most folk's notions of moral truth. The moles see the bottom, and nothing else. Imagine a mole forming a *philosophical* theory of my bulbs. In mole's language, he would say: 'A hyacinth is a vegetable creation put under ground for the benefit of the moles. . . . It has been held by some moles that a hyacinth has an existence above ground, and speculatists have gone so far as to say that this root is only a kind of starting point, while the best part of the plant is above ground. But there is no evidence of that, and it is doubtless a vagary of the imagination.'"—*H. W. Beecher*.

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SPIRITUALISM v. POSITIVISM.

"I am attacked by two very opposite (?) sects,—the scientists and the "know-nothings. Both laugh at me—calling me 'the frogs' dancing master.' "Yet I know that I have discovered one of the greatest forces in nature."—*Galvani*.

"Oh, my dear Kepler, how I wish that we could have our hearty laugh "together. Here, at Padua, is the principal professor of philosophy, whom "I have repeatedly and urgently requested to look at the moon and planets "through my glass,—which he pertinaciously refuses to do. Why are you "not here? What shouts of laughter we should have at this glorious folly; "—to hear the Professor of Philosophy at Pisa, labouring before the Grand "Duke with logical arguments,—as if with magical incantations to charm "the planets out of the sky!"—*Galileo*.

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GENTLEMEN,

I wish it to be distinctly,—especially,—emphatically understood,—that I am not now about to address you in your personal and private characters, but as public men, philosophers, and F.F.R.S. You are, I have been informed, accomplished men of the world; and, believing this, I yet hope one day to have the opportunity of meeting you in society, where we will discuss the sciences of which I have a little smattering—like yourselves. I may then possibly ask you to kindly inform me, by what means the *Bacillaria* perform, with such regularity, their strange paradoxical motions in the water,—what are the elements of which the blood is composed,—and "half a million other questions"* concerning which I am very desirous of enlightenment. But—unless, indeed, you take up the glove which I am presently about to throw at your feet—we will never approach Spiritualism by word of mouth: for, I being a Sicilian, and one of you two gentlemen (I am told) of Hibernian extraction,—if we attempted to discuss the subject *viva voce*, instead of through the friendly medium of pen and ink, the result of such discussion *might* be neither spiritual nor philosophical.

If the opinions expressed, and the assertions hazarded, by you, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of May and June last, mean anything—they would show that you regard Spiritualism as sheer folly, and consider that its followers are divided into two classes only—knaves and idiots. If these, indeed, are your deliberate convictions, the ignorance which you display is truly refreshing,—

* Professor De Morgan.

ignoring, as you do, the fact that in the ranks of those knaves and idiots you enrol such men as Whately, Howitt, Lyndhurst, Dr Elliotson, Dr Ashburner, the two Wilkinsons, Edmonds, Victor Hugo, Jules Favre, Guizot, Kerner, Guldenstubbé, Robert Chambers, Wallace, Gerald Massey, F. Tennyson, Garrison, Lincoln, H. Child, Tallmadge, Professors Hare and Mapes, Caprara, Varley, Didier, Piérart, Bizouard, Gougenau des Musseux, De Mirville, and many others—men (as even *you* will hardly gainsay) representing no insignificant proportion of the intelligence, honour and culture of the two hemispheres. Neither can I seriously compliment you, in this instance, on your discretion,—seeing that by the reckless assertions you have publicly made, you are now placed in a position from which it will be difficult indeed to withdraw without much leek-eating. On the other hand, however, the candour you have displayed transcends all possible praise, and should be especially grateful to spiritualists,—if only because it enables at least one member of that traduced body to display a like plainness, in now openly saying what he thinks of you, and such as you.

In the annals of Gotham is contained a story which I will here repeat for your edification—and instruction. A Gothamite “philosopher” was, once upon a time, discovered on a starry night, by the side of a pool of muddy water, on which his most sagacious eyes were meditatively fixed. “What are you looking at?” inquired a passer by. “I am studying astronomy,” replied the philosopher,—condescending as only philosophers *can* be,—“do you not see the stars shining down there?” “But why not look upward at the real stars?” asked the other. “Look upward, you simpleton!” exclaimed the village sage, “look upward, when I have them here, under my hand!” So saying, the philosopher touched the water, whose ripples caused the bright reflections to disappear. “Ha! they are gone to the bottom;—I’ll fetch some, and convince you that mine are the ‘real stars.’” He plunged to the bottom of the pool, and soon returned triumphantly, holding aloft *a handful of muddy stones*.

This philosopher was your prototype. *You have only faith in stones*. Does any passer-by dare to point upwards,—and your lips are curled in scorn. You are only following out your traditions. Such as *you* were the men who for centuries *scientifically* denied that life could exist in the depths of the ocean; a fact which poor unscientific Palissy asserted, despite the sneers of the self-styled learned of his generation;—and *you* were wrong and the potter was right. *You* are the lineal descendants of those academicians who pronounced Fulton a madman; *you* are the scientific contemporaries of the Galileos, Columbuses, and Harveys of modern days. Every discoverer who has ever yet

been born—whatever his era—has been persecuted by men who, like *you*, were bigots and tyrants under the guise of philosophers. The scribes were the “philosophers” of antiquity, and you are the scribes of to-day.

With the self-complacency which sometimes distinguishes the man who knows himself beyond the common herd (although Newton, your predecessor and master, was more modest), you arrogate to yourselves the title of “priests of knowledge.” You form yourselves into a Mutual Admiration Society (unlimited); and the ignorant outsiders accept you at your own valuation.

Science herself is by you reduced to the condition, at best, of the freed-woman of Pluto,—the slave of material wealth. Whip in hand, you would drive men, like Jerusalem ponies,—loading them with gold indeed, but goading them to the end of their journey, which they reach with ears not an iota shorter than when they started. Bridges, viaducts, railways, arsenals,—*these* are *your* means of regenerating society: stocks, funds, cotton and hardware,—such as *these* are the only worthy objects for which immortal souls may strive.* Your future is—Mechanics; your Heaven—Machinery; and your God—Mammon.

In common with your master, Auguste Comte (whose own most miserable life, one would imagine, should supply at once a moral and a warning), you seem to be completely ignorant of the fact that there are *two* laws governing the universe, the law of mind, and the law of matter. We concede that you are the philosophers of matter, and that, whilst you keep within the clearly-defined limits of your province, you are of considerable service to the world you live in. But you must not be allowed to obstruct that other law which you ignore (probably only because you are incapable of understanding it); you must be reminded, since you need such reminding, that you are merely treading on the skirts of knowledge,—that you are simply the investigators of material facts—not the enquirers after reasons. This last is the department of us spiritualists. *You* are the slaves of the lamp, *we* the Aladdins; *you* “interrogate nature,” *we* seek out the causes whence the phenomena of nature proceed.

You appear incapable of perceiving that Science is nothing more than the knowledge of to-day,—to be enlarged to-morrow. The efforts of centuries have been directed to one great problem,—What is man, and wherefore is he? Whilst *you* have been advancing step by step in your slow and painful search after effects, *we* at one bound have solved this all-engrossing problem by the light of *our* science,—a science than which none more sublime was ever conceded to man since first the Creator

* Immortal souls!—I beg your pardons. I had forgotten that I was addressing the disciples of Comte.

projected this world into space. For this reason it is, perhaps, only natural that you, one-sided Scientists, should hate the new and comprehensive philosophy with a bitter and professional hatred. Be it so;—your antagonism is the touchstone of its true worth. But when, in your unreasoning jealousy, you venture to scoff at that which you *cannot* comprehend without investigation,—and *will not* investigate in order that you *may* comprehend,—it is time that we should step in, relegate you to your own secondary place, and demonstrate, in the eyes of the world, your and our relative positions in the scale of knowledge.

This is not the first time that you, the leaders of a certain sect of philosophers, have been urged, by some amongst us, to investigate our science, as we investigate yours,—as *all* science should be investigated,—with humility and an unaffected desire for information. Such appeals, made to *you*, have been made in vain. It is not that we have been wanting in courtesy in so urging you; on the contrary, we have been only too patient and long-suffering,* meeting scorn in return for friendliness, and impertinence for conciliation. It is rather that you have, like Ulysses of old, stuffed your ears with the wool of your own prejudices, and refused a hearing to sirens in whose caves were coral and pearls, indeed, but no bones. This state of things between yourselves and us, *has* been—but shall be no longer. We now abandon whatever faint belief we have hitherto entertained in your reasonableness. You are illogical, and evade arguments; you are disingenuous, and deny facts. But beyond you and your circle of henchmen, there is the public,—a public that you misguide and betray, a public that has hitherto sat, unknowing, at the feet of you sapient Gamaliels; and, constituting this public our tribunal, to them I now appeal to judge between you and us spiritualists, whilst I here attempt to demonstrate the claims of Spiritualism to a high—to the highest—place amongst positive, inductive, and ascertained sciences.

To begin with definitions.

Spiritualism is (1) the knowledge of the existence of spirit co-existent with, and surviving matter, and (2) the communion of spirit, so co-existent with matter, with spirit emancipated from matter: or, in other words, the communion of the living with the (so-called) dead.

This definition, however, strictly speaking, only applies to the *phenomenal* side of Spiritualism. Our science has a second, and higher side, inasmuch as it governs the entire relations of the moral and intellectual universe. In this second sense, Spiritualism may be briefly defined as the *philosophy of human existence*.

* *Vide* Correspondence between Professor Faraday and Thomas Sherratt —“Spiritual Magazine,” July, 1868.

Having thus indicated the position which we spiritualists assume to be filled by Spiritualism in relation to the world, I now proceed to narrate the facts the occurrence of which originally led to its revelation to men.

Like all important discoveries, Spiritualism had a very small beginning. As the steam engine was first suggested to the mind of Watt by the boiling of a kettle; as the principle of the electric telegraph *flashed* on Galvani whilst looking at the involuntary movements of a frog; so Spiritualism had its origin in table-turning and taps,—“inexplicable dumb show and noise.” For many years, towards the commencement of the present century, a mysterious “tick-tick” was heard, at intervals, in many transatlantic habitations, to the great bewilderment of the inmates. In or about the year of grace (and Comtism) 1848, it occurred to a Miss Fox, of Hydesville, New York, to question these ticks—“interrogate phenomena,” as *you* would say. “What is that?” she asked one night. “Tick, tick,” was the answer. “Does that mean ‘Yes’?” “Tick, tick.” “What is ‘No’?” “Tick.” “Are you a spirit?” “Tick, tick.” “Not a mere accidental noise?” “Tick.” “Will you strike when I point to the letters of the alphabet?” “Tick, tick.” This was the first faint dawn of the new philosophy—a dawn which is now fast broadening into the full effulgence of noon.

Poor woman! She had not the felicity of being a Comtist, or she would never have thus “given in to the spirits.”* Being only a poor simple woman, and not knowing (ignoramus as she was!) that she had the privilege of living in this glorious “third period,”† when religion and metaphysics have alike yielded to the giant force of Posivitism,—she (adopting, poor soul! the easy, simple, obvious course) believed that the “tick” was a spirit telegraph! Had she been haply, a disciple of the “greater philosopher than Bacon,”‡ she would have shrugged her shoulders and, like a good Comtist,—unable to give a *natural* explanation of the fact, and unwilling to admit that anything inexplicable could be—have cut the Gordian Knot by pronouncing the whole thing an imposture,—a delusion of the senses,—a “stable-boy’s trick.” But (alas for her!) this unlucky Miss Fox had never been privileged to sit at the feet of a Comte: she had not outlived the freshness of her mental youth: faith in *something higher than stones* was yet possible to her: therefore she listened, questioned, and learned.

* Sir David Brewster’s phrase.

† *Vide* “Cours de la Philosophie Positive par Auguste Comte.” Paris, 1830-42.

‡ *Vide* “Exposition of the Principles of the Positive Philosophy,” by G. H. Lewes. London, 1853.

From this small commencement,—this humble “ticking,”—the spirits have now, nearly a quarter of a century since Miss Fox’s first experiences, gradually advanced in their methods of communication. In the present day, the modes of spirit-manifestation are almost innumerable in their variety. The “planchette” came next in order after Miss Fox’s “telegraph,”—and thus *written* communications were first introduced.* Then the “planchette” was improved upon, and the medium’s hand invisibly guided in writing and drawing. Next the spirits themselves took to writing and drawing, *unassisted by human mediums*, and often without the aid of pen, ink, pencil, chalk, or colours. After this, they began to appear *personally and visibly* in the presence of numerous intelligent and scientific spectators (some few of whom I have already named). At the moment I write, the spirits are manifesting their presence in London, New York, and elsewhere, by *sonorous, audible sounds*—by words and sentences, spoken as one man speaks to another, not to mention other *physical* phenomena, such as the changing of water into wine,† and the conveyance into rooms of fruit, flowers, live birds, &c.,—the doors and windows of such rooms being closed meanwhile. These are facts well attested, sufficiently so to establish, as matter of history, *any* fact or collection of facts;—and are neither “unconscious cerebration, mental aberration, collective “delusion,” or other philosophical no-explanation.

Such, hastily and roughly sketched, are the leading facts of Spiritualism. (I have hitherto only dwelt upon *facts*; as to our *theories*—the philosophy of the science—although these are, necessarily, as “caviare to the general” to Positivists, yet I will attempt, in the after part of this letter, to explain them also—so far as they are capable of explanation within my somewhat narrow limits of space.) Well—what do you find to object to in these facts? Following your usual course, I presume, you deny their existence because you cannot explain them,—and rest content with simply saying, “These things are false.” Their falsity or truth, sirs, can surely be decided only by investigation. We have invited you to investigate: *have* you investigated? Have you given one day, one hour of your valuable time to seeing, hearing, judging for yourselves? Not you, forsooth; for what *you* style “investigation”—your spare half-hours contemptuously accorded—are a positive insult to the understanding.

* The “planchette” is a flat piece of wood, some six or seven inches by four or five, heart shaped, in which is a hole to receive a pencil, whilst underneath are small rollers on which it moves. A sheet of paper being placed beneath the “planchette” and the medium’s hand above,—the instrument moves automatically, and pencil-writing is thus produced.

† Done through the mediumship of the Baroness Guldenstubbé of Paris.

"Investigation!"—yes, such as you would accord to a Punchinello show,—a child's story-book—something to be humoured, made light of,—blown aside with a puff of the lips. Treading in the footsteps of Faraday, like so many sheep following an old wether through a hedge, you have (how truly philosophical!) *refused to be convinced*,—taking refuge in that easiest, most convenient of courses—a persistent denial. "Tis not so!" you cry, "Faraday *did* investigate: that great man was so infinitely condescending as to attend a *seance*, and found the whole thing, *as he expected*, a delusion and a snare." Faraday did so condescend, true. He devoted *half-an-hour* to the investigation of a philosophy. Compared with this, Mr Disraeli's "ten-minutes' resolutions" for the mending of the British Constitution (at which you and your following were the first to laugh), sink into modest insignificance. And even for that brief half-hour, how did Faraday conduct himself? Like the hero of Copenhagen, he persistently applied the telescope to his blind eye,—complaining to the gods and men *that he could see nothing*, but without desisting, all the while, from firing his heaviest shots. Look at that famous letter of Faraday's,*—that incredible document which *you* have endorsed, and which will, most assuredly, cause you and him to cut most ludicrous and pitiable figures in the eyes of posterity. Depend upon it, that we, the spiritualists of to-day, will take care that the letters of Faraday and yourselves shall be kept in remembrance,—so that future generations may see of what stuff the self-styled "philosophers" of the nineteenth century were made.

To apprehend correctly the position taken by the late Michael Faraday in relation to Spiritualism, let us for a moment suppose that that gentlemen had proposed to convince Mr Home of the truth of the atomic theory; and that Mr Home, in return, had desired answers to the following queries and observations, as an indispensable preliminary before assenting to the investigation.

"1. Who wishes me to go? to whose house? for what purpose?

"2. Does Prof. Faraday wish me to go?

"3. Is he willing to investigate, *as a Spiritualist*, in a closed cupboard and an artificially darkened room? Does he also consent to hold his tongue, and to aid inquiry all that he can?

"4. Does he make himself personally responsible for the truth of the theory of atoms, and identify himself more or less with them (the atoms)?

"5. Would he be glad if their delusive character were established and exposed, and would he gladly help to expose them? or would he be annoyed and personally offended?

"6. Does Prof. Faraday consider the atoms natural or super-

"natural? if natural, what are the laws which govern them? or does he think they are not subject to laws? if supernatural, is he prepared to explain their spiritual affinities? Would sneering at the atomic theory be considered a personal insult to Professor Faraday?

"7. If the effects are natural, will Professor Faraday kindly inform me what atom (!) of good have the atoms ever done to mankind?

"I lost as much time about atoms, formerly, as I thought consistent with the self-respect of an experienced Spiritualist, in hopes of developing some new spirit-power—but I never could see *the ghost of an atom*. As I do not want to debate the matter with those who have already made up their minds in a direction contrary to my own, I wish you would shew this letter to Professor Faraday and those who want me to meet him, after which you will know whether you should persevere in asking me. You will understand that I decline to meet any whose minds are not at liberty to investigate according to the general principles here expressed. I care *not a rap* for the atoms, and the last thing in the world that I will ever "give in to," is the atomic theory."*

Now, what would have been the answer of Professor Faraday to such a "programme" as this? Would he not have denounced in the strongest possible terms, the conduct of a man who, when a question involving consequences of the utmost importance to science was about to be investigated, should put forth such a childish preamble as the basis, and the conditions of the enquiry? And wherefore should we spiritualists shew any greater consideration to Professor Faraday and the supporters and endorsers of his views? We have hitherto entertained the highest respect for these promoters of science who have, by their discoveries, enabled us better to comprehend the physical phenomena of Spiritualism: but your petulance and disingenuousness† have at length forced us to look upon you in the same light as *you* look upon the ignorant bores who, by a just Nemesis, deride you, call you "book worms," and scoff at your science which they cannot comprehend.

* This is, *mutatis mutandis*, almost word for word a paraphrase of Faraday's own letter.

† The writer, through a common friend—J. S. H., Esq., of Clifton—invited Mr Lewes to meet him in London, during the month of May, 1868, that he might shew him certain physical phenomena occurring at spiritualistic seances; and received—through the same common friend—the following rational, urbane, and "philosophical" answer. "I should be very indisposed to renew transactions with the spirits. Nothing but a strong sense of duty would again make me soil my hands with such dirt." This is the kind of *desire for investigation* that these philosophers evince towards the new science!

But you have not been content with refusing investigation; you have attempted to prejudge. To take one case as an instance:—You, Professor Tyndall, in one of your letters to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, jubilantly exclaim, in reference to the then pending case of *Lyon v. Home*, “Now that *the law is about to pronounce in the matter* (of Spiritualism), I take the opportunity,” &c. The law! what has the law to say about Spiritualism? When did a court of equity—or, for that matter, a court of Common Law, either—assume to “pronounce” upon the intrinsic merits of a science or a religion? In the case above referred to, the decree of the Court could only be, simply that Mr Home should or should not refund certain moneys received by him of Mrs Lyon. Vice-Chancellor Giffard’s judgment—as he himself took the trouble of distinctly pointing out—was against *Home*, not against *Spiritualism*. It could not have been otherwise in the nature of things. The Court of Chancery exercises, I am aware, a very high jurisdiction; but at what period of its history did it ever claim jurisdiction over the future life?

“The law!”—*what law*. Suppose we lived in the good old times when the Canon law and *Corpus Juris Civilis* were administered, would you have relished an appeal to “the law,” in the matter of Rationalism, or Comtism? If you had so appealed, your ashes, strown over Smithfield, would soon have convinced the law-loving world of your errors; and we spiritualists (thanks to your denunciation) would have been doomed, as congenial schismatics, to stand beside you, chained to the self-same stake as that to which you Rationalists were condemned.

You object, perhaps, to the *tu quoque* line of argument? As you have been so eager to invoke “the law,” Professor Tyndall, you can hardly object to have your own test applied to yourself and your science. Would you care much if Vice-Chancellor Giffard had “pronounced” against Mineralogy? or would you have felt very deeply impressed if the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen’s Bench had directed a Middlesex jury that Electricity was an absurdity? And if not these,—why Spiritualism? “The law” is as capable of “pronouncing against” one as the other. But, indeed, in asserting that the Court of Chancery, or “the law,” was about to “pronounce upon the subject of Spiritualism,” you stated, by way of anticipation, something that was not, and could not possibly be.

Again, I emphatically repeat that a science like ours, based upon the evidence of the senses (although not *ending* there), is, to all intents and purposes, a positive, inductive, and ascertained science. Of some few (*necessarily few*) of the many physical phenomena of Spiritualism, I have already spoken. I claim no

higher place for these phenomena than this,—that they are, doubtless, intended to attract the attention of men, and prepare their minds for the reception of the Spiritual Philosophy. You may ask,—“What *is* that philosophy? what do the ‘spirits’ ‘profess to teach us?” I will endeavour, briefly, to state it for the enlightenment of others than yourselves.

The philosophy of Spiritualism, then, teaches us these things:—

- 1st. That man, the inhabitant of the universe, is endowed with an immortal spirit; and that all material creation exists only for the development of that spirit.
- 2nd. That when this spirit breaks through the clay,* it finds itself in a new phase of existence.
- 3rd. In this new phase, the spirit works out its further advancement by deeds of love,—by acquiring knowledge, and by imparting such knowledge to men or spirits less favoured.
- 4th. This progression is infinite as knowledge. From one stage, or phase, of progress, the spirit, never losing its identity, passes to another and higher.

Such is our philosophy. What is your objection to it? Can you deny that it is, as a theory, *primâ facie*, logical and consistent; as a creed, simple and consolatory? Can *you* offer anything better? Do you seriously imagine that your “mind-producing ‘matter’” theory will ever be allowed, by thinkers, to be conclusive upon the mysteries of creation? Is it not better, with us, to accept the evidences of the immortality of the soul, offered by means of messages and signs from those who have preceded us to the realms of light,—than to grope in the dark, with you, in a vain attempt to satisfy the cravings of “man’s immortal part,” by means of mathematical demonstrations of purely physical facts? *Whose* philosophy is the likelier to make men virtuous and happy,—*our’s*, which teaches us to look ever forward, towards the yet-brightening day of a progressive spiritual existence? or *your’s*, which recognises nothing higher than the flesh-pots of Egypt, and—like the Gothamite philosopher, disdaining the stars of heaven—prefers examining only things of the earth, earthy?

You object—reverting to *phenomenal* Spiritualism—you object, I say, to some of our experiments, as being conducted in darkness. If you were acquainted with the constituent elements of light, and the means employed by the spirits for the purpose of producing certain phenomena, you would understand the why and the wherefore of this. You are as much justified in refusing credence to experiments performed in the dark, simply because they *are* performed in the dark, as a man would be in refusing

* *i.e.*, as you would say, *when the man dies*.

to credit the microscopic revelations of *infusoria* in decomposed water, until it was conclusively proved that there was no trickery concealed in the tube of the instrument, and—mark this—refusing to investigate the internal arrangement of that instrument. You reject the facts of Spiritualism, because of their being in opposition to the *known* laws of nature, and unexplainable by the tests of science. Are you sure that you are acquainted with all those laws, or that the tests you may select are really accurate in themselves or conclusive in their results? Your tests applied to Spiritualism appear about as appropriate and natural as the shaggy coating of the mythical “woolly horse.” The fact is, this new wine is bursting your old bottles.

Again, you say that these phenomena which spiritualists assert to take place in their presence, never occur in your’s. You obtain precisely the revelations you deserve to obtain—none. To adopt a saying of my own country—“*In chiesa coi santi, e in taverna coi ghiottoni.*”^{*} Do you not admit, in physical science, that “like begets like”? You go disbelieving, ridiculing, mocking; you do not deserve to have the truth revealed to you, and you have it not. You are like the sick bear to whom his keeper brings a hot-house pine-apple (the story is Douglas Jerrold’s, not mine)—“Bah! away with it, keeper,” growls the bear; “how sickly its smell, how faint its taste!” “Why, what on earth “would you have?” asks the astonished keeper. “Offal, nothing “but offal!” you (and the bear) reply. You are offered Spiritualism: “Away with it! we want stones—nothing but stones!” You go to our *séances* in a negative (if not an inimical) state of mind; well, what result can you expect? *Ex nihilo, nihil fit.* Scarcely believing—nay, I am wrong, utterly disbelieving—the very existence of a spirit world, you go to question it, and complain that there are no answers to your inquiries. With as much reason (to repeat one of my previous illustrations) might a blind man deny the existence of the *nebula*, because he could not see them at Greenwich Observatory. You come to us blind—blinded by your own prejudice and determined incredulity,—what wonder that you see nothing? You come to us, disbelieving the very existence of spirits,—what wonder if the spirits repudiate any affinity with *you*? You are antagonistic to spiritual revelations, and no revelations take place.

Spiritualism is at one with Pneumatology, inasmuch as it deals with the doctrine of the properties of occult imponderable fluids. What if incredulity disturbs, suspends, the action of these fluids, as an acid neutralises an alkali, and an alkali an acid? You may, perchance, find fault with us because we are unable to clearly demonstrate this proposition. Can *you* explain why the

* “In church with the saintly, in the tavern with the bibulous.”

acid *does* neutralise the alkali? Who shall be so bold as to say that thought, the greatest force in nature, may not, does not, actively influence our material surroundings? And if this be so, then do *your* acrid disbelief and mental animosity necessarily act as disturbing or neutralising influences upon the spiritual forces.

But further argument is useless addressed to men like you, whose ears are stopped, and whose eyes are shut. You are not open to argument, you are not to be impressed by facts, you are not to be convinced by logic; for you come to the temples of our science with your minds filled with self-sufficiency and prejudice. You are pocket Catos, coming with faces of predetermined austerity into the great theatre on whose boards are enacted the grand scenes of life and immortality. *Cur in theatrum Cato severe venisti?*—and you cannot give the why or the wherefore! But although you may not be *convinced*, you can be *silenced*: and I have that to say, in taking leave of you, which must, if left unanswered, deprive you and your acolytes for ever hereafter of any shadow of right to deny, to asperse, or to ridicule Spiritualism. I, therefore, standing before the public under no cloak of anonymity, but in my own proper person, offer to you what must appear to you, Comtists and Positivists, sufficiently material in its nature to be worthy the attention of men who deride whatever is *not* tangibly substantial.

I now offer you two challenges.

First, I challenge you, or either of you, or any of the public who, like you, disbelieve in the genuine character of spiritualistic phenomena, to deposit in the hands of any well-known London banker whom you or they may name, the sum of five hundred guineas; and I pledge myself to immediately deposit in the same bank a like amount,—the ownership of such sum of one thousand guineas to depend upon my proving by evidence sufficient to establish *any* fact in history or in a criminal or civil court of justice:—

First,—That intelligent communications and answers to questions put, proceed from dead and inert matter in a manner inexplicable by any generally recognised law of nature.

Secondly,—That dead and inert matter does move without the aid of any mechanical or known chemical agency, and in defiance of all the admitted laws of gravitation.

Thirdly,—That voices appertaining to no one in the flesh are heard to speak and hold rational converse with men.

A jury of twenty-four gentlemen, twelve to be chosen by each party (such jury to consist exclusively of members of the learned professions and literary men), to decide whether or not the facts contained in the above propositions are conclusively

proved *per testes*—i.e., by witnesses of established character. A majority of the twenty-four to decide. If the verdict be that these facts have *not* been established, the thousand guineas are to belong to the party accepting this challenge; if the verdict be that these facts *are* established, the thousand guineas to be mine.

Secondly,—Immediately upon the above wager being decided, either way, I offer a like challenge of five hundred guineas (to be met on the other side in like manner as above)—the ownership of this second sum of one thousand guineas to depend upon the establishment of the facts contained in the propositions already given, *by experiments conducted in the actual presence* of the twenty-four gentlemen who have decided the previous wager; the verdict of the majority to decide in this case likewise.

In either case, the *séances* are to be conducted in any public or private building which the jury may select, and which may be available for the purpose.

The result of these challenges (if accepted and decided) to be advertised by the victorious party, at the expense of the defeated party, in all the London daily papers.

I hope this is plain English.

Awaiting a reply to this letter, and to the challenge with which it concludes,

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedt. servt.,

Clifton, Oct. 1, 1868.

G. DAMIANI.

P.S.—Letters addressed “Sigr. Damiani, care of Manager of “West of England and South Wales District Bank, Corn Street, “Bristol,” will always reach the writer.

APPENDIX.

MICHAEL FARADAY'S LETTER TO SIR EMERSON TENNENT.

Folkestone, June 14, 1861.

MY DEAR SIR EMERSON,—I cannot help feeling that you are indiscreet in your desire to bring me into contact with the occult phenomena which it is said are made manifest in Mr Home's presence. I have investigated such in former times, during some years, and as much as I thought consistent with the self-respect that an experimental philosopher owes to himself. It would be a condescension on my part to pay any more attention to them now; and I can only do so under the persuasion that all concerned wish to have the phenomena unravelled and understood, and will do all they can to aid in such a result. To settle whether I can go or not, I wish to put to you the following points:—

1. Who wishes me to go?—to whose house?—for what purpose?
2. Does Mr Home wish me to go?
3. Is he willing to investigate as a philosopher, and as such to have no concealments, no darkness, to be open in communication, and to aid inquiry all that he can?
4. Does he make himself responsible for the effects, and identify himself more or less with their cause?
5. Would he be glad if their delusive character were established and exposed, and would he gladly help to expose it, or would he be annoyed and personally offended?
6. Does he consider the effects natural or supernatural? If natural, what are the laws which govern them? or does he think they are not subject to laws? If supernatural, does he suppose them to be miracles or the work of spirits? If the work of spirits, would an insult to the spirits be considered as an insult to himself?
7. If the effects are miracles, or the work of spirits, does he admit the utterly contemptible character, both of them and their results, up to the present time, in respect either of yielding information or instruction, or supplying any force or action of the least value to mankind?
8. If they be natural effects without natural law, can they be of any use or value to mankind.
9. If they be the glimpses of natural action not yet reduced to law, ought it not to be the duty of every one who has the least influence in such actions personally to develop them, and aid others in their development by the utmost openness and assistance, and by the application of every critical method, either mental or experimental, which the mind of man can devise?

I do not wish to give offence to any one, or to meddle with this subject again. I lost much time about it formerly, in hopes of developing some new force or power; but found nothing worthy of attention. I can only look at it now as a natural philosopher; and, because of the respect due to myself, will not enter upon any further attention or investigation unless those who profess to have a hold upon the effects agree to aid to the uttermost. To this purpose they must consent (and desire) to be as critical upon the matter and full of test investigation in regard to the subject, as any natural philosopher is in respect of the germs of his discoveries. How could electricity, that universal spirit of matter, ever have been developed in its relations to chemical action, to magnetic action, to its application in the explosion of mines, the weaving of silk, the extension of printing, the electro-telegraph, the illumination of light-houses, &c., except by rigid investigation, grounded on the strictest critical reasoning and the most exact and open experiment? and if these so-called occult manifestations are not utterly worthless, they must and will pass through a like ordeal.

As I do not want to debate this matter with those who have already made up their minds in a direction contrary to my own, but (if I see sufficient reason) only to work it out with such a desire to find incontrovertible proofs independent of opinion or assertion, so I wish you would show this letter to Mr Home, and those who want me to meet him and them on his ground; after which you will know whether you should persevere in asking me. You will understand that I decline to meet any whose minds are not at liberty to investigate according to the general principles I have here expressed.

Further, I claim the right of publishing the whole or any part of this letter, or any future written communication that may arise out of it, in any manner that I may think fit.—Ever, my dear Sir Emerson, your very faithful servant,

M. FARADAY.

You will see that I consent to all this with much reserve, and only for your sake.—M. F.