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VERA VINCENT,
OR
THE TESTIMONY OF
T. M. SIMKISS
OF WOLVERHAMPTON,
TO THE TRUTH OF
SPIRITUALISM.

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"We have long made up our minds on the Spiritualist question, and it needed not the case of LYON *v.* HOME to convince us that it was a perilous swindle as well as a miserable self delusion. It is simply sickening to read the twaddle of spiritualist publications, recording facts so childishly absurd that only fools could believe, and only rogues could invent them."—*Fun*, March 13, 1869.

"Scorn brandeth the body, while justice crowneth the soul."—*Anon.*

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.

WOLVERHAMPTON:
E. RODEN, MACHINE PRINTER AND LITHOGRAPHER.

—
1869.

TO THE

London Dialectical Society.

GENTLEMEN,

In accordance with the expressed wish of your Committee, I herewith furnish, in writing, the substance of my testimony to the truth of Spiritualism, as given by me at your meeting at the residence of Dr. EDMONDS, Fitzroy Square, London, on the evening of Tuesday, the 13th of April, 1869.

T. M. SIMKISS.

Wolverhampton,

May 1st, 1869.

VERA VINCENT.

I have been a Spiritualist for nearly sixteen years, and have examined the various phases of mediumship, with all the critical research of which I am capable.

I am not myself a medium in the common acceptation of the term, though I have tried hard to become one. I have tried in a variety of ways to see, hear or feel spirits myself: by sitting frequently in circles as passively as possible, by submitting myself to repeated mesmeric manipulations, and by sitting alone in the dead of night for many hours in a room that was used for some years exclusively for the purposes of spirits and mediums, and might be considered to be thoroughly permeated with spiritual magnetism, but all with no apparent effect.

I have never been able to witness any independent physical manifestations, (i.e. without contact of the medium,)—which would admit of efficient testing; so that I am generally sceptical as to the reality of this branch of Spiritualism. Though I have not seen any reliable physical manifestations, I have witnessed a great number of neurologic spiritual manifestations; and after deducting the greatest possible per centage for mesmerism, for imposture, and for hallucination, there remains for me no possible alternative but to acknowledge that some persons who are physically dead, have still a conscious existence, and can, by operating through the nervous systems of certain sensitive individuals, called mediums, give unmistakable evidence of their identity.

I will quote a few marked instances out of a great number, of which I have had personal experience:—Sixteen years ago, being in the city of Philadelphia, in America, sceptical as to future existence, and quite unacquainted with Spiritualism, except by report as the last American humbug, I went to see Henry Gordon, a noted medium.

The instant I entered his room he became entranced, and his body appeared to be controlled by some intelligent power other than himself. He immediately extended his hand to me, saying quickly—"Tom, how are you ; I am glad to see you here ; I am your old friend Michael C——" After a pause, "I and others have influenced you to come here, so as to give you proof of immortality, which you have given over believing in." Michael C—— was a college friend of mine who had been dead more than three years. I had then been in America only six days, and was a complete stranger to all around me : I had never mentioned the name of Michael C—— to any one in America, nor had I thought of him for some weeks before that time. On subsequent occasions, through Henry Gordon, Michael C—— related many incidents of a private nature which completely established his personality in my mind.

On the next day after my first visit to Henry Gordon, I went to see a lady who was not a public medium, Mrs. Chase, the wife of Dr. Chase, one of the Professors of the Eclectic Medical College of Philadelphia, and who was said to see spirits. On my entering her drawing-room she said—"Oh ! Doctor, there are several spirits come in with this gentleman ; one is a tall, thin, young man, with brown hair, and only a little whiskers by his ears ; he stoops and coughs very much, and died of consumption ; but he has already communicated through some other medium." This, I recognised as being a correct description of Michael C——. Mrs. Chase then continued—"On the other side of him there is a young girl, apparently about sixteen or seventeen years old, with very white skin ; her hair appears to be nearly black and hangs in ringlets ; she has a broad square forehead and square shoulders ; you knew her very well when alive." I could not recollect any one answering to that description. "She is very merry and rather fond of teasing, and is amused at your not recollecting her, as you used to know her so well." I was still perplexed, and began to think that Mrs. Chase was playing with my imagination. After a few more tantalizing remarks I began to get tired of the affair, when

Mrs. Chase said—"She is now going to say something by which you will know who she is." After a pause she continued—"You bore me to the grave." This remark, originated by the spirit herself as a sign of recognition, was a perfect test to me. I had never in my life, up to that time, been present at the funeral of any young girl except at that of the one of whom Mrs. Chase had just given me such a perfect description, both as to her appearance and playfully teasing manner, all of which this test brought fully back to my mind, though I had not thought of her for at least two years previous to that time. She had then been dead nine or ten years.

For the past three years my wife has been a medium. Constitutionally she is quite healthy, rather wiry and energetic than actually strong, with a quick circulation, strong nerved, never been subject to fits or fainting, almost insensible to fear, and of a sceptical turn of mind. She was first entranced almost immediately on her sitting in a circle of Spiritualists, to which she went out of curiosity. Afterwards she was frequently in the unconscious or trance state, and easily possessed by spirits, who could have full control of her organisation for their own peculiar modes of speech and gesticulation, and were apparently as much at home as if in their own bodies. One spirit who at this time very frequently possessed her was that of a Scotchman, who invariably spoke broad Scotch through her, which she is quite unable to do in her normal condition.

This trance state, unsurpassed as it may be for test purposes, is detrimental to the nervous system if much persisted in. In the case of my wife it appears to have been a transition stage that she passed through as means of developing her interior senses, so as to enable her to see and converse with spirits, without the closing of any of her external senses. She is now as wide awake and fully conscious when seeing spirits as any person with whom she is in company. She not only sees them, but occasionally gives the full names, both christian and surnames of total strangers, and by this means has convinced many persons of the truth of Spiritualism and immortality, about which they were previously doubtful.

One evening, in the midst of a general conversation, my wife suddenly said to me "here is a spirit who says his name is Father F——;" she went on giving me a correct description of his personal appearance, and told me where and under what circumstances we were previously acquainted with each other. A week afterwards I took an opportunity of testing her with regard to this spirit. Seeing his photograph in a shop where I was making some other purchases, I bought one; my wife not being with me. I afterwards caused her to see it in an accidental manner, without her having any suspicion of intention on my part, by showing it to another person. She looked to see what I was showing my friend, and said "Who is that, I have seen that face before." "Don't you know?" said I. She replied "Oh! it's that spirit that I saw last week; it's Father F——, what a good likeness it is."

On another occasion we went by invitation to visit some persons who were strangers to us; during the evening my wife described a spirit, a deceased relative of theirs, which description they said was accurate; and he gave his name as "Tommy." To this I was paying but little attention, not being acquainted with their family connections, when my wife said to me "Tommy says he used to know you very well." I then enquired of the lady of the house as to the former residence and business of her uncle, (the spirit Tommy) and found that he was quite correct; I was officially connected with him when alive, and knew him well, but never had any idea that he was any relation to the persons whom we were then visiting. Some six months afterwards she saw an oil portrait of this person at a house in another part of the country, and instantly recognised it as "Tommy," whom she had seen on the evening above mentioned.

My wife has given me the names of spirits of historical personages, many of whom I am quite certain that she had never heard of, and in several cases that I had never heard or read of until I searched various Encyclopædias to find if such persons had ever existed. One instance. That of "Annibale Carracci," who she

said was an Italian artist. Not being given to artistic pursuits or literature, I did not know of such a person ; but on looking out for him in the Encyclopædia I found his name and profession rightly given. She has correctly described the details of dress of many ancient Grecian and Roman spirits, such as the tunic, toga, sandals, &c., of which she was previously quite ignorant.

Into the various ontological theories and speculations, which inevitably grow up in the philosophical mind from the consideration of metaphysical subjects, or into the theological paraphernalia with which ecclesiastical dogmatism and superstition have invested and well nigh smothered the pure form of "MAN THE SPIRIT," I think it useless at present to enter, as the chief object of this investigation is to elicit well authenticated facts, and thoroughly to sift them, to see if they can be accounted for in any other manner than by the agency of departed human beings.

In my experience I have met not only with success, but with very many disappointments ; and now rarely waste much time upon the spirits, vainly waiting for them to communicate ; for I know that if they choose to withhold themselves, they will not come when we do call, whilst on the other hand, they will sometimes manifest themselves at times and in places the most unexpected.

Beyond solving the important question "If a man die shall he live again ?"—by the very fact of spirits communicating and proving their identity, there is to me little that is consistent or reliable in what is revealed through different mediums. And perhaps this is very wise. For if man were led to rely much upon spirits for advice, his own judgment and energy would be in danger of being weakened thereby.

T. M. SIMKISS.