

A  
GUIDE TO SPIRITUALISM;

OR

REASONS FOR INVESTIGATING THE SUBJECT

AND AN

EXPOSITION AND DEFENCE OF ITS

PHENOMENA AND TEACHINGS.

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BY

J. TYERMAN;  
STANFORD LIBRARY

AUTHOR OF "RE-INCARNATION," "IS THERE A DEVIL?"

"IS THERE A HELL?" "CREEDS AND DOGMAS," &c.

Melbourne :

E. Purton & Co., Printers and Publishers, 106 Elizabeth Street.

1874.

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J. W. Stanford Esq.

With the Author's Compts.

May 18, 18<sup>th</sup>/4.

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FRANKLIN DROTHMATE

## P R E F A C E .

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THE following work appeared originally in the *Progressive Spiritualist*, extending in a series of articles over twenty-one numbers of that paper. A desire has been expressed to have it re-published in book-form, not only for greater convenience, but in the belief that it would be of some use in promoting the interests of Spiritualism.

The want of a cheap, plain, popular Manual of Spiritualism, to put into the hands of inquirers, has long been felt in this and neighbouring colonies; and I have been advised by friends of the movement to prepare one, but have not yet been able to command the requisite time. It is hoped that the following work may for the present in some measure supply this long-felt want, though it was not originally intended for that purpose. It deals with the subject at greater length, and in more of its aspects and bearings, than any work that has yet been attempted on this side the globe; and should a second edition be called for, it might be so altered and improved as to meet in a larger degree the above-named desideratum. Of course, there are works published in Europe and America which treat the subject much more ably and exhaustively than I have done, but they cannot be obtained in sufficient numbers, and at a price, to be placed within the reach of many inquirers in the Australian colonies.

This little work has no literary pretensions. The critic will no doubt find much room for correction and improvement in the structure of it. Had I had time to re-write it, it would have been much more accurate and satisfactory in several respects; but I had not; and such as it is, with all its imperfections, I send it forth, in the hope that it will do some little good. I have simply

aimed at giving a plain, practical exposition and defence of Spiritualism. The candid reader must judge how far my object has been fulfilled. I only ask that all my evidences, arguments, and reasonings, shall be impartially weighed before a final conclusion is formed as to the merits of the book.

Special attention is invited to the reasons that induced me to investigate Spiritualism. Some of them are more particularly applicable to the clergy, while others are such as may influence the general reader, who has hitherto disbelieved in the movement, to examine its claims.

Those who judge my utterances on theological and religious subjects by the standard of orthodoxy, will, of course, condemn them. I have stated my convictions on these matters plainly and fearlessly, but without intending any needless offence or pain to those who hold views opposed to my own. On calmly reviewing what I have written I see no reason to retract or modify any essential principle I have enunciated. I ask that my sentiments may be tested by the standard of Reason, Science, Justice, and Benevolence, rather than by any of the Creeds of Christendom, and I fear not the verdict that will be given. As for the adverse verdict of the orthodox tribunal—I feel assured the future will reverse it,

Should this little work be the means of removing the difficulties that have stood in the way of any inquiring minds, and of guiding them to the truths, and beauties, and pleasures of Spiritualism, I shall be fully rewarded for my trouble in writing it, and shall find in that fact ample consolation under any adverse criticism it may provoke,

J. TYERMAN.

45 DRUMMOND STREET,

CARLTON, MELBOURNE.

*May, 1874.*

## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

It is uttering a mere truism to say that we live in a most eventful age,—an age of restless activity, extensive reading, keen inquisitiveness, and far reaching thought; an age which boldly challenges the dicta of lordly authority, scrutinises the pretensions of pompous position, and demands an intelligent and satisfactory reason for everything that claims our belief and acceptance; an age of useful inventions, grand discoveries, and marvellous developments of principles and powers which have slumbered in latent quietude for centuries past; an age in which revolutionary forces are in extensive operation, in almost every department of thought and action, effecting changes, and working out results, at which our fathers would have stood aghast—in a word—an age pregnant with mighty purposes, which time will gradually evolve, and in the glorious plenitude of whose blessings future generations will revel with unbounded delight.

I shall, no doubt, be branded by many as a blind, deluded fanatic, or a credulous, gullible simpleton, for affirming that, among the great movements which date either their origin, or principle growth, from this eventful age, *Spiritualism* will take an exalted rank. And yet, I am so fully convinced of its truth; of the beauty and utility of its teachings; and of the vast extent to which it is destined to affect the condition of the whole human family, in this world and the next, that, without assuming the functions of a prophet, I venture to express it as my deliberate conviction, that historians of future ages will pronounce Spiritualism to have been the mightiest religious movement developed in the nineteenth century. Those who have been deterred from investigating the subject by the spiteful cry of "humbug" and "imposture," and continue to look at it through the medium of distorting prejudice; as well as those who consider that the whole thing is summed up in such trivial physical manifestations as table-tilting, have no conception of the great variety of its phenomena, the important bearing of its teachings, the elevating tendency of its spirit, and the widening sweep of its divine influence. To know it

merely as its opponents have caricatured and misrepresented it, is to shrink from it as a revolting thing; but to understand its facts, principles, and import, as revealed by its own inherent light, is to prize it as a treasure of unspeakable worth, and to desire the time when all men will accept it as the priceless boon of a wise and loving Father. I, therefore, gladly undertake to place before the reader a plain, popular sketch of Spiritualism, though I feel painfully conscious that my best efforts will fall far below the greatness and grandeur of my theme.

The object of this work is to vindicate my conduct in investigating Spiritualism; state the conclusions at which I have arrived, and the reasons on which those conclusions rest; examine the principal theories advanced by its opponents to account for its phenomena, and reply to the most popular objections raised against it on religious and other grounds; state the facts connected with my leaving the Church of England for having embraced it; and give a brief exposition of its leading principles and teachings.

I am not going to whine out a long list of complaints, and whimper over the wrongs I have suffered for the course I felt it to be my duty to pursue; and have no wish to be regarded by my friends as in any sense a martyr for having simply obeyed the dictates of my judgment and conscience. I have no doubt the Archdeacon of Castlemaine, and the Bishop of Melbourne believed they were doing right, and acting in the interests of their church, in denying me the opportunity of explaining and defending the course I had taken in investigating Spiritualism, and disposing of my case in the high handed way they did; and most of their friends will, of course, approve of their conduct. But there are many others, and among them some good churchmen, who consider the summary action they took was essentially wrong in principle, and extremely unwise in policy; and I venture to think this will be the opinion of most of my readers, when the real facts of the case have been placed before them. I am not disposed, however, to be very severe on those church dignitaries, knowing they are to a large extent the helpless creatures of circumstances; educated to believe in the divine right of bishops and archdeacons to rule with

a rod of iron ; and piously committed to uphold certain ecclesiastical positions, although that may occasionally involve the sacrifice of Christian magnanimity, and even common justice.

Nor do I enter upon this work as a spiteful antagonist of the orthodox churches, as some of my opponents may allege. Those who expect a vindictive and slashing attack on the clergy and laity of the religious communions in our midst will be disappointed. I harbor no illwill towards either class; and am prepared to concede to both all that truth and justice can claim on their behalf. And if any of them continue in the future, as some of them have done in the past, to impugn my motives, force false constructions upon my conduct, threaten damnation to my soul, and try to injure my reputation and usefulness, they can do so ; but I shall not tremble at their holy frown, nor be diverted from my purpose by their brotherly threats. Such edifying exhibitions of Christian charity will neither disturb *my* mental tranquility, nor add to the depth and security of *theirs*.

But whilst I shall strive to cultivate and manifest a proper spirit towards those who differ from me in opinion, I shall not hesitate to express my sentiments freely upon those subjects respecting which I conceive they hold erroneous views. Fidelity to truth and conscience, as well as a sense of public duty, will compell me to carefully analyse the teachings, forms, and doings of the orthodox communions; and to assail with unsparing hand, and expose with fearless openness, whatever I believe to be erroneous in popular theology and wrong in church practice. I shall willingly credit Christians with sincerity in their religious professions, so far as their conduct appears to prove it, and will not wantonly wound their tender sensibilities ; but, to be true to myself, I cannot be other than a declared opponent of whatever I am convinced is false and baneful in existing religions; and an open advocate of broad, liberal, progressive principles; no matter whose creed they clash with, or what vested interests they imperil.

In speaking thus, I do not wish to be regarded as an authority on the subjects with which I shall deal. I make no pretensions to superior knowledge or judgment, much less infallibility in dealing with this question. I



only claim to think out a subject for myself, and place the results of the process before other minds, leaving those results to stand or fall by their own intrinsic strength or weakness. I alone am responsible for the sentiments I utter. I do not wish to bind even Spiritualists to the views I enunciate. They are, as a rule, too liberal and independent a class to be bound by the teachings of any man, except so far as those teachings commend themselves to their reason and better nature. And as to the religious and general public, I do not expect many of them to adopt our principles at present. They clash with many of the most deeply rooted and ardently cherished popular opinions of the day; and those opinions will not be abandoned without a severe and protracted mental struggle. I can only expect our views on rationalistic Spiritualism to be received in proportion as they commend themselves, by their reasonableness and beauty, to the judgment and conscience of the people. I know too well how difficult it is to free ourselves from the effects of early education; how tenacious and widespread is the influence which preconceived opinions exert; how desperately error fights to retain the empire over which it has so long held triumphant rule; how slowly liberty asserts its divine rights, and reason its unfettered sway in the human mind; and how gradually the light of truth dawns upon any new and startling subject—I know these things too well to expect the speedy and general reception of a system so free, so advanced, so revolutionary, as Spiritualism unquestionably is. I therefore only ask those opposed to this new movement, who may read these pages, to impartially analyse my reasoning, and honestly weigh my conclusions, before they venture to pronounce judgment on the subject in hand. I do not ask this as a favor, I claim it as a right. I wish no one to accept Spiritualism without investigation, on the mere *ipsi dixit* of any of its advocates; but neither is it just to reject its claims and brand it as false, till it has had a fair hearing at the bar of enlightened reason.

## CHAPTER II.

### REASONS FOR INVESTIGATING SPIRITUALISM.

SPIRITUALISM was first brought under my notice in Manchester, England, some twelve or thirteen years ago ; but for various reasons I did not pay much attention to it at that time. Some years afterwards, whilst in New Zealand, it crossed my path occasionally, but not in a character that was attractive, or in any way calculated to induce me to undertake a fair and full investigation of it. On coming to this colony, I found it was exciting a very lively interest in certain quarters ; the pulpit was thundering against it ; the press was heaping ridicule and contempt upon it ; and many people were anxiously asking the question—What is this thing called Spiritualism of which we hear and read so much ? I resolved that, instead of relying solely upon the testimony of others, either for or against it, I would investigate the subject for myself ; and would do so as thoroughly as my time, powers, and opportunities would allow. I determined to enter upon the investigation openly, and in broad daylight, so that no one attending upon my pulpit ministrations could say that I was deceiving them. I also went into the subject with a mind unbiased by preconceived notions, and open to receive such conclusions as the facts and evidence in the case seemed to fairly warrant ; even though such conclusions might modify, or entirely change some of the views I had hitherto held. In other words, my supreme and only object was *truth*.

The following are some of the principal reasons that induced me to enter upon the inquiries which resulted in a firm and rational conviction of the truth of Spiritualism ; and I would fain hope that a plain statement of these reasons may stimulate others to inquiry, who at present stand in an attitude either of sleepy indifference, or active hostility, towards this important movment.

I. The first reason which inclined me to investigate it was simply a regard for *personal consistency and straightforwardness*.

“Spiritualism,” it was generally said, is a “gross delusion,” a “shameless humbug,” unworthy of a moment’s consideration, unless to expose its baseless pretensions and counteract its pernicious effects. But the question

naturally arose—Who are they who say the thing is a tissue of falsehood and wickedness? Are they those who have *exhaustively investigated* the subject, and are, therefore, entitled to speak with authority? No! I found that those who were personally and experimentally acquainted with it, almost to a man declared their hearty belief in the genuineness of its phenomena and the truth of its teachings. It was soon apparent to me that the cry of “*imposture*” was generally raised by those who had not examined the subject for themselves, and were indebted for the little knowledge of it they possessed to some prejudiced source. In ignorance of its character and claims they ventured to dogmatically pronounce the whole thing a monstrous sham. But seeing they had prejudged the case, and condemned it without a hearing, what respect was their contemptuous and positive opinion entitled to? None whatever. Again, if the thing was either a delusion or an imposture, it appeared to me to be a very serious one, and was spreading with amazing rapidity. It was, moreover, fraught with fearful consequences, extending through time, and stretching out indefinitely into eternity; and, therefore, I felt it to be my duty, as a religious teacher, to publicly expose it, and do all I could to preach it down in the district I was laboring in. But the question—How can I honestly and consistently denounce that as a false and mischievous thing of which I am ignorant?—troubled me, and made me pause in the execution of my self-imposed task. Common justice required that I should at least have a little knowledge of the subject before I rushed into the pulpit to denounce it. Without such knowledge, I might only be exposing my own folly and presumption. Nor could I forget that many new movements had encountered the same blind and merciless antagonism as Spiritualism is now subjected to; and yet had triumphed over all opposition, and established their claims on an immovable basis. Such *might* be the destiny of the new 'ism now attracting so much attention. I, therefore, decided to hear what this fresh candidate for public favor had to say for itself—to give its claims a full and impartial consideration, before I entered the field against it.

The vast majority of those who condemn Spiritualism are in precisely the same condition in relation to it that

I occupied at that period—they know nothing worth mentioning about it. Some of its opponents will expatiate in flippant phrase upon the “specious imposition,” the “latter day delusion,” the “trick of the devil to ensnare precious souls;” and will manifest every possible concern for those who are deceived by it, except that which takes the practical form of trying to rescue them from it. But if you address one of those blustering, loquacious gentlemen thus—“My friend, *what is Spiritualism?* Did you ever attend a *séance*, and witness any of its alleged phenomena? Have you carefully read the best published expositions of the system? Have you candidly and fully investigated the subject you so strongly denounce, and *proved* it to be the abominable thing you characterise it?”—he will quickly wax warm with holy indignation, and with an air of supercilious self-sufficiency, exclaim:—“*I investigate Spiritualism?* No, Sir! It is utterly beneath *my* notice. I will not soil my fingers with such a thing as that. It is a gigantic delusion, Sir, and all who have to do with it are either infamous impostors, or candidates for Bedlam!” “Gently my friend, gently,” it might he replied, “according to your own confession you have no personal knowledge of the subject you venture to condemn; and in view of this fact, what is your dogmatic opinion worth? In truth, Sir, it is not worth the words employed to express it. Examine the matter *honestly* for yourself, and if the result be a confirmation of the views you now hold, then you can with some show of authority denounce it as a thing unworthy of credence; but at present, Sir, prejudice is stifling the voice of reason; your fiery emotions are sporting with your better judgment, and rendering you a laughing stock in the eyes of all lovers of consistency, and fairplay.”

II. My second reason for inquiry was that Spiritualism threatened to *seriously affect the Christian Church*.

It had already considerably affected it in some quarters; and was gradually extending its operations, and steadily increasing its baneful influence. Those who had been born in the church, and brought up in communion with it; who for years had been exemplary members of it, and in some cases held prominent official positions in it; had embraced Spiritualism, and been constrained, often

at considerable sacrifice of feeling and interest, to sever themselves from the church of their fathers; and become, in some cases its active, and in others its passive enemies. Others, outside the pale of the church, had also identified themselves with this new movement; and had, in all human probability, thereby placed an insuperable barrier to their future connection with it. Spiritualism was thus simultaneously causing secessions from the church, and preventing accessions to it.

And those who had embraced it, believing as they did that it was in many respects superior to the faith they had abandoned, would feel it to be their duty to disseminate its principles in their several localities. And knowing the zeal with which error frequently inspires its dupes, it required but little penetration to foresee that this new phase of it was likely soon to affect the church to a very appreciable extent. It was no use us Christians blinding our eyes to the dangers that were gathering around us. The orthodox communions were menaced by a foe of no insignificant pretensions, or despicable strength. He had already invaded their territories, and could boast of trophies from every quarter; and was calculating—with appearances largely in his favor—upon shortly achieving conquests on a much more extensive and magnificent scale. And could religious teachers fold their arms in fancied security, and make no effort to arrest the march of this audacious pretender? Not if they were faithful to their trust as guardians of gospel truth. At least, I felt it to be my duty to look this daring foe boldly in the face, and ascertain if he were really a foe; or whether, if properly treated, he might not after all turn out to be a noble friend in disguise.

III. The third reason that induced me to investigate was that, through Spiritualism had its scientific aspect, it was professedly and mainly a *religious subject*; and, therefore, naturally fell within the province of my inquiries as a minister of the gospel.

Had Spiritualism been a *political* question, those who were opposed to my investigation—and there were several such in the parish—might have advised me to leave it to statesmen and journalists, as it was not for me to dabble in politics. Had it been a *commercial* matter,

they might have suggested the advisability of leaving it to business men, as I was not supposed to trouble myself with secular concerns. Had it been a purely *scientific* subject, they might have recommended that it be left for our natural philosophers to grapple with, and that I ought to confine myself to a higher and holier science—the science of saving souls. But as it was confessedly a *religious* question, I considered it had a legitimate claim upon my attention.

I was then forcibly struck with the conviction, which time has only strengthened, that *ministers of the gospel* ought to be among the *first* to take up Spiritualism, and try, in the interests of their common faith, to ascertain its true merits. Indeed, every religious movement, which does not originate in their ranks, ought to receive from them a prompt and exhaustive inquiry, before they either admit or reject its claims. But, alas! this is seldom done. I am not slandering the clergy in saying that, when any new truth is broached or fresh movement started, they, as a rule, either bitterly oppose it without inquiry; or stand sternly aloof and treat it with cold contempt, until it forces itself upon them, and they can no longer with safety resist or neglect it. Then, with a bad grace, they yield an unwilling assent; or rather, it is wrung from them by circumstances which, with all their skill, and the advantages their position gives them, they are powerless to control.

The bulk of the people have neither time nor ability to grapple successfully with such questions, in their first stages of development. And yet many of them become intensely curious respecting them; and to whom ought they to look for reliable information but to their religious teachers? So long as people pay others to think for them, they have a right to expect that, when any new phase of religion crops up, their paid instructors will give them the result of their honest inquiry, and dispassionate judgment on the subject. But unfortunately their reasonable expectation is generally either absolutely disappointed, or its fulfillment is deferred until it fails to satisfy the requirements of the mind.

The majority of the clergy, I regret to say, like a portion of the press, lag behind rather than lead and mould public opinion, on any new religious question which

agitates the popular mind. Most of them are dumb dogs in relation to Spiritualism; and the few that do bark, bark at the shadow of some hobgoblin, which their own prolific imaginations have conjured up. I believe I am justified in saying that, although it is seen on its very face that Spiritualism is to a large extent a *religious* movement, yet very few of the clergy of any church have ventured to deal with it openly, fully, and fairly. It is much more congenial to their illiberal instincts, and agreeable to the traditions of their priestly order, to complacently shut their eyes to surrounding facts; jump to conclusions without going through the troublesome process of reasoning; take for granted that Spiritualism is a false and devilish thing; and on the strength of that gratuitous assumption, harangue the people with all the vigor and eloquence of men contending for some vital truth—it is much more congenial, I say, to do this than to admit any innovation upon their prescriptive rights, or touch with their saintly fingers any subject that smacks of that loathsome thing called “heterodoxy.” It is much easier and safer to shout “danger” in the *pulpit* where no one dare attack them, than to boldly face the foe in the *open field of controversy*; and enter upon a manly contest, even at the risk of being worsted at some points, and compelled to surrender certain positions occupied by their order from time immemorial. The cry of “danger” throws a magic spell over their faithful congregations. Whenever a new system springs up, or theory is introduced, that is likely to modify or destroy any part of popular theology, they take alarm and lustily shout that cry into the people’s ears. Their “tender lambs” in the Sunday School are in danger; their “beloved brethren” are in danger; their “venerable creeds” are in danger; their “mother church” is in danger; their “holy Bible” is in danger; their own position as “successors of the blessed Apostles” is in danger; their “hard earned stipend” is in danger—*everything*, alas! is in danger. The works of defence must now be vigorously pushed forward. More prayers must be offered, and *extra* special collections made. The “faithful” must not leave the cover which the breastwork of “duly constituted authority” affords. The rusty weapons of “antiquity” must be flourished over the

battlements of the city in the face of the foe; but no *open encounter* must be ventured upon, lest any of the "Lord's people" are slain, and the demon-inspired Philistine at the gate, is emboldened in his wicked career!

The result of this loud and repeated talk about "danger," real or imaginary, generally is, that the ignorant and timid members of the church are scared away from the dreaded thing; but the more intelligent and independent of the fold are stimulated to personal inquiry. They take up the proscribed subject for themselves, and go into it with all the keener zest because those who claim to be their divinely appointed religious teachers, have refused to enlighten them upon it; and in nine cases out of ten, they embrace the very principles those teachers so energetically protested against.

In connection with this cry of "danger," which the clergy so frequently raise, it might be interesting to inquire whether the church—including the Roman Catholic and all the Protestant branches—is in most danger from the action of its avowed enemies; or from its own internal dissensions, its cumbersome institutions, its revolting dogmas, and its inherent weakness; but that question does not fall within the scope of the present work, and its discussion would involve too lengthily a digression.

In quitting this part, I would just ask the clergy whether, when any new *religious* movement like that of Spiritualism comes to the surface of society, it is not their *duty* to carefully examine it and test the truth or falsity of its claims, rather than either quietly ignore it, or bitterly inveigh against it in ignorance of its true character? At all events, without claiming any special credit for myself, I considered the subject in hand came fairly within the range of my inquiries as a religious teacher, and this was the third reason which prompted my investigation.

IV.—The fourth consideration that induced me to investigate was the *possibility of the truth of Spiritualism*.

Some of its opponents will not admit even the possibility of its truth. It is beyond the narrow range of their own experience, contrary to what they consider right and proper, and above all opposed, as they ima-



gine, to the word of God—therefore it *must* be false. This position would command respect if those who occupy it were omniscient and infallible beings; but, as they are only erring creatures, evidently governed more by contracting prejudice than a sincere desire for truth; and as the ground they take has often been taken in relation to other new movements, and as often swept away by the logic of facts, I cannot but regard their position as being not only untenable, but presumptuous in the highest degree. They cannot demonstrate the falsity of Spiritualism, and, therefore, it *may* be true, notwithstanding their inability to conceive of such a thing. And considering the profoundly interesting nature of the subject, and the momentous issues it involves, the bare possibility of its truth ought to constrain them to probe the matter to the bottom, and carefully weigh what may be said for and against it, before they form decided and final conclusions respecting it.

The possibility of the truth of modern Spiritualism, as it presented itself to my mind, was grounded on two facts, namely, the records of the Bible, and the testimony of competent witnesses, living and recently deceased, who declared they had held communication with the other world.

In the first place, the *Bible* appeared to me to warrant the belief in the possibility, if not probability, of communion with departed spirits. If that ancient book was to be credited—and I then regarded it as the word of God, and consequently man's highest authority on religious matters—I could not but admit that spiritual intercourse between the visible and invisible worlds had taken place thousands of years ago. That intercourse must have taken place by Divine permission—and what proof had we that that permission had ever been revoked? It must also have been in harmony with the Divine laws of nature; and as those laws are eternal and immutable, it seemed to me logically inevitable that what was possible in the distant past was equally possible in the busy present. If communion between earth and heaven had *really* taken place in those olden times, I could not help believing that, under the conditions, and in harmony with the laws, which then permitted it, similar communion might be enjoyed in our own day.

Can our Christian friends, who believe that departed spirits occasionally returned to earth in Bible times, consistently deny the possibility of their return now? If not, may not at least some of the thousands of recently reported cases of communion with spirits be genuine? As to the alleged prohibition of Moses and other Biblical authorities, they clearly refer to practices which had nothing in common with modern Spiritualism.

In the second place, the *testimony of witnesses in favor of Spiritualism* appeared to me to materially strengthen this possibility. It was said there were some twenty millions of Spiritualists in the world, most of whom solemnly affirmed they had held communion with the denizens of the world to come. That was rather a formidable array of witnesses to confront and dispose of. I could only entertain one of two suppositions in regard to that large number of persons and the testimony they gave, namely, that they were either deceivers or were themselves deceived.

1. The first supposition was that they were *wilful deceivers*, and that, therefore, their testimony was worthless. In the early days of modern Spiritualism "wilful deception" was the ready answer which most of its opponents gave when questioned about it; but latterly the more intelligent of them have been compelled to abandon that ground, and now try to account for it on some other hypothesis. Various considerations at once precluded my adoption of the supposition in question, as affording an explanation of the conduct of Spiritualists.

In the first place, the *number* of witnesses was a serious difficulty in the way. A few individuals in any given district may conspire to deceive the public on some matter in which they are pecuniarily, or otherwise interested; but it seemed incredible that some twenty millions of persons should lend themselves to the infamous work of deliberately deceiving the rest of the world, by palming on it as a truth what they knew to be a coolly concocted imposition. In the second place, the witnesses were *not confined to any given part of the world*. They were scattered nearly all over its surface, and found in almost every country under the sun; and, therefore, collusion appeared to be utterly impossible. And as the idea of collusion was out of the question, the only alter-

native, on the theory of wilful deception, was that millions of the human family had been simultaneously afflicted with an irresistible propensity to attempt a wicked imposition on their fellow creatures, and that in connection with one specific movement—a thing more incredible than Spiritualism itself. In the third place, the *character* of the witnesses seemed fatal to the deception hypothesis. The majority of Spiritualists, so far as I could learn, were persons of intelligence and reputation, and hence not likely to wilfully deceive others as this supposition implied they did. Some of them occupied distinguished positions in the scientific, legal, literary, medical, political, commercial, and even theological world. To tell me that men like Judge Edmonds; Professors Hare, Mapes, and De Morgan; Drs. Dexter, Elliotson, Ashburner, and Gully; and Messrs. Robert Chambers, Cromwell Varley, William Howitt, S. C. Hall, and scores of other well-known men whose names I could mention—some of whom could boast a distinguished scientific reputation; and all of whom were well known for their scholarly attainments, brilliant talents, and unimpeachable integrity—to tell me that those men would lend themselves to the propagation of a known falsehood, was to tell me what my reason and conscience alike compelled me to reject. In the fourth place, the *absence of anything like a reasonable and adequate motive for deception* completely disproved the supposition in question. One man does not usually deceive another simply in obedience to the impulse of a “totally depraved” nature, or merely from a love of mischief. Deception is generally prompted by self-interest. Some immediate or prospective advantage is almost invariably the main-spring of a deceiver’s conduct. But Spiritualists could not be actuated by any such motive as this. To avow a belief in Spiritualism was not likely to improve a man’s worldly prospects, nor enhance his reputation for intelligence and soundness of intellect, in the estimation of his friends. It often involved serious domestic misunderstandings, and the rupture of friendship’s tenderest ties. Loss of position, ruin of business, and injury of character frequently formed the penalty which Spiritualists had to pay, for fidelity to what they conceived to be truth and duty. Judge Edmonds lost

his seat on the bench; medical men had to mourn over a dwindling practice; scientists lost cast among their brother philosophers; tradesmen found their customers falling off, because the public would not patronise shops that were supposed to have dealings with the devil; mechanics were in some instances summarily dismissed, and in all cases had to move with cautious step, because their positions were imperiled by their Spiritualistic proclivities; and all classes of the adherents of the new dispensation suffered more or less in some way or other. To be a Spiritualist was to be branded as either an infamous impostor or a deluded fanatic. The former charge was pressed home by the most unscrupulous of their opponents; while the latter was preferred by those who wished to take a more charitable view of the case, and believed that all Spiritualists had a "shingle off," in consequence of which the winds of delusion were whistling through their upper regions!

In view of these facts, and especially the last—the absence of an adequate or even plausible motive for deception, and the painful consequences often likely to follow an open avowal of a belief in Spiritualism—the question pressed itself on my attention—Is it likely that so many men, under these circumstances, would deliberately and persistently declare that to be true which they knew to be false? I press the same question on those who still regard Spiritualism as a gross deception. If they weigh it honestly, as I strove to do, they will perhaps be obliged, like myself, to return a negative answer.

These four reasons, then, convinced me, as they may possibly do others, that the first supposition—that of wilful deception, is utterly untenable.

2. The second supposition, namely, that *Spiritualists were themselves deceived*, was soon disposed of in my mind. The *professional knowledge* of many of the witnesses struck me as affording a pretty good guarantee against self-deception. The competency of such men as I have named, to analyse arguments, dissect evidence, weigh probabilities, and draw just and reasonable conclusions from certain data, would be universally admitted in connection with any other subject. And why should their competency in dealing with this single question be doubted? Why should their testimony be set

aside just because it is in favour of it, when on other disputed subjects it is not only treated with respect, but admitted to have great weight? Had their verdict, arrived at after full and honest investigation, been against Spiritualism, it would have been devoutly accepted as possessing almost oracular authority; and stump orators and journalistic scribblers would have emphasised the fact, and echoed it far and wide as a triumphant refutation of this troublesome 'ism. Alas! that with those who prefer the ready-made opinions of others on disputed matters to a personal examination, the conclusions of eminent men, deferred to on other subjects, should be rejected as worthless, when they happen to be in favor of an unpopular movement! And yet how much more competent are such men as I have named to form a sound opinion, at least on the higher phases of Spiritualism, than are most of its enemies and calumniators! And, moreover, their decision, as just intimated, is based on the results of actual investigation and personal experience; while that of most anti-spiritualists springs from complete ignorance of the simplest phases of its phenomena and the most elementary principles of its philosophy. Secondly, I considered that *numbers*, again, ought to have some weight. A few persons might be deceived on such a subject as this was alleged to be. Unreasoning superstition, easy credulity, optical illusion, fevered imagination, perverted judgment—these might explain the fact of odd individuals here and there being imposed upon; but it appeared highly improbable that those millions of persons, scattered all over the world, should all be deceived, especially on a question like this, which depends so much on ocular evidence. If it be said that numbers prove nothing, as hundreds of millions of the race still believe in the rankest absurdities and superstitions, I reply that the cases are totally different. The millions referred to believe not on evidence or logical reasoning, but on dogmatic authority; while Spiritualists as a rule believe on the testimony of their senses; and in many cases that belief, or rather knowledge, has been forced upon them despite the most obstinate prejudice against it. Thirdly, the evidences for Spiritualism were generally of a character that the *mass could judge of* as well as the favored few. It was not a question of meta-

physical disquisition, abstruse reasoning, or scientific speculation, on which comparatively few were competent to judge ; but was, so far as its fundamental facts were concerned, simply a matter of palpable, sensible evidence. The organs of sight, hearing, and touch, were appealed to ; and those organs reported certain occurrences they became cognisant of, to the judgment within. The humble mechanic could decide whether a table moved without muscular contact, and whether questions put to what professed to be the spirit of a departed friend, were correctly answered, as well as the most illustrious philosopher ; though not so qualified as the latter to ascertain the laws and conditions on which such phenomena depended.

These reasons, thus briefly stated, seemed to me to render the supposition that Spiritualists were the victims of a peculiar species of self-deception on the subjects they testified to, to say the least highly improbable. And, therefore, on the strength of Biblical facts and the testimony of millions of living, competent witnesses, I could not but admit the *possibility* of the truth of Spiritualism. Hence my fourth reason for personally examining the subject on its merits.

V. The fifth, and last reason that I will advance at present, for investigating was a hope that, so far as Spiritualism was a religious system, it might possibly *relieve my mind of certain religious difficulties which I had labored under for some time.*

When I entered the Christian Ministry, and for several years afterwards, I conscientiously held and faithfully preached what are called orthodox views, on those doctrines commonly considered fundamental in the Christian Church. But in course of time, partly as the result of my own independent thinking, and partly from reading controversial works, doubts would occasionally spring up in my mind, and questions on these doctrines troubled me, which were not quite so easily disposed of as I wished. Naturally, as in duty bound, I tried hard to repress those rising doubts, and answer those varied questions ; and for a time I flattered myself that the attempt was pretty successful. But after a while they would assume some fresh form, and rise with renewed vigor ; and at last would press

themselves on my attention with a boldness and persistency, extremely embarrassing, and difficult to resist.

1. The doctrine of the *plenary inspiration, and consequent divine authority of the Bible*, was surrounded with considerable difficulties. The Bible occupied a position, and made demands on my reason and conscience, which no other book did. Were the evidences in its favor in proportion to its unparalleled claims? I had been trained to believe they were, but free inquiry gave rise to grave doubts on the subject. I was sometimes not a little staggered as I looked at it impartially in the light of the apparent discrepancies in several of its narratives; the discordances which interrupted its chronological order; its conflicting representations of the character of God; its opposition to many of the facts of modern science; and its contradictory teachings on certain fundamental doctrinal questions. But for a time I was enabled, partly by my own ingenuity, but still more by the help of some of the best biblical critics of the past and present, if not to entirely obviate, at least considerably diminish those difficulties; and thus reconcile myself to the position I held, without giving occasion for the charge of inconsistency.

2. I need hardly say that the *Trinity* was another fruitful source of perplexing doubts and pertinacious questions. The doctrine of the Trinity has baffled the skill of the profoundest theologians, and lain as an incubus on the bosom of the church for ages. After the most determined and protracted attempts to penetrate it, it has still remained enshrouded in repelling darkness; and the keenest intellects have had to abandon it as an incomprehensible mystery. When my reason broke loose from authority, as it sometimes did, and fearlessly grappled with this dogma, it appeared to me logically demonstrable that, if the *Unity* of God was a truth—if there was absolutely but *one* God—there could not be three Gods, or three persons in one Godhead, which is practically the same thing; and hence the doctrine of the Trinity must fall, and the popular doctrine of Redemption, in which three distinct Gods play three distinct parts, be reduced to an egregious fiction. On the other hand, if the *Trinity* was a truth—if there were really three distinct “persons”; possessing three distinct individualities; go-

verned by three separate though harmonious wills ; and sustaining three different characters, and performing essentially independent acts, in the great drama of Redemption—then there were to all intents and purposes *three* Gods ; and hence the doctrine of the Unity was baseless, and must be swept away by the irresistible force of logical reasoning.

But the question would arise—Is not the Trinity an acknowledged “mystery” which it is wicked to attempt to unravel?—one of the “secrets of the Lord” which it is presumptuous to try to elicit?—and I had to chide myself for allowing any question about it to cross my mind. As for “*logic*,” what had that to do with the subject? The Trinity was far beyond the range of logic’s rules, and absolutely independent of its stern demands. And with regard to “*reason*,” had I not been educated from childhood to limit its functions and ignore its assumptions, especially when it dared to handle tabooed theological questions like the Trinity? It was, as I had been accustomed to believe, the parent of intellectual conceit ; the prompter of that impious biblical criticism so prevalent in our time ; and the most dangerous foe with which the church was confronted. Its proud spirit must be humbled, its unfounded pretensions stripped off, and its imperious neck bent at the footstool of Revelation ; or the smile of God would be withdrawn, and the gates of paradise would never open to receive me. And thus for a time I silenced the voice of reason, and smothered all rising doubts as to the soundness of the doctrine of the Trinity. Moreover, I zealously enforced from the pulpit the necessity of implicitly subjecting carnal reason to divine revelation, and snubbing it whenever it ventured to propose troublesome questions on any religious subject. And great was my grief and earnest were my prayers when, on the occasions referred to, I felt it difficult to practice what I preached, because my wicked reason would question creeds, and catechisms, and the Bible itself ; and disturb my mental tranquility with more than hints about the logical inconsistency of the popular view of the Trinity, and the philosophical impossibility of its truths.

3. The doctrine of *Original Sin* was another serious stumbling block in my path. It often struck me, to say



the least, as a strange economy for a God of wisdom and justice to be the author of, which allowed the whole human family to be involved in the moral consequences of Adam and Eve's conduct; and that not in a trifling degree and for a brief period, but to a vast extent and for all eternity; unless some great power interposed to avert or modify those consequences. As I gazed upon a helpless child, slumbering in unconscious innocence on its mother's knee, my paternal instincts would sometimes constrain me to exclaim—That is a hard, unnatural doctrine which holds that helpless, unconscious child liable to eternal damnation, for something said to have been done by the first human pair, thousands of years ago! "But what have paternal instincts to do in settling a question of divine revelation? Everything that exalteth itself against the word of God shall be abased. The *Bible* teaches the doctrine of the *Total Depravity* of the whole race, including unconscious infants, and that ought to silence all objections for ever—" was the rebuke which a low-browed, iron-fisted theology administered to me for allowing that ungodly exclamation to stain my lips. I bowed my head in submission to what I supposed was a real, though inscrutable truth; and besought more divine grace to enable me to fully reconcile myself to what was, if apparently a hard, yet equally inexorable, fate. But I sometimes felt for the moment, while smarting under the lash of that severe rebuke, that it was almost a crime, or at least a misfortune, to be a father, subject to the strong yet tender emotions which only a parent feels; overlooking in my discomfiture the fact that God is *our Father*, and that, even according to the *Bible*, the paternal relations are those which most fully represent His character.

4. The *Atonement* was another doctrine with the popular views of which my mind was not wholly satisfied. That doctrine was held to be the life and soul of gospel religion; destroy it, and death would be the inevitable result. It was the very foundation of the Christian system; remove it, and the noble superstructure, which had braved the storms of eighteen centuries, would come down with a crash, and remain an irreparable ruin. It set forth the grandest exhibition of the wisdom, justice, and benevolence of God,—blended in beautiful harmony—

the world had ever seen ; and as such it claimed the faith, the admiration, and the gratitude of universal man. It was the exhaustless fountain, whence were issuing streams of living water, which would soon gladden and fertilize the morally parched and desolate quarters of the earth. All this I steadfastly believed, humbly gloried in, and honestly preached for years.

But a time came when aspects of the Atonement were presented to my mind not very agreeable to contemplate or easy to ignore. Reason, despite all my attempts to coerce it into abject obedience to what I deemed an infallible standard, would occasionally suggest that it would have been more magnanimous—more worthy of the greatness and goodness of God—to have forgiven man on the simple condition of repentance and future obedience, than to have required the intervention of a coequal to stay His uplifted hand—the blood of His *own son* to quench his burning wrath. But that was venturing on forbidden and dangerous ground, and I would check myself with the consideration that finite human reason must not presume to dictate terms of mercy to an infinite God. Then there were questions to be settled about vindicating the majesty of the Divine administration, and the King alone could fix what would satisfy the just requirements of the case—what would fully uphold His authority, and yet enable him to exercise the prerogative of mercy. Moreover, it was held that man had somehow or other opened up an account with God, and become a very great debtor to his Creator. He had absolutely nothing wherewith to discharge his enormous liabilities ; and had, therefore, been arrested, imprisoned, and rendered unhappy and hopeless. His Divine creditor would not, it was said, release him till the uttermost farthing which unbending justice could demand was wrung from him. Being penniless, eternal imprisonment—imprisonment in hell, with scorching flames for his bed, and tormenting fiends for his companions—was his certain doom ; unless some kind friend came to his rescue and settled his account. Jesus, I had been educated to believe, and for years had taught, was the friend in need, who stepped in, paid man's debt to the last fraction with his own blood, and procured his complete and everlasting liberty. And in view of the amazing love Christ thus

displayed, what could carping reason say? The thought would still haunt me, however, that this debtor and creditor account between God and man, had rather too commercial a look about it—smelt rather too strongly of the counting-house—for the infinite Creator of the universe to be a party to.

Again, the *justice* of the Atonement was usually held up as one of its cardinal virtues—a virtue that could not fail to command the respect of all right thinking men. But on weighing the subject thoroughly I could hardly see wherein the justice consisted of punishing the *innocent* for the guilty. At any rate, it seemed a little foreign to earthly ideas of justice. In human society the man who breaks the law has to bear its penalty. To imprison or execute an innocent person instead of the real criminal, would not exactly pass for justice, even among imperfect men. But when such irreverent and sinful notions as these sprung up within me, my theology had another extingisher ready:—"The schemes and acts of the Almighty are not to be weighed in the balance of man's crude, and fallible judgment, nor measured by the standard of human justice: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.'" That pertinent and striking biblical quotation would settle the question in my mind for the time being.

5. The subject of *eternal punishment* was another part of orthodox theology which often staggered me. Probing questions touching the true object of punishment; the method by which God inflicts it upon transgressions of his laws in this world; the disproportion between the sins—even of the most numerous and aggravated character—of a short life time and everlasting suffering; the opposition of the doctrine to the teachings of natural religion; its inconsistency alike with the justice, mercy, and benevolence of a perfect God—questions on these and other points which I shall not discuss in this work, arrayed themselves in a bold and menacing attitude in front of the popular notions on the subject, which I had endorsed, and was teaching to others. I dispatched some of those troublesome questions as best I could, but several of them stood their ground and grinned defiance at me. Even by the help of those mighty weapons—prayer and faith,

I could not dislodge them. And those questions stand before orthodox theology unanswered to this day; and I believe, for reasons I shall advance in another work, they never can be answered satisfactorily, either on the ground of pure reason and justice, or that of the universal and unchanging benevolence of God. The questions which then challenged my creed have since developed into a profound conviction, that the doctrine of eternal punishment can only be maintained by trampling underfoot the lofty sentiments of justice and benevolence; and transforming our Heavenly Father into an inhuman and unrelenting monster, utterly unworthy of the name of God.

On these and other leading Christian doctrines I frankly confess my mind was at times considerably unsettled and harrassed, before I entered upon an inquiry into Spiritualism. And I have good reason to believe that if the clergy generally were questioned on these points, and dared to speak out their minds freely and fully, many of them would admit having experienced similar doubts and difficulties. Indeed, several of my own ministerial friends and acquaintances have, in conversation, made no secret of the fact. They have mourned over it, and prayed about it; and have only been reconciled to that part of their experience by the belief that it was one of Satan's many devices, permitted by God to try their faith in what they held to be eternal truths. Nor is there anything surprising in that part of clerical experience. Nothing can be more natural than that they should often be troubled with questions, and even serious misgivings, on many of the doctrines they preach. The only thing for regret is that, instead of considering whether there may not be good grounds for their doubts and apprehensions, they try to dismiss them in a summary manner, as obtruders who have no rational plea to urge on their own behalf.

Only those who have passed through such a phase of experience can form an adequate idea of the state of mind I was in at the time alluded to. Hope and fear alternately raised and depressed my spirits; anguish which no words could express frequently wrung my soul. Abandonment of the Christian Ministry, then would have been premature and unwise; while to remain in it

and continue to preach a system of doctrines whose very foundations were shaking and giving way, was intensely trying to a sensitive and conscientious nature. To have adopted the former course would have been to cut myself adrift from moorings which had proved both "sure and steadfast" to many who had finished the voyage of life, and go out to sea with no compass or chart on board, and no fixed destination ahead—for I knew no system then which I could embrace, as likely to fill the vacancy in my mind caused by the surrendering of the larger part of what I had hitherto believed. To pursue the latter course was not free from objections on several grounds; yet it was the freest of the two courses; and, all things considered, I felt I could consistently pursue it for the time being. How did I know but that more extensive reading and maturer thought would scatter my theological doubts and difficulties, and re-establish the endangered doctrines on a firmer basis than ever in my mind. On the other hand, if further investigation resulted in a full conviction that those doctrines were utterly untenable on just and reasonable grounds, *then*, I considered, and *not till then*, it would be my *duty* to sever myself from the church I was ministering in, and take my stand on another and broader platform.

In connection with this part of the subject I would just state that, some time before I investigated Spiritualism, my attention was directed to the writings of *Swedenborg*. I was assured by certain friends who had become his disciples, that in his works I should find a ready and satisfactory solution of all my difficulties. Light gleamed upon the darkness within, and the star of hope rose high in the heavens. But the final result was not so satisfactory as those friends anticipated, and appearances for a time promised. I willingly acknowledge, however, that I was greatly indebted to Swedenborg for help on several theological questions; and his writings, no doubt, paved my way for the reception of Spiritualism.

Swedenborg has been misunderstood and shamefully maligned, especially by the religious public. The world has not yet learned his real worth. He lived in many respects long before his time. Future generations will appreciate many of his theological merits, and do justice

to his stupendous labors. He was, in my humble judgment, one of the brightest geniuses and best men the world has ever seen—an illustrious ornament of the human race. He was, moreover, a genuine seer; and was favored with visions of the future, and enabled to penetrate the arcana of nature, to an extent that few have equalled, and perhaps none surpassed. This much I gladly and gratefully admit. But unfortunately some of the followers of Swedenborg have assigned him a position and claimed for him a homage to which he is not justly entitled; and which he, if still in the world, would be the first to repudiate. He was to the end of his earthly life trammelled with some of the narrow prejudices of his early religious education. These prejudices pervade and mar all the works he produced in the days of his seership. His disciples who render a blind devotion to his authority, fail to see or allow for this fact; and hence they in effect, unwittingly of course, invest him with the attribute of infallibility, and exalt his writings above the Bible, for which they profess such profound veneration. Consequently, when any disputed question crops up, they do not ask—What saith the Lord?—or what saith the Scriptures? but what saith *Swedenborg* on the subject? If the Bible is allowed a voice in settling a controverted point, it is not listened to as it speaks for itself, but only as it is interpreted by this venerated master; just as with Catholics, when the Bible speaks to them it is through Popes and Councils; with Episcopalians, it is through their thirty-nine Articles and Prayer Book; and with Presbyterians, it is through their Confession of Faith.

To illustrate why I was not able to accept Swedenborg's entire system, as a solution of the religious difficulties I have described, I will just refer to two of its cardinal doctrines, namely, on the Bible, and the Divinity of Christ. I have already stated that I was not satisfied with the orthodox views of the Bible, and the Trinity. But to get rid of my difficulties respecting the Bible by accepting Swedenborg's theory of the "Plenary inspiration and threefold sense of the Word;" and to displace the Trinity by his doctrine of the "Sole Divinity of Jesus Christ," appeared to me to be only a breaking loose to become more hopelessly entangled—an ex-

changing of one mystery for another still more mysterious. To believe that the Bible can only be properly explained by what is termed the "Science of Correspondence," which in its application often struck me as being either exceedingly arbitrary or ridiculously whimsical; and that most passages in that ancient book have a threefold meaning—"natural, spiritual, and celestial"; to believe, moreover, that Christ was "sole God;" that in the helpless child of Bethlehem—differing little or nothing as a child from other children—the infinite and eternal Lord of the universe was enshrined—to believe these things was a greater tax on my credulity, and a knottier problem for my reason, than those doctrines which Swedenborg's system was to satisfactorily dispose of. And, therefore, though I derived much instruction and benefit from his writings, and those of some of his followers, I could not accept all his theological teachings. Some of them magnified the difficulties which embarrassed my mind, rather than diminished or removed them.

Hence, when I took up Spiritualism I was still in that unsettled, unhappy state of mind already described. It was a transition state—a passing from mental darkness to cloudless light, from tumultuous chaos to serene harmony, from agonising doubt to undisturbed certainty. I felt I could not remain where I was, for the ground was trembling and slipping from beneath my feet. To retrace my steps was impossible, because insuperable barriers blocked the way; and to go forward was not free from risk—it might be a false and fatal step by which I should plunge myself, and possibly drag others with me, into theological, and perhaps moral and eternal, ruin. Spiritualism professed to be more than a belief in the actuality of intercourse with departed spirits. It presented a philosophy and a theology peculiarly its own. It had what may be regarded as its fixed dogmas, though most of its votaries dislike that term. That is to say, it laid down a few great, leading, yet simple principles, which it asserted were eternally and unchangeably true; affected by controversies, and independent of all Bibles and Churches. To these principles, as to a touch-stone, all theological questions were brought; and such as would not bear the test were rejected as erroneous and

bad. There was something in its profession which struck me favorably on looking at it; and while enveloped in the darkness of doubt, longing for light from some quarter to break in upon my soul, and for ever dispell depressing clouds, I turned my attention to it in the hope of finding what I had sought for in vain elsewhere. It *might* contain that which would meet my case. It might be a more rational and satisfactory system than the one I had been educated to believe in, and had for years preached, which was now being shattered and swept away. And should it fail to meet the expectation of its friends, and fulfil my own hopes, its investigation could do me no harm, and might teach me some lesson that would be of future benefit to me. I therefore resolved to examine it carefully, and with unspeakable joy and gratitude I acknowledge the fact that it did bring the light and comfort for which I was praying, by solving the theological problems that had for some time taxed and troubled my mind.

In view of the statements I have made some of my readers may perhaps be disposed to say that I ought not to have harbored any doubt or question on doctrinal subjects for a moment; and that to admit even the possibility of any of these doctrines being false was inconsistent with my profession. But I think I have shewn that I did not harbor those doubts and questions. On the contrary, for a time they were firmly and successfully resisted. But they forced themselves upon my attention, and at last took up a place in my mind from which I could not eject them, till their demands were fully met. And I have further shown that these demands were not met by additional evidence in favor of orthodoxy, but by the more reasonable evidence in favor of Spiritualism. As to the possible imputation of inconsistency, that will not trouble me. Had I claimed infallibility for myself and all the views I held I should have been open to the charge, but as that was not the case it cannot be justly urged against me.

I have thus placed before the reader the five principal reasons which induced me to enter upon an investigation of modern Spiritualism. I have stated them pretty fully in the hope, before expressed, of inciting others to examine it for themselves. If those who are opposed to it



can only be influenced to investigate it fully and impartially, I venture to say their prejudice will soon vanish, and their opposition give place to a cordial adhesion to its principles.

### CHAPTER III.

#### PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AS AN INVESTIGATOR.

Having determined, for the reasons adduced, to take up Spiritualism and if possible bottom it, my next step was to enter upon an *actual investigation of the subject*. The evidence on which the system bases its claims is of two kinds. In the first place it presents an interesting class of what are termed *physical manifestations*. These are of various kinds, such as table tilting; ringing bells; moving solid objects in a room without muscular contact; bringing various articles, such as fruits, flowers, books, and clothing, from different parts of a house into the circle, when the doors are fastened and every avenue closed up; and transporting human bodies a considerable distance, in one instance as far as three miles—and all without any visible earthly agency. Its second branch of evidence consists of *intelligent communications*. These communications are sometimes spelt out letter by letter by the table, and by what is known as the “spirit rap;” sometimes they are obtained in writing both by the planchette and the ordinary pencil, used by mechanical and impressional writing mediums; at other times they are given through a trance speaking medium; and occasionally they are given by *direct* spirit writing—that is by spirits using the pen or pencil themselves, instead of controlling a writing medium. The messages obtained by these and other methods are, as might be expected, on a great variety of subjects, and are marked by different degrees of merit. Many of them are on personal and family matters which have no interest to the public, while some of them are on subjects of the profoundest importance to all men. These two classes of evidence are sometimes called the *phenomenal* and the *intellectual* parts of Spiritualism.

The first physical manifestations I witnessed occurred at the house of Mr. John Allen, Robinson Crusoe, about two miles from the parsonage I then occupied. Mr. and

Mrs. Allen had been Spiritualists some time, and frequently held seances in their house. Several of my friends on Kangaroo Flat had been at their place, and witnessed more or less of the phenomena usually elicited there; and some of them began to manifest a greater interest in the subject than was considered good for their spiritual welfare. On the occasion of my first visit there were seven persons present. We sat around a rather small table nearly half an hour before any sign was given. The impression was becoming pretty strong that the spirits were not present, and no performance would be witnessed that night, till I was informed that the circle had sometimes sat more than an hour before anything occurred. I had the notion which most outsiders have, that if the thing was true, the denizens of the other world should be at our beck and call, and able to produce the "manifestations" whenever and wherever desired; not knowing that spiritualistic phenomena depend as much on *natural causes* and *established law* as the fall of rain or the growth of a tree. The delay that generally occurs in obtaining phenomena at a circle will strike most people as an evidence of their genuineness; for if they were mere tricks of imposters they could be produced at will, and quickly; unless mediums were slow, bungling creatures, in which case they would be pretty sure to be detected.

After sitting in quiet expectation about half an hour, with a kerosene lamp shining brightly, creakings of the table were heard, gentle oscillations followed, and finally the usual movements were produced. The believers said the spirits had come and were ready to answer questions. Mr. Allen and most of the company were anxious to ascertain if any spirit friend of theirs was present. The established mode of answering queries was by raps on the floor with the table feet. One rap signified no; two, doubtful; and three, yes. Most of those present received an affirmative answer to their question: and then interrogated the supposed spirits on various matters. The questions were mostly on personal and family concerns; and were apparently put with the object of testing the identity of the spirits professing to control and communicate. In every circle good tests should be applied, or deception may be practised even

by spirits. The answers, with but few exceptions, were said to be correct and satisfactory. I watched every movement to see if I could discover any means by which what occurred could be produced independently of spirit agency. At the close of the seance I examined the table and floor to make sure that no mechanical apparatus was concealed. Not that I had the slightest reason to suspect the use of any agency of that kind ; but, entering upon the investigation in the interests of religion, as well as for my personal satisfaction, it was right that I should be able to say that whatever took place was not the result of mechanical agency, whatever other cause might be assigned. None of the elaborate machinery which many of the opponents of Spiritualism have spoken of so confidently was used on the occasion referred to. Nor was their aught in the conduct of any member of the circle calculated to excite the least suspicion in any mind. If they were deceiving me they were also deceiving themselves. What possible motive could they have for wilful deception ? They would not have been in any way benefitted had I been induced by trickery to believe the phenomena real ; while on the other hand they were risking a good deal if they were perpetrating a deliberate imposition. They would almost certainly have been detected sooner or later, and the consequences of an exposure would have been disastrous. I could not but believe that the majority of those who formed that circle conscientiously credited their disembodied friends with the movements of the table and the messages rapped out ; while the rest were sincere inquirers, quite open to conviction. All were evidently influenced by honest motives and acted in good faith. I was, therefore, compelled to admit that the manifestations were real, and were produced by some force or power which those present did not consciously exert, nor believe emanated from them.

On being requested to ask if any spirit relative or friend of mine was present I did so, and was replied to affirmatively. I confess a peculiar sensation stole over me on receiving that answer. The first movement of the table had sent a thrill through my system ; but when I was informed that I was actually in the presence of a departed relative, and that that relative was able and

waiting to converse with me through that simple means, my feelings were such as are not easily described. I have since observed that the first experiences of most honest investigators are similar to what mine were. I, of course, believed that my deceased friends still lived, and admitted they might sometimes be about me, the spectators of my actions—part of the “cloud of witnesses” Paul speaks of—but I had never thought I should hear from them, or be able to commune with them again, until I passed within the veil, and joined them in the world to come. Had I been mistaken on this latter point? Was it possible for the veil that hides the future state from mental vision to be so far lifted as to afford us a glimpse of the eternal regions beyond? Could it be that familiar and beloved voices long since hushed in the silence of death were able, under certain conditions, to speak from the other side, and tell us something of their whereabouts and condition in that shadowy land? The announcement that some of my friends were present and ready to communicate with me, combined with the fact that such *might* be the case, impressed me with a conviction of the reality and possible nearness of the spirit-world I had never felt before. I was informed by the raps that an uncle of mine, William Stangoe, was present. He had been dead several years, and I was not thinking of him at the time. I proposed a number of test questions to what professed to be my disembodied uncle, to prove his identity if he really were present; and whatever the power was that moved the table I was forced to admit to the circle that almost every question was correctly answered. No one present knew anything of my uncle, or the matters referred to in the questions; and, therefore, had they been manipulating the table they could not have made it rap so many correct answers; and, of course, I did not make the table respond to my own questions; for I was only a sceptical inquirer, and had no interest in imposing upon myself. It may be suggested that some one present obtained the answers from my brain by the power of clairvoyance or thought reading—a possibility that did not strike me at the time; but I am perfectly satisfied that such was not the case, for no one there possessed that rare gift.

My wife's mother, whose maiden name was Bruce and

married name Dunn, next announced her presence by raps in the usual way. The questions I addressed to her related chiefly to the time and place of her death, her age at that date, her family and relatives, and different places in the north of England, familiar to her before she passed away. As in the case of my uncle, she was quite unknown to all present; and hence the answers which, with one or two exceptions were correct, could not be supplied by any member of the circle. The incident that impressed me most was the following—I asked for the name of the eldest living child of the supposed spirit. William, was the answer. But my mind was fixed on Matthew, being under the impression at the time that he was the eldest of the family, and accordingly I said the answer was incorrect. The table, however, persisted that William was the eldest, and I reiterated that he was not. The pertinacity with which it stuck to the name made me reflect a moment and recall certain facts and dates; and lo, I found the *mistake was mine!* The table was right and I was wrong. Now, what supplied that name and adhered to it? It was not any of the friends in the room, for none of them knew the part of England my wife came from, much less anything about her relations. Nor could it be my own mind, for that was fixed upon another name. Was there not a living, intelligent power outside the circle that knew the correct answer and gave it? And might it not be my mother-in-law as was declared?

That incident at my first seance, though not striking enough to convince me of the truth of Spiritualism, was quite sufficient to deepen my interest in the subject, and strengthen my resolution to bottom it if possible. I was fully convinced that the table really moved; that it was not knowingly moved by any one of the circle for deceptive purposes; and that it gave answers, mostly correct, to a number of questions put by various persons present. Whether those answers, clearly displaying intelligence, emanated from the minds of those present, and were in some mysterious manner communicated to the table; or whether they were supplied, as was professed, by several spirits, who controlled the table, I was unable to decide. I could not reconcile the answer given by what purported to be my mother-in-law with

the former supposition, and was not prepared all at once to accept the latter.

Having by two more visits to Mr. Allen's satisfied myself that there was more in Spiritualism than popular opinion allowed, and that its phenomena could not be explained on any mundane theory I was acquainted with, I resolved *to form a circle with a few friends on the Flat*, that the investigation might be prosecuted regularly till some definite and satisfactory conclusion was arrived at. The first two meetings were held in the *parsonage*. I cannot but notice in passing that this fact gave rise to a good deal of ill-feeling and petty spiteful talk against me. There were those in the parish, and some of them connected with the church, who knew nothing of Spiritualism proper, but confounded it with some monstrous thing that its enemies and maligners had invented and called by its name. Those individuals were prejudiced against Spiritualism, and some of them were strongly opposed to my investigation of it. It was not a subject for a preacher of the gospel to meddle with. No one, it was kindly asserted in my presence, had anything to do with it till they had been forsaken of God! which was as much as saying that we, who were simply trying to ascertain the truth or falsity of its claims, were forsaken of God, and were a pack of graceless wretches. So much for the charity of those whom God had not forsaken, but were still among his chosen, faithful people! It was, moreover, alleged that I was wasting time that ought to have been otherwise employed; which was only another way of affirming that any one in my position ought to be in a worse condition than that of a slave, never having an hour on an evening to spend in recreation, or devote to the study of the question—Can any positive proof be obtained of a future state? It will easily be believed that in the estimation of such self-righteous bigots it was a dreadful thing to hold a seance in the parsonage. It was little less than sacrilege. Their sense of Christian propriety was outraged. One of them denounced me to my face in terms none the politest for having turned the parsonage into what they designated "a spirit shop." Would to God that every house in the land—parsonage, cot, or mansion—were "a spirit shop" of that kind—a place where those still on earth hold blissful

communion with the dear ones who have entered the spirit world!

The circle I was instrumental in forming consisted properly of six persons, but occasionally more were present. Despite the outside talk and opposition we continued to meet once a week for some time, at the houses of two of the friends alternately.

One of those friends—Mr. John Hamilton—deserves to be mentioned, because he like myself suffered for the course he pursued. He was the head teacher in the State school, and was admittedly an excellent teacher; but on taking up Spiritualism he rendered himself obnoxious to several orthodox members of the school committee, and to a considerable number of the pious parents of the children attending his school. His spiritualistic investigations did not interfere with his school duties, any more than mine did with my pulpit and pastoral duties; nor did he ever introduce the subject to the children under his charge, or interfere with the religious belief in which their parents wished them to be trained; but the period of his connection with the school was determined. An opposition was organised to oust him, and at last it succeeded in its illiberal and unchristian design. Whatever the ostensible reason for the action might be, the *real* reason was that he had become a Spiritualist; and for Spiritualism he lost his school as I lost my church. Yet christians say they never *persecute*, but are perpetually whining about the persecutions *they* are exposed to!

The ordinary table movements were soon obtained by the new circle, and spirit friends of most of us generally professed to be present; and others not related to us were often with us, mostly in answer to our requests. We adopted the usual mode of communication—that is by raps. None of us were satisfied for a time that the manifestations we witnessed were produced by our disembodied friends; but we tried to identify those professing to control, and in the end most, if not all of us, were convinced of the spiritual origin of the phenomena. In addition to putting test questions to enable us to identify the spirits, we interrogated them on a variety of subjects, chiefly religious. The answers to these questions, by whoever or whatever given, often startled us.

A common objection to the spiritual source of the communications, admittedly received at seances, is that they are only the reflection of the mind of some one present; and that on religious and doctrinal subjects they agree with the belief of those who put the questions, or with that of those in the circle who have the most active and positive will. But I can confidently assert that though this may sometimes be, it is by no means always the case. Our experience as a circle was mainly the exact opposite of this. The answers we received were by no means an emanation from our own brains, nor in agreement in all things with our own views. Almost all the doctrines we held as members of the Church of England—doctrines which I was preaching as divine truths—were condemned as false. This naturally surprised us. Men like Dean Macartney, who admit that many of the communications received at circles do come from spirits, but contend they are infernal spirits—the Devil and his angels—will no doubt say that one fact ought to have stamped the whole thing in our eyes as being of diabolical origin, and have caused us to abandon it once and forever. But we did not view the subject in that light. Speaking for myself, I thought but little of this part of our experiences, having resolved to hold the *teachings* of Spiritualism in abeyance for the time being, and aim solely at satisfying myself on the one question—Can disembodied spirits communicate with mortals on earth? Should investigation convince me they could, and further investigation satisfy me that many of the doctrines I held were untenable, honesty and consistency would oblige me to resign my position in the church; and there are several friends, some of them being still members of the church, who can testify that such was my expressed intention. But as I shall have occasion to touch on this point again further on, and deal with some of the teachings of Spiritualism in favor of which I surrendered most of my orthodox creed, I will dismiss it for the present.

The following two or three facts are a fair specimen of those I witnessed during the first stages of my investigation, and which I could not account for on any other hypothesis than that of spirit agency. One evening, an equal number of ladies and gentlemen being



present, we were informed that the father of one of the party was present in spirit form. This gentleman, Mr. B——, had as he supposed been conversing with his deceased daughter, but was more than surprised when his father announced his presence. He had received a letter from him by the English Mail only four days before, stating that he was alive and much better in bealth than he had been for some time; and as that was before there was any telegraphic cable connection with the mother country, no news of his death could possibly have been obtained in the colony since the mail arrived. Our friend doubted the information at first, but on its being very emphatically repeated several times he became nervous, for it was just possible that his father might have quitted the body after the mail left; and with tremulous voice he put several questions to the controlling intelligence professing to be his father, the answers to which two or three in the circle including myself noted down. *The next English mail brought news confirming the information thus obtained.* Now here is a *fact* and not a theory to account for. We received news, unexpected and unsought, of our friends father's death in the circle nearly a month before it came by the English Mail—the only earthly means of bringing it at that time. Whence, I ask, was the knowledge of that event, with several particulars respecting it, derived? Dr. Carpenter's theory of unconscious cerebration will not account for it, nor will that of clairvoyance, for the fact was not in the brain or mind of any one present. Guess work may be suggested by some; but unfortunately for them we were not even thinking, much less guessing about the matter till it was forced upon our attention. And coincidence is hardly a satisfactory explanation, for two many similiar events have occurred for coincidence to account for them. I cannot but think that the most simple and reasorable explanation is that the identical spirit of the departed was present, and announced to his son the fact of his departure from this world. All other theories advanced to account such events appear to me to involve a hundred-fold greater difficulties than the one they are thought to relieve.

The following was a still more convincing case, because it occurred when my wife and I were the only parties present, and was accompanied with more particulars. We were having spelt out to us a message professedly by my father-in-law. I may just state that those messages obtained in the privacy of our own home went far to convince me of the truth of Spirit communion. We had no interest in deceiving each other. My living and position, and to some extent my reputation, were at stake. My wife was quite as sceptical and difficult to convince as myself. But the messages purporting to come from her father were so characteristic of him as to leave little doubt in our minds on the subject. On the occasion referred to the communication was broken off somewhat abruptly, and was not resumed that night. It struck me that some other spirit might be present, and was anxious to communicate with us, and we were informed by the raps that such was the case. In reply to my request—Will you spell out what you want? we received the answer—"You should bring Robert F——." Neither of us were thinking of that gentleman. The controlling intelligence informed us that his name was William F——; that he was a relative of Robert F——'s; that he had died at Kangaroo Flat at such a time and at a certain age; and that he had a message for his relative Robert F——. Now we did not know that such a person as William F——, had ever existed. I went next day to inquire of Robert F——, and found that all the main items in the message were absolutely correct. What William F—— wanted with his relative in the flesh I know not, for the latter either through nervousness or prejudice, or perhaps a little of both, would not attend the parsonage to receive the message that was awaiting him, but he was much surprised at the facts I told him; and as it was not likely to be of interest to us we did not care to ask for it, though the same spirit announced his presence two or three times afterwards.

I have purposely given only the initial letter of the surname in these two cases, as I have no wish to identify the parties publically with Spiritualism, but the facts are no secrets in the district in which they

occurred. I will leave our opponents to account satisfactorily for these facts on any other theory than that which Spiritualism furnishes.

On another occasion when my wife and I were with ourselves, a communication purporting to be from my father-in-law and very characteristic of him, was suddenly interrupted as in the case before stated. We were informed that another spirit wished to communicate, and in reply to a remark I made, "Question me," was spelt "Will you give us your name?" was my first question. "Robert Peel" was rapped out, letter by letter. The reader may judge of our surprise. We had not been talking about or thinking of that eminent statesman; and of course the flippant sceptic will scout the idea of the great Sir Robert condescending to visit a country parsonage, and talk to obscure individuals through a cedar table. A considerable amount of ridicule and abuse has already been heaped upon me for publicly stating this and similar parts of my experience. I can only say, without being positive as to the identity of the spirit, we had no particular reason to doubt it. I put a number of questions, as requested to do, on social, political, and religious subjects, and received distinct answers, which, I say with due deference, were not unworthy of Peel. Whatever the power was that responded to my questions, many of the answers were contrary to what I expected, and at variance with my views. Space will not permit me to give those questions and answers in detail; but I cannot help asking while on this point, whether there is anything so intrinsically absurd and improbable in the idea of an illustrious spirit like Peel communicating with persons this side the grave, as the opponents of Spiritualism allege? How will such spirits spend eternity? Will their noble powers be allowed to rust in idle inactivity? or will they be wasted in a ceaseless round of fulsome praise of a Being who is more pleased with the praise of *deeds of usefulness to others*, than with that of *words*, however sincerely uttered? Has the interest in the welfare of their nation, and of the whole human race, which they *practically* manifested while on earth, given place to a spirit of callous indifference in heaven? If not, who shall say that they are not really, though invisibly to us,

still assisting to work out those great problems of political, social, and religious reform, which absorbed so much of their time and energies before they passed away from amongst us? And considering the powerful influence which Spiritualism is destined to exert on all the great questions of the age, is it not just possible that Peel would not consider he was doing anything unworthy of his reputation, in assisting to increase and strengthen the evidence in favor of this new and important movement?

In addition to these and similar evidences I obtained through the simple movements of the table, others were furnished by *writing*. I was told several weeks before it came to pass that I should become a writing medium, and was advised to hold a pencil, and my father-in-law would control my hand and write us a message. I did so, for I made it a point of acting on the advice we received, for the purpose of testing the matter in every possible way. Knowing the ill-will and slander the course I was pursuing had already exposed me to, and what I was risking by persisting in it, I was anxious to decide on the claims of Spiritualism on adequate and satisfactory evidence, whether my decision might be in favour of or against it. Hence I looked forward to the fulfilment or otherwise of the promise to write through my hand with unusual interest. I held a pencil as directed, without consciously moving a muscle or a nerve. After sitting with rigid passiveness for about a quarter of an hour, my hand was slowly moved, without any voluntary effort on my part, across the paper and back again, but there was not the rudest outline of a letter formed. During the second experiment on the following day similar lines were traced, but nothing more. The third attempt was more successful. Letters were traced, which were not very perfect, and evidenced considerable nervousness in the hand, though I was not conscious of any nervous feeling. On the fourth day I obtained still more satisfactory results. The full names of my father-in-law, mother-in-law, wife, and myself were written out, without any effort or intention on my part; and in a hand as like as it could well be the ordinary writing of my father-in-law. The power, whatever it was, then wrote a short message as had been promised

by what professed to be my father-in-law, to Mrs. Tyerman, and was just such a message as a father might be expected to send to his child.

What was I to make of a fact like that? I knew the writing was not mine, If unconscious muscular action be suggested to account for it, that theory may explain the simple movement of the pencil, but it will hardly account for the formation of letters, and finally the writing of names and messages, and those in the hand of a person who had been deceased ten years, which hand I do not think I could imitate so closely if I tried, whereas in that case I was perfectly passive. As I looked at the hand writing, and read the message so like the man whose signature it bore, I could not but regard it as a strong evidence of his identity. Several other spirits attempted to control my hand and write, with more or less success, but I can only mention one additional instance at present.

While sitting in my study one day, a very peculiar sensation stole over me, and I was impressed that some spirit wished to communicate with me. I held a pencil in the usual way, and was soon convinced that the influence was a new one, and that some spirit was trying to control my hand for the first time. My hand felt as though a heavy, leaden weight had been placed upon it. The top of the pencil was bent to and fro, and there was evidently a difficulty felt in making a beginning to write. At length my hand moved slowly and heavily, but I had not the slightest idea of what was about to be written. With the greatest difficulty the following letters were formed—"OLIV"—in a very cramped, old-fashioned, and large hand. The v was not finished, when the pencil stopped, and would not make any other movement. A few hours afterwards, I took it again, when it was directed by some will other than my own to the unfinished v, finished it, and added "er," making "OLIVER;" but nothing more could be got at that sitting. The next time I held the pencil there was written, with the same difficulty, and in the same cramped, old-fashioned hand—"CROMWELL." The wiseacres who deign to read this will shake their heads incredibly at the idea of the great Protector writing that imposing name in the manner described, which had been appended to so many important

State documents. And the thing is altogether so strange, so contrary to our ordinary experience and notions of things, that I can quite understand and in some measure sympathise with the feeling of surprise and doubt with which such a statement will be received, by those who have paid no attention to the phenomena of Spiritualism. But whatever may be thought of the matter, or however our opponents may attempt to account for it, there beyond all doubt was the name of Oliver Cromwell.

I can only state two or three facts in connection with this case, which I leave the reader to accept for what he may honestly think they are worth. First, *I had not been thinking of Cromwell*; and indeed he would have been one of the last persons I should have expected to use my hand in the way described; therefore my own mind could have nothing to do with the production of his name, and there was no other person in the study with me whose mind could have anything to do with it. Secondly, *I was conscious of a feeling in my hand that I had not experienced before*. I felt a heavy, cramping weight as already stated, and the pencil was moved with the greatest difficulty. It is not easy to describe the difference there was in the influence, whatever it was, that moved my hand to write the name of my father-in-law, and that which produced the name of Cromwell. Why that difference in feeling and freedom, if in both cases the same cause operated, and that cause was a natural one, as anti-spiritualists suppose? Thirdly, *I had no recollection of the style of Cromwell's signature, and therefore could not have imitated it*. Yet I afterwards ascertained that, allowing for the difference in writing with a pen and a pencil, and for the little variations of the same person's signature at different times, it might be pronounced an excellent imitation of it. I sent a copy of it to a medical gentleman in Melbourne, with whom I was then corresponding on the subject of Spiritualism, that he might compare it with a genuine signature of Cromwell. In his reply he stated—"The Oliver is very like, and indeed the Cromwell also."

Now, I need hardly say that, to imitate a signature so closely that it will pass for an original one, a person must possess an accurate knowledge of it, and be an expert with the pen. No forgerer would attempt a name

he had never seen, or had but a very imperfect recollection of. Even with a genuine signature before him he has to exercise great skill and care to escape detection. Yet my hand was made to write a very good imitation of a signature I had no distinct remembrance of, and one that is by no means easy to imitate. I got the same signature several times afterwards, and also a little writing, always in the same peculiar hand. I think chance will hardly account for this fact, especially when it is remembered that I was a rigidly passive instrument in the matter; and to credit any blind, unconscious force in nature with an act displaying decided intelligence and skill, is an outrage upon reason and common sense.

I submit, then, that these three facts afford me a stronger reason for believing that the writing in question was done by the veritable Cromwell controlling my hand, than unbelievers have for denying this conclusion.

I could relate a number of other facts, similar to those already narrated, which came under my own observation while an investigator, but these must suffice for the present. What I have witnessed since has nothing to do with the personal experiences that convinced me of the truth of Spiritualism. I have striven to give a brief, candid, unvarnished statement of some of the facts I was cognisant of; and leave the matter to the verdict, not of unreasoning bigots, but of competent and impartial judges; only adding that such things as I have so far described form but a small part of the phenomena which Spiritualism as a whole includes.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LITERATURE OF THE MOVEMENT, AND THE TESTIMONY OF EMINENT WITNESSES.

In addition to the personal experiences narrated, and others of a similar kind, I paid as much attention while investigating as my leisure moments would allow to the literature of Spiritualism, in order to learn something of the evidence on which others had become convinced of its truth—something of what avowed Spiritualists had seen, heard, and felt, upon which they based their belief in communion with the departed. I confess I had no idea that Spiritualism could boast such a rich and ex-

tensive literature as it possesses. Within the last thirty years hundreds of works of considerable size have been published, in elucidation and defence of this interesting movement, many of them of intrinsic and lasting value; a still larger number of tracts and pamphlets have been sent forth, telling the same glad story to thousands of lisentening ears; while not a few periodicals have been and still are being issued in its interests, spreading a knowledge of it broad-cast over a large portion of the civilised world. Probably no other new and unpopular cause ever produced such a varied and extensive literature in so short a time.

I am aware that the literature of the movement is often used as an argument against its spiritual origin. It is stigmatised, as puerile, trashy, worthless; and the public, especially the young, are warned against its contaminating influence. I venture to think, however, that most of those who condemn its literature in such unmeasured and contemptuous terms know but little of it, or are too strongly prejudiced against it to judge of it impartially. Perhaps they have picked up some tract that is admittedly destitute of sterling merit, or stumbled upon some book of fourth-rate literary quality, and taking these as fair specimens of the whole, have let fly their sweeping and unqualified denunciations of the system that has called them forth.

Spiritualistic literature is by no means faultless. Some of it confessedly possesses but little merit. A movement rousing such excitement, and spreading so rapidly as it did, especially in America, was almost sure to bring out some crude exponents and feeble defenders. For a part of its literature a long life was neither expected nor desired. It served a temporary purpose, and will pass into oblivion. But is not this equally true of other, older, and more popular movements? Is all their literature pure, edifying, and enduring? Alas, for many an unfortunate scribe! Much of the literature of our most popular causes is equally puerile, and as certainly perishes. Streams of the veriest trash are constantly issuing from the press of sectarian religion, only to find their way to the stagnant pool of forgetfulness. Piles of worthless scribbling on almost every subject pass from the printing office to the lumber room, to be disposed of



in due course as waste paper. And, therefore, Spiritualism has nothing to fear from a comparison in this respect with much more fashionable and pretentious movements. But much of its literature will live, and operate upon society with no small influence, as time rolls on. Some of it is unquestionably of a high order, and has already powerfully impressed thousands of thinking minds. The works of Davis, Owen, Howitt, and scores of others who could be mentioned will live, and liberalise and mould men's minds, ages after those who fling the cheap and pointless sneer at Spiritualism are forgotten. As time advances its literature will reach a higher standard, and in the meantime, I repeat, it will not suffer from a comparison with the literature of older and more popular movements.

I must compress the result of my inquiries in this department into a small compass. I found much more varied and striking phenomena reported from various quarters than I had witnessed. In older circles, and under more favorable conditions marvellous things had occurred. In addition to the ordinary table movements it was alleged that certain mediums had been lifted from the ground and carried some distance, by invisible agency. Bells had been taken up, carried about, and rung over the heads of the members of circles,—also without visible human hands. Pianos, guitars, accordians, and other musical instruments had been heard discoursing beautiful music, when no earthly musician was near them. Flowers, fruits, and many other articles had been brought into rooms when all the doors, windows, and other avenues were closed and securely fastened. Moreover, spirit hands had been seen and touched, which were as palpable and life-like as any ordinary mortal hand. Spirit voices had been heard, holding distinct and coherent conversation with those this side the grave. In some instances the full spirit form, clothed in the beautiful robes of immortality, had been seen and touched. And in addition to these things, numberless communications had been received from the same source, sometimes in writing, which was often in the identical hand of the departed spirits professing to give them, and sometimes orally, through trance speaking mediums. These communications were said to often relate to

matters of which the parties obtaining them had no knowledge, but which on inquiry were found correct; and some of them foretold future events, which came to pass with a frequency and minuteness which the theory of mere guess-work could not have accounted for. It was further related that the sick were healed by the laying on of hands, as in olden times; that mediums often spoke in languages they had never learned; and that under spirit influence they often discoursed on subjects with an eloquence and ability, far beyond their power, in their normal state.

These and similar things I read of as occurring, many of them simultaneously, in America, England, France, Italy, and other parts of the world. And extraordinary as some of the phenomena were, the testimony to their occurrence appeared to be fairly entitled not only to respectful attention, but even general credence. It was certainly not of a kind to be disposed of by a flippant utterance of the lip, or a self-sufficient dash of the pen. The witnesses, as already stated, were found in all ranks in society, and were ready by thousands to swear to these wonderful occurrences. Many of them being well-known public men, whose character for intelligence, honesty, and soundness of judgment was beyond dispute, I could not but allow their testimony to have considerable influence with me, in forming my final conclusions on the claims of Spiritualism.

I cannot do better than place before the reader a part of the testimony in favor of Spiritualism, that has been published at different times and in different forms. It will be seen by the names of the witnesses, that what I have said of their competency and trustworthiness is fully justified; and I venture to say that such an array of evidence by the same witnesses on any other subject would satisfy the most incredulous scepticism, conquer the most determined opposition, and ensure a unanimous and cordial verdict of proven. Alas, that in this matter prejudice should in so many cases deny such evidence its legitimate weight! But the time is not far distant when it will universally command the respect to which it is so justly entitled. It will be seen that these witnesses testify to the reality of the phenomena of Spiritualism, and most of them to their spiritual origin.

The late Professor de Morgan, President of the Mathematical Society, London, in the preface to a work on Spiritualism—*From Matter to Spirit*—by his wife, says:—

I am perfectly convinced that I have both seen and heard, in a manner which should make unbelief impossible, things called spiritual, which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence, or mistake. So far I feel the ground firm under me.

The late Lord Brougham occasionally attended seances, and in the preface to a work by Napier—*The Book of Nature*—he says:—

There is but one question I would ask the author, is the Spiritualism of this work foreign to our materialistic, manufacturing age!—No; for amidst the varieties of mind which divers circumstances produce are found those who cultivate man's highest faculties; to these the author addresses himself. But even in the most cloudless skies of scepticism I see a rain-cloud, if it be no bigger than a man's hand; it is modern Spiritualism.

The late Dr. Robert Chambers examined Spiritualism carefully both in Scotland and America; and in a preface to *Incidents of my Life*, by D. D. Home, the medium, he thus speaks of it:—

Already Spiritualism, conducted as it usually is, has had a prodigious effect throughout America, and partly in the Old World also, in redeeming multitudes from hardened atheism and materialism, proving to them, by the positive demonstration which their cast of mind requires, that there is another world—that there is a non-material form of humanity—and that many miraculous things which they had hitherto scoffed at, are true.

A committee of the London Dialectical Society, consisting of eminent professional men, was appointed in 1869 to investigate the subject. It was divided into several sub-committees, most of which elicited more or less of the phenomena, and one or two of them obtained extraordinary results. The report of sub-committee No. 2 relates some striking occurrences which took place in different houses, under the strictest test conditions, and mostly in the presence of Anti-Spiritualists, but it is too lengthy to quote. The final report of the general committee states:—

1. That sounds of a very varied character, apparently proceeding from articles of furniture, the floor and walls of the room—the vibrations accompanying which 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 those 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.

Dr. Hitchman, President of the Anthropological Society, Liverpool, has lately embraced Spiritualism, after a careful examination of its claims; and in a speech lately delivered in Liverpool he said:—

Spiritualism was one of the leading topics of the day, not only in Great Britain, but on the Continent, and in America; it was a subject of debate in the leading academies of France, Italy, Spain, Germany, and Holland, and some of the greatest minds of Europe were at that moment Christian Spiritualists, in consequence of having investigated the psychic phenomena. In the Academy of Sciences at Paris, also those of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Munich, and Rome, they had investigated Spiritualism as they would any other branch of science; the members had tested the subject in their own homes, and concluded that nothing but the spiritual theory would explain the facts. Spiritualism was one of the greatest truths which God had given to mankind to remove the veil of materialism which now covers the beautiful face of Britannia—a truth which would aid to raise up a moral, intelligent people, advancing step by step like the stars of the firmament—a happy people, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

The late Horace Greeley, whose testimony is entitled to the highest respect, thus describes what he witnessed:—

“I have sat with three others round a small table, with every one of our eight hands lying plainly, palpably on that table, and heard rapid writing with a pencil on paper, which, perfectly white, we had just previously placed under that table; and have, the next minute, picked up that paper with a sensible, straightforward message of twenty to twenty-five words fairly written thereon. I do not say by whom or by what the said message was written; yet I am quite confident that none of the persons present, who were visible to mortal eyes, wrote it. The mediums are often children of tender years who had no such training, have no special dexterity, and some of whom are known to be awkward and clumsy in their movements. The jugglery hypothesis utterly fails to account for the occurrences which I have personally witnessed.

William Lloyd Garrison, the well-known journalist and radical reformer, not only admits the reality of the phenomena, but declares his belief in their spiritual origin, as the following extract shows:—

As the manifestations have spread from house to house, from city to city, from one part of the country to the other, across the Atlantic into Europe, till now the civilised world is compelled to

acknowledge their reality, however diverse in accounting for them ; as these manifestations continue to increase in variety and power, so that all suspicions of trick or imposture become simply absurd and preposterous ; and as every attempt to find a solution for them in some physical theory relating to electricity, the odic force, clairvoyance, and the like, has thus proved abortive—it becomes every intelligent mind to enter into an investigation of them with candour and fairness, as opportunities may offer ; and to hear such testimony in regard to them as the facts may warrant no matter what ridicule it may excite on the part of the uninformed or sceptical. As for ourselves, we have been in no haste to jump to a conclusion in regard to phenomena so universally diffused and of so extraordinary a character. For the last three years we have kept pace with nearly all that has been published on the subject ; and we have witnessed, at various times, many surprising manifestations ; *and our conviction is that they cannot be accounted for on any other theory than that of spiritual agency.*

The Rev. Dr. Phelps, Congregational minister of America, in a sermon lately preached against Spiritualism—which has been ably replied to in the *Banner of Light*—grants the genuineness of most of the manifestations, and contends that no purely mundane theory can account for them. He says :—

As little reason have we to cavil at the character of a certain portion of the testimony by which the toughest facts of Spiritualism are supported. Some of that testimony, so far as it respects the sanity, the culture, the integrity, and the opportunity of the witnesses, would convict a murderer in any court in Christendom, out of New York City. It is too late also to set down the spiritualistic phenomena as only a revamping of old, or an invention of new, feats of jugglery. Moreover the theories of scientists thus far announced cannot be held to cover all the facts of the case.

Dr. Ashburner's testimony is short, but very pointed and decisive. He says :—

I have myself so often witnessed spiritual manifestations, that I could not if I were inclined, put aside the evidences which have come before me.

The late Rev. Dr. Campbell's testimony proves not only that the phenomena are real, but that they are often characterised by an intelligence of the highest kind. Speaking of what he had witnessed he says :—

That is an affair involved in deepest mystery. We never saw but one exhibition of this sort ourselves, but it was certainly an extraordinary affair. We heard a multitude of questions put and answered of a character which required wisdom more than human. These are indisputable facts as attested by our own eyes and ears. The source of that wisdom we know not, but the questions were beyond doubt correctly answered. On one point the intelligence appeared to be at fault. A question was put respect-

ing a gentleman supposed to be in the country ; this was denied, and he was affirmed, by the table, to be upon the premises. All present were surprised, deeming it a mistake ; but on inquiry he was found to be actually there ! Explanation of such phenomena we have none to offer, but we stand by the facts as here stated.

Dr. Elliotson, the eminent physician, long fought against Spiritualism, denouncing the manifestations as imposture. But the evidence of their genuineness accumulated, and acquired a character and force that overpowered all his objections, and entirely altered his attitude towards the movement. Few men opposed it more vigorously than he did, and hence the greater importance to be attached to his opinion. He says :—

I am now quite satisfied of the reality of the phenomena. I am not yet prepared to admit that they are produced by the agency of spirits. But I do not deny this, as I am unable to satisfactorily account for what I have seen on any other hypothesis. . . . What I have lately seen has made a deep impression on my mind, and the recognition of the reality of these manifestations, from whatever cause, is tending to revolutionise my thoughts and feelings on almost every subject.

Judge Edmonds, one of the earliest and ablest advocates of Spiritualism, is entitled to great credit as a witness He says :—

I have known a pine table, with four legs, lifted bodily up from the floor, in the centre of a circle of six or eight persons, turned upside down,—and laid upon its top at our feet, then lifted up over our heads, and put leaning against the back of the sofa on which we sat. I have known that same table to be tilted up on two legs, its top at an angle with the floor of forty-five degrees, when it neither fell over of itself, nor could any person present put it back on its four legs. I have seen the same table tipped up with the lamp upon it, so far that the lamp must have fallen off unless retained there by something else than its own gravity ; yet it fell not, moved not. I have known a dinner bell taken from a high shelf in a closet, rung over the heads of four or five persons in that closet, then rung round the room over the heads of twelve or fifteen persons in the back parlor, then borne through the folding doors to the farther end of the front parlor, and there dropped on the floor. I have frequently known persons pulled about with a force which it was impossible for them to resist, and once when all my strength was added in vain to that of one thus affected. I have known a mahogany chair thrown on its side, and moved swiftly back and forth on the floor, *no one touching* it, through a room where there were at least a dozen people sitting, *yet no one was touched* ; and it was repeatedly stopped within a few inches of me, when it was coming with a violence which, if not arrested, must have broken my leg. This is not a tithe, nay not a hundredth part of what I have witnessed of the same character.

William Howitt is distinguished alike for his literary

attainments, and his fearless and manly defence of Spiritualism, despite its unpopularity. On entering upon an investigation of the movement, he says :—

I did not go to paid, or even to public mediums. I sat down at my own table, with members of my own family, or with friends,—persons of high character, and serious as myself in the inquiry. I saw tables moved, rocked to and fro, and raised repeatedly into the air. I heard the raps, sometimes a hundred at once, in every imaginable part of the table, in all keys, and of various degrees of loudness. I examined the phenomena thoroughly. . . . I heard accordians play wonderful music as they were held in one hand, often by persons who could not play at all. I have heard and seen hand bells carried about the room in the air ; put first into one person's hand and then into another's ; taken away again with a strong pull, though you could not see the hand touching them. As for communications professedly from spirits, they were of daily occurrence, and often wonderful. Our previous theological opinions were resisted and condemned when I and my wife were alone. I have seen spirit hands moving about ; I have felt them again and again. I have seen writing done by spirits, by laying a pencil and paper in the middle of the floor ; and very good sense written too. I could give you a whole volume of the remarkable and even startling revelations made by our own departed friends, at our evening table ; those friends coming at wholly unexpected times, and bringing messages of the most vital importance.

Professor William Denton, a bold and gifted exponent of the new philosophy, says :—

I commenced the investigation of Spiritualism at home, with members of our family ; when we had raps, movements of tables, and by these means communications from unseen intelligences, professing to be our departed friends, and giving us satisfactory evidence of this. . . . I have seen hands repeatedly, and felt them, still more often, when the hands of the only person in the room besides myself lay upon the table before me ; and this frequently in the broad daylight also. . . . I have frequently received communications in writing both on slate and paper ; and in all cases *this* took place in the day time, or in a lighted room, and under circumstances that rendered it utterly impossible for any person in the body to produce them.

William Crookes, F.R.S., whose rigidly scientific investigations have demonstrated the existence of a force in nature not hitherto recognised by science, thus testifies to some of the phenomena :—

That certain physical phenomena, such as the movement of material substances, and the production of sounds resembling electric discharges, occur, under circumstances in which they cannot be explained by any physical law at present known, is a fact of which I am as certain as I am of the most elementary fact in chemistry.

A. F. Wallace, the eminent Naturalist, who anticipated Darwin's evolution theory, and is an authority in certain departments of Science, is a pronounced Spiritualist; and took part in the controversy on Spiritualism which appeared in the London *Times*, a few months ago. In a letter he thus relates what occurred at a seance under his own observation:—

The following is exactly what happened, except that I alter the surname, which was a very unusual one, having no authority to publish it. The letters I wrote down were of the following kind:—y r n e h n o s p m o h t. After the first three—y r n—had been taken down, my friend said—"This is nonsense; we had better begin again." Just then her pencil was at "e," and raps came, when a thought struck me (having read of, but never witnessed a similiar occurrence), and I said, "Please go on; I think I see what is meant." When the spelling was finished I handed the paper to her, but she could see no meaning in it till I divided it at the first h, and asked her to read each portion backwards, when to her intense astonishment the name "Henry Thompson" came out, that of a deceased son of whom she had wished to hear, correct in every letter. Just about that time I had been hearing *ad nauseam* of the superhuman acuteness of mediums who detect the letters of the name the deluded visitors expect, notwithstanding all their care to pass the pencil over the letters with perfect regularity.

This experience, however (for the substantial accuracy of which as above narrated, I vouch) was and is, to my mind, a complete disproof of every explanation yet given of the means by which the names of deceased persons are rapped out. Of course, I do not expect any sceptic, whether scientific or unscientific, to accept such facts, of which I could give many, on my testimony, but neither must they expect me, nor the thousands of intelligent men to whom equally conclusive tests have occurred, to accept their short and easy methods of explaining them.

In conclusion, I may say that although I have heard a great many accusations of imposture, I have never detected it myself; and, although a large proportion of the more extraordinary phenomena are such that, if impostures they could only be performed by means of ingenious apparatus or machinery, none has ever been discovered. I consider it no exaggeration to say that the main facts are now as well established and as easily verifiable as any of the more exceptional phenomena of nature which are not yet reduced to law. They have a most important bearing on the interpretation of history, which is full of narratives of similiar facts, and on the nature of life and intellect, on which physical science throws a very feeble and uncertain light; and it is my firm and deliberate belief that every branch of philosophy must suffer till they are honestly and seriously investigated, and dealt with as constituting an essential portion of the phenomena of human nature.



S. C. Hall, the Editor of the *Art Journal*, and author of some excellent works, has been an unwavering believer in Spiritualism for years; and his faith in it, like that of most Spiritualists, is based on actual, personal experience. He thus speaks of part of his experiences:—

A few days ago, sitting with Daniel Home and seven other friends, my venerable and truly Christian sister, who passed from earth about eight months ago, was enabled to be visible to me and those who were with me. She was not only not a Spiritualist, but strongly and sternly objected to the principle, as anti-Christian or demoniacal. She had never been present at any manifestation, never would be. But not long before her departure, I said to her, "I am sure God will permit you to visit me after you leave earth. You will be permitted to do so for my comfort, and as a helper on my way to Christ. I wish you to promise that you will do so, if God gives you power." She did not absolutely make me the promise; but she did say, "My dear brother, if it be for your good, and God permits it—and he may do so—I will be with you when he has called me from earth." When she appeared to us in my drawing-room, her face was so healthy—so full of the red and white that exhibit health—that at the moment I did not recognise her; for she had been two years confined to bed, "died" of cancer, was a great sufferer, and was naturally reduced to a skeleton, so to speak. Suddenly I said, with an exclamation, "It is my sister!" Three blows were struck on the table. The eyes were closed—she had been blind during the last ten years of her earth-life—possibly but for that I should not have recognised her; there was so marvellous a contrast between the face, as I saw it on her "death" bed, and the face as I saw it then; so healthful, so beautiful, so happy, so smiling; but the likeness was exact, for I recognised every feature after my exclamation; the hair exactly as she wore it, or plaited back, and the cap exactly as she wore it also, which the Master of Lindsay, the Hon. Mr. Lindsay, called a "mutch,"—i.e., the cap of the old Scottish model. She remained before us thus palpably for about two minutes—certainly more than one—long enough for any photographer to have made a photograph of her; and I am very sure there would have been no difficulty whatsoever in taking such a photograph if the apparatus had been ready; that it would have been at once recognised by any person who knew her during her "life" here, and that it would have been as distinct and palpable as any photograph of any (so-called) living persons. I have no doubt that each of the eight persons present would make exactly the statement I have made.

Sergeant Cox, in a little work lately published, entitled *Spiritualism answered by Science*, describes the frame of mind in which he entered upon the examination of the subject, under the auspices of the London Dialectical Society, and the results at which he arrived respecting

some of the phenomena. He demonstrated, under strict test conditions, many of the physical phenomena, and thus proved the first half of the claims of Spiritualism. He then thought that science could account for what he had witnessed, but there is good reason to believe that further investigations have convinced him that the only theory that can cover all the phenomena is that of Spiritualism. He says:—

"I entered upon its duties, in common with five-sixths of the members of that committee, having the most firm conviction that we should detect a fraud, or dissipate a delusion. I hoped that long experience in the work of sifting and weighing evidence, and resolving what does or does not constitute proof of asserted facts, would enable me to do good service in detecting imposture, discovering its contrivances.

Before we commenced to examine, it was our confident belief that the alleged phenomena were:—

1. Self-delusion by the spectator; or
2. Imposture by the Psychic; or
3. Involuntary and unconscious muscular action.

With our minds thus prejudiced against the reality of the phenomena we proceeded to their investigation.

I can only say as an expert, that if the evidence of the existence of Psychic Force, produced under so many and various conditions, with such careful experiments, and under tests so often repeated, is not deemed to be a sufficient proof of the fact that motions of heavy bodies and audible sounds of impact upon them are produced without contact or material connection with any person present (for that is all we assert) however that fact may be explained, the pursuit of truth must be abandoned as hopeless. If the senses of honest and intelligent observers are not to be trusted for a fact so obvious to the eye as that of a table being moved untouched over spaces of several feet, how is the common business of life to be conducted? We must close our courts of justice, for upon evidence infinitely more disputable than that attested by the scientific experimentalists and the Investigation Committee, liberty and property are daily dealt with by all our tribunals.

Cromwell F. Varley, the distinguished electrician, thus describes part of his experience:—

I have in broad daylight seen a small table with no one near it but myself, and not even touched by me or any visible person, raised off the floor and carried horizontally ten feet through the air; and I have repeatedly seen a large dining-table lifted bodily off the floor, and when so supported in the air the table has moved in the direction that I mentally requested is to take. In this experiment not only was the new force well developed, but in addition it obeyed my unspoken mental request, to convince me that there was present an intelligence that could and did read my thoughts.

Mr. Livermore, of New York, a shrewd, practical man of business, not likely to be imposed upon by those tricks which our opponents are so ready to fall back upon as an explanation of the whole thing, relates the result of his experiences as an investigator as follows :—

I commenced these investigations an out-and-out sceptic. They were undertaken solely with a view to satisfy my own mind, and with no thought, motive or desire for publicity. After thorough and careful scrutiny I found, to my surprise, that the phenomena were real ! After ten years of experience, with ample opportunities for observation, (often with scientific men) I arrived at these conclusions:

First. That there exists, in the presence of sensitives of high nervous organization, a mysterious force, capable of moving ponderable bodies, and which exhibits intelligence.

For example: A pencil without contact with human hand, or any visible agency, apparently of its own volition, writes intelligently, and answers questions pertinently.

Second. That temporary formations, material in structure, and cognizable by the senses, are produced by the same influence, are animated by the same mysterious force, and pass off as incomprehensibly as they came.

For example: Hands which grasp with living power; flowers which emit perfume, and can be handled; human forms and parts of forms; recognisable faces; representations of clothing and the like.

Third: That this force, and the resulting phenomena are developed in a greater or less degree according to the physical and mental conditions of the sensitive, and in a measure, by atmospheric conditions.

Fourth: That the intelligence which governs that force is (under pure conditions) independent of, and external to, the minds of the sensitive and investigator.

Dr. Gully, of Malvern, is a decided Spiritualist, and no wonder, seeing the extraordinary manifestations he had witnessed. Some years ago a remarkable article appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, entitled "Stranger than Fiction." It was from the pen of Robert Bell, the distinguished critic, and related some marvellous things that had been witnessed by a select party, in the presence of Mr. D. D. Home, the medium. The article is too long to quote. Among those present were Dr. Gully, and the late Dr. Robert Chambers, the well-known publisher. Dr. Gully afterwards published an account of that seance, corroborating the testimony of Robert Bell. The following extract from his letter speaks for itself. Speaking of Mr. Home floating in the air he says :—

Only consider that here is a man, between ten and eleven stone

in weight, floating about the room for many minutes—in the tomb-like silence which prevailed, broken only by his voice coming from different quarters of the room, according to his then position—is it probable, is it possible, that any machinery could be devised—not to speak of its being set up and previously made ready in a room, which was fixed upon as the place of meeting only five minutes before we entered it—capable of carrying such a weight about without the slightest sound of any description? Or suppose, as has been suggested, that he bestrode an inflated balloon, could a balloon have been introduced inflated large enough to hold in mid-air such a weight? Or could it have been inflated with hydrogen gas without being detected by ears, eyes, or nose?

It seems to me a much stronger sign of credulity to believe either of these suggestions, with our present knowledge, than to adopt the wildest statements or dreams of what is called Spiritualism. Let it be remembered, moreover, that the room was, for a good part of the evening, in a blaze of light, in which no balloon or other machine sufficient for the supposed purpose could be introduced; or, if already introduced, could remain unobserved; and that, even when the room was comparatively darkened, light streamed through the window from a distant gas-lamp outside, between which gas-lamp and our eyes Mr. Home's form passed, so that we distinctly perceived its trunk and limbs; and most assuredly there was no balloon near him, nor any machinery attached to him. His foot once touched my head when he was floating above.

Then the accordion music. I distinctly saw the instrument moving, and heard it playing when held only at one end, again and again. I held it myself for a short time, and had good reason to know that it was vehemently pulled at the other end, and not by Mr. Home's toes, as has been wisely surmised, unless that gentleman has legs three yards long, with toes at the end of them quite as marvellous as any legion of spirits. For, be it stated, that such music as we heard was no ordinary strain; it was grand at times, at others pathetic, at others distant and long-drawn, to a degree which no one can imagine who has not heard it. I have heard Blagrove repeatedly, but it is no libel on that master of the instrument to say that he never did produce such exquisite distant and echo notes as those which delighted our ears. The instrument played, too, at distant parts of the room, many yards away from Mr. Home, and from all of us.

To one whose external senses have witnessed these things, it is hard to increase the insufficiency of those attempted explanations which assert the use of tricks and machinery. As I said before, it requires much more credulity to believe such explanations than to swallow all the ghost stories that ever were related. I may add that the writer in the *Cornhill Magazine* omits to mention several curious phenomena which were witnessed that evening. Here is one of them. A distinguished *littérateur* (Dr. Robert Chambers) who was present, asked the supposed spirit of his father, whether he would play his favourite ballad for us, and, addressing us, he added — 'The accordion was not invented at the

time of my father's death, so I cannot conceive how it will be effected ; but if his favourite air is not played, I pledge myself to tell you so.' Almost immediately the flute notes of the accordion (which was upon the floor) played through 'Ye banks and braes of Bonnie Doon,' which the gentleman alluded to assured us was his father's favourite air, whilst the flute was his father's favourite instrument. He then asked for another favourite air of his father's, 'which was not Scotch,' and 'The last Rose of Summer' was played in the same note. This, the gentleman told us, was the air to which he had alluded.

I will only make two or three brief remarks on the testimony adduced. First, the witnesses are *numerous*, though only few compared with the number that could have been called. Secondly, they are *all well-known public men*, occupying distinguished positions in the literary and scientific, artistic and commercial, legal and medical departments of life ; and as such their statements are entitled to respectful consideration. Thirdly, they testify to what they have *individually seen, heard, and handled*, and do not merely repeat the alleged experiences of others. Fourthly, they *all* bear witness to the *reality* of most of the phenomena of Spiritualism, and most of them admit that the hypothesis of disembodied spirits being the cause of these phenomena, is the only one that fully and fairly covers all the proved facts of the case. Fifthly, they cannot be suspected of *interested or unworthy motives* in giving the testimony. Their character and social position preclude such a suspicion. I press these considerations upon the attention of the opponents of Spiritualism. How will they meet this mass of testimony, from such competent and trustworthy witnesses ? Can they deny or resist its force ? Will they venture to set their own ignorance, or want of experience of the movement, against the positive knowledge of those who have personally investigated it, and *proved* its truth ? Would they pursue such a course in regard to any other public question ? If the same amount of testimony, and by the same parties, was adduced in favour of any other disputed subject, would they not consider the point settled affirmatively, so far as the testimony of reliable witnesses was concerned ? Why then should self-interest or prejudice, or any other unworthy motive, cause them to withhold that credence from the testimony of these men, to which, by all fair rules of

evidence, it is justly entitled, simply because it happens to be in favor of Spiritualism? Assuredly, the general acceptance of a system which has won the spontaneous and cordial approbation of so many eminent men, is only a question of time, whatever its opponents may at present think of its claims.

## CHAPTER V.

### THEORIES ADVANCED BY ANTI-SPIRITUALISTS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE MOVEMENT.

Having stated my reasons for examining Spiritualism, detailed some of my experiences as an investigator, and adduced the testimony of several eminent witnesses in its favour, I will now notice and reply to some of the theories which its opponents have propounded in explanation of it. Before I gave in my adhesion to Spiritualism I felt bound to examine these theories to see if any of them could satisfactorily account for the manifestations I had seen and read of. None of them satisfied my mind, and the more I examine the subject the more I am convinced that none of them ever will afford a satisfactory solution of it. The following are all the theories I have met with that are worthy of the least notice :—

I. Spiritualism is first of all met by a class of *negationists*.

These parties deny there is anything genuine in it. Inform them of certain physical phenomena, and they will tell you they do not believe anything of the sort ever occurred. They will not even admit that a table can be moved, unless it is by mechanical agency, or the hands or feet of some one in the room. They are guided, in dealing with this subject, simply by their own limited experience; and because they have not witnessed any of the phenomena of Spiritualism, they forsooth, do not believe that anybody else has! Persons who take this ground are not worth arguing with at this stage of the history of this movement; for if there be one thing that can be demonstrated it is that the phenomena of Spiritualism are genuine occurrences. Anyone who doubts this may soon satisfy himself that at least the physical manifestations so often spoken of actually occur, whatever opinion he may entertain as to their cause.

II. *Wilful imposture* is held by others to account for

most if not all that is said to be done by disembodied spirits.

There was a time when this objection was freely banded about. Spiritualism and imposture were supposed to be nearly synonymous terms. Persons who were immaculate in their own eyes, and wished to be considered living embodiments of true charity, did not scruple to brand as imposters those who had never given them the slightest occasion for such a charge. Cases of alleged detection of fraud were blazoned before the public, the appetite of scandal-mongers was appeased; and opponents, anxious for its discomfiture and downfall, turned their saintly eyes to heaven, and thanked God that at last the whole thing was exploded. But the cause spread in spite of that favourite cry. The charge of imposture is still urged in certain quarters, though with less frequency and assurance than formerly. In a little while no well-informed person will venture to repeat it.

A more unfounded and monstrous accusation has seldom been preferred against a new movement. On examining it I found no evidence to sustain it. It has been pretty fully answered in a former chapter. As was there shown no reasonable or adequate motive for deception, on the part of the great body of Spiritualists, could be assigned. They gained nothing, but often suffered much from their avowed belief in Spiritualism. The character of many of them would have been a sufficient guarantee against the charge of imposture, had not prejudice blinded people's eyes to a proper perception of truth and justice.

I do not deny that cases of deception have occurred. It is not surprising that such a movement should draw some unprincipled persons to it. When impostors are found within what many regard as the much purer enclosure of the orthodox churches, some of that class might be expected to seek shelter under the wing of Spiritualism. The wonder is that more have not done this. After all the vigilant efforts of its opponents how small a number of imposters have been found, compared with the number every year discovered in the Christian Church! Some other cause will have to be sought for the unparalleled success of the Spiritualism. It is impossible that such gigantic and wholesale imposition as

the charge implies should have escaped detection for a quarter of a century. The imposture theory will soon be universally abandoned. Even now it is only persisted in by those who either wilfully refuse to be taught on this subject, or wickedly pervert the knowledge they have gathered.

III. *Self-delusion* goes far, in the estimation of some of its opponents, to account for the existence and growth of Spiritualism.

This theory also has been anticipated and met in a former part, and, therefore, I will only make an additional remark or two. It rests on a pure assumption, and is not sustained by facts that can give it even a plausible appearance. There is no direct and positive evidence of it. The number and character of Spiritualists, and the nature of the facts they testify to, are, as before shown, fatal to it. Most spiritualistic phenomena appeal to the bodily senses, and can be judged of like other visible events; and why should the senses of so many people, reliable in reporting other matters, be supposed to deceive them on this one point? Why should persons who are quite sane on all other subjects be written down as insane—for that is what it amounts to—when testifying to the occurrence of spiritual manifestations; when there is no other evidence of insanity than is implied in their testifying to extraordinary facts, outside the experience of those who call them mad? That some persons are the victims of optical and mental delusions is well known; but to charge Spiritualists with self-delusion, when their senses are in a normal condition, and their reason is as well-balanced as that of their opponents; and to have no other ground for doing this than an unwillingness to admit the reality of facts that would upset some cherished belief or notion—is to be guilty of conduct utterly unworthy intelligent and honorable men.

IV. A fourth theory is that such manifestations as take place are caused by some *mechanical apparatus*, concealed from the eye of inquirers.

This theory, like some of the others advanced by opponents, is not worth a moment's consideration, and would have no time wasted in refuting it, were it not that persons who ought to know better, and who might easily



satisfy themselves of its falsity, take refuge in it when confronted with evidence not easy to ignore. Some time ago I heard a learned doctor expatiating with great zeal and eloquence on the adequacy of this theory to account for all the astounding things so often read of as occurring at seances. He had just been reading in a journal devoted to medical science an account of how the whole thing was done. He twitted Spiritualists with gullibility, but he had little reason to do so. He simply showed how easy it is, even for a man of education and social position, to be imposed upon by specious errors, when his mind is influenced by strong feelings for or against a movement.

This theory had not the least weight with me in forming my judgment of the merits of Spiritualism. I was perfectly satisfied that the phenomena I had personally witnessed, which did far more to ensure conviction of its truth than the reports of what others had seen, were not caused by mechanical or other mundane agency. And the most sceptical may soon assure himself, if he will take the trouble, that remarkable manifestations do take place absolutely independent of any such cause.

Besides, what a wonderful apparatus, what an elaborate and skilful contrivance, that must be to produce all the phenomena of Spiritualism! If they consisted solely in table-tilting and rapping they might be produced by some such means; but it is well known that these form only a part, and the first and simplest part of the system. What a curious and extraordinary machine that must be which can speak several languages with fluency and correctness; give a facsimile of a person's writing, whose hand is unknown to anyone in the company; compose and deliver lengthy and beautiful communications on different subjects; manufacture and exhibit human hands that have no connection with any visible body; foretell future events that come to pass with remarkable accuracy; and do other things quite as marvellous! The inventor of such an instrument is a genius of the brightest order. Who is he? Why has his name not been blazoned round the world long ago? Surely he ought not to remain in obscurity any longer. Let him patent his invention, and his fortune is made; for assuredly an instrument that can produce the higher

phases of spiritualistic phenomena far surpasses anything the inventive genius of man has yet given to the public. I fear, however, those who are anxious to see the wonderful thing that is going to practically and publicly demonstrate how what are called by opponents the tricks of Spiritualism are done, will have a long and weary wait. True, certain conjurers have pretended to do this already, but they have only after a fashion imitated the simplest physical manifestations; the higher phenomena have not been attempted. And even the simplest forms are but miserable shams, which no intelligent Spiritualist would confound with the genuine spirit manifestations; and clumsy devices as they are, not one of them can be performed under the conditions usually observed at *séances*. What straws, or rather weeds, men will grasp at, to save them from being borne down by the stream of evidence that is strongly setting in, in favour of a movement that has long been despised and abased! But the current is too vast and powerful to be resisted by the aid of any such flimsy means.

V. Another class of opponents urge the theory of *involuntary muscular action* as sufficient to explain the movements said to be spiritual in their origin. This theory is not so often advanced now as formerly, and it never would have gained the currency it did but for one or two great names associated with it. It was Professor Faraday's pet explanation of what took place. And a theory propounded by such an authority had only to be applied and the pretensions of Spiritualism would be for ever destroyed. But this theory is easily exploded by those who have any personal experience of spiritualistic phenomena; and those who have not are not entitled to be heard on the subject.

Two brief remarks will show how insufficient it is for the purpose it was intended to serve. First, it supposes that the phenomena *are confined to such physical manifestations as table moving*, than which nothing can be further from the truth. Most of the phenomena, and indeed those parts which give the strongest evidences of a spiritual origin, are in no way dependent upon, nor connected with, a table, or other dead material object; and therefore there is no scope for involuntary muscular action. But if even the phenomena were confined to a

table, I reply, secondly, that unfortunately for this theory the table often moves *without muscular contact*! This theory requires physical connection between the circle and the table, by means of the hands; but as a matter of fact tables not only move without physical contact, but are sometimes raised in the air, and while suspended there, with no human being within several feet of them, they perform graceful movements and answer questions. The reader will recall the testimony of Sergeant Cox, Cromwell F. Varley, and others given in the last chapter, which fully supports this position. I leave those who still cling to the involuntary muscular action theory to fit such facts with that theory if they can.

VI. The phenomena are attributed by another class to *animal magnetism*.

But what is animal magnetism? There was a time when what is known by that name was denied and scouted by certain classes as Spiritualism has been. Thanks to the labours of such men as the late Dr. Ashburner, a distinguished Spiritualist, it is now an admitted reality; though but little is yet known of its nature, properties, and powers. This much, however, may be safely affirmed of it—it does not possess *conscious life*, much less *intelligence*. Yet much of the phenomena of Spiritualism, unquestionably display life; and not only life, but a high degree of intelligence also; and therefore cannot be produced by an agent which is utterly destitute of both these qualities.

I do not deny that magnetism has to do with the phenomena. Nay I believe it plays an important, perhaps an indispensable part in their production. Disembodied spirits use it as the means by which they perform the phenomenal wonders whose reality is so well attested. I cannot better illustrate my opinion of the part magnetism plays in the matter than by referring to the Electric Telegraph. Electricity bears the same relation to telegraphic operations as magnetism does to Spiritualistic phenomena. A person receives a telegraphic message, but he does not credit electricity with it. He would be laughed at as an ignoramus or pitied as a maniac who insisted that electricity composed and sent the message. The presence of a living,

conscious, intelligent operator at the other end of the line is taken for granted, and electricity is regarded as only the *medium* of communication. So I look upon what is called animal magnetism as only the medium of spirit operations. In addition to physical manifestations, we obtain intelligent and often beautiful and instructive communications. We know they are not our own creations, not the emanations of our own minds. They come as it were along the magnetic line, from some other region. We see no visible operation ; but as the telegraphic message *necessarily implies* an operator, so do these magnetic messages ; and as that operator is not a mortal in the flesh, we infer, and I think we are warranted by analogy and every fair principle of reasoning in inferring, an immortal operator behind the veil that hides the future state from view.— In other words, we infer the presence and action of disembodied spirits at the other end of the line, if I may so speak. And we do this for the additional reason, that in the messages we receive we are assured that spirits are the invisible operators ; that by them the movements are produced, and from them the messages are sent ; and having no evidence on the other side to rebut this direct and positive testimony, we hold ourselves justified in accepting it as truth. The telegraphic wires now belt the world, and with the rapidity of lightning messages are flashed from one place to another thousands of miles apart. But much as *natural* science has to be proud of a still greater achievement than it can boast has been effected. A *spiritual* telegraphic connection has been established with *the world to come* ; and scientists on the other side of the mystic river are co-operating with scientists on this side, to perfect the line of magnetic communication ! And the time will come, impossible as it may seem to many, when we shall be able to communicate with the inhabitants of other spheres, with as much certainty and satisfaction as we do with each other in the present world !

VII.—Others contend that certain *psychological laws* which science is just beginning to recognise, but does not yet fully understand, will explain all the more remarkable and mysterious phenomena of Spiritualism.

Psychology as a branch of science is comparatively

new, and but little understood. What it may or may not be capable of explaining no one can as yet authoritatively state. When more fully unfolded it will no doubt clear up many obscure points, and throw a flood of light on the whole subject of man's soul; but it does appear to me to justify the conclusions of anti-spiritualists. This psychological theory is adopted by those who are compelled to admit not only that the physical phenomena are real, but that they often display decided *intelligence*, and yet deny that that intelligence emanates from disembodied spirits. Granted, they say, that tables do sometimes rap out answers, that planchettes write messages, and that mediums impart information, we need not call in spirits to account for this; for all the information thus obtained was in the minds of those present. In the case of the table and planchette, they are charged with some element or force that emanates from the bodies of those present; and the will acts upon this force as it does upon the nerves of the body, and makes the one rap out, and the other write what the mind is fixed upon. And in the case of the medium, his or her mind is *en rapport* with the mind of the person who receives the information, and one of them psychologises the other—the recipient either impresses his thoughts on the mind of the medium and has them reflected back again, or the medium, reading the thoughts of the recipient, communicates them as though obtained from some external source. These things take place in harmony with psychological laws whose existence is no longer a matter of doubt, and whose workings scientific observation is fast clearing up; and therefore spirits have nothing to do with them.

Such, in brief, is the position taken by those who adopt this theory; and to illustrate it they often refer to mesmeric and kindred operations. But plausible as the theory may appear at first sight, it will soon be seen that it fails to account for the intelligent, as distinguished from the phenomenal, side of Spiritualism. At most it only covers a few facts, not all by any means.

It will be seen that the fundamental principle of this theory is that all answers and messages received at

*séances were previously known to one or more persons present.* This theory may be tested in two ways. First, as to the information obtained at *séances being possessed by those present.* Is this always the case as a matter of fact? I say most emphatically, No! Many facts in my own experience, limited though it is, compared with that of some Spiritualists, are in direct opposition to this theory. As stated in a former chapter, I have been in circles when important communications have been received on matters absolutely foreign to the minds of all present. When my wife and I have been with ourselves, information has often been imparted which could not emanate from our own brains, for the simple reason that it was not there. When a sentence or a message was partly given, in order to test whether our own minds had anything to do with it, we have often tried to anticipate the remainder, and were almost invariably wrong. And I believe this corresponds with the experience of nearly all who have gone anything like fairly and fully into the matter. That some answers to questions and messages are but the reflection of some embodied mind is no doubt true, but cases of the opposite kind are so numerous as to leave no room for reasonable doubt.

A second way of testing this theory *is to apply it to the religious belief of those forming a circle.* According to it all messages on religious subjects ought to be in harmony with the religious belief of the medium, or those who receive them; but though this is sometimes, it is by no means always, the case. Communications are often received contradicting and condemning the creed of the questioner. In my own case most of the doctrines I held and taught as true were strongly condemned, while prosecuting my inquiries into Spiritualism. And when other members of the circle I attended put questions to the controlling power, whatever it was, they, too, often got answers quite opposed to their religious views. Such is the experience of investigators generally. William Howitt received communications so contrary to the views he held, that he was compelled to change his religious belief. Many others owe their change of creed to the same cause. Most Christians on becoming Spiritualists give up nine-

tenths of the doctrines they hitherto believed, because those doctrines are denounced as false by the presiding intelligence.

Now, the question arises—Whence come those answers to questions so contrary to the belief of the inquirer? Whence emanate those communications which so strongly and unequivocally condemn the creed a person has hitherto held, that he is led to abandon it? If the theory in question were correct, all the answers and communications obtained through table, planchette, medium, or other means, would agree with and confirm the belief of the parties seeking them; but in the majority of cases the exact opposite to this takes place; and therefore this theory utterly fails to explain these phases of Spiritualism. It is a point settled beyond all doubt that the intelligence manifested often emanates from some source external to the circle; and may not that source be what it claims to be, namely, the spirits of the departed?

These two methods of testing this theory not only disprove it, but also the kindred one of *mesmeric influence*. It is often said that mesmeric phenomena illustrate and prove this theory of psychological law; but without enlarging on this part, I will just indicate three points wherein, as many have shewn, the mesmeric and the Spiritualistic phenomena differ so widely, as to prove the operation of different laws and forces. First, in mesmerism there is an *operator*, who by certain passes and manipulations, and the exercise of his will power, brings his subject under his influence. But in Spiritualism there is no visible operator at work. Nothing is done by the circle to the medium, nor by the medium to the circle, to induce the manifestations. The more *passive* all its members are the better. Even in trance mediumship no one “puts” the medium into the trance state, as the mesmerist “puts” his subject under his influence. If there be an operator it is certainly an invisible one, which is so much worse for the theory in question. Secondly, in mesmerism the operator can only act on *mind*, not on *matter*, at least not to anything like the extent to which some agent acts upon it in Spiritualism. He cannot for example, *will* a pen to write; nor a bell to ring; nor brushes

and paint to draw; nor musical instruments to play; nor his living subject to float through mid air, without any visible support. Yet something wills and does all this, and much more in Spiritualism. Thirdly, in mesmerism *the subject can only speak and act agreeably to the will of the operator*. The operator transmits, by will-force, the ideas and impressions of his own mind to his subject, who reproduces them on the stage. But this is not so in Spiritualism, as has been already shown. The phenomena are not the mere embodiment of some human will-power; but often defy and act contrary to the will of the medium and all present. The communications received are not the mere transcripts of what is passing in the mind or minds of those in the room; but are often demonstrately new to all assembled.

Differing, then, as spiritualistic and mesmeric phenomena do in these three important respects, I submit that we may fairly conclude they have not a common origin, and are not governed by the same laws; although the action of an operator on his subject may properly be taken to illustrate the action of a disembodied spirit on, say, a trance medium.

The foregoing remarks will serve equally as a reply to Dr. Carpenter's theory of "*unconscious cerebration*."

VIII.—Some *undiscovered force in nature* is relied upon by others to explain all that is genuine in Spiritualism.

The logic of facts compels this class of opponents to abandon all the theories already noticed; but still they are not willing to adopt the spiritual hypothesis. They are like the late Sir David Brewster—"Spirits are the last thing they will give in to;" and rather than admit their agency in the proved phenomena they attribute them to something that has no known existence. "An adequate cause will yet be discovered—a 'force' will come forth from nature, and declare itself the author of all that cannot be traced to other causes." It is certainly a gain to Spiritualism that many of its opponents have been driven from every other position, and compelled to assume a cause that is so vague and shadowy that we cannot lay hold of it. We cannot discuss this "force," for the obvious reason that it is "unknown;" it will be time enough to do that when it has been discovered.



That it is not probable such a force will be discovered will appear from two considerations. First, *science has already had a fair trial, and has so far failed in its efforts.* The phenomena have been before the public a full quarter of a century, and science has been challenged from the first to account for them on purely physical or mundane principles, but all its attempts have been fruitless. True, it has propounded theories at different times with all the pomp of authority; but *facts* have soon demolished them. No sooner has it adduced a theory to account for all that had occurred, than, as if in mockery of its proud pretensions, new phases of the movement have been developed, which set such theory at naught. And to-day it appears to be as far from discovering this wonderful "new force" as ever it was. Secondly, those scientific men who have examined this subject carefully and fully *have abandoned all hope of ever making such a discovery, and accepted the spiritual hypothesis, as not only reasonable and sufficient, but satisfactorily proved.*" Professors Mapes, Hare, and De Morgan; Drs. Gray, Ashburner, and Elliotson; Messrs. Wallace, Varley, and many others, have tried what science could do with the facts of modern Spiritualism, and found that she had no satisfactory explanation to offer. They failed to discover this wondrous hidden "force;" and in the end saw quite sufficient to convince them, despite their former prejudice and opposition, that the real authors of the phenomena are disembodied spirits.

That forces may exist and operate in nature which science has not yet discovered, is in the highest degree probable. Indeed, in connection with this very subject, a force has been discovered, hitherto unknown to science. Mr. Crookes not long ago announced that he and two other gentlemen—Dr. Huggins and Sergeant Cox—had discovered a new force which they called "*psychic force.*" It will be found, however, that they cannot justly claim the credit of a discovery. They have only confirmed the discoveries of others. Professor Hare demonstrated the existence of this so-called *new force* years ago; but even he did not discover it. It was known from the very dawn of Spiritualism, generally by the name of "Magnetism." Instead of the scientists of to-day claiming the merit of its discovery, the honor really belongs

to those invisible intelligences called spirits. They taught from the first that they communicated with man by means of a magnetic force; that some persons possessed more of it than others; and that hence it was that persons known as "mediums" were necessary to the production of the phenomena. Even Reichenbach stands years before Crookes, so far as human claims to the discovery of the peculiar force in question are concerned. His "od force" is no doubt identical with Crookes' "psychic force." It is well, however, that Crookes has made his experiments. They scientifically demonstrate the existence of a force or power in nature, not before known to science, by means of which what may be called a telegraphic communication has been opened up between earth and heaven.

But this is not the "force" which those who hold the theory under consideration mean. It has been discovered, and is held to be only the *medium* of spiritualistic manifestations, and not the *agent*—for surely no one will say that *it* played the accordion in the wire cage during Mr. Crookes' experiments with Mr. Home. No, this is not the force meant. It has yet to be discovered. How long the world must wait for the discovery, those who expect it can give us no idea. But should it ever be proved that a mere "force" can produce such effects as speaking, singing, playing, painting, and writing, which have hitherto always been associated with living, conscious, intelligent beings, then Spiritualists will re-examine the grounds of their faith; and give the claims of such a force a proper consideration, but till then they may be permitted to enjoy their present belief.

IX.—Satanic agency is the last and crowning theory advanced by anti-spiritualists.

There are those in the opposition ranks who not only admit the reality of the physical phenomena, but concede that they are often accompanied by an intelligence which emanates from some source external to the circle. The only source they can think of is an infernal one, and hence they exclaim—"It is all of the Devil!" When certain persons cannot otherwise account for a thing they charge it upon this notorious personage. That is certainly a convenient way of getting out of a difficulty. What has he not been credited with? Of course he

stirred up the first rebellion in the universe, and was punished by being expelled from his celestial home. He robbed the first human pair of their innocence, and got them turned out of paradise. He bereft Job of his children, and stripped him of his possessions. Most of what Christ taught and did was attributed to his instigation. And almost all the inventions and discoveries of modern times, by which the world has been so much benefitted, have been set down to his credit. Indeed, any doctrines or movements that oppose certain religious tenets, are at once traced to the lower region, and charged upon this wonderful being. It is therefore no wonder that Spiritualism should be charged upon him. He was sure to be at the bottom of such a system.

But do those who adopt this theory of satanic agency ever reflect upon what it involves? It implies a *ubiquity* almost equal to the omnipresence of God. If he be the author of those strange things he will often be tilting a table here, moving a planchette in England, delivering a speech through a trance medium in America, and performing as wonderful feats in other countries. Then think of the *versatility of his genius*. He has often been credited with wonderful powers by those who delight to study his character and expatiate on his capabilities; but if this theory be correct, all those descriptions fall far short of the reality. He can do anything from knocking a table about to carrying a Mrs. Guppy three miles through mid air, and depositing her, despite all material obstructions, in the centre of a startled circle. But if *he* really transported Mrs. Guppy that distance the wonder is that, having her in his arms, he did not carry her straight to the nether regions, without waiting till she came to him through the gates of death, in the ordinary way. He cannot have such a spite against the race, and such a ravenous desire to devour it, as he is often charged with, when he let such a chance slip! Again, if Satan be the author of Spiritualism he must have become a *wonderfully changed character*. He used to be painted in the blackest colors, but no one would infer from his doings in this matter that he was the black, bad being depicted. He has evidently been so washed and reformed that I question whether the unhappy angels who fell with him, and so long shared his

exile from heaven, would know him now. True, it is often said he can transform himself into an angel of light, the better to accomplish his infernal purposes ; but I doubt whether he would have kept up the sham so long. The cloven foot would have appeared, the mask would have fallen off before now. To show how he has changed, if he be the cause of Spiritualism, we have only to note what he is doing by and through it. He is a successful healer of the sick, and in this way is doing much to relieve poor suffering humanity. He has dried many a bereaved parent's tears, and comforted many a lonely widow's heart ; and thus proved himself possessed of real Christian sympathy for the sorrowing. He often preaches sermons which would put many of the clergy to the blush ; and gives moral maxims, which for wisdom would not discredit a Solomon, and for purity and goodness might rank with the teachings of Jesus. The whole tenor of his teachings, whether given through the pen, planchette, or trance medium, is good ; and their avowed aim is to make men more truthful, honest, charitable, pure, heavenly-minded, and God-like. These are some of the fruits of Spiritualism, and according to this theory they are produced by the Devil ! If he is their author he is not the frightful monster theology has represented him. On the contrary, he is a truly noble character—a genuine friend of humanity ; and the sooner the better the usual orthodox misrepresentations of him are abandoned, and he is welcomed to the ranks of the world's real benefactors !

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## CHAPTER VI.

### REASONS FOR ACCEPTING THE SPIRITUAL HYPOTHESIS OF THE PHENOMENA.

Having briefly examined the principal theories advanced by its opponents to account for modern Spiritualism, and shown their insufficiency for the purpose, I will next direct attention to the hypothesis of *spirit agency*, which I finally accepted as the only satisfactory explanation of the system as a whole. I did not adopt this hypothesis hastily. My investigation, if not so extensive and protracted as that of some inquirers, was sufficiently full and impartial to enable me to form a deliberate and rational conclusion respecting its claims.

I. I accepted the hypothesis of spirit agency in the first place on *a priori* grounds.

I did not perceive any antecedent improbability, much less impossibility, against the theory of spirit communion. It could not be proved that it was impossible for the spirits of the departed to hold converse with those still in the flesh ; nor, supposing it were possible, that they were unlikely to do so. On the contrary, as the subject appeared to me, there was an antecedent probability in favour of this hypothesis. The subject is one in which man naturally feels interested. His thoughts and affections follow those who have gone from earth ; and he cannot but feel inquisitive as to their state beyond the grave, supposing they are still living, conscious beings. What more natural than a desire for explicit and direct information as to their condition in the spirit world ? And what more reasonable than to suppose that the departed are willing to respond to the desire of those they have left on earth, and return, not only to assure them of their continued existence, but to give them some information respecting their new and eternal home. It seems to me that reason and probability are quite in favor of this supposition.

Theology cannot meet those natural and powerful yearnings of our nature to know something of the present condition of our friends whom death has transferred to another state of being. And with due respect to it, the *Bible* itself does not supply that full and varied knowledge of the future state which seems requisite to meet the legitimate desires of our nature. More light is needed, fuller information is desired, on this point than the Scriptures supply. Of course some persons are satisfied with the little the Bible has disclosed, and are content to wait till they pass within the veil for more perfect knowledge. They deem it highly presumptuous, nay, decidedly wicked, to pry into futurity, and seek that information about the state of our departed friends which their favourite Book does not give. With such individuals I have no wish to quarrel. If they are satisfied with the twilight glimpses on this subject I will not reproach their easy contentment. They may make a virtue of resignation to what they regard as God's will in shrouding the future in impenetrable darkness,

and refuse to peep within if the curtain were for a moment lifted. But they must remember they only speak for themselves. Others, freed from antiquated notions about Bible sufficiency, desire more knowledge than it affords on this deeply interesting question. They do not think it impious to desire more light than God has shed upon this subject in those ancient records. They do not deem the inquisitiveness which they naturally feel in reference to their future home a sinful sentiment which ought to be suppressed. On the contrary, they regard those strong desires and feelings which spring up spontaneously in the soul, and branch out future-ward, as natural indications of God's will to make further and grander revelations on the subject than man in the past enjoyed. From the very nature of God, as a being ever in sympathy with the pure sentiments and aspirations of man, as well as from the progressive character of the disclosures He has made in past ages, they hold it highly probable that He would shed a brighter and more general light on the future than any past revelations have done; and thereby dispel much of the darkness that has hitherto enveloped it. And they see nothing improbable in the idea that this new Spiritual dispensation—this Ministry of Angels is the identical means He has chosen through which to effect this glorious purpose. For my own part, I saw no argument against Spiritualism on *a priori* grounds, but looking at the subject in a broad light I saw many probabilities in its favour.

II. I accepted the spiritual hypothesis in the second place, because it appeared to me to *best cover all the facts of the case*.

When a theory is advanced to account for any new and extraordinary phenomena, one of the first and most important questions to ask is—Does it account for *all* the proved phenomena? Yet strange to say, natural and obvious as this question is, it is precisely the one that is seldom asked. Persons take up a theory and think it explains one or two phases to their satisfaction; and forthwith they conclude it can explain the whole thing; but further inquiry often shows both the fallacy and the folly of such a hasty conclusion.

This is the case with many in dealing with Spiritualism. Various theories, as has been shown, have been propounded to account for it. Some have adopted one theory and some another. The theory adopted by a given party has been thought to cover one or two simple facts, and they have jumped to the conclusion that the whole system was explained! They did not put the natural question—Does this theory apply to and fully explain the *whole* of the phenomena? And when they are met with that question they are surprised to find that spiritualism is not included in the very limited experience of it they have had—the few manifestations they have witnessed.

Some for example, as already stated, think that fraud explains it, because odd instances of imposture been detected. Others, who admit there is something in it, are satisfied that involuntary muscular action accounts for it all; apparently thinking that table movements are the sum total of the system. Others, who recognise certain higher phases of the movement, find a cause in animal magnetism or thought reading, or unconscious cerebration, or some subtle psychological influence not yet fully understood; complacently taking it for granted that when the movements do display intelligence it is but the reflected intelligence of the medium or some member of the circle; which is often demonstrably not the case.

But none of those parties seem to think of applying their pet theory to the higher and more extraordinary phenomena, to test its power in explaining these. If they did, they would soon see how far it falls short, how miserably it fails to solve the problem of Spiritualism as a whole. I adopted and still hold the spiritual hypothesis because it not only accounts for the ordinary features of the system, but it affords an adequate cause, and the only adequate cause yet advanced, for the more unusual and mysterious parts of it. No other theory can account for the sweet music that has been produced without a visible performer; for the unearthly voices that have been heard; for the beautiful spirit forms that have been seen, as distinctly as ever human beings were; for the varied communications received, often strikingly characteristic of departed friends, and touching upon mat-

ters unknown at the time to the whole circle; for distinct and recognisable photographs of disembodied spirits, and for many other marvellous phenomena, for whose reality and genuineness thousands can vouch. This theory and this alone, it will be found on a proper examination of the matter, fully covers *all* the proved facts and features of Spiritualism; and those who ignore its higher phases, and think they have explained it when they have only assigned a doubtful cause for its simplest manifestations, are not in a position to pass a just opinion of it; they are only deceiving themselves and befooling others.

III. The third and last reason I will state at present for accepting the Spiritual theory, was, *that the evidence in its favour appeared to be so overwhelming as to amount to demonstration.*

I venture to say that any disputed case in a court of justice, with a tittle of the evidence in its favour that Spiritualism can produce, would obtain a speedy and unanimous verdict of *proven*. This evidence does not come from some isolated part of the world, but from nearly every country under heaven. The witnesses are not confined to one class in society, but are found in all classes from the highest to the lowest. The testimony is not hesitating and half-hearted, but prompt, decided, and cordial. It has not to be wormed out by wily questions, nor forced by imperious threats, but springs forth spontaneously from millions of living voices. The facts relied upon are not few and doubtful, but numerous and undeniable. And, therefore, making the most liberal deductions for imposture, self delusion, and purely mundane causes, that justice and truth can demand, the genuine evidence that remains is so abundant and striking, that no unprejudiced mind, capable of appreciating it, can resist its force. Indeed, if Spiritualism has not substantiated its claims, it may be confidently affirmed that nothing can be proved, outside the few subjects which admit of mathematical or scientific demonstration.

But people are not so unreasonable in their demand for evidence on other matters. The straightforward testimony of a respectable and trustworthy witness or two, is accepted as conclusive evidence, in the absence



of any counter statement, and the question is settled in harmony with their evidence. And even in more important and complicated cases, a proportionately larger amount of evidence is all that is needed. There is a reasonable limit, on reaching which doubt gives way, and verdict of "proven" is given. And granting that the claims of Spiritualism, being extraordinary, an extraordinary amount of evidence is necessary to prove them; I submit that that demand can be met—that rule of evidence can be complied with—an extraordinary degree of evidence can be, and has been, produced. What number of witnesses ought to be considered sufficient to prove the points at issue? Do our opponents say a hundred? They shall have them. A thousand? They are ready. Ten thousand? They can be found, and ten times that number, without the slightest difficulty. And, moreover, the witnesses, as already seen, shall be persons of undoubted intelligence and integrity, whose testimony on any other subject would be received without the slightest doubt or misgiving. Let anti-spiritualists take the evidence of those who testify to the higher phases of Spiritualism, which none of the mundane theories just examined can explain; let them apply the ordinary and just rules of evidence to their testimony, and then say whether they can consistently reject it. Those parties solemnly declare that they have seen, heard, and witnessed extraordinary things, in the form of physical manifestations, intelligent communications, and other things, which departed spirits claim to be the author of. Will anti-spiritualists affirm that the deliberate and serious testimony of these persons is knowingly false? I will not characterise by its appropriate term the conduct of those who would say or insinuate anything of the kind. But if they dare not accuse them of wilful falsehood, their only alternative is that the witnesses have been deceived in the matters they testify to. But what authority have they for alleging anything of the kind? Is the mere negative opinion of those who have admittedly witnessed no spiritual phenomena to set at nought the solemn testimony of those who have? Shall our external senses be deemed trustworthy when reporting any other occurrence, and only suspected when reporting the pheno-

mena of Spiritualism? Strange logic! Wonderful consistency! Yet this is what the opponents of Spiritualism in effect affirm.

The question then is narrowed down to this plain issue. Here are thousands of witnesses who calmly and seriously testify to certain facts that they were personally cognizant of. Will their opponents accuse them of wilful perjury? They will hardly venture to do that. The well known character of many of them defies such a charge. Will they venture to say they are the victims of delusion or imposture? For reasons just stated, that would be a piece of unmitigated presumption and impertinence. Then, will they admit the only other defensible supposition, namely, that the facts and phenomena so well supported by unimpeachable testimony are genuine, and as such clearly point to a Spiritual origin? If they are reasonable and candid seekers after truth, I cannot see how they can consistently evade this conclusion.

At all events, speaking for myself, I considered when deciding upon the claims of this subject, that the witnesses were so numerous and trustworthy, and their testimony so consistent, and so evidently natural and true, that the evidence in favour of Spiritualism left no reasonable doubt on my mind; nay, in the absence of any counter evidence, I considered that it amounted to the strongest moral proof, yea demonstration, that the subject was capable of; and, therefore, I was compelled to accept it as a *proved* reality. And I thank God that the evidence in its favour was so clear, abundant, and conclusive, as to induce the profound conviction in my mind, that in Spiritualism we not only have a truth, but the greatest and most momentous truth ever revealed to man.

Such are some of the grounds of my belief in Spiritualism. But I am not sanguine enough to believe that the facts stated and the arguments used will convince those of its truth who are blindly opposed to it, or personally interested in the disproof of its claims. If I succeed in to some extent modifying prejudice, correcting misapprehension, and stimulating investigation, I shall be satisfied. Other results will inevitably follow. For, without being too sanguine or presumptuous, I

venture to think that fields of inquiry have been indicated and trains of reasoning suggested, which, if prosecuted in a right spirit, will lead the most sceptical to the grand conclusion that Spiritualism is not the false and dangerous thing so often represented, but is a true, and beautiful, and joyous system—a system teaching that death does not remove our friends to an immeasurable distance from us, but that they still linger near and lovingly watch over us; that they desire to communicate with those they have left behind, and are able to do so under certain laws and conditions; that though invisible to the natural eye they act as ministering angels to us, and often render us important service, in restraining us from what is wrong, stimulating us to what is right, consoling us in our sorrows, and helping us to fight bravely the great battle of our earthly career; and that at the close of life's chequered pilgrimage they will be waiting to receive us, and greet us with a cordial welcome to the shores of what has been aply termed the "Summer Land."

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## CHAPTER VII.

### LEAVING THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AND FUTURE COURSE.

The result of my investigation of Spiritualism was very disappointing to some of my friends in the parish, who had judged and condemned it without a hearing, and hoped my verdict would confirm their foregone conclusion. Some of them for a time expected a sermon or lecture, in which I should relate my discovery of the earthly cause of table-tiltings and planchette-writings, and expose the whole thing as a disgraceful imposture. As time wore away, and the hopes of those friends waned, their countenances perceptibly changed; and their confidence in my judgment, which would not allow me to decide contrary to evidence, rapidly diminished. They began to shake their pious heads, and mutter solemn threats; and when my avowal of belief in the fact of Spirit Communion extinguished their last ray of hope, and snapped the last thread of respect for me as a religious teacher, vast was the indignation which they poured upon my devoted head. But the spiteful efforts of a few members of our own church, and certain plau-

sible busybodies connected with another church, to injure me for the course I had felt it my duty to take, only showed how sadly deficient they were in the first principles of true religion. "Brotherly love," and "Christian charity" and "liberality," were only empty, meaningless phrases. They had still to learn that possibly all religious truth is not found in their own cramped creeds and narrow isms; and that a person who ventures a little beyond the beaten path of theological belief, and discovers something they have not seen, has not necessarily fallen from grace, and sold himself to the Devil.

Having satisfied myself as to the fact of Spirit Communion, my next step was to ascertain the *bearings of Spiritualism on theology*, more particularly as taught in the Articles and Formularies of the Church of England. There is a wide difference between the *facts* of Spiritualism and its *teachings*. A person may go so far in his inquiries into the subject as to satisfy himself that disembodied spirits do hold intercourse with persons still on earth, and may not trouble himself about what spirits teach, or what are the leading principles of Spiritualism as a religious system. Indeed, there are some who do go thus far and then terminate their inquiries. They have solved the main problem, and are satisfied. But I could not rest at that half-way house. Having been convinced of the actuality of Spiritual communications, I was anxious to know what spirits taught on certain doctrinal questions. This second branch of the subject was held in abeyance whilst I was examining the first; and anything I met with bearing upon it was laid aside for future consideration. I was bound now to examine the religious teachings of Spiritualism. The question I had to settle in my own mind was, whether I could still consistently hold my position as a minister of the Orthodox Faith. The simple belief in the fact of spirit communion could not be held to justly disqualify me for the position I held. No doctrine or law of the Church was contravened by such a belief. On the contrary, it seemed to be recognised in some parts of the Prayer Book. But was there anything in the principles of Spiritualistic teaching that could not be reconciled with the doctrines I was pledged to teach? If there was, I should have no alternative as an honest man but to re-

linquish my position, and quit the orthodox communion. And I openly announced my intention of taking that course, as many can bear witness, should my inquiries lead to a change of my views on essential doctrinal points, though that might entail serious consequences upon me in a worldly point of view.

I soon discovered, on entering into this part of the subject, that the teachings of Spiritualism did not confirm the doctrines I held. The brief answer to questions and the lengthier communications I received from what I had every reason to believe were the spirits of the departed, most unequivocally condemned the majority of these doctrines, and unfolded another system. Almost all the principal published works on Spiritualism did the same thing. I did not, however, accept everything I received or read as law and gospel, but sifted and weighed it as carefully as my judgment enabled me to do. I was not looking for something to convince me that the doctrines of the Church were false. On the contrary, though, as already stated, my mind was sometimes harassed with doubts and difficulties respecting them, yet at that time I should have rejoiced if my investigation had scattered those difficulties, and confirmed the faith I professed. But that was not to be. The further I went into the subject and the more probable a thorough change in my theological belief, and consequent voluntary abandonment of my position, became. A hasty decision, however, in a matter fraught with such grave consequences to myself, and possibly to many others, would have been unwise. I felt that I ought to weigh the reasons for and against a change in my belief with the utmost care, and have my mind thoroughly made up, before I publicly declared the change, and severed my connection with the Church. And before I had arrived at decided and final conclusions, I was summarily suspended. This leads me to make a few remarks on the action of my ecclesiastical superiors.

The facts connected with this unpleasant matter are few and soon told. The Archdeacon of Castlemaine, having been informed by a neighbouring clergyman of my Spiritualistic proclivities, came to see me on the subject. I of course frankly admitted that I had investigated Spiritualism so far as to become convinced of the fact

of spirit communion. He thereupon suspended me from duty in the Church. I did not think I had done anything to deserve such summary treatment, and claimed as a matter of simple justice that he should at least hear my reasons for taking up the subject and coming to the conclusions I had, before suspending me. But I was denied that reasonable request, and left in the hands of the Bishop. My complaint against the Archdeacon, therefore, was that he suspended me on insufficient grounds. It must be distinctly understood that the question of the teachings and principles of Spiritualism was not raised, nor was I asked whether I still believed all the doctrines of the Church; and hence, for anything he knew to the contrary, I might still be as sound in the faith as he was; and in point of fact I had not, as just stated, fully decided against any of these doctrines. I was suspended simply because I had dared to examine Spiritualism, and believed that departed spirits can, under certain conditions, return and communicate with us. But did either of these points involve a violation of any law or doctrine of the Church? I do not think that any one will attempt to prove they did. Certainly the Archdeacon did not. Had he held that they did he would have had some plea for his conduct; although even then I should have disputed his position. For with regard to the first point—my inquiry into Spiritualism—I had simply exercised an individual *right* that belonged to every member of the Church; and with regard to the second—my belief in spirit communion—there is not an Article in the Church that condemns it. I therefore could not but regard the Archdeacon's conduct as exceedingly arbitrary, and in no way justified either by the principles of Christianity, or the ecclesiastical laws of the Church.

But from what I knew of each I was not so surprised at the Archdeacon's conduct as at the Bishop's. I could not believe that the latter would endorse the former's action, and take a still more extreme step, without at least hearing what I had to say for myself. I ought, on the simple ground of justice, to have been furnished with a copy of the Archdeacon's report, upon which the Bishop based his action; and to have been allowed the usual privilege of admitting or denying the allegations

it contained. How was I to know what the report set forth? Without insinuating that the Archdeacon sent a false report, he might in his impetuous zeal have over-colored it, and conveyed an impression to the Bishop that I had avowed myself a full-blown Spiritualist, in the sense in which the term is generally understood, instead of having only admitted my belief in spirit-communion, without any regard to Spiritualism as a religious system. Indeed I could not but think that the Bishop had received an impression respecting my position in the matter, which nothing that transpired when the Archdeacon visited me, would fairly warrant, or he would not have adopted the course he did. But, however accounted for, the fact is, that without giving me any warning or asking for any explanation or defence, he revoked my license, and thus summarily removed me from my position. I submit that nothing could have justified such a step but indubitable evidence either of heretical teaching, or the violation of ecclesiastical or moral law. But there was no evidence on either point. I had simply exercised that right of private judgment in relation to the claims of a new and alleged important movement, which is one of the fundamental principles of the English Church—yea the boasted glory of all Protestant Churches. Alas! stern facts often prove what an empty boast—what a delusive sham it is! If the Bishop alleges that my taking up Spiritualism had given offence to certain members of the Church, and injured the work of religion in the parish, even that could only have been a reason for either counselling me to desist from my inquiries, or removing me to another sphere of labour. It surely could not justify him in removing me from the Church altogether.

I will not, however, dwell on this subject. I have only stated the plain facts of the case, and pointed out why I think I did not receive fair treatment at the hands of my superiors in the Church. I was bound to say this much in the interests of truth, right, and liberty. I trust I have not been actuated by any uncharitable spirit towards those whose conduct I have condemned as rash, arbitrary, and unjustifiable. It is some satisfaction to me, and a confirmation of the view I have taken of this affair, that the Bishop afterwards in a letter

to me expressed his regret for having revoked my license without first communicating with me. When I represented the case to him from my own stand-point, I felt certain that he could not but see that he had, to put it in the mildest form, acted too hastily ; and I am glad that I elected from him, in his own hand, an expression of regret.

I cannot dismiss this point without adding that, although I am now out of the Church of England, I cherish no hard thoughts or feelings against it. My views on most of its fundamental doctrines were destined to undergo such a change that, as before stated, I should have voluntarily left its pale had I not been removed in the manner I was ; and I now feel bound to do all I can to show the falsity and bad effects of those doctrines. But I am not unmindful of the fact that many excellent men within its borders conscientiously believe these doctrines to be true, and are working nobly to improve society, by what they consider the best and most effectual means. Nor am I insensible to the obligation society is under to the heroic efforts of many of its members, lay and clerical, in the cause of civil and religious liberty in a past age. And with all its faults and imperfections it is, taking it all together, the most liberal and comprehensive of any of the sectarian churches into which christendom is divided ; and if I should ever return to the Orthodox Faith—a thing I am not the least likely to do—it would probably again be the Church of my choice. Alas ! that it should be cramped with absurd creeds, weakened by internal divisions, and rendered comparatively powerless for good in the world. As to Bishop Perry, its head in this colony, he needs no praise from me. But I cannot refrain from saying that, notwithstanding the animadversions I have made on his treatment of me in the matter just dealt with, I have every reason to entertain a high opinion of him for his many excellent qualities ; and shall ever recall with pleasurable feelings the evidences I experienced of his interest in my welfare. May his declining years be pleasant, and his end peace !

I thank God for the freedom I have enjoyed for over two years. I am not only ecclesiastically free by being out of the Church ; but intellectually free in the broad-



est sense of the term ; and a free man I intend to live and pass away. My mental struggles on doctrinal questions having culminated in my deliverance from the bondage of these doctrines, I took my stand on the broad platform of Spiritualistic Freethought ; and have since done what little I could in exposing error and superstition ; fighting against priestcraft and tyranny ; and disseminating such principles as appear to me to be true and calculated to promote man's real freedom and highest interests. And such I intend my future course to be. How far I may succeed in the work to which a sense of duty has called me, time alone will show. The path I have chosen is not strewn with roses. Far better would it have been for me in a worldly point of view had I still been in the Church ; but worldly position and comforts, desirable as they may be, ought not to be retained at the cost of honor and consistency. That the course I have struck out will continue to be beset with difficulties, and to incur heavy penalties in different forms I quite expect. To dare to think for yourself unrestrainedly on all theological and religious topics, and thus carry out the boasted Protestant right of private judgment to its final and logical conclusion ; to call in question time-honored dogmas, and denounce antiquated customs ; to deny the pretensions of a man who has long been worshipped as a God, and place him in the ranks of fallible mortals ; to challenge the claims of a book which is held up as the only inspired and unerring authority on subjects in which mankind are profoundly interested ; to reject the assumptions of a self-constituted order of men who arrogate to themselves the functions of divinely commissioned interpreters of that book, and subject their teachings to the same criticism as those of other men ; and to advocate what may be regarded in a sense as revolutionary principles—principles utterly opposed to the beliefs and prejudices of the majority of those around you—to do these things, is to cause you to be regarded as an enemy of God and man, and to expose you to all manner of slander and abuse. But more of these things move me. I have counted the cost, and will meet it to the best of my ability. A consciousness that I am acting in accordance with the dictates of my reason and conscience ; and a hope of

effecting some little good in the world, will inspire me with courage and sustain me in my mission. Nor will those angels, whose Ministry of Love to man it is my highest honor to advocate, leave me comfortless.

I am glad that I have now done with personal matters. It is never pleasant to me to dwell upon them, but this chapter is a necessary link in the chain of evidence I am working out; and therefore I could not omit it.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE LEADING PRINCIPLES AND TEACHINGS OF SPIRITUALISM.

The question is sometimes asked,—Is Spiritualism anything more than a system of strange and wonder-exciting phenomena? Does it definitely teach anything that gives it a distinctive character? Are there any principles of ethics, or religion, or philosophy involved in it? What relation does it bear to the great questions of the day, especially of a religious character, which are agitating so many minds? I reply that it is not confined to phenomenal manifestations, though these are its foundation. It has no stereotyped and final creed, like most of the other isms that engage man's attention. It would be contrary to the very genius and first principles of Rationalistic and Progressive Spiritualism to formulate an absolute and final system of teachings. Truth being its object, and the constant pursuit of truth its duty, it is ever augmenting its store of facts and enlarging its sphere of knowledge; and consequently its teachings are ever becoming more correct in principle, and more extended in their range. But without inculcating a fixed and final creed, it does lay down certain great principles and teach certain important truths, which its adherents generally endorse, for reasons which will appear as some of them are unfolded.

I. In the first place, Spiritualism *proves the twofold nature of man.*

That man has a Spiritual as well as a material nature, a soul as well as a body was universally believed in Christendom, when the pulpit wielded supreme power in the land, and the people were ignorant, superstitious, and fully under ecclesiastical con-

trol. But things have greatly changed. With the liberty of modern times there has sprung up and spread to an extent never known before, a disposition to question almost everything, and to deny much that was once held to be true and sacred. Liberty has generated doubt, and doubt has given birth to cold, stern materialism. The doctrine of spiritual existences is held to have been exploded by science. Nature is declared to have been carefully explored, and nothing answering to what is called spirit has been discovered. Because it cannot be bottled up like gas, nor measured like a yard of cloth, nor weighed like a pound of potatoes, nor tasted like food, nor smelt like perfume—in a word, because it eludes all the tests of physical science, and is not cognisable by our bodily senses, its non-existence is considered by many to be proved. What we have been accustomed to call mind and spirit, and think of as something essentially distinct from the material body, is held to be but a part of the body—but matter in its finest elements and most exquisite combinations; or as some put it, it is but “a mode of matter.” The brain is not only the organ of thought, but is held to be its source—its only cause. And, therefore, man is regarded as only an animal of a superior organisation, naturally destitute of religious instincts and spiritual aspirations, and destined to perish at death like all the forms of life beneath him.

These materialistic principles, insufficient as are the evidences on which they rest, and melancholy as are the conclusions to which they tend, are undoubtedly gaining ground in the world. Nor can their progress be effectively checked by the means usually relied upon. Of course the Church, in all its sections, denounces these principles, and stoutly contends for the doctrine of the soul's existence. “Away,” it authoritatively exclaims, “with your coarse and degrading materialism! Do not insult humanity by denying it any nobler destiny than that of the brute creation. Man *has* a soul, and the body is only its temporary habitation.” But the intelligent materialist is not satisfied with this *ex cathedra* mode of dealing with the question. He asks for evidence, nay he demands *positive proof* of a spiritual existence before he can admit it. On such an important

subject mere dogmatic statements do not satisfy his mind. The church condescends to lay such evidences as she possesses before him, and tries to reason him into an acceptance of them. He calmly and carefully weighs the evidences and arguments put forth ; but alas ! forcible as some of them admittedly are, they do not remove the difficulties which scientific materialism has thrown in his way. They do not *prove* to his satisfaction the existence of a soul. It has never been seen, heard, or handled apart from the body. After it is said to leave its material organism at death no more is known of it. He therefore concludes that no such conscious, intelligent entity exists apart a physical body.

But Spiritualism comes to his rescue, and supplies the last and most important link in the chain of evidence. Such psychological phenomena as those of mesmerism and clairvoyance, which are but branches of it, throw a flood of light on the question of the soul's existence. They prove that he has a spiritual entity within his material organism ; that this spiritual entity is the life and controlling power of his body ; that though on earth connected with it, it is capable at times of acting to a large extent independently of it, as in the case of reading without the use of the bodily eyes, and performing other functions without the use of bodily organs ; and that it can for a time actually leave the body, as in the case of those who have gone in *spirit form* hundreds of miles from their body, examined persons and other objects at that distance away, and on returning to its body it has reported correctly of those persons and things, as subsequent inquiry has proved. Astounding as some of these things may sound to some, they are nevertheless facts testified to by the most competent and unimpeachable witnesses.

But the crowning evidence which Spiritualism affords is found in the varied "manifestations" that are now taking place in nearly all parts of the world. These manifestations *prove* that the so-called dead still live, though their bodies are mouldering in the grave. Their spirits have in many cases been seen, and heard, and felt, and spoken to ; and in still more instances have so manifested themselves as to prove their presence and identity beyond reasonable doubt. This *fact*, for which

there is vastly more evidence than satisfies the most cautious sceptic, on other uncertain points, proves beyond the possibility of reasonable doubt, that those still in the body are possessed of a soul which will survive its dissolution. And not only so, but that the soul is the most important part of the man, nay, in point of fact, is the man; and that it has wants which can no more be neglected with impunity than the wants of the body—wants and aspirations which clearly point to life beyond the present.

Spiritualism thus clearly disproves, not by logical argumentation only, but by palpable and undeniable *facts*, the conclusions of the materialistic philosophy, so prevalent in our time. And hence, all unprejudiced minds must perceive in it the most effectual means of counteracting this materialism which would blast our brightest hopes, mock our holiest aspirations, and shroud our destiny in the dreariest gloom. It meets materialism on its own ground, fights it with its own weapons, and supplies it with the very evidence it has so persistently demanded, and triumphantly assumed could not be furnished. And it will be further seen that the churches are pursuing a suicidal course in rejecting its claims without inquiry; and treating it either with easy indifference, quiet contempt, or active hostility, as they are generally doing.

II. In the second place, *Spiritualism demonstrates the reality of a Future State.*

This point has been in a measure anticipated by some of the remarks just made. The existence of the soul being proved by its action independent of the body, the ground-work of immortality is laid. If the materialistic view of man were correct—if he were composed entirely of the physical and perishable materials, it would be useless discussing the question of a future state. But as that view is demonstrately erroneous—as man is proved to have a soul as well as a body, that soul may be able to exist without the body; and therefore there may be another state of conscious, intelligent being beyond the confines of the tomb.

This question of another world is one of profound interest to all men, and one that in all ages has occupied a large share of attention. It is still a leading public

question. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we think of those whom death has removed from us, and of the doom that awaits ourselves. What has become of them? and what will become of us? "If a man die shall he live again?" How often has this question been asked with quivering lip, and throbbing heart, and tear-dimmed eye! Is there a future state? What lies beyond the boundaries of time? Is it all unbroken silence, impenetrable darkness? Or is there a world, in which those who fall asleep in death wake up and find their eternal home? Our friends have gone—where are they? In silence, only broken by the sobs of sorrow, we committed their bodies to the grave; and is that the *last* we shall see of them? Is all that once spoke, and smiled and thought, and loved and handled—all that we *know* them by—buried there? Or have we only buried their outer form, through which they manifested themselves, while *they*, in a "spiritual body," still live in another world? Oh! that we could have clear and certain evidence that those we loved either still live, or that they, as conscious entities, have been for ever blotted out of existence.

Who can satisfactorily answer these questions? Some men firmly *believe* in a future state; others ardently *hope* for one, because they have aspirations which nothing on earth fully satisfies; others doubt its existence though willing to admit it if convincing evidence is forth-coming; while others absolutely deny it, contending that there is not only no proof of immortality, but irresistible evidence against it. Many ask in significant tone—"What evidence have you, who profess to believe in it, of a future state? If man has a soul, why has it never been seen apart from his body? If there is a region beyond the grave, peopled by those who were once inhabitants of this world, why do none of them return to assure us of the fact? Seeing what mystery envelopes man's fate—what a dark cloud hangs over the grave, and how anxiously we peer into it in the hope of catching a glimpse of something on the other side, why if there is anything beyond—if our departed friends are living there—do they not come back to dispel this darkness, and set the question of another world at rest for ever?" Troublesome as these questions may be to

some, they are just such as thinking men naturally ask. And what answer can be given to them? It will not do to pass them by in silence. They are too clamorous, too persistent, too pressing to be quietly ignored. To denounce them as impertinent, or curious, or irreverent, is only to intensify the misgivings that prompt them. Nor can they be satisfactorily disposed of by an appeal to the Bible, with the well-known assurance that "life and immortality are brought to light" by it. The answer to such an appeal is obvious and conclusive. For those who regard the Bible as the inspired and infallible word of God, such appeal may be sufficient; but with those who regard it as of purely human origin—rightly or wrongly matters not as touching this point—its teachings on the subject of a future state are of no special authority. Stronger evidence than the testimony of an ancient record, or the *ipse dixit* of its professional interpreters, is demanded by the sceptical reasoner. And thank Heaven that evidence has been furnished in our own day. It is now before the world, and within the reach of all who desire it. The honest materialist who asks for proof of another world can have it now, if he will take the trouble to obtain it.

Spiritualism comes to the rescue of the doctrine of immortality, which the materialistic philosophy of the nineteenth century is laboring to overthrow, and places it on a firmer foundation than ever—the foundation of *demonstrable fact*. Instead of supplying the materialist with elaborate metaphysical disquisitions on the soul, and the possibility of its existence apart from a material organisation, it places before him certain facts, which are as capable of verification as the ordinary facts of every day life. It bids him look, and there will stand before his wakeful vision the disembodied inhabitants of another world. It bids him listen, and there will break upon his ears those familiar voices which he thought were lost in the silence of the grave. It bids him stretch out his hand, and he will again feel the warm, affectionate grasp of those whose life and love he believed death had for ever blotted out. And thus it will bring home to his consciousness and reason, through the avenues of his external senses, the irresistible conviction that his departed friends still live; and that as they live without

the fleshly body they once inhabited, so shall he live also.

This is not a mere fancy sketch—not a baseless and deceptive pretension—of what Spiritualism can do. The picture has been realised in many instances. Spirits cannot render themselves visible to the eyes, nor appeal directly to any of the bodily senses, of all, nor many men as yet; but they have done this to a sufficient number to place the matter beyond reasonable doubt; and the number will increase as the laws and conditions of such manifestations become better understood. While for other phenomena, produced by spirit agency and thus proving a future state, the evidence when fully examined is simply overwhelming. Those who still deny the existence of another world are either ignorant of the vast and ever accumulating evidence of it which Spiritualism furnishes; or through prejudice they violate in this matter those rules of belief and action which guide them in all the affairs of life.

Yes, tens of thousands can joyfully testify that Spiritualism demonstrates the reality of a future state. To the disconsolate parent it comes with the tidings that their child is not lost; the tender flower has not perished; the cold winds of annihilation have not nipped it in the bud, and prevented it unfolding its beauteous colors. No! It has been transplanted to a richer soil and brighter climate, where it will bloom in unfading loveliness. Their child still lives, and ere long it will return from its spirit-home, and tell them of the grandeur and joys of that happy land. To the weeping widow it speaks in soothing tones, and assures her that he whose death she mourns still lingers near her, and will yet advise and help her, if she fulfils the necessary conditions. To the orphan child, bewailing the loss of fond and loving parents, it appears an angel of mercy, and opens up the way by which it may still commune with its much-missed father and mother; and receive messages of love and instruction from the new home "beyond the river" to which they have removed. To the materialist, as he stands by the grave of those he has lost, pondering over the hard fate that has, as he believes, consigned all that he held most dear to an eternal sleep, it speaks in positive strains, and declares that the



so-called dead are not buried there; but have only put off their material outer garment, and still retain all their essential characteristics, and find themselves on another plane of conscious existence, from which they can communicate and give him that evidence of a hereafter which he has long asked for but found not. To all men it speaks with a heavenly voice of that "better country," and proves that from its bourne travellers *do* return, and tell us what they have discovered, and what awaits us when we, too, shall have "shuffled off this mortal coil." And the evidence it has thus furnished of a future state has gladdened thousands of sorrowing hearts, and lit up with sunshine and strewn with flowers the path of life that was previously dark and dreary. It has destroyed the terror of death, scattered the gloom of the grave, and opened up a glorious way to the Summerland; and with the certainty it gives of the soul's eternal home, it is enabling many to bear the ills of the present transient life with increasing fortitude and patience; and anticipate the change called death with the liveliest satisfaction. And as Spiritualism is the only system that supplies such evidence of a future state as this sceptical age demands, the estimation in which it will yet be held by the world needs no prophet to predict.

III.—*Spiritualism gives a more rational and satisfactory theory of the world to come, and of the soul's eternal destiny than any other system supplies.*

The existence of a future state having been proved by its disembodied inhabitants returning to earth to assure us of the fact, it is but natural that we should desire definite and reliable information respecting it. No subject can be of more interest to us than that of our eternal home; and who can wonder at our desire to know something of that world to which this is but introductory? If we reflect at all upon it we can hardly help asking—What are the leading characteristics of that world in which so much of our future interest is wrapped up? How shall we appear—what form shall we assume—when separated from the body? What will be our lot on the other side of death? What principles will determine the place of our abode, the society we shall have to associate with, and the condition of happiness or misery we shall find ourselves

in? How shall we stand related to God, to our kindred and friends, and to the earth we have left and the rest of the universe?

Much has been written and spoken on the subject by the professional advocates of religion. Horrid pictures of hell and glowing descriptions of heaven have filled many a book, and formed the substance of thousands of sermons. And yet alas! how little wiser we are for all this. Apart from what Spiritualism has revealed, how little do we really know of the future! Most of the graphic descriptions of heaven and hell in which certain pulpit orators revel are only fancy sketches—there is no corresponding reality beyond the grave. They lay down as the basis of their work radically false assumptions, and rear upon them a thing of air—they depict a purely mythical place. The Bible is supposed to contain all the information that can be obtained in this life respecting the world to come; but the direct and explicit knowledge it reveals is scant indeed. There are many gaps to be filled up by the imagination of the reader, if he desires a definite theory of that world. And with what strange creations these gaps have been filled up, let the teaching of the Christian Church testify! Many of those supplied links in the chain—those fillings in of the picture—if I may so call them, in the shape of “inferences,”—are a positive offence to enlightened reason, a gross outrage upon the finer, nobler sentiments of humanity. Nor is it agreed among Bible students whether the little information it does contain is to be taken as literally and strictly true. If, for example, its teachings are explicit on one point, it is on the fate of the wicked. Hell is described as a place of fire and brimstone; and the sinners punishment is said to be everlasting burning. And yet, though the belief in literal fire used to be all but universal in the Churches, there are but few educated Christians who now endorse that belief; it is confined chiefly to the ignorant and fanatical members of some of the minor sects

But meagre and unsatisfactory as is the knowledge of the future state furnished by the Bible, it is generally held by devout Christians to be all that we have a right to expect, or can possibly obtain this side the grave.

They complacently assume that God has, for wise purposes, shrouded almost all that pertains to the future in impenetrable mystery. It would not have been well, they suppose, for us to have known more on the subject than the light of His word reveals. We must willingly acquiesce in our present comparative ignorance, and patiently wait till we finish our earthly course, and prove the realities beyond by actual experience. To complain of the little information the Bible supplies is to reproach Infinite Wisdom and provoke Divine displeasure. To desire to increase our knowledge by seeking communion with our departed friends, who are now denizens of that world, is to indulge a wicked curiosity and practice a forbidden art; for which, if we are not "stoned to death" here, according to the strict injunction of God's word, we shall certainly be severely punished hereafter. So think the Bibliolaters around us. And hence it is that Spiritualists are regarded by those well meaning but mistaken individuals as an impious and audacious class, for trying to lift the veil that hides the future from mortal vision; or rather, for looking beyond when their spirit friends have lifted the veil for them.

There are various opinions among Christians on the subject of the future state and the souls destiny. Some hold that only a certain number survive death, the rest being annihilated by that dread event. In the opinion of others none will, strictly speaking, touch the shores of the world to come till the Day of Judgment; because they believe that the soul, at the end of its earthly journey, drops into a state of profound unconsciousness, in which it quietly sleeps away its time till roused by the blast of the Archangel's trumpet. Others contend that at death the righteous ascend to heaven and the wicked descend to hell; but that neither the happiness of the one nor the misery of the other will be completed till their bodies and souls are reunited on the Resurrection morn. While others believe that though the last view is correct with regard to the best and the worst of mankind, yet there is a large intermediate class—the sinners of moderate proportions and lighter hue, not quite good enough for heaven nor bad enough for hell—who go to a middle place called purgatory, where they

remain a certain time, longer or shorter according to circumstances, and are then translated to heaven.

But notwithstanding these differences of opinion, the great majority of Protestant Christians believe that the other world consists of *two grand divisions*. The lesser division is *heaven*. All the "righteous," "the redeemed of the Lord," are there, mingling promiscuously, and forming one great congregation, who "stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes and palms in their hands," serving God "day and night in his temple," and singing "the song of Moses and the Lamb" for ever. The larger division is *hell*. All the "wicked"—all those who have not "believed on the Lord Jesus Christ," and found the narrow way that leadeth unto life—are there, huddled together as in a vast prison; "weeping and gnashing their teeth" in agony and despair; no ray of light, no gleam of hope ever finding its way to their wretched abode.

Our Christian friends, moreover, teach that in which of those divisions we shall find our eternal home depends absolutely upon whether we "die in the Lord" or not. That is whether we have assented to the system of doctrines they hold, enjoyed spiritual experiences similar to their own—such as being "born again" and possessing the "witness of the spirit"—and given those evidences of piety that conform to the standard they have erected. If we are "sound in the faith" we are safe for glory; for although we may not be quite pure in heart nor blameless in conduct, the "blood of Jesus" in whom we trust can "cleanse us from all sin" instantly, and fit us for a place among the "just made perfect." But if we are unbelievers in their theological dogmas, and nonconformists to their religious practices, the door of heaven will be barred against us; the angry voice of a righteous Judge will thunder forth our condemnation; and the gates of hell will open to receive us, amid the infernal yells of those fiends and lost souls who have to be our everlasting companions. Our principles may be as good and our lives as upright as those of our Christian neighbours; nay we may even surpass some of them in our efforts to cultivate virtuous thoughts and feelings, and in the performance of those deeds which are the surest evidences of a holy and noble

nature; and yet they tell us that all this will count as nothing in the absence of a "saving faith in the merits of Christ crucified;" although it may be an intellectual impossibility for us to exercise that faith, not perceiving any reason for it, or virtue in it! We may have to our credit nearly a life-time of "good works," springing from the purest motives, but without the thing they call "faith" God will not recognise those works; they will form no ground of His approving smile, secure no passport to celestial bliss; on the contrary they will sink us to a deeper perdition, and intensify our sufferings in hell rather than ensure a reward in heaven!

Thus it is taught that man's destiny beyond the grave is determined, not by the principles of immutable justice or divine benevolence, but by the accidental circumstance of whether he has known and been able to believe certain doctrines, which are put forth by ecclesiastical organisations, called Churches, as the word of God. And that destiny once fixed is said to be irrevocable. For the elect few in heaven that is well, their eternal happiness will be guaranteed; but for the unnumbered millions in hell it will be a terrible thought. No repentance, no appeal for mercy, will henceforth avail. Sufferings that would move the most callous creature to pity, will have no softening effect upon the Creator. After countless ages of unutterable woe have rolled away, the torments of the lost will have only begun. No aid, however distant, will be in view, no amelioration, however small in degree and short in duration, will be possible.

Such, briefly put, are the views which the Christian Churches, generally, entertains of the future state. Who can wonder at the growing disbelief in it—at the increasing preference for dreary atheism to continued existence under such conditions? It is so clearly artificial and fanciful; it involves ideas of God and man so utterly repulsive, so contrary to all known facts, and so evidently the offspring of debasing superstition, that thinking, humane men may well begin to treat it as an idle tale. The heaven of orthodoxy is simply an impossibility, and as for its hell, it only exists in the barbarous theology which the world is fast out-growing. Imagine a God of infinite justice, love, and mercy, adopting a

"few" of the human race into His family, making them the recipients of His special favors on earth, and at last bringing them safe to a home of eternal blessedness; and rejecting all the rest, though *His own children*, and finally consigning them to endless punishment! It is difficult to conceive anything more unworthy of the Father of all than Christian teaching on the world to come. O God, how fearfully is Thy name blasphemed by those who call themselves Thy children! How grossly is Thy character misrepresented by the very men who claim to be the only "duly qualified" teachers of Thy Truth!

Thank heaven, the light of a new and nobler dispensation has dawned upon the world. Spiritualism is scattering those atrocious and degrading views, which have so long hung as a dismal and depressing cloud over the world; and is kindling hope and joy in the heaving breast of humanity. It is unveiling the future world, and giving man a knowledge of what actually awaits him when he quits his earthly habitation. And it is doing this, not by appealing to the dusty records and foggy traditions of past ages, but by thousands of living voices, which speak to-day from the sunlit shores of that happy land. Yes, the bright immortals are daily enlightening mankind on their destiny after death. And who are so able to discourse with authority on the world to come, and describe the real state of its inhabitants, as those inhabitants themselves? Surely the views of that world, given by those who have entered and speak from personal knowledge, is much more reliable than that of the orthodox churches, which had its origin in the mythology of a dark and distant past, and is repugnant to all the best principles of our nature.

What, then, does Spiritualism teach on the subject of the world to come? Without going fully into the matter at present, I will state a few things which our spirit friends distinctly and emphatically affirm respecting the world they have entered, and towards which all earth's inhabitants are hastening. They teach—

1. That the next world is as *real*, as *tangible*, to the senses of the spirit as this is to the senses of the body. Many of the ancient philosophers, as well as the writers

of the Bible, appear to have had some idea of this. They spoke of "trees," "countries," "seas," "houses," "temples," and "cities;" but their modern interpreters denude their language of its natural force, and reduce their splendid imagery to a poetical flourish or metaphorical illustration. But the revelations of modern Spiritualism confirm the literal truth of what they wrote on this subject, whether the dictates of reason, the suggestions of fancy, or the inspiration of the inhabitants of that world. The departed assure us that their spirit-homes are as real and substantial to them as ours to us; and that this material world in many respects typifies the world to come; but of course, as reason and analogy would have suggested, what may be regarded as the physical aspects of "Summerland" far surpasses anything on earth in perfection and grandeur. Those who have been accustomed to think of the future as an ethereal, insubstantial region, will no doubt consider this idea of it too gross and material for a home of the soul; but if they will reflect on the alternative of having to dangle in mid air, without anything to support them, for ever, they will perhaps modify their opinion.

2. That the *spirit after death assumes a form or body*, which is the counterpart of the perishable body it leaves behind. It is not an airy, undefined, intangible something, which practically amounts to nothing; but is as distinct and visible an objective reality there as the body is here. It may be said to be as really a material organisation as the earthly body it leaves at death; only it is composed of elements so sublimated and refined as to be imperceptible to our ordinary mortal vision and touch. And as the spirit is a palpable reality, the counterpart of the body, the problem of retaining our individuality and identity after death, which has puzzled so many minds and provoked so much speculation, is simply and satisfactorily solved. And the teaching of the departed on this part seems to me to be perfectly reasonable and natural. How else can the spirit be conceived to exist but in a bodily form? Moreover, their statements have been borne out by clairvoyant observation. All who have seen the inhabitants of the other world speak of them as having spiritual bodies; and whenever they are seen as apparitions it is in a form identical in appear-

ance with the bodies they formerly occupied. All the celestial visitants of whom the Bible speaks manifested themselves in the human form. And all the well-authenticated cases on record of spiritual appearances confirm the point in hand. Paul was right when he declared—"there is a natural body, and there is a *spiritual* body."

3. That there are divisions called *spheres*, seven in all, including this which is the first, representing the various stages through which the spirit will pass in its onward march to perfection. Those who require a full and satisfactory explanation of this point will find it in larger works on Spiritualism, by such writers as A. J. Davis; at present I can do little more than state the fact. Within each of those vast spheres there are many of what may be termed lesser spheres, representing the gradations in intellectual and moral worth which characterise the denizens of the spirit world. And in each smaller sphere there are innumerable homes, societies, and communities, founded on the basis of natural affinity and similarity in tastes, pursuits, and degrees of moral, intellectual, and spiritual culture. On no other principle could societies of free spirits be formed, and kept together permanently, and in pleasurable harmony. The incongenial and unhappy unions of this life, perpetuated by law or by other means, will not be continued in the life to come.

4. That man's state on entering the spirit world is not determined by the *direct decree of God*, nor by the *faith he professed*, but by *his own moral character*. He hears no voice saying either, "Come thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world"; nor, "Depart thou cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." He is neither borne in triumph by smiling angels to the heaven, nor dragged in disgrace by exulting fiends to the hell, which popular theology has prepared to receive him. By an immutable law of nature, which is engraved on his own being, he is either self-acquitted or self-condemned; and under the same stern, unbending law he rises or sinks on entering the future state. In other words, he wakes up in eternity the identical man, spiritually, that he fell asleep in time. Death has made no radical



change in his soul. What is there in death that could affect his soul's real condition? He occupies there precisely the same moral and spiritual plane that he did here. Freed from the body, he is necessarily under the dominion of the very same principles that swayed him while connected with it; and by a law which he cannot resist, these determine his initial state in the world to come. Under the influence of this law of his being he gravitates to that moral plane which corresponds to the one he occupied while on earth; and finds the society and surroundings for which he is best fitted, and which are most congenial to his real nature and true principles.

Thus God determines our state beyond the grave by natural and invariable law, and not by arbitrary decree. How can it be otherwise? Suppose a man has been what is called a great sinner all his life, but repents on his death bed, and is believed to be pardoned and washed in the blood of Jesus. He dies, and is said to go direct to heaven, the heaven of sinless perfection. But tell me, is that man really fit for the society of those pure, exalted, progressed spirits, supposed to stand before the throne of God, according to the orthodox idea of heaven? Ah, no! Nature knows nothing of such sudden and marvellous transformations as this. All the popular pulpit talk about what the "grace of God" and the "blood of Christ" can do, at the eleventh hour and in the worst of cases, is simply meaningless and misleading. God works by law and not by miracle. Perfection is reached by gradual development, and not by a single, sudden bound. If the man in question could by any means get into the company of the "just made perfect"—supposing such beings could be found in any part of the universe—would he be "at home" with them? Would he find himself in his natural element? Impossible! There would be hardly anything in common between himself and those surrounding him. He would find himself solitary in the midst of company, wretched while happiness abounded on every hand; and would inevitably work his way to the outskirts, and descend to a place and people where mutual sympathy would enable him to feel at home. His death bed repentance, if genuine, would be a *starting point* for a

higher, purer, and happier state, but nothing more.

It will thus be seen that no passport, labelled "*sound in the faith*," is necessary to secure a place of happiness hereafter. The creeds we profess and the religious duties we perform will have no influence in making us happy, further than they have made us intrinsically good. The poor Pagan, if he lives up to the light that is in him, is just as sure of heaven—that is happiness—as the powerful Pope. The traduced Infidel, who intelligently and conscientiously rejects the current religious dogmas as false, will just fare as well, if he is a good man, as the pious Christian whose capacious faith has taken in all the Creeds and Catechisms, Articles, and Confessions in Christendom. God makes no distinction, on theological grounds, in dealing with men in this world. Those who obey His holy laws of nature—He has given no other—are happy whether in the church or out of it; and those who violate them incur penalties from which no profession of religion can exempt them. Nor does He make any distinction on these grounds in the next world. He governs man by the same just, benevolent, and immutable laws there as here; and therefore our state—our happiness or misery in entering the spirit world—will be determined by our moral condition, and not by our religious belief or profession.

It will further be seen that the orthodox idea of the whole human family being arranged into two grand divisions, between which an impassable gulph yawns, is equally destitute of foundation. God does not separate mankind as a shepherd does a flock of sheep. They separate themselves here, not into two, but into almost innumerable divisions; and so it will necessarily be hereafter, for the reasons just assigned. Take the very best man on earth and the very worst, representing the extremes of good and evil—how wide they are apart. What a number of intermediate stages there are occupied by others. And if they were all instantly swept from earth they would turn up in the next sphere exactly the same, and represent the same extremes and manifold gradations in moral worth that we behold here. And, therefore, instead of there being only two places and two classes of persons in the next world, nature, analogy, and reason lead us to expect an indefinite

number, as is the case on earth; and this conclusion is confirmed by the testimony of those who speak of that world from personal observation.

5. It teaches, in the fifth place, that punishment beyond the grave is *not arbitrarily inflicted by an external power, but follows as the inevitable penalty of violated law*; and that its object is *remedial* and not vindictive.

Some have said that because Spiritualism scouts the fabled hell of orthodox theology, it thereby denies all future punishment; but this is not so. There is punishment for the wicked beyond the grave. This is the testimony alike of those who have passed through it, and of those who are still enduring it. The difference between Spiritualism is not as to the *fact*, but the *cause*, the *mode*, the *place*, and the *duration* of punishment. It is not inflicted directly as a judicial penalty, but overtakes the transgressor naturally as the necessary consequence of his wrong doing. No angry God, on a dread tribunal, passes sentence of condemnation upon him; the culprit is self-condemned, and that is enough. No roaring devil, as God's jailor-in-chief, seizes him and hurries him down to flaming regions; for he becomes a devil to himself, and meets none worse. No hell of raging fire opens its insatiable jaws to receive him; for he finds a hell already kindled within him. What more horrid hell can man be sent to than his own sin-darkened, sin-stained bosom? What more pitiless, tormenting devil can he meet than his own guilty conscience? To represent God as unbotting his pent up wrath, and pouring down his indignation in merciless torrents on the heads of His poor, erring children, as though He were a callous tyrant, a veritable fiend—as is often done in fashionable pulpits and religious books—is revoltingly blasphemous. The prodigal has brought punishment enough upon himself by the life he has lived; there is no need that his Father should add too it, even to the extent of reproaching him for his folly.

If the hell that warms and is half the life of popular theology, and the modes of punishment over which some professedly good men almost gloat, were realities, surely the denizens of the other world who come to speak to mortals would know something of it; but with one

voice they declare these things to be fabulous creations. Man's hell is declared to be principally with him. Remorse, self-reproach, a sense of moral degradation, a consciousness of what has been lost—these form a source of suffering and anguish not easily described. And yet this suffering is natural. It springs from the very constitution of things under which we are placed. As physical laws cannot be violated with impunity, neither can moral laws. The penalties of the latter, however, though equally certain, do not always overtake us so swiftly, and are not always so apparent, as those of the former. Yet assuredly those will be visited upon us in the next world if not in this. But how? Does God *directly* inflict the penalties of physical laws here? No. They are, if I may so put it, self-executing. And so are those attached to moral laws; therefore they are certain. The wrong doer may escape the penalties of human laws, but he cannot escape those annexed to the immutable laws of God.

But as those penalties are inevitable, *what is their object, and how long will they endure?* Theology teaches that the object of future punishment is to vindicate infinite justice, and uphold the majesty of divine law; and that its duration will be eternal. The blazing fire will never be quenched; the horrible prison will never be opened; the vials of God's wrath, though ceaselessly pouring out their contents, will never be emptied; the Devil and his subordinates will never be tired of their infernal task—assigned them by a God of *love*—of torturing poor souls; the capacity of those souls for suffering will never be exhausted or diminished—so says the theology of fashionable Christianity! Spiritualism joins issue with it on this point. What perverted notice of "justice" and "divine law" men must have who can for a moment entertain such a shocking belief! Never would intelligent and well-meaning Christian men countenance such a doctrine if the exigencies of a barbarous creed, in which they have been trained and to which they are slaves, did not require it. Eternal punishment necessary to vindicate infinite justice? Could it be inflicted it would be an infinite *injustice*! Necessary to uphold the majesty of divine law? The doctrine tramples under foot the purest and noblest of all divine laws—the law

of *love*! Justice is best vindicated when those who have violated its principles are led, by the sufferings they have brought on themselves, to see their folly, and conform to its requirements. The majesty of law is best upheld, not by mercilessly and hopelessly crushing its unfortunate victims, but by leading them through the thorny path of its penalties to respect and henceforth obey it. And such our spirit friends assure us is the object, and such the effect of punishment beyond the grave. It is exactly of the degree and duration merited by man's sins, and necessary for his true repentance and reformation. When it has answered this purpose it ceases. His burdened, fettered spirit is freed and rises. Darkness and desolation flee away. Henceforth sunshine and happiness are his portion. And instead of having through endless ages to curse the God who made him, as a cruel, brutal monster, he sees the wisdom and beneficence of His laws, and praises Him for the disciplinary and corrective experiences through which they compelled him to pass.

6. In the last place, Spiritualism teaches that *unlimited and eternal progression is the destiny of all men.*

According to the popular conceptions of the future state this is hardly possible even with respect to the select few supposed to inhabit heaven, and utterly impossible of the vast majority of mankind believed to be in hell. The former cannot progress in *moral purity*; for having been "washed in the blood of Jesus," they are as white as the angels, as pure as God himself. Nor can much advancement in *happiness* result from their monotonous round of devotional exercises. Praising God is an elevating exercise, when not repeated till it becomes formal, and protracted till it induces weariness. Nor is much provision made for growth in *intellectual capacity and attainment*. A few writers on the subject of heaven, like Dr. Dick, do allow some variety of employment there, and a steady increase in knowledge and mental culture; but the heaven most Christians look for is a monotonous, stationary state of existence. The progress the soul is capable of, and which is so essential to its permanent felicity, is not thought of by those whose only anxiety is to reach a place of "*rest*."

But if even the saints in heaven can progress a little,

the sinners in hell certainly cannot improve either in internal condition or external circumstances. Though not one of them had reached the limit of their intellectual or moral capacity at death, still an insuperable bar is supposed to be put across their path at that moment. Even the progress and attainments they achieved on earth will not be kept up. *Retrogression* is their woeful doom. Such kindly dispositions, virtuous principles, and manly aspirations as distinguished them on leaving this world are stamped out, and all that is corrupt, debasing, and devilish, rushes in and fills up the measure of their souls. And thus to become irreclaimable outcasts from their Father's home in heaven; moral wildernesses, on whose blighted, desolate bosom no blade of promise, no flower of hope, will henceforth grow; revolting embodiments of reeking depravity and fiendish malignity; wretched inhabitants of a region of darkness and sufferings of indescribable intensity and unending duration—this is alleged by Christian theology to be the destiny of the vast majority of the human race. And this terrible destiny is held to have been determined "from all eternity," by "the decrees" of a wise, merciful, and loving God! and all "for the manifestation of His glory!" His "glory," indeed! Imagine an earthly parent treating even the worst of his children thus to manifest his "*glory*." If such conduct were a manifestation of "*glory*," what in the name of truth would a manifestation of vindictive *wrath* and heartless *cruelty* be?

But the gospel of Spiritualism, which is God's latest message to the world, brings glad tidings, not to a selfish few, but to *all men*. It teaches us that the good of all nations and classes, irrespective of their creed or religion, find themselves in a beautiful home on waking up in the next world; in the midst of excellent society; surrounded by enchanting scenery; and supplied with numerous and ample sources of enjoyment. But they will not sit down in idleness as though the full object of their existence had been reached, as though perfection had been really attained. A career of unlimited progress in wisdom, knowledge, purity, usefulness, and pleasure, will open before them. And even before the less developed of God's great family, commonly called the "*wicked*,"

the star of hope will shine; and to them the sweet voices of the brighter spirits will speak words of encouragement, and bid them rise higher. The chastisement they are for a time subjected to is that of a loving Father, and helps to work out their moral elevation. They are in a sense "spirits in prison"—in the prison of their besetting sins and the sufferings those sins have entailed; but the more advanced spirits do now what Christ did of old—descend and "preach" to them the good news that their redemption draweth nigh. Regularly are liberated and purified spirits leaving that "prison," amid the rejoicing of friends and the grateful songs of those "ministering angels" who have by sympathy, instruction, and benign influences, helped to burst their fetters, and bring into active play the better powers of their nature. Not a single soul will be left in that dark prison to linger out an existence of eternal misery. The most polluted and guilty are still the children of the Infinite Father; and though His image may be marred and stained by sin, it will yet be restored to purity and beauty; and the sublime object of universal salvation will assuredly be accomplished.

Such is a brief outline of the teachings of Spiritualism respecting the world to come. It is not my purpose at present to go into *details* on what may be termed its physical and geographical features; its family and social laws and arrangements; its diversified and enjoyable employments; its wisely ordained means of intellectual, moral, and spiritual culture; and its countless and never-failing springs of pure and everlasting pleasure. But I trust sufficient has been said to show its naturalness, its attractiveness, and its vast superiority in every way over the mythical world, which theology has created and divided into two unequal parts called heaven and hell.

Exception may be taken to the views advanced, because they have not been supported by the direct testimony of spirits themselves. Suffice it to say that it would have been easy to have given any number of passages from spiritual communications; but it was not a part of my plan to introduce them in this work. My only aim has been to furnish a few of the leading facts and principles with some of the evidences and arguments on which they rest; leaving a fuller and more detailed description to an-

other work. Those, however, who are not satisfied with what has been advanced on the points glanced at, will find abundant corroborative evidence in the literature of Spiritualism; and better still, by communication with their own spirit friends.

Having stated at some length the teachings of Spiritualism on the subject of the soul, immortality, and the world to come, I shall compress the rest of what I have to say in this chapter into a very small compass. Each of the following leading principles of Spiritualistic teaching would bear much more amplification than I can give them at present.

IV. In the fourth place, Spiritualism teaches that *God has established certain universal and immutable laws* under which we live; that these laws are to govern and guide us in all the affairs of life; and that, therefore, He does not interfere *directly* with the regular course of events.

This proposition strikes at the very root of the doctrine of special providence, prayer, and cognate subjects. It has long been taught that God interposes specially now and then on behalf of certain persons, people, and institutions; and that in answer to prayer He does for man what He would not otherwise do. Religionists like to believe that their God is ever in attendance upon them, and that he can and will interfere directly to promote their individual interests, in compliance with their earnest requests. It is a great comfort to them to think that He can defeat the best laid designs of their enemies, crush their mightiest power, and work miracle after miracle for their benefit, if He *sees fit* to do so. And this belief has ever engendered a superstitious trust in supernatural aid, that has been most mischievous in its effects. But stern facts have often read the credulous believers in Providential interpositions a severe rebuke, could they but have seen and felt it. When most needed their God did not step out of his way to help them, notwithstanding their importunate prayers. And men are beginning to doubt whether the God of the Universe is at the beck and call of everybody who chooses to supplicate His direct and special favors on their behalf. Our spirit friends are teaching, and science and ordinary observations are confirming the fact, that God has placed all His creatures under wise



laws, that by these laws He governs us, and that He will not contravene, or break, or set aside any of them for our particular benefit. In proportion as this fact is realised, men will trust natural rather than supernatural means in times of trouble and need; prayer will cease to importune God for special favors, and grow into praise, thanksgiving, and holy aspiration; and events which appear to indicate direct responses from the Eternal, will be found to prove the timely help of those bright intelligences who are ministerting spirits to the inhabitants of earth.

V. In the fifth place, Spiritualism teaches that *true religion* consists simply in *being and doing good*; that is in cultivating virtuous, just, and benevolent principles, and exemplifying these in all our dealings with our fellow-men, and thus fulfilling the golden rule of doing to others as we would that others should do to us.

This principle is entirely opposed to the popular notions of religion. It asserts that true religion may exist independent of those creeds, professions, and observances supposed to be indispensable parts of a religion that will be acceptable to God. Too long has an artificial religion held sway among men. Too long has agreement with a given set of dogmas, and the acknowledgment and support of certain institutions, been considered the only satisfactory marks of enjoying the Divine favor. And hence whole nations have been regarded as non-religious in the orthodox sense of the term; and thousands in Christian lands have been denied the credit of being religious, though giving the best possible proofs of being animated by the spirit of *true religion*. But Spiritualism will do more than any other system to correct these erroneous notions, and usher in the reign of natural and universal religion. It distinguishes between sectarian piety and religion, and teaches that the despised Pagan, living up to the light he possesses, is as much a truly religious man as the most pious Christian; and that his religion is quite as acceptable to the great Father of all as that of the most favored of the sons of God. Its great aim is to supplant the religion of creeds with the religion of *deeds*.

VI. Spiritualism further teaches that genuine and permanent happiness consists not in what is convention-

ally known as "serving the Lord," but in a knowledge of, and obedience to, the laws of our own physical, intellectual, and moral being, and of external nature; inasmuch as these are the only known and infallible laws of God.

Much is said and written about happiness, and a certain class assume that the genuine thing can only be obtained by believing the dogmas they do. They talk about the service of God and the service of Satan, as though these were matters on which there could not be two opinions, and they complacently take it for granted that only those "who serve the Lord" as they phrase it, that is think and act as they do in religious matters, can enjoy real and lasting felicity. But what do they mean by serving the Lord? They mean assenting to a particular system of theology, whether understood or not; admitting that the whole Bible is the inspired and perfect word of God, and contains everything essential to man's salvation; regarding one day as more sacred than others, and spending it in performing a prescribed round of duties in a place of public worship; eschewing a number of practices and places supposed to be sinful and displeasing to God; and framing their whole life to an authorised pattern labelled "*orthodox*." Those who do these things are said to have the keys of happiness, while those who omit them, no matter what else they do, are supposed to be "miserable creatures," whose bosoms have never been thrilled with the music of God-sent pleasure. But is this view reasonable? Is it corroborated by the experience of mankind? Can it be that a wise, and just, and loving Father would make true felicity depend on conditions which many of the most gifted and conscientious of His children could not honestly fulfil? Assuredly not! He has suspended true happiness on *natural* conditions, and placed it within the reach of all men. They serve and honor Him most who make themselves best acquainted with the laws of their complex being, and those of nature around them, and who most regularly and strictly obey these laws. A man may be the rankest radical in politics, the boldest sceptic in religion, and the most heterodox reasoner in science, yet if he understands and obeys the laws of nature he enjoys far more pure and rational

happiness than the most devout sectarian, who through ignorance or indifference violates these laws. It will be well when men see that happiness, like religion, is a perfectly natural product, and the birthright of every member of the human family, whatever his profession or creed may be.

VII. In the seventh place, Spiritualism teaches that *inspiration is not a direct and special operation of the Spirit of God, but is a natural influx from the spirit spheres, dependent upon established psychological laws and conditions*; and that it was not confined to a few ancient writers who composed the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, but is a *universal and perpetual fact*.

It will be seen that this proposition is directly opposed to the popular views on inspiration, and tends to strip the Bible of the claims usually advanced in its behalf. Inspiration has long been held to be a direct operation of God upon man, by which He revealed His will to the world. But that notion originated when men had very crude and erroneous views of God—when they conceived him to be seated in the clouds, and to be a sort of gigantic man. As knowledge and science have expanded man's intellect at the same time as they have opened up a boundless universe, the idea of a personal God, coming into direct contact with His creatures, has vanished, and will in time totally disappear from all intelligent beliefs. Spiritualism is revealing the grand fact that God only works through and by intermediate agencies, and that what is called inspiration is the influence which disembodied spirits bring to bear upon embodied minds on earth, in accordance with immutable natural laws. And hence it follows that inspiration is a perfectly natural process, and has nothing more miraculous or supernatural in it than religion and happiness, just touched upon.

It has also long been taught that inspiration was confined to the writers of the Bible, and that it guaranteed its subjects perfect exemption from error. Reason concludes that if it is a natural thing it cannot be confined to any exceptional part of the race, nor be limited by any particular periods of time. And our spirit friends teach us that as a matter of fact inspiration has been enjoyed by all nations, and that many of the so-

called heathens were as highly inspired at times as the writers of the Bible. But prejudice, founded upon false teaching, has long blinded men's eyes to many of the beauties of other writers, and caused them to assign their writings a far lower place than their intrinsic merits entitled them to. Nor was inspiration confined to the ancients. It is a perpetual as well as a universal thing. In every age since the last page of the Bible was written, men have been as susceptible to spiritual impressions as they were before, and much has been written under spirit inspiration, which is simply credited to the writer's own unaided powers. And as the fact of the universality and perpetuity of inspiration takes hold of men's minds they will abandon their superstitious and false notions about the Bible, and will regard its writers as they do other inspired men, not as the passive channels of infallible revelations from God, but as the instruments of intelligences higher than themselves, but still finite and imperfect, whose messages were more or less colored by passing through their minds.

VIII. Again, Spiritualism teaches that the *unusual phenomena commonly called supernatural and miraculous are produced by finite causes and governed by uniform and eternal laws*; and, therefore, their recurrence in different ages, and their manifestation in all parts of the world might reasonably have been expected, and has been abundantly proved.

Sectarian Christians have long claimed that the possession and exercise of certain spiritual gifts and miraculous powers, was confined exclusively to the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles of the Bible. These men are alleged to have been specially endowed by God with supernatural powers, and it is contended that the marvellous things recorded of them were done in attestation of their divine mission and message. Anything of a similar kind to the events recorded in that Book, said to have been performed by persons of other lands and other times, is set down as false or of diabolical origin. But does either reason or history justify these conclusions? By no means. If those Bible worthies were invested with miraculous powers, why should we suppose those powers were confined to so few persons, and to ages so remote from this? Surely there

is as much reason for them now as in former times. And if the powers those persons exercised were not miraculous, but were the result of natural organisation, and were exercised in harmony with natural law, then the fair presumption is that, like inspiration, they would be universal and continuous. And I think history, read in the light of modern events, abundantly sustains this conclusion. The sacred books of all nations contain records of events quite as extraordinary, and many of them just as probable and as well authenticated as the so-called miracles of the Christian Scriptures. Nay, the history of the Christian Church itself proves that the wonderful gifts supposed to have been confined to the Bible writers, were possessed long after the last of those writers left the world. No single age was absolutely destitute of them; and doubtless in each age they were exercised to a much larger extent than history has recorded. In our own day we witness a glorious revival of those powers. They are proved to be natural and not miraculous, and thus they explode the theological notion so long held on the subject of miracles. The phenomena of Spiritualism are of the same kind as many biblical events, commonly deemed miraculous; but they depend on laws and conditions which in proportion as they are understood are found to be perfectly natural; and when they are fully comprehended we shall have the means of satisfactorily accounting for all the extraordinary occurrences narrated in the Bible, which are fairly credible, without resorting to the theory of the miraculous intervention of Deity.

IX. Spiritualism further teaches that the law that *what a man sows he will necessarily reap* is not confined to *natural and material* things; but extends to, and operates with equal and undeviating certainty in, the realm of *moral and spiritual being*; and that the *substitution of one person for another* can in no degree affect the operation of this just law of cause and effect.

The bearing of this proposition on one of the most popular and cherished dogmas of Orthodoxy will be seen at a glance, namely, that of the *Atonement*. Christians admit its truth when applied to the domain

of nature; nor do they deny it when man's physical constitution is under consideration. They know that any penalty he may incur, by the violation of any natural law, must be borne by *himself*. However anxious he may be to escape it, or transfer it to another person; and however willing another person might be to bear it for him, it cannot be done. What he sows he *must* reap. The effects of certain causes which he controls he must bear. But strange to say, when we enter the region of moral and spiritual matters, a new principle is introduced—a fresh law is supposed to be in operation. Man may break every commandment in the decalogue; he may violate every moral law that God has established; he may corrupt every faculty of his spiritual nature, and outrage the noblest sentiments of his being; he may wrong his fellow man in the most shameless manner, and insult his God by persistent rebellion and audacious blasphemy; in a word, he may be the blackest, vilest, most repulsive wretch under heaven, yet he has but to repent, and exercise a power called faith, and he gets rid at once of all his sins and their frightful consequences. They are transferred to another being—an innocent substitute—and he appears as pure as though he had never been defiled, and as happy as though his whole life had been made up of hymns of praise and deeds of usefulness!

The pernicious consequence of such a doctrine upon society are too well known to need pointing out. It is time that a more just and natural view of sin and its consequences took its place. Many men, having lived a life of sin, have sought refuge in the fiction of an Atonement on their death beds, and because of their so-called penitence and faith, they have been dispatched by mistaken priests to a heaven of purity and blessedness; but on waking up in the next world they have found out their sad mistake. No Christ has borne their sins, and washed them in his cleansing blood. They are still the depraved and wretched creatures they were on earth; and only after making the atonement of *personal suffering*, do they expect to reach a state of peace and happiness. They find that what they sowed in time they reap in eternity. Thousands of spirits, who had died under the orthodox delusion of the

Atonement, have returned to earth to warn men against resting upon such a false foundation, and to assure them that as they live and die so they will find themselves on the other side. In this branch of Spiritualistic teaching will be found a motive to a pure, upright, and useful life, far more powerful than any that sectarian Christianity can possibly furnish.

X. Spiritualism teaches, moreover, that the final, and only unerring standard of appeal in religious and other matters is *Nature*—the vast volume of God's truth which he has spread out for man's use, study, and instruction; and that the only authorised and duly qualified interpreter of that volume is *free and enlightened reason*.

This proposition is radically opposed to the supreme and infallible authority claimed by one party for a human institution called the *Church*, and by another party for a particular book called the *Bible*. The Catholics put forth their Church as man's only reliable guide in spiritual matters. All who believe and obey the teachings of the Church—that is the Pope, Bishops, and Priests,—are the favoured of God, and sure of heaven; while those who reject her teachings and despise her authority are living under the curse of the Almighty, and are certain of endless destruction unless they repent. The Protestants transfer the authority to another power—the Bible, and teach that only those whose faith is in harmony with it—that is with certain men's interpretation of it—are in a state of grace, and have a chance of eternal life. These two conflicting powers have long oppressed and cursed the world. Man's reason has been enslaved, his conscience trampled upon, and his future destiny made to depend upon most arbitray and unjust conditions. But another dispensation has dawned upon society, which denies the absolute authority of both the Church and the Bible. These are alike human creations. Nature is God's only word. And only such teachings as enlightened reason and liberal science deduce from it are of any obligation upon men. Those despotic powers—the Church and the Bible—have no more formidable opponent than is found in the Rationalistic Spiritualism of modern times. It claims for every man the right to

think and act for himself in religious matters, instead of allowing others to prescribe a system of belief and a course of life for him.

XI. In the last place, Spiritualism teaches not only that there is another world, but that its inhabitants can and do return to earth and hold communion with those still in the body. Sufficient has been already said on this point to render it unnecessary to do more at present than simply state the fact, as an essential link in the chain of Spiritualistic teaching. The fact of open intercourse between the worlds is demonstrated by the most indubitable evidence, and this constitutes the crowning glory of Spiritualism.

Such, briefly stated, are some of the leading principles and teachings of Rationalistic Spiritualism. I hope to be able to apply them more fully to popular errors in another work, and shew how fairly and effectually they overturn those errors. In the meantime it will be seen that they contain the elements of a system of ethics and religion based upon natural and immutable principles, which mankind will assuredly embrace, in proportion as they achieve their intellectual enfranchisement, and advance in true wisdom and knowledge.

## CHAPTER IX:

### POPULAR OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

It is not surprising that the opponents of Spiritualism should raise a number of objections against it, with the view of either invalidating its claims or depreciating its merits. Many of these objections are of too absurd and trumpery a character to deserve notice; the most plausible and forcible of them have been met again and again; and yet they are repeated almost daily as though they were original and unanswerable evidences against the movement. I will briefly reply to a few of those that are most frequently raised both in conversation and in the public prints.

I. In the first place, an objection is often raised in the form of a question,—“*Why, if Spiritualism is true, was it not known to the world until so very recently?*”

Some of our opponents lay great stress on this objection. If Spiritualism were such a glorious system, and capable of such grand results in dealing with some of



the most important yet mysterious problems of existence, as is often alleged, they cannot see why the world should have been ignorant of it so long, why so many generations should pass away without the chance of knowing its comforting doctrines. I reply, first, that Spiritualism in most of its essential features is not so new as this objection supposes. As an organised and public movement it is of recent origin, and some of its phenomenal phases are developments of the present century, but the great fact of spirit communion has been recognised for thousands of years. In Bible times, as that book informs us, the inhabitants of the other world frequently visited our earth, and conversed with men in the body. Not a single century of the Christian dispensation has been destitute of such incidents. Of course those alleged instances of spirit manifestation have been ridiculed by many as mere "ghost stories," that had no foundation in truth; but most of them were, no doubt, veritable realities. And since the advent of Spiritualism those visits of disembodied spirits to earth have only become more frequent and universal than they were in any former age. But, secondly, supposing Spiritualism were in every sense a new thing, that cannot consistently be urged against it as a valid objection. Suppose we were to ask our orthodox friends why Christ did not come before he did, why, if he was to save the world, so many generations were allowed to die without a knowledge of him; and were we to urge his late coming as an argument against him and his religion, what would they say? They would probably reply in the language of Paul, that he came in the "fulness of time." So it may be urged that Spiritualism, as a public movement, has come in the "fulness of time,"—that is at the time when it was most needed, and had the best chance of success. Other systems of religion are fast decaying and losing their influence; materialism is threatening to crush man's spiritual nature, and extinguish the hope of another life; and nothing could be more opportune than the advent of a movement that will rescue natural and true religion from destruction, and hold a cold and ruthless materialism in check, yea, conquer it with the weapons it has challenged. The world did long without the printing press, railways, telegraphs, and many other things; but no one now ventures to deny

their great utility, because Society was not blessed with them before. Nor, if Spiritualism were an absolutely new development, should it be rejected on that account.

II. A second objection is that it is *contrary to the Bible*.

It is not singular in having to meet this objection. Almost every new movement is confronted with it, and some of those that have ultimately proved to be of the greatest benefit to mankind have been seriously obstructed by it in their early days. My first reply to this objection is that Spiritualism is not contrary to the Bible. That book is in reality one of the oldest and best authorities for it that can be quoted. It is true there are a few passages in it which are often adduced as being supposed to prohibit and condemn it; but when the thing condemned is carefully compared with Spiritualism they are found to have little or nothing in common. The divinations and enchantments of the ancients no doubt had an element of truth in them, but they appear to have been associated with very questionable practices, and used for unworthy purposes. Those evils the Bible evidently condemns. But surely no one can justly deny the actuality of spirit intercourse in Bible times and Bible lands. Scores of instances of it are recorded in the Scriptures. Christ himself practised it. The spirit-light, the spirit-voice, the materialised spirit-form, spirit-writing, moving physical objects by spirit-power, speaking under spirit-impression, and several of the other phases of Spiritualism now before the world, are clearly and frequently spoken of in the Bible. Indeed, without regarding that book as the infallible word of God, it will be found that Spiritualism throws a light on many of its darkest pages, and affords a rational and scientific explanation of many of its phenomena, which have long perplexed devout believers, and could only be accounted for by supposing the miraculous interposition of Deity; and which many of the lights of the present day reject as fabulous inventions. My second reply is, that if even it were utterly opposed to the Bible that would be no evidence of its falsity. The day has gone by when a new system must necessarily accord with that book to have any chance of public recognition, as being true and

good. That day lasted too long for the interests of mankind. But a number of things said to be opposed to the Bible, and denounced by its believers, have been proved to be true and of great benefit to the world; and hence men are beginning to examine matters on their merits, without any reference to the Bible. Quoting Scripture against them does nothing to disprove their claims, any more than quoting it in favor of a point proves its truth. Therefore, if piles of texts could be reared against Spiritualism they would not have the slightest influence against its claims. It might be a grand and indestructible truth, though all the Bibles in the world condemned it.

III. It is objected in the third place, that it is *opposed to Christianity*, and it might *seriously affect, perhaps revolutionise, orthodox theology*.

This objection is partly true, but it does not follow that Spiritualism is false. To much that goes by the name of Christianity it is decidedly opposed, and the popular system of theology it certainly seeks to revolutionise. Christianity is supposed to be the religion taught by Christ. His religion was a simple, practical thing, consisting of love to God and man, and the duties growing out of these principles. Spiritualism is Christian in that sense. But there is much taught and done by the Churches in the name of Christianity that has nothing to do with the religion of Christ. Let anyone examine, without prejudice, the theological dogmas of the Catholic and the leading Protestant Churches, and he will see what a mass of opinions and speculations have been grafted upon the gospels, for which Christ is in no way responsible, and which his teachings emphatically condemn. Those who are interested in keeping up the theological fictions by which the people have so long been imposed upon, will of course cry—"Away with Spiritualism; it is an enemy to our religion; it strikes at the very root of many of the doctrines our fathers held; it must be crushed, or it will revolutionise our glorious creeds, and overthrow the venerable temple of faith which was built of old." They are quite right. It is all they say, and will accomplish all they predict. When Galileo announced a great scientific fact, the orthodox philosophers of his time shook their heads and said "This can never be tolerated. If it gains ground it

will entirely revolutionise all the scientific doctrines about the earth and the universe, which our fathers from time immemorial have held. The declaration must be recanted, or our venerable system is done." They, too, were right. Their scientific dogmas were exploded. But is not the world all the better for the change? So, if Spiritualism effects all that its opponents dread in reference to sectarian Christianity and orthodox theology, the world will be infinitely benefited by the changes thus wrought out. A much nobler and better system will take the place of the one removed.

IV. A fourth objection is that it *relaxes moral obligations and gives a license to man's evil passions*.

This is a favorite objection with a certain class of opponents, and is quite enough to excite the prejudice of those who know nothing of its true principles and natural influence. We often hear the remark—"Oh! if Spiritualism is true, we can do as we like. It teaches that there is no hell, no devil, no eternal punishment; that there is no angry God ever looking down upon us; that the Bible is not all true; that we have no need of a Saviour; and that bad men are just as sure of happiness at last as good men. Why then may we not do as we like, and have our fill of such pleasure as our nature craves most?" Such is the reasoning often employed by those who ought to know better. It is only another way of stating the exploded notion that appealing to man's ignorance, fears, and prejudices is the most effectual way of making him a good citizen and a good Christian. Experience has fully proved that this method has lamentably failed to reform and elevate the majority of men; but even if it were in a measure successful it ought to be superseded because it is essentially wrong in principle. Spiritualism certainly relaxes, yea, knocks off many views and influences that have long firmly held men; but with the freedom it secures it imparts new impulses and nobler motives. It teaches him that no "robe of righteousness" belonging to someone else can be thrown over him to cover his own moral deformities and corruption; that no "blood" can cleanse him from sin; that no "faith" can secure him the blessings of salvation here and heaven hereafter; that the evil deeds of a lifetime cannot be got rid of by a death-bed repentance; but that,

on the contrary, he must work out his own salvation, and can only attain to high degrees of moral excellence and true happiness, by the slow process of personal cultivation and improvement. Never was a pure and noble movement sought to be injured by a viler calumny than that which charges Spiritualism with bad moral tendencies. The better it is understood and the more clearly will it appear, that of all religions it is the best calculated to produce a life that is really good, yet free from the gloom of puritanical austerity, and the cant of orthodox piety.

V. It is urged as a fifth objection, that the communications alleged to come from the spirit world are so *contradictory as to destroy their credibility, and of so trivial a nature as to be unworthy of notice.*

It is not denied that there are contradictions in some spiritual communications: but many of these are more apparent than real, and those of the most decided and glaring character are not so difficult to account for as may appear at first sight. Some of them are due to the imperfect conditions under which the communications are received. But few investigators pay sufficient attention to the natural and necessary conditions on which intercourse with the other world depends. They are also partly owing to the different positions occupied by the communicating spirits in the future state, and the different planes of intellectual and moral advancement they have reached. Seemingly contradictory accounts of any given country on earth might be satisfactorily explained on this principle. And the alleged contradictions in what purports to be spirit messages, will be found, on careful examination, to be but descriptions of different places and scenes in spirit land, and the expression of those differences of opinion even on the same subject that prevails among spirits as well as mortals. Let two men return to earth, one of them a very good and the other a very bad man; their experiences will necessarily have been so different beyond the grave that their descriptions of that state are sure to differ in many respects; but those differences in their communications are not contradictions. In truth, however, there are not nearly so many even apparent contradictions as this objection implies. There is a wonderful agreement among spirits,

from all parts of the world to come and of all degrees of progression, on most points. They condemn much that is called religion, and most of the dogmas of orthodox theology, with a remarkable unanimity; and their statements as to the main features in the character and conditions of spirit life, are also very consistent and harmonious as a whole. As to the triviality of the communications, those who raise this objection evidently have but a slight knowledge of Spiritualism. It is sufficient to say that, though some communications are admittedly of a trivial kind—a thing not to be wondered at—yet those who will examine the literature of the movement, and patiently interrogate spirits themselves, will find many of those communications deal with the most important questions, and in a very intelligent and able manner.

VI. It is objected in the sixth place, that the spirit once free from the body, and in the future state, *is not permitted, and if permitted will not desire to return and communicate with those left behind*; and that, therefore, the system built upon the belief in that communication is a delusion.

This objection is founded on erroneous views of the world to come, and the soul's destiny therein. I have exposed some of the errors on this subject in a former chapter. The popular belief is that the souls of the so-called righteous ascend to heaven at death, where they will be for ever occupied in praising God, admiring the beauties that surround them, and bathing in the sea of supreme felicity. The worship of God and their own happiness will so fully engross their time and attention, that they will think but little or nothing of the earth they have left, and the friends that survive them on it. If even it were possible for them to revisit earth and commune once more with its inhabitants, they are supposed to have no desire to quit that celestial region for such a purpose. And as for the souls not in heaven, they are said to be imprisoned in hell, suffering the just penalty of their transgressions. It is admitted that *they* might desire to return to earth, if it were but to obtain a short respite from their torments, and warn those left behind to beware lest a similar doom overtakes them; but it is contended that they will not be allowed such a privilege.

Justice will not relax their punishment for a movement. Their keeper, the devil, has locked the gate of damnation upon them, and will not open it till the Judgment Day. Indeed, it is assumed that part of their punishment will consist in their being for ever cut off from all communication with the world and their friends. For these reasons it is supposed that the alleged communion with disembodied spirits is impossible.

Sufficient has been said in another part of this work to shew the falsity of this, the orthodox, view of the future state. Neither the heaven nor the hell of Christian theology has any existence in the regions beyond. Men are neither so bad nor so good as the churches teach. And when they have finished their earthly course they only pass on to another stage of their progressive existence—to a world as real and natural as this. They carry with them the knowledge they had acquired, the recollections of their earth life, the sentiments, affections, and passions that animated them while in the body; and hence they are still bound by strong ties to those they have left to mourn their death. From these facts we should infer the natural desire of most spirits to return to earth. What sincere friend would not desire to return to assure the friends he had left of his continued existence? What husband would not desire to visit his lonely, disconsolate widow, and give her the assurance of his presence and help, in the struggles which are too frequently a widow's lot? What parent would not desire to speak once more to his orphaned and perhaps friendless children, and act as a guide and guardian to them? Surely, even the so-called saints ought to feel this to be a duty. It says little for their religion if it suppresses in another world emotions, desires, and impulses which naturally spring from these relationships. What nobler mission could they desire, and what greater happiness could they have, than is found in this practical interest in the welfare of those who are still bound to earth, and involved in its conflicts, labors, and sorrows? And what could be more pleasing to God than to see spirits so engaged? He needs not that we should be telling Him to all eternity what we think of Him, and how much we love Him. As those on earth best prove their love to Him by seeking to bless the creatures He

has made, so He would have departed spirits demonstrate their love to Him. As to His not permitting departed spirits to return, this objection is sufficiently answered by affirming that He is a God of love. A God of love will prohibit nothing that is for the benefit of the human race; and that spirit communion is for its good no one, with a proper knowledge of it, will venture to deny. I dismiss this objection by adding that I have no desire for a heaven from which I could not return to commune with those I shall leave on earth, and no belief in a God who would refuse permission for such communion.

VII. A seventh objection is that the means through which spirits are said to manifest themselves, *are so unlikely to be used for such a purpose, as to render the theory of their communications in the highest degree improbable.*

There is much talk about the absurdity of immortal spirits tilting tables, knocking chairs about, sporting with planchettes, and performing other physical manifestations. Spirits are supposed, I do not know why, to have become such dignified beings as to be above things of that kind. It is argued that if they could revisit earth and manifest themselves to mortals, they would do it in a more lofty and worthy manner; they would never descend to the ridiculous methods said to be employed in spiritualistic seances. To this objection I would remark first, that spirits are as much under the necessity of observing laws and using means as we are, and that physical manifestations serve a useful purpose at the present stage of human progress. Many persons seem to think that disembodied spirits are almost omnipotent, and can do pretty much what they like; and hence, that if they wished to communicate with those on earth they could do so directly, without resorting to such means as are said to be employed by them. But why should we suppose that spirits can override law and dispense with means any more than we can? And if means are necessary, we are not the best judges of what those means should be. Wires are necessary in order to our obtaining electrical messages; pen, ink, paper and certain postal arrangements are necessary in order to our communicating with each other on the present plane of existence; we should be glad to be able to dispense with those



means, but we cannot at present, and because we cannot we do not ridicule and denounce them as being clumsy and unworthy of intelligent beings. Why, then, should we despise the physical means through which our spirit friends manifest their presence and communicate messages of instruction and love? If they chose to use such means it is for sufficient reasons, whether we can comprehend and approve those reasons or not. Besides, as a matter of fact, what are called physical manifestations have been proved to be exceedingly useful to many persons. They have carried conviction to minds which could not be reached by arguments. Appealing as they do to man's physical senses, they carry with them, when accompanied by intelligence as they usually are, a force of evidence which candid inquirers cannot easily or consistently resist. When persons witness physical objects being removed from place to place without visible hands or aid; when they see a table rise without human contact, and hear it rap out intelligent messages; and when the intelligence producing and controlling those movements claims to be that of a spirit friend—such exhibitions cannot fail to impress unprejudiced minds, and have convinced thousands of the reality of spirit communion.

But I reply in the second place, that this objection is founded on a very imperfect and erroneous view of spiritualistic phenomena. It assumes that Spiritualism rests on those physical manifestations alone; but this is by no means correct. Indeed, the physical phenomena, though striking and convincing to many, are but as it were the alphabet of the language, the first elements of the system. They have but little interest to those who have been convinced of the truth of Spiritualism. Such persons generally seek higher and more intellectual manifestations. And such manifestations are given. Those who reject Spiritualism because they consider its phenomena to be puerile and unworthy of spiritual beings, evidently know nothing of the higher phases of the movement. Spirits write, speak, draw, play, render themselves visible, and in a variety of other ways prove their continued existence, and their power to revisit the world they have left. And no opponent is justified in ignoring well attested facts of this description, and

ridiculing Spiritualism as though it included no higher manifestations than simple table movements and kindred phenomena.

VIII. An eight objection is, that *Spiritualism leads to insanity*.

This objection is flourished in the face of Spiritualists almost as frequently as the kindred one, that Spiritualism leads to immorality. If a believer in our beautiful doctrine happens to be bereft of reason it is at once concluded that the unfortunate person has been driven mad by "dabbling in the mysteries of Spiritualism." The press and the pulpit team with denunciations of it, the public are warned against it, and the authorities are appealed to to step in and suppress the evil by the arm of the law. Our opponents never stay to inquire what there is in true Spiritualism to disturb the balance of reason, and whether other causes which Spiritualism was unable to control are not justly chargeable with those cases of insanity. They are too prejudiced and too eager to clutch at anything that can be turned into a weapon against a system whose claims they are unwilling to admit, to allow them to examine such cases on their merits.

Let me ask, what is there in Spiritualism that, when rightly used, has the slightest tendency to insanity? A person, without a knowledge of Spiritualism, may brood over death and try to penetrate the dark future and solve the mystery of the life beyond; and being unable to obtain any gleam of hope—any solution of the problems that tax his mind, that mind may become distracted and gloomy, and at last reel and fall under the burden of its difficulties. Indeed such cases have frequently happened. The contemplation of certain theological dogmas have also often had the same effect. But let any impartial observer of Spiritualism say what feature of it is naturally fraught with such results. Is there anything in its *phenomena* likely to upset his mind? No. It is true they appear wonderful to him at first, and may clash with his preconceived theories of the laws and powers of nature; but he simply observes phenomena that are produced by definite causes and governed by invariable laws; and he finds that another field has been opened up for scientific research and philosophic deduction. Is there anything in the *teachings* of Spiritualism that has

the tendency in question? Again I say, no. He has not to rack his brain in attempting to comprehend and make plausible such an insult to reason as the doctrine of the Trinity. He has not to tax his ingenuity in attempting to clear the character of God from the charge of injustice in cursing the whole human race for the sins of the first pair, and holding man liable to eternal punishment for a transaction that took place thousands of years before he was born. He has not to fret himself about the destiny of many he knew in the flesh, fearing they have perished everlastingly, and wondering how a God of infinite love could doom any of His creatures to endless woe. He has not to task every faculty of his mind and lay every scrap of learning and knowledge he has acquired under contribution to maintain certain claims for the Bible, and defend it from the attacks scientific unbelief. These and other matters which are enough to overpower the strongest mental powers cause him no trouble. He rejects them as the false teachings of heathenish theology. And as a Spiritualist he acknowledges but one God, the universal Father. Instead of the fall, he believes in the gradual rise and progress of the race. Instead of thinking he can transfer his guilt to the shoulders of an innocent person, he knows he must bear the consequence of his own wrong doing, and strives to exemplify a religion of good works. Instead of pondering ever the fate of the departed, and wringing his hands in anguish when he thinks of the tortures that millions are enduring in hell, he knows that all who quitted this world have entered upon a career of unending progress,—the sufferings of the worst being only temporary, and such as are necessary to their purification. And instead of despairing of ever again meeting those whom he knew and loved, he knows that but a thin veil separates them, that even now he can hold sweet communion with them, and that when he quits his body he will join them again in a region of light and joy. Have these and similar views a tendency to produce insanity? Let reason and common sense answer.

How many persons have lost their reason by applying themselves too closely to scientific pursuits, but shall science be denounced as tending to insanity? How many have been driven mad by the dogmas of the various

orthodox religions, but we do not see those religions held up to reprobation in consequence. In these cases people try to find other causes of insanity, and if they fail they argue that those cases only afford illustrations of the *abuse* of what is true and good in itself. How strange that men do not act and reason thus in dealing with cases of insanity, alleged to be caused by Spiritualism! If space permitted it would be easy to adduce ample evidence to prove that Spiritualism not only has no such tendency as this objection alleges, but that its tendency is in the exact opposite direction, and that cases of insanity have been cured by spiritual agencies when everything else has failed; but it is not necessary to pursue the point further. This, like all the objections dealt with, is the offspring either of ignorance, bigotry, or malice; and would be unworthy of space for refutation, were it not that it has been so often urged that many, who know nothing of genuine Spiritualism, have been led to believe there is some truth in it.

IX. It is objected in the ninth place, that if there are any spirits employed in the production of the phenomena of Spiritualism *they are bad spirits*.

This objection has been partly anticipated and answered in a former chapter, but an additional remark or two may not be out of place. There are those who have been constrained by force of evidence to admit not only the reality of most of the phenomena, but also that they may be produced by intelligent beings from another world. They cannot believe, however that good spirits are concerned in the matter. Those they call good are supposed to be engaged in loftier and holier pursuits, and would never stoop to such work. Hence they complacently assume that the spirits who produce the phenomena and give the communications of Spiritualism are bad spirits. Some of this class of objectors assert that there is but one bad spirit at work in the affair, and that is the Devil; while others, observing that Spiritualism has sprung up in almost every nation on earth, and that its phenomena are being developed simultaneously in thousands of places, see a difficulty in admitting that Satan, who is not infinite, can be in all those places at the same time; and therefore they conclude that there must be a number of bad spirits employed.

But whether those bad spirits are a separate race of beings, called demons, or whether they are the lost souls of the human race, they are not quite certain.

Now, what foundation is there for this objection? What evidence is there that those spirits, whose intervention in spiritualistic phenomena is admitted, are bad spirits? Our opponents adduce no evidence but their own assertion. They cannot conceive that good spirits would be so employed, and, therefore, they *must* be bad ones. Strange reasoning this. Those objectors admit that disembodied spirits can visit earth, and make their presence known in a variety of ways. But as bad spirits can do this, why not good ones also? Does the Devil liberate bad spirits from hell to come and work mischief among men, as this objection implies; and will not God permit good spirits to come from heaven, to counteract the mischief of the evil ones, and do good to the world?

But let this question of the moral character of those spirits be tested rationally, and not decided by prejudice. Judge the tree by its fruits. Are the physical manifestations they admittedly produce bad? Are the communications they give to inquirers bad? Do they encourage vice and depreciate virtue? Do they ignore religion and scoff at God? Do their teachings influence believers in them for evil, and produce bad results in their general conduct? No one with an intimate knowledge of Spiritualism and its professors will reply to these questions in the affirmative. That bad spirits do communicate as well as good ones no one denies. As there are good and bad men here, so there are good and bad spirits in the other world; and both classes are alike free to return to earth in spirit-form. But even those we call bad do not come back as a rule for evil purposes. They return to warn others, and to benefit themselves, spiritually. They assure their friends of their continued existence, and urge them to live a good life, and all will be well with them on the other side. And as to other spirits, they give ample proof of their goodness. The sole object of their visits to earth is to do good—to enlighten men's minds, correct their morals, stimulate their religion, and make them in every way purer and nobler men, and fit them for a glorious destiny beyond the grave. Surely, the Devil would neither do himself,

nor employ bad spirits to do what Spiritualism is doing; for in making men better, and fitting them for a happy state hereafter, he would be defeating the wicked designs usually attributed to him.

X. A tenth objection is that *it substitutes Reason for Divine Revelation, in dealing with religious questions.*

This objection is, I admit, well grounded; but instead of telling against Spiritualism, it is, to me, one of its best recommendations. This is not the place to enter into a discussion of the pretensions of those who claim that the Bible is throughout a divine and infallible revelation, and that all men are bound to acquiesce in its doctrines and obey its precepts. Suffice it to say that Spiritualism, as I understand it, denies this, and thereby denies the dogmas that are founded on these pretensions. It delivers reason from the fetters of creedal authority, and turns the light of its brilliant lamp upon the dark corners of theological mystery and ecclesiastical error. It does not accept everything as a revelation from God that claims to be such. It demands other and stronger evidence than their personal claim to inspiration, before it can accept the teachings of any body of men as of Divine authority. It declares that as reason is God's brightest and noblest gift to man it must judge and decide on all such claims. To prostrate reason at the feet of any authority but that of absolute and proved truth is to abnegate our manhood. The subjection of man's best and grandest gift to stereotyped creeds and priestly authority has been the curse of the world. Those who trade on a self-asserted authority, and demand implicit faith in dogmas which reason cannot grasp, and revolts against, may well oppose Spiritualism and dread its progress. It will assuredly strip them of their arrogant pretensions, and bring them down from the lofty and dogmatic position they have so long occupied. It does not claim that reason is infallible, but it contends that it is the most reliable guide God has given to man; and by the aid of science, which is every day becoming more cordial as its ally, reason will gradually substitute knowledge for faith, rational conviction for blind superstition, the glorious sunlight of living nature for the dull rays of uncertain tradition, and demonstrable facts for pompous authority. So-called revelation has had a

long enough trial in the world, and so have its professional guardians and expounders. The experiment has been a miserable failure. Scepticism and sin were never so rampant and widespread as now. It is time that another system were tried. Spiritualism ushers in a new dispensation. It proclaims the emancipation of the human intellect and conscience from the fetters that have so long enslaved them, and asserts the supremacy of reason over all pretended revelations. And for this it will yet be welcomed as the world's benefactor, rather than rejected as an enemy and deceiver of mankind.

Other objections are often urged against Spiritualism, but they do not merit a special notice. The foregoing are those most frequently and persistently raised, but it will be seen when they are honestly examined that most of them are destitute of foundation, and the rest, instead of detracting from Spiritualism only add to its beauty and power.

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## CHAPTER X.

### ADVICE TO INVESTIGATORS, FORMATION OF CIRCLES, &c.

Everybody ought to investigate the subject of modern Spiritualism. Until they have done so they are not in a position to pass a competent judgment on its claims. The opinion of those who condemn it without investigation is worthless; no matter how eminent they may be as authorities in any other department of knowledge. Nor can any one fairly excuse himself from the task of examining it on the ground that the subject is one in which he has no interest. Those who refuse to investigate on this ground cannot have fully considered what is involved in Spiritualism. Surely a system which professes to deal more satisfactorily than any other with the question of the soul's existence, the destiny of their departed friends, and other important but difficult subjects, ought to interest every rational and honest mind.

It may not be amiss to address a few words of advice to actual and intending investigators, in the hope of assisting them to obtain satisfactory results. There are few indeed who have investigated Spiritualism in a proper spirit, and for a reasonable length of time, who have not been fully convinced of its truth. Those who have been attracted to it for a little while, and have then thrown it

up in disappointment and disgust, will probably find the cause of their failure indicated in some of the following remarks.

1. First: *Divest the mind of prejudice, and be willing to accept whatever comes that is evidently genuine, whether it harmonises with or contradicts your preconceived beliefs, theories, and feelings.*

Perhaps nothing is more fatal to the successful examination of any disputed point than prejudice. It obscures and restrains the mental powers, colors and distorts every object that is presented for inspection, and influences, in proportion to its intensity, whatever conclusion may be arrived at. And there are but few things in connection with which it manifests itself more frequently than Spiritualism. Such is the power of prejudice in some minds that they can believe nothing good of this subject. Respectable testimony is discredited, and alleged facts are either ignored, or an explanation is offered of the most crude and unsatisfactory kind. Even where it can be so far overcome as to allow the subjects of it to attend a *seance*, or read a little of spiritualistic literature, it fetters them at every stage. They will not believe in it unless the communications they receive confirm their religious creed and support their foregone conclusions. But I need hardly point out how unfit such persons are for an impartial and successful inquiry into this matter. Nothing could be more unfavorable to the discovery and reception of truth than such a frame of mind as theirs. Prejudice must be banished. The subject must be examined purely on its merits. And the question should not be whether we can account for the alleged phenomena, but whether they are really genuine; not whether the communications we receive from a professedly source accord with our theological tenets, but whether they are reasonable, true, and good. What if some of our religious sentiments are offended, and certain articles of our faith denied by what we receive? Is Spiritualism, therefore, necessarily false? To ascertain the simple and certain truth should be the sole object of every investigator; and in embracing truth we are right and safe, even though it may work a thorough revolution in our creeds and dogmas.



2. Secondly: *Exercise a discriminating judgment in sifting evidence, and a prudent caution in accepting conclusions.*

Spiritualists are sometimes charged with over-credulity, and no doubt some of them have lacked the data and the judgment necessary to give their decision weight with many minds. But I do not know that this is more true of Spiritualists than of believers in other systems. Christians at least cannot consistently twit them with gullibility. They certainly receive Christianity on much less direct and complete evidence than the ordinary Spiritualist can boast. Generally speaking, however, Spiritualists have become such after protracted and cautious investigation. And it would be well if this were the case in every instance. A conclusion favorable to Spiritualism that is arrived at independent of the ordinary rules of evidence, cannot be deemed satisfactory, and is not likely to be enduring. The powers of observation should be carefully exercised in testing the phenomena, and the judgment calmly employed in drawing deductions. All is not Spiritualism that goes under its name. Some things witnessed may be the result of deception, while purely mundane causes may explain others. All alleged phenomena should be sifted with the utmost care, and such are proved to be genuine should be tried by the theories advanced by anti-Spiritualists to account for them. No one is justified in admitting the reality of the phenomena, and accepting the hypothesis of spirit agency, as their cause, without intelligent and careful inquiry; nor, when such inquiry has been made and these facts established, is any one justified in withholding his assent to the truth of Spiritualism.

3. Thirdly: Do not aim at the merely *phenomenal and sensational* features of the system, but rather regard these as only a *means to an end*.

Many of the phenomenal aspects of Spiritualism are striking enough to satisfy the keenest sensational appetite; and unfortunately some investigators care only for these things. They have an inordinate craving for extraordinary physical manifestations, but seem to have little or no relish for the higher phases of the movement. The teachings and philosophy of Spiritualism appear to have but slight attractions for them. This is to be re-

gretted. Phenomenal Spiritualism is of vast use to the majority of inquirers ; but when it has furnished a practical demonstration of the truth of spirit communion, it has answered its chief end. Spiritualism as a system of ethics, religion, and philosophy next unfolds itself. Great natural principles which have an important bearing upon the doctrine of morality, the problem of human existence, and the mysteries of external nature are revealed : and in this region the honest inquirer will find ample materials for elevating his moral sentiments, expanding his mental faculties, and moulding and beautifying his general character. And outside of this region he ought not to remain. Nay, having passed the introductory, or phenomenal stage, this region ought to be his chief abiding place. Here he ought to dwell, and grow in wisdom and goodness, till he throws off his cumbersome body, and rises to the higher realms of Spirit Land.

4. Fourth : *Do not hastily judge the whole system by a single part or phase of it.*

Scarcely any mistake is more frequently made than that of judging Spiritualism as a whole by one or two of its phases. So-called investigators bestow little attention upon it, and having witnessed some of the lower and simpler phenomena they jump to the conclusion that they have mastered the whole system, and that spirit agency has nothing to do with it. Even Professor Faraday fell into this mistake. He was satisfied that the table movements were genuine, but concluded they were produced by "involuntary muscular action." He overlooked other phenomena, and even the fact that tables themselves are often moved without muscular contact. Dr. Carpenter is satisfied of the reality of certain phenomena, but believes that what he terms "unconscious cerebration" will explain them. He forgets to inform us, however, how "unconscious cerebration" can move heavy material objects, play musical instruments without the aid of human hands, cause loud raps in several parts of a room at one time, produce the spirit voice and the materialised spirit-form, and evolve many other well-attested phenomena. Sergeant Cox witnessed events that could not be accounted for by any of the laws or forces hitherto recognised by science, and therefore

suggests a new term—"psychic force"—to solve the new difficulties. But surely this "psychic force" theory would never have been propounded, had its author made himself fully acquainted with all the well-established phenomena of Spiritualism. He would then have seen how utterly insufficient it is as an explanation of many of them. Faraday, Carpenter, Cox, and many others have made the great mistake that I would urge the inquirer to guard against, namely, of forming their conclusions on data obtained by a very limited and imperfect survey of the great field of spiritualistic phenomena; and hence, eminent as they may be as authorities on other subjects, their judgment has no weight against the claims of Spiritualism. It is surprising that men who would not think of generalising and drawing deductions on any other new and difficult point, until all the available facts and evidences bearing on it were before them, should act so hastily and unscientifically in dealing with this question. Has that baneful prejudice just spoken of been allowed to influence even those distinguished individuals? I would earnestly impress upon investigators the necessity of making themselves acquainted with *all* the phases of Spiritualism, before they decide upon its claims. They may feel inclined to give their verdict against it on an imperfect knowledge of it, and seek their justification in some of the theories which its opponents have advanced; but further acquaintance with it will no doubt reveal facts which those theories fail to cover, and for which the only rational explanation will be found in the theory of spirit agency.

5. Fifthly: *Persevere with such a determination as will see the subject fairly bottomed, and is worthy of the probable results to be obtained.*

This advice is much needed by many. Persons who enter upon other enterprises, and prosecute them with a vigor and perseverance that nothing can damp or thwart, have abandoned their investigation of Spiritualism after a very few attempts to solve the mysteries. Inquirers often address themselves to the question under very erroneous notions. They imagine that spirits can be commanded at pleasure, and ought to be able to give almost any information, and perform any feat that may be desired. And because their erroneous expectations

are not fully realised all at once, they throw the thing up in disgust, and denounce it as an imposture or a delusion. A little of that patience and perseverance which many of them manifest in acquiring some worldly possession, or obtaining some coveted distinction, would most probably have produced very different results. If a circle is formed, and after a few wholly or partially fruitless meetings, is dissolved, its members cannot be said to be in a position to form a just conclusion on the merits of Spiritualism. Some quit a circle because no phenomena are elicited, others because the manifestations are of an apparently trivial character, and others again because communications received are contradictory and unreliable. It cannot be too frequently impressed upon investigators that spirits are neither omnipotent, omniscient, nor infallible; that the phenomena they produce depend upon natural laws and conditions; and that those of the higher class can only be obtained through superior and well-developed mediumistic power. Viscount Amberley attended some five *seances*, and failing to find evidence of the truth of Spiritualism during those five short sittings, he rejected its claims. William Crookes, a distinguished scientist, patiently extended his investigations over four years, and obtained the most satisfactory results. He verified, under rigid scientific test conditions, some thirteen different phases of spiritualistic phenomena. In the one case we witness haste, impatience, incompleteness, and consequent failure; while in the other we behold patience, caution, perseverance, and consequent success. It is needless to point out whose verdict will have most influence with thinking men. Let not the investigator, then, be discouraged, and give up his inquiries in despair or disgust if he fails a few times in trying to solve the great question. But let him rather endeavor to surmount the difficulties that may beset his path, arising from want of harmony in the circle, imperfect development in the medium, apparent triviality in some of the phenomena, unreliability of professed spirit communications, or other causes; and by patient perseverance he is almost certain to obtain good and conclusive evidence in the end. Surely the prospect of satisfactorily solving the profoundly interesting questions involved in Spiritualism ought to stimulate and sustain a

spirit of patient perseverance. That prospect is not a delusive one. It is morally certain that the perseverance inculcated will be abundantly rewarded; the light of another life will sooner or later burst forth with irresistible force, and scatter the clouds of perplexing doubt that have so long overshadowed the mind.

6. Sixthly: *Failing to obtain that personal evidence of its truth you desire, give that credence to the testimony of those who declare they have had positive proof, to which it fairly entitled.*

There are many persons in whom has been awakened an interest in Spiritualism, who have hitherto failed to obtain any personal evidence of its truth. In some cases this is owing to want of facilities for holding *séances* for investigating purposes. There is a difficulty in securing a suitable place for meetings, or a sufficient number of earnest and congenial inquirers cannot be got together. In other cases after attending a circle for a considerable time, for some reason which the honest investigator cannot understand, either no manifestations are elicited, or not sufficient to ensure rational conviction. What is the obvious duty of the candid truth-seeker under these circumstances? He need not abandon his search for personal proofs—for no conviction can be so strong as that which is founded on facts and evidences that we are personally cognisant of, but he ought to carefully examine the testimony of those who have been more successful in their investigations than he has hitherto been. He need not be reminded of the many things he firmly believes in, not from any personal knowledge of them, but solely on the testimony of others. He will find a vast array of witnesses to a class of facts, which have proved to them the truth of Spiritualism. I ask him what he has to say to the testimony of those witnesses? They have solemnly deposed to having observed a great variety of phenomena, often under conditions which precluded the possibility of deception or trickery. Many of them declare they have seen, heard, and felt disembodied human spirits; and all of them are convinced that other things witnessed cannot be accounted for by any of the theories proposed by anti-spiritualists. Those witnesses, as I have before shown, are found in all classes in society. Persons of great

eminence and authority in many departments are among them, who are not only competent observers of facts, but cannot be suspected of any possible motive for lending themselves to an imposition. Can the intelligent and candid investigator fairly impugn the evidence of this host of witnesses? Is he justified in attacking their competency, or suspecting their honesty? If not, can he explain away their testimony on any principle that is consistent with their integrity? Failing to do this, what does he honestly think their testimony amounts to? Would it be considered sufficient to definitely settle any other disputed point for which it could be adduced? I appeal to the intelligence, reason, and candour of the investigator, and only ask him to allow that weight to the testimony of those witnesses in favor of Spiritualism, which he would accord to it if produced in favor of any other open question.

7. Seventhly: Above all, seek to prove the truth of Spiritualism, not as *a means of gratifying idle curiosity, but as a motive to a higher and better personal life, and as an agency of increasing good to the world.*

Curiosity-hunters are always on the look out for something new and startling. Such persons may be attracted to Spiritualism by its alleged wonderful manifestations, and when their gaping curiosity is satiated it will have lost its charm for them. Others may take it up as a source of amusement. Table-tilting and rapping they may imagine will be a capital item of entertainment for an evening party. But it is needless to say that it is neither intended to merely gratify the curious nor amuse the flippant and thoughtless. It is true the phenomena appeal to our senses and excite our wonder, but great principles and grand truths underlie them. The object of Spiritualism, which is the latest gospel of the angel-world, is to reform, elevate, and bless mankind. But, it must begin with the individual members of society, before it can reach and influence the general mass of the people. Departed spirits return with messages of wisdom and love to those they have left. The general burden of their communications is that man must be true to himself, live a natural and harmonious life, obey all the laws of his complex being, recognise the rights of

his fellow men, and manifest a proper disposition and conduct towards them in all the relations of life, and thus fulfil the law of God. Spiritualism does not tend to produce that unnatural restraint and affected piety so generally associated with the idea of religion. It is opposed to all that is forced and artificial in the popular religions of the world, and leaves such matters as praying, reading the Bible, attending a place of worship, and other so-called religious duties, to the taste, inclination, or habit of the individual. Its supreme aim is to make man *good* rather than pious. Nor does it seek to accomplish this by any supernatural means. No "special grace" or "Holy Ghost" is relied upon. No instantaneous transformation is expected. It seeks to make man good by gradually bringing all the powers and faculties of his physical, intellectual, and moral nature into healthy and harmonious operation. And when this well-balanced and harmonious nature is attained, the condition of a really good man has been reached—that of a man who is just, charitable, humane, forbearing, and benevolent; whose sympathies flow out to his fellow man in every condition of life; and whose philanthropy embraces the whole human race. Spiritualism, then, ought to be investigated, not from mere curiosity, nor even solely as a means of proving a future life, but with the design of making those interested in it truer and nobler men, and of stimulating them to do their best to expose the shams and uproot the evils in society, and bring about a more equitable and happy state of things throughout the world. If it fails to bring forth these fruits in any of its professed believers it has not fulfilled its mission in them; and if those who are or may be investigating it overlook this point, they will overlook one of the chief objects of the system whose truth or falsity they desire to prove.

Having offered the foregoing plain, practical advice to actual and intending investigators, it will, perhaps, be inquired, "How shall we proceed to obtain such manifestations as have been spoken of?" Many who feel some interest in Spiritualism do not know how to set about a proper investigation of it. It is sometimes asked, "Why are mediums necessary? and if necessary, why is not everybody a medium?" Suffice it to say that a medium is

a person whom Nature has endowed with a peculiar organisation, that gives off a subtle element, generally called "magnetism," which spirits use in producing the various phenomena that take place, just as electricians use electricity to produce certain desired results. As to why all are not gifted with mediumistic powers, we might with as much reason ask why all are not eminent poets, distinguished musicians, celebrated artists, illustrious philosophers, or geniuses of some other order. Nature does not bestow these high gifts very liberally. Mediumship, however, like other natural gifts, varies in degree and also in kind. In all cases it is a thing of development, though in some persons it is developed more rapidly than in others. Mediums for the higher manifestations are yet comparatively few and far between, and hence not many persons can witness these phenomena. But if there are a few persons in any given locality, who are desirous of investigating the subject and will do so in a proper and persevering spirit, they will almost certainly elicit sufficient in the end to convince them of its truth; and it may be that some one among them will be found to be endowed with very superior mediumistic powers. The following rules for the formation of circles will be of use to investigators. They are copied from *The Spiritualist*, London:—

Inquirers into Spiritualism should begin by forming spirit circles in their own homes, with no Spiritualist or professional medium present. Should no results be obtained on the first occasion, try again with other sitters. One or more persons possessing medial powers without knowing it are to be found in nearly every household.

1. Let the room be of a comfortable temperature, but cool rather than warm—let arrangements be made that nobody shall enter it, and that there shall be no interruption for one hour during the sitting of the circle.

2. Let the circle consist of four, five, or six individuals, about the same number of each sex. Sit round an uncovered wooden table, with all the palms of the hands in contact with its top surface. Whether the hands touch each other or not is usually of no importance. Any table will do, just large enough to conveniently accommodate the sitters. The removal of a hand from the table for a few seconds does no harm, but when one of the sitters breaks the circle by leaving the table it sometimes, but not always very considerably delays the manifestations.

- 3 Before the sitting begins, place some pointed lead-pencils and some sheets of clean writing paper on the table, to write down any communications that may be obtained.



4. People who do not like each other should not sit in the same circle, for such a want of harmony tends to prevent manifestations, except with well-developed physical mediums; it is not yet known why. Belief or unbelief has no influence on the manifestations, but an acrid feeling against them has a weakening influence.

5. Before the manifestations begin, it is well to engage in general conversation or in singing, and it is best that neither should be of a frivolous nature. A prayerful, earnest feeling among the members of the circle gives the higher spirits more power to come to the circle, and makes it more difficult for the lower spirits to get near.

6 The first symptom of the invisible power at work is often a feeling like a cool wind sweeping over the hands. The first manifestations will probably be table tiltings or raps.

7. When motions of the table or sounds are produced freely, to avoid confusion, let one person only speak, and talk to the table as to an intelligent being. Let him tell the table that three tilts or raps mean "Yes," one means "No," and two mean "Doubtful," and ask whether the arrangement is understood. If three signals be given in answer, then say, "If I speak the letters of the alphabet slowly, will you signal every time I come to the letter you want, and spell us out a message? Should three signals be given, set to work on the plan proposed, and from this time an intelligent system of communication is established.

8. Afterwards the question should be put, "Are we sitting in the right order to get the best manifestations?" Probably some members of the circle will then be told to change seats with each other, and the signals will be afterwards strengthened. Next ask, "Who is the medium?" When spirits come asserting themselves to be related or known to anybody present, well-chosen questions should be put to test the accuracy of the statements, as spirits out of the body have all the virtues and all the failings of spirits in the body.

9. A powerful physical medium is usually a person of an impulsive, affectionate, and genial nature, and very sensitive to mesmeric influences. The majority of media are ladies.

The best manifestations are obtained when the medium and all the members of the circle are strongly bound together by the affections, and are thoroughly comfortable and happy; the manifestations are born of the spirit, and shrink somewhat from lower mental influences of earth. Family circles, with no strangers present, are usually the best.

Possibly at the first sitting of a circle symptoms of other forms of mediumship than tilts or raps may make their appearance.

A circle may consist of five or six persons as the above rules suggest, or, of ten or twelve if necessary. Some persons are sufficiently mediumistic to get communications when alone. Too much stress cannot be laid on the importance of harmony and mental passivity as a condition of success. The opposite of these

may retard or entirely prevent any phenomena. Much has been said about *dark* seances. Darkness, being favorable to the practice of trickery and deception, naturally excites suspicion. There are very few manifestations that cannot be obtained as well in the light as in the dark, and those for which darkness is necessary are not such as a new circle may expect. Therefore, all new circles should sit in the *light*. Some circles obtain nothing for a time, and others receive contradictory and unreliable communications at first. Too much should not be expected for awhile. Even after a circle has made some progress there may be total or partial failure at certain sittings. This may be owing to the state of the medium's health, atmospheric conditions, the presence of an uncongenial element in the circle, or some other cause not easy to discover. It is not wise to invite strangers to a young circle. There are but few mediums sufficiently developed not to be affected by their presence. Should a visitor be in a sneering, suspicious, antagonistic mood, he brings with him a very prejudicial influence. T. R. Hazard has well said in his little work on "Mediums and Mediumship":—"Let a bitter-spirited bigot enter the circle, and indulge in a spiteful or even suspicious feelings, his thought—disguise it as he may—will embody itself in a spirit element adapted to itself, and penetrate the sensitive mind of the helpless negative medium with a chilling blast, as fatally disturbing or distorting to his or her mediumship as that instanced by Sydney Smith, or as the descent of a rock would be to that of the water in the well." Hazard, on one occasion invited a clerical friend to a *seance*, who was evidently unfavorable to Spiritualism. The sitting was very unsatisfactory. After his friend left the medium was entranced, and he inquired of the spirit present how it was that on ordinary occasions he could "obtain satisfactory spirit utterances, whilst, in such an instance as the one named, the spirits seemed all to become dumb." His spirit-guide answered, "How would you feel in the presence of a rattlesnake that was all the time spitting poison at you?" And the writer very properly adds that in this answer "may, perhaps, be found a key to unlock the mystery that attaches to some of the unlucky failures that occur."

But the cause of failures and contradictions may not always be found in the circle; it may sometimes lie with the spirits. To say nothing of low, undeveloped spirits who may trouble a circle for a time, even the best of spirits who are anxious to communicate with the friends they have left have to learn the method of doing this, and may fail and commit mistakes in their first experiments. Andrew Jackson Davis, in his "Philosophy of Spiritual Inter-course," p. 76-7, thus expresses himself on this point:—

Spirits can not always make the human mind comprehend a subject in all its bearings; particularly when communicating through the imperfect, uncertain, and tedious method of spiritual intercourse by electrical sounds and manifestations. And inasmuch as spirits are neither *infallible* nor *omnipotent*, and are compelled to conform, (when they endeavour to impart their thoughts through these electrical agencies,) to the principles and conditions of this new method, which they can not altogether control, it is not safe at all times to depend on any given number of "raps" as indicating a positive "yes" or "no." or any other particular word or sentence. Because a spirit—perhaps, *communicating for the first time*, and being *one who can not readily learn the science of thus communing*, but *who greatly desires to answer a friend here*—may not always be able to manage the sound so as to *prevent* misunderstandings and apparent contradictions. Therefore, on the part of the inquirer, great *vigilance* and *care* are necessary to the end that the mind may not be misled. And let not any man's sensuous and uneducated judgment, with a ready and thoughtless condemnation, accuse those messengers from our future home of "falsehood" and intentional deception; because mistakes may arise, where explanation is now so difficult, in consequence of the *infancy* and newness of this *telegraphic* method of correspondence among the *departed* from earth, now in the higher world, and in consequence, also, of man's present inability to wholly comprehend the laws, principles and conditions of its action here.

Davis sums up and thus summarises the principal causes of contradictions in spiritual communications:—"1st. The ignorance of many of the spirits concerning the science of producing the vibrations. 2nd. Our frequent misapprehension of the precise thought spirits design to convey through sounds. 3rd. The presence of affectionate spirits who unconsciously glide into sympathy with the feelings and desires of the interrogator." These and other difficulties, however, which sometimes beset a circle in its first stages, will all be overcome by patience and discrimination; and above all, by each member cultivating such frame of mind as will attract only good and truthful spirits.

## CONCLUSION.

In the preceding chapters of this work I have given some of my reasons for investigating Spiritualism; detailed a few personal experiences; glanced at the literature of the movement, and adduced a considerable amount of testimony in its favor; examined the principal theories advanced by its opponents to account for it; stated the grounds of my acceptance of the spiritual hypothesis; related the facts connected with my leaving the church for having investigated it; dwelt upon most of its leading principles and teachings; and answered the chief objections that have been urged against it. The subject has not been treated so exhaustively by far as it would have been had space permitted. In reviewing it I have discovered several errors that escaped correction, and also parts that could be considerably improved and strengthened, if I had to re-write it. I have endeavoured, however, to express myself plainly, candidly, and fearlessly on the several positions discussed; and as a short exposition and defence of Spiritualism I trust it will not be without its use to those interested in the subject. I can only, in conclusion, urge this subject on the attention of all intelligent and thinking men, as one worthy of serious investigation. I urge it upon the *Press*. Surely a movement which has braved the sneers, ridicule, misrepresentation, and slander that have been heaped upon it for a quarter of a century, and has won millions of converts, including men of respectable social standing, high literary culture, and distinguished scientific attainments, is at least entitled to a fair hearing. The Press is not asked nor expected to commit itself to the advocacy of Spiritualism; it is only asked to give both sides of the question, that the public may judge for themselves, instead of suppressing everything in its favor, and giving prominence to anything calculated to injure it, as has too often been the practice in the past. I urge it upon the *Pulpit*. It has special claims upon the clergy. Their preaching and praying have failed to extinguish it, or arrest its progress. Every argument they use against it tells with much greater force against their own religious systems. It is pressed upon them for their own good,

and not because it needs their patronage and support. They would find it a mighty weapon in their battle with materialism ; and as they can only have its help on the condition that they give up some of their present views and pretensions, would it not be well to consider whether the concessions demanded should not be made? If not voluntarily surrendered they will be wrung from them in the end ; for Spiritualism, being based upon demonstrable *facts*, is bound to triumph over all the merely *speculative* systems to which it is opposed. I urge it upon the *teachers and guardians of youth*. It contains principles of the utmost importance to the rising generation—principles which, if fully embraced and lived, will exert a powerful influence for good in regulating their conduct, moulding their character, and shaping their future destiny. I urge it upon *all classes in society*. It comes with light to the mind enveloped in darkness, joy to the soul wrung with anguish, hope to the spirit trembling on the brink of despair, and blessings to all mankind. It is essentially and pre-eminently a religion for the whole world, based as it is on the principles of the real brotherhood of man. It is spreading rapidly in every quarter of the globe, and will sweep away whatever obstructs its onward march. It has within it the elements of a mightier, social and religious revolution than has yet been witnessed. It is sapping the foundations of priestcraft and other evils that have too long encumbered and blighted the world. It has challenged those powers which have for ages repressed freethought, trampled upon man's rights, and opposed the development of liberal and progressive principles. And it not only demands for all men their social and religious rights in this world, but it lights up the future and gives hope for every soul beyond the grave. Such a system cannot be crushed, but will fulfil its angelic mission in spite of every obstacle. Its opponents might as well think of extinguishing the sun in the heavens as banishing it from the world. On the ruins of other systems that are doomed and tottering, Spiritualism will rise in all the power and splendour of its divine truth ; and mankind will yet thank God for the glorious dispensation that is now being ushered into the world by the angel hosts.

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