

TWO LECTURES

ON THE

PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM

DELIVERED IN THE MASONIC HALL, DUNEDIN, ON THE
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BY THE

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FIRST LECTURE.—SPIRIT-RAPPING & GHOST SEEING

Before entering on the special subject of my lecture, I beg to make one or two explanations of a personal nature. It may be asked: Why come forward now to lecture, after remaining silent so long, when a public challenge was given to discuss the subject publicly? In answer, I have to state that, while admitting public discussion may, under certain circumstances, be valuable, it is in most cases eminently unsatisfactory. The course of argument and illustration is abruptly interrupted, and the attention of the audience is apt to be distracted from the main points by lively repartee, and jokes and witticisms. Such sallies often carry more weight with a mixed popular audience than solid reasoning, and there is a strong temptation presented to the disputants to frame their speeches so as to gain the applause of the audience at the moment rather than to inform and convince their understanding. Before a select audience, trained to weigh the force of logical arguments, this would not be the case, but such would scarcely be looked for in a popular audience that might assemble to hear a debate on this subject. Moreover, I frankly confess that I expected the general interest in Spiritualism, which appeared eight or ten months ago, and which seemed to have nearly passed away, would not now be revived, at least beyond the natural curiosity to see and hear any new comers of great pretensions, particularly when nothing new was advanced in support of Spiritualism or the doctrines which are usually associated with it. I have been given to understand, however, that a number of individuals in this city have recently been led to attach great importance to Spiritualism, and especially to the doctrines of a strongly negative character generally connected with it, such as the denial of the Trinity, of the Divinity of

Christ, of original sin, and of the existence of the Devil and of Hell. I have come forward therefore with the view of assisting, if possible, any who may be in perplexity or darkness in respect to this subject, and have adopted this mode of reaching such, as, in my view, the most suitable. In this I have acted simply on my own responsibility, and I would wish it to be understood by all that none of my respected brethren in the ministry are in any degree parties to my action. Some of them, I believe, may not approve of this step; and I would not presume to censure any of them for holding a different opinion, or following a different course. I am sure of this, that whatever appeared to them to be duty they would boldly and readily follow out. I may state that the subject of Spiritualism has not engaged my attention now for the first time, as I have written articles upon it in the Press at home as far back as seventeen years ago. At the same time, I do not put myself forward as professing to offer a complete explanation of all the phenomena which have been presented in the name of Spiritualism. The evidence as to the existence of the alleged phenomena has in many cases not been furnished, and the state of scientific enquiry on all these points has not yet been so far advanced as to warrant me in professing myself able to furnish a complete solution of them. The real subject, however, which claims our attention is much more limited. It is to determine, if possible, what may be accepted as unquestionable facts established by sufficient evidence; then to consider whether science, as fairly established, furnishes any adequate explanation of them, and, if not, whether the theory of the Spiritualists can be received as giving the explanation required. This theory is simply that they are caused by

spirits; not, however, spirits of any class, but by the spirits of departed human beings—ghosts. To discover what the facts of Spiritualism are is a task of no little difficulty. In trying to search them out one is strongly reminded of the saying, "There is nothing so deceitful as figures except facts," and of the other—no less true—"There are more false facts than false theories in the world." No doubt the well-known story of the problem submitted to the Royal Society of London may occur to your minds. King Charles sent to enquire how it came to pass that when a live fish was put into a globe of water the weight was not increased by the weight of the fish. Many learned and profound theories were readily started to explain this. At length one philosopher, evidently strong in common sense, proposed, amid loud cries for his presumption and disloyalty in calling in question the king's word, that the fish itself should be tested by the scales. The result was that the weight was found to be the same, whether the fish was dead or alive. It is always the dictate of sound sense first to make sure of the facts, before troubling about the explanation. I have often felt that lecturers on Spiritualism directed far too little attention to these and the evidence on which they rested. A very short and simple method of disposing of this part of the subject has been followed by the Rev. Mr Watt in a letter recently published. Looking at the character of the alleged phenomena, and observing that they are for the most part of a silly and purposeless character, he declares this affords a strong presumption that the phenomena are really the work of some kind of spirits. He says "it is a very significant fact to me that the manifestations are sometimes intensely silly. We are gravely told, when a number are meet at a *séance*, how the coat has been whisked off one man instantaneously, and on the gas being turned on, is found on the back of his neighbour, whose hands, strange to say, have been bound behind his back all the time. Those who know anything about the doings of the spirits must be aware that they largely consist of practical jokes of this description, militating against the gravity and decorum we naturally associate with the inhabitants of another world. The very grotesqueness and absurdity of the reported marvels of Spiritualism are, I confess, to me a proof of their reality; for I cannot help thinking that men and women in this nineteenth century, to whom an exalted model of supernatural action has been presented in the miracles of Jesus Christ, would be ashamed to select the utterly purposeless and silly displays of power which make up a large proportion of the Spiritualistic manifestations, if they have not actually witnessed them." Would any other person derive such an inference? Do we not infer the nature of causes from the nature of effects? And if, as he admits in

this case, the effects consist largely of practical jokes, militating against the gravity and decorum we naturally associate with the inhabitants of another world, surely this should be a very strong presumption that the inhabitants of another world had nothing whatever to do with them, and that the practical jokes might be found among those who had such a propensity, and the opportunity for carrying it into practice in darkened rooms. But he reaches the same conclusion by another process of reasoning, equally fallacious. He says:—"They (the American Spiritualists) court controversy, and exhibit a *bouhommie* under the vituperation of opponents, which proves to me they are conscious of standing on a solid foundation of facts, and can afford to look down with something like a feeling of amusement on the efforts made by these critics to deny those facts, or explain them away." To my mind, the natural inference to be drawn from the conduct of those referred to would rather be that they hold their theory and the doctrines connected with it in a very light manner. They could not attach great importance and solemnity to their so-called faith if they could derive amusement from sneering and ridicule which might be cast upon it. If we could ascertain that Spiritualists were ready to make themselves martyrs for what they declared to be the truth, and that they persisted in their efforts to extend it through years of self-denying toil, then we might infer that their conviction of the reality of the phenomena was real and strong. I have never observed that earnest Christians could find any amusement in hearing the claims of their divine Saviour ridiculed; or his offering himself as a sacrifice for sin sneered at as of no more efficiency than the offering of the blood of a sheep. Earnest Christians could find no amusement in hearing such blasphemy, and would refuse to countenance those who were guilty of it. And yet they have often shown how deep and strong were their convictions of the reality of Christ's divinity, by the sacrifices they have made in giving their testimony to this fact. It is, however, but justice to Mr Watt to state that although his philosophical Pegasus has carried him through such vagaries, he declares that the argument which has weighed most in his mind in accepting the Spiritualistic phenomena has been the testimony of such men as Judge Edmonds and Robt. Dale Owen. The alleged phenomena, however, are far too numerous and multiform, and, in many cases, obscure, subtle, and evanescent, to be received in the mass on the testimony of any single witness, however sincere and honest he may be. They must be examined in detail, and the evidence presented in support of them must be carefully scrutinised. This has to a certain extent been done by the Dialectical Society of London. Members of that Society devoted months of

enquiry and patient attending of séances to find out the facts. A report stating the results was published. It should be mentioned, however, that this was not sanctioned by the Society as a whole, but only by a minority, yet it might be fairly taken as presenting, so far as it goes, evidence that may be accepted. The framers of the report declared to be established as true—1. "That sounds of a very varied character, apparently proceeding from articles of furniture, the floor and walls of the room—the vibrations accompanying such sounds are often distinctly perceptible to the touch—occur without being produced by muscular action or mechanical contrivance. 2. That movements of heavy bodies take place without mechanical contrivance of any kind, or adequate exertion of muscular force by the persons present, and frequently without contact or connection with any person. 3. That these sounds and movements often occur at the time, and in the manner asked for by persons present, and by means of a simple code of signals answer questions, and spell out coherent communications. 4. That the answers and the communications thus obtained are for the most part of a common-place character, but facts are sometimes correctly given which are only known to one of the persons present. 5. That the circumstances under which the phenomena take place are variable, the most prominent fact being that the presence of certain persons seems necessary to their occurrence, and that of others generally adverse; but this difference does not appear to depend on any belief or disbelief concerning the phenomena. 6. That, nevertheless, the occurrence of the phenomena is not insured by the presence or absence of such persons respectively." If, then, we accept these conclusions as true, we must consider whether science can explain them, or whether we must seek their explanation in the ghost theory. There are two elements here which require to be accounted for—the physical rappings and movements of bodies, and the intelligence which is shown in the answers to questions or movements of tables at request. Both, I think, can be amply explained, without the help of any ghost. It has been scientifically demonstrated that the human body is more or less charged with electricity—a fact which was observed before electricity was studied as a science. Cardan relates that the hair of a Carmelite monk emitted sparks whenever it was stroked backwards. From the hair of a young woman mentioned by Faber sparks of fire always fell when it was combed. Cassandra Buri, a Veronese lady, often terrified her maid-servants by brilliant sparks and a crackling noise, which were given forth whenever her body was rubbed or slightly touched by a linen cloth, and a bookseller at Pisa emitted sparks from his back and arms, with a crackling noise, whenever he pulled

off a narrow shirt and a piece of cloth which he wore upon his breast. In the case of some individuals this electric power attains a much higher force. I quote the following examples which are well authenticated. In the summer of 1839 two Greek girls came from Smyrna to France, and began to exhibit their powers for a livelihood. On placing themselves at opposite ends of a large table, a cracking sound was emitted, like that of the electric fluid passing over gilt paper. The table thereafter began to shake, and gradually moved away from the elder to the younger. *But when clad in silk, or if the atmosphere chanced to be humid, they had no power to act either on the table or on each other.* Speaking of a French medium, whose case was reported to the Paris Academy of Science in 1846, Arago says:—"The principal seat of her power seems to be in her left side. During her paroxysms it is warmer than her right side, and is affected with jerks, unusual movements, and a kind of trembling which communicates itself to anyone that touches the parts so affected. She presents, moreover, a peculiar sensibility to the action of the magnet. On approaching its north pole she receives a violent shock, while its south pole produces no effect on her whatever. A sheet of paper, a pen, or any light body is driven away as by a gust of wind, so soon as she extends her left hand towards it and before she has come near enough to touch it. The moment the table is touched by her hand—or even by a string which she may be holding—it is overthrown. This action produces a strong commotion in her left side, by which she is forcibly drawn to the table. Should she, while in this condition, attempt to sit down, the seat is thrown from under her with prodigious force. One day a chest, on which three men were sitting, was moved in this manner; and on another occasion, a chair held by two strong men was broken in their hands." When a number of people were seated for a considerable time in a close room, it was very natural and probable that electricity should become so accumulated and intensified as to present a sufficient reason for the phenomena declared to have been witnessed by the Dialectical Society, not merely on the table with which their hands are in contact, but likewise on the walls or floor of the room. Such effects may be accounted for, as it has been scientifically demonstrated that electricity is conducted by the air as well as by solid bodies. There, then, is a sufficient cause for the physical part of the phenomena, and so far there is no need for a ghost. But how explain the manifestation of intelligence? If the knocking force proceeds from the highly charged human body or bodies that are present, it is reasonable to suppose that the direction in which it may be transmitted may be influenced to some extent by the movements of parts of their bodies under the

control of their will—not necessarily the movements of their hands, nor yet movements of a violent or even noticeable kind, and possibly even without such movements—by the mere influence of will. The effects of electricity proceeding from the bodies of electrical eels—called *Gymnotus electricus*—in South America, may serve to illustrate this. Humboldt placed both his feet on a fresh *Gymnotus*, and experienced a more violent shock than he had ever felt from a Leyden jar. When he and another held one of them between them, one holding the head or shoulders, and the other the tail, the one felt the shock and the other did not, and they were led to the conclusion that it could direct its electric strokes where it chose. Further, they found that some *Gymnoti* which they kept alive killed some other fishes which they introduced into the same vessel of water, without coming in contact with them. The force with which this can be done was observed by Humboldt in America to stun horses which were driven into the water when they were swimming, so that the horses fell down completely overpowered, and were drowned. Regarding the probability of electrical effects proceeding from the human body, influenced to some extent by the will, I think there is here a clue to the intelligence displayed by the table knockings in answer to questions put. That intelligence, from all the reliable evidence I have been able to obtain, is sufficiently accounted for by the intelligence of one or several of those from whom the knocking force proceeds. The evidence of the Dialectical Society does not advance one step beyond this. The answers, the report states, are usually of a common place character, but sometimes known only to one of the persons present. We must, however, accept of other evidence besides theirs. Let us try then, if this explanation will apply to the well-known story of “the Rochester knockings.” Circumstances given by Mrs Harding and by Dale Owen, and many more, need not be questioned. They are briefly these:—The Fox family, residing at Hydesville, were disturbed by knockings about their house. After a time it was found they would respond to questions, and they gave correct answers about the names and ages of the children when questioned by Mrs Fox. Questions were further put—Are you a man? are you a spirit? and, what is your name? and so on. Gradually, and after many questionings, and that by different people and on different occasions, a connected story was made out from the answers that this was the ghost of a pedlar named Charles B. Rosma, who had slept in the house four or five years before on a Tuesday night, and had been murdered at 12 o’clock by John C. Bell, a blacksmith, who occupied it, and was that night in the house alone. It was further stated that the body was buried in the cellar 10 feet deep. It appears from the evidence that the knockings had

never been heard in the house previous to the time thus indicated, but by all who had since occupied it. It seems to be assumed by Mr Owen that none of the neighbours knew anything of the occurrences mentioned. But this, I think, is a very improbable supposition; for Mr Owen states that the daughter of a neighbour (Lucretia Pulver by name, 15 years of age), was servant at the house at the time when the pedlar came with his pack, and that she spoke to him. This young woman gave her depositions regarding the circumstances after the knockings attracted public attention. She stated that Mrs Bell told her she was acquainted with the pedlar before. Is it then not a very probable thing that she would mention his name to the girl? Lucretia was sent home that day, as Mrs Bell was going from home, and said she would not require her services longer. The pedlar remained in the house with Mr Bell, but next day he never came, according to expectation, to the house of Lucretia, who had promised to buy a new dress from him. Lucretia was sent for again on Mrs Bell’s return 3 days afterwards, and came and resided there. Then she heard knockings and sounds of footsteps about the house at night, Then sounds as if coming from the cellar. A week after this Lucretia having gone into the cellar, was alarmed by sinking in the soft soil. She asked Mrs Bell what Mr Bell had been doing in the cellar. Mrs Bell said that it might be rat holes, and her husband was occupied a few days afterwards taking down earth to fill them up. The tenants who succeeded Mr and Mrs Bell, who had evidently considered it prudent to leave that part of the country, resided in the house a year before they heard knockings, and thereafter they had no peace for them, and shortly afterwards left. How are we to account for the knockings after the pedlar’s visit, heard by Lucretia and Mrs Bell, and then for the absence of them during a year after their successors came to the house, and further, for the resumption of the knockings at that time? The most reasonable explanation is that the knockings, in so far as they were real (although no doubt their excited imaginations would exaggerate them, and assign them to their several localities), proceeded from the excited persons who were terrified and haunted by the strong suspicion of foul murder having been committed. The absence of the knockings for a year after their successors entered was probably due to their ignorance of this dark deed. But as they had become better acquainted with their neighbours the secret had evidently been drawn out from Lucretia, and the natural result followed. They became terrified, and through their excited state knockings were produced, which no doubt would be exaggerated in the stillness of night. They did not bear this long, but sought another dwelling where they would find peace. The Fox family next took

possession, and the story of the previous knockings, and the suspicion of the dark deed associated with them, could hardly fail to be speedily known by the new tenants. The usual results followed, and most probably in an intensified degree. From Mr Owen's account, the Fox family were hereditarily gifted, or, as I should rather say, afflicted, with what was called second-sight, and such excitable natures as theirs would manifest the full effects of such a history as pertained to their new dwelling. But Mr Owen brings forward what he no doubt thinks clear proof that the neighbours never did entertain such suspicions of the pedlar's murder. He says that Mr Bell, hearing of the reports that were spread, came to the district and obtained signatures from persons residing there to the number of 44, stating that they never knew anything against his character, and that when he lived among them, they thought him, and still think him, a man of honest and upright character incapable of committing crime. Now what does this prove? It is intended to establish the fact that none of the neighbours had ever heard a rumour or entertained a suspicion that this Mr Bell had committed murder on the pedlar. He does not tell us if Lucretia signed, or if the successors of Mr Bell in the house signed it, or if the Fox family signed it. Most probably some of them did. As for others, who at the very worst could only know of a dark suspicion attaching to the unfortunate pedlar's visit, very little weight can be attached to their signing such a vague testimonial if they thought it would be of any service. As an evidence of Mr Bell's innocence, it strongly reminds one of the plea set up by an Irishman. When two witnesses swore they saw him steal a horse, he said he could bring fifty who didn't see him do so, and who would swear it. It is of little importance to us in the present case whether Mr Bell was innocent or guilty. It is sufficient to shew there is strong evidence for believing that a rumour of such guilt had reached the ears of Bell's successors after they had lived in the house a year, and also had come to the knowledge of the Fox family. The whole connected story, as we stated it, was given gradually at separate times, and no doubt corresponded to the various beliefs which were entertained by the questioners. Mrs Harding says, evidence of the crime was discovered in the cellar, when it was dug into. Mr Owen does not seem clear about this. To us, however, it is of no consequence. The evidence regarding Lucretia, who lived in the neighbourhood apparently during the whole time, affords sufficient reason to believe that the suspicion of the murder was connected with the house. Where then, I ask, is there any room or need for a ghost? One adequate reason will satisfy every philosophical mind. The Dutch Burgomaster, who omitted to receive his royal master with the customary salute of cannon, was prepared to

lay before His Highness nineteen good and sufficient reasons in vindication of his conduct. His master, however, was wisely satisfied when he heard the first—that he had no powder. It is surprising that Mr Owen (the narrator of the story) did not clearly see that the responses came in accordance with the minds of the questioners; for in the very same chapter in which he describes this case, he mentioned that a report was circulated that a pedlar who had suddenly disappeared, was murdered. This report was proved to be utterly false. Yet before the truth was found out by the return of the pedlar, specific information had been obtained by means of raps that the pedlar's dead body would be found at a particular point of a canal. In all cases that have been adduced, it would be found that where there were any means of obtaining full particulars regarding them, the rapping table, like Dame Waddell's teapot, would only give out what had been put in. To give a correct judgment, however, of what may be in the mind of any questioner, is no easy matter, and on this point there is great misapprehension. The amount of knowledge which the mind possessed, many supposed, was just what they were able to recall at the moment, yet on reflection everyone must be convinced that his knowledge was far more extensive; and it was a well-established fact that every thought or expression which the mind had ever received was retained by it, and might be recalled. Only a very small part is reproduced under ordinary circumstances, but in times of special excitement, or concentration of thought, the hidden stores of memory are brought forth in such abundance, and so distinctly, that the person is amazed. Dr Abercrombie tells of a naval officer who was submerged for a few moments in the water, and was rescued, and that during this brief time he declared he had seen the whole events of his life pass vividly before his mind. Another instance he gives as follows:—"A lady in the last stage of chronic disease was taken from London to a lodging in the country. Her infant daughter was taken to see her, and shortly afterwards the lady died. The child grew up, without any recollection of her mother, to mature age. She happened to be taken into the room where her mother died without being told anything about it. She started on entering it, and when the friend who was with her enquired the reason, she replied, "I have a distinct impression of having been in this room before, and that a lady who lay in that corner, and seemed very ill, leaned over me and wept." These examples will show how memory retains many things which may slumber for years, and suddenly be revived through even the slightest circumstance connected with what was forgotten. Sometimes also what has thus suddenly started into consciousness as suddenly disappears, so that we are at a loss

to know why it arose in the mind at all—until perhaps by careful searching we discover that it is correct. Of the reality of this every one who attends much to the working of his own mind will have frequent proof. The reproduction of thoughts in the mind takes place, according to what philosophers call the laws of association. Nothing in memory will start up into consciousness without being influenced by some thing else which connects it with our present thought. The intermediate thoughts, however, by which it is held in association with that presently before us, may not rise into consciousness, although they have been operative, and have led to the starting up of some long forgotten thought. This furnishes an illustration of one peculiarity of the mind's working, which has been designated by the term *Latent Mental Modifications*, or more recently by Dr Carpenter's *Unconscious Cerebration*.

It will serve to explain such a case as the following given by Owen, which he entitles "Sister Elizabeth." Dr H. saw an apparition while attending Dr Bellow's Church in New York of three female figures. One appeared as his wife, the other as his mother; the third, a young girl between them, he did not recognise. He had a sister Anne, who had died 39 years before, but he settled that the young girl did not resemble her. Next day he called on one of the Foxes. He wrote out a number of female names. Anne was passed by, and the table rapped out the name of Elizabeth, his sister. He declared he never had a sister Elizabeth. He asked if the figure he saw was his sister Elizabeth, and the raps at once answered yes. He afterwards consulted the family register, and found that a sister named Elizabeth had died a few weeks after birth. This had happened during a five years' absence from home, and on being questioned, Dr H. thought it likely that his father would mention the circumstance in one of his letters at the time, but he had forgotten it. This had been most probably suddenly recalled to his mind at the moment when he was intently seeking information—possibly with so much dimness and uncertainty, that he had been unable to assure himself of its correctness until the family register revealed what had been long ago made known to him. The answer I regard as simply a response influenced by his own will, although he had a feeling of doubt as to its correctness. He had already settled that the figure in question could not be his sister Elizabeth. Being between his mother and wife, he would most probably think that she must be another sister, although he forgot that there really was another. The name had no doubt flashed up suddenly yet dimly, when expecting the response. The vastness of the storehouse of memory in every soul is far beyond our conceptions, and as wonderful is the subtlety

and apparent caprice which characterise the mode in which it yields up its treasures. It is in sleep, in the somnambulist state, and in various abnormal conditions, that the extraordinary powers of the memory are most vividly displayed. Instances of this I cannot here take time to present, but they go far to prove that all we have once known is ever retained, and may be at any moment recalled, and probably no circumstances are more favourable for recalling what has been long forgotten than when a susceptible person, eagerly expectant, is making enquiries about it at his wooden oracle. It may, perhaps, be asked by some, Have you not admitted the reality of ghosts in the last-mentioned instance, in which Dr H. saw distinctly three figures, which he recognised as those of his departed relatives? Nothing, surely, can be stronger evidence than seeing them. If seeing is believing, then, surely, nobody can deny. This leads me to the subject of spectral illusions or apparitions which in all ages have been seen, and have ministered most powerfully to the love of the marvellous. Mr Owen admits—and I agree with him,—that some of the spectral illusions are truly accounted for on well-understood optical principles. For example, the visitor to the top of the Brocken, which is the principal summit of the Hartz Mountains, in the North of Germany, may see about sunrise, when the atmospheric conditions are favourable, the appearance of a giant in the clouds perhaps five or six hundred feet in height. Not, however, equal to the conception of the great Highland giant, Gog Magog MacFinn MacCoull, whose mouth was 11 miles wide, his teeth 10 miles square.

He would upon his toes upstand,
And take the stars down in his hand,
And set them in a gold garland,
To deck his wife's hair.

This wonderful spectre, which I was not fortunate enough to see when I was there, is simply explained when it is known to be merely the shadow of the traveller standing in light clouds with the sun shining brightly upon him, which is reflected from the distant clouds, and of course magnified to enormous proportions. Similar principles explain the Fata Morgana of the Mediterranean, the mirage of the Desert, and occasional figures of ships or cities, or other distant objects, sometimes seen in the clouds. These are *illusions*, considered as to the reality of what is represented, but not *illusions* as to the objective reality of the *images* or reflections themselves. With regard to illusions as to images which have no outward existence, but which simply exist in the imagination of the beholder, he is inclined to deny that there are such, unless in the case of persons labouring under disease or persistent hallucinations bordering on insanity. He lays down something like a principle to distinguish those hallucinations which he will admit to be

such from what he regards as being in no sense an illusion or hallucination, but the veritable appearance of a real ghost. He says there is no authentic instance of hallucination in which several witnesses agreed about it, and that an illusion or hallucination only deceives the one unhappy individual who is the subject of it. Now, if he and his admirers would adhere to this principle I think it would cut away the ground from the vast majority of the reputed ghosts with which we are favoured. And certainly it would leave not even the space of a needle's point for Dr H.'s three ghosts to stand upon in Dr Bellow's church. I may safely say that no one else saw them but himself. In most cases this distinction will be practically correct. Yet it is by no means followed out by Mr Owen, nor by those who put so much faith in his narratives. In fact, one of his own stories supplies a very strong illustration that the principle is not correct. He tells of two ladies, mother and daughter, walking in broad daylight, who observed a figure moving towards them. One said to the other, "There's Mr Thomson." They both looked, and recognised the person named. When they came home they mentioned to the husband, who was a medical man, that they had just seen Mr Thomson. He replied "That is impossible, for he has been ill in bed all day, and I have just been visiting him." An ordinary reasoner would conclude that here was the clearest evidence of one of two things. Either a remarkable case of mistaken identity, or a decided example of spectral illusion. The sharp eyes of the ladies seeing close at hand in the daylight a well-known friend, so that they were both certain of his identity, militate against the former alternative; and Mr Owen's acute mind probably never entertained such a thought. The other alternative, however, appears to him no less objectionable. It is clear it was not the man himself; and I think it must be equally clear to every one that it could not be his ghost, for he was still in the body, although he was in bed. Mr Owen, however, manfully sticks to his ghost theory. In fact, his capacity for the marvellous seems to be only equalled by the unfortunate party who had been living for a time at the Cape, and long afterwards, complained of persistent pains in his stomach, which he accounted for by saying he had swallowed a Caffre, and could not get rid of him. Mr Owen has swallowed the ghost theory, and although his mental stomach is often put to straits to digest it, he refuses to part with it under any circumstances. The spectre of a living man therefore seen by two ladies he persists in declaring to have been his ghost, and he explains its presence by supposing that the man had fallen asleep or gone into a trance, and that his ghost had gone out for an airing. One or other of the alternatives named is the only explanation which can to my mind

satisfactorily meet the case; but which was the correct one we have not sufficient evidence to prove. To prove that it was a case of mistaken identity we should require either to produce the man who passed along at the time and place, and show that the resemblance to the Mr Thomson named was sufficiently close to account for the impression of the two ladies. If, on the other hand, we had proof that no man in the least resembling him passed that way at the time, I should have no hesitation in declaring it a case of spectral illusion, which can be adequately accounted for by the influence of the imagination. This explanation will probably be regarded by some of you as a mere vague and unsatisfactory reason, resorted to to get rid of a difficulty—a reason which has no solid, or at least no scientific basis on which to rest. I think, however, I shall show you sufficient reason from facts well-established by science, and many of them quite familiar to your own experience, that may lead you to attach more importance to it than is frequently done. It is clearly and incontrovertibly established that all the organs of sense are also the organs of imagination—that they may be under its control, and exercise their several functions under its influence. On this point hear what Sir David Brewster says—who, I have observed, has been claimed by Spiritists as one of their supporters. He remarks that "when the eye is not exposed to the impressions of external objects, or when it is insensible to these objects in consequence of being engrossed with its own operations, any object of mental contemplation which has either been called up by the memory or created by the imagination *will be seen as distinctly as if it had been formed from the vision of a real object.*" In examining these mental impressions, he adds, I have found that they follow the motions of the eyeball, exactly like the spectral impressions of luminous objects, and that they resemble them also in their apparent immobility when the eyeball is displaced by an internal force. If this result shall be found generally true by others, it will follow that the objects of mental contemplation *may be seen as distinctly as external objects*, and will occupy the *same local position in the axis of vision* as if they had been formed by the agency of light." The truth of this, I think, everyone will understand, and admit in regard to the state of *sleep*. You have the impression of visible objects as distinctly as in the waking state. Moreover, you see them always in such position with regard to yourselves as you would do if you were awake, and in their presence. You never dream that you see objects behind you, or in any position relative to yourselves on which it would be impossible for your eyes to see them, if it were a reality instead of a dream. I have no doubt that the eyes really adjust themselves to the positions of the various objects which imagination has presented to the mind. A fur-

ther proof in support of this view is derived from the fact that those who have been born blind or deprived of sight in infancy are unable to imagine such objects as require sight to perceive them in reality. So it is with all the other organs of sense. The hearing is as much under the control of the imagination as the sight, and those who have been born deaf are unable to imagine or dream about sounds; or, if they do, they will represent them to their minds under the form of objects that are cognizable by the other senses—representing, perhaps, a loud sound under the form of a great cloud, or a sour apple, or a very solid piece of rock. The *muscles of expression*, as is well known, readily obey the impulses of imagination, so that the mother who is watching her child, and sees at times the beaming smile light up its countenance, says very truly her babe is dreaming. So the *organs of speech* are frequently found obedient to the imagination during sleep, and have sometimes revealed the secret of the murderer when he little knew of it. And various members of the body of some individuals show, on many occasions—sometimes to the loss and damage of their bedfellows—that they are ready at the call of imagination to follow Hamlet's advice to the players, and 'suit the word to the action and the action to the word.' But it will be said all this may be true in regard to sleep, but it is quite different when a person is awake. Then he can distinguish at once between any impression or influence of his imagination and an equally strong impression or influence from something which is a reality. This is not in all cases so easy as you think. The reason why we can in most cases distinguish between what is an impression of the imagination and what is a reality, is that the impressions of the imagination are usually inconsistent with, and contradicted by, the whole circumstances around us. We have on the one side a single impression derived from the imagination, and on the other a vast number of impressions all consistent with each other, and all opposed to this single impression derived from the imagination, and so we readily distinguish between the one and the other. But when the impression furnished by the imagination is not *inconsistent* with our surroundings—which sometimes, although rarely, happens—then we may be left in uncertainty. I remember a case of this which, although trivial in itself, furnishes a clear illustration. One day I suddenly called to remembrance an impression that I had made an engagement to meet a friend on a particular evening at his house. On trying to recall the circumstances connected with making the appointment, I could not do it. The impression was then distinct enough, but all the attendant circumstances had gone from me. I considered with myself, could this be an impression received in a dream?

I could not recall any attendant circumstances to afford a clue. There was nothing inconsistent or unlikely in the thing itself, nor anything extraordinary in my forgetting the circumstances. I felt quite uncertain, and only after going to the house at the time, arrived at the conclusion that the impression had been received in a dream. What happened to this very limited extent has occurred in another case quoted by Hamilton, to an extent which, if it were at all common, would turn the world upside down. 'A young man had a cataleptic attack, in consequence of which a curious effect was wrought upon his mental constitution. Every night, about six minutes after falling asleep, he began to speak distinctly, and always of the same subject, and he continued from night to night to act the same part. On awaking he had no recollection of his dreaming thoughts. He played a double part in his existence. By day he was a poor apprentice, by night he was a wealthy senator, the father of a family, and in prosperous circumstances. If during sleep anything concerning his true state were said to him, he declared it was unreal and a dream.' This may show that it is not always so easy for us to distinguish between what is presented by the imagination, and what by outward realities. Impressions made in dreams frequently continue after awaking. Probably you can all remember that when you have had a vivid dream, and have been suddenly awakened, you remain for a time under the full belief that the dream was a reality, and only gradually persuade yourself that it was not. It is the fact that the imagination can and does influence the various organs of sense during our waking hours, as well as during sleep. Neibuhr, the celebrated Danish traveller, when old and blind, said that 'as he lay in bed all visible objects strut about; the pictures of what he had seen in the East continually floated before his mind's eye, so that it was no wonder he could speak of them as if he had seen them yesterday.' Many eminent composers of music first compose their whole piece in their minds and perform it in their imagination, and are able to hear the whole harmony of the music as distinctly as if it were performed by an orchestra. The sense of *smell*, too, is also subject to the imagination's influence. A lawyer once accompanied a doctor to a *post mortem* examination of a child who had been murdered. They saw the coffin when they entered, and very speedily the gentleman of the long robe said the body was too far gone; he felt the smell overpowering, and he must at once retire. The doctor's well-seasoned nose, however, did not perceive the odour. On opening the coffin it was found to be empty, and there was no assignable cause for the strong impression on the olfactory nerves of the lawyer, but his

own excited imagination. The sense of *touch* is also subject in a remarkable degree to the magic spell of imagination. There are, however, illusions to which it is subject that may be accounted for on strictly physiological principles which physicians well understand. If you were visiting a friend whose leg had been amputated a week before, and in the course of your conversation on other topics, you casually ask him how he felt his leg; you must be startled by hearing him reply that he was much annoyed by a constant pain in his big toe. You must start at this, knowing probably that his amputated limb was already buried, or receiving special attention in the dissecting room; and yet his sensations must be easily accounted for on well-known physiological principles. But where there is no such physiological reason, innumerable instances occur daily of false perceptions of touch, which can only be explained by the influence of imagination. Without referring to such extraordinary cases as those in which a person believes that his head is turned the wrong way and dresses himself accordingly, or where he is convinced that some important part of his person is made of glass, which necessitates on his part very extraordinary caution, and fills him with many groundless fears—the sensations of touch, and especially in all parts of the body—except the points of the fingers, and the tip of the tongue, are in very many cases utterly deceptive.” Keeping in view those well established principles that show the influence of the imagination to be much more powerful than was generally understood, we might find in them a sufficient explanation of the great mass of cases in which it is alleged ghosts had been seen. When the imagination was strongly excited or very susceptible, it might cause one to see, even in the daylight, objects of its own creation. The simple reason why they did not usually see such so vividly during their waking hours was that the attention was generally distracted by impressions from external objects. If, however, they should sit down in a darkened room, in perfect silence, and with the strong desire and expectation of seeing a ghost, it would not be at all surprising if they should, like so many Spiritists, succeed. I have already said that Owen mentions a test for distinguishing between an illusion and a reality, namely—that the reality may be seen by any who are present, while the illusion cannot. If he adopted this principle, he should cast aside as unreliable all the cases of allged ghosts seen only by one person. But, probably from what he may allege to be corroborative evidence, he accepts visions, though seen only by one, as being actual ghosts. Now there is sufficient evidence to prove that the mere fact of two or more spectators receiving the same impression at the same time, is not proof that the thing seen is an outward reality. Owen

gives the case of the two girls being seen by the rest of the family clearly and distinctly at a little distance from their house. The father went towards them to see, but before he reached the place they disappeared. The family also standing outside the house lost sight of the figures about the same time. They found the two girls in the house upstairs, alone, and in their usual state of health. This circumstance might convince anyone that the figures seen outside could not be their ghosts. The girls, Owen says, saw and recognised their own figures as well as the others. What explanation then, does he offer? He maintains they were realities, though he does not profess to give the full explanation. He suggests, however, as a probable solution, that the purpose was to forbode the death of both of the girls, which took place within a year. The purpose of the figures appearing is not the question of main importance: What were these outward realities, as he maintains them to be? Either they were ghosts, according to his view, or they were not. If they were, we have the extraordinary result of persons who had two ghosts—one to serve them in the body, and another for ornament; one to be like Punch’s useful poker, and the other to remain always polished and bright. Really to overtake such a reasoner as Mr Owen, and bring him to convictions in accordance with common sense, seems as hopeless as to catch a ghost. To his mind it is not sufficient to find ghosts for the dead, but he claims them for those who are asleep or in a trance, and even for such as are looking with amazement upon what he declares to be themselves. Surely if they believed that this was their own ghost at which they were so amazed, we might well say—

Fool, fool! look at thy brother.

Why shouldn’t one fool look at another.

The explanation of this phenomena, so far as the evidence supplied affords indication, is a very simple one. It was a case of optical illusion arising from the peculiar state of the atmosphere. It was the month of October, after a heavy rain, and when the sun was shining brightly. In such a case there would most likely be a good deal of vapour rising from the soil, causing light clouds to form near the ground. The two girls were in the upper part of the house, in some part where the sun shone upon them from the one side of the house, and from which their shadows would be thrown out of the opposite side upon the light vapoury clouds near the ground. The reflection of these shadows would sufficiently explain the whole phenomena, without either ghost or foreboding of any kind. There is a story given by Owen in his “Footfalls” of a totally different kind, which Spiritists, I believe, hold to be a most clear and convincing demonstration of the correctness of their theory. The wife of an officer who had gone to India saw his spectre one night

in a faint-like attitude, with his hands crossed upon his breast. She at once settled in her mind that he must have died that very day, and waited with the utmost anxiety the arrival of the mail. Tidings came that her husband was killed in action that very day on which she saw the spectre—the 14th November. The War Office intimation dated it the 15th November. A friend in London mentioned the circumstance to a lady, who along with her husband had got power in seeing apparitions. She replied, addressing her husband, "That must be the very person I saw the evening when we were talking of India, and you drawing an elephant with a howdah on his back. Mr Wilkinson (the friend)," she said, "has described his exact position and appearance—the uniform of a British soldier; his hands pressed across his breast; his form bent forward as if in pain. The figure appeared just behind my husband, and seemed looking over his left shoulder." Through the medium of her husband, they procured communication from him—I suppose by table-rapping—and to the effect that he had been killed in India by a wound in the breast—where else would a lady wound a soldier? This was found to have taken place on the very same evening on which the vision appeared to the officer's wife, and it was afterwards ascertained that the date in the official intimation first sent from the War Office was wrong, and was afterwards corrected. At first sight, all this appears very remarkable; but it does not carry such weight as Mr Owen attaches to it. As to the officer's wife seeing a spectre of her husband at night, this does not by itself appear very extraordinary. Probably enough this had appeared frequently before. But why did she attach so much importance to its appearance on this night? Most probably because she may have had reason to suppose from his last letter that about that date he expected to be where the enemy were. A wife's anxiety will sufficiently explain her fears for his safety after this. If he had escaped, we should have heard nothing about it; but the fact of his dying on that day is held to be a strong evidence that the spectre was his ghost. The corroboration that is brought forward from the appearance of a soldier to another lady does not seem to me to help it much, as her information is very vague, beyond the mere fact that she saw the figure of a soldier on the same evening when they were talking about India, and evidently with considerable interest. In all probability, they may have had some relative, also an officer, about whose safety at this particular time they were also much concerned. If their friend had received a wound instead of the other, and the fact had come to the knowledge of the officer's wife already mentioned, the spectres would have been made very conveniently to do duty as ghosts for him.

The utter vagueness that characterises these narrations, and the faint shadow of coincidence with which ghost seers are commonly satisfied, remind one of the mental idiosyncracies of the child, who is,

By Nature's kindly law,

Pleased with a rattle—tickled with a straw.

I may mention a story, which I have not seen in any of the ghost books, but which I think might afford a much more plausible instance to illustrate the Spiritist's theory. Although I am stating it from recollection extending back 19 years, and cannot give the names and places concerned, still I believe it is authentic, as I heard it related by the late Professor Aytoun, of Edinburgh, in his lectures, when dealing with evidence. A number of a ship's crew landed on an island to procure water. On this there was a burning mountain, which, however, does not seem to have been at the time in action. While engaged in procuring water, one of them called the attention of the rest to an extraordinary spectre on the mountain side at some distance from them, crying, "Oh, there's Old Fogie!" this being the familiar *soubriquet* by which they designated a marine storekeeper in the port from which they hailed, with whom they were all well acquainted. They all at once recognised the identity of the person named, and, eager to satisfy their curiosity, left their water operations and hurried one after the other to see what was the matter. Their astonishment and horror can be easily described, when they saw not only Fogie, but a number of active followers, whom they at once set down in their minds as demons. Up the mountain sides the spectres ran, and as quickly the wondering sailors followed. They continued the pursuit until they observed Old Fogie with his spectral train had reached the crater at the top, when down into its dark depths he quickly disappeared, and all the demons immediately followed. The whole circumstances were narrated when they went on board, and a correct account of them was inserted in the log book, and signed by all the witnesses. When they returned to their own port, they made known the strange apparition they had witnessed at the crater, and they discovered that Old Fogie had died on that same day on which they had seen the spectres. The surviving relatives of this respected storekeeper felt much annoyed by the circulation of such a story regarding him, believing it to be a malicious fabrication. They accordingly brought an action against the captain of the vessel for circulating the story. The log book, however, was produced in Court; the witnesses could also testify to the accuracy of the facts. Judge and jury seemed to be confounded, and dismissed the case as something which no fellow could understand. This story, Professor Aytoun (who was a lawyer as well as a poet) said, was recorded fully in the records of one of

the County Courts, I think, of England. If it does not already figure in any of the Spiritistic books, some Spiritistic lawyer (if such a person can be discovered out of America) will perhaps hunt it out. It presents two important elements, authenticity and a striking coincidence. There is, however, as far as I can discover, no proof of a ghost. The most probable explanation is that it was an optical illusion due to the state of the atmosphere. The figure of Old Fogie was probably the reflection of the shadow of the mate, whose form may have presented some resemblance to the party named. The demons following were probably the half-naked sailors hurrying after the mate in wild glee to see the spectacle. The story was such as sailors would readily form from such materials. The only circumstance in the least noticeable is that this happened on the day old Fogie died, and that seems to me of very little importance. With respect to ghosts appearing in dark rooms belonging to professional mediums, and presenting themselves before individuals whose faculty for being imposed upon had already been tested to the highest degree, little need be said. The records of such performances showed the depth to which persons gifted with an ordinary share of intelligence might allow themselves to sink, while they cherished the delusion that they were advancing truth. A ghost under such circumstances gives proof of its reality by carrying a rose, or by appearing in woollen clothing and inviting his dupe to cut a piece

of it off, and so make sure that it is a ghost! If the etiquette of ghost-hunting allowed it, such dupes might easily satisfy themselves that the wearers of woollen clothing, the bearers of roses, and the owners of soft arms and bony fingers were ghosts of a very worldly character. Such should be seized and held fast till a light could be obtained. The intense simplicity of many spiritists appeared strikingly in Mr Owen's recording—as an interesting fact in science—that a certain investigating committee discovered phosphorus on the tips of the fingers of a professional medium. This was gravely noted with the tacit understanding that the phosphorus had been deposited there by natural exudation from the medium. The more probable explanation of its presence there would occur to all but blinded spiritists—that it was placed in readiness to produce those illuminated arms and faces, which appeared to have carried conviction to the minds of many. It was not necessary that he should be able to explain in detail how every varied effect was produced in dark rooms for the satisfaction of confirmed spiritists. This much was patent to all, namely, that the whole appearance and surroundings of ghost mediums in their dark rooms were such as were most favourable to any kind of imposture they chose to practise. Their childish performances were only relieved from utter insignificance by the dark suspicion, which they naturally prompted, of vile imposture.

SECOND LECTURE.—LEVITATION; SPIRIT WRITING; SPIRIT DIAGNOSING AND HEALING OF DISEASES.

Before I enter on the subject of the present lecture, I will refer to some letters in the public Press regarding the former one. It is not difficult to perceive in the letter signed "Perplexity and Darkness," appearing in the Daily Times, that the purpose the writer had in view was to lead his readers into perplexity and darkness on the subject which it is my purpose to make plain. He avows his agreement with me in attributing the phenomena of Spiritism to influences proceeding from the individuals who assemble to question the spirits rather than from external sources. So far, it might be thought there was no occasion for his writing at all unless to inform the public, who might be interested to know, that he agreed with the views which I set forth. But for some purpose he wishes to present himself as an antagonist, and as one of a dubious sort. He roars like a lion, but stalks forth in the skin of the ass. Now I could respect an honest, even although he were a stout antagonist, who appeared in his own character, boldly challenging combat on his own footing, which, in this case, is evidently that of an opponent of the truths set forth in the Scriptures, but this intellectual hippogriff only excites contempt. My purpose is to deal with Spiritists, and the alleged phenomena on

which they rest their system, and to show that these, in so far as they appear supernatural, are unsupported by solid facts; but the conduct of this double-faced adversary resembles that of the convict who tried the other day to escape from gaol by throwing pepper in the eyes of his keeper. He, however, was caught, and returned to his cell, and so long as my opponent wears the prison garb of Spiritism, I must deal with him on his Spiritualistic merits, until, by footing it for a sufficient time on the treadmill of this dark and dreary ghost house, he satisfies himself that the noise and dust with which he is surrounded are not indications of progress on the highway of intelligence and religion, but merely the illusions and impostures to which renegades from true religion have by their own folly been subjected. Another newspaper correspondent asks, "what force or law there is in nature which anybody knows of, that will account for the appearance of materialised spirits or ghosts?" I answer it is fully explained by the well-known law of the reciprocal influence of trickery and credulity. The difficulty mentioned, regarding a piece—which could not be matched in London—cut out of a ghost's garment, is one which probably drapers can explain. It may have been

an ordinary fabric so manipulated that it could not be recognised, or, possibly, something unusual, such as a piece of asbestos—a substance of mineral origin, which is fibrous and incombustible, and has been manufactured into a soft flexible cloth, formerly used as a shroud for dead bodies, and which has also done service, I believe, in assisting conjurers and impostors in passing unscathed through the midst of scorching flames. As to the appearance of such materialised forms in lighted rooms, this has only occurred when the parties concerned were well assured of the self-restraint and good behaviour of their dupes, and under circumstances in which it was easy to carry out their trick. To most individuals the materiality of the garments of the ghosts, and the solidity of their arms, fingers, and hair, as recorded, would afford the strongest presumption that they were ghosts in ordinary human bodies. If the precaution were taken to seize them suddenly, and hold them with a firm grip—which Owen, like an honest simpleton would not venture to do—it would certainly not require a surgeon's skill to assure even the most credulous that these ghosts' bodies and limbs were made of the normal constituents of bone and muscle. With respect to the assumed anxiety of this correspondent regarding the fate of the miraculous deeds recorded in the Scriptures if Spiritistic miracles he held as not established by sufficient evidence, I would remark that the miracles of Scripture are in no danger of falling through the want of sufficient evidence, and do not need the spurious help of Spiritistic tricks to buttress them. The sentiment of the ancient Trojan, "I fear the Greeks and those bringing gifts," expresses my feeling with regard to the Spiritistic wise men who would bring gifts to the Saviour. The harmless looking wooden horse which Spiritistic Greeks delight to bring into every city, contains within it such a horde of enemies to the Christian faith that their assumed desire to add to the evidence of Christianity can only meet with ridicule and contempt. Another critic has appeared—Mr E. C. Dunn, now styling himself M.D. He stated in a recent letter that he did not possess the degree usually indicated by these initials. I presume, therefore, he must simply mean by M.D. after his name, "making himself doctor." It appears that my method of dealing with the subject does not meet with his approval. He objects to personalities, and has a wholesome horror of ridicule. Now, Solomon, who must be admitted as an authority on this point, has laid down two directions. One is "Answer a fool according to his folly;" and the other, "Answer not a fool according to his folly." As I understand these, there is no real contradiction between them, but simply an indication that some cases require the one mode, and some the other. In this case it seemed to me the most appropriate course to adopt was the former. Mr Dunn may not like it; but my soul shall not spare for his crying. He read the 23rd Chapter of Matthew, as illustrating Christ's method of plain speaking, and that is an example which he will no doubt be pleased that I should follow. I should do him the justice to remark that he correctly enough described my sentiments regarding Spiritualism, when he stated, in his own vernacular, that it was all humbug. He might just have added, "and something worse." He said that my first effort in logic was an assertion that facts were not facts. Anyone

might readily see that the application of such a statement was to alleged Spiritistic facts, and, with regard to them, I have already shown in part, and to-night will show still further, that these, when scrutinised, are not facts, but "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a reek behind." My critic admitted that the medium for producing raps was electricity, but said that this did not explain the intelligence displayed in the raps. It was made, I think, sufficiently clear that the intelligence proceeded from the voluntary and intelligent persons from whom the electricity proceeded, and by whose will it was controlled. The statement that information received through raps was not previously possessed by any person present, I showed was not correct in the cases which I had time to examine, and presented as test cases by Owen. All the information received in them was just what was previously lodged in the minds of those asking the questions. Mr Dunn, relative to my explanation that the alleged ghost appearances were due to hallucination and optical illusion, said this must also apply to the visions recorded in the Bible. My critic, however, overlooks a most important difference. In the Bible we have to deal with a record Divinely attested, the validity of which neither avowed infidels nor Spiritists have been able to destroy. In Mr Owen's book, on the contrary, we have to deal with silly stories, supported by evidence which, though often making a great show, is found to be, when examined, utterly deficient in those points where there was room and opportunity for illusion or imposture. Let Spiritists prove their own position. Bible miracles do not need their help. He brings forward a charge against me of misrepresenting the report of the Dialectical Society; and says that I read, not from the report of the Committee, but from the report of a Sub-Committee. Now that is a most unfounded and unwarrantable assertion, for which there is no possible excuse, if he meant or wished to speak the truth. I have here the report of the Committee as published in the Spiritual Magazine of November, 1871, and the conclusions which the Committee arrived at from their own investigations are given there word for word as I gave them in my lecture, and as they were reported in the Daily Times of the following day. What will Mr Dunn say to that? If he has a spark of honour and honesty in him, he will take the first public opportunity of acknowledging his falsehood and retracting his aspersions. Moreover, I charge him with misleading his audience in regard to the evidence appended to that report. This evidence consisted of statements made to the Committee, some orally and some in writing, by witnesses. Some of these were members of the Committee, but others were not. Moreover, they state what they individually had seen or heard or otherwise experienced, but the Committee does not vouch for the accuracy or truth of everything which they say, because the Committee had not witnessed them. The whole amount for which the Committee stands responsible—vouching for the correctness of their personal experience—is simply what is expressed in the six conclusions which I stated in my former lecture. It would be expecting too much, however, from this adventurer when his craft is in danger, that he should hesitate about using such weapons to support his pretensions. He further misrepresents my statement when he says that I declared that the Dialecti-

cal Society proved that the phenomena of table rapping and such like were performed by the agency of electricity. For this misrepresentation, also, there is no possible justification, if he is able to understand a plain statement in print, or has the honesty to present it as he reads it. My statement on this point, as given in my lecture, and as reported in the Times, is word for word as follows:—"When a number of people were seated for a considerable time in a close room, it was very natural and very probable that electricity should become so accumulated and intensified as to present a sufficient reason for the phenomena declared to have been witnessed by the Dialectical Society." That is my opinion, and it is simply given as mine, and neither in that nor in any part of the lecture did I say that the Dialectical Society had proved electricity to be the cause. I further stated that the evidence of the Dialectical Society—that is, of course, what is guaranteed or vouched for by the Society or its Committee—does not advance one step beyond declaring that the information conveyed in the answers was known to the persons present, but sometimes only to one of them. I have referred to this matter at greater length than it intrinsically merits, but do so simply to show how great is either the obtuseness or the recklessness of this individual, and how little weight can be attached to the charges which, for want of arguments, he hurls blindly against his opponents. With reference to an observation I made, he asks: Would martyrdom make a cause more true? I never asserted that it would, but that it would afford an indication that the convictions of those who made such sacrifices were real and strong. Now, with regard to Mr Dunn's convictions of the truth of certain statements, made relative to him by his teacher, Mr J. M. Peebles, and which he has not, so far as I am aware, denied, I would suggest a method by which he might easily convince multitudes in this city, whom he appears so anxious to convert to his views. Whether by following it he would make himself a martyr he should know best, but if his Spiritistic pretensions are true, he should have no fear in making the trial, and if he did so, we should then know that he himself, at least, believed in the claims set up for him. Mr J. M. Peebles, in a lecture in Melbourne, entitled, "Spiritualism Defined and Defended," stated, "I have seen Dr E. C. Dunn and other mediums float in the air by spirit power." Here is an opportunity then for this individual demonstrating both his own convictions of the reality of this Spirit power, and bringing conviction to the multitudes of this city. Let Mr Dunn float through the air in daylight from the end of the Stuart street jetty to the old jetty. This will do more to convince the world of Spirit power than all empty talk. If he says that he can only float, but not fly, let him take the help which a clown once used who gathered a great crowd to see him float in a tub in Leith Harbour: let him harness a team of geese, and attach himself to them, and if he can perform this journey, then he may ask us to believe in his levitation. Apparent floating in prepared rooms, and with concealed apparatus, is merely a conjurer's trick, which is frequently shown; and that Mr E. C. Dunn has often performed that, I should not be surprised to learn. But until he gives us a fair test of his powers, he need not suppose that the public will be duped by either his own or his

teacher's assertions. With regard to diagnosing diseases on the surface of the body, it does not at all tend to excite our faith in his power when, after receiving a challenge which he had himself provoked, to test his skill in a very fair and simple manner, he draws back, and refuses to examine subjects, as he says, for the gratification of idle curiosity. But surely the vital importance of the new and beautiful faith of which he sets himself up as an apostle, is something more than a matter of idle curiosity. It is presented as a faith to live by, and as a faith to support men in the solemn hour of death. If this man then can give convincing demonstrations of its reality by any of those wonderful performances to which he openly lays claim, or which are claimed for him by his teacher—if he can establish his pretensions by spirit diagnosing, or floating in the air by spirit power—or holding his hand in a burning kerosene lamp, as was asserted by his teacher in Melbourne; and if, while all eyes are upon him eager to see these wonders and believe the new faith, he still refuses even to attempt such things, there is but one epithet which can be applied to him by every intelligent observer, and all his gasconading and foolish pretensions and foul abuse will only serve to open the eyes of his dupes to his real character. The phenomena which come before us to-night for examination, are, first, those performances to which the name of levitation has been applied. It is worthy of note that the Spiritists seem to repudiate Shakespeare's sentiment, "What's in a name?" To explain what is meant by this fine sounding term, it means riding through the air (either with or without a broomstick), and, I should add, not merely through the air, but through roofs and brick walls without leaving a hole. One of the best marked cases I have met with is the celebrated one of Mrs Guppy, who lived in Highbury Park, in the north of London. From the account in the Spiritual Magazine of July, 1871, it appears that a séance was held on the 3rd of June, in the rooms of two professional mediums, as usual, in the dark. A conversation was heard between a male and a female spirit that frequently appeared in these rooms, discussing whether they could bring Mrs Guppy, who was an unusually portly lady. One of the company urged them to try, to which they consented. Three minutes thereafter, Mrs Guppy dropped on the centre of the table. A light was struck, and she was recognised by the company, standing on the table round which they sat, trembling all over, and in a somewhat stupified frame of mind. She held a pen in which the ink was still wet, and an account-book in her hand, but did not speak. Three of the company immediately went to see if the door was shut, and found it locked. The company was therefore persuaded that by no natural means could she have come in. Mrs Guppy said the last thing she remembered before finding herself on the table was being in her own room entering accounts in her book. She complained that she was not in visiting costume, having taken off her shoes before the fire. Just as she stated this a pair of shoes dropped from the roof upon the floor. Afterwards, in the dark, four flower-pots with flowers, which belonged to Mrs Guppy, were placed on the table, the room of course being all the time closed. Still later in the same evening, while sitting in the dark, some one cried for a light. Four of the company saw Mr Herne, one of the profes-

sional mediums, falling back into his chair, and bundles of clothing belonging to Mrs Guppy and her husband, and a Miss Neyland, who lived with them, on the table. Herne declared he had just seen Miss Neyland, who had pushed the clothes into his arms. The lamp was again put out, and on being lighted, Mr Williams, the other professional medium, was missing from the room. He was found in the next room, lying in an insensible state on some clothes belonging to Mrs Guppy. He said he had been at Mrs Guppy's house and saw Miss Neyland, who was sitting at a table, and who seemed to be praying. A number of those present went in cabs the same evening along with Mrs Guppy to her house, and ascertained that she had been at home some time during the evening, that Miss Neyland who had been in the room with her had fallen asleep, and on awakening had observed that she was gone. This account, which I have slightly abridged, was signed by the company present, and therefore we must presume that what they relate as facts that happened under their own observations really took place. But even if we admit all these facts, we do not reach the inference which they draw, and wish others to draw, from them—that Mrs Guppy had been transported a distance of about three miles through the air, and through the roofs and walls of the dwelling of Messrs Herne and Williams. Nor yet are we necessitated to believe that Mr Herne made the double journey in the same way to Highbury and back, carrying a bundle of clothing. Nor are we constrained by the evidence to believe that his accomplice, Williams, performed the same wonderful feat. When Miss Neyland was asked by the party who went home with Mrs Guppy if Messrs Herne and Williams had been there, she replied no; and it appeared she had been asleep most of the time that Mrs Guppy was absent. A clue to the real explanation is presented in the following circumstance, observed during the seance: "Once, when a light was struck, Mr Herne was seen by four persons with his feet above the level of the edge of the table, his arms extended towards the ceiling, and his whole body falling with the velocity almost of a flash of light into his chair. He was moving in a curve from near the top of the folding doors." The most devoted Spiritist will, I think, have little difficulty in admitting that this was simply a case of palpable and clumsy imposture. The discovery of one of the so-called mediums (Herne) falling down swiftly into his chair from the top of the table on which he had been standing while the light was out, evidently receiving articles through a trap door in the roof of the apartment, at once explains how the whole of the articles mentioned found their way into the room. As for Mrs Guppy, those familiar with the pages of the *Spiritual Magazine*—that pitiable record of human imbecility and imposture—are well aware of the unflinching credulity both of her and her husband, as their house appears from the numerous accounts of such transactions to have been a favourite place for performing every kind of silly practical joking. Mrs Guppy, there can be little doubt, had been conveyed from her house to the dwelling of the tricksters Herne and Williams by one of the usual terrestrial conveyances called cabs, and had been made, willingly or unwillingly—perhaps with the assistance of some powerful narcotic—the victim of this clumsy trick, and had been passed

through the trap-door already referred to down upon the table, where the group of wondering table-rappers were sitting in the dark in readiness to testify to her arrival. The transference of Williams from the room in which the *seance* was held to the next room was effected, there could be little doubt, through a concealed door. The whole occurrence simply presents the results of a set of impostors practising on their dupes. While Spiritists may concede this, I will no doubt be referred to the much-talked-of case of Home's levitation, described by Lord Lindsay, and which must be admitted to have been very extraordinary, if true. A very slight examination of the narrative, however, excites the gravest suspicion of its correctness. By this I do not mean to insinuate that Lord Lindsay consciously misrepresented anything which he stated, but on the face of it the evidence offered is singularly incomplete, if not self-contradictory. Like many of Mr Owen's narratives, given, no doubt, in perfect honesty, so unbounded is the faith displayed in the honesty and power of the mediums, who have to be tested in regard to these very qualities, that precautions against imposture and illusion have not been taken on these points on which precaution was most necessary. Lord Lindsay describes Home's levitation as if it were a most ordinary occurrence, and with as little care to satisfy the suspicions of his readers as if he believed they had all as much faith in Home as he had. This narrative also appears in the *Spiritual Magazine* of August, 1871, as follows:—"I may mention that on the occasion I was sitting with Mr Home and Lord Adare and a cousin of his. During the sitting, Mr. Home went into a trance, and in that state was carried out of the window, in the room next to where we were, and was brought in at our window. The distance between the windows was about 7 ft. 6 in., and there was not the slightest foothold below them, nor was there more than a 12-inch projection to each window, which served as a ledge to put flowers on. We heard the window in the next room lifted up, and almost immediately after we saw Home floating in the air outside our window. The moon was shining full into the room; my back was to the light, and I saw the shadow on the wall of the window sill and Home's feet about 6 in. above it. He remained in this position for a few seconds, then raised the window and glided into the room, feet foremost, and sat down. Lord Adare then went into the next room to look at the window from which he had been carried. It was opened about 18 in., and he expressed his wonder how Mr Home had been taken through so narrow an aperture. Home said (still in trance) 'I will show you,' and then with his back to the window he leaned back and was shot out of the aperture, head first, with the body rigid, and then returned quite quietly. The window is about 70 feet from the ground. I very much doubt whether any skilful tight-rope dancer would like to attempt a feat of this description, where the only means of crossing would be by a perilous leap or being borne across in such a manner as I have described, placing the question of the light aside."

Now it must occur to every one who reflects on this narrative, that we should require to know a great deal more about the circumstances than is here given, before we can believe that Home levitated from the one window to the other. The account is given in the most slipshod and un-

satisfactory manner. Home went into a trance, while in the room along with other three persons. We next hear of his passing through the window of the next room. We have no evidence regarding the mode by which he went from the one to the other; nor yet how he went from the one window to the other. Whether he had any rope to swing himself by, or any plank to walk upon; or whether there was any opportunity of his using any other ordinary means of transit—there is no evidence to show. We have only the fact that he went in some way from the room in which he was sitting, along with three others, and that some time afterwards he came in by the window. Even regarding his mode of opening the window nothing is said, because nothing was seen. Lord Lindsay was sitting with his back towards it. It will surely require stronger evidence than this to make us believe the inference which this credulous nobleman presents. His cousin, Lord Adare, who went to the window of the next room and observed it open 18 inches, was greatly puzzled to understand how a man could pass through such a narrow aperture; but how he could float from one window to the other, a space of 7 feet, and that situated 70 feet above the ground, appears to have caused no difficulty to his comprehensive mind. Until we obtain better evidence, I think we shall not be chargeable with unfairness if we place this in the same category with the adventures of the illustrious Baron Munchausen. The other performances of the medium Home, in shortening his own body to about five feet and lengthening it again to seven feet, may be safely relegated to those who are content to draw their facts from their imaginations. I may be reminded by some that the new *psychic force* discovered to be so fully developed in this individual by Mr. Crooks, F.R.S., has been found to change the weight of bodies. It was long ago ascertained, by careful experiment, that electricity produced a very slight difference, both in the volume and in the weight of bodies; but so minute as only to be regarded or measured by the scientific chemist. Crooks's experiments on Home brought out considerably greater results. These have not, however, been accepted by most scientific men as at all reliable. This, however, is, for our present purpose, a matter of little importance. Even the greatest results which Crooks professes to have obtained in the lessening of the weight of bodies, would not, by any means, account for the continuous floating of the human body high in the open air. The elevating of the tables in rooms where a number of persons are present affords different conditions to the continuous floating of the human body high in the open air; and until satisfactory evidence has been discovered of the reality of the alleged phenomena of human levitation, we shall leave our floating mediums to the company of their respected ancestors, the witches of the broomstick. I pass now to seek out and follow up the trail of ghosts of a more intellectual character than those who delight in gymnastics. It is said that ghosts of this description take possession of the heads and hands of their friends, and cause them to write communications conveying information which they did not know, and often expressing sentiments of a more exalted and refined description than they could of their unaided genius have attained to; always, however, be it remarked, observing a beautiful conformity to the peculiar notions regarding spelling and grammar which the earthly medium may hap-

pen to entertain. Their intellectual efforts are directed to subjects as various as those which engage the thoughts of ordinary mortals. A book of their communications might fitly serve the title given to an ancient treatise "concerning all things and a few other matters." Besides the commonplace style of epistle you may have poetry ranging over all the gamut of human sentiment, "from grave to gay, from lively to severe;" you may have musical compositions when the mediums have capacity for this work, and orations and treatises such as those wonderful productions of Mr James Smith which so much excited the admiration of the citizens a few months ago. With a deeper meaning than our literary judges were able at the time to discern, he told the public that he was not the author of them, but that only his hand had written them. The spirit of some departed author had inspired him, and it now appears as a sure confirmation that the same spirit had written down and published during his earthly lifetime in books which are in the Melbourne library the very same wonderful revelations. In short all kinds of literary effort may be expected from the ghosts, with the solitary exception of a gospel sermon. A devoted educational reformer imagined he had gained a great point, when he raised the cry and sought to make it a reality, "The schoolmaster is abroad;" but this seems antiquated and worthless compared with the advent of the literary ghosts. With the trifling drawback of their carelessness in such matters as spelling—holding, I suppose, the views of a distinguished nobleman, that people have a right to spell their own words in their own way—the royal road to knowledge, long sought in vain, has at last been found. To give an illustration of its striking character and intrinsic value, I cannot do better than present you with the account which Mr Owen has given of a ghostly communication written by a lady's hand before his eyes, which was the means of converting him to that new and beautiful faith which he so appropriately adorns. In a small party in Naples, a lady enquired of Mr Owen if he had seen spirit-writing. He replied in the negative. Another lady expressed her disbelief of the reality of such a thing, and a trial was agreed upon. Several sat down with paper and pencil, waiting for the ghost to move them. A question was asked by one lady, "Who gave me these pins?" and another wrote down as an answer, "The one that gives you a maid and a cook." This answer was correct. A friend in Florence who had given the pins, had also sent to her a ladies' maid and a cook. This produced great astonishment, particularly to the lady who had asked the question. Mr Owen's philosophic mind could not rest without probing it to the bottom. He accordingly ascertained by enquiry next day from her, that she had never spoken to any one outside her family circle, about the servants, whence they came or who sent them, nor yet about who sent the pins. Moreover, she stated that she had only lately made the acquaintance of the lady who had written the reply so correctly. He did not consider it necessary to push his enquiries further, by asking *the lady who wrote the answer*, about the extent of her acquaintance with the affairs of the owner of the pins; as the whole matter of both pins and servants seems to have been known in the household, and the two ladies were acquainted, it is most probable that some of the children, or of

the servants connected with both families, were also acquainted with each other. The circumstances, both of the pins and the servants, would thus most likely be communicated and in this way reach the ears of the lady who wrote the reply. To my mind this appears far more reasonable and probable than fathering the answer upon a ghost. It may be said this is a mere supposition. I answer Mr Owen's explanation is a mere supposition too, and mine I hold is by far the more likely. It must be remembered too, that the burden of proving a ghost's presence lies on those who assert it to be there. Mr Owen professes to bring proof of his presence, and his proof in this, as in all cases, falls short of the mark. I may now notice a case which Mr Owen describes at great length, and evidently puts forward as a most convincing demonstration of the reality of spirit communication by means of writing; he entitles the chapter "How a French King's favourite musician manifested himself," M. N. G. Bach, a musical composer 67 years of age, who lived in Paris, received from his son a musical instrument called a spinnet of a very antique description, on 4th May, 1865. He was delighted with it, and spent most of the day in admiring it, trying its tone, and inspecting its mechanism. On a bar of wood which supported the sounding board he thought he could distinguish writing—namely some Latin words with the date, April, 1564. This ancient date on it, of course, greatly increased the old gentleman's interest in it. During the night after such excitement, as was not unnatural, he had a vivid dream about it. A young man in the ancient costume of the French Court appeared to him and said this spinnet belonged to me. I often played on it to amuse my master King Henry. The King composed an air which he used to sing, and I accompanied him." Further, the visitor added "I will play it to you," which he did. The old man awoke in tears, touched by the pathos of the song. He lighted a taper and found it was 2 o'clock. Next morning he found a paper at his bedside with some French words written on it, and below it the music and words of a song. This was the very song which he had heard sung and played in his dream. Now Mr Owen asks, "Who had done it?" Had it been himself? This latter supposition was so natural, that it might have been expected, Mr Owen would have searched into it before rejecting it in favour of a ghostly explainer. But he summarily dismisses it by saying, "He was no somnambulist, he had never that he knew walked or written in his sleep. Is that then a sufficient ground for rejecting this most natural and sufficient explanation? Somnambulism where it occurs must have a beginning some time, and the fact that this old gentleman was not aware of his being a somnambulist is no guarantee that he was not. It is brought out in the narrative that if this was the first occasion, it was not the last. Such cases of somnambulism are so frequent, that it is surprising any man of intelligence should seek for any ghost to account for this writing and composing during sleep. Mr Owen however points out a greater wonder, which he regards as proof positive of the reality of a ghost. Some people enlightened M. Bach about Spiritism and Spirit-writing. Accordingly, three or four weeks after his dream, M. Bach, feeling a headache and nervous trembling of the arm, the idea struck him that perhaps some spirit wished to write through him and explain the mystery about the *spinnet*. He sat down with paper and

pencil, then lost consciousness, and in that state he wrote that the *spinnet* contained a piece of parchment written by King Henry and nailed on the inside of the case, and beneath was written a copy of the parchment. Signed, Baldassarini. The *spinnet* was accordingly sent for from the museum, where it had meanwhile been deposited. Anxious search was made by father and son, and a parchment was found in it as described, with an inscription closely resembling what was written down by M. Bach, in his state of unconsciousness, or, as I would call it, somnambulism. No doubt he had examined the instrument and seen the first parchment nailed inside, and read the inscription on it, during his first somnambulist attack. It is quite evident, too, that he now wrote down in this second somnambulist attack what he had seen during his former somnambulism, but had forgotten during the interval. This is very much like what is well known as double-consciousness. The recurrence of the same train of ideas as he formerly had, and the recalling vividly what he had formerly seen, is quite according to the ordinary experience of such cases. The most remarkable thing about the case is the simplicity of Owen, who imagines he has discovered a ghost. He goes into a long and laborious investigation, presents full evidence of the statements he has given, and then argues about the explanation. He laboriously strives to demolish the supposition of imposture in the case, for which I think there was not the slightest ground, but regarding the most natural and simple explanation that it was a case of somnambulism, he has nothing to object except that the old man did not know previously that he was subject to this affection. A slight acquaintance with well-authenticated cases of somnambulism, will afford a sufficient explanation of many things as wonderful as this. Dr Abercrombie supplies a host of them. I may mention one, as it is somewhat remarkable for the kind of accomplishment manifested in this state, and may perhaps afford a clue to some of the spirit music with which Spiritists are occasionally entranced. A girl 7 years of age slept in an apartment next one frequently occupied by an itinerant fiddler. He was a skilful musician, and spent a part of the night performing fine pieces. The girl, however, merely regarded his music as a disagreeable noise. After 6 months' residence here she fell ill and removed elsewhere. After recovery she acted as servant, and during the night there was heard in the house where she was the most beautiful music, which could not be accounted for. At length it was found to proceed from her lips, and resembled the sweetest tones of a small violin. On further observation it was found that after being about two hours in bed she became restless, then uttered sounds like tuning a violin, and then dashed off into elaborate pieces of music. After a year or two she imitated the sound of a piano, which she heard in the house where she now lived. A year after she began to talk as if instructing a pupil on a vast variety of topics, and with great ability. She has been known to conjugate Latin verbs, and speak several sentences in French—though ignorant of these languages when in her waking state. This case shows clearly how powerfully the faculties may be excited in this condition, and especially how memory may give back even impressions which had been apparently forgotten as soon as they had been heard. It affords ample grounds for explaining M. Bach's remembrance of the parchment and what was on

it while in the same peculiar state. The most usual form in which Spirit writing is practised by mediums is that which attracted public attention in London about the year 1858, when a well-known medium called Foster held séances, charging a guinea for admission, which the nobility in great numbers attended. He requested visitors to write down any names they chose, each on a separate piece of paper, which was rolled up as a pellet and placed on a salver. Foster then requested any one of the company to point out one which he wished to be read by spirit power. Very speedily Foster produced on a piece of paper the name contained in the pellet pointed out and that written in a style bearing a close resemblance. Multitudes believed in this man as a real medium between the inhabitants of the earth and of the spirit-world. The Times of London declared it was little short of miraculous. An honest conjuror, however, who was practising his calling in the Coliseum, denounced Foster as an impostor, and challenged him to do what he pretended in his presence without the trick being detected. Of course Foster did not comply, and the conjuror contented himself with exposing his false claims. He first performed the trick; then explained how it was done. He shewed that when he took up the salver and pointed to the pellet, the name on which he was asked to write by spirit power, it was the easiest thing for an expert conjuror to take up the pellet between his fingers and drop another in its place before the eyes of the spectators without detection. Having it concealed in his hand, it was easy enough to read it while the attention of the audience was directed by conversation. Then, with an appearance of great mental agitation, he wrote, as he pretended, under the guidance of the spirits, a *fac simile* of the name which he had surreptitiously read on the pellet. This will indicate sufficiently the principle on which the whole practice of those impostors called test-mediums is carried on. Of course there are many variations in the particular modes adopted for drawing off the attention from the art of trickery, but sleight of hand is the main explanation of the whole. I have little doubt, too, that some advance a little further, and from careful study of the countenance and manner of persons while writing down a number of names, one of which they wish the medium to pick out, hazard a guess about it, and in most cases may be correct. The whole appearance of the mode of proceeding can leave little doubt that it is a piece of trickery. The information which the medium professes to give is simply elicited from what the inquirer has written down in his presence, or from the medium's knowledge of those who come to consult him. None of Owen's cases, although he professes to have scrutinised them, and presents full evidence on points about which there is no room for doubt, can disabuse the mind of trickery and sleight of hand as the real explanation. He never entertains the suspicion himself, and takes no means, therefore, to put it to the test. Let us glance at a case which he gives as most convincing. He visited Foster, the best test medium, he says, he ever knew, and intimated he wished the name of a spirit from whom he had lately received a communication. Foster told him he saw the spirit of a lady with a basket of flowers—all violets. Owen was at once excited. He indicated this was the party he wanted, and asked the name. Foster told

him to write down seven christian names, which he did. Foster then took the list, glanced over it, then tore off the names separately, and rolled them up into small pellets, which he threw down among a number of blank and written pellets which were lying on the table. Foster told him to take them up and hold them in his hand under the table. He then said: "The spirits desire to have your hat under the table." Foster accordingly put it there. Then he said: "Spirit, when you have selected the pellet, will you let us know by rapping?" In a minute the raps sounded. Conversation by raps followed as to who should take up the hat and receive the pellet. A young lady with Mr Owen was requested to do so. Before she opened it, Foster said: "Let me try first if I can get the same name written under the table." He held paper and pencil for a little under the table, and handed the paper to Owen. Of course the name in the pellet and the paper was the same, and in a minute after he shewed it marked on his arm. Now most plainly all this is mere conjuring or sleight of hand. We have no means of judging of the extent of Foster's previous knowledge of Owen. Probably he knew much more than Owen thought of. Besides Owen had some conversation with Foster in what he calls "a general way" about the purpose of his visit, and most probably Foster elicited more than Owen dreamt of. In watching Owen write down the names, Foster must (if he did not previously know it) have made his guess as to which it was. Foster himself separated the names, and made them up in pellets, so that he could easily secrete between his fingers the one he had fixed on and drop another in its place. He then dropped the pellet into the hat as he put it below the table. To guard against Owen's detecting the exchange Foster made, in regard to the pellet, by examining the pellets left in his hand, Foster took care to have them mixed up with a number which were lying on the table, and of which Mr Owen did not know the number nor yet the names in them. The writing on paper below the table and on the arm was easily enough accomplished during the many movements which were made during the performance to divert attention. Although this is one of the commonest conjuring tricks, and one therefore which might most readily be suspected, the possibility of it never seems to enter Mr Owen's mind, and of course he takes no precautions against it. I would have no hesitation in defying any test medium whatever, to do what they profess to do, and what Mr R. D. Owen believes, in his simplicity, they do, under anything like reliable test conditions. Every pretension to such supernatural power or knowledge, set up in the name of Spiritism or clairvoyance, has been found, when put to the test in anything like a scientific way, to be mere imposture, performed with varying success, according to the natural cleverness and acquired audacity of the performer. To show you what is the tendency of this whole system, as it appears to any calm and impartial mind after close and careful scrutiny, I may quote a sentence from the judgment delivered by the Vice-Chancellor in the Court of Chancery, in the famous suit which was raised by Mrs Lyon against Home, the well known medium, in the year 1857. Mrs Lyon had been induced to adopt Home as her son, and had given him £30,000 as a free gift, and £30,000 more in reversion. When her eyes were

opened to her folly, she instituted this suit to set aside these gifts, on the ground that they had been obtained by undue influence. Evidence on both sides was adduced to a very full extent. The whole matter was impartially and judicially investigated, and the conclusion of the Vice-Chancellor's judgment—which judgment, of course, was founded on the evidence—was as follows:—"That the system" (namely, Spiritism) "as presented by the evidence, is mischievous nonsense, well calculated on the one hand to delude the vain, the weak, the foolish, and the superstitious; and on the other to assist the projects of the needy, and of the adventurer; and lastly, that beyond all doubt there is plain law enough and plain sense enough to forbid and prevent the retention of acquisitions such as these by any 'medium,' whether with or without a strange gift, and that this should be so is of public concern; and (to use the words of Lord Hardwicke) of the highest public utility." I quote from the official Law Journal Reports for November, 1868, which is admitted in every court of law. I would only remark here that probably the Vice-Chancellor's principle is one which might admit of easy application to many other dupes as well as Mrs. Lyon, and the well-known charge of raising money under false pretences might, I think, fairly and legally be established against any of the travelling quacks and impostors, both Spiritists and others, who fatten upon the credulity of the public. I promised in my advertisement to refer to the pretensions in regard to spirit diagnosing and the healing of diseases, and I shall now do so. The healing of diseases in all ages has been a favourite sphere of operation for all kinds of impostors. It combines every conceivable advantage for their carrying on their swindling without the means of ready detection. The imagination and credulity of men are probably under no circumstances excited more easily than when they are affected with disease. Often the slighter the disease is, the more is the imagination excited, and the readier will they believe in anyone who sets up great pretensions. As to the nature of the disease by which the person is affected, he himself is usually the least qualified to judge. He may suffer from the most trifling and temporary ailment, and magnify it to the most alarming dimensions. He may be affected with some most serious organic disease, as of the head, the heart, or the lungs, and refuse to believe that there is anything more serious than some slight temporary disorder. Further, in any case, whether slight or serious, when there is recovery the greatest misconception is apt to prevail regarding the method and means by which it has been effected. Keeping these facts in view, which are familiar to all medical men, and probably well enough known by persons of ordinary intelligence, it is not surprising that the domain of the healing art should have always presented a favourite sphere for impostors in which to exercise their gifts. Besides, as there are sick persons in every country, and more or less at all times—as they are always eager to obtain the help of the skilful, or those whom they believe to be skilful, and are as ready, as far as they are able, and often beyond their ability, to pay for it, I have no hope of seeing, in this age at least, a cessation of impostors who pretend under various names to cure diseases. The spread of this latest delusion, Spiritism, which

has called into activity impostors of every name, and has lent its shield for their protection, has, as might have been expected, sent forth a host of Spiritistic healers. These for the most part hail from America. But they have appeared also, like Spiritism, in other countries as well. The exploits of the Zouave at Paris, and of La Regina dal Cin of Venetia, a successful bone-setter; of Dr. Newton, of America; and last and least of Mr. E. C. Dunn—all fail to show anything like real cures performed by Spirit power. The existence of disease in all those cases which are professed to be cured is a matter of doubt, no reliable evidence being given. The fact of persons lying in bed and being unable to walk is no sufficient evidence of any organic disease. The extent to which diseases of every kind are simulated by that peculiar state of the nervous system called hysteria is well-known to all medical men, and affords results which the ordinary public would be astonished to learn. On this subject I quote the following from an authority which I think will not be disputed. Sir James Syme, the world-renowned Professor of Surgery in Edinburgh, says:—"Young women—particularly those of the higher ranks—are apt to suffer from painful sensations in the joints, which closely simulate the symptoms of articular disease connected with alteration of structure, and consequently are apt to lead to treatment no less unnecessary than injurious." Then, after describing the proper treatment to follow, and the marks of diagnosis, he says, "The uneasy feelings, though frequently remaining months or years, generally commence and disappear suddenly—whence empiricism is afforded a good field which has been diligently cultivated." Another surgeon describes the success of Sir Benjamin Brodie in dealing with such cases. Being well aware of their being under the influence of the imagination and will of the patient, he has often commanded his patient to rise and walk, and possessing the authority of a great name, his unflinching order has been obeyed, though at first with reluctance and protestations on the part of the patient that the thing was impossible. The result has been that the patient has at once been able to walk. Cases of this class are only a small part of the multitude of diseases which owe their continuance mainly to the imagination or the nervous condition of the patient; and when a powerful stimulus is brought to bear on such excited individuals the effect appears to ordinary beholders almost miraculous. No class of practitioners are probably more likely to exercise a powerful influence on such individuals than persons who set up great pretensions to heal by spirit power, or by any unusual influences. Whether they call themselves clairvoyant, or magnetic healers, the source of their power is simply the force of their audacious pretensions acting on sensitive and nervous patients. Although the pretence of healing by spirit or ghost power is comparatively recent, healing claims have been set up in all countries and from the earliest ages. On Egyptian and Assyrian inscriptions there are indications of mesmeric manipulation. In India and China artificial somnambulism is believed to have been practised from early times; and among the Greeks and Romans appear traces of similar methods of healing. In modern times Mesmer acquired the greatest fame for his exposition and practice of these peculiar methods of healing.

called by various names—mesmerism, animal magnetism, electro-biology, somnambulist treatment, and now spirit-healing. He was born about the year 1734, and is said by some to have been a native of Switzerland. Like the great mass of his followers who have attained anything like notoriety in the world on account of their healing pretensions, he was a scheming impostor. A commission was appointed by the Empress Maria Theresa to investigate a cure alleged to have been wrought by him on a blind girl in Vienna. A large assemblage of 800 persons, comprising medical men, met for the purpose of testing the reality of the girl's vision. She was found able to distinguish bright colours, but when it was observed that Mesmer made signs to her, and he was ordered to withdraw—which he was very unwilling to do, however—she could no longer distinguish colours at all. Mesmer thereupon received an imperial order to leave the city within 24 hours. What a pity such a law was not in force in Dunedin! In Paris, to which he afterwards removed, M. Campan being seized with some pulmonary affection, Mesmer was called in. To insure a speedy and perfect cure, Mesmer ordered one of three things to be done—either that a young woman of brown complexion, a black man, or an empty bottle should be placed at the left side of M. Campan. "Sir," said Madame Campan, "if the choice be a matter of indifference, pray bring the empty bottle." The treatment did no good, and taking advantage of the absence of Madame Campan he had recourse to the old system of bleeding and blistering, and M. Campan recovered. He asked for a certificate from M. Campan that the cure had been effected by magnetism alone, and received it. Madame Campan, however, was more honest. When she learned it, she reported it to their Majesties, who had previously been interested in Mesmer, and they determined to have nothing more to do with him. In France, the subject of animal magnetism—known under various names—has almost ever since his time attracted great attention, and has been made the subject of investigation by several of the scientific societies. The subject has, however, always been liable to exaggerations and misrepresentations. The Magnetic Society of Paris, which broke up in 1820, had for its Secretary a nobleman called the Baron d'Henin, and speaking of the caution necessary to be used in receiving the accounts of the results of animal magnetism—he says "I have read or run over almost all the books which treat of magnetism; I have lived among magnetisers; I have seen them magnetise; and I have magnetised with them; I have restrained my incredulity, the better to allow them to reason, and more frequently to speak nonsense, and to push their pretensions to the uttermost. I have often heard the very facts, which have occurred before my eyes, related in such a way that I could scarcely recognise them, so much were they disfigured by the enthusiasm and exaggeration of those who had been witnesses of them, or who had themselves produced them." These remarks apply in their full force to the marvellous narrations of spiritistic cures. It is only cases that have been submitted to fair examination by competent skilled witnesses on which reliance can be placed. In February, 1837, the Academy of Medicine of Paris received an offer from M. Berna, a physician, and believer in the virtues of animal magnetism, offering to submit certain somnambulists to a

commission for examination; but all the pretensions made by them were found to be groundless. One somnambulist it was alleged would lose the power of motion in any limb on the mere mental order of her magnetiser. On trial, the following results were found—"When M. Berna mentally paralysed her *right arm only*, she declared that both the *right leg and right arm* were paralysed. He next mentally paralysed her *left leg*, but she affirmed that she could move that leg very well, but not at all the *left arm*. Another, professing to read without the assistance of the eyes, completely failed. She would not acknowledge her deceit, however, but persisted in making guesses, which of course exposed her pretensions. A prize of 3000 francs, which had been offered in 1825 to any one who could read without the assistance of light, of the eyes, and of touch, called forth none to attempt the task. The conditions were accordingly relaxed—the use of light and of the fingers being allowed. A girl was brought forward as able to do what was asked, but the father could not agree with the commissioners regarding the mode of bandaging the eyes. A veil was proposed by the commissioners, but the father declared the cheeks must be uncovered. They desired the book to be placed on a level with her eyes; he insisted it must be on the level with her knee, and if a finger were placed on the lower edge of the bandage the father declared she would fall into convulsions. It was clearly shewn that the only mode of reading was by the eyes, while the bandage was slightly lifted by the eyebrows. In 1839 the same prize, which had never been gained, was offered to any one who should prove himself able to read with a sheet of linen or paper interposed 6 in. from his eyes, between his eyes and the book. But the ability to do this very simple act of clairvoyance has never been shewn." A book was published by Sir John Forbes, M.D., in which he stated the results of his testing the powers of various professed clairvoyants who had gained considerable notoriety. Among them was a lady who professed, like Mr Dunn, to diagnose diseases. A patient was submitted who was in perfect health, with the exception of having varicose veins. Although the attention of the clairvoyant was directed to the surface of the body for the seat of the disease, she failed to discover it, and announced a variety of diseases, such as weakness of stomach, palpitations, &c. Another lady who came from Germany to London in 1845 to examine and prescribe, and who, like most of such impostors, made very heavy charges for her pretended skill, three guineas at her own house, and six guineas at the patient's, was tested by Sir John Forbes, who was invited for this purpose by the lady's brother. He himself became the patient, and she declared that he laboured under two diseases, a statement which he himself knew to be utterly without foundation. Her anatomy, too, was as much at fault as her power of diagnosis; it was merely an embodiment of prevalent vulgar notions on the subject. It is quite unnecessary to mention the account he gives of his exposing the pretensions of another professed clairvoyant, who pretended to be able to read names on a card enclosed in a card case; nor yet of another who recited full particulars of a shipwreck, which proved to be true, but of which Sir John Forbes satisfied himself she had obtained full knowledge in the ordinary way. One and all of such pre-

tenders, when fairly tested, have been found to be mere impostors. Those who set up similar claims, but refuse to submit to any fair test, need not be surprised when the public refers them to the same category. Cures, I am prepared to admit, may sometimes be performed by such pretenders. They are well suited to impress powerfully the imaginations of hysterical or hypochondriacal patients, whose disease is mainly due to their own fancy. Not merely are diseases of the joints simulated by hysteria—according to Sir B. Brodie, four-fifths of the alleged diseases of the joints among the higher class in London being of this description—but diseases of almost every kind are simulated by it, and are usually cured suddenly. Nor is this nervous condition restricted to females exclusively; some examples of similar affections occur among men. All such cases offer a rich harvest for spiritualistic healers. Further, as people do not always remain ill, but sometimes get better even without any help, and may when in their recovering state apply to some magnetic or spiritualistic healer, the cure, I am prepared to allow, may, notwithstanding the healer's trance, go on to completion. In this way, too, he may draw forth certificates of gratitude, and expressions of wonderment at his marvellous power. There is a natural tendency of the system to throw off disease and return to health, aided, in some cases materially, by a strong belief and expectation of cure, and if persons recovering from disease have consulted a spiritual healer they will naturally ascribe the cure to his power. The record of one of the last trials for witchcraft in Scotland presents a sufficient explanation of the belief which some may entertain in the healing virtues of Spiritism. The same belief was cherished with equal reason in the efficacy of charms which were worn on the body. A poor woman was charged with witchcraft, in as much as she lent out to her neighbours for a small consideration a charm said to be efficacious in curing sore eyes. The prisoner admitted the charge, but justified her conduct, as she had received benefit from it in her own child, and it would be

equally good for her neighbour's. She was about to be condemned, when the judge explained to the jury that he knew more about this case than had been put before them. When a young man he had stopped a night at this woman's alehouse, and seeing her troubled about her child's eyes, offered her a charm to cure the child instead of paying his bill. From the evidence presented it had been efficacious; but to prove that the woman had acted in perfect sincerity, and that the charm had been originated by himself, he said that if the ball of worsted which constituted the charm was unwound, a piece of parchment with certain words on it would be found. This was accordingly done, the parchment found as he stated, and on it written these words—

The Devil scratch out both thine eyes,
And spit into the holes likewise.

Equally efficacious I am prepared to admit, and not one whit more so, may be the healing power of the ghosts. It has been said by Owen and some others that Spiritism may be a good cure for insanity, and I would not wonder if, on homoeopathic principles, that statement would prove correct. It would then, however, be a serious question whether the cure were not worse than the disease. Looking at this system of delusion and imposture as a whole, its intellectual imbecilities, its moral results, and its religious negations (which form its real attraction for the sinful and blinded heart of humanity), I say, far rather welcome the bold and defiant front of open infidelity, the dreamy speculations and heartless sentiment of Pantheism, or the coarse and confident dogmas of scientific materialism. These possess at least the merit of honesty; and however repulsive and unsatisfactory they may be to the human heart, that cries, from the depth of its sin and sorrow, Who will show us any good? they do not delude their votaries with the mockery of professed adherence to the Bible. But this heterogeneous compound of silly superstition and crafty imposture, called Spiritism, is an insult to the human understanding, a degradation to the moral nature, and a destructive snare to the soul.