



H I N T S

FOR THE

“EVIDENCES OF SPIRITUALISM.”

BY M.P.

“Va, petit livre, et choisis ton maître.” — TRÜBNER.



LONDON:
TRÜBNER & CO., 60 PATERNOSTER ROW.
1872.

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265. k. 98.

ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENT.

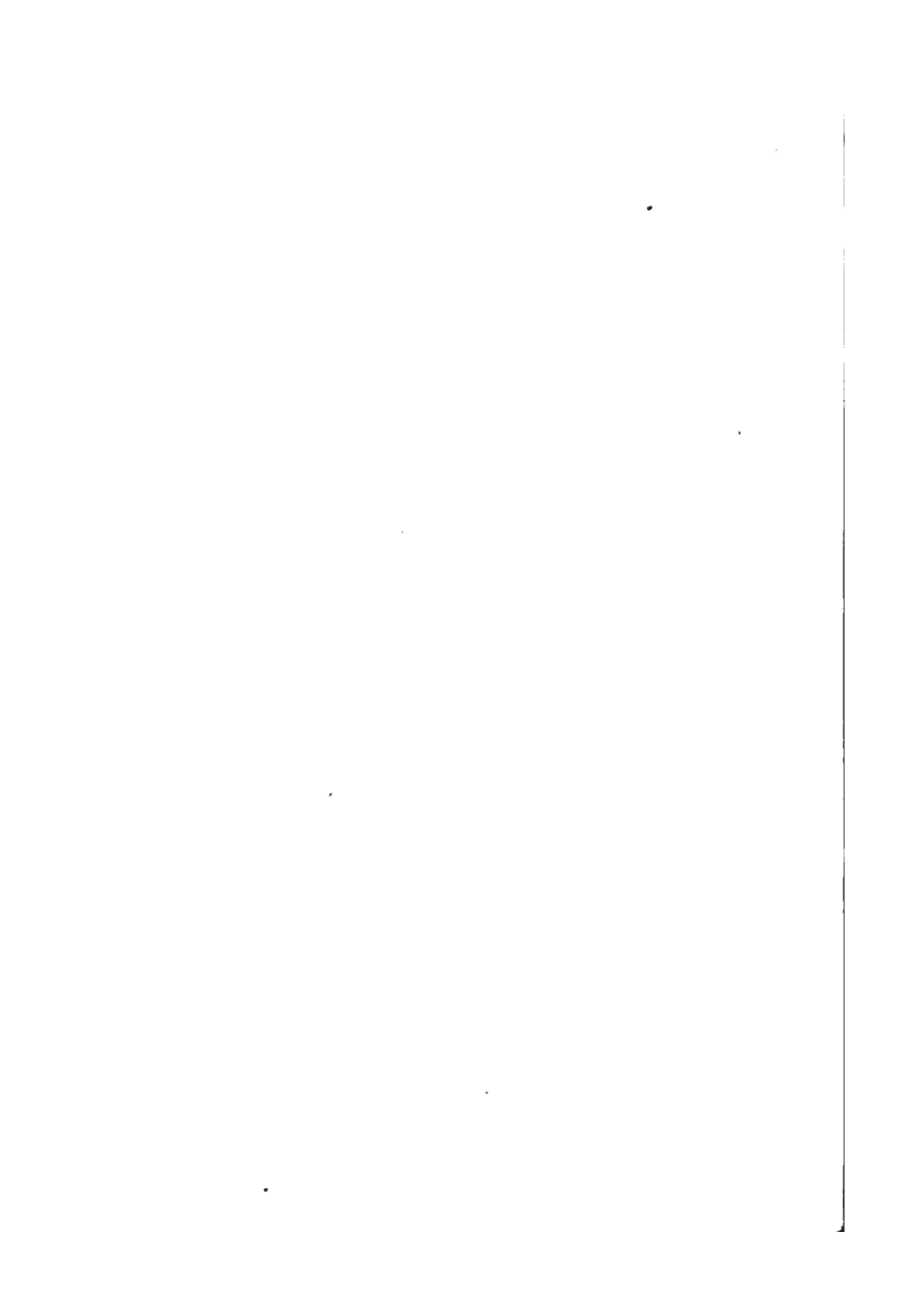
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HINTS

FOR THE

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IT has often occurred to me (and I say this without pronouncing any opinion of my own as to the truth of spirit-rapping and table-turning), that if ever spiritualism should become an established creed—as seems from its present rate of progress not at all unlikely—with ever so many Archbishops and Bishops, or other highly-paid functionaries, to look after its interests, some of these learned persons will find a great deal to say in its favour. Indeed, I hardly know of a creed for which so much might be said, or which could more aptly be made the subject of “Evidences,” or “Apologies,” or “Analogies of Nature,” or Lec-

tures such as those founded by Canon Bampton and the Rev. John Hulse, or addresses like those recently delivered from the platform of the Christian Evidence Society. I will endeavour briefly to trace the outlines of what might be written (what perhaps some day will be written) from this point of view, and which, judging from certain well-known models, might assume some such form as the following. It might be alleged, with perfect truth, that—

I. There is no antecedent incredibility in spiritual manifestations.

Surely this is a proposition which scarcely needs to be supported by argument. I have introduced the statement of it only for this reason: that I observe, in almost all recent defences of Christianity, a great point has been made of showing that miracles are not antecedently incredible. And no doubt their authors have been justified in taking this course, inasmuch as some have not hesitated to affirm that no testimony could reach to the miraculous. Of this number have been Strauss, who lays it down that whatever is miraculous is

necessarily unhistorical ; and the late Baden Powell, in his well-known contribution to "Essays and Reviews," and in his "Order of Nature." But the most distinguished sceptics and philosophers are at one with the champions of orthodoxy in holding such a position to be quite untenable.* "Let the course of things," Hume himself admits, "be allowed hitherto ever so regular ; that alone, without some new argument or inference, proves not that for the future it will continue so" ("Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding," sect. iv.). "It is very convenient to indicate that all the conditions of belief have been fulfilled in this case (gravitation), by calling the statement that unsupported stones will fall to the ground 'a law of nature.' But when, as commonly happens, we change *will* into *must*, we introduce *an idea of necessity* which assuredly does not lie in the observed facts, and has no warranty that I can discover elsewhere. For my part, I utterly repudiate and anathematise the intruder. Fact I know, and law I know ; but what is this necessity but an empty shadow of my own mind's throwing?" (Huxley, "Lay Sermons,"

* Or, at any rate, in holding views which, if pressed home, would render the position untenable.

p. 158.) Reid and Brown had said the same before. Well, therefore, may Mr Mansel refuse "to waste an additional argument in answer to that shallowest and crudest of all the assumptions of unbelief, which dictatorially pronounces that miracles are impossible—an assumption which is repudiated by the more philosophical among the leaders of Rationalism itself; and which implies, that he who maintains it has such a perfect and intimate acquaintance with the divine nature and purposes, as to warrant him in asserting that God cannot or will not depart from the ordinary course of His providence on any occasion whatever" ("Bampton Lectures," 5th edit., p. 136). And Mr Mill says, in effect, the same thing ("Logic," vol. ii., p. 159), when he tells us that the only antecedent improbability in a miracle is the improbability of the existence of a cause capable of working a miracle.*

Be the case, however, as it may with regard to sceptics in religion—to whom I do not wish to address myself in these pages—it is evident that

* "Nous ne disons pas, 'Le miracle est impossible ;' nous disons, 'Il n'y a pas eu jusqu'ici de miracle constaté.'"—*Ernest Renan Intro. to Vie de Jésus*, p. 51.

no *Christian* can assert that spiritualism is antecedently incredible, even should the manifestations be represented as miracles of the most stupendous character, inasmuch as it is part of the Christian case that no miracles whatever are antecedently incredible. If, on the other hand, as will presently be shown, the phenomena in question do not come before us in the light of miracles at all, but are merely asserted to be manifestations of ordinary, though hitherto only partially recognised, and still incompletely observed laws, the most orthodox will admit that here is no case of antecedent incredibility or impossibility, but only it may be of *improbability*; and this antecedent improbability must necessarily be smaller than that which exists in the case of an alleged miracle. But the considerations which may arise as to “probabilities” will be more conveniently discussed under our next proposition.

II. *On the contrary, there is some general probability in favour of (or at the least an absence of strong probability against) their occurrence at any time, founded on*

1. *What we learn from the Bible.*

Spirits, as every one knows, are of constant occurrence in the Old and New Testaments. An evil spirit tormented Saul, 1 Sam. xvi. 14-23. The spirit of Samuel appeared to the same Saul, through the instrumentality of what we should call a medium, 1 Sam. xxviii. 7-20. A spirit appeared to Eliphaz, the Temanite, and spoke to him, Job iv. 15, 16. "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God," says the Apostle, 1 John iv. 1 (though it is true that a different sense may be given to *πνεῦμα* in this and other passages). In Matthew xxvii. 52, 53, the dead appear, in considerable numbers, to the living. The appearance of *angels* is also frequent; and angels and spirits are coupled together in Acts xxiii. 8, 9, and apparently shown to be identical in Rev. xxii. 8, 9. In 1 Kings xix. 5, an angel *touches* Elijah. In Dan. ix. 21, an angel *touches* Daniel. It is not necessary to refer particularly to the evil spirits cast out by Christ, who speak audibly, and are capable of setting in motion the bodies of animals. Both Paul and John appear to have been snatched out of the body, mira-

culously indeed, but still under conditions not altogether dissimilar from those of modern clairvoyance. Philip, on another occasion, was bodily taken up and removed to a considerable distance.

Now such of the above events, and of other events like them recorded in Holy Scripture, as were miraculous, or can fairly be represented as such, may perhaps be thought not to help my proposition. Because it may be said (and I shall not now dispute the assertion) that the occurrence of miracles, however numerous, furnishes no ground for holding it as probable that other miracles of the same kind will be wrought. But it is important to observe, that there are large classes of what may be called spiritual cases in the Bible, which cannot fairly be brought within this category. When the Almighty warns the Israelites against becoming charmers, or consulters with evil spirits, or wizards, or necromancers, and further adds, that the nations which were to be driven out had largely indulged in such practices* (Deut. xviii.), it can

* The reader will perhaps make the remark, at this place, that spiritualistic practices are generally noticed in the Old Testament only to be condemned under heavy penalties, and that spirit-possession

hardly be contended that the practices in question were miraculous, according to the sense which we usually assign to the term. Miracles are suspensions of the ordinary laws of nature for a special purpose, and whole nations or bodies of individuals can hardly have been entrusted with the power to work them. The universality of these practices among the Canaanites, and the fact that the Israelites might themselves, if they chose, acquire a similar faculty, and are warned against doing it, are fatal to this interpretation. If we were specially ordered by the Almighty not to raise dead people from their graves, and were moreover told by Him that He was about to bestow upon us the land now occupied by the French, because of the prevailing habit of doing this very thing in France, raising the dead would be a crime, but could not be called a miracle: it would be a power appertaining to man, and liable to be constantly exercised by him. Similarly, communion with evil spirits, or spirits of any kind, if it was such a

in the New Testament was necessarily diabolical. This, which merits very serious notice at the proper time, will have to be considered by and by. But it does not affect the argument in the text.

constant and everyday practice as it appears to have been in those times, must have been in accordance with natural laws. The same remark will apply to the case of the possessed of devils in the New Testament (I do not speak of the *casting them out* by Christ and others, which, in some cases at least, may be claimed as miraculous); and indeed the fact that people were possessed by devils is not set before us as a miracle, but rather as a natural condition of some persons, as a not uncommon disease of humanity.*

Now, in the minds of those who believe in the

* I have not alluded to *dreams*, which are of constant occurrence in the Bible, because they are generally represented as direct communications from God to man, Job xxxiii. 15, 16, &c. ; and, consequently, must partake of the nature of special interpositions. Every nation, it may be remarked, has held this view about dreams, which—whether spiritualism be true or not—is, of course, an entirely erroneous and superstitious one everywhere out of the inspired writings. It might be a curious point to consider whether Homer, in attributing dreams to the direct action of the Divinity, was right or wrong. In the case of the Greeks, he would be giving expression to a superstition calculated to do a great deal of harm, but he would be quite right as to the contemporary Hebrews.

Nor have I said anything in this place, though I may have to do so hereafter, of divination generally—a curious subject, bearing on spiritualism, which, as Cicero, *De Divin.*, i. 1, mentions, every nation civilised and savage has practised.

truth of the occurrences just mentioned, there cannot be even a sense or feeling of general improbability as attaching to spiritual manifestations. There can only be a sense of its being *improbable that they should occur at the present day or in the future*; since it is not open to them to dispute that past generations, and indeed whole nations, have had experience of them. It is not violently improbable that people may some day be able to fly with artificial wings. Yet this is more improbable *a priori* than that the manifestations of spiritualism should be true; since of the former operation we have no example—of the latter phenomena there have been many examples. Spirits have rendered human beings sensible of their presence; and therefore *there are such things in the realms of nature as spirits capable of communicating with man*. I am not sure that there is in nature any possible combination of gases with materials, or of substances, or forces of any kind, capable of producing wings serviceable for the human body. And on what, I should like to ask, does a sense or notion of the improbability of spiritual manifestations taking place *in the present day* ultimately

rest? I suppose it will be said, on its being contrary to experience. But what is meant by "experience" in this case? The world has existed, on the lowest computation, for about six thousand years, and we know from a divine source that during four thousand years, *i.e.*, two thirds of that period, spiritual manifestations were constantly experienced. Will it be said that, during the remaining two thousand years, they have not been so experienced? Such a statement is open to very grave doubt indeed; for it is certain that *throughout nearly the whole of that period civilised mankind have held a precisely opposite opinion*. Vast numbers of persons have been put to death for holding communion with the unseen world. And, what is of much greater importance, many have admitted—and that not under torture, but voluntarily and under such circumstances that, if the admission had not been made by them, their lives would have been spared—that they were in the habit of holding intercourse with spirits. As we have seen that there is nothing *à priori* incredible in such intercourse taking place; as we have, moreover, from Scripture the positive assurance that it *has* taken

place, and that not once or twice, or by a miracle only, but on the most extensive scale—the question will resolve itself into a balance of evidence as to whether such a communion existed, or the people were mistaken, *in these particular instances*. Making a large allowance for admitted examples of imposture and delusion, is this balance so very easy to strike in all cases? And supposing even that it should incline to the latter side, is this feeble difference in the weights—while we are estimating strongly-disputed and doubtful transactions confined to a comparatively brief period of the world's history—to be dignified by the name of "Human Experience?" And is such experience not only to render spiritualism unlikely, but, as we shall presently see, to prevail against a body of evidence such as has never before been brought in support of any narrative or body of narratives whatever? And, all this time, we are to admit, with Hume and Mr Mozley, that experience is worth nothing at all, in a philosophical sense, as a guide for the future. "We really *look at a blank* before us; but the mind, full of the scene behind, sees it again in front" ("Bampton Lectures," p. 37). The

experience of all the ages furnishes us with no reason why the earth should not stand still to-morrow; but the doubtful observations of a limited period, during which certain phenomena (of the previous occurrence of which we have certain proof), *are now-a-days said* to have ceased, though they were believed in by contemporary witnesses, and many voluntarily suffered death in attestation of their power of working them—are to outweigh the disinterested testimony of thousands (not to say millions) of living people!

But the assurance which we possess from the Bible that Egyptians and Canaanites, Chaldeans and Philistines, were in possession of the power of communicating with the unseen world—a power which it is denied that any man now enjoys—brings us to another consideration, and enables us to push still further the question of “probability” in connection with spiritual manifestations. Is the supposition in accordance with the analogy of nature—is there any instance to that effect on record—that a faculty should be committed to man which was afterwards entirely withdrawn? The history of the race might be ransacked in vain for any such

instance. There is absolutely none to be found. Mr Darwin may tell us that there was a time when the ancestors of our kind climbed trees with an agility unknown to their descendants: but, firstly, this must have been before they had developed into men; and, secondly, I may be permitted to say that there is certainly no record of any such state of things. Races may decay, and may cease to be the lawgivers, the artists, the orators, the philosophers of humanity. Granted. But where is the art or science in which whole nations were at one time proficient, of which no effort of ours would enable us to acquire the merest rudiments? What are the faculties possessed by any ancient race, of which not a germ remains in any man at the present day? Have we evidence of any people of old being furnished with wings, or walking on the water, or living in it like fish, or passing unharmed through fire like the fabled Salamander? These questions would sound absurd, were it not that in one particular case we shall have to give an affirmative answer, if at the same time we believe in the Bible and disbelieve spiritualism. "Great nations, for many

centuries, communicated with the unseen world ; but not a trace of the faculty remains in any human being at the present hour ! ”

At what time, then, was this faculty lost ? Was the cessation of all intercourse with spirits sudden or gradual ? We are entitled to ask these questions with respect to a change so remarkable in the history of man—such a notable diminution in the area of his operations. And we should expect to find that the destruction or decay of the power would have made a deep impression : and that the facts would have found their way into some sort of record. In the days of Isaiah, we are informed that the Egyptians communed with “familiar spirits.” And if the Egyptians were able to do this—considering the intercourse which even at that time existed between Greece and Egypt, not to speak of the improbability of a natural gift being confined to two or three nations, we should expect that the Greeks would have been able to do the same. And if so, when did they and the Egyptians lose the power ? We are already in historical times—in the Olympiads, Miletus is flourishing, the first Messenian war is just over. We shall

think it likely that some information will be transmitted to us of any change which may henceforth take place in the relations of man to the world of spirits. It has been held by many that the Greeks and other nations of antiquity, besides those mentioned in Scripture, did enjoy this power, and that it ceased generally at the birth of Christ. Milton adopts this view in his "Ode to the Nativity." Peor, and Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and Hammon, and Moloch, and all the heathen gods and goddesses (who are only evil spirits under another name)—the "damned crew," as he calls them—fly from the earth before the rays of Bethlehem and the dreaded Infant's hand. But all this is mere poetical assertion, without a shadow of proof. On the contrary, we find evil spirits possessing people all through the career of Christ, and with such frequency that there were persons employed in casting them out quite independently of Him and His followers. They continued to infest the world after His ascent to heaven, for Philip cast them out in large numbers (Acts viii. 6, 7); and Simon and Elymas figure as sorcerers at the same period, and go about bewitching people. And

the Roman Catholics, who are entitled to their say, represent spiritual manifestations as continuing to a much later period, if indeed I can suppose myself to be arguing with *them* at all; for I think that the greater number of them would admit the proposition for which I am contending.

The position of sceptics on this subject is, of course, a simple and a logical one. They affirm that no such manifestations have ever taken place; that their existence was as much a delusion in the case of the Jews and the Philistines, as it was on the part of Matthew Hopkins and the New Englanders. There can be no question as to the cessation of what never had a being. But Christians, or at any rate Protestants, may, I think, fairly have their attention called to this query, "Man having once acquired this remarkable power, how came he to lose it?"

I say that, if he ever had the power committed to him (otherwise than by a succession of miracles), it is probable that he has *not* lost it. It is more likely that it should have remained dormant for a time, or have been only partially exercised, than that it should have been totally extinguished. In

other words, if man ever could evoke spirits on a large scale, it is highly probable that the power to do so is in him at the present day. And any alleged narrative of its exercise ought not to be at once discarded; it ought not even to be looked upon as *a priori* highly unlikely: it should be examined as a question of evidence.

2. *The experience of all nations, civilised and savage.*

Almost every people of whom we have any record has believed in spirits, good and evil, in the power of communicating with them, and in the fact of their being brought into material contact with living men. This will doubtless be admitted. Here again the philosopher repeats that the belief has always been a delusion. The theologian may perhaps assert that it was sometimes true and sometimes false; that the Canaanites summoned up real spirits, while most of the contemporary races were only deceived in their experiments; that Simon really and truly bewitched the Samaritans, whereas the statements of the elder Pliny on the subject are myths.* The value which I attach, in

* When, in Plutarch's "Symposium," some of the guests laugh at

this place, to the undisputed fact here noticed, is simply this: That a belief, almost universal, in spiritual manifestations should thus be implanted in the human mind, *and that there should be nothing in nature corresponding to it*, would be an admission fatal to many eloquent chapters and pages written on behalf of religion, natural and revealed, and which the orthodox, therefore, will hesitate before making; since theologians and others argue that the almost universally extended belief in a spiritual world is a proof of the existence of such a world (in other words, of a future state). It follows that a belief, nearly as widely diffused, of there being a means of communication with the spiritual world, must be a proof (nearly) as good of the existence of some such means of communi-

the idea of fascination, and deny its existence (v. 6), we are at first inclined to agree with them. But it would seem that they were entirely wrong, and presumptuously ridiculing what was certainly a power enjoyed by some people. Nay, more, it was practised at the very time the "Symposium" was written, and the conversation is supposed to take place, *unless* it died out of the world very shortly after the time of Simon. The latter is introduced to us in A.D. 34, and Plutarch describes himself as the contemporary of Nero. We may go further. *Sorcerers* are spoken of in Rev. xxii. 15, to which, in our Bibles, is prefixed the date A.D. 96.

cation ; or else, as it appears to me, the former argument falls to pieces. Or put it in this way: "Every man longs to be immortal ; therefore there is an immortality for every man. Because, if the case were otherwise, there would be a craving of human nature which would never be satisfied." If any one uses this reasoning to me, I would beg to add—"Every man longs to penetrate the veil which separates him from a future state ; therefore he penetrates it. For if the case be otherwise, there would be a craving of human nature which would never be satisfied." I don't pretend to say that I think much of this reasoning ; but simply, that if it is good in one case, it is good in the other.* And this brings me to—

* This argument, very often used, has perhaps never been strained to a greater extent than in the "Pleadings for Christ" of Bishop Magee. "We do believe that, *in answer to the craving desire of the soul of man to look upon human perfection*, this earth has once been visited by a perfect Man." I was not aware that there had ever been such a "craving desire of the soul of man to look upon human perfection" as to require a miracle to satisfy it. At any rate, the craving to know something by experience about a future state (a matter of much more practical interest to ourselves), must be much stronger than this desire to have a merely ideal wish gratified. And; therefore—if there is any value at all in this sort of argument—there is much more reason why it should be satisfied.

3. *The fact that spiritualism supplies a want in human nature.*

This, if true, will indeed be no *proof* of spiritualism, but it will be a circumstance to be taken into consideration in estimating its claims, and judging of the antecedent probability in its favour. That it does do this is quite clear from the fact that you have, and always have had, it in the world in some shape or other. The highest civilisation may strive, but it will strive in vain, to shake it off. Like death itself, it finds its way into the abodes of great and small, *regum turres et pauperum tabernas*. Nor, if all the persons who have hitherto practised spiritualism are to be set down as impostors, will that alter the fact one jot. You would never have had such a supply of the counterfeit unless there had been a demand for the real coin. And that spiritualism must supply a want is clear on the face of the matter, without going back to the teachings of history. That there is a natural craving in our minds for information as to what is to happen to us on the occurrence of death, is admitted on all hands. Theologians, as we have seen, have founded on this admitted feeling one of

their strongest arguments in favour of a divine revelation. And where this desire for information exists on a subject so momentous to ourselves, it will evidently be a desire for information as clear and complete as possible,—for *direct knowledge and proof by experience*, if by any means such is to be obtained. Now, spiritualism professes to give this kind of knowledge and assurance. We have, moreover, the evidence of many thousands of persons, that intercourse with their deceased relatives and friends does confer on them the greatest happiness and consolation. This is what might be expected ; for their belief *completely* meets a want, which is elsewhere only partially satisfied. I may, further on, have to refer to the happiness caused by a belief in spiritualism, and the void which it fills, and will now go on to contend that—

III. *There is a particular probability in favour of their appearance at the time when they are alleged to have first occurred, based upon the circumstances of the age.*

By the words “appearance” and “first occurred,” I don’t intend to imply that they had not been

observed in the world before, for we know from the Bible to the contrary; but this may be the most convenient way of expressing their revival on a large scale, and in some respects under new conditions. Now it can scarcely be doubted—so I think the future apologist might very fairly argue—that at the period when spiritualism is said to have been introduced into the modern world as a new system of belief, the popular faith in the immortality of the soul had, to say the least, become extremely vague. It is true that sermons by the cartload were preached on the subject, and prayers were offered up, and inscriptions were carved on tombs, and resurgams put up in front of houses, and the tenet was nominally held by hundreds of Christian sects; but to those who penetrate beneath the surface, it is clear that the kind of belief evidenced by these facts was of a very loose and unsatisfactory character—that it did not come home to the hearts of men with a sense of definite reality. The literature of the period, when carefully examined, and still more the language and the habits of everyday life, will confirm this view. For all that men talked of immortality, they had not risen.

much above the savage theory of death, that it is an unmitigated evil. It was not merely that men as a rule carefully avoided putting themselves in the way of death, and that even the bravest among them used their utmost efforts to escape from it when imminent and when escape was honourable ; for to do this much would appear to be a duty, having a natural instinct for its motive power ; but that they treated death, when it had fallen on one of theirs, as the end of all things, as an irreparable misfortune, as an event which the survivors were never to cease deploring till *time* had in some degree mitigated their sufferings. It would be impossible to explain on any other theory the sorrow, often ending in a settled melancholy, of a Christian parent at the loss of his baptized infant child—an event which must necessarily be viewed as an infinite gain to the child so removed. Nor can we otherwise explain how a believer, alleging himself to have a settled assurance of eternal happiness, and with no ties to bind him to the earth, should so generally have exhibited the greatest disinclination, and even loathing, to exchange a bed of suffering for a throne of glory. “ Resignation to

God's will," "Kissing the rod," "Bowing beneath the stroke," was the kind of language used to designate the spirit in which the invitation to eternal glory should be accepted. Every sentiment and expression connected with death will be found deeply tinged with this sort of scepticism. If two religious missionaries were upset out of a boat into the Ganges, and one reached the bank, *he* was providentially saved: it would have been a sort of blasphemy to assert that the other was providentially drowned; life being the gift of God, and death, as it would seem, being sent specially by the evil one. This erroneous philosophy of life and death leavened everything. With many, not to be in the flesh, *i.e.*, not to be in this world, was to be non-existent, if there is any meaning in words. How this crops up in countless passages, which seem to come from the writer's inmost soul without his noticing it! The motto of many of them seems to be that of Mecænas, "*Vita dum superest, bene est.*" This casual reference to antiquity may remind the reader that many Christian apologists have quoted passages from the Greek and Latin authors as evidencing their disbelief in a future state, and the

consequent necessity of a revelation.* But every single passage that can be so quoted may be readily paralleled by one from a so-called Christian poet. If Moschus says “*Ευδομες εὖ μάλα μακρὸν, ἀτέρμονα, νήγρετον ὕπνον,*” and Catullus, “*Nobis . . . nox est perpetua una dormienda ;*” in Sir Walter Scott will be found almost precisely the same expression—“*Soldier, rest : thy warfare o’er, sleep the sleep that knows no waking.*” If in Seneca’s tragedies we find, “*Post mortem nihil est ;*” Byron describes the day of death as “*The first dark day of nothingness.*” The ancient poet who sang “*Ἄλγος γὰρ ὄντως οὐδὲν ἄπτεται νεκροῦ,*” is almost literally rendered by the writer in “*Keith’s Elocutionist,*” so extensively used in schools—“*How sweet to sleep where all is peace, where sorrow cannot reach the breast.*” And this list might be extended indefinitely. Bryant in one of his poems speaks of himself by anticipation, when no more, as one “*Whose part in all the pomp that fills the circuit of the summer hills, is—that his grave is green.*” No such idea

* See Gregory’s “*Evidences of the Christian Religion,*” Bohn’s edition, pp. 29, 30.

as this could ever have come into the head of a spiritualist poet. In every poet and prose writer of the period similar passages will be found, and the language of everyday life was replete with sentiments of the like kind. The dead man was spoken of as "*Poor Mr So-and-so.*" The grave was "*The last long home.*" "*The sleep of death*" was a common expression. "If poor So-and-so could only see this!" a form of words used every day, was by implication an affirmation that under no circumstances could the spirit of the departed be conscious of what is going on in this life. No wonder that, when these views were prevalent, the grave was surrounded with everything calculated to inspire horror and melancholy, and that just as the Romans marked an auspicious day with a white stone, and clad themselves in white for their festive ceremonies, so the deepest black should be used to stamp death as the most inauspicious of events on the Christian mind.* Even putting it

* Compare with all this the account given of Mrs Mowatt's funeral, in the *Spiritualist* of August 15, 1870. She was a distinguished American actress and authoress, whose remains were interred in Kensal Green Cemetery on the 25th of the preceding month. "In accordance with her own wishes, all the grim paraphernalia of

that there was a general belief in a hereafter, there was no definite realisation of what the term meant, no bringing home to one's self that the friend who departed from this world yesterday was really as much alive as those he left behind him. There was even a doubt among many religious people as to whether there was any conscious existence at all between death and the resurrection.*

Nor, in considering this subject, can we fail to notice that there had arisen about this very time a considerable number of persons who altogether denied the truth of divine revelation, and, by con-

death were dispensed with. A simple snow-white coffin was borne to the grave, followed by a band of loving friends, who wore no external sign of grief, and who strove rather to rejoice over her triumph than selfishly mourn their own loss. The grave was decked with flowers, and the coffin strewn with lilies, in remembrance of the 'Lily' that had been gathered from the garden of earth to bloom henceforth in heaven." The lady's death is announced in these terms—"On Thursday, the 21st of July, the spirit of one who was beloved by a wide circle of friends, both in England and America, was tenderly removed to a higher world."

* Of course the state of feeling with regard to death, adverted to in the text, was not confined to the nineteenth century. But it is not here alleged that spiritualism would not have met a want, if it had been introduced at any previous time; simply, that it met a want at the time when it *was* introduced, and it is shown further on that there were some particular circumstances in that age which would render its appearance specially welcome to mankind.

sequence, anything like an *assurance* of a future state. Only a few years before the rise of modern spiritualism, a nation, in many respects the foremost in the world, had gone a step further, and on the walls of the capital of Europe might be read the words, "Death is an eternal sleep." "*Ma demeure sera bientôt le néant,*" said Danton, when asked for his address before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The teachings of the great German philosophers Hegel, Schelling, and their disciples, Feuerbach, &c., were fatal to any conception of *individual immortality*. The old beliefs which had sustained the Christian world for eighteen centuries were evidently enfeebled, and the attacks on them had increased in number and in power. What is still more remarkable is, that these attacks, for the first time, came in great measure from within. Of the celebrated Essayists and Reviewers, six were clergymen of the Established Church. A colonial Bishop and an Independent minister assailed the Pentateuch, which means that they assailed the whole Christian system; for with the fall of Adam goes the necessity for the atonement, and, indeed, everything that is distinc-

tive in the Christian dogmas. Well might the Dean (Goulburn) of Norwich exclaim—"The frightful prevalence of sceptical views among all classes of the community, and the alarming fact that even among the clergy themselves insidious objections to the 'things which are most surely believed among us' are gradually winning their way, seem to make it imperative upon all persons and societies entrusted with the guardianship of the faith to make some definite effort to stem the evil" (Preface to "Pleadings for Christ," three discourses by the Bishop of Peterborough). At or about the very time when the worthy Dean was bemoaning himself in this fashion, an ex-Bishop of his own diocese was publishing pamphlets under the headings "Free Discussion of Religious Topics," "Another Reply to the Question, 'What have we got to rely on, if we cannot rely on the Bible?'" "A Reply to the Question, '*Apart from supernatural revelation, what is the prospect of man's living after death?*'" &c., in a series of publications, where his name figures by the side of those of Professor F. W. Newman, Mr Voysey, Mr Moncure Conway, Dr Kalisch, and other equally well-

known Free-Thinkers. Wherever we look we shall find evidence of the rapid progress of infidelity, and the testimony is strongest, not in the pages of professed sceptics (who might be expected to magnify their own success), but in the utterances of orthodox watchmen like Dean Goulburn. Mr Farrar, in his "Witness of History to Christ," tells us that in the previous century the attacks on Christianity were rare. "It is not so now," he writes in 1871; "we are, as it were, in the very focus of the storm. It is not that every now and then there is a burst of thunder and a glare of lightning, but the whole air is electric with quivering flames." He adds, further on, that the most vital principles of Christian doctrine have to be defended *against whole literatures, against whole philosophies*" (p. 6). And so Mr Mozley speaks of the "intellectual movement against miracles" ("On Miracles," p. 2), and Mr Liddon informs us that "No one can doubt the existence of a widespread unsettlement of religious belief" (Preface to second edition of "Divinity of our Lord," p. 15); and again, in terms as strong as those used by Mr Farrar, he exclaims, "Never, since the first ages of

the gospel, was fundamental Christian truth denied and denounced so largely, and with such passionate animosity, as is the case at this moment in each of the most civilised nations of Europe" (p. 498). Every one in the least degree acquainted with that age must know that cries like these were constantly heard from the clergy and ministers, and, moreover, that they were justified by facts. To allude to only one more authority: The most intellectual people in Europe at that day are generally supposed to have been the Germans. A competent observer, writing in 1870, represents the middle, and even a large portion of the lower classes in Prussia, as "estranged from the religion of their ancestors." Public opinion in Protestant Germany denied miracles, and had even gone so far as "to negative the efficacy of prayer, and with it the interference of the Almighty in the course of events" ("Religious Thought in Germany," pp. 11-15). And, as relating more particularly to our present subject, I must notice a passage at p. 27: "Most, indeed, profess to believe in God and in immortality; but if you examine their opinions more closely, you will easily discover

they have but confused notions on the relations between the Creator and mankind, and even deny or ignore the duty of aspiring to a more definite knowledge on the subject." "Men who have had a university education scarcely dare go to church, lest they be taken for hypocrites or sentimental enthusiasts" (p. 37).

When we contemplate a society whose religious belief might thus be exhibited as in a state of disintegration, what can seem more likely than that a new and more comforting assurance should be given to man of the most important of all truths to him—the immortality of the soul? At any rate, I for one fail altogether to see any unlikelihood in the supposition, from the orthodox standpoint. Humanity, in what is styled its highest stage of development, is seen drifting back into the darkness which wrapt Greece and Rome in a pall. As we mark it tossed on a sea of doubt and uncertainty, with every landmark fast receding from the view, who shall say that this is not the moment for holding out a fresh light to it? The occasion is surely an adequate one. To impart new vigour to the decaying belief in the soul's immortality, to bring that immor-

tality home to our senses as a realised experience, "to satisfy the wants and console the sufferings of human nature,"* this surely might be thought a work not unworthy of a divine interposition. But nothing of the kind is postulated on behalf of spiritualism. It must be repeated that spiritual phenomena come before us only as manifestations of *law*, which, indeed, if they are real, they must be, unless, as I before said, we are to extend the meaning of the term miracle, which, in the end, will come to the same thing. Spiritual power is not represented as a power of violently rending the veil which separates us from the unseen world, but of lifting by natural means a curtain which the orthodox must admit to have been similarly lifted in countless instances before. And the time and manner of the appearance, or rather re-appearance, of this faculty merit a moment's attention, in connection with the circumstances of the age. At or about the same time the power was conferred upon man of travelling, with the speed of a bird, from place to place; of communicating by instantaneous signals from one end of the world to the other; of

* Mansell, "Limits of Religious Thought," p. 173.

submitting himself to the most dreaded surgical operations without experiencing pain. If any one of these processes had been announced to an ordinary man in the year 1700, he would have failed to see how it could be accomplished, save through the agency of a miracle. Yet we know that they were brought about by natural means, by the employment of latent agencies—steam, electricity, and the ingredients of chloroform—which were in the world when man roamed across its surface a naked savage. I understand that no more than this is claimed by its possessors for the power which enables them to communicate with spirits. That it had not been brought into play for many centuries, indeed that it had hitherto never been brought into play, would be no argument against satisfactory proof of its existence. And to those who should still cling to the notion that, if real, it must needs be miraculous, I would take the liberty of saying (while reminding them that, even in that case, according to their own showing, a miracle is capable of being established by evidence), that to a savage, or even to an ordinary Chinaman or Japanese, a steam-engine seen for the first time

would certainly be a portent and a prodigy, just as Cortes' horsemen were to the not uncivilised Aztecs.* Now, our minds stand to spirit-rapping very much in the same relation as that of the savage to the locomotive, or the Aztec to the supposed centaur. The tendency of man is to rank as supernatural every strange phenomenon of which he has not discovered the causes or registered the laws, as, of course, is well known in the case of thunder and lightning, earthquakes, eclipses, &c. That tempests and fires were due to "God's wrath" was a doctrine generally accepted in England in John Evelyn's time ("Diary," Feb. 16, 1662). At this very moment in England the mass of people, including Archbishops and Bishops, hold the distribution of rain and fine weather, and the course of

* Supposing, what is quite conceivable, a planet inhabited by a race of beings like ourselves in other respects, but who, as a rule, were not subject to dreams, having on that subject only some traditions which had come down from remote times. If, which is again quite conceivable, owing to an atmospheric change in the planet, or to the discovery of some agent capable of producing the phenomenon in persons of a particular temperament, or from other causes, certain people were to begin to dream, we may be sure that such experiences would be treated by some as supernatural (as they have been with us), and by others, as incredible. Philosophers would utterly ridicule the superstitious notion of a sleeper who was conscious of beautiful scenery, or of being pursued by a mad bull, &c.

plagues and diseases, to be decidedly supernatural, and capable of being influenced by human prayer. But this is not the opinion of the more enlightened among the religious. It is, therefore, quite a gratuitous assertion to pretend that spiritual phenomena trench on the miraculous, and, not being miraculous, they require, as I said before, *less* evidence to establish them than a professed violation of the order of nature. Though, for the matter of that, the point is not of much importance, since, as we shall presently see, spiritualism can produce a body of witnesses sufficient to establish even a miracle.

I have hitherto carefully followed what may be called the theological mode of treatment, in dealing with this subject, because I have been anxious to show that whatever *a priori* arguments exist in favour of Christianity, similar arguments exist in favour of spiritualism. First, I have shown—on the admission of orthodox as well as sceptical writers—that there is no antecedent *incredibility* to surmount. Next, I have ventured to deal with the *probabilities* of the subject. I must, however, very candidly admit that I do not attribute any great

weight to this line of argument, which I have only taken up in order not to desert my models, and that it is one which I should certainly not follow in this matter with a religious sceptic. And for this reason, that whenever a creed *is* established, very good reasons may always be made out for showing why it was antecedently probable that it *would* be established,—and how the precise doctrines which it sets forth, and no others, were exactly what the human race was looking for—the gift of prophesying after the event being one which is very largely poured out upon mankind; and it being very easy, with a solution in hand, to construct for one's self the steps which must necessarily lead up to it. Thus Bishop Magee tells us that *before we opened a page of the Gospels*, judging from experience, judging from analogy, we should expect to find just what the story tells us, “how He (Christ) was despised and rejected of men; how those who saw Him besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts,” &c. (“Christianity and Faith,” p. 17); and similarly a Parsee would doubtless argue, in perfect good faith, that before opening a page of the Zendavesta we should expect it to contain exactly whatever it does contain.

What spiritualism, in common with every other creed, must ultimately rest upon is, *the evidence which it can produce in its favour*. In all these discussions we find ourselves landed at last in this question of evidence. Divines and others have recently given to the world elaborate treatises directly or indirectly in defence of the Christian miracles; but when all has been said by their authors, it comes to little more than this, that miracles are *possible*,—very proper ground to take up as far as it goes, as I have already said, and good reasoning against those who deny the possibility of miracles, but which does not advance the Christian religion one jot in the eyes of the majority of sceptics, who have never taken up that position. Accordingly, it is almost always admitted in the end that the truth of the religion in question must be judged of on the evidence adduced for it. The Duke of Argyll and the Bishop of Peterborough, Mr Mozley and Mr Mansell, Mr Liddon and Mr Farrar, agree in this with Pascal, Butler, and Paley.* If the dogma that John

* Dr Newman does not. He speaks in terms of critical approval of Paley's argument, and describes him as one "who has such con-

Jones got drunk at the "Red Lion" on a particular night is to be instilled into me on pain of damnation, you are quite right in clearing away the ground by showing me that it was *possible* for John Jones to get drunk (supposing that I am likely to dispute that proposition). You may then proceed, if you please, to show that it was *probable* that he would get drunk—(1.) Generally. He had often got drunk before; he came of a tipsy family, &c. (2.) In the precise manner alleged. His way lay past the door of the ale-house on that evening; he had quarrelled with his wife, and was out of sorts from having lost his pig, and so was more likely to fall into temptation, &c., &c. I do not say that these circumstances are unworthy of attention, but, since standing by themselves they will fail to carry conviction to my mind, if, as

fidence in the strength of the testimony which he can produce in favour of the Christian miracles, that he only asks to be allowed to bring it into court" (surely the best thing to do, and here is the best of all advocates for the Christian religion to have got hold of, if only his confidence is justified by facts), and at the same time indicates his own preference for an *à priori* line of argument ("Grammar of Assent," pp. 418, 419). This is what might be expected from the author of the "Apologia." Great intellects, like great rivers, may be diverted and made to run off anywhere by some very small object lying *near their source*.

you say, you have the testimony of a number of respectable and disinterested persons, who, at the alleged time and place, saw John Jones drink twelve tumblers of gin-and-water, and then go tottering and hiccuping along the street, you had better produce them without more ado. And this brings me to—

IV. *There is a body of evidence in favour of spiritualism at least as strong as can be alleged on behalf of any other creed.*

Here is the strong point for spiritualists, and perhaps some of their number may be inclined to think that the above proposition might be put with greater force. They may hold that whatever be the evidence in favour of the Christian miracles, there is fifty times as much in favour of spirit-rapping; that if there be a sufficient body of contemporary testimony to lead us to believe that Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, there is very much stronger testimony to the fact that Mr Home, and a variety of other persons, have floated about in the air. An examination of the evidence, however, will alone enable

us to judge of the actual degree of its strength ; and, in the meanwhile, I am content to leave my proposition as it stands.

The first apostle of modern spiritualism seems undoubtedly to have been Swedenborg, in whose works the wide diffusion of the power at the present day is clearly predicted. We have not time, nor perhaps is it essential, to go into the career of the Poughkeepsie Seer, or of Kate and Margaretta Fox, and the remaining pioneers of the existing creed. It may suffice for our purpose to note, that the power, or alleged power, of conversing with spirits manifested itself at about the same epoch in many different individuals and in various places, thus remarkably coinciding (if it be no more than a coincidence) with the prophecy of Joel : " And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit *upon all flesh* ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions ; and also upon the servants and the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit " (Joel ii. 28, 29). What I wish chiefly to direct attention to now is, the extraordinary man-

ner in which the new belief spread. Twenty years ago, to adopt the words which Mr Farrar uses of the early Christians, "It numbered but a handful of timid followers; . . . they were poor, they were ignorant, they were helpless." In 1861, Mr A. E. Newton of Boston estimated the spiritualists in the United States at between two and three millions. In 1866, Judge Edmonds puts their number at between five and six millions; and in 1867, at ten millions, adopting an estimate said to have been compiled by the Council of Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops assembled that year in Baltimore. Other estimates have been given; one by an Englishman, Mr E. H. Green, rating them as high as thirteen millions. We may dismiss these figures as exaggerations, and shall probably not be far wrong in adopting the more moderate computation of Mr Hepworth Dixon, an unbeliever, that "a tenth part of the population of the New England States, a fifteenth part of the population in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, lie open, more or less, to impressions from what they call the spirit-world" (*"New America,"* vol. ii., pp. 156, 157). He adds, "The number of their Lyceums,

the frequency of their picnics, the circulation of their journals, are facts within reach of some sort of verification." According to "Chambers' Cyclopædia" (article, "Spiritualism"), there were in the States in 1859, some ten years after the rise of the new creed, "one thousand public advocates of it, thirty periodicals devoted to its cause, besides hundreds of books and pamphlets that had already issued from the press," and since that time these figures have enormously increased. There are no reliable means of numbering the spiritualists in our own country, but judging from various indications, they must be far more numerous than is commonly supposed, probably to the extent—if united on some political object peculiar to themselves—of seriously influencing the national Legislature, or even, supposing Mr Hare's scheme to be adopted, of returning many spiritual members to Parliament. Thus we find four or five English periodicals devoted to the cause—*The Spiritual Magazine*, *Human Nature*, *Daybreak*, now the *Medium*, the *Spiritualist*, and the *Christian Spiritualist*.* We

* The *Queen* (lady's newspaper) has inserted an elaborate series of articles in favour of spiritualism, and *Temple Bar* has spoken of it not unfavourably.

read of "Progressive Libraries" and "Spiritual Depositories;" of associations of spiritualists at Clerkenwell, East London, Dalston, Brixton, Kilburn; of similar societies at Birmingham, Halifax, Bradford, and all over the country. In Australia, the establishment of the *Glowworm* as their organ is hailed by all spiritualists as evidence of the progress of the sect in those parts. Nor are these indications of the hold they have taken on the public mind, and the rate of their advance, confined to what is roughly called the Anglo-Saxon race. We hear of the *Revue Spiritualiste* in Paris, of a *Comité des Vereins für Spirite studien* established in Leipsig; while Mr Moncure Conway, the well-known Unitarian minister, author of "The Earthward Pilgrimage," and a non-spiritualist, stated at a public meeting, "that he had been recently travelling in Russia, and there among educated people, in the houses of Counts and Barons, wherever he mingled in intellectual society, he found that one or more of the members of the family were spiritualists." These indications of the power and progress of the belief might be very greatly multiplied, but enough has been said

to oblige us to arrive at the very modest conclusion of the *Spiritual Magazine*: "One thing is clear, that the spiritualists are *very numerous*."

It will perhaps be alleged that, in weighing the depositions of these millions of people, we are bound to take into account that the mass of them are persons in what are called the lower walks of life, and consequently prone to superstition. This is equally true in the case of the mass of the early converts to Christianity, and to all new religions. Indeed, to assert that a new creed is successful in gaining votaries on a large scale, is only to assert, in other words, that the vast majority of such votaries must needs belong to the lower classes, inasmuch as these constitute the great bulk of mankind. An army must, after all, be mainly made up of privates. But it is to be observed, further, that a proportionately larger number of the early converts to spiritualism have been men of education, of great reasoning powers, and of acknowledged eminence, than can be found in the list of the early votaries of any other creed under the sun. Neither Christianity nor Mahometanism, in the first quarter of a century of their respective

existences, could boast such an array of names as those of Professor and Mrs de Morgan, Mr Wallace, Mr Varley, Mr Robert Chambers, Dr G. Wilkinson, Mr Laman Blanchard, Mr and Mrs S. C. Hall, Mr William Howitt, Dr Gully, Mr Laurence Oliphant, Mr Hiram Powers, General Banks, Lord Lytton, Mr T. Adolphus Trollope, Mrs Crowe, Mrs Beecher Stowe, Mrs Mowatt, Mr Robert Owen, Mr R. D. Owen, Mr Nassau Senior, Judge Edmonds, Dr Hare, Elder Frederick, Professor Bush, Dr Elliotson, Lord Lindsay, Mr Hain Friswell, The Hon. Mrs Egerton, Captain Burton, Mr Wilkinson, Lord Adare, the Master of Lindsay, Baron Reichenbach, M. Leon Favre, Signor Damiani, Count Poninski, the Baroness von Güldenstübbe, Mr and Mrs Gerald Massey, the Rev. William Ker, Professor William Denton, Mr Thackeray, Sir Walter Trevelyan, Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Brougham, and Archbishop Whately,* not to speak of others, with re-

* The above list is compiled from the *Spiritualist* and other journals. I have omitted many names given by one of them—*e.g.*, John Stuart Mill, Tennyson, Sir C. Wheatstone, Washington Irving, Abraham Lincoln, Horace Greeley, Longfellow, Victor Hugo, Guizot, Garibaldi, the ex-Emperor of the French, &c., because I do not find in these instances any *proof* given: and, very likely the wish to claim them as converts has been father to

gard to whose belief in spiritualism we have some, but not conclusive, evidence. Now here is a list of men and women above the average in intelligence and position—mathematicians, naturalists, electricians, judges, lawyers, generals, poets, poetesses, novelists, peers of the realm, professors, travellers,

the thought. With regard to the ex-Emperor, however, I have heard affirmative evidence from persons connected with the French Court. Some doubt may be felt with regard to some of the names given above. According to Mr Weld, "Last Winter in Rome," p. 180, Mr Thackeray distinctly informed the author that he gave in his adhesion to the truth of spiritualism : and this statement is to some extent borne out by remarks which he has been heard to make at the Garrick Club, where I knew him well and met him almost daily. Mr Fitzpatrick, in his "Memoirs of Whately," affirms that the Archbishop was a spiritualist. "Some of the last acts of his life were excited attempts at table-turning, and enthusiastic elicitions of spirit-rapping." Lord Lyndhurst was claimed as a convert by the *Spiritual Magazine* for 1863, p. 519, and the assertion has not, as far as I know, been denied. The same may be said of Mr Nassau William Senior. Mr Senior made no secret of his belief among his friends. He it was who recommended the publication of Mr Home's recent work by Messrs Longman (*Spiritual Magazine*, 1864, p. 336). Lord Brougham, in a preface to the "Book of Nature," by C. O. Groom Napier, F.C.S. (Hotten), goes so far as to write what follows : "There is but one question I would ask the author, Is the spiritualism of this work foreign to our materialistic, manufacturing age? No ; for amidst the varieties of mind which divers circumstances produce, are found those who cultivate man's highest faculties;—to these the author addresses himself. But even in the most cloudless skies of scepticism I see a rain-cloud, if it be no bigger than a man's hand ; *it is modern spiritualism.*"

doctors, distinguished actresses, essayists, political economists, clergymen of the Church of England, &c.; whom it is impossible to picture to one's self as lending themselves to fabrications in which they could have no conceivable worldly interest; and many of whom, one would suppose, from their known characters and pursuits, to be very unlikely to fall into a gross delusion—to be in the habit of weighing evidence and conducting scientific experiments. And to the names which I have given might be added those of others, who, while hesitating to give in their positive adhesion to spiritualism, have admitted that the phenomena which have come under their observation are of so startling a character as to defy explanation. Thus, Sir David Brewster writes: "We could give no explanation of them (the experiments), and could not conjecture how they could be produced by any kind of mechanism. Hands are sometimes seen and felt; the hand often grasps another and melts away, as it were, under the grasp" ("Home Life of Sir David Brewster," Edinburgh, 1869). Mr Crookes, F.R.S., editor of the *Chemical News*, tells us in the *Quarterly*

Journal of Science, "That certain physical phenomena, such as the movement of material substances, and the production of sounds resembling electric discharges, occur under circumstances in which they cannot be explained by any physical law at present known, is a fact of which I am as certain as I am of the most elementary fact in chemistry. My whole scientific education has been one long lesson of exactness in observation; and I wish it to be distinctly understood that this firm conviction is the result of most careful investigation." Mr J. M. Peebles, the United States Consul at Trebizond, in a lecture delivered at Battle Creek, near Chicago, and published in the Chicago paper *The Present Age*, of September 3, 1870, relates the following in connection with the Right Hon. John Bright:—"While in England I dined with John Bright, when transpired quite an earnest conversation on the subject of spiritualism. He said he had witnessed some of D. D. Home's manifestations. They were wonderful. He could attribute them to no cause unless it be the one alleged, that of intelligent disembodied spirits. 'But,' he added, with due caution, 'I do not say that this is

so ; but if it be true, it is the strongest tangible proof we have of immortality.” “The late Professor Baden Powell, in his essay on the ‘Spirit of the Inductive Philosophy,’ seems to intimate an inclination to believe that spiritual phenomena will yet be recognised as a part of the domain of nature, and become a subject for philosophic investigation. ‘In the present state of science,’ he remarks, ‘of all subjects that on which we know least is perhaps the connection of our bodily and mental nature, the action of the one on the other, and all the vast range of sensations, sympathies, and influences, in which those affections are displayed, and of which we have sometimes such extraordinary manifestations in peculiar states of excited cerebral or nervous action, somnambulism, spectral impressions, the phenomena of suspended animation, double consciousness, and the like. In such cases, science has not yet advanced to any generalisations; results only are presented, which have not as yet been traced to laws; yet no inductive inquirer for a moment doubts that these classes of phenomena are all really connected by some great principle of order. If,

then, *some peculiar manifestations* should appear, of a more extraordinary character, still less apparently reducible to any known principles, it could not be doubted by any philosophic mind that they were in reality harmonious and conspiring parts of some higher series of causes as yet undiscovered. The most formidable outstanding apparent anomalies will at some future time undoubtedly be found to merge in great and harmonious laws, the connection will be fully made out, and the claims of order, continuity, and analogy eventually vindicated"" ("Chambers's Cyclopædia"—"Spiritualism"). Professor Challis, the celebrated mathematician and Plumian Professor at Cambridge, wrote, in 1863, a letter to the *Clerical Journal*, in which he says: "But although I have no grounds, from personal observation, for giving credit to the asserted spontaneous movements of tables, I have been unable to resist the large amount of testimony to such facts, which has come from many independent sources, and from a vast number of witnesses. England, France, Germany, the United States of America, with most of the other nations of Christendom, contributed simultaneously their quota of

evidence *In short, the testimony has been so abundant and consentaneous, that 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.*"

Now, what are these narratives which flow in upon us from all parts of the Christian world with such a consensus, and from so many independent sources, that, according to Professor Challis, if they are not admitted to be true, "the possibility of certifying facts by human testimony must be given up?" What is it that these millions of witnesses depose to? Their evidence is to the effect that heavy dining-tables have risen several feet above the ground, and remained suspended in the air without visible means of support; that they have been rendered alternately so light that they could be raised from the carpet "like a sheet of paper," and so heavy that they could with difficulty be moved; chairs have glided mysteriously over the floor, ponderous pieces of furniture have been carried along "as a leaf is carried by the wind on a turnpike road," and that, often in large and well-lighted rooms, "the light being sufficient

to see the maker's name on the watch in very small characters. *A tremulous motion has run up the arms of all those present ; small hand-bells placed on the carpet have rung when nothing could have touched them ; they have then come over of their own accord and placed themselves in the hands of some of the witnesses.* These, and all the other phenomena to which I am referring, have been repeatedly exhibited before professed sceptics, who, though totally unable to explain them, or to conjecture how they could be produced by any other causes than spiritual agencies, have gone away quite unconvinced that they *were* so produced. For instance, those which I have italicised above are deposed to by Sir David Brewster. Tables large and small have oscillated with great violence, while numerous objects placed on them, such as delicate statuettes under glass-shades, have been quite undisturbed. In some cases the whole room has vibrated so violently, that engineers present have said that nothing but the strongest machinery could cause such oscillations.* Nor have such

* Deposition of Mrs Honeywood before the Dialectical Society.

astounding effects been produced upon walls and articles of furniture only. There exist numerous well-authenticated instances of the human body being carried into space—a result which no conjuring could bring about. Thus, in the presence of Lord Lindsay, Lord Adare, and Mr Bergheim, on July 11, 1871, Mr Home was carried out of one window of a room seventy feet from the ground and brought in at another window. The moon was shining full into the room, and Mr Home was seen “floating in the air outside the window.” A minute account of the whole affair has been published by Lord Lindsay in the *Spiritualist* of July 15, 1871. Long before this, Mr Home had been seen to rise in the air, and pass out of one open window into another in a house near the Victoria Railway Station, and had been observed by one witness on another occasion “*gliding in the air several feet above the ground.*”^{*} Mr E. L. Blanchard, the well-known author, testifies to having been “uplifted by the spirits himself, and kept for some time in the air.”[†] Mr J. Jones, of Enmore

^{*} Deposition of Mr Jenkin, M.R.I., F.R.G.S., barrister-at-law, before the Dialectical Society, in 1869.

[†] Deposition of Mr E. L. Blanchard before the same Society.

Park, South Norwood, has seen chairs floating in the air, and had also "seen his own mother, an aged lady, raised off the ground, chair and all, by invisible agencies. *These things all occurred in the presence of many witnesses.*"* The Master of Lindsay, Grosvenor Square, and Mrs Cox, of Cox's Hotel, Jermyn Street, had seen Mr Home "floating in the air," and the former had also been a witness to his exploit near the Victoria Station.† At the house of Mrs Berry, on the 16th of December 1870, "her niece, Miss Berry, was floated in the air." On the 31st of May, at 74 Navarino Road, Dalston, Miss Cook of Hackney was not only floated in the air, but "carried about the room." These facts are testified to by eye-witnesses.

At a meeting of the St John's Association of Spiritualists, held at Clerkenwell on December 9, 1869, Mr Crockett testified to having seen a young man "lifted, chair and all, three times from the floor, without visible agency, *in the presence of some dozens of persons.*" Mr Henry Lord, secretary to

* Deposition of Mr Jones.

† Deposition of the Master of Lindsay and Mrs Cox.

the Halifax Psychological Society, certifies to Mrs Sagar having been "carried round her bedroom in mid-air." On another occasion, in the midst of a large circle, Mr Hearne was raised by the spirits to the ceiling, which was twelve feet from the floor, and had his head bumped against it. The same gentleman is said to have been "caught away" whilst walking in the neighbourhood of Islington in open day, and conveyed by invisible agency to a room in Mr Guppy's house at Highbury, the doors and windows being all closed. "Having made the strictest inquiries respecting this very remarkable event," writes Mr Benjamin Coleman, a very competent authority, "I am as certain of its having happened as I can be of any fact which I have not myself witnessed." Here, it is true, we want direct testimony; but, on another occasion, Mrs Guppy was carried by spirits from her house at Highbury Hill Park, a distance of nearly three miles, to a room in Lamb's Conduit Street, measuring twelve feet by ten, the doors and windows being closely fastened; and a party, which quite filled all the available space, being closely seated round a table, shoulder to shoulder. She

appeared to come through the ceiling, and was deposited on the table in complete *deshabille*, holding a household account-book in one hand, and a pen, with the ink still wet, in the other. These facts are deposed to by eleven respectable witnesses, who give their names and addresses. At another time Mrs Guppy and Mr Hearne were seen by several people floating in the air together. "I and at least *five hundred intelligent witnesses*," writes Mr Coleman, "know for a certainty that windows, doors, and stone-walls are no barriers to spiritual forces."

Other phenomena, not less startling than these, and equally well attested, present themselves to our notice. Sheets of paper, previously marked for identification, have been covered with crayon drawings, "in spaces of time varying from seven to ten seconds;" sometimes the paper has been marked by all those present, and "placed under a shawl which had been tied round the table."* This is an experience which seems to have been often repeated; and similarly, people who scarcely knew anything of drawing have, under spirit influence,

* Depositions of Messrs Coleman and Borthwick.

produced the most exquisite sketches.* And persons who knew next to nothing of music have played pieces which competent critics have pronounced "inexpressibly weird-like," "like the tones of a human being issuing from the pianoforte;" clouds of feathers and flowers (two or three hundred at a time) have poured down from the ceiling; spirit-lights like stars have moved about a room for an hour at a time; musical instruments have played tunes in a full blaze of light, and when it could be proved that there was no living being within eight feet of them. Mr Home, on many occasions, handled red-hot coals without being injured, and, what is much more striking, placed them *on the heads* and in the hands of persons present; and these facts are testified to by Lord Adare, Lord Dunraven, the Master of Lindsay, the Countess de Pomar, Mr and Mrs S. C. Hall, and many others.

Of course, it will be objected that some of these appearances were due to trickery—an allegation to which the Christian miracles are equally subject,

* Specimens have been exhibited by Count Poninski before the Leipsic Association for Spiritual Studies.

and have indeed been frequently subjected. But what shall we say of portraits of deceased persons produced under these circumstances, and sworn to by the survivors? Thus, to cite two out of hundreds of cases: Mr Avery deposed to having procured a portrait of his grandfather from a medium, a perfect stranger to him, who resided five hundred miles from his grandfather's abode. The portrait was recognised by all who knew the deceased (*Spiritualist*, No. 3). Or take the case of Mr Livermore, the well-known banker in New York, who at a recent trial swore that he had received three portraits of his deceased wife from Mumler, the spirit photographer. Or how shall we account for the remarkable answers given by spirits to those who questioned them, when the correct reply was only known to, or at the time not even known to, the questioner? It is necessary for me here to make an admission. I may be allowed to consider myself as holding a brief gratuitously on behalf of spiritualists, not against philosophers—whose grounds for disbelief in these phenomena I would very much rather not have to consider closely—but against the attacks of those who,

while pelting the edifice of spiritualism with stones, seem not to be aware that the glass in their own abode is not of much greater thickness; and, under these circumstances, the utmost candour is desirable, and indeed essential. It has been affirmed that these answers admit of an easy solution; that they are given by means of printed alphabets, and that it has been frequently observed that a questioner, through nervousness or a feeling of expectation, has made a short pause upon the letter which he looked to receive a reply to, and that thereupon the spirits have rapped, and this process has gone on throughout the whole of the message. Not only would one be led to suppose, antecedently, that this *would* take place in some cases, but I have observed that it *has* taken place; and standing on one occasion beside a female medium, I could have given the replies as correctly as she did. This much ought to be admitted. But it fails to be an answer to more than a very small portion of these phenomena of spirit-messages. It fails, for example, in accounting for the answer where the questioner himself does not know it at the time, or for an answer which appears to him to

be false, and which turns out afterwards to be true. And evidence of replies of this character having been given might be produced in any quantity.* It equally fails in accounting for messages correctly predicting future events, such as those related by Mr Varley before the Dialectical Society, and by Mr Avery before the St John's Association (*Spiritualist*, No. 3), or for messages conveying information of what is taking place at a great distance, like that recorded by Mr Everett (*Spiritualist*, No. 8). In spiritual publications, readers will find numerous cases of this kind recorded, and strongly attested, where the above explanation will be entirely powerless to account for the circumstances. And in arriving at a conclusion upon these, the question to be decided will be—*not*, "Did these events occur, or were these respectable persons deluding themselves and being deluded?" (for here the theory of "delusion" does not apply to the facts);

* Thus, Signor Damiani deposed before the Dialectical Society, that "at Mrs Mary Marshall's, who did not know him, a spirit had communicated with him, professing to be his sister. He replied that he had never had a sister of that name. The spirit answered that he was mistaken. Accordingly, he wrote to his mother, then in Sicily, and learnt that a sister of that name had died in infancy."

but, "Did these events occur, or have these respectable people come forward, sometimes singly, sometimes in combined numbers, to lie deliberately, in the face of the world?"

There are, again, other classes of spiritual phenomena which cannot possibly be assigned to trickery, though they may be attributed to a form of self-delusion known as hallucination. But the difficulty will be, that we shall sometimes have to suppose as many as eight people "hallucinated" at one and the same time. Thus Mr S. C. Hall and *eight* other witnesses saw the spirit of his deceased sister, dressed as she used to be in life. She remained in view for nearly two minutes. Again, the Hon. Mrs Egerton deposed before the Dialectical Society, that on a certain Sunday in 1869, "We saw a figure at the window. It entered, and then *figures came in, trooping in by dozens. . . .* A figure, *that of a relative*, passed behind my chair, leaned over, and brushed my hair lightly with its hand. It was eight feet high." After relating other wonderful phenomena, she adds—"We were seven in number. *Five of the seven saw just what I have described*, and the others saw

something, but not so distinctly." Mr Livermore, the banker in New York, repeatedly saw and recognised his departed wife, who showed herself also to several other persons. Analogous to this is the phenomenon of the spirits or "doubles" of persons yet living presenting themselves to spirit circles, or to several witnesses together or in succession. Mrs Emma Hardinge, the celebrated actress, related several examples of these appearances at one of the meetings of the Gower Street Conference in 1870, giving names and addresses, and challenging every inquiry. Thus, the Rev. Mr Binning appeared one evening to *twenty* persons at Troy, he being all the time in the flesh at New York, one hundred and sixty miles away. Madame Dorchenbach's "double" appeared in the same manner in Wisconsin to three people. And Mrs Hardinge gave her own personal experience of an appearance of the kind, which was indeed of a prophetic character. She witnessed the spectacle of a spiritual figure cutting its throat, and remained gazing awe-struck at the frightful phantasm for *five minutes*. She immediately told several people what she had seen, and afterwards

received intelligence from many quarters that, four days later, the person whose "double" had presented itself to her had committed suicide in the precise manner prefigured by the apparition, and with the same minute particulars as those which she had described. She added—"There are many in this country who have proved to me *most conclusively*, again and again, that they have beheld me at a time when I have been distant from them, while I have been unconscious of thus manifesting myself." Though not exactly falling under this head, I may perhaps, while I think of it, be allowed to notice the evidence of Mr Percival, an officer in the Guards, before the Dialectical Society. He narrated several instances "in which he had seen some of the future events of his life pass before his eyes, and these visions, together with the persons represented in them, were afterwards met with in reality."

The *cures* effected by spiritual means are among the best-attested events on record. And if they are to be attributed to the operation of imagination on the patient, it will be difficult to parry the application of the same theory to the cures related

in the New Testament. The opening of the eyes of a woman who had been blind for twenty-seven years, by mesmerism—a case carefully examined and attested by Archbishop Whately—may be thought to be without the limits of our subject ; but that of M. Leon Favre, a French Consul-general, of a disease he had suffered from for forty-two years, by the spirit of Giacomo Giaferro, who died at Venice in 1510, the account of which is published by M. Favre himself in the *Revue Spiritualiste* of September 1869, appears to be as well established as any such incident can be. Mrs Cox, of Cox's Hotel, Jermyn Street, deposed before the Society which I have several times had occasion to mention, that she had been cured by the spirits of an ailment of several years' standing. The Rev. Mr Spear at the same time related similar incidents. Mrs Hardinge publicly states at meetings in London, that having left England with her voice "quite gone as far as music was concerned," she sailed for America, "assumed to be on the verge of incurable consumption." In the latter country she was advised by a clairvoyant to consult the spirits, and six weeks afterwards

spoke before an audience of two thousand persons. The Rev. Frederick Rowland Young, minister of the Free Christian Church, Swindon, has published in *Daybreak* an account of his cure by Dr Newton, the "Healing Medium," which ought to be read entire. It must suffice to say here, that by the advice of Mr William Howitt and Mr Coleman, he crossed the Atlantic in 1868 expressly to visit Dr Newton, and was by him instantaneously cured of a painful neuralgic affection in the head, from which he had suffered for eleven years. The same day, Mr Young witnessed the cure of a paralytic who for three years had only been able to walk on crutches. In five minutes she walked, jumped, danced, and ran a mile. At the same time a young man was cured who had a withered hand. Dr Newton subsequently visited England, and on his arrival cured Mr Ashley, a retired merchant at Liverpool, who had been confined to his bed for five months, and was given up by the doctors. The same evening Mr Ashley was able to attend a public meeting, and the next day he took a long walk and ate a good dinner. Dr Newton subsequently operated in public, and is

alleged to have healed gratuitously between one and two hundred persons. Their names and addresses are given in full by the *Spiritualist* newspaper, the editor of which employed a special agent to inquire into the cases, and invites a full investigation. Deafness, paralysis, blindness, rheumatism, eczema, and many other complaints of long standing, are said to have been removed by this wonderful man by the simple laying on of hands. The editor candidly admits that "he cures some people, relieves others, and fails with the remainder," and this it appears is just what he professes to do. And if, as will probably be found to be the fact, some or even many of these cases will have to be pronounced spurious or exaggerated, after a closer examination, still enough will remain to establish conclusively that Dr Newton *does*, in certain instances, heal by the mere imposition of hands. And this is sufficient for my present purpose.*

* A very curious article on this Dr Newton appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 25th May 1870. After heaping ridicule on him in various ways, and describing as "a sorry sight" the crowd of "ill-dressed men, women, and children—not of the aristocracy," who thronged to consult him, the writer adds—"I went among the

The above summary (in which nothing has been said of spirit-voices, speaking with tongues, and other phenomena), must be considered merely as a sample from the vast stock of evidence at the command of any writer who may feel inclined to deal with the whole subject of spiritualistic manifestations more carefully than this sketch purports to do. My object has been, not to write the "Evidences of Spiritualism," but to suggest the outlines on which, in my humble opinion, such a work ought to be constructed. Now, in estimating

crowd, desiring to find those who had been healed, if there were any such. I found one man who said, 'My throat was very sore; now the pain is all gone.' Another had come in terribly crippled and doubled up; he had been healed, it seemed. He was walking about erect; and when I asked him if he felt no pains, he said, 'I can't say none exactly; but I can walk, as you now see, and before, I could hardly stand.' A woman had come all trembling with palsy. She now sat in her chair quietly, and said she was free of the trembling, as she had not been for months before. A man with bleared eyes said he could see much better than before—was sure of it. One or two other cases of this sort came before me." The writer further tells us that he has heard of many, and knows personally two, persons in America who declare that Dr Newton has cured them. He inclines to the belief that all these people were *self-deluded and mistaken*. I should have thought that if a man said he crawled into a room "crippled, doubled up, and unable to stand, and that shortly afterwards he walked erect," he must either—(1.) tell the truth, or (2.) tell a lie; and that this was precisely one of those cases in which a *mistake* was impossible.

the weight and the value of this vast mass of evidence, there is one consideration of capital importance which cannot be too strongly insisted on.

The phenomena in question have been produced in an enlightened and an inquiring age.

They have made their appearance, and have challenged investigation, under the watchful eye of science and in the full noon-day glare of publicity, at a time when the narrative of any event which seemed to be out of the range of ordinary events was looked upon with immediate suspicion. The alleged miracles of the Old and New Testaments were produced under conditions precisely the opposite of these. That a human being should heal the sick at will, and drive out devils, and walk upon the sea, and stop a tempest, that darkness should cover a part of the earth, that voices should be heard from heaven, that the veil of a temple should be rent in twain, or a fish drawn out of the sea with the required coin in its mouth, were events readily believed in, and the witnesses, or alleged witnesses, to which would soon grow into almost any number, in an age when the exploits of magicians and heavenly portents and miraculous births

were accepted by the gravest historians as of constant occurrence. Wonderful appearances of gods, oxen that speak, mules that give birth to foals, miraculous flights of birds, rivers running with blood,* are to be found chronicled, without suspicion, in the pages of such writers as Livy, Tacitus, and Valerius Maximus. The elder Pliny was perhaps the most learned man of the first century. In his "Natural History," the portents follow each other with such rapidity that whole pages might be filled with them. Showers of milk, blood, flesh, iron, wool, and even baked tiles, fall from heaven; the rattling of arms and the sound of trumpets are heard in the sky, armies are seen fighting together in the clouds, mountains fall upon each other with a loud crash and then recede; women are delivered of elephants and serpents, pools give a prophetic power to those who drink their waters, fires dart out of the earth on days sacred to Vulcan; there are races of men who have the heads of dogs, and

* And yet perhaps I am rather hastily attributing to them credulity with regard to this phenomenon. The Egyptian magicians in Exodus turned water into blood in answer to the challenge of Moses; and if they had the power, why should not others—*e.g.*, Tuscan soothsayers—have possessed it?

who bark instead of speaking, others who have but one eye placed in the middle of their foreheads, others who unite two sexes in the same individual, others who have no mouths; individuals like King Pyrrhus, whose right toe can cure the spleen, and cannot be reduced to ashes on the funeral pile; pigmies who ride about on the backs of rams and goats; countries in which the inhabitants live to the age of four hundred years; men born with long hairy tails, and others who have ears so large as to cover the whole body, &c. &c.

In short, there seems to be no narrative, however wonderful, or, as we should say, improbable, that the author has met with, which he does not think worthy of serious record. There can be small doubt that if he had been informed that Jesus walked on the sea, and had thought it worth his while to register the fact, he would have entered it unhesitatingly on his "tablets," and transferred it to his history in some such terms as these: "It is said that in Judea men have been known to walk upon the sea. Jesus, the prophet born at Bethlehem, did this in the presence of His twelve chief disciples." If we met with such a statement in the

pages of Mr Darwin (and in point of fact we *do* meet with the narrative of an occurrence not much less singular, in a letter of a naturalist, only second to Darwin, Mr Wallace, in reference to Mrs Guppy, and this relating *what he himself saw*), we should attach an importance of quite a different kind to it, because we know that statements on scientific matters are made now-a-days on very different conditions to those which prevailed in Pliny's time. What holds good of the statements of scientific magnates holds good also, in a considerable degree, of the evidence of ordinary people on such subjects. The atmosphere of belief has entirely changed. Nine Roman gentlemen who swore to seeing a ghost, or eleven persons who testified to a Roman matron being carried off from her villa on the Esquiline, and landed on a table in a small room in the Suburra, would have no appreciable effect upon our minds. The evidence of the same number of educated persons, in a critical age, is much more formidable. And so five hundred persons, who are ready to testify to similar occurrences in the London of the present day, form a body of witnesses far stronger than five hundred

Romans, or Athenians, or Alexandrians, who should have deposed to such events in the first century.

These considerations will be strengthened when we look at the case of the Jews, from among whom come the chief, indeed the only witnesses to the Christian miracles.

The Jews of that time not only shared in the general credulity, but are cited by contemporary writers as being endowed with an extra portion of the quality—as being, even for that epoch, proverbially credulous.* In company with the Chaldeans and Egyptians, they were the great dealers in enchantments, and interpreters of dreams.† Nor can we wonder at this, when we consider the character of their history. If the annals of England through a long course of centuries consisted of little else than a series of alleged special interferences on the part of the Deity—if our laws and our liturgy were represented as having been given to us miraculously—if we believed that our first king had been chosen for us directly by the Almighty,—then, certainly, the great bulk of Englishmen would be found much more ready to give credence to a tale

* Horace, Sat. I. v. 100.

† Juvenal vi. 542-547.

of any marvellous occurrence, and much less particular in sifting the evidence for it, than they are at the present day; and that, too, even if supernatural events had not been recorded as having taken place among us since the days of the Plantagenets. What then would be the case if miracles were supposed *not* to have ceased—if we believed that every year, hard by Westminster Bridge, and in full sight of the Houses of Parliament, an angel from heaven descended into the Thames and troubled the waters—that all the incurables of London lined the banks, and made a rush for the river, and that the first who reached it was miraculously cured of his ailment? This was precisely, *mutatis mutandis*, what was held to occur, at intervals, at the pool of Bethesda, in the days of Jesus. And though I have not classed them as necessarily miraculous, yet it is important to observe that possession by devils was esteemed to be common, as also the power of casting them out, and that certainly this power was *esteemed to be miraculous*. The Jews declared that Jesus had been endowed with it by the devil himself, to which He replied—"If I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by

whom do your children cast them out?" A people subject to such experiences, or supposed experiences, must have seen a miracle in every unusual phenomenon, and in the case of a prophet or preacher coming among them with great eloquence and apparent authority, no doubt *expected* them. So when Zacharias came out of the temple dumb, the people immediately "perceived that he had seen a vision;" John credited his Master with power to call down fire from heaven; a woman grasped the hem of Jesus' garment under the idea that curative power exuded from it. These and similar examples show the attitude of the popular mind in respect to unusual occurrences at that day, and enable us to mark the vast change which has taken place in this respect. No English crowd, on seeing a minor canon coming out of St Paul's, who had been struck dumb during the service, would suppose that it was in consequence of a vision. Some one would probably run for a doctor, and the doctor on his arrival would suspect a fit of some kind. No one would think of a miracle. Whitfield, after his most stirring discourses, was never asked even to suspend the falling of a shower; and Mr Spur-

geon is not supposed by any of his congregation to carry a miraculous power in his frock-coat.* "The Christian miracles," writes Mr Lecky, "floated into the world on a wave of credulity." It may, with equal truth, be said that spiritual phenomena have had to force their way against an opposing tide of scepticism. "When they first made their appearance," the future apologist may fairly point out, "all evidence in favour of the contemporary miraculous was practically bundled out of court. And as every claim to deal directly with another world was held necessarily to partake of this miraculous character, the bulk of mankind, like the priest and the Levite in the parable, 'passed by' the spiritualist as one not merely figuratively but literally 'fallen among thieves.'" Now no one will arrive at a fair estimate of the value of the evidence adduced on behalf of the creed we are discussing who does not take into his consideration this important element.

There is another point, too, which must not be omitted in this connection, and that is, that the

* Though the present Pope is believed by the lower class of Romans to have the "Evil eye." This is, however, not an unusual gift, if gift it can be called.

narratives of spiritual manifestations (or at least many of them) are accompanied by *particulars* such as are altogether wanting in the records of almost all miracles. We are furnished with precise dates and localities, and with *the names and addresses of the witnesses*. Again, spiritualistic mediums have offered to submit their claims to the highest test, and have invoked the judgment of scientific men upon them.* This test was proposed by Mr Home to Professor Faraday and Professor Tyndall, and it is to be regretted that the former did not more frankly accept the invitation addressed to him. We have seen that Sir David Brewster was present at a *séance*, and what his account of it was; and, for the matter of that, any scientific man of eminence might at any time attend any *séance*. I have also quoted Mr Crookes's report; and at the present moment that gentleman is occupied in investigating, by the most delicate methods, the phenomena pro-

* While these sheets have been going through the press, the report on Spiritualism of the Committee of the Dialectical Society has been issued—too late for me to make any use of it. Short reports of the evidence of some of the witnesses have been, from time to time, given in the *Spiritualist* newspaper, and some of these I have quoted in the text.

duced by the same Mr Home, in conjunction with Sergeant Cox and a third person of note. We are not entitled to surmise what the verdict will be ; but we are entitled to call attention to the fact that this submission of his claims to scientific investigation is one which, as M. Ernest Renan well remarks, no *Thaumaturge* or "wonder-worker" of former days has ever made. I may mention further, as an instance of the elaborate way in which modern habits of investigation have been brought to bear on these phenomena, the machine constructed by Professor Hare of Philadelphia, of which a detailed description, with diagrams, will be found in the *Spiritualist*, No. 23. He was so struck with the possibility of fraud on the part of the medium, as to "contrive an apparatus which, if spirits were actually concerned in the phenomena, would enable them to exercise their power independently of control," and the results related by him were conclusive to his mind. No one will dispute that the idea of submitting any so-called supernatural manifestations to such experiments as these would never have occurred to an ancient philosopher, an early Christian, or a mediæval saint.

We are absolutely without any tests of the kind as applied to miracles, and here again is a consideration which must weigh with us in forming our estimate of spiritual phenomena.*

I shall now proceed to consider some *objections to the truth of spiritualism*, which have doubtless occurred to those who have borne with me so far ; and I will take first in order the one which will perhaps be the first to present itself to the mind of the reader.

OBJECTION I. *It is not probable that God would*

* It is not intended, in the above comparison between the conditions governing human belief at the time of the Christian miracles and spiritual manifestations respectively, to throw the least doubt upon the truth of the former ; but to argue that the present state of scepticism, as contrasted with the former credulity, furnishes us *pro tanto* with still stronger evidence in favour of the truth of the latter. "Education, prejudice, and authority were against Christianity at first ; so that *the immediate conversion of such numbers* is a real presumption of somewhat more than human in this matter," says Bishop Butler. Does not the same remark apply with tenfold force to spiritualism, especially when we are willing to substitute for "somewhat more than human," the words, "the discovery of a new law?"

While on the subject noticed in the text above, I ought perhaps to mention the challenge of Signor Damiani, offering a reward of one thousand guineas to any scientific man who will investigate spiritualism and prove it an imposture : a jury of twenty-four professional men, twelve to be chosen on each side, is to give the verdict. No *Thaumaturge* in miraculous times has ever ventured to offer such a challenge as this.

communicate to us a knowledge of a future state (or rather, a more certain knowledge of that state than we previously possessed) through such instruments as turning tables, &c.

Answer. The force of this objection has been entirely demolished by one whom the orthodox will accept as an authority—Bishop Butler. He has told us in his “Analogy,” that we are no judges of what constitutes *probability* or *improbability* as applied to the divine mode of working. What may be strongly contrary to our expectation may, for all that, be the process adopted by God ; what may seem objectionable or even ridiculous to us may not be so in reality. “ The only question for us, therefore, concerning the truth of *spiritualism* is, ‘whether these be *real manifestations*,’ not whether they be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for ; whether it be what it claims to be, not whether it be such a *system* and so promulged as weak men might fancy a *method of communicating with the unseen world* should be. . . . Since upon experience the course of nature is found greatly different from what, before experience, would have been ex-

pected, and liable, as men fancy, to great objections, this renders it highly credible that they may find *the gift of communicating with spirits* very different from expectations formed beforehand, and liable in appearance to great objections. . . . It is highly credible beforehand that, on the supposition that God should afford men some additional instruction by *spiritualism*, it would be with circumstances against the credibility of which we should be apt to fancy we had strong objections." This is Bishop Butler's own reasoning,* in which for *revelation* we have only substituted *spiritualism*; and we are entitled to make this

* "Analogy," Part II. ch. iii.; see also ch. iv.: Things *apparently foolish* (e.g., table-turning) may, in a scheme so greatly beyond our comprehension, be the very best means to the very best ends.

The present Bishop of Carlisle (Dr Harvey Goodwin) writes to the same effect. He says it must be "acknowledged that in a matter so much beyond the scope of our faculties as that of saying in what manner God can best reveal Himself to mankind" (*or* can best reveal the existence of spirit-life to mankind—where the same argument holds good) "all difficulties depending on the *strangeness* or *unexpectedness* of a method alleged to have been adopted must, in the nature of things, be of less than first-rate magnitude, and must give way to sufficient evidence." And again, "I see the knowledge of God emerging from very obscure beginnings, and imparted in *very unexpected ways*."—*The Gradual Development of Revelation*, pp. 14, 16.

substitution, because if the argument is good in the one case, it must be equally good in the other. If it is to be no bar to our accepting revelation that it contains many things unlikely to happen, and even absurd in our eyes,* so likewise the occurrence of the same sort of things in spiritualism constitutes no objection to our receiving *that*. We are in both cases, as always happens, driven back upon the evidence, "Are these things true?" And we have ventured to submit that, if evidence is to

* *e.g.*, Serpents and donkeys that speak, the miraculous propagation of lice and frogs, men voyaging from place to place in the bellies of large fish, swine possessed with demons, &c., &c. No one can deny that narratives such as these impress the mind not only with a sense of wonder, but also with a *prima facie* sense of the ludicrous. There would be nothing, that I can see, more "seemingly ridiculous" in the idea of a thousand asses speaking, than in that of one speaking; or in the notion that these asses might deliver themselves of the purest morality, more than in that of one of them (as Balaam's) recalling his past faithful services to his master. If, then, we had been told that the Deity had chosen donkeys to proclaim the truths of revelation, this ought not to affect our belief, because we are no judges of the means He is likely to adopt, and such ideas as "absurd," "ridiculous," "ludicrous," have no application to Him. They are purely relative expressions. Surely this reasoning may be applied to spiritualistic manifestations. Indeed, I think we may go a step further, and apply Bishop Butler's *general* argument to this case. If revelation, which is from the hand of God, contains so many "seemingly ridiculous" things, I should expect from analogy to find like things in spiritualism.

be allowed the same weight here as has been conceded to it elsewhere, they are proved to be true.

But *is* there anything absurd in table-turning, &c.? The absurdity, if there be any, must consist in the idea of spirits being able to influence *material substances*; because in a table, as such, I see nothing more ridiculous than in a house, or a tree, or a sun-dial, or a fleece of wool, or a mountain, or a herd of pigs. Now the Divine Spirit (from which the spirit of man is a direct emanation—Gen. ii. 7) is represented to us as continually acting upon matter, not only by means of those general and orderly laws by which we believe the worlds to have been fashioned and to be still upheld, but under exceptional circumstances, such action being marked by what we must term very trivial details. Thus I should suppose that if spirits were to make an answer to an inquiry by filling a fleece of wool with a basonful of water at one time, and drying it up at another, such a circumstance would be looked upon as very absurd and ridiculous; yet this was precisely the means adopted by God for communicating with Gideon. Spirits, good and bad, are represented in the Bible

as constantly influencing material substances. As we have seen, an angel touches Elijah—an angel touches Daniel; again, an angel wrestles with Jacob, and injures the joint of his thigh. Evil spirits rend and tear people, and throw them down, and set in motion a herd of swine. If Mount Etna were suddenly to spring up into the air, and to plunge into the Straits of Messina, the event would be a very awful one; yet, if we dismiss from our thoughts the fact of its *size* relative to man, and the terrible loss of life which would follow from so large a body being displaced, the idea of its displacement in this way is as ridiculous as that of the leap of a camp-stool. Yet we are assured that the volition or spirit of a man is capable of removing a mountain, and causing it to fall into the sea. It does not at all matter to my argument that any of the real or hypothetical actions mentioned above are of a miraculous nature. I am speaking of the supposed absurdity of spirit acting directly on matter (which is the particular absurdity alleged in regard to the turning, rapping, &c., of tables); and it appears that spirits have actually often accomplished this feat, and are affirmed, on

the highest authority, to be always capable, if only sufficient faith be present, of accomplishing it to any extent.

Is there, again, anything very violent in the suppositions—(1.) That spirits may be able to communicate with living man ; and, (2.) (which is the point to which I desire to call attention), that they can only do so, *as a general rule, through material substances* ? Intercourse between spirits in this world can certainly be conducted in no other way. Thus, the ideas which are passing through my brain at this moment will be conveyed to my reader through the medium of such substances—pens, ink, paper, printed type. Conversation of all kinds is conducted by means of a material substance—the larynx—while the deaf and dumb use their fingers. If this should also be the law governing the communications of disembodied spirits with ordinary human beings, what more natural instrument could be found for the purpose than a table, unless it should be a wall, or the floor, or a ceiling, all of which, by the way, are alleged to have formed the mediums for similar communications ?

Table-turning, moreover, forms but a single item in these phenomena, and is a process which I gather from spiritualistic authorities to be generally practised by novices and less experienced mediums.* It is but the rudest and most elementary mode adopted by spirits for making known their presence. There are other phenomena of a much more advanced kind, which can scarcely be termed ridiculous—*e.g.*, “voices appertaining to no one in the flesh heard to speak and hold rational intercourse with men,”—the reality of which Signor Damiani undertakes to prove before twenty-four professional gentlemen, twelve of whom are to be chosen by the sceptics. And it is to be observed of nearly all these manifestations, that if they are indeed absurd and contemptible in their character, they, or something very like them indeed, are to

* There is no difficulty in supposing a *progressive* knowledge of spiritualism, any more than in supposing that some persons are gifted, in this respect, with faculties denied to others (as we shall presently see). Ordinary intercourse with spirits may be plain and obvious, while the more distinct knowledge of those things, the study of which is called “going on unto perfection,” may require exact and careful thought, like many parts of natural and civil knowledge. It may require to be developed by the progress of learning, and by particular persons attending to, and tracing out, hints overlooked by the generality, &c. Butler, Part II., ch. iii.

be found in the inspired record. I have already said that I cannot use that fact in all cases as an argument for the *probability* of their occurrence now-a-days, but I am entitled to point to it when the charge of being ludicrous and contemptible is brought against them. Thus, if any one shall feel inclined to laugh at the production of fruit and flowers by spiritual means, I would remind him that this is exactly what was done in the case of Aaron's rod, which brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds (Num. xvii. 8). If "spirit hands" provoke mirth, we must at any rate bear in mind that such things *have* been seen. "He put forth *the form of an hand*, and took me by a lock of mine head" (Ezek. viii. 3). "In the same hour came forth *fingers of a man's hand*, and wrote upon the plaister of the wall: and the king *saw the part of the hand* that wrote" (Dan. v. 5). The "touching" of people's knees, &c., by these hands, again, may be ludicrous enough, but, as we have seen, a spirit or angel touched Jacob in the *thigh*, and Elijah and Daniel were similarly touched. Mrs Guppy is *said* to have produced in the midst of a circle,

by the aid of spirits, "three live *eels*." I may doubt the fact, but I shall not see in it anything so very mirth-moving if I believe that Pharaoh's magicians could rival Moses and Aaron in evoking or producing *frogs*, and sending them into the houses and bedrooms of the Egyptians. "Spirit lights or fires moving about a room" are common phenomena. And I find constantly in Scripture the appearance of lights and fires accompanying spiritual manifestations. Thus, in the above-cited passage from Ezekiel, "I beheld, and lo a likeness in the appearance of fire." In the Acts, "tongues as of fire" settle on the apostles. A cold wind passes over the Hon. Mrs Egerton when she sees the spirits; and we are told in the *Spiritualist* that "the first symptom of the invisible power at work is often a feeling like a cool wind sweeping over the hands;" and so on this very day of Pentecost "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." Mrs Honeywood's house vibrates in such a fashion that no machinery can have produced the result. So in Acts iv. 31, the place was *shaken* where the disciples

were assembled together. Mr Home and others are carried off into the air ; so was Philip, so was Ezekiel on two occasions. The "gift of tongues," again, is asserted to be one of the manifestations, and this, as we all know, is to be found in the New Testament. It may be said that the scriptural narratives have produced these imitations. Very well ! but then what becomes of the charge of their being of *a ludicrous character*, which is what I have been considering ?

OBJECTION II. *None of the spirits alleged to have been summoned have communicated anything new or valuable to mankind.*

Answer. But they *have* done so. They have communicated sure and certain intelligence of the existence of the human soul immediately after death, and of the entire preservation of its identity, and this is both new and valuable. To suppose that, if they appeared at all, they must necessarily furnish us with minute details as to a future state, is to suppose that such manifestations must necessarily be just such as we should *expect* them to be,

which Butler has shown to be absurd.* Moreover, it may not be in the power of spirits to make any such communications, or not in our power, in our present state, to understand them if they were made. We do not indeed *know* the reasons for their being withheld, but there are possible explanations which will readily suggest themselves. For instance, that such communications, if generally permitted, might in many cases be false and erroneous, and so great confusion would ensue in our minds.† For it should be recollected that spirits are both good and evil. The latter are constantly mentioned in the Bible. "Spirits out of the body," says the editor of the *Spiritualist*, "are wise or foolish, *truthful* or *untruthful*, just the same as spirits in the body." Now, the one thing about which a real spirit, good or evil, cannot lie is *the fact of the existence of spirits*, which is proved by

* And cf. the same writer, Part II., ch. iii. : "We are not judges of how, or *how far* it were to have been expected that God should permit us to *communicate with spirits*, if He did so at all."

† It may be added, that none of the numerous angels or spirits who appear in the Bible have ever given any information as to the conditions of existence in another world, if we except what occurs in the Apocalypse, where, however, the language and imagery are entirely allegorical, and do not help us to form precise notions.

his or her own appearance, and to establish which seems to have been the object in permitting these manifestations.

OBJECTION III. *Many of the so-called mediums were detected in palpable impostures. A great number of them are known to have been paid.*

Answer. I have no certain information of the truth of the former of these two statements ; but, judging from human experience, I should say that it is in the highest degree probable that many of the so-called mediums *have* been impostors, and in a high degree probable that some of them have been detected and exposed. This is no real objection ; it is the statement of a fact (or what I am willing to take as a fact), the contrary of which would, under the circumstances, be well-nigh inconceivable. That there should be thousands of real manifestations (which is what spiritualists assert) and no spurious imitations of them, would be indeed contrary to all that we know of human nature.*

* "False miracles suppose the existence of real ones" ("Douglas on Miracles"). If this reasoning is good for anything, "False spiritual manifestations suppose the existence of real ones."

A similar plea might be urged against the wonders exhibited on behalf of Christianity in its infancy. In the time of Christ and His disciples there were, as we learn, many persons going about (as might be expected) pretending to work miracles ; but no reasonable sceptic has ever laid hold of this circumstance as an objection to the Christian miracles.

Mediums, that is to say, professional mediums, accept pay. No doubt they do, and very properly too. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." If by this objection it is intended to imply that persons who are able to commune with spirits from another world might be expected to learn from them some means of enriching themselves, which are not open to men in general, the objection is a very frivolous one. It would apply equally to the Apostles, to whose necessities "the saints ministered." At the very time that Peter was intrusted with the power of striking a man and woman dead, he was employed in superintending the distribution of the proceeds of those goods which, brought into a common fund, were to supply the modest wants of himself and his co-disciples. Paul, who could take

up deadly serpents without injury to himself, is solicitous about a cloak which he left behind him. It is quite clear that miraculous gifts and spiritualistic gifts were never intended to be conferred for any other purpose than the *establishment of certain truths*, and were not meant to exempt their possessors from the necessity of earning their livelihood in the ordinary way. I learn from spiritual publications that injudicious attempts to lure spirits into giving advice on pecuniary matters have been uniformly unsuccessful. And this is just what—supposing spiritualism to be true—I should expect.

OBJECTION IV. *The belief in spiritualism was, as a general rule, confined to a small number of ignorant persons, and was not shared by the learned.*

Answer. Granted that this statement were strictly correct, which it is not, as must be clear from what has preceded; yet it would be no valid objection to spiritualism. Every new creed, at its outset, is embraced mainly by these same low and ignorant kind of persons. The first Christians were fishermen and publicans, just as the first Mahometans

were slaves and people of low condition. As a rule, religious beliefs, like the grain of mustard-seed, spring up from the soil. The reason is very plain. The wealthy and highly-placed are not prone to changes of any kind, being satisfied with things as they are. It is otherwise with the classes below them, who have a much more intimate acquaintance with the particular miseries of life, and are more readily disposed towards any new message, or theory, or system, which professes to assuage misery in general. We need not, however, enter upon this; the *fact* is sufficient for our purpose. And it may be added, that if this objection is to have any weight, it will tell—on a comparison of early Christianity with early spiritualism—very much more strongly against the former. Because, as I have already said, the converts to Christianity in the first quarter of a century of its existence, are not to be compared, as far as we can judge, with the converts to spiritualism in point of respectability. I should think that the objection might be put with more force if its terms were exactly reversed: “That the early converts to spiritualism were so respectable, that, judging by

analogy from what we know of the early years of similar beliefs, it cannot be true."

OBJECTION V. *The narratives of these phenomena are given to us by partisans of spiritualism, and are therefore open to suspicion.*

Answer. By whom would you have them to be given? Who were Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul? It might as well be objected to the narrative of any miracle—*e.g.*, a corpse being re-animated—that it came to us from the persons who were present, and who saw (or believed they saw) the dead man raised from the grave, and were thereupon converted to the religion of the wonder-worker. Whereas, if the whole affair be not a pure invention, these were the only possible witnesses to the facts—the *inference* which they drew from them being of course a fair subject for discussion. And so with the alleged phenomena of spiritualism. But here, again, the statement contained in the objection is not true with regard to the narratives of these phenomena, as it would be in respect to those of the Christian miracles. As to the latter, we have absolutely no testimony to the facts which

does not come from professed believers. In the case of spiritual "wonders," we have such testimony in abundance. For example, that of Sir David Brewster, the Right Hon. John Bright, and others. It must be added that *nearly the whole of the evidence which we possess on this subject comes to us from persons who commenced their investigations as strong disbelievers in spiritualism, and who were converted by what they witnessed.* We have their own repeated assurances to this effect. In the days of the apostles, as we have seen, there was hardly such a thing as scepticism on the subject of miracles, or "wonders" of any kind ; the only doubt being whether the particular person claiming the power to work them really possessed that power, a form of uncertainty which would yield to much slighter evidence than a general disbelief (such as the witnesses to spiritualism nearly always started with) as to the existence of any such powers, or the reality of any such phenomena.

OBJECTION VI. *The belief came originally from America, where everything new and startling is sure to find adherents.*

Answer. I set this down in the list of objections to be met, because I have heard it insisted on. It scarcely merits serious notice. The question is not where the belief came from, but whether there is sufficient evidence in its favour. It might as fairly be urged that the East, from which our religion comes, was the region of wonders and portents, and dreams and ecstasies,—the home of divination and necromancy, the birthplace of theological creeds. If there is anything to be said on this subject, it is this : That there seems a certain fitness (if I may use the word) in the New World, as it is called, giving birth in these days to a new religion for humanity.

OBJECTION VII. *There were no martyrs to the truths of spiritualism, as there were to those of Christianity.*

Answer. There was scarcely such a thing as martyrdom, in the sense in which the term is here used, in any civilised country at the time when spiritualism first appeared. You might as well make it a test of a young man's affection for his mistress that he should slay dragons on her behalf.

There are no longer any dragons to be slain. In order to make anything of this objection, you must first show that none of the early converts to spiritualism consented to undergo martyrdom, when forced to confront it as an alternative to abandoning their belief. And you cannot do this, because, as far as I know, the alternative has never been presented to any one. I should like further to ask whether, if no one had proposed to behead James, or to crucify Peter (on the supposition that he was crucified), or to scourge Paul, or to vex their companions, this absence of persecution would have made the depositions of the apostles and others *less true*?

OBJECTION VIII. *Immortality having once been revealed through Christ, did not require to be revealed again.*

Answer. There is more force, it seems to me, in this objection, from the orthodox point of view, than in any of the preceding ones. Yet it must be borne in mind that spiritualism does not purport to be a "revelation," but a "republication (by natural means), adapted to the present circumstances of mankind"—the expression is But-

ler's—of the essential doctrine of the immortality of the soul. There is no passage in the New Testament which gives us to understand that no fresh knowledge, in addition to what was possessed in the apostolic times, on the subject of the unseen world, should ever by any means be conferred upon mankind till “the end of all things;” while there are many passages which will bear an entirely opposite sense. Yet, were there any of the former, spiritualists even then might say that they pretend to no knowledge other than was plainly possessed and extensively turned to account in those times. St Paul (1 Cor. xii.) speaks of the “discerning of spirits” as a gift like wisdom or faith or knowledge; and if he adds that it is “given by the Spirit,” this does not necessarily mean that it is miraculous, but the words are used in the sense that “every good gift comes from God.” Indeed, in the same passage he sets down “the working of miracles” as a power quite separate from this, and also distinct from the gift of healing and speaking with tongues, which are therefore in his opinion not miraculous.*

* *Prophecy* is also spoken of; but here, as often elsewhere, it seems to mean a talent for preaching, which now, as in the time of the apostle, is certainly “not given to all.”

Now, a pious spiritualist claims to be in possession of the same powers as an early Christian, *less* that of working miracles. Just as the Reformation was no new revelation, but the republication, by natural means (among which the art of printing is to be reckoned), of important truths which had so long been darkened by a cloud of superstitious doctrines and usages, that for centuries scarce a trace of them was to be found in the world, save exceptional and fitful gleams like those sent forth by the Albigenes, &c. ; so spiritualism, it may be said, is the recovery, by natural means, of certain powers enjoyed by the early Christians, which for some reason or other (perhaps the worldliness and corruption of the Christian world) had fallen into decay and disuse, but traces of which are most distinctly to be found scattered through history, from the days of Jesus to our own time. There is nothing in the Bible to render this view untenable. On the contrary, in the method and plan of divine teaching, as interpreted to us by theologians, there is much which would render it probable that a clearer knowledge and additional experience would in the course of time be vouch-

safed to man—a knowledge and experience of the existence of spirits (*i.e.*, of immortality) having been once communicated to him. “I see,” says Dr Goodwin, Bishop of Carlisle, “the *knowledge of God* emerging from very obscure beginnings, and imparted in very unexpected ways. I see, however, that this knowledge does somehow or another not merely remain with mankind, but *increase and become clearer and more influential*” (“The Gradual Development of Revelation,” pp. 15, 16). Why, then, should not this be true of a knowledge of another world? And as to a knowledge of another world not *requiring* to be made any plainer, as a disciple of Butler I do not exactly understand what this means. If there be sufficient evidence that such additional knowledge was given (which is the whole point), then I suppose we shall all be agreed—we at least who are treating together of this question—that it was required.

OBJECTION IX. *The gift of communing with spirits is not universal; it is confined to certain persons called mediums.*

Answer. Butler, as we shall generally find to

be the case, has by anticipation demolished everything that can be urged against spiritualism. "The Author of nature, in numberless instances, bestows that on some which He does not on others, who seem equally to stand in need of it. Indeed, He appears to bestow all His gifts with the most promiscuous variety among creatures of the same species; health and strength, capacities of prudence and of knowledge, riches, and all external advantages" (Part II. chap. vi.) This is undoubtedly true; and if the gift of communing with spirits be a natural one (as is contended throughout the whole of this argument), the objection is merely a statement of what might be expected to be the case. It may be added, that in the Christian scheme salvation is not universal, but is confined to certain persons called the elect.

OBJECTION X. *How is it that spiritualism was not made known before?*

Answer. This would be a foolish objection on the part of an orthodox believer in Christianity. It might be asked, "How is it that the Christian scheme was not revealed before?" And, indeed,

this very difficulty has been raised, and has been met by Bishop Butler, in Part II., ch. vii., of his "Analogy," to which, not to be wearisome with my quotations, I beg to refer the reader.

OBJECTION XI. *It is much more likely that the witnesses to spiritualistic phenomena should have been deceived, than that the phenomena should have been genuine. The evidence is the result of enthusiasm.*

Answer. The first part of this objection is simply an expression of opinion, like Hume's celebrated *dictum* about miracles, of which it is a copy. It leaves the question exactly where it was. As to enthusiasm, we will leave Butler—whom we quote in the text for the last time—to deal with that point.

"But enthusiasm, it is said, greatly weakens the evidence of testimony, even for facts, in matters relating to religion; some seem to think it totally and absolutely destroys the evidence of testimony on the subject. And indeed the power of enthusiasm, and of diseases too, which operate in a like manner, are very wonderful in particular instances.

But if great numbers of men, not appearing in any peculiar degree weak, nor under any peculiar suspicion of negligence, affirm that they saw and heard such things plainly with their eyes and their ears, and are admitted to be in earnest, such evidence is testimony of the strongest kind we can have for any matter of fact. Yet possibly it may be overcome, strong as it is, by incredibility in the things thus attested or by contrary testimony. And in an instance where one thought it was so overcome, it might be just to consider how far such evidence could be accounted for by enthusiasm; for it seems as if no other imaginable account were to be given of it. But till such incredibility be shown, or contrary testimony produced, it cannot surely be expected that so far-fetched, so indirect, and wonderful an account of such testimony, as that of enthusiasm must be—an account so strange, that the generality of mankind can scarce be made to understand what is meant by it; it cannot, I say, be expected that such account will be admitted of such evidence, when there is this direct, easy, and obvious account of it, that people really saw and heard a thing not incredible, which

they affirm sincerely, and with full assurance, they did see and hear. Granting, then, that enthusiasm is not (strictly speaking) an absurd, but a possible account of such testimony, it is manifest that the very mention of it goes upon the previous supposition, that the things so attested are incredible, and therefore need not be considered till they are shown to be so ; much less need it be considered after the contrary has been proved ; and I think it has been proved, to full satisfaction, that there is no incredibility in a revelation [or in spiritual manifestations] in general, or in such a one as the Christian [or the manifestations we are considering] in particular."

OBJECTION XII. *If any spirits are evoked, they must be evil ones ; and the practice of spiritualism is unlawful.*

Answer. It has often occurred to me that this objection — which by implication admits that spiritualistic phenomena may be *real*—might be a difficult one for spiritualists to meet. Nor can it be disputed that, supposing any spirits at all to be summoned, the probability is some of them would

be evil. I understand, moreover, that the fact of the spirits being of all kinds, good, bad, and indifferent, truthful and lying, is distinctly asserted by the upholders of the creed. This much, then, must be admitted. But have we any reason for going a step further, and asserting that *all* the spirits which are said to hold intercourse with men must necessarily be evil ones? For this is the meaning of the objection.

In the Old Testament, "consulters with familiar spirits" are ranked with witches, enchanters, wizards, &c., and are pronounced to be an abomination to the Lord (Deut. xviii. 11, 12). A man or woman who had such a spirit, or who was a wizard, was to be put to death (Lev. xx. 27). In Leviticus xix. 31, those who have them are again coupled with wizards. In 1 Samuel xxviii., a woman who has a familiar spirit is identical with a witch. In 1 Chronicles x., Saul is represented as having died for his transgressions, and amongst others, for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, *and not of the Lord*. In Isaiah viii., these same people are again coupled with "wizards that peep and mutter;" so again at xix. 3. In Galatians v. 20,

among the works of the flesh is cited *witchcraft*,* where it figures along with murder, idolatry, and other crimes.

It would seem, then, that to be possessed, or to consult with *familiar spirits*, was a form of witchcraft, or allied to it, and that witchcraft existed in the days of Paul, and was a great sin. By witchcraft is generally understood, as Delrio puts it, "an art in which, by the power of the contract entered into with the devil, wonders are wrought" (Brand, "Popular Antiquities"). In all modern definitions that I have seen, a contract or understanding of some kind between the wizard, &c., and an evil spirit, is supposed to be of the essence of witchcraft, and this seems to be the sense of the Hebrew. Now, the question is this: Is *all* intercourse with spirits of every kind necessarily of this character? I don't think this can be asserted; because the same Paul who condemns witchcraft, speaks of the "gift of discerning spirits."

Moreover, all through the Bible we have what may be called an accredited class of seers, or, as

* *Φαρμακεια* is the word, *i.e.*, enchantment by means of drugs, &c. The Latin, *veneficium*.

we should call them, mediums, who are never confounded with those "who practised divination" (Deut. xviii.) The exact nature of their powers it is impossible to define; but it is important to notice the point, for this reason, that just as all those who foretold future events, and were consulted on that subject, were not necessarily "an abomination" to God, so it does not follow that all persons communicating with spirits should be identified with those "who possessed a familiar spirit." These seers seem to have divined "in the name of the Lord,"—that is to say, lawfully, with professed submission to the theocratic Ruler of Israel; not illicitly, like the others. Thus, when Saul is sent in search of his father's asses, his servant suggests to him that they should go to "a man of God, an honourable man; all that he saith surely cometh to pass." Saul regrets that they have spent their money, and cannot pay the requisite fee, and his servant thereupon produces a quarter of a silver shekel which he has remaining. The author, or editor, of the book, adds, "Before-time in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer;

for he that is now called a Prophet, was before-time called a Seer" (1 Sam. ix. 9). "Inquiring of God" here evidently means what we mean by "having one's fortune told," going to ask where a lost object will be found (as in this very case of Saul, and a very common ground for resorting to gipsies, &c., now-a-days), and the like, *i.e.*, asking through a professional medium for an answer to a question, such as it was thought could not be learnt by ordinary means, the unknown being supposed to lie in the hand of God.* We do not hear that any blame is attached to Saul and his servant for consulting this seer (who turns out to

* It was in accordance with this idea that the eleven apostles cast lots, and chose Matthew, on whom the lot had fallen. The tribes had their position in the Holy Land determined by lot. The notion runs through the Bible. The *sortes Biblica* and *sortes Virgiliana* of the Middle Ages are well known. The superstition is hardly extinct yet.

Dr Pusey asserts that "to *inquire of the Lord* was as received an idiom before the return from the captivity, as to 'consult' a physician or a lawyer is among us." And he gives numerous additional examples of this ("Lectures on Daniel," p. 244). Of course, from his point of view, there was a never-failing spring of miracles open at that time; but this, as I have already said, is to use the term in a sense quite different from the accepted one; or, as Paley puts it, to have miracles occurring so often that they cease to be miracles.

be Samuel). On the contrary, the former is immediately afterwards, by divine command, proclaimed and anointed king of the Jews. Later, we hear of God, "David's seer;" "Heman, the king's seer;" "Jeduthun, the king's seer;" just as one might speak of the Pope's confessor, or the Laureate of George III., or the Duke of Argyll's piper. And Amos, when addressed by Amaziah as "O thou seer," and bidden not to prophecy any more at court, replies that he is not a professional prophet or seer, but carries a special diploma. "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit: *and the Lord took me* as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophecy unto my people Israel" (Amos vii. 12-15). And elsewhere we read of the "sons of the prophets." They seem, in fact, to have formed a large class of authorised "canny men," not laying claim to any divine commission, as the above passage shows, but exercising their mysterious powers under the sanction of the law, and quite distinct from the sorcerers and wizards who were deemed worthy of death.

I know nothing of demonology, scriptural or profane, and am merely throwing out these crude hints—on a subject which I do not profess to have studied—as an intimation that, in my humble opinion, the future apologist ought to look somewhat closely to this point, and so be prepared with a complete answer to the objection. Meanwhile, I cannot but think that dealers with “familiar spirits” may be fairly taken to mean such as had entered into a compact with an evil spirit for purposes of gain, or the gratification of personal vengeance, or the like ends, and such also as employed their art for similar objects. A passage in Acts xvi. seems to confirm this view. We read of a damsel “possessed of a spirit of divination, *which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying*”—a spirit which Paul exorcised in terms which evidently imply that it was an evil one.

Under circumstances which, to the orthodox inquirer, may not be altogether free from doubt, it seems to me that the proper plan would be to apply to spirits the rule which we have been taught to adopt in respect to those still in the flesh—“By their fruits ye shall know them ;” and

as John bids us do, "To try the spirits." If there be any persons who employ themselves in summoning the departed for the purpose of their own worldly advantage, then—although it would seem that these aims are now-a-days always frustrated—I should say that such persons would fairly lay themselves open to the charge of dealing with "familiar" or evil spirits, who it appears are alone capable of responding to such a call. But gathering as I do from publications which are the organs of this creed, that the greater number of *séances* are opened with prayer, and with a Bible on the table; that the spirits generally call for hymns, and not unfrequently join in singing them; that for the most part they give the most excellent advice, to the effect that people ought to go to church and chapel, to avoid tippling, &c. ; that, moreover, many of them have turned their hearers from infidelity: then, in accordance with the maxim, that "a house divided against itself cannot stand," I am forced to conclude that these spirits, supposing any such to appear, are good, orthodox spirits, to whom no objection can be taken, and intercourse with whom, so far from being a crime,

cannot be considered as anything but a great religious advantage (not to speak of happiness and comfort) to the genuine Christian.

OBJECTION XIII.—(The last that my space will permit me to notice, though, of course, others may be raised.)

These phenomena, if real, are the result of psychic force, or some power of that kind.

Answer. This is not, properly speaking, an objection to what I call spiritualism. If for "psychic force," &c., you substitute the general words, "some unknown power," an expression which is large enough to include "psychic force" (whatever that may be), or any other force of whatever kind, I should suppose the statement would be accepted as correct from the spiritualistic point of view. If psychic force be competent to produce the alleged phenomena—floating in the air, the visible presence of deceased relatives, &c.—then it will be a cause, and it may be the sole cause. Only I should suppose that scientific spiritualists (of whom, as we have seen, there are many) would insist—(1.) That it must

cover *all* the phenomena ; (2.) That it must be shown to be a cause, or agent in producing them, by a properly conducted method of experimental inquiry. Meanwhile, they are content to say that they do not know what brings about these manifestations.

I have ventured thus rudely to survey the ground on which the future apologist, armed with greater powers and furnished with a vast mass of additional materials, may some day raise a structure which the orthodox will not be able to demolish without some risk to their own fabric.*

* I do not say that if spiritualism were shown to be either an imposture or a delusion (as a great part of the religious world believe it to be), the discovery would overthrow the evidence in favour of the Christian miracles ; but I do think it would somewhat weaken the force of that evidence. Here, it is true, that Bishop Butler, whom I have so often quoted in my favour, may be cited against me. As the point seems to me an important one, I give the entire paragraph, to which reference is supposed to be made, from the "Analogy."

"It is added, that there is a very considerable degree of historical evidence for miracles which are on all hands acknowledged to be fabulous. But suppose there were even *the like* historical evidence for these to what there is for those alleged in proof of Christianity, which yet is in no wise allowed, but suppose this,—the consequence would not be that the evidence of the latter is not to be admitted. Nor is there a man in the world who, in common cases, would conclude this. For what would such a conclusion really amount to but this, that evidence confuted by contrary evidence, or any way over-

For nothing seems to be plainer than that the evidence in favour of spiritual manifestations

balanced, destroys the credibility of other evidence neither confuted nor overbalanced. To argue that because there is, if there were, like evidence from testimony for miracles acknowledged false as for those in attestation of Christianity, therefore the evidence in the latter case is not to be credited, this is the same as to argue that if two men of equally good reputation had given evidence in different cases in no way connected, and one of them had been convicted of perjury, this confuted the testimony of the other."—Part II., ch. vii.

Now, I must observe that the above statement of mine does not contradict the position taken up by Butler. What I contend for is this : That if it could be shown that there were like evidence from testimony for occurrences afterwards acknowledged to be false, as for the miracles in attestation of Christianity, the evidence in the latter case *might be thereby somewhat discredited*, and *would* in this instance be somewhat discredited (not that no credit whatever ought to be attached to it). And I am, moreover, prepared to affirm that if two men of equally good reputation had given evidence in different cases, and one of them had been convicted of perjury (or rather—for this is how the point should be put—of giving evidence which proved to be intentionally or unintentionally false), this might, under certain circumstances, seriously diminish the value of the testimony of the other. For if the contrary of this be maintained, see where we shall be led : If the subsequent conviction of B does not weaken the evidence of A, so neither would the subsequent conviction of C, D, E, F, &c., who had given evidence in other cases, since zero multiplied any number of times, is still zero. Now, if this be correct, A, B, &c., may each be of the value of five hundred men, as well as of one man, and the proposition will hold good. Suppose, then, in an early stage of society five hundred respectable witnesses to depose that they had seen a man floating in the air, that would be taken at the time to be conclusive proof of the

very closely resembles in kind that which is adduced in support of the Christian miracles, while

event. Suppose again that five hundred, or a similar number of equally qualified witnesses, should repeatedly afterwards testify to a similar event, and that in every one of these subsequent cases imposture or delusion could be shown, there is not a man who will not admit that this would throw great doubt on the statement of the first body of witnesses.

What Butler means by his illustration is this : That if Smith testified to the firing of a house at Penzance, and Brown to a similar crime at John o' Groats, proof that Brown had lied, or was mistaken, would not *confute* Smith. And he is right. But he would have been wrong if he had asserted that B's perjury, or delusion, threw no discredit at all on the evidence of S. By furnishing an additional example that even seemingly respectable (or sane) men are not always to be trusted, it would throw some discredit on *all* testimony. But this would be of so infinitesimal a character, that it would be very properly neglected. Yet, that it would be a real quantity may be proved by multiplying cases of B's misstatement. If Jones, Robinson, and a hundred others all over the country were to swear that they had seen houses set fire to in every direction, and in every one of these cases it were shown that no such event had occurred, we should inevitably be led to some such conclusion as that a general delusion prevailed on the subject, or that there existed a conspiracy to frighten people ; and serious doubt would be cast upon the testimony of Smith, as being very likely one of the deluded, or one of the mischief-makers ; and this, too, where the kind of occurrences supposed are not only known to be possible, but admitted to be frequent. And how much more would our doubts be stimulated if the very existence of such events as that deposed to by Smith and Company, were a matter of dispute !

There is another observation to be made on Butler's argument. In his illustration, after the words "in different cases," he has

it greatly exceeds it in force ; that the same difficulties which may be alleged against one set of

adroitly inserted "no way connected," which makes a vast difference. For example, there is no apparent connection between an act of arson in Cornwall and another in North Britain, and the evidence in the one case would be practically unaffected by false evidence having been given in the other. But such a connection might exist, as has just been shown ; and if false accounts of fires had been for some time common, and Smith, the truthful witness, came forward with his evidence (and it makes no difference in estimating its value, as affected by perjuries, &c., elsewhere, at what time it is given—if subsequent convictions of other witnesses ought not to affect it, neither ought prior convictions), there is not a jury in the kingdom whose minds would not be very seriously and very properly biassed by what had transpired elsewhere, and who would not look upon Smith's evidence with a degree of suspicion of which neither he nor any one else would have a right to complain.

The fact is, that all cases of so-called miracles, witchcraft, spiritualism, &c., *are* strongly connected together. And an instance of delusion on an enormous scale (such as this of spiritualism, if proved false) would certainly affect similar narratives of prior date, in that it would go to show that evidence for these kind of occurrences is, for some reasons which we need not now consider, *peculiarly unreliable*.

Precisely the same rule applies to ordinary historical events. It may be said that no number of fictitious narratives would throw the least doubt upon any well-attested historical occurrence,—for instance, the passage of the Rubicon by Cæsar. And yet, if this story had come down to us with a great number of other stories proved to be false, all of them representing great conquerors and founders of dynasties as crossing rivers on their way to empire, with circumstances resembling the passage of the Rubicon, it is certain that we should require more evidence for that event than would otherwise satisfy us ; in other words, some doubt would be thrown upon it by these false narratives.

narratives may also be found in the other ; that theologians may therefore be very fairly asked to *attend* a little (not to use a stronger term) to this matter, and either to give up consigning to endless and excruciating torments those who, after a conscientious examination, deem that the balance of probability is on the whole against the reality of *their* portents, or else to admit that, in the language (in which only one word need be changed) of their ablest advocate, "*It is not so sure that there is nothing in SPIRITUALISM.*"

THE END.

