

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

SPIRITUALISM:

A Narrative with a Discussion.

BY

PATRICK PROCTOR ALEXANDER, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF

'MILL AND CARLYLE,' 'MORAL CAUSATION,' ETC.

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

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265. k. 45

**MURRAY AND GIBB, EDINBURGH,
PRINTERS TO HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.**

P R E F A C E.

THE following little Piece was almost wholly written some time since. Originally projected within the limits of a Magazine article, it had strayed very much beyond these ; and was thus lying beside me unused, when the startling facts laid before the public by Mr. Crookes, and witnessed to by Dr. Huggins and Mr. Sergeant Cox, once more drew attention to the subject. The yet more extraordinary experiences, testified to by Lord Lindsay immediately afterwards, still further excited attention. Subsequently various other marvels of the like kind have found their way to the public, and ‘the cry is, Still they come.’ This revival of interest in the subject has suggested the present publication. I cannot but be aware how slight is the importance to be attached to anything written on so narrow a basis of either observation or inquiry ; but I print it for what it may be worth, as a mite of contribution to the

discussion. I give it as originally written, though my friend Dr. D—— (to whom reference is frequent) is since dead, to the regret of all who knew him. He was a man of venerable age, but retained at the time of which I write all the powers of a naturally strong and thoroughly cultivated intelligence.

P. P. A.



SPIRITUALISM :

AN HOUR OR TWO WITH MR. HOME.

SOME time in the spring of last year, Mr. Home, the famous *Medium*, visited Edinburgh for the purpose of giving a series of public readings ; and learning accidentally that he was living with my old and greatly respected friend Dr. D—, in whose house signs and wonders were reported as of nightly occurrence, I had just sufficient interest of curiosity in the matter to lead me to ask leave to be present at a *Séance*. This was readily granted ; and accordingly, on an evening fixed, I presented myself at the house, taking with me (by permission) Dr. Findlater, a man very well known in Edinburgh intellectual circles,—not hitherto suspected by his friends of a tendency to undue credulity in any matter ; a friend, and in some sense disciple, of Mr. John Stuart Mill ; with a couple of good sharp eyes in his head, and perhaps as accurate notions as most men as to what

may constitute Evidence, and the conditions of scientific inquiry. We found a small party assembled; and to Mr. Home we were, of course, introduced. The impression he made on me was, on the whole, favourable. Fair of complexion, he might reasonably be called good-looking, though scarce, in any strict sense, remarkably so. His manners were simple and quiet, and very much those of a gentleman. There was no trace in him whatever of the *charlatan*; and, except for an occasional wildness in his eye—so slight that I may have merely imagined it—none of the *Magus*, or seer, accustomed to hold awful commune with Spirits, either evil or good. After tea we proceeded to business; and I shall narrate, as simply as I may, everything just as it occurred. Though by no means remarkable, and indeed a little insignificant, as compared with other phenomena of the kind on record,—and never, as it seems to me, quite satisfactorily explained,—what took place is perhaps sufficiently curious to be made note of, and may possibly have matter of amusement in it for here and there a reader good-natured enough to be amused.

I may premise that I cannot readily conceive conditions much more favourable to Dr. Findlater and myself, as regards the interest of truth, than those under which this little experiment was made,—more unfavourable to Mr. Home, presumed a mere juggler and impostor. Had Mr. Home advertised an enter-

tainment to take place in a hired apartment of his own, I don't think I should have cared to go to see him, any more than I ever cared to go to see Professor Anderson bring puddings out of a hat, or pour liquors from his magic bottle. But the room was Mrs. D——'s drawing-room, and could scarce in any way have been *prepared* by Mr. Home without her or Dr. D——'s connivance,—a theory of the matter, in my own mind, and, I venture to say, that of every one who has ever had the pleasure of their acquaintance, disposed of as utterly inadmissible, in virtue of the known and high character of both. Further, it is certified to me beyond question, that the 'manifestations,' as they are termed, took place indifferently in any or every room in the house, and most particularly in Dr. D——'s bedroom, which could scarce have been tampered with by Mr. Home without his becoming aware of it. None of the company had any relations with Mr. Home, excepting as we ourselves had, *per* favour of our host and hostess; or could thus, any more than we, be suspected of complicity with Mr. Home. The drawing-room was *fully and brightly lit with gas*; and the table, which was good enough to vouchsafe us intelligence from the Spirit-world, an old acquaintance, at which I had aforetime taken tea, undreaming of Mr. Home or of Spirits. If conditions more favourable can be suggested by any scientific gentleman, I shall be glad to

have the benefit of his wisdom. In passing to a little narrative of the events of the evening as they occurred, it may be as well for me to say, as marking at once and clearly the point of view from which I write, that neither on Dr. Findlater's mind nor my own did the wonders of which we were witnesses *leave any serious impression*. But both of us were a good deal perplexed, and remain so—as quite unable to suggest any plausible explanation of them. As to the obvious explanation of *mala fides* and jugglery on Mr. Home's part, the only little objection to it is (and perhaps it may be thought but a little one), that with our very best will and care to that effect, and the best opportunities for doing so, we utterly failed to *detect of these any trace whatever*.

The table at which we sat down was an ordinary round drawing-room tea-table, solidly built, and thus of considerable weight, resting on a central stem, which branched at the base into three feet. The number of the party was nine ; and as certain of the ladies were somewhat expansively dressed, there was at first a little difficulty as to all of us being accommodated. To solve this, I proposed that, without taking active part in the *Séance*, I should look on as an outside spectator. This arrangement seemed adjudged by Mr. Home inadmissible, either for me or another ; and there was some hint of one of the ladies (already familiar with the phenomena)

having to leave the room. Presently, however, by some ductility of arrangement, and compression of elastic bodies, we all found ourselves more or less comfortably seated, with our hands deposited before us on the table.

Distinctly, however, Mr. Home seemed to object to the presence of any observer outside the circle of those seated with him at table, and thus exercising a *disengaged* supervision. This, at the time, I mentally noted as point 1. of suspicion ; and as such, I in fairness think it well to make note of it, for behoof of the reader, who may assign to it what weight he pleases. In my own mind, a *souçon* of suspicion still clings to it ; but I attach to it no great importance, on the ground that, *supposing everything to have taken place as it did*, it is not clear to me how, as outside observer, I should have had any facilities for detection of supposed imposture not to the full accorded me, as *at* the table, and occasionally *under* it. *Why* then, it may be asked, this condition, surely more or less suspicious? To which I can give no answer ; nor should I expect Mr. Home to give any, except that it was certified to him by experience as a condition more or less imperative. ‘Supposing everything to have taken place as it did,’ I have said,—perhaps an inadmissible supposition, if we suppose for the disengaged spectator any formidable and exceptional facilities as a detective. But suppose this brought to

the test of experiment (as, of course, by any accurate inquirer it would be—the chances supposed given him). Suppose, at the next *Séance*, the presence of a disengaged spectator insisted on as one of the conditions of the inquiry; and suppose that nothing should now ‘take place, as before it did,’—that nothing at all should take place. Would imposture be thereby proved in the phenomena of the previous event? I think it would be rash to say so. All that was really indicated might be contradiction, in this condition of inquiry prescribed, of a true condition of the phenomena. Our condition, prescribed as scientific, might in truth be *unscientific*, as introducing a new cause into the experiment, and that cause a *really* counteracting one. Given, as here asserted, a novel and mysterious agency to be inquired into, and provisionally admitting it to exist (as in fairness, for the purposes of inquiry, we must), we may very well suppose it to have laws and conditions of its own. These (supposing, of course, still the thing, by possibility, true) are only to be learned by experience; and as so learned, it seems plain we are in no position to criticise them: far less are we entitled to dogmatically prescribe conditions to agencies mysterious and hitherto unknown. They are to be taken on their own terms, as these are alleged to be determined, in the only way in which they could be so,—by experiment and observation. One condition of

inquiry, and one only, are we in such a case really entitled to prescribe and severely insist upon ; *to wit*, that nothing in the conditions of the phenomena shall be such as to stultify inquiry, by outrage of any condition of exact scientific observation. Such an obviously stultifying and fatal condition would be, for instance, that the Spirits declined (as indeed we at one time used to hear they did) to face the light of day, or do their spiriting, except as owls, in carefully darkened apartments. It seems plain, that the operations of Spirits, which should obstinately share with the owl its antipathy to a clear light, could only be adequately criticised through owls which we had trained to observe them, as we train pigs to hunt truffles for us. And other such conditions there are, as to which I need not here enlarge, as I shall have to treat somewhat formally this part of the subject. As to how far the condition which seemed a little to be insisted on by Mr. Home—that an outside or disengaged spectator could not be permitted in the room, as apt to paralyse his Spirits—may be liable to this fundamental objection, there will probably be some difference of opinion. Practically, as having seen the thing, I do not myself think it, on grounds as already given, to any serious or even appreciable extent, so liable ; but I should be rather surprised if as to this I found many scientific men in agreement with me. On the whole, as Mr. Home has apparently

been able to educate his Spirits—as Mr. Disraeli succeeded in doing with the Tory party—out of their preference for dark places, it might be well if he could educate a little further, and get them to overcome their objection to the presence of critical and disengaged spectators,—spectators, *as* disengaged, more likely to be sharply critical than those who are actors also.

To return from this digression : the little difficulty, as I said, was got over, and we found ourselves fairly *en séance*, with our hands before us on the table. Thus for some little time we sat, solemn, and for the most part silent ; and as nothing whatever took place, I confess I began to feel—as one so very often must in Society—a little like a fool among fools. Mr. Home then remarked that perhaps nothing *was* going to happen. At no time, he said, could he be *certain*—his *will* being in the matter quite powerless—that ‘manifestations’ would take place.* But in any case,

* This might seem so ingeniously contrived as a loop-hole of escape for Mr. Home from certain difficulties always menacing an impostor,—*to wit*, the presence of some exceptionally sharp-eyed detective, astutely surmised to be so, or the elimination of the sources of error in a carefully prepared experiment,—that one might be excused in noting here point II. of suspicion. And, in point of fact, it is this element of the capricious and incalculable, asserted as involved in the phenomena, which indisposes so many scientific men to any serious concernment with the subject, and seems to make it impossible for most of them to hear even serious *allusion* to it with ordinary temper and patience.

he continued, it was no use taking the matter thus *au sérieux* ; and he suggested that, without the least risk of offence to the Spirits, and consequent continued alienation of them, some light and easy talk might go on. The 'topics of the day' were accordingly taken up, and carelessly bandied about, as at any ordinary party. And here it may be well to remark, that it was only in this preliminary stage of the proceedings that there was anything to be called solemnity. *Afterwards*, when the Spirits of the just made perfect—as undoubtedly some of us believed—put themselves in close communion with us, we contrived to maintain a hilarity, not to say levity, of mood, which, had I seriously shared that belief, would have seemed to me but scant edifying. The hallucinations, if so

'Inquiry into Home's claims !' will the *Savant* in such a case say. 'Pooh ! pooh ! pooh ! my good fellow, don't bother me with such *bosh* ! Why should I, or any one not an ass, inquire into such a matter ? I should put myself to a good deal of trouble : the phenomena would, *of course*, be nowhere ; and your friend Mr. Home would turn round to me and say, quite unabashed, " Oh ! I have always said that in no case could I be *certain* of success : this utterly incalculable element is one of the strangest things about the phenomena." Pooh ! pooh ! pooh !' etc. And in this, from the point of view of the *Savant*, undoubtedly there is much reason. Not the less from another point of view ; *to wit*, that of a person who provisionally admits the thing as true, or at least possible, fair reasons might perhaps be shown, pretty deep in the nature of the case, for not expecting to find in its phenomena the absolute constancy we assume in our dealings with acids and alkalis. To this I may possibly return.

to be termed, to which we became subject, were thus certainly not any birth of mere awed and excited imagination.

The first hint or foreshine we had of the 'phenomena' came in the form of certain tremors which began to pervade the apartment. These were of a somewhat peculiar kind ; and they gradually increased till they became of considerable violence. Not only did the floor tremble, but the chair of each person, as distinct from it, was felt to rock and—as we Scots say—*dirl* under him. Meantime that Mr. Home produced, or *could* produce, these tremors, sitting quiet as he did like the rest of us, there was no evidence to show ; though that *somehow* he *may* have produced them, it would seem to me hazardous to deny, or decline to admit.

Presently some of us became conscious, or supposed they did, of ice-cold blasts of air drifting across their hands. 'Oh ! don't you feel it ? don't you feel it ?' would one person say to another ; and most of those at the table professed to feel distinctly these wafts of air and chill sensation. For my own part, I felt nothing of the kind ; neither did my friend Dr. Findlater. Once only it *seemed* I *did* feel *something* of the sort ; but it was so dim a ghost of sensation, that I could not at the moment determine (and cannot, of course, now) whether it was felt, or merely imagined, *per* infection from those about

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me. Certain of the finer ears of the company began presently to hear raps upon the table. For a little while, I myself could hear none. Yet I am not in the least dull of hearing. Not the less, it seems scarce to be doubted that, some little time before to *me* they became audible, raps were heard from the table, just as when I myself afterwards heard them. Seriously doubting of this, I should be forced upon one of two alternatives, neither of which can I accept: either that I had come into a nest of conspirators with Mr. Home, who professed to hear raps when they really heard nothing of the kind; or that the whole series of raps, as distinctly heard by me and others, had merely a subjective validity—*i.e.* were induced as effects of sound in the *sensorium*, without any real sound *ab extra*, operative as cause upon the ear. Both alternatives I dismiss: the first on grounds already stated; the other on grounds too obvious to be worth stating. By fair inference back from this,—if I cannot in reason refuse belief in these sounds as heard, though as yet I did not myself hear them,—by parity of reason, I must accept as *bona fide* phenomena of sensation those chilly drifts of air upon the hands, distinctly testified to by certain of my friends, though on my own hands I was not conclusively conscious of any such. And on coming to inquire as to the *cause* of these effects of chill, to which my credence must be given, I find myself in

a state of entire puzzlement. Supposing them phenomena of real sensation, *how* could Mr. Home have induced them? *how*, if not induced by Mr. Home, could they be at all induced? I can form no theory of my own, either way; and should be glad if any philosopher would furnish me with one to consider of.*

By and by, however, as to the raps, there could be no manner of question: they became quite bold and pronounced, as if delivered by a smart knuckle; and they were distinctly localized on the table, so that almost the precise point of each impact could be indicated. Presently—as to the ear it seemed, exactly in the *centre* of the table—came a tap, tap, tapping, regular, continuous, and prolonged; on hearing which, Mr. Home announced that he was now nearly sure we should have ‘manifestations’ of some sort; and, turning to *me*, he suggested that, as naturally I might wish to test the thing a little curiously, I had better go under the table, and satisfy myself as to whether there was anything *there* to account for what would probably take place. Accordingly—though a little loth, as suspecting a slight degradation in it—I performed what Mr. Darwin would call an act of

* Of my two friends referred to at pp. 32–36 respectively, the one assures me he felt these chill sensations with a distinctness quite unmistakeable; the other, that in *his* case they were felt to almost positive pain of refrigeration. I see no reason whatever to question the testimony of either.

'reversion ;' and, in the enthusiasm of scientific inquiry, was content, for the nonce, to relapse into the condition of an 'ape-like progenitor,' or member of the class *Quadrumana*. As such, I crept quietly under the table, and kept steady watch there for the space of ten minutes or so ; Dr. Findlater, as an observer of the genus *Homo*, keeping the like steady watch above. I may remark that the light under the table, though necessarily dimmer than above, was yet amply sufficient for purposes of clear observation. For a good while nothing took place but raps, which flew about all over the table ; and I could indicate, when desired by Mr. Home to do so, the precise *locale* upon the table of each rap as it occurred. Meantime, by anything beneath the table, the raps were entirely unaccounted for ; and Mr. Home, in particular, had his feet steadily at rest beneath his chair : his hands, as observed by Dr. Findlater, were quietly before him on the table. And now, of a sudden, the table moved noiselessly over the carpet three-quarters of a foot or so, and back again. Asked by Mr. Home if I saw anything to account for this movement, I replied, 'Nothing whatever.' Nobody was in contact with the table beneath it, and Mr. Home's feet were, as before, quiet under his chair. Note, however, that the movement, as regards *direction*, took place precisely as it must have done, if effected by a *push* from Mr. Home above.

Of this, meantime, the gentleman at watch above failed to detect any symptom. Shortly after, one of the feet of the table rose from the floor, I should say, about half a foot or so,—rose, and softly subsided ; and this again, and yet again. Asked once more by Mr. Home if I could see anything to account for this, once more I answered, ‘Nothing whatever.’ Mr. Home’s feet were motionless under his chair, as previously ; and no one of the party was in contact with the table beneath it. Note again, however, that the foot of the table which rose was, as near as may be, *opposite* Mr. Home—that is, precisely where a very strong pressure applied by him might suffice to account for its rising ; but also, again, that of such pressure applied by Mr. Home, the observer of his hands above failed to detect any evidence. After this, the table jibbed and bolted a little, and performed some nondescript antics ; but, as before, it did so quite without efficient cause to be detected in anything to be seen above or under it. Mr. Home then suggested that perhaps I might as well now resume my chair ; and I did so, perfectly convinced—and saying so—that, for anything I had been able to *see*, whilst squatted under the table, with my eyes very keenly observant, the phenomena in question could not have been due to the *physical* agency at least of Mr. Home, or of any other member of the company. Two outlying points of suspicion here,

I have purposely reserved for discussion. I noted above, that the table, in moving over the carpet (and back again), took the precise direction which a *push* supposed from the hands of Mr. Home must have given it. I have practically ascertained that such a push supposed must have been a somewhat strong one; *so* strong as scarce, without detection, to be exerted under the nice eye of an observer in the least up to his business. Further, it will be obvious to every one that the *push* of the table over the floor being difficult for Mr. Home, its retractation would be much more so. But I need not labour such a point, seeing that Mr. Home's hands were not strictly on the *table*, but on a *loose* table-cover over it. *This*, had Mr. Home tried to push the table, must inevitably have slid away under his fingers, at once leaving him no purchase on the table, and ensuring instant detection. (Any reader may readily test this for himself, if in possession of a table and table-cloth, as most readers may be presumed to be.) It is thus, to my own mind, as certain as a demonstration, that however this movement of the table might be effected (as to which I am quite vague), it was not effected by any *push* at the hands of Mr. Home. Again, as above noted, when the foot of the table rose, it was *opposite* Mr. Home that it did so; in the exact plane, therefore, which strong pressure on Mr. Home's part would suggest. I have ascertained, by careful trial,

that a very strong pressure indeed on Mr. Home's part would have been needed in order to effect the rising of the table as described. I shall not say it would have been *impossible* for Mr. Home to so effect it, undetected ; but certainly it must have been difficult ; and the further difficulty of effecting the soft and silent subsidence of the table when raised, must plainly have been very much greater. But, as before, this discussion is needless. As thus—though, in the instance referred to, the table rose in the plane which pressure by Mr. Home would have suggested : that it really did *not* rise by such pressure, is certified by this, that subsequently, in course of the manifestations, it rose all round, or in nearly every *other* plane. In particular, it rose exuberantly *twice*, directly under my own hands ; and as I was sitting, as near as possible, at a right angle from Mr. Home (supposing the circle squared, so to speak), it is manifestly impossible that any pressure exerted by Mr. Home should account for its *so* rising. It is thus to my mind pretty certain that the foot of the table, when it rose, did not do so on pressure of Mr. Home opposite. How to account for its rising, I could not then guess in the least ; and now I cannot.

One explanation oftentimes confidently tendered of these phenomena, is the use by the operator of a system of secret machinery ; and I remember to have seen, in some magazine, elaborate sketches of

the apparatus, with an account of the artist's manner of manipulating it. Certain London machinists are, moreover, said to make no secret of their doing a good steady business in the production and sale of such articles. This may be quite true ; in which case there are probably a race of tricksters who produce their so-called spiritual effects by vulgar methods of this kind. But of these Mr. Home is almost certainly not one. It is not quite easy to see how and where, on the occasion referred to, he could have his machinery secreted ; and if this is in itself not much, it may be more to the purpose to observe that, with all the machinery in the world at his disposal, he could by no possibility have made use of it, save by using his hands or his feet ; and his hands, while the phenomena were in progress, were at rest before him on the table, his feet quiescent under it. A juggler, as we know, can, by dexterous *legerdemain*, effect much ; but his sleight-of-hand would avail him little—the severe condition imposed, that his hands should be glued to the table in front of him. The quiescence of Mr. Home's hands and feet, as testified to by Dr. Findlater and myself, disposes absolutely, in so far as our testimony is admitted, of the notion of his working by concealed apparatus. It is just possible to conceive of the raps as the product of a subtle and refined ventriloquism on Mr. Home's part ; but the movements, etc. etc., remaining thus unaccounted

for, it seems scarce worth while to suggest an explanation, in itself so precarious. It is possible to conceive of the raps as so produced, I have said. As to the other question—as to the possibility of their actually being so produced—one should know more of ventriloquism than I do, in order to decide on it with confidence. My impression is, it is rather a painful and difficult operation, involving great concentration of effort; and could scarce be kept up in company continuously throughout an evening by a person seemingly quite at his ease like Mr. Home, and joining freely in conversation the while.

Mr. Home then said he thought we might now, with fair prospect of success, proceed to the phenomena of—as I think he phrased it—levitation. And before proceeding, he said that, if at any crisis of the *Séance* I or any one had suspicions of practice under the table, we were welcome to go under it again, and remain there, if we so pleased. He also very particularly begged that we should not, on any point of delicacy towards *his* supposed feeling in the matter—as if evil suspicion of him were implied—refrain from testing the phenomena in any way that might occur to us. There was nothing, he said, to conceal: he courted inquiry, for which he would give every facility; and the more stringent the tests we could devise, the better he, for his part, should be pleased;—all which, it is in candour to be admitted, seemed quite fair and

above board. Mr. Home then desired that any one of the company would say, addressing the table (not *him*—he having nothing whatever to do with it), ‘Be light!’; tilt it from beneath; then say to it, ‘Be heavy!’ and proceed to again tilt it. This was done, with the following result. ‘Be light!’ said the operator; and the table, when softly solicited, moved readily from beneath his fingers. ‘Be heavy!’ *presto* the table seemed weighted to the floor with lead, and could only at all be moved by a great expenditure of force. Every one of the party in succession tried this: Dr. Findlater carefully twice; I twice, with scrupulous care, and invariably with the above results. On my trying the experiment the second time,—of course, if possible, with some *additional* care and ‘scruple,—it actually seemed to me that the table *sprang* from under my fingers, almost before the initial touch could take the form of distinct pressure—the difficulty of moving it afterwards being well-nigh, in proportion, great. These results seemed certainly curious, as to every one quite unaccountable. The last person who tried was a clergyman (I forget of what particular persuasion), who, though he had seen the thing once before, was still very obstinately sceptical. ‘Be light!’ said the reverend man, and tilted the table very readily. ‘Be heavy!’ he then said; and, shifting his hands surreptitiously, so as to get a good strong purchase, he succeeded in raising

the table with much less effort than could be *apparent* to those of the company who had not chanced to observe his little 'dodge.' Mr. Home had, however, done so ; and he said, 'I beg your pardon, sir ; but I don't think that last time you quite gave the table fair play.' This I confirmed, saying that, in order to his final *lift*, I had distinctly seen him shift his hands. 'Ah ! ah !' he said—a little as if caught, yet jauntily—'very well, then, I'll try it with my little fingers.' This he accordingly did, to his own manifest and complete discomfiture. 'Ah ! ah !' he again said (looking this time a little like an ass) : 'very odd, I admit, really ; very odd ! very odd indeed ! But do you know, Mr. Home' (brisking up again a bit, as if feeling it his duty not to be put down by so mere a layman), 'it would be more satisfactory to my mind, if your Spirits could put such a weight on the table—say a ton—that it could not be lifted at all? Yes, decidedly, to *my* mind, *that* would be more satisfactory.' The wisdom of this clerical remark not being to myself obvious, I ventured to say—in terms, of course, of perfect civility—that I did not think it very wise ; and that, if a single pound of weight *non-natural* could be proved to be induced upon the table, to every scientific purpose it was quite as good as the ton he was pleased to desire. Just then there came upon the table *five* clearly pronounced raps. Hereupon arose a little excitement ; the de-

sired signal, it seemed, was at last given ; and the murmur ran round the party : ‘ Spirit wanting to communicate !’* Paper and pencil were at once got ; and in the *modus* detailed below, the following oracular deliverance was taken down from the series of raps upon the table : ‘ *You are a sensible man !*’ ‘ Oh !’ said the young lady next me, who had been acting as *amanuensis* to the Spirit ; ‘ that’s *you*, you know ; it’s in reference to the remark you made a little ago.’ At this I laughed a little, modestly deprecated any reference to myself in the matter, and asked how I

* Five raps is the understood signal whereby a Spirit (supposed) signifies its presence and desire to communicate ; and as nearly every one present, except Dr. Findlater and myself, had before been at *Séance*, of course it was at once recognised. The communication itself is thus obtained :—The alphabet is in some leisurely manner repeated : A—B—C, etc. When a particular letter is arrived at, *three* raps on the table—or risings of it, indifferently—as the understood sign of *assent* (yes), indicate it as that wanted : it is accordingly taken down ; and the alphabet being begun anew, a series of other letters is in the same way obtained, and noted. Two raps indicate the close of the communication ; and the word, or sentence, as it may be, is then readily deciphered and read out. Occasionally, on a rap coming *between* two letters, it may be doubtful which is the one intended ; and the alphabet is then begun over again. Commonly it is the *last* of the two letters which is found to be the one wanted ; as if the spirit, on the first occasion, had been, in its eagerness, anticipating. For the most part, the alphabet was repeated by Mr. Home ; but it was not essential that it should be so. Dr. Findlater requested to be allowed to repeat it instead. For a considerable time he did so ; and the result was quite as satisfactory as before.

was really to know that the compliment was for *me* intended. 'Oh!' said Mr. Home, 'perhaps I may be able to satisfy you;' and beginning from himself, he pointed his finger successively at each person of the party. When, after passing five or six, his finger came round to *me*, instantly the table rose and fell *thrice* under my hands, in an exceedingly marked and energetic manner. Of course there could be no further doubt: the Spirit, in virtue of my remark, thought me a sensible man. Need I say that I returned the compliment, and thought it a sensible Spirit?

Very soon after this, the significant five raps put us again on the *qui vive*. Here once more was a 'Spirit desiring to communicate;' and the communication this time rapped out, and taken down as before, was, '*We touch you.*' On this being read out, Mr. Home said, 'I don't quite understand,' in a kind of half-puzzled way; and then, 'May I ask, *has* any one of the company been *touched*?' 'Yes,' replied Dr. Findlater with slight gravity; '*I* was touched a very little ago. I preferred to take no notice of it, but I had a pretty smart stroke on the pan of my knee. There could be no mistake about it; it was *very distinct.*' Immediately on this came again five raps, and the words '*very distinct,*' in echo of Dr. Findlater's last, were rapped out by the table. All this time, of course, Mr. Home's hands were visible above the table (not always resting on it,—for this

did not seem absolutely *de rigueur*,—but occasionally used one or the other in slight gesticulation, as from time to time he made his remarks); his feet, by fair inference from what I saw when under the table, may almost with certainty be assumed to have been at rest beneath his chair as then.

About this time it was, I think, that we were startled by a little cry from Mrs. D——. Her chair had been dragged forcibly sideways towards the table, against which she was jammed, without, as she professed, any power to release herself. Mr. Home, however, who sat near her, quietly rose, and relieved her from her little difficulty. How he could possibly have had anything to do with getting her into it, other people who were not there will no doubt readily enough be able to explain; but it is certain nobody who was there in the least could.*

And now, as we seemed to be getting pretty well into the swing of the business, Mr. Home proceeded to exhibit, or more accurately speaking, evoke—if his own account is to be taken—phenomena of some interest. Two *accordions* were on the table, one of which he selected. The instrument, he explained, was not *his*, but the property of Dr. G—— (a gentle-

* Let me be strictly correct here. On the evening in question Mrs. D—— *was* jammed up against the table, as described; the further incident of her having positively to be released by Mr. Home, occurred the evening after, in the presence of my friend referred to at p. 32 *et seq.*

man present I had not before met, but very well known to me by reputation), who had been good enough to bring it with him. This Dr. G—— confirmed; and it is to be in fairness supposed he could scarce be mistaken as to its being his own *accordion*. Had it, Mr. Home said, been *his*, it might of course have been said that its effects were produced by him—as indeed such was the usual explanation tendered of the whole business—by deft management of a subtle system of machinery secreted in it. As it was, he hoped that, in the present instance, there could scarce be any such suspicion. So much premised, taking the instrument in one hand by the end unfurnished with keys, he put it under the table, and said that in a very short time we should probably begin to hear it play;—as accordingly, in a very short time, we did. It began almost immediately to emit sounds; and having begun, went on to play pretty briskly. Guiding the instrument in his direction, Mr. Home then desired Dr. Findlater to go under the table, and, after careful examination, return and give an account of what he saw there. Dr. Findlater did so. He remained some little time under the table, the *accordion* the while continuing to sound as before; and then resuming his chair, he reported that the instrument held *motionless* in Mr. Home's *one* hand—his other hand being, of course, all the time on the table—was moving and giving out sound, precisely

as if it were worked by a hand at the other end of it ; whilst, to account for this phenomenon, not to be questioned, except in so far as his eyesight might be, nothing whatever was visible. Mr. Home then guided the instrument over to me (his own account of the matter was, that the instrument moved as if at its own sweet will, and rather guided his hand than was guided by it), and going down to make strict examination of it, I came up in a little to report precisely as Dr. Findlater had before done. The *accordion*, held motionless in Mr. Home's *one* hand at an angle of about forty-five degrees, was moving backward and forward, and continuing to play, just as if a couple of hands had been manipulating it ; and to account for this, nothing was visible. Meantime there was no hint of a tune in the sounds produced : they made just such an aimless monotony as a child, let us say, might produce, amusing itself with the instrument.

Just then, another Spirit gave notice of its desire to communicate ; and what it communicated was this, '*I am Colin Campbell, and you saw me*' ('whom you have seen and known in the flesh' may be presumed to be what Colin meant ; but it would be absurd too closely to criticise the literary style of a Spirit, who might very well, by disuse, be supposed to have a little forgotten the niceties of a language which in life he perhaps but indifferently knew). As I had very

well known in time past a naval gentleman so named, of whom for years I had no tidings, instantly it occurred to me that perhaps he had come to grief in the great deep, and that this was veritably *he* come back to let me know. That my fears for my friend were needless, however, was immediately made plain by the exclamation of a gentleman present: 'Colin Campbell! you saw me! I wish I could see him now, poor man, for he was a man I liked very much!' And presently it appeared that this deceased Colin Campbell, a gentleman of Aberdeenshire, had been intimately known to two or three others of the party, of whom Mrs. D—— was one. So much being made out, we had from Colin this further communication: '*I am not dead*'—a proposition which might be held self-evident, if he was really alive enough to talk to us. Almost instantly after, the five raps were again heard; '*He does not forget*'—was rapped out by the Spirit of the faithful though defunct Colin; and *presto*—odd as it may seem—the accordion under the table, still held in Mr. Home's *one* hand, played distinctly '*Auld lang syne!*'—(the reader may laugh if he likes, as indeed to myself, had I not been present to witness it, such a thing must needs have seemed at once ludicrous and incredible). The tune was played distinctly, recognisably, and yet withal a little bunglingly; and then, as if Colin had suspected a certain deficiency in his own performance, it was

played over again, this time in tones of exquisite modulation, which moved the admiration of all present. Mr. Home of course assured us that he himself could not play a note on the accordion ; but as clearly Mr. Home, if an impostor, was bound to say no less, his assurance to this effect is plainly to be set aside as naught, or disposed of as assurance in the other sense. The mystery, however, remains, as to how Mr. Home, even if we suppose him to have lied in proclaiming his utter incapacity on the instrument, could be capable of playing a tune on it whilst holding it in *one* hand, its end furnished with keys being meantime dependent in air, and untouched by any living creature,—facts as to which, in regard of the sounds heard but a minute before, Dr. Findlater and myself are, if need be, prepared to testify on oath. . And this is, I rather think, a mystery, which only a science of the occult (as distinguished from the terribly exact) kind is likely to be able to elucidate for us. (I am ashamed to say that, on receipt of Mr. Home's assurance that he himself was incompetent on the instrument, it did not occur to me to inquire whether or no the deceased Mr. Campbell had in life performed on the accordion, or shown anything of a musical genius. I did think it well to ascertain, however, that this was his first appearance, as at no previous *Séance* had he given evidence of his existence.)

Miss J——, the young lady seated next me, who, as a niece of Mrs. D——, had seen much of the phenomena, at this juncture assured me that once, when the *accordion* was thus playing of itself, as it seemed, she distinctly saw a *hand* appear, take hold of the keys, make a pass or two, and then vanish. As not inclined to quite believe this, I asked if she was sure it was not the work of imagination. 'Oh no!' she replied, 'it could not possibly be *that*; for I am *not in the least an imaginative person*;' which seemed feminine, and not entirely conclusive. In discussing the matter with me later, this young lady (though entirely believing) confessed she had doubts whether it was quite *proper*, as she did not find any warrant for it in Scripture. (She forgot, apparently, the Witch of Endor, who seems to have been a medium of near as much power as Mr. Home.) Her notion seemed vaguely to be, that the Devil might be somehow concerned in it; and perhaps, as the father of lies, he had really a good deal to do with it; though, in this sense, as I have said, neither Dr. Findlater nor myself could press a conviction home to him.

The performance began now to be really interesting; but my *pleasurable* interest in it was just a little dashed with dread lest any of my own near relatives deceased should be indiscreet enough to seize this opportunity for renewal of affectionate intercourse.

From this, on a ground already indicated, I should have shrunk with a very strong distasté indeed. And, undoubtedly, my risk must have been considerable had the motive power and mainspring of the business been collusion with Mr. Home on the part of Dr. and Mrs. D——. For with my family their intimacy had been aforesaid of the closest kind; so that of nearly all my relations dead, as living, their knowledge must be minute, even to points of detail. Consequently, *mala fides* supposed on their part, I entered their hospitable gates a victim prepared for sacrifice, so to say; or much as a leg of mutton might, cooked and ready to be eaten. And yet I escaped surprisingly; the Spirits, save for the one little compliment recorded, paying me no attention whatever—not even so much as of the *touch* accorded to my friend Dr. Findlater and others.* Had collusion indeed been present, I am at a loss to account for its remissness in letting slip such a pretty opportunity offered it. The evidence from this, as against the hypothesis of collusion, is clearly of no conclusive weight, as merely of what we term the negative kind; but it has, to my own mind, *some* weight, so as at least to seem worth statement. Such weight, as it takes in my mind, may best be appreciated in the light of such facts as those further on adduced (p. 32 *et seq.*);

* I omitted before to note that these *touches* occurred several times throughout the evening.

for which, as it might almost seem, only collusion can account, Mr. Home being held an impostor.

Not much more time was allowed us, however, for further development of the phenomena by the method of collusion or otherwise, for a twitch was suddenly heard at the handle of the door of the room.* 'Ah!' said Mr. Home, on hearing it,—as I also did, and I suppose every one else,—'that is a bad sign. I fear we shall not have much more of it to-night: almost invariably I find that to mean that the Spirits are preparing to depart.' And, sure enough, the next communication we had from them announced itself as a final one. It was to this effect: '*Are you all grateful to God for His many mercies? We go.*' I was looking over the shoulder of the young lady who took down the letters; and up to the word *God* I could quite decipher the sentence so as very well to guess what was coming. As I anticipated, when the letter *G* was read out, the table at once responded, and it did so with a kind of rapture of edifying enthusiasm, rising and falling thrice directly under my hands with an energy and emphasis it had never before exhibited. With the *O* which followed it was the same. *D* ditto. The holy name was rapped

* As the merest matter of course, to such a thing as this, *in itself*, no importance can be assigned. A servant-maid, at back of the door, judiciously fee'd and instructed by Mr. Home, may very well have been the *causa efficiens* of this particular item of miracle.

out, in point of fact, thus—GOD—in prominent and pious capitals. The word *Mercies* was, in like manner, emphasized ; and a little difficulty of the kind before explained occurring with one or two of its letters, Mr. Home observed, ‘ I don’t know what that may be ; but I’m certain ’ (from the eager enthusiasm displayed, of course, by the table) ‘ it has something to do with the Divine Being.’ Having thus said ‘ We go,’ the Spirits were as good as their word ; and though we sat for some twenty minutes longer, in hope that perhaps they might return, they declined to do so ; and we had thus no more communications.

The Spirits being gone, we had spirits and water at a side-table with Mr. Home, and a little easy conversation on the topic of the evening ; but this of no very special moment. Whilst we were thus engaged, Mr. Home heard slight raps going about ; others also heard, or professed to hear. For my own part, as when first the raps began to be heard, I cannot say that, with distinctness, I heard anything, though once or twice it seemed as if almost I *might* have heard.

Here my little narrative ends ; and though I might copiously supplement it from the experience of others more favoured than we (for the ‘ manifestations ’ of this evening were, by comparison, feeble, and not of a striking kind), I shall cite only one or two details from a mass of such given me by a friend, who was considerably more fortunate, as present the evening

after. The earlier phenomena were pretty much as they have here been narrated; but the first proper indication of personal spiritual presence was, on this occasion, of somewhat a whimsical kind. My friend was seated next a young married lady; and all at once, with a little feminine shriek, she cried out, 'Oh! somebody's *touching me under my clothes!*' The announcement seemed slightly an awkward one; but Mr. Home interposed explanation. 'The sensation was,' he said, '*peculiar*; and when *first felt*, it was apt at times to be *startling*.' There was really no more in it than this. The point of curiosity—for which only, of course, it is that I select the instance—is this:—The sensation of being touched under one's clothes is sharply discriminated from that of being touched above, or *through* them. Any one may convince himself of this by touching with his finger, first his hand, and then his leg through his pantaloons; and I can scarce be wrong in surmising that, in virtue of the amplitude of the female garments, the point of contrast must be still more distinctly marked. The question occurs—*supposing* Mr. Home able—with his foot, let us say, or by some other apparatus at his disposal—to effect these *touches* testified to by people all round the table: By what apparatus possible to be imagined could he touch people *under their clothes*? Is it surmised that the touch might in *this sense* be imaginary? With precisely equal reason might it be

surmised that the touch was *in toto* imaginary ; that all the touches were imaginary ; also the raps, movements, etc. ; and that the whole *complexus* of facts—inclusive of Mr. Home himself, perhaps, and, for that matter, all the rest of us—resolved itself into a series of merely *subjective* phenomena. As a severely philosophical view of the matter, I can suppose there may be minds to which such a speculation might commend itself ; but not the less it seems an absurd one. And the question recurs : By what conceivable means could Mr. Home, sitting at some distance from a lady at table, even if we allow him to have had means of touching her, effect in her the particular sensation of being *touched under her clothes ?*

At a later period of the evening, Mr. Home chancing to observe that, from certain symptoms, he surmised the Spirits were ‘getting exhausted,’ my friend—a person of a philosophical turn of mind—ventured to hint that he thought it absurd to suppose exhaustion in *Spirits*, however natural, in a prolonged *Séance*, it might be to Mr. Home. Instantly on this came the five raps, and an emphatic ‘*Why not, James ?*’ was rapped out by the table. The point of curiosity here is this : there is the very strongest reason to suppose that the Christian name of my friend must have been unknown to Mr. Home, as to every one else at the table. To every one present he was an entire stranger. He had come there as substitute for another

person, who, as already familiar with the phenomena, had offered to cede his place to him, and in course of that afternoon had asked to be allowed to do so. He thus came, introducing himself as simply Mr. H—— expected, and had not the slightest ground to suppose in any one present a knowledge that his name was *James*.* This seems sufficiently slight; and yet, were it absolutely *certain* that neither Mr. Home nor any one else present knew that my friend's name was *James*, it might be more or less fruitful of inference. For, as it cannot be supposed that the table knew, some intelligence *behind* the table, and expressed through it, we should be rationally compelled to assume. Another instance:—My friend was smartly *touched*. Instantly after, a Spirit announced its presence; and what it rapped out was this: '*It is Aunt Margaret's loving John.*' Mr. Home, on this, looking round the table, asked: 'Pray, has any one here an Aunt Margaret?' 'Yes,' answered my friend; 'I have an Aunt Margaret, who lives a long way from Edinburgh. She is a widow; and the name of her husband, who died now a good many years ago, oddly enough, was John.' Now I assert it scarce possible (I decline to use the word *impossible*—that *bête de mot* with which that other stupid word *incredible* might fitly be run in couples) that Mr. Home, or any one else at

* He was at pains to ascertain that his friend's introduction of him had not included this piece of information.

the table, should have had the knowledge implied here. On these grounds: Only a very few hours were available for Mr. Home or his supposed accomplices, during which to rush about for information: moreover, to hunt up information in this fashion would be almost to court detection at the hands of the people, by applying to whom it had thus been surreptitiously acquired. Further, my friend Mr. H—— assures me that he does not know a single person in Edinburgh, from whom Mr. Home, if we suppose him solicitous to do so, could have got this special information. Unfortunately, the ‘loving John,’ content with thus announcing himself, retired, and would communicate no further. Had he stayed a little longer, and been pleased to condescend on little points of family history (necessarily unknown to every one present except my friend), the evidence as to his identity might have plainly been much strengthened. But the ‘loving John’ would not do this.

Only one other instance, and that a specially remarkable one:—A spirit announced its presence, and rapped out, ‘*It is Pophy Sophy.*’ ‘Pophy Sophy!’ said Mr. Home; ‘that is very odd. It does not seem like a name, either in English or any other language known to me. Can any one at the table explain?’ Whereupon a lady present gave signs of great agitation, and presently she burst out, ‘*Pophy Sophy!* Oh! that is our poor dear little Sophia, whom we lost two

years ago. *Pophy Sophy!*—that was the dear little pet name she always went by in the family, as she had given it to herself when an infant.' On this, another lady present (the aunt of little Pophy, as it appeared) began to cry bitterly. Five raps were then again heard, and the following was rapped out—'*Do not cry, Auntie dear! You were not to blame, and I am happy, happy now.*' And immediately after came this: '*I did not die. Am I not alive? And could I forget you all?*' The story, as after inquired into by my friend, was thus:—The little child, left under charge of her aunt, during absence of the parents in England, had died of scarlet fever, and the poor lady had been eaten up with morbid remorse, as supposing that, through some blind carelessness on her part, the infection might have been caught.

As at least equally extraordinary, the following may be given. It is vouched to me by a friend who was present at several of these *Séances*. I have every confidence in his veracity; and even if I considered it doubtful, an allusion to the marvel related, made by Dr. G—— in my hearing on the evening referred to in my narrative, would buttress it unimpeachably:—At a particular stage of the proceedings the table began to make strange undulatory movements, and gave out, as these proceeded, a curious accompaniment of creaking sound. Mr. Home seemed himself surprised. 'This is very curious,' he said. 'It is a phenomenon

of which I have no experience hitherto. Please let us watch it very carefully.' Presently my friend remarked that—movement and sound together—it reminded him of nothing he could think of except a ship in distress, with its timbers straining in a heavy sea. The notion was discussed, and, on the whole, there was agreement in the party that it was really more like this than anything else that could be suggested. This conclusion being come to, the understood five raps were heard, and the table proceeded to rap out, 'It is David!' Instantly a lady present burst into tears, and cried wildly, 'Oh, that must be my poor dear brother David, who was lost at sea some time since.' Curious this, if true. And of its truth (except as I was not myself present) I have not the smallest reason to doubt.

Now here, in the most palpable and unmistakable way, the discussion seems narrowed to distinct issues. Let us suppose Mr. Home a consummate artist and juggler (though Dr. Findlater and myself, combining our little faculties of observation, could detect no *scintilla* of suspicion of this): he can produce at will, by some recondite and subtle process which no one has ever yet been able to detect, the series of raps, movements, touches, etc. by which the whole humbug is worked. But in such a case as those last considered, all this could avail him not at all, unless in aid of his system of jugglery we suppose a system of *collusion*. And

the charge of collusion, if made (and it *must* be made by any one resolute to escape from the inferences fairly deducible from these last instances, accepted as genuine), is laid down directly at the door—as to every one it must be obvious—of my good friends Dr. and Mrs. D——. It seems to me it had best be taken up again. It ought really to be enough to say, that no one who knows the people can seriously entertain such a notion of them,—that no one *does* for an instant entertain it, even of those (not a few) who scout this whole spiritual business, and deplore in friends whom they otherwise respect, what they cannot but surmise a delusion. Should any one *not* knowing the people, in the teeth of all who intimately *do*, persist in insinuating against them collusion, thus leaguering them in rascality with a rascal, there seems no harm in saying, *sans phrase*, that I rate him as impertinent at once, and irrational. His impertinence is obvious; how irrational he is, may readily enough be made plain. This insinuation of collusion, in default of other argument, may in the last resort be always confidently thrown out; and as in its very nature it cannot in *any* case be disproved (negatived by severity of proof), we are shut up to the monstrous paradox (supposing it legitimately tendered, no rational account being taken of character and the general probabilities of the case), that a thing may be thrice over true, yet for ever incapable of being substantiated.

The canon (so call it) announced, precluding as it plainly does the very possibility of rational proof, even of things thrice over supposed true, may fairly be pronounced an irrational one. Let me put an extreme case. Some eminent *Savant*—Professor Huxley, perhaps, let us say—resolves to bring Mr. Home to the test. He hires a room for the purpose; takes up the carpets; removes every stick of the furniture, and substitutes scientific instruments; finally, he fumigates the apartment, and introducing a deal table, carefully made to order, proceeds to business with Mr. Home, and a few select friends invited. Presently the scientific world is aghast to hear that Professor Huxley has given in his adhesion to Mr. Home; has had, through the table, an interview with the authentic ghost of his grandmother—of whom Mr. Home could know nothing—and cannot any longer doubt. What would, in such a case, be said by his brother *Savants*? Probably, that Professor Huxley, though indeed a very clever person, had, despite all his deep precautions, been hoaxed by a cleverer than he. But suppose it beyond question shown—when the detail of the matter was given—that Professor Huxley in his scientific experiment had eliminated every possible or conceivable source of error, what would *then* be said by the wise men? Such of them as once for all *would not* believe on the strength of their fundamental axiom laid down and

stuck to, that the thing could not *possibly* be true,—was incredible, monstrous, etc.,—might perhaps be capable of insinuating against Professor Huxley a charge of *collusion* with Mr. Home : Professor Huxley, it might be hinted, having had a surfeit of scientific fame, on some unaccountable whim or caprice had gone in, by way of change, with Mr. Home, to suck for a little the sweets of an unscientific notoriety. Or, possibly, some brother might say, pointing to his own wise head, and shaking it with a look of melancholy sagacity : ‘ Ah ! poor fellow ! poor dear Huxley ! but he was always, you know, a little—ahem ! or so—you understand.’ Or, not improbably, if Professor Huxley had just then been known to be a little in want of money, it might be shrewdly surmised, here and there, that Mr. Home had *bought* Professor Huxley. To all or any of which idiocies there could only be one reply ; to wit, that it was in the last degree *improbable* that Professor Huxley, known to be of sound mind, should be capable of so acting. And of course it would be vastly improbable ; but not any whit more improbable—*me judice*—than that my excellent old friend Dr. D—— should, without any motive assignable, as crown to a long life of conspicuous integrity and honour, conspire with a wretched mountebank, to pass off upon a circle of his friends a tissue of silly and blasphemous deceptions. In point of fact, to my own mind, the improbability

in this last case seems considerably greater than it could in the other supposed ; for of Professor Huxley I know little or nothing by which to calculate the probabilities of his conduct ; and of Dr. D—— I know a great deal on which to strike the calculation an hundredfold in his favour. In one word, it is surely the simplest prescription of common-sense, that in order to be even listened to, a charge of *collusion* must have something rational to say for itself,—something a little more rational than this, that it is preferred as the only means of escape from conclusions we are pledged to resist, as denounced from our high *à priori* ground, incredible, impossible, monstrous, and the rest of the understood jargon. For, positively, it is jargon merely, and jargon, as mostly used, helplessly *unscientific*, whilst taking airs upon itself of Science.

Do I then, it may be asked, believe in these marvels I have been narrating? As I have not at all points of my narrative been able to maintain that perfect decorum and seriousness which befits the philosophic inquirer, it will probably be no surprise to the reader to learn that meantime I do not. I believe, of course, in the *phenomena*, as things I saw and heard : as to their *cause*, assigned in an immaterial and unknown agency, under sway of an intelligence akin to the human, and permitted therewith to communicate, it seems reasonable to retain some little of one's original scepticism. Agency and

intelligence alike may, after all, have been merely those of the ingenious Mr. Home. Neither Dr. Findlater, nor I, nor any one else present, could indeed detect any trace of such a thing ; but possibly we were all made fools of together, as duped by that admirable artist. To disciples of David Hume it will seem vastly more probable that we were so, than that things so strange and so surprising should be true ; and to the case, as thus put, I have no very serious objection. Should the disciple of Hume go further, and say that if not fools, beyond all question we are liars, it may perhaps be permitted me to say that I don't quite follow his argument. In any case, it is plain that such a thing is not to be believed, except on conclusive evidence,—evidence absolute, and in its stringency proportioned to the antecedent improbability of the thing itself ; and of such evidence it would be not less than absurd in me to suppose myself meantime in possession. For this, were there no other reason—I have only had *one* opportunity of testing the phenomena. And in one's first attempt to do so, one is necessarily at some little disadvantage. On emergence of a specially strange thing, one is taken a little by surprise ; one's wits are not quite at command on the instant, and only afterwards suggest the proper procedure, as in the case of belated controversialists over their wine, whose choicest repartees of argument only occur to them the day after. Thus, had I *foreseen* that

the instrument I was examining, as it gave out sounds under the table, was presently to play 'Auld Lang Syne,' I should have made it a point to remain, and curiously inspect the *keys* as it went on with its performance. And in various ways, on a second occasion, new stringencies might have suggested themselves in dealing with phenomena in a measure familiar and anticipated.

The truth is, moreover, that this is the sort of thing it might not be quite *easy* to believe, even were it vouched to us by evidence almost compelling us to admit that rationally we *ought* to believe. Let me illustrate the difficulty here by a little account of a strange thing told me by Dr. D——, and confirmed by his wife, from whom I had it in a separate narrative. It happened at an early stage of his experience, whilst yet he was scarce a confirmed believer; though 'perplexed in the extreme,' as quite unable to naturally account for the phenomena. A *Séance* having taking place, Mr. Home had left the house, and the good Doctor was sitting alone in the room, much musing over the odd things that had happened, and in a state of great mental puzzlement. 'Suddenly,' he said, 'it seemed to me that one of the chairs opposite me was moving. It *was so*; and I could scarcely believe my eyes when I saw it travel slowly across the carpet, and set itself beside my own. Presently another followed, and set itself beside the first.

I was very much astonished indeed. At this moment my wife came into the room.' Let us allow her to carry on the story. Mrs. D—— had up to this time—as she said—entertained a distinct distaste for the whole business ; and her annoyance was considerable at the strong hold it plainly had begun to take of the mind of her husband. When told of what had occurred, she expostulated vigorously: 'Oh Doctor!' she said, 'I wish you would get that nonsense out of your head. It is *impossible* such a thing should occur ; you must be under some delusion ; you must merely have imagined it ; it can't *possibly* be true.' And then, as if for her prompt contradiction, a third chair left its place ; under her very eyes, came slowly across the room, and set itself beside the others, to her no little surprise and consternation. Do I confidently believe, on the evidence, that this thing actually happened? I am not prepared to say I do ; but most implicitly I believe in the veracity of the two people, and therefore that *they* believed it, as seen of their own eyes. And how they should have so believed they saw it, if the thing did not really happen, I am a little at a loss to know. Had there been only *one* witness, we must, with little hesitation, have disposed of the fact alleged in the way which at first occurred to Mrs. D—— herself,—as spawn of a heated fancy,—some mixed mode of mental and optical delusion. As seen by a *second* witness, engaged at the very instant in

making a strong sceptical protest, this explanation of it can scarce, except with much difficulty, be accepted. And yet, if it be not accepted, either the thing must be true, or the people reporting of it *liars*. Personally declining *in toto* to take up with this last supposition, I cannot but regard the evidence to the fact as very strong indeed,—*so* strong* that I almost think I *ought* to believe it. Yet, to say sooth, I scarcely *can*; so strong, on the other hand, is the instinctive sceptical recoil from a fact so hitherto unexampled, and in the teeth of all previous experience. Not the less it is quite certain that, on evidence no more conclusive, indeed considerably less so, as tendered to a fact of murder, I should to-morrow hang with these hands, if need were, some half-dozen of my fellow-creatures. Now I want to know, is this rational? I don't ask, is it scientific? for I know it is quite scientific. But

* A person who should admit *no* force in the evidence here, would of course admit none in the supposed case of a *third* person having entered the room, and a *fourth* chair having come over; and so of a fourth or fifth person, or up to a fiftieth, if you will. Yet, plainly, there is a point in the series, at which the evidence would become not only strong, but conclusive. To demur, on the ground that we cannot very nicely *fix* this point, would surely be a little absurd,—as absurd as the *thesis* of a gentleman who should maintain he can never possibly be drunk; for if *one* glass of sherry does not do it, *two* will not, nor *three*, and so on. At the end of his third bottle he is helpless; but his logical proof of his sobriety, did speech remain to him, might be perfect.

is it rational? Ought I in reason to hang, upon evidence given, half a dozen of my poor fellow-sinners, yet resist belief in a fact vouched to me by *stronger* evidence, on a mere ground of *strangeness* in the fact, as outside of previous experience? Well, perhaps, after all, it might in such a case be reasonable not so properly to *resist*, as to meantime *decline*, belief in the fact alleged, and regard it with some degree of scepticism, whatever the strength of its evidence. A rational person would, I rather think, in such a case, neither rush into belief of the thing, nor yet, from his *à priori* ground of experience, dogmatically condemn and pooh-pooh it. Whilst he thought the fact alleged strange—*so* strange as to be in the last degree improbable—he might, on the other hand, be struck with the extreme strength of the testimony to it, as almost equally strange (if the thing were not really true), and such as to suggest further inquiry: not meantime believing the fact as such, he might regard it as a thing to be inquired into, quite possibly in the end to be believed, on accumulation from various other quarters of testimony equally strong. And to this particular fact (of the chairs mysteriously locomotive), he would find in my previous narrative—Mr. Home, for the purpose of argument, assumed to be no impostor, but a true prophet—a good deal of corroborative testimony. On the other hand, the prophetic character

of Mr. Home being, as it is, very seriously called in question, the testimony to it implied in this little illustrative anecdote (so far as at all to be believed in) ought not perhaps wholly to be denied attention.

It so chances that, from an independent source, I have evidence of really a rather cogent kind to facts not very dissimilar, as pretty much on the same line of the marvellous. My friend Mr. C. F., an Edinburgh artist, some little time ago (before Mr. Home was in question) chanced one evening to tell me of certain strange powers possessed by his wife over furniture, etc. As instance, putting her hand over a table—over, not *on* it—she could make it follow her about the room like a dog; *presto* tilt itself backward on the floor, and cut, in fact, such other capers as she pleased; and a good many more of the like things he told me. On my laughingly saying I hoped he didn't really expect me to believe this sort of thing, he got a little angry, and (being, when irritated, profane) asked (with oaths which I cannot repeat) if I 'meant to tell him he *was a liar*.' 'Not in the least,' I said; 'but really the thing seemed so odd, etc.' 'What motive can I have to deceive you?' he then said. 'Ask —; ask —. You know Dr. C—, don't you?' I signified that I did. 'Well then,' said he, 'ask *him*; and I'm — if he doesn't bear me out in everything I've told you.'

On my next meeting Dr. C—, I asked him if

he had really seen these strange things. 'Why, yes,' he said, 'at F——'s one evening, strange as it may seem, I did. And what's more, the phenomena were exhibited one evening after, with even greater vigour, in my own drawing-room, and with my own furniture. The little woman made it dance what fandango she liked.' In this case, however, there was no *spiritual* presence or agency asserted—only a power in the lady, magnetic or what not, of this peculiarly absurd kind; but in addition, some faculty of *clairvoyance* more or less developed, her husband distinctly asserted for her, and a singular talent for divining the most secret thoughts of people she chanced to be in contact with. This last was in various ways tested. One instance:—Dr. C—— said, 'I'm thinking of something, Mrs. F——. Tell me what it is!' 'You are thinking,' replied the lady, 'of a salmon-rod you looked at to-day, and intend buying to-morrow;' and the fact was accurately *so*. Now, suppose such gifts to exist in a *very highly developed form*, and along with them the power aforesaid to make tables, etc. bolt about at pleasure, it seems plain that, without intervention of Spirits, a very great deal might readily enough be accounted for of what Mr. Home, as a *Magus*, can effect. Given this strange conjunction of gifts, the desire to utilize them as an impostor, and the subtlest dexterity in doing so, not much perhaps in Mr. Home would remain to be

accounted for. But what of 'the Laws of Nature,' as concerned in this mode of accounting for him? It seems to me that on this ground, not less than on the hypothesis rejected, of *Spirits*, we are wandering in a quite bewildered way through a region of mystery and marvel.*

As to the amount and kind of evidence rationally required to substantiate alleged facts of the transcendental kind in question, there has been not a little discussion. The extreme view announced by Hume in his famous 'Essay on Miracles,' is, of course, that simply *no* amount of human testimony would suffice to make credible things thus anomalous, as violating established laws of nature. Of the constancy of these, our experience is absolute. Our experience, accrediting human testimony, is to a large extent discredited by a counter experience, that men, in the plainest report of their senses, are in various ways liable to be mistaken or deceived; and that, failing this, they are terribly apt to be liars, when they have any motive to lie, and almost at times when they might seem to have *none*, save what Bacon calls 'a natural but corrupt love of the lie itself.' And the

* Did I not—it may here be asked—desire to make personal inspection of these marvels? Certainly I wished to be allowed to do so; but was told that the lady, finding herself beginning to be talked of, had struck work, and very peremptorily declined to exhibit further. The pitiful motive of notoriety was thus plainly not here present.

absolute experience must always outweigh in the scales the experience thus confused and self-contradictory. A miracle, however avouched, is never therefore to be believed. It must always be incalculably more probable that the witnesses to it were either deluded, or liars, than that so staring a natural anomaly should ever have taken place. The cleverness of Hume's reasoning here is in nothing more conspicuous than in this, that it really seems to put the Deity in a position of some little embarrassment. For, supposing the Deity to exist (as an unscientific hypothesis, it may still perhaps be permissible to refer to Him), and to wish by miraculous interposition to avouch Himself to His creatures, it is plain He might save Himself the trouble of trying; for so clever have they now become, that He could not possibly succeed. To only the blockheads of creation could He evidence Himself by such means; and it seems disrespectful to the Deity to suppose Him to make special revelation of Himself, merely for behoof of blockheads. To Theists (and it is dimly surmised that in certain remote country parishes, nooks of the Hebrides, and elsewhere, stray specimens of the breed survive), an argument may very well be suspect, as probably more plausible than sound, which thus puts the Deity in a difficulty, out of which not even the ingenuity of David Hume himself might perhaps avail to extricate Him. But why speak of the

Deity to persons in the least of a scientific turn, or even to 'advanced' Theologians? It is understood, I believe, that the Devil has some time since been made away with. Scarce anybody now even *preaches* him (to say nothing whatever of belief); and as undoubtedly a good deal bound up with him in Scripture, the Deity has also of late a little suffered, so as scarce now to be advanced with any confidence, as the valid premiss of an argument. Without reference to the Deity, then, as too precarious a hypothesis, let us treat a little, in an easy way, of Hume's ingenious puzzle from a less questionable point of view; though always, of course, with much diffidence, seeing how terribly it has vexed, as a puzzle, some very sage skulls indeed. Not to be too confident about it, Hume's argument seems, in two particulars, liable to be taken exception to. It seems to err, on the one hand, by implicitly attributing throughout to our experience of Nature, as summed in our formulated laws of it, a *finality* which no just and cautious thinker—a due regard being had to the infinite possibilities of the Unknown—would ever dogmatically assert for it; on the other, by an ingenious exaggeration of the weakness which does really, within limits understood, tend to beset the proof from human testimony. Very grossly exaggerating this weakness, as if it covered the whole of the phenomena, and striking his balance of probabilities as explained, he decides, to his own

satisfaction, that no miracle *can ever possibly be proved* to the satisfaction of any sane person. Now, though the two propositions that a thing can never possibly be proved, and thus ought not to be believed, and that the thing can never possibly have happened, are as distinct from each other as may be, they very naturally tend to coalesce; and it is only by some exercise of care that they can be kept from becoming in the mind identical. In Hume's argument they constantly tend to coalesce, and become so; and at particular points of it, as here, the confusion may expressly be signalized. 'And what are we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses but the *absolute impossibility* or *miraculous nature* of the events which they relate? And this surely' (the *natural impossibility*, to wit), 'in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation.' Implicitly throughout, and even, as here, explicitly, his thesis may fairly be said to be this—that a miracle cannot possibly be proved (by human testimony, the only conceivable mode of proof), because, as contravening a natural law (postulated as finality in nature), it can never possibly have happened. For on what ground other than of this finality can we infer impossibility in the *proof* of a fact, save only from the impossibility of its *existence*? If a miracle can never possibly have taken place (natural laws, as ascertained, being final), it is certain, and the merest ridiculous truism, that it

cannot possibly admit of valid proof. But suppose the *possibility* of the miracle (no natural law being announced so final that it may not by possibility be traversed—by no means a synonym of *contradicted*—by some other law or cause unknown), what then? The miracle admitted *possible* may provisionally be figured as *actual*; yet as actually made obvious to sense, we are told it could not possibly be proved. Asking, Why so? the only answer we should ever have got from Hume, or shall ever get from any one else, is, that *as* a miracle (admitted possible, to start with) it could never possibly have happened. Could there possibly be reasoning more wretched? It seems certain that, as basis of his argument, Hume—without being clearly aware of it—assumes finality in natural law, and, as implied in this, the *impossibility* of a miracle. Having quietly assumed so much, he might have saved himself and others trouble had he considered everything assumed, and spared us his amusing Essay. Impossibility given, incredibility might very well have been held to be given along with it; and an attempt to *prove* the incredibility by an elaborate *apparatus* of cunningly opposed probabilities, could be nothing but an ingenious puzzle, or bit of logical hocus pocus—a feat of intellectual *legerdemain* about as creditable to David as the feats of Mr. Home, in the physical way, must be held to be creditable to Mr. Home, considered as a humbug and impostor.

Mr. J. Stuart Mill—surely in such a matter one of the most competent of judges now living—thus severely fixes the limits within which Hume's argument can be held successful. 'All, therefore,' says he (vide *Logic*, chap. 'Grounds of Disbelief'), 'which Hume has made out—and this he must be considered to have made out—is, that no evidence can be sufficient to prove a miracle *to any one who did not previously believe the existence of a being, or beings, with supernatural power.*' (It seems but a little matter for Hume to have made out, as against his foe, the Christian Theologer, whose express definition of a miracle is the direct interposition of such a being.) The existence of such beings conceded, therefore, or even the possibility of their existence (not to speak of agencies occult and unknown in the partially explored deeps of nature; and that such may, and indeed *must*, exist, will any one be bold enough to deny?), the possibility of miracle is also conceded, in the shock which is thereby given to finality in the natural laws; and Hume's proof of its *incredibility*, from the precarious nature of human testimony, must, on authority so high as that of Mr. Mill, be set aside as *sophistical and worthless.*

How *sophistical* it is, a very little trouble indeed may abundantly suffice to make obvious. Our experience of human testimony is—pretty much like our experience of whisky or mutton—that it is good,

bad, or indifferent, precisely according to the *quality* of it. Our experience of human testimony is, on the one hand, that men with no interest in lying may commonly be trusted to tell truth; on the other, that men who have any motive to lie strong enough to induce them to do so, will lie, and persist in lying, with a vigour which would be held exceptionally virtuous and exemplary if exercised in the cause of truth. Our experience also is, that with the sincerest desire to report truthfully the thing which *was*—as under their very eyes—nine in ten people will, more or less, report the thing which *was not*; such was either their original looseness of observation, or subsequent defect of memory. And in various other ways, unnecessary to be here set down, the testimony of men may be discredited. Our experience of human testimony therefore is, that, taken in the rough, so to speak, and unsubjected to critical examination more or less stringent, it is, on the whole, a rather poor affair, and in strictness of terms will *prove* almost nothing whatever, even antecedently *probable*. Our experience not the less is, on the other hand, that the certainty to which it may attain is precisely proportioned to the strictness of the tests to which we are able to subject it; and that, scientifically sifted and tested (the tests and *notæ* of suspicion are familiar, as a matter of course, to every one who has in the least considered of Evidence), it may attain

a certainty to be called scientific, and will prove almost anything whatever, even antecedently *improbable*. Even tested in what, from my own observation of one or two most interesting murder-cases, I must hold a very loose and perfunctory way (though the operators were of much professional eminence, with wigs extremely efflorescent), it every day attains a certainty, on which, without any scruple, we proceed to hang a poor fellow-sinner—probably, if all were known, not much more a sinner than we, whose murders are happily as yet undetected. And in the matter of life and Practick, we cannot go much further than this. Personally, I should have no hesitation in transferring the certainty to the speculative ground, and announcing a direct reversal of Hume's famous *dictum*. If only this obvious condition be complied with—that in proportion to the strangeness of the thing testified, is the scientific strictness of the criticism to which the testimony is subjected—there is positively nothing so strange (short of the contradictory, which only should be called the impossible) that, in regard of it, we may not be entitled to say that, thrice over strange as it is, it is really more probable it should be true, than that the testimony to it should be false.

But why needlessly elaborate a point as to which—as must be known to every accurate reader of him—Hume is, oddly enough, in complete agreement

with *me*, and in complete disagreement with himself? He starts by announcement of a scientific objection to the evidence of all miracle, past, present, or to come ; but, in the course of his Essay, it appears that his objection is not so properly to Miracle, as to the obnoxious use which has been made of it as evidence of the Christian religion. Apart from this pestilent employment of it, *le bon David* has no more objection to a miracle than I have, and will even concede, in the most *naive* way, that its evidence might be clear and complete. No amount of human testimony could ever, in the view of Hume, prove the truth of the Christian miracles ; and the particular testimony to *these* he criticises in a consumedly amusing, and perhaps, to the 'well-constituted mind,' what may seem a slightly vexatious way. But find him a miracle or *márvel*, with no suspicious savour of religion about it, and he is frankly willing to admit human testimony might be competent to approve it. 'I own that otherwise' (if not used 'so as to be the foundation of any system of religion') 'there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony.' And instancing a supposed case of 'a total darkness over the whole earth for eight days,' vouched by universal tradition, he says : 'It is evident that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact, ought to receive it as certain, and ought to search

for the causes whence it might be derived,' seeing that such a case 'comes within the reach of human testimony, *if that testimony be very extensive and uniform.*' What is thus the accurate state of the case? Hume announces, with some pomp, at starting, a grand new canon of criticism, by which all miracle whatever, or 'violation of the usual course of nature,' is peremptorily set aside, as incapable of rational proof. He himself, as above appears, has nothing like a thoroughgoing faith in it; merely using it as a convenient stalking-horse, from behind which to shoot certain arrowy sleet of his ridicule at the Christian miracles. His caustic criticism of the *particular* testimony to *these* may be damaging, more or less, as each reader is pleased to estimate it; but the *general* question of Miracle or Natural Marvel, of which he professes to treat, he leaves precisely as he found it; and, considered as a whole, as to consistency and logical coherence, this celebrated Essay of his, though full of his best talent, is as curious a muddle and *fiasco* as will readily be found perpetrated by a man of his consummate ability. What it concerns us to note of it here is, that a miracle being by Hume 'accurately defined a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the *interposition of some invisible agent,*' there is nothing whatever in his principles to discredit the spiritual interpretation of the Phenomena of the Table treated

of. The 'particular volition of the Deity,' of course, he must have set aside, as suspiciously savouring of religion; but to mere 'invisible agents' it does not seem that he ought to have had any objection. Indeed, seeing the phenomena, *as such*, are vouched by indisputable testimony, the case seems almost to be one as to which he would probably have ruled—as we saw him do in another case supposed—'that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the facts' (which they don't, as I really suppose, do), 'ought to receive them as certain, and ought *to search for the causes whence they may be derived.*' Were they to take trouble to do this, it is surely a slight imputation against our 'present philosophers' to suppose, that—Mr. Home, as an impostor, presumed the *vera causa*—they would not pretty promptly find him out, and as such expose him.

Of 'our present philosophers,' Professor Tyndall is, so far as I am aware, the only one who has given any attention to the subject. In his book lately published, *Fragments of Science for Unscientific People*, he reprints an Essay entitled 'Science and Spirits.' It purports to be an account of a *Séance* at which he was present; and if the Spirits do not greatly shine in it, still less, as it seems to me, does the Science. Relegating to an appendix a few remarks on Dr. Tyndall's quite loose and perfunctory paper, let me quote the decisive deliverance with which he dismisses the subject:—

‘The present promoters of spiritual phenomena divide themselves into two classes, one of which *needs no demonstration*, while the other is beyond the reach of proof. The victims like to believe, and they do not like to be undeceived.’ The knaves who deceive, and the fools, their victims—such, according to Dr. Tyndall, is an exhaustive classification of those who concern themselves with Spiritualism, so-called. But surely this is somewhat too sweeping. A little work lies before me, entitled *The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural*,* etc., in which the fullest belief in it is set forth, and, along with this, a conviction of its profound religious importance. The late Dr. Robert Chambers gave it to Dr. Findlater, with some dim view of making a convert of him. Dr. Chambers’s belief was entire and earnest in the reality of these spiritual communications; yet nobody ever suspected him of being either knave or fool. Further, the little book is inscribed to Dr. Chambers ‘from the Author,’ and the Author is the well-known Mr. Alfred Russell Wallace. Mr. Wallace is at this day recognised, I believe, as a scientific Naturalist, second only to Mr. Darwin: by consequence, he is no fool; and Dr. Tyndall must show reason good before any of us will

* *The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural; Indicating the Desirableness of an Experimental Enquiry by men of Science into the alleged powers of Clairvoyants and Mediums.* By Alfred Russell Wallace. London: F. Farrar. 1866.

suspect him a knave. Moreover, Mr. Wallace, in his book, gives a considerable list of men more or less intellectually eminent, and whose *bona fides* is not to be questioned, who yet in some distinct way have proclaimed or admitted themselves adherents of the new doctrine. Of such are the late Professor A. De Morgan (who wrote a book upon the subject, entitled *From Matter to Spirit: The Result of Ten Years' Experience of Spiritual Manifestations*); Professor Challis of Cambridge (who writes that, in *his* opinion, founded not indeed on personal observation, but on careful examination of the evidence, 'either the facts must be admitted to be such as are reported, or the possibility of certifying facts by human testimony must be given up'); Drs. Herbert Mayo and Elliotson (very well known as physiologists); Mr. Charles Bray (who, as author of the *Philosophy of Necessity*, etc., is sufficiently known to all who at all concern themselves with such subjects); the late Mr. Nassau E. Senior (of some note as a political economist, and on terms of personal intimacy with Mr. Home); Mr. T. A. Trollope (Novelist, and otherwise author, who, after much intercourse with Mr. Home, altogether scouts the notion that he is to be regarded as a mere impostor); etc. etc. (I merely select—and that pretty much at random—from the list supplied by Mr. Wallace.) Of people well known to myself, I have already instanced Dr. Chambers—certainly one of the shrewdest of men, and with some

little claim to be considered (in addition to his claims to respect otherwise) a man of scientific intelligence. Further, Dr. D——, at whose house I met Mr. Home, though unknown as such to the world, is known to a wide circle of friends as a man of vigorous ability, and of specially sound culture, at once philosophical and scientific.*

It is in fairness to be supposed that such men do not accord their serious belief to a matter of this sort, without having made it the subject of anxious and careful investigation; that, having done so, they have

* Not all the men included in the above are men to be called scientific. Mr. Trollope is 'a mere Novelist;' Mr. Bray 'a mere Metaphysician;' Mr. Senior 'a mere political Economist.' Of those whose scientific claims do not admit of dispute, not all are 'Physicists.' De Morgan was 'a mere Mathematician;' Dr. Challis is a 'mere Astronomer;' Mr. Wallace is 'a mere Naturalist,'—a misfortune which he shares with Mr. Darwin. The line of remark is familiar. Meantime, does it never occur to that great creature 'the Physicist' that he only of mortals calling themselves intellectual is capable of this sort of impertinence? Supposing some well-known Physicist were to write a love poem (if in love, he might really attempt such a thing), and be further so absurd as to publish it! What would he think of a critic in the *Athenaeum* who should gravely adjudge without reading it, that, as the poem of 'a mere Physicist,' it was undeserving of attention? Supposing it occurred to him to put forth a treatise on the Law of Supply and Demand! How would he estimate a critic who tossed it aside with the remark that, as the treatise of 'a mere Physicist,' it could only be kicked into the kennel? Too probably, the critic would in either case be right, but the Physicist would almost certainly not see it.

come in seriousness to believe it, is, to my own mind, the most curious of these 'phenomena,' and that which above all others seems to demand explanation. When, for instance, a man like De Morgan, after a ten years' inquiry, thus, with great caution, writes: 'I am perfectly convinced that I have both seen and heard, in a manner that should make unbelief impossible, things *called* spiritual, which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence, or mistake. So far I feel the ground firm under me,'—it will really not do—as the mode is, of men who would hesitate to proclaim themselves De Morgan's superiors, and if they did, would only be laughed at—to sneer away his testimony or ignore it. Some inquiry, by persons competent and accredited, as to the validity of Mr. Home's claims, would thus be not without a curious interest, were it only as bringing to light the *modus operandi*—hitherto undetected—by which he has contrived to dupe so many people, in all other matters exhibiting themselves as of shrewd and cautious intelligence. Whatever little discredits may have been cast on Mr. Home, nobody, so far as I am aware, can allege that he has 'caught him in the fact,' so to speak,—has 'plucked out the heart of his mystery,' and impeached him on the spot as an impostor, by exposure of the occult means whereby his effects are produced. And until this is done, his ghosts will not,

by those who have come through personal inquiry to believe in them, be held conclusively laid.

Of course it may be said that the Science of M. Houdin or the wizard Professor Anderson is competent to feats quite as wonderful as those of Mr. Home, and, except as the imposition is confessed, quite as puzzling and inexplicable. And as regards the merely *physical* side of Mr. Home's performances—the raps, the weight artificially put upon the table, its risings, boltings, etc.—I should be frankly disposed to admit them as within the possible *rôle* of the juggler. I admit it may be also possible—perhaps even easy—for M. Houdin or Professor Anderson to play a tune on another man's accordion, held motionless in his one hand, with its keys dependent in air; though *how* any one should be able to do this, or *seem* to do it, except by surreptitiously substituting a magical instrument of his own, which he had brought with him in his waistcoat-pocket, I must profess myself unable to explain. The real *crux* and puzzle of the business does not lie in these physical phenomena, but in the *intelligence* which sits hid behind them, and uses them as its *media* of expression. It may very well be that this intelligence is merely that of the ingenious Mr. Home; but if so, we must plainly assume him to be the centre—like a spider with its web spun round it—of an organized system of *collusion*, which is not without its little difficulties. Thus, unless we suppose Mr. Home to have

been carefully coached up by Dr. and Mrs. D—beforehand in the family history of their expected guests, there are certain things in the narrative I have given which do not seem readily susceptible of any quite natural explanation. And this supposition is to myself entirely incredible, as it must be to every one else entitled to speak on the subject. Further, if we suppose it credible in this instance, it is distinctly *not* credible that Mr. Home, wherever he goes (and he has pretty nigh made the tour of Europe), should be able to improvise accomplices of the like credit and repute—no soul of them anywhere having any intelligible interest to serve in becoming Mr. Home's accomplice. A ramified system of collusion of this kind is, in the very conception of it, ridiculous; and even if we conceive it constituted, it seems plain—Mr. Home only being seriously concerned to maintain it—that inevitably it would be blown to the winds in a week.

Another consideration occurs which seems not without a certain pertinence. In a professional medium like Mr. Home,—who, though professing to take no money, may be held to practically make his bread by the business,—it is natural to suspect fraud; but in order to account for his precise kind and amount of success, we must presume in him quite wonderful tact, practised dexterity, and astuteness. These, in any consummate degree attained,

imply the conjunction of a somewhat rare original aptitude, with a course of sedulous and prolonged training. Probably, for no 'profession' is a severer 'education' necessary than for that of the juggler. It is in the last degree unlikely that, except for the motive supplied by intent to prosecute it 'professionally,' any mortal should take the enormous trouble necessary to qualify himself for the work of a successful medium of the Home type—supposing Mr. Home an impostor. It is, however, alleged that many professed mediums exist, in no sense to be called 'professional,'—*lay* brothers, so to say, who exercise their 'gifts' freely, and without any clerical ends to serve, such as we may surmise in Mr. Home and others, who in a sense may be said to draw stipend. In fact it is said there is evidence that in the privacy of a family or a social circle a medium will now and then crop up in a quite unforeseen and unexpected way, developing at once all the powers possessed by Mr. Home, the so-called 'accomplished prestidigitator.' And if the evidence to this effect be valid, it seems further valid to give fair and reasonable inference in favour of Mr. Home, as perhaps something other and better than the mere 'prestidigitating' scoundrel and quack one might otherwise be disposed to suspect him: for, in such cases, the motive to deceive is not obvious; and if it were, it is not quite easy to see how the requisite skill could

have been come at. As to the amount and value of such evidence, those only who have been at some little pains to inquire into the matter are entitled to express an opinion. For people who have troubled themselves to inquire, I should suppose the evidence to be very strong indeed. Of the only small items of evidence, fortuitously come at by myself, I have already given account (*vide* pp. 47, 48); and they seem to me of some little weight.

That the blessed Spirit of one's grandmother should quit the happy fields to become the frisky tenant of a deal board, and thence rap out to her descendant an injunction to blow his nose! (and many of these spiritual 'communications' are intrinsically of no more importance)—this is, I frankly admit, *not* the kind of proposition which very kindly commends itself to the ordinary human intelligence. But it is perfectly *possible* it may be so; and if so, it is possible there might be evidence to prove it. And if this evidence should approve itself to me as scientific, I would be bound to accept the proposition, however antecedently ridiculous in the light of my resolved preconceptions. And my whole mode of thought on the subject, it may be hoped, would presently experience reversal. The proposition—which before seemed ridiculous—would now, as proved *true*, come to look very much more serious; my preconception, which thought itself clever, and

probably called itself 'scientific,' would now be seen to have been ridiculous ; and I should have to 'write myself down' as veritable 'an Ass' as Dogberry, in that once I had held it wisdom. Your little 'tailor's yard' of intelligence is, in its own way, excellent ; it is good to measure you out broadcloth, to fashion pantaloons withal ; applied as a measure to the Universe again, it scarce seems the proper instrument, and one suspects in it a certain inadequacy. That there may, and indeed *must*, be, in the unexplored deeps of nature, several things as yet not even dreamed of by the most 'advanced' man of science now living, is a *truism*, for the serious announcement of which a schoolboy would deserve to have his breech punished. Pity there should be men of large scientific culture who need constantly to have it preached to them as *truth*. Your 'Finality John' is, unfortunately, an absurd figure, who does not confine his operations to the field of practical politics. In the field of Science he has always been particularly active ; and if an accurate estimate could be made, he would probably be found to have retarded the progress of knowledge by at least some hundred or so of years.

On the vexed problem of Matter and Mind (or Spirit) it might be possible for me to write copiously, and fill a good many more or less plausible pages. But as I profess to know no more of it than other

gentlemen who, in writing deep treatises on the subject, have exhibited nothing so clearly as the depth of their necessary ignorance, it is perhaps as well to avoid this. A few random remarks may suffice to exhibit such ignorance as I pretend to. The depth of it is, I admit, considerable, as summed in a loose notion I have that nobody, in the ultimate resort, ever will, or *can*, know anything whatever of the matter. When we speak of the Soul or Spirit of man, it is to be supposed we mean the conscious Intelligence or Mind—the Ego (in the jargon of the philosophers) as distinguished from the non-Ego of the material organism. These are unquestionably discriminated in consciousness; and are rationally, on other grounds, to be held distinct.* But the terms of the discrimination we are helplessly unable to adjust; and that the Ego, Soul, Mind—what you will—*inhabits* the Organism, so to speak, as a separable and independent entity, capable of surviving under other conditions unknown, in the ruin of the material structure, there is only a feeble show of evidence. For, the proof of the discrimination admitted between

* *Vide* chapter in Butler's *Analogy*: 'Of a Future Life.' A good deal of it looks a little obsolete; and in particular, no one, in the changed condition of our physiological knowledge, would now write as Butler here does, surmising that though sensation and perception are dependent on the organism (or 'gross body,' as he calls it), reason, reflection, etc. may not be. Not the less his essential argument remains. So distinct from the

the Ego and the Organism, the proof of their *interdependence* must be admitted as at least equally clear ; and the diversity inferred from the discrimination seems to be accurately enough balanced by the contrary inference of identity fairly to be drawn from the admitted interdependence. (As to all the rest of the 'natural argument,' as it is termed, for the 'Immortality of the Soul,' I set it aside as what it seems to me, a tissue of the poorest sophistries.) This of the survival of the Ego, therefore, is one of the propositions which, on the mere ground of rational inference, nobody seems entitled either to affirm or to deny. We ought not to affirm, inasmuch as there is no proof or probability not balanced by a proof or probability equally strong on the other side ; on the other hand, our denial, if wise, can be merely the *sceptical* denial which alleges the absence of proof. To press this to a *dogmatic* denial, would be a stupid assumption of knowledge on a basis of confessed ignorance. Still, though as an article of Reason suspect, as an article of Faith the doctrine has thus much to say for itself,

organism is the Ego of consciousness, that out of some parts of the brain itself we may scoop freely, the Ego not seeming much to mind it. The fact that on so much as the touch of a needle-point at other parts of it the Ego feels itself outraged and goes elsewhere, does not perhaps so properly invalidate the argument, as merely carry it to the point at which Matter and Mind alike disappear from us in the region of the for-ever insoluble and mysterious.

that, as appealing to very deep instincts indeed (if that really amounts to anything), it holds its own in the world persistently ; has satisfied in the past many men of some intelligence ; and even now, in this era of Scientific Illumination, is more or less firmly believed in, or dimly cherished as a hope, by probably a vast majority of thinking people. And perhaps, after all, they may be right : though Science can meantime have nothing to say to it, there may really be in man ' a living soul ' which constitutes his true existence, and does not lapse to the original sleep, when the poor, enfeebled, battered body is flung forth to rot upon the winds.

Of Being, conscious and intelligent, we have no experience except in vital relations with certain organized systems of matter. But when we say that these relations are *vital*, we say all that we really know ; and, properly, this amounts to saying that we know almost nothing whatever. Any one who asserts these relations indissoluble—relations of *identity* in fact, however a mere illusion of consciousness may necessitate the idea of difference—so that, the organic structure perishing, the conscious and intelligent Being must needs perish along with it, asserts what he must very well know he cannot in the least *prove*. Neither can the relations be so proved of diversity, as to rationally ground an assertion that the conscious Being survives, and *must* survive, the de-

struction of the material organism. But the proposition that it *may* survive seems a modest one ; and it cannot be held irrational so long as there is no clear proof to the contrary. A person who alleges no more than that the conscious Being, Ego, or Spirit, which we only know of under certain conditions as embodied—so to phrase it—*may* survive under other conditions unknown, as *disembodied*, or perhaps in some other embodiment, withdrawn from the cognisance of our senses, seems to occupy a position entirely inexpugnable in the present state of our knowledge. The reply to him is indeed obvious, that we are here not to dream of what *may be*, but to ascertain sharply what *is*; and that, on the whole, it seems wisdom utterly to decline to concern ourselves with all such mere speculative rubbish : ‘ If you have Scientific *proof* of your proposition ’—it may be said—‘ pray, with due brevity, produce it ; if you have *none*, and do not even pretend to have any, we are perhaps not entitled to deny, but we are clearly entitled to ignore it : be good enough to take yourself off, and cease to pester people engaged in solid and fruitful inquiries.’ And this deliverance, from its own point of view, seems to be not unreasonable. But it is the claim of the modern Spiritualist, that his doctrine, as distinguished from a mere speculation, has a sound basis of fact ; and thus of evidence which will be found Scientific, so soon as Scientific

men take the trouble to inquire into the matter with the requisite care and candour. And if we set aside the notion of imposture—which any exact inquiry might surely very promptly detect if present—it almost seems to me he might go pretty nigh to prove his case. If it be rational to suppose it possible that disembodied Spirits exist, it can scarce be held irrational to suppose further, that possibly, in some mysterious way, they may be permitted to make known their existence to us. Direct cognisance of them we cannot have, but indirectly we might apprehend them in operations permitted them in the sphere of sense;* and if from Spirit sensible effects can descend to us, from these, by a rational process, we may ascend to Spirit revealed as Cause. Certain phenomena are before us, such as I have given account of. For these a cause must be assigned; and if the most rigorous and exhaustive inquiry should fail to reveal any natural cause, plainly a so-called *supernatural* cause we are rationally compelled to assume. To account for certain physical effects—

* It is not necessary here to do more than allude to the old puzzle—of which nobody could ever make anything—as to *how* a Spiritual entity supposed should be competent to express itself in material effects. The question is *now*, as to whether or no there is Scientific evidence that it *does*. Given certain physical phenomena, are we, or are we not, in default of any natural explanation, rationally compelled to retire upon this one of Spirit recognised as Cause?

if absolutely no otherwise explicable — a new and occult mode of force must be admitted ; and behind this force, and expressed through it, an Intelligence must plainly be assumed, in order to account for 'communications' addressing themselves to *our* Intelligence. And if this Intelligence akin to the Human were decisively shown—as it might be—to be *not* the Intelligence of Mr. Home (let us say), or of any one else having aught to do with the inquiry, what then ? It seems absurd to surmise it the Intelligence of any one outside of the circle of the inquiry ; and I submit it would be quite as rational to accept it as what it expressly gave itself out for—the Intelligence of the Dead, who yet live—as to suppose it that of either the Deity or the Devil ; the only two alternative solutions which, on some consideration, have occurred to me.

Almost the sole question seems to be this : Is Mr. Home (assumed a representative figure and type of the class Mediumistic) merely a trickster and juggler, trading on the weakness and credulity of the sillier sections of the Public ? and can he be decisively convicted as such ? Though, apart from the fact that neither Dr. Findlater nor I could trace in him the smallest hint of deception (a fact to which neither of us is stupid enough to assign any importance), I have shown, I think, reasonable ground otherwise for supposing that Mr. Home may really *not* be a mere

impostor and *charlatan*, undoubtedly there are grave difficulties in the way of our supposing him anything else. The case, it seems to me (as it did, and probably still does, to Mr. Wallace), is fairly one for inquiry; and it might really be worth while for some one whose decision, as published, along with accurate detail of the grounds on which he rests it, would be generally recognised as authoritative, to give the matter so much of his attention as might be needed for a conclusive result. Whether or no an impostor, Mr. Home, in his periodical reappearances, is undoubtedly becoming a *bore*; on which ground it might be well to have him decisively knocked on the head and made an end of, or once for all admitted, in his way, a Prophet of these later periods.

Such an inquiry as that suggested seems really about as simple as any that could be set before a Scientific gentleman. It is, however, embarrassed with one or two little difficulties. In the first place, it may not be quite easy to find a Scientific man who would enter upon the inquiry in that perfectly disinterested and unbiassed spirit, in virtue of which only can truth be assured in the result. At least nine out of ten of our *Savants*, as resenting the implied slur on their 'methods,' previously held omnipotent, would be convinced, if at all, exceedingly 'against their will;' and a conviction of this kind is commonly as the old saw tells us. Any *circle* of

Scientific men, again, convened to 'investigate' the phenomena, would almost certainly come together as a *junto* of conspirators, determined by fair means or foul to discredit them; and if their ingenuity was equal to their determination, not improbably they might succeed, even if the thing were true. (Of course, in the use of the ugly word *foul*, I intend no moral imputation, but merely touch the intellectual obliquity which is everywhere apt to be bred of an obstinate intellectual preconception.) Further, apart from this subjective difficulty, though related to it, there is a difficulty objective, or involved in the phenomena themselves as developed. A man trained in physical inquiry, who everywhere postulates constancy in the relation of cause and effect, may naturally be a little impatient when asked to consider of phenomena, of which inconstancy is expressly asserted, so that under seemingly identical conditions the result may occur or not, as it may chance. His impatience is natural; yet a just consideration of the nature of the case might in so far tend to allay it, as showing at least that these inconstancies involve no impeachment whatever of constancy as between a cause and its effect. Supposing a Spirit to exist (provisionally suppose such a thing, as the condition of candid inquiry), it is withdrawn from the sphere of sense, and, except indirectly, in these phenomena induced, we can have no

cognisance of it whatever. An experiment is made, and certain phenomena emerge, for which (all other explanations failing) we must rationally infer a Spirit as Cause. Under precisely the same conditions a second experiment is made, and no phenomena occur! What is the rational inference from this? That our previous inference of a Spirit as Cause was *irrational*? Nay, surely, but simply, that in this instance no Spirit was present as Cause; and the cause not being present, of course we could not have the phenomenal effect. Further, a Spirit, even if we suppose it present, may be supposed to be communicative or not, pretty much as the whim strikes it: even in dealing with Spirits, we are still on the *human* ground, where the element of will and caprice may still have in so far to be allowed for. Though a man might have 'communications' from the wife of his bosom deceased (two cases of the kind have been known to me; and the men, if insane on this subject, were sane enough on every other), the wife might retain in the next world the 'will of her own' she probably exhibited in this, and time her communications to suit her own inclinations very much more than his. Suppose Mr. Home *can* at times 'call Spirits from the vasty deep,' it is perhaps too much to expect that to-day, to-morrow, or the next day, they should hold themselves at his beck, and invariably 'come when he does call for them.' The Spirits

must, in reason, be allowed in the matter a little of their own way.

But, dismissing the Spirits as Cause, let us consider Mr. Home as the proximate cause, in virtue of some exceptional and abnormal gift or potency which resides in him, as in others similarly constituted. Should such exceptional potency supposed reside in him constantly, as subject from day to day and week to week to no condition of flux and variation, it would certainly be exceptional in another sense, as differing in this respect from every other gift or power which a man possesses. A man, like a horse, is physically one day *fit*—on another, by comparison, helpless; and this often without any distinct cause which he himself could assign. Intellectually, it is no otherwise; and a Poet shall to-day pour you an inspired strain, who could not, to save his life to-morrow, bring together two idiot rhymes. Spiritually, it is the same—

‘As far as we have mounted up in height,
In our dejection do we sink as low’—

the exultations of the soul alternate with its languors and stupors; and in many minds fierce sensations of power, tyrannous and triumphant, give place to abject moods, and a prostration which is well-nigh despair. Should it be found, therefore, that this abnormal power supposed in Mr. Home is some-

times in riotous excess, at other times in nearly entire abeyance, there seems in this to be no ground for cavil, seeing its analogy in this respect is close with various other powers which, in common with ourselves, he possesses. Mr. Home is one day pretty well, and the 'phenomena' succeed indifferently; the next he is tortured by a colic, or made wretched by an indigestion. It is really not scientific—in point of fact it is cruel—to denounce the poor man as an impostor because, under these altered conditions, the phenomena do not quite succeed as before. A man is a man, and as such, in certain important respects, he is to be distinguished from an acid. You cannot make your experiment with him; hermetically cork him in a bottle; and produce him again the day after, certain that the effects will be the same. The acid is on any two days the same; on no two days can the man by possibility be so. 'The basis of the soul' remains, but fluctuation and change, incalculable as that of the winds and the waves, is the law of the surface of his being. The uncertainty which besets these phenomena, however it may a little complicate the investigation of them, can thus be no good ground for declining it, seeing that by the very conditions of the case, the constancy of sequence which we postulate in a purely physical inquiry, it would here be unreasonable to expect.

As usual in such discussion, some unnecessary

embarrassment is apt to arise in the treatment of this subject, from the use of inappropriate or misunderstood terms. The foolish word 'supernatural,' for instance, is a bugbear to many minds; and as it has literally no meaning, except as a synonym of the false or non-existent, it had better perhaps be disused. Nature must plainly be defined as the totality of created existence; and a disembodied Spirit, if such a thing exists, is no more to be held supernatural than a Spirit whilst it dwells in the body. Is the existence demonstrated, which before was, in either case, problematical? We extend our conception of Nature so as to include the new spiritual fact. Except on the impossible and the absurd, the word 'supernatural' is meaningless, and may fitly be excluded from a discussion, which it merely confuses by intrusion of prejudice and foregone conclusion.

Further, we are constantly told that these alleged 'phenomena' are, without ado, to be set aside as 'contradictory of uniform experience,' and 'violating established laws of nature;' whereas they contradict no experience, and violate no law whatever. Suppose, as in an instance cited, a chair should suddenly leave its place and travel to me across the carpet: in no accurate sense can this be said to *contradict* my previous experience of chairs. Though, indeed, not consonant with my previous experience, it does not contradict, but *supplement* it. How, again, is

the law of gravitation *violated* by such a thing, or by the unexplained risings of a table, as described? If we suppose, indeed, the phenomenon to take place *without a cause*, it violates not only the law of gravitation, but a fundamental necessity or law of thought. But if we assume a sufficient invisible cause, plainly the law of gravitation is no more outraged in the matter than it is when I move the chair or table with my hand. Ascertained laws of nature may, in this sense, be said to be final, that they can never possibly be violated; but counteracted they may be to any extent by known or unknown agencies; and in their counteraction by an unknown agency, as here alleged, a seeming violation is effected. All this seems so plain, that it would be mere waste of time to set it down, were it not that such very gross inaccuracies are rife and rampant on the subject.*

With some little miscellany of remarks, let me rid myself as I may of the matter. In considering of these 'communications' obtained by a system of 'raps' as explained, it cannot but occur to one to ask, how such a mode of communication was originally come at? and whether, in order to arrange this method of converse with the Spirits of the departed, some previous conversations with them were not

* Let my somewhat loose statement (pp. 52, 53, 54) as to the finality of Law, be read in the light of the above.

needed? An original preconcert of some kind is quite plainly implied in it; and, of what kind? is, it seems to me, a question we are fairly entitled to ask. Was this mode of converse by means of the alphabet and raps the clever invention of the heavenly visitant anxious to communicate, or of the earthly votary thirsting to imbibe, wisdom? Or, between them, how did they contrive it? If, in order to clear up this point, it is necessary to assume in the Spirits a power of direct and mystical communion with the human mind, this subsequent indirect and invented method seems impeached as absurd and superfluous. It is somewhat in the same way absurd, as if sane people with articulate tongues in their heads should forthwith forswear vocal speech, and betake themselves to painful processes of speaking to each other, as dumb people do, on their fingers. This objection is probably not fundamental; yet one desiderates information on the subject. This whole spiritual business has emerged within the memory of people not very old; and some precise historical account of its genesis and development ought readily enough to be attainable. Personally, I should rather wish to know the name of the Yankee genius who first, on hearing raps proceed from a table, jumped to the happy conjecture that they must needs be the speech of a dead relative, yearning for renewal of intercourse. Certainly it is not a

conjecture which, in such a case, would at once have suggested itself to every man. But not all of us are Yankee geniuses.

In casual discussion of this matter, one has to listen to a good deal of loose talk somewhat to this effect: that the thing is palpably absurd; that the dignity of the Spirit-world is outraged by such high-fantastical proceedings; and specially, that in the trivial and inane character of many of these 'communications,' the canon of the *dignus vindice nodus* seems somewhat too little attended to. All which mere irrelevancy is at once disposed of by the simple appeal to evidence. Can the thing be scientifically proved *true*? If so (and many things have turned out to be true which seemed at the first blush absurd to sages of some eminence), of course we should be bound to believe it, whatever its seeming absurdity. And, personally, I see nothing in the matter so absurd as to indispose me to a candid consideration of the evidence. When we have mouthed them ever so about it, all our big words of 'monstrous! wildly incredible! incongruous! extravagant! preposterous!' etc. etc. etc., translate themselves, in the ear of reason, into simply the strange and the unfamiliar. Extravagant, indeed—etymologically taken, as merely going outside of knowledge and past experience—is really the correct term. And the extravagant, in this sense, supposed

we are clearly incompetent to criticise it with any effect. To allege against it unfitness, incongruity, absurdity, may be merely to exhibit ourselves as absurd. Incongruous—or, simply, not congruous with preconceived notions, which of needs are empty as dreams, so far as not mere generalizations of the known—is not an epithet which tells with damaging effect against the hitherto unknown, of whose laws we are necessarily and utterly incognisant. The abstract conception of a creature with fifty senses, instead of our liminary five, is an easy one; and it is not impossible that somewhere such a creature may exist; but nothing in Gulliver even approximates in wild absurdity to such a creature, as we strive to conceive it in the concrete. But of the modes and properties of such a creature supposed, we certainly know as much as we do of those of a disembodied Spirit; and we are quite as fit to prescribe laws to the one as to the other. For my own part, I shall say frankly, that—admitting at all a communication between the Spirits of the dead and those yet in the fleshy prison-house—beside that mighty marvel, the small subsidiary one that they choose to talk to us through tables, seems to me to dwarf itself into such utter insignificance, that I decline to take any account of it. As to the dignity and solemnity of their procedure, it is just possible the Spirits are not cursed as men are, by any such absurd considerations. The

only Ghost with which most of us have any acquaintance, is the Ghost in Hamlet; and our familiarity with that somewhat solemn personage may perhaps a little have spoiled us for appreciation of the genuine free-and-easy Spirit, as we find him in the Yankee newspapers, rapping out his 'Yes, Sirree,' etc., and even in the abodes of bliss not seeking wholly to hide his pinnings for the liquor-bar. As to the *dignus vindice nodus*, again, it does seem a little rash to assume that admirable dramatic maxim as a law for disembodied spirits: the Spirit-world, if it exists, may very well be supposed to order its procedure by other rules than those of the *Ars Poetica*. Moreover, if the Spirits can conclusively assure us of their existence, they give us a piece of information the importance of which may seem to many minds so considerable as to outweigh any spice of triviality we suspect in what otherwise they are pleased to tell us. All such idle remarks in criticism of the procedure of the supposed Spirits are at once to be dismissed as beside the question, which is severely to be held one of evidence. Is the evidence scientifically valid? If it could so be shown, of course we should be bound to believe in the Spirits, however thrice over strange we might think their modes of comporting themselves. And, in truth, though the thing looks strange enough, it is scarce in strictness of fact more strange than much in our actual life over the infinite

wonder of which is flung what Shelley finely calls the 'veil of familiarity.' Thoughtlessness only, the creature of idle habit, can refuse to admit that, except for some sets of fixed and rooted, yet merely arbitrary, associations in the mind, having no warrant in the real and deep relation of things, it is as proper and as little marvellous for a Spirit to speak to us through a table as in any other way we could quite readily suggest. Indeed it almost seems to me it might puzzle a Sage to devise any much less wonderful method.

It has always been alleged as a point of suspicion against the Spirits, that to Scientific men, and Sceptics generally, they entertain an insuperable aversion, almost invariably striking work in sheer disgust at their presence. So thieves have been known at times to absent themselves from their accustomed haunts, when they were 'ware of a detective officer who 'wanted' them. And so far as this allegation is correct, it is no doubt damaging to the claims of the Spirits. To say that they are paralysed by the presence of a Sceptic, what is it in effect but to say that they can succeed in convincing nobody but credulous blockheads, whose preliminary slavish attitude of mind brands them as dupes ready made? It is just possible the credulous blockheads may be right, since truth does not cease to be truth though a million blockheads should blunder into belief of it; but unless somehow the Spirits can be coaxed to en-

counter the critical analysis of doubt, the knowledge of them must remain a form of wisdom, whereof most sensible men will be content to allow the blockheads a monopoly.*

In taking leave of this subject, I may claim at least to have written of it in a spirit of entire candour and fairness. In truth, I was under no temptation to do otherwise. I am by no means specially interested to find this thing true. Unimportant whether or no, is pretty much what I should be disposed to rule in the matter. If it brings Immortality anew to light, it seems to do so in a form not particularly fitted to stir torpid aspirations. The appeal to my religious enthusiasm is thus, on the one hand, scarce such as seriously to bias my judgment. On the other hand, as utterly unscientific, I have no cut-and-dried *schema* of the Universe, in the interest of which to desire the suppression of the intrusive new facts alleged, and to blind myself to the force of the evi-

* The above passage, with others in this later part of the discussion, was included in a little paper on the subject, written some years since, when I had neither seen anything of the phenomena, nor considered them worth inquiring into. I give it as originally written, and should write it precisely so now, did the allegation on which it is founded seem now as correct as then I assumed it to be. But since, and particularly of late, it does not appear that the Spirits have shown such a very decided aversion to Scientific men. The inference seems fair, that perhaps the aversion was always quite as much on the part of the Scientific men to the Spirits.

dence adduced for them. What force I attribute to this evidence, so far as I am able to estimate it on my narrow range of opportunity, may be gathered from what I have written. Strictly, it seems to establish no more than such a probability of reason as may suffice in some measure to *balance* an *à priori* improbability so strong that it seems almost to invite ridicule; thus leaving the subject as one which, without impeachment of his rationality, a rational person might seriously entertain and inquire into. The Scientific view, on the contrary, is—and this without even a pretence of investigation—that any serious entertainment of the subject is possible to only a fool or a maniac; and should a man of Scientific distinction, after much care and pains bestowed, announce himself convinced of their genuineness, it is considered that this does not in the least accredit the phenomena, but merely discredits the inquirer. And, as I said, the people who assume this attitude, do not pretend to have given one iota of attention to the evidence. As the thing is impossible and absurd, there *can* be no evidence to prove it—such is the easy formula with which they kick aside the subject. Announced as outside of the sphere of the known, these modest gentlemen dogmatically adjudge the thing ‘impossible,’* and there an end;

* ‘With regard to the Miracle question, I can only say that the word “impossible” is not, to my mind, applicable to matters

which plainly amounts to an implicit assertion for themselves of an omniscience they would perhaps not explicitly lay claim to—though as to this, one cannot be certain. In the face of such strange facts as those alleged, Scepticism of the most severe and uncompromising kind is the only rational attitude. Scepticism, however, is one thing; an insolent dogmatic *denial*, on a mere ground of *strangeness* in the facts, as unconformed to Scientific preconception or prejudice, is a thing totally different. It might almost seem that many men of some Scientific intelligence, if asked to define the difference, would be helplessly at a loss to do so, the distinction not existing in their minds.

When a dogmatist of the type above indicated comes professedly to 'investigate' this or any other subject which he regards with the like *malus animus*, be sure he does not come to investigate the phenomena, but, if possibly he can, to discredit them. That this thing is not, can not, and *shall not*, be true, is the soul of his so-called inquiry. And as his Scientific repute is a little concerned, in virtue of his attitude of dogmatic negation assumed, it is probable,

of philosophy. That the possibilities of Nature are infinite, is an aphorism with which I am wont to worry my friends.'—Professor Huxley (quoted by Mr. Wallace as one of the mottoes of his little book). One should like to have a list of Professor Huxley's friends who are worried, as obstinately maintaining against him that the possibilities of Nature are finite.

if he had the money, he would be ready to pay a thousand pounds down, rather than find the thing accredited. As we do not gather grapes off a holly bush, out of this palpable unfairness of mind we can scarce expect fairness of Scientific procedure. There seems to be a good deal in Dr. Tyndall's remark—in the opening of the Essay to which I have elsewhere referred—that 'preconceived notions can vitiate to an extraordinary degree the testimony of even veracious people.' I venture to supplement it with the further remark, that if 'the preconceived notion' should chance to be a so-called 'scientific' one, the danger is not thereby sensibly diminished. Some people, not specially Scientific, might even be disposed to rule that it was rather, if anything, increased. Most of us, it is to be hoped, love truth; but there are few of us, it may really be feared, who do not love still more dearly our own paltry vested interest in it, supposing we are fortunate enough to have any such. Of the power of Scientific preconception or prejudice to absolutely incapacitate the mind for the reception of a new truth,—to vitiate observation, and make dark the counsels of the wise in matters of the plainest evidence,—it is surely not needful to write. The History of Science! What is it, on its one side, but a mean record of the perfect *rabies* of unfairness thus induced? The 'struggle for existence' of a new truth sent into the world, against the Scientific

apostles of the old, with which it seems to be in conflict, is a thing to shock even Mr. Darwin. Indeed it *does* shock him very much; for does he not with a certain mild pathos complain that, though the young fellows for the most part are well inclined to him, he meets hitherto with but cool reception from the old ones—the men of great and established reputation, whose recognition would, above all, be pleasant to him? And reason good: your old knight, who has won his spurs hard, likes to be allowed to wear them: if you try to hack them from his heels, be sure he will stick them into you.

Since formally taken up by Mr. Crookes and Dr. Huggins, who are understood to be still going on with it, the Inquiry is in very good hands, and might be expected shortly to issue in some such results, *pro* or *con*, as should satisfy reasonable people. I do not, however, expect that for yet a considerable while unanimity will be either way arrived at. Seeing it took Harvey some fifty years, and cost him a good deal of obloquy, to get so plain a demonstration accepted as that of the circulation of the blood, it would surprise me if Mr. Crookes' demonstration—supposed in favour of Mr. Home, and equally valid with Harvey's—should find its final success on very much easier terms. The dead weight of the great Conservative (defined by Mr. Mill as the stupid) party would be sure for a good long while to press

heavily on Mr. Crookes ; and might even so crush the poor gentleman, as to secure for him after his decease the honours of Scientific martyrdom. 'Died of being heavily sat on by his fellow *Savants*,' might readily enough be the verdict which, in case of his sudden exit, a jury would feel called upon to find on the corpse of the deceased Chemist.

On the other hand, if we suppose the Scientific inquiry to issue in the conviction of Mr. Home as an Impostor, it would equally surprise me to find this decision quietly acquiesced in by the Spiritualists, as decisively settling the question. Presently we should hear, in such a case, that, though Mr. Home had put himself a good deal forward, he had never been thought very much of, and had always been more or less suspect in the eyes of the really initiated. But though Mr. Home had been made away with—it would be said—the great Mrs. Guppy survived ; and a Scientific Committee would be called for to investigate the claims of Mrs. Guppy. Mrs. Guppy, in her turn disappearing, beyond doubt somebody else would be found to take her place ; and a fresh Committee would be clamoured for.* Given a typical man of Science, whose decision would be held by

* Absurd as this seems, there is yet in it some lurking plausibility, in fairness to be taken into account. Given the true Prophet, the false Prophet may be expected to come hard upon his heels ; round any nucleus of truth such as the present (sup-

his brethren authoritative, and, as such, accepted and rested in,—on the other hand, a typical Medium on whose decisive exposure the general body of Spiritualists would admit their new Faith consigned to the *limbo* of sick delusions,—something like a conclusive result might, in no very long time, be hoped for. As it is, I should rather expect that the wrangle which may be said to have commenced, may prolong itself somewhat indefinitely. In this wrangle which might almost seem imminent, beyond the cheerful interest one always feels in anything of a row going forward, I can have no great personal concernment. I shall with much indifference acquiesce in the truth as either way established. Considering the attitude of resolved and unreasoning hostility assumed towards these phenomena by the great bulk of the Scientific world, it would, I admit, amuse me not a little should they, after all, conclusively be shown to be genuine. And, besides the amusement to others, Scientific men themselves might perhaps take some good of their discomfiture, as teaching them a little of the modesty, which meantime is scarce to be considered one of their most conspicuous virtues. A very wise

posed) we should expect to find some accretion of lying imposture; and plainly an exposure of the false Prophet leaves untouched the claims of the true. To denounce the Iscariot as a scoundrel, can by no means be held to impeach the respectability of the Apostle Peter.

man of old said, that all that he knew was, that he knew nothing. It is an invaluable point of knowledge which many of our modern wise men seem greatly in need of being taught.

APPENDIX.

PROFESSOR TYNDALL 'ON SCIENCE AND SPIRITS.'

ONE only point of Professor Tyndall's narrative seems to me of any importance. Whilst a sentence about himself was being spelt out, it struck him as odd that, though 'the knocks came from under the table, no person present evinced the slightest desire to look under it.' He himself asked permission to do so ; and 'having pretty well assured himself that no sound could be produced under the table without its origin being revealed,' he found that the communications instantly ceased. So soon as, after a quarter of an hour of silence, he resumed his chair, the Spirits resumed their operations. This, as regards the *Séance* in question, seems certainly a little to discredit it : as regards that at which Dr. Findlater and I were present with Mr. Home, I have simply to set our experience against that of Professor Tyndall. Mr. Home

expressly *asked* me to go under the table: whilst there, I, as thoroughly as Professor Tyndall could do, 'assured myself that no sound could be produced under the table without its origin being revealed,' and *my* experience was, that the knocks above, etc. went on as vigorously as before. Subsequently Mr. Home even *urged* that at any moment any one entertaining suspicion, should instantly seek to satisfy himself by going again under the table; and, without impeachment of the phenomena, Dr. Findlater and I did so. Of course this experience is only good to ourselves, and for the particular case to which it refers; but I must be excused if, to my own mind, it sufficiently disposes of the opposite experience of Professor Tyndall as bearing on the general question.

For the rest, some of the main facts made use of by the Professor, as disposing of the Spiritual phenomena, being meantime on the physical ground unintelligible to me, I must for the present decline to assign any weight to them. 'The knocks continuing, I turned a wine-glass upside down, and placed my ear upon it, as upon a stethoscope. The Spirits seemed disconcerted by the act; they lost their playfulness, and did not quite recover it for a considerable time.' As the glass thus used as a stethoscope could merely a little, by vibration from the wood, intensify the sound of the knocks, and could by no possibility avail to give hint of their true cause or

origin, I do not quite see how the Spirits, unless very stupid indeed, should have been seriously disconcerted by an act so entirely unmeaning on the Professor's part. It is not to this, however, but to his next use of the inverted wine-glass, that I specially desire to refer. A distinct *push* having come to the table, Professor Tyndall writes: 'I readily granted the fact of motion, and began to feel the delicacy of my position. There were several pairs of arms upon the table, and several pairs of legs under it; but how was I, without offence, to express the conviction which I really entertained? To ward off the difficulty, I again turned a wine-glass upside down and rested my ear upon it. *The rim of the glass was not level, and the hair, on touching it, caused it to vibrate, and produce a peculiar buzzing sound.* A perfectly candid and warm-hearted old gentleman at the opposite side of the table, whom I may call A., drew attention to the sound, and expressed his entire belief that it was Spiritual. I, however, informed him that *it was the moving hair acting on the glass.* The explanation was not well received.' There seems really no reason it should have been, being, as it was, so highly questionable. The odds are about ten to one that the glass used by Professor Tyndall the second time was the very same glass he had before used; in which case the 'uniformity of Nature' might have led us to expect that the 'peculiar buzzing sound'

would have made itself audible to the company in the first as in the second experiment. Yet it should seem not to have done so—a point which a little requires explanation. Selecting from various wine-glasses some specimens not ‘level in the rim’—*i. e.* the rim of which is not throughout its circumference in contact with the surface of the table—I have carefully tried the experiment, the result in every case being, that no vibration whatever was induced. Putting my ear down towards the glass, and working my hair and whiskers against it, much more vigorously than Professor Tyndall could have done in the circumstances, I am sensible of the faintest griding sound of the hair against the glass; but, as quite unaccompanied by vibration, it is not sensibly diminished when I prohibit all possible vibration by clasping tight the bell of the glass, and pressing it on the table. And so faint is this sound in the ear held close to the glass, that it must needs be well-nigh inaudible to the ear of any one else; and is not without absurdity to be supposed heard as ‘a peculiar buzzing sound’ by people all round the table. Consequently, until I shall hear this ‘peculiar buzzing sound’ produced in the way described, by Professor Tyndall, or by some one else, I must beg utterly to doubt of its existence, *as so produced*. Of the existence of the sound we can have no doubt; it was heard by ‘the warm-hearted old gentleman,’ who

had his own little theory of the matter ; it was also heard by Professor Tyndall, who at once jumped to a theory of it : as it was synchronous with the contact of his hair with the wine-glass, he at once assumed the relation of the facts to be that of cause and effect. His explanation, however, it seems, 'was not well received' by the company. At this I don't greatly wonder, as meantime much of the company's mind, and quite declining to receive it. I say *meantime* declining, as meantime disposed to rest on the accuracy of my own little course of experiment. The experiment is an exceedingly simple one ; and every reader, *per* aid of a wine-glass and a mahogany table, may verify for himself my results, as compared with those of Dr. Tyndall.*

To proceed to another instance illustrative of Dr. Tyndall's Scientific procedure. 'My attention,' he says, 'was drawn to a scarcely sensible vibration on the part of the table. Several persons were leaning on the table at the time, and I asked permission to touch the Medium's hand. "Oh ! I know I tremble,"

* Note a little point here : 'My hospitable host had arranged that the *Séance* should be a dinner-party. This was to me an unusual form of investigation ; but I accepted it as one of the accidents of the occasion' (provided the dinner and the wines were good, not, I should say, a disagreeable one). We may thus almost assume that a cloth would be upon the table ; and with this condition, I have the highest Scientific authority for saying that the phenomenon would be *absolutely impossible*.

was her reply. Throwing one leg across the other, I accidentally nipped a muscle, and produced thereby an involuntary vibration of the free leg. This vibration I knew must be communicated to the floor, and thence to the chairs of all present. I therefore intentionally promoted it. My attention was promptly drawn to the motion; and a gentleman beside me, whose value as a witness I was particularly desirous to test, expressed his belief that it was out of the compass of human power to produce so strange a tremor. "I believe," he added earnestly, "that it is entirely the Spirits' work." "So do I," added, with heat, the candid and warm-hearted old gentleman, A. "Why, sir," he continued, "I feel them at this moment shaking my chair." I stopped the motion of the leg. "Now, sir," A. exclaimed, "they are gone." I began again, and A. once more ejaculated. I could, however, notice that there were doubters present, who did not quite know what to think of the manifestations. I saw their perplexity; and as there was sufficient reason to believe that the disclosure of the *secret* would simply provoke anger, *I kept it to myself.*

In one sense Dr. Tyndall's procedure was judicious. Had he spoken out—as clearly he ought to have done—whether or no he had provoked *anger*, he would certainly have provoked *inquiry*: his 'free leg,' as *vera causa* of the tremors, would instantly have

been called in question ; he would have been asked to bring it out, with the other, from under the table ; to 'nip a muscle' as before ; and thus, or otherwise, as before, produce the tremors. And had he been asked to do so, it might perhaps have been found that the 'uniformity of Nature,' on which he so much relies, in this instance also failed him ; the miracle (in Professor Tyndall's sense a miracle) might possibly have been made manifest to the company, that Professor Tyndall *could not successfully repeat his experiment*. And it seems to me really very doubtful whether he could have done so. The vibration of Dr. Tyndall's 'free leg' no one, of course, will question, seeing he himself asserts it. As to the vibration of the floor as an effect of it, and as an effect of *this* the vibration, *such as that implied*, 'of the chairs of all present,' I confess I have some little difficulty. Precisely on the ground on which I before impeached the asserted vibration of the wine-glass at a mere *touch* of Dr. Tyndall's whisker (!). I have made rather careful experiment, and see reason to think that Dr. Tyndall, in the use of his legs as of his whiskers, merely illustrates what he himself would call the 'Scientific use of the Imagination' (had not Dr. Tyndall been so really Scientific a person, I should have preferred to say its *un-Scientific* use). 'I knew,' he says, 'that this involuntary vibration of the leg, caused by nipping a muscle, 'must be communicated

to the floor, and thence to the chairs of all present.' What I for certain know is, that no such involuntary or automatic vibration of a leg freely swinging from the knee would be *perceptibly* communicated to the floor, and thence to the chair of *any* one present ; and that no such repetition or 'promotion' of it merely, as that indicated by Dr. Tyndall, could possibly produce the effects he attributes to it. The truth might seem to be that, as in the case of the wine-glass, a mere relation of co-existence became in the imaginative mind of Dr. Tyndall a relation of cause and effect. As to his telling us that when the leg stopped the tremors stopped, to begin again when the leg began, this is not the least inconsistent with such a supposition, particularly if we surmise in Dr. Tyndall a little of the laxity of observation natural to a person who has jumped to a theory and sees pretty much what he wants to see in support of it. And had not Dr. Tyndall been so careful to 'keep the secret to himself,' it is just possible that all this might have promptly on the spot been made manifest. As it is, we must remain pretty much in the dark as to the whole matter. Knowing little or nothing as to the special intensity of tremor to be accounted for, and not very much of the vibrations of Dr. Tyndall's 'free leg,' we are quite incompetent to judge as to the adequacy of the last, assigned as cause,* to pro-

* The tremors, as experienced at the *Séance* before alluded to,

duce as an effect the first. And surely nothing can be much more odd than Dr. Tyndall's notion, that having, as he thought, discovered 'the sufficient natural cause of phenomena announced as Spiritual, he was entitled to 'keep it to himself,' and then go away and publish it! It amounts in point of fact to this, that though everything else may be investigated, Dr. Tyndall's investigations must not be; as on the spot, at least, on this occasion, he took very good care they should not.

One more instance of this strange secretiveness on the part of Dr. Tyndall, where only by a perfect manly frankness could any rational result have been

were extremely peculiar, as at page 10 described. That Mr. Home may have *somehow* produced them, is quite possible; that he could do so with his legs, in Dr. Tyndall's manner, I do not the least believe. Had any one present come to me afterwards and said, 'Oh! I was vibrating my free leg all the time, and so producing, in the simplest way, the tremors that seemed to puzzle you so much,' I must needs have held him, I don't say untruthful, but in error, unless he could convince me of his accuracy by once more effecting with his legs the same precise results; and the question of precision and identity might in such a case be more or less a nice one to decide; on which ground I must have held the gentleman injudicious in not speaking out on the spot.

That some sort of tremor, more or less violent, may readily be communicated to a floor by certain uses of one's legs, is of course a familiar point of knowledge to every one. Let us, in the light of this knowledge, accept without criticism, and in its full integrity, the statement of Dr. Tyndall; it is clearly still quite inconclusive of the point at issue. For supposing Spirits

attained. 'During the evening this pulling of the table occurred, or rather was attempted, three times. Twice the table moved, when my attention was withdrawn from it; on the third occasion I tried whether the act would be provoked by an assumed air of inattention. Grasping the table firmly between my knees, I threw myself back in the chair, and waited with eyes fixed on vacancy for the pull. It came. For some seconds it was, Pull, Spirit—hold, muscle; the muscle, however, prevailed, and the table remained at rest. *Up to the present moment this interesting fact is known only to the particular Spirit and myself.*' Had Dr. Tyndall—as again clearly he ought to have done—produced on the spot this little item

to exist, and to have a whim, as alleged, of certifying their presence by inducing certain tremors in a room—supposing the thing a *fact* (and, whatever its seeming absurdity, to decline to admit it *possible* is really to set up a stupid claim of omniscience)—would this fact, *supernatural* so-called, in the least be invalidated by the other fact, that by *natural* agency we could produce very much the same sort of tremors? Only a blockhead will say so. That natural causes were shown to be adequate to the production of very similar effects to those alleged due to supernatural, would indeed justify a very strong rational *suspicion* that the so-called supernatural causes were in truth only natural ones deceptively hid away from us. But the strongest rational suspicion is still some little way short of proof; and until this suspicion became certainty in the exposure of the *modus deceptionis*,—no very hopeless matter, one should say, where the thing is merely a deception,—no accurate person would consider that the question was thoroughly and finally disposed of.

of experience, question would at once have arisen, first as to the particular *modus* of his 'grasping the table firmly between his knees,' and next as to the facilities possessed by the person or persons opposite for effecting the pull which he resisted. As to this last, it is plain that by hands resting *on* the table, covered, as we must suppose it, with a table-cloth, the pull could not be effected; and it might readily, perhaps, have been shown, to the satisfaction of Dr. Tyndall himself, that the arrangement under the table precluded its being effected with the feet, without instantly attracting notice. Or, contrariwise, Dr. Tyndall might have been able to substantiate *thus much*: that the facilities under the table were such as to make it *easy* for those opposite, if so wishing, to effect the pull in question; which would yet amount (save only in the exact mind of Dr. Tyndall) to something short of distinct evidence that they *did*. Every detail of this kind being left uninvestigated, we have really not before us (thanks to Professor Tyndall) the elements of a rational judgment, on one side or the other. Further, if we suppose, for the nonce, that the *pull* was *really* that of a Spirit—suppose such a thing—it by no means follows that the express effort to that end of so muscular a Christian as Dr. Tyndall is known to be, should not be able to neutralize it. Dr. Tyndall's experience, as given, satisfactorily enough disposes of the crude and wild

rubbish (so on the very face of it) of the rather poor people about him, as to 'the superhuman power of the Spirits,' '*no human power could prevent,*' etc.; but it takes us not a jot further. Dr. Tyndall himself, it may be hoped, would not pretend that it does; for he is probably aware that to observe and criticise phenomena is one thing,—to interfere with or disconcert them, another; and that it can never be the function of the Scientific observer to interpolate himself as a directly counteracting cause to the phenomena he is set to observe. In brief, Dr. Tyndall's experiment here, which, if frankly at the moment given, might have been more or less fruitful, as tested by immediate investigation, is now, as published, quite valueless, seeing that, just when it might thus have been so far fructified, he saw fit to 'keep it to himself.'

In yet another instance, as it seems to me, Dr. Tyndall was not quite so above-board as he might have been. A young lady present (the Medium of the party, in fact) having asserted that she was made ill by the presence of a magnet, the little dialogue which took place between her and Dr. Tyndall was thus brought to a conclusion:—*Medium*: 'I should know of its presence on entering the room.' *I*: 'How?' *Medium*: 'I should be rendered instantly ill.' *I*: 'How do you feel to-day?' *Medium*: 'Particularly well; I have not been so well for months.'

I: 'Then, may I ask you whether there is at the present moment a magnet in my possession?' The young lady looked at me, blushed, and stammered, 'No, I am not *en rapport* with you.' *I sat at her right hand, and a left-hand pocket, within six inches of her person, contained a magnet.* (The italics are Dr. Tyndall's.) Dr. Tyndall, however, as in the other cases, 'kept the secret to himself,' and did not produce the magnet. On a point of gentlemanly tenderness to the lady, it no doubt was that he did not. His gentlemanly feeling, unhappily, in this instance, expressed itself a little at the expense of Scientific strictness; and we can fancy some of those concerned in the *Séance* retorting certain of his remarks about them in a way he might not quite like, yet might find it not easy to reply to. Against certain of these—very specially the Medium and a particular person, X.—he very plainly implies a charge of wilful imposture: his 'conviction,' not obscurely hinted, is, that in this practical sense they were untruthful persons; and his little Paper is naught, except as *proving* them so to his own satisfaction, and that of his intelligent readers. But X., as before the world and his friends, is probably as reputable a person as Dr. Tyndall—though inferior in Scientific attainment—and as little held capable of untruthfulness; in which case, it seems to me, he might here have some word to say to Dr. Tyndall. 'You

broadly insinuate against me,' he might say, 'imposture and untruth; I am conscious of my own truthfulness, but by no means quite so well convinced of *yours*. Your procedure has throughout been *underhand*; you *now* promulgate facts, as explanatory of the phenomena, which you carefully "kept to yourself" *at the time*, as unwilling that they should be tested, perhaps as afraid lest they might be so. That indeed they *were facts at all*, we have nothing but your bare word to certify. As to the magnet you say you had in your pocket, why the deuce didn't you produce it? I desire *evidence* that you *had it*; and, failing such evidence, must meantime decline to believe you had. You very plainly hint I am fraudulent in the interest of a stupid imposture: I beg to return you the compliment; and see cause to suspect you of fraud, in the interest of the Science you are so proud of, which that so-called imposture might confound, if you failed before the world to discredit it. The personal interest in the matter is obvious which might tempt you to unfairness in this matter; *my* personal temptation to unfairness on the other side, is, I venture to say, not by any means quite so obvious.' To all which, what could Dr. Tyndall reply? Solely, that he was known to be incapable of such fraud as that insinuated. X. would then of course rejoin, that *he* 'was known to be incapable,' etc.; and as neither of the gentlemen could possibly

be at any loss for witnesses to his perfect integrity of character, here the matter must needs rest. I venture to think there must be something radically at fault in a method of Scientific investigation which, after a considerable circuit, lands us at so beggarly a result as this. I trust it is needless to say that no one can for an instant suspect a man like Dr. Tyndall of any such conduct as that above indicated; not the less the retort (supposed) of X. is plainly, from his own point of view (supposed), a perfectly competent and legitimate one; and its competence, which cannot be denied, is the measure of the Scientific incompetence of Professor Tyndall's procedure.

Throughout, as we have seen, Dr. Tyndall 'kept to himself' everything; *i.e.* he was there to test the phenomena, but nobody was to be allowed to test *him*: the great philosophic principle that everything on earth is to be investigated, save only *his* investigations, seems throughout to have been his guiding star in this inquiry. By necessary consequence, his Paper is frankly not worth the ink it cost him to write it. Gentlemen whose *rôle* it is to expose imposture (and for no other purpose did Dr. Tyndall attend this *Séance*), if so be they find themselves able to do so, ought really to do it there and then; for afterwards, as we see, there may be difficulties. If they lack the moral courage so to do, they have clearly mistaken their *rôle*, and ought to change it,

and try some other. The amiable timidity of disposition, in virtue of which Professor Tyndall seems in this case to have shrunk from giving instant offence, has no doubt a beauty of its own ; but clearly it is quite out of place in Scientific investigations of this particular kind.

THE END.

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