

THE Harbinger of Light.

A
MONTHLY JOURNAL

DEVOTED TO

ZOISTIC SCIENCE, FREE THOUGHT, SPIRITUALISM,
AND THE HARMONIAL PHILOSOPHY.

"Dawn approaches, Error is passing away, Men arising shall hail the day."

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"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake, and when we sleep."

So sang the poet Milton, in the grandly daring music of his magnificent verse—his mind irradiate with the light of inspiration—and so believe that steadily increasing host among the peoples who recognise the truths of Spiritualism. And what is Spiritualism? It appears that very few, among those who have it in their power, will take the trouble to endeavour to answer this question for themselves; and therefore, with a view to correct (as far as our lights and ability enable) a wide misapprehension on the subject, the following outline of belief is set before the reader.

Spiritualism as a faith means nothing antagonistic to the great and leading truths of Christianity. It believes in one God, Creator and Ruler of all things. It believes in the Bible as a history replete with truths and solemn teachings, both human and divine—with wise instruction and purest religious principle—but it hesitates at literal interpretation of its parables, its figurative language and multitudinous allegory. Spiritualism, through the physical manifestations most especially, demonstrates that the spirits of departed human beings now hold and exhibit apprehensible and intelligible intercourse with man on earth. The spiritual nature of man is born into spirit life immediately on the dissolution with the material. The Spiritual world is a "house of many mansions," (or planes or spheres,) in which all take place according to character, although none are debarred from progress. Hundreds of thousands of living persons attest the truthfulness of spirit commune. A certain human organization is especially subject or open to spirit influence, and those possessing this organization may be discovered in almost all ranks of intellectual possession or culture. What is commonly understood

by the terms Heaven and Hell are states and conditions, rather than places. Spirits are endowed with power to act upon the human mind and body, without interfering with man's responsibility. Man's will and actions are free within a destined path. No manifestations or communications can be regarded as infallible, since they all come through faulty and fallible mediums. "Prove all Things." Spiritualism appears as initiating a vast uprising of the mind after something superior to the miserably conflicting creeds and dogmas, and the hideous superstitions, that have kept the world in horror and darkness concerning the future and the past. The immortality of the soul is, through spirit phenomena, demonstrated for the first time in the history of mankind. We are taught by spirit commune that the type of character which an individual has cultivated or sustained in this life determines the condition of the spirit in the beginning of the next. The punishment for sin in the present world will exhibit itself thus as a direct and obvious consequence in the next, and will be represented by the inextinguishable memory of the past. Spiritualism, in this revelation, presents the only intelligently conceivable idea of future punishment awaiting us from a God of Justice and Mercy.

The literal interpretation of the Scriptures is what the children of orthodoxy contend for. They might just as well assert that the figure of language about putting new wine into old bottles is to be exactly understood as referring to vessels of glass.

The Bible has been handed down from the pen of one writer to another, who have translated it according to their ability to transfer language. The prophets and patriarchs of old were inspired by such unseen intelligences as control the human mind at the present day. Inspiration is but receiving light from a higher source, and is necessarily liable to be imperfect. We are to beware therefore how we receive the Bible as absolutely and literally free from imperfections.

Sceptics and worldlings may scoff at the hope of immortal life, but to the suffering, sorrowing, down-trodden millions, it comes in Spiritualistic assurance to redeem and soften and illuminate the miseries of this world's human existencies. It appears impossible to imagine a more ennobling consequence to humanity than would result from the adoption of Spiritualism. The belief

might be expressed in a sentence—the love of God, exhibited in love to man. The slanders, caricatures and misrepresentations that have been heaped upon Spiritualism have no more force of truth and justice than similar charges brought against Christianity some eighteen centuries ago. Christ talked with Moses and Elias; and shall we repudiate Spirit-communion when he was familiar with it.

Spiritual gifts are not miraculous, but belong to our common nature. If the inspiration of the present age be rejected by the churches, how can they believe in the inspiration of the past. If modern mediums and believers in Spiritualism are under some diabolical or illusive influences, may not the same be conjectured of all ancient seers and saints? If the great fact of spirit commune be denied, are we not left to wander, dark, desolate, lonely and despairing? The requirement of partial darkness at spiritual seances has been referred to as being favorable to deception. The answer from the spirit world is that light is an active force, and disturbs the operations of spirit influence. What did we understand a century ago of the powers of steam and electricity. The heretic and madman of one age is discerned in the next to be a hero and a benefactor of his race. Hahnemann the founder of Homœopathy was driven from Leipsic by ignorant orthodoxy; and yet the very children of those who had hounded him from his native city, afterwards erected a stately public monument to his memory. Even so the patient advocate of Spiritualism, scorned and scouted at the present, may be recognised at no very distant period in a spirit more kindly, more liberal, and more just.

COMMUNICATION.

To each and to all Mankind,—We have naught else to teach than that he shall listen, and give heed, to the small, still voice within him. If he require to do, or to think, act as that divine principle in you shall direct—be hourly guided by it. It will thenceforward become stronger, and will ultimately rule your actions, and guide man into all truth which leads to wisdom.

General evil, universal evil, individual evils, are all the result of general, universal, individual ignorance. Man lacks wisdom, true wisdom, not that which savours only of worldly prudence.

Wisdom is that principle which is divine, is godly, is true, is consistent, is charitable, is not vain-glorious, thinketh no evil, is pure; it aspires to higher attainments. It is that which stands fast, yet ever progresses. It is what ever gets nearer God, ever takes into its possession more of God, ever leaves man better, until he finds mankind to him as one brotherhood, progressing until man becomes Godlike.

Engaging as every apparent new truth is to the mind of many, it is not the investigation of new truths that can satisfy the soul's wants. Truth tested by and applied to life, and bringing forth in good ground good fruit, will to eternal life be joy indeed, and ever fruitful prove.

God has, in all that he has of his own divine nature imparted to man, an impulse given, that beats responsive to the truths imparted by all his employed means.

Great and good-men in all ages have been no more than those who have given up their being to the echo of the inner voice—to the voice of God, as heard and read, and as to them revealed by nature. God's teaching voice is heard everywhere in nature as the mind has been constituted to hear it, to feel it, to respond to it; or had the skill and courage given to impart the impression to man.

These men devoted their capacious minds to new discoveries of divine beauty in all things, and were great in mind to discover the new and startling works that now and then appear in the world.

Man in these labours has only a little more than other men justly disposed his mind to allow truth to enter and lead his mind.

The wisdom of the Most High can flow to man only, as we informed you earlier, as man's mind is opened to its reception, and reverberating chords are found to take up the music of harmonious truths.

The progress making by man is accelerated by the distances left between the state progressed from. The time will come when to compare progress in the birth-world with past progress would gladden angel minds, but as the past is lost to view, its tendencies to re-echo its condition pass for ever.

Good night!

Received June 11, 1863.

Poetry.

POLLOK—BEAUTY THROUGH SENSATION.

"THE senses are the ministers of love,
The senses are the oracles of truth,
The senses the interpreters of law,
The senses the discoverers of fact;
They hold their court in beauty and in joy
On earth and in the spheres where Angels dwell,
And through the senses God reveals himself,
And through the senses earth is taught from heaven.
Call not the senses carnal, but respect
The use and beauty of their perfect law.
Abuse them not; degrade them not by vice;
Each hath an Angel function for thy mind.
They cradle thee in soft and loving arms;
They chant harmonious to thy being's ear;
They feed thee with divine deliciousness,
And lap thee in Elysium. From the air,
The earth, the sky, the ocean and the stars,
From eager morn and soft reposeful night,
From flowers on earth, from Angels in the skies,
From dearest kindred, from sweet lips of love
And forms of joy whose life pervadeth thine,
They bear a blessing ample as thy want,
Full as thy satisfaction. Mar them not,
As the foul drunkard smites th' attendant wife.
Think that they are, all, in their proper sphere,
As much God's work as sun and moon and stars.
The body is not vile. Men make it so,
By harbouring vices in its tenement.
Sweet as the lily on its virgin stem,
Sweet as the rose, that opens its perfumed lips,
And kisses the enamoured air of June,
Is the fair child upon its mother's breast,
And the sweet maiden in her girlhood's prime,
And the young mother sacred unto God,
Whose infant is a blossom of the soul,
Dropped by His hand, and fresh from Paradise.
The form is made to be the home of love,
And every atom bathed in innocence,
And joy and beauty, should diffuse its life,
And thrill with song—to Angels inly heard,
The mother bosom. Love's all-hallowed realm,
Is no vile dust. Born from the darkest age
Of superstition is that ancient creed
That matter is the enemy of good,
Accursed and hateful to the Infinite;
For every atom is a living thought,
Dropped from the meditations of a God,
Its every essence an immortal love
Of the incarnate Deity; and all
The inmost pulses of material things
Are mediums for the pulses of His will.
God's harmonies through matter pour their flood
Of billowy music. Nature is a rose,
Whose breath, and leaves, and buds, and flowers disclose
The beauty of the One All-Beautiful;
The grace and charm whose source is the Divine."

Lyric of the Golden Age.

To Correspondents.

Communications for insertion in this Journal should be plainly written, and as concise as possible.

MR. McLEAN'S LECTURE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

SIR,—In your last number appears the report of a lecture upon Spiritualism, recently delivered at Stawell, by Mr. James McLean; which lecture contains at least one paragraph so extraordinary, and so utterly at variance with my own humble idea of logical rules, I can but conclude that some devil—the printer's most likely—has introduced the passage in a spirit of the purest mischief. The passage runs—"Spiritualism proves that a miracle is scientifically and philosophically impossible. None will deny that God is omnipotent, and that everything was designed for the best and wisest purposes. No change, therefore, could take place in his plan save for the worst."

I demur most decidedly to the first sentence, on the ground that Spiritualism has *proved* nothing like what is affirmed; and any assertion that might be made by Spirits themselves relative to the impossibility spoken of must be taken *cum grano salis*, and even as not at all pertinent to the question at issue. Theologians say that miracles are traceable to the action of an infinite being, therefore no denial of such being's ability to work a miracle made by any Spirit whatever, save an infinite one, would be worthy of credit. In other words, the Spirit must himself be God, ere he could positively affirm what God could not accomplish, or state, with mathematical certainty, what are the limits of his power, and where lie the end of his resources.

What Spiritualism really has done is this. It has shown that many of, perhaps all, the so-called miracles of Scripture are explicable by modern Spiritualistic phenomena, which are certainly not of a supernatural order; but to say or show that the supernatural does not play any part in certain occurrences, is a very different thing from boldly asserting that the supernatural has not now, and never has had, an existence; a proposition the truth of which Mr. McLean will see as plainly as it must be seen by every one besides.

The latter part of the paragraph must necessarily be wrong, since the conclusion arrived at directly contradicts the first term of the argument. It is first stated that a certain being is omnipotent—that is, can do all things—and then it is affirmed that there is something which that being cannot do. It is of no use asserting that this sort of argument is made use of by theologians, who first say God can do all things, and then add, save anything in opposition to his attributes, for the two cases are not parallel. It is not admitted to be an unchangeable attribute which stops the way, but simply a gratuitous assumption that to the Creator of the Universe there remains but one solitary way by which a given end can be arrived at, an assumption ridiculous when applied to any sensate being, however humble, monstrous when used in connection with a God who, by the first proposition of the syllogism, is affirmed to be almighty.

I have no wish to press myself ostentatiously before the public, and would willingly maintain my anonymity, but as I am criticising a gentleman whose name is mentioned, I sign mine.

THOMAS HARRISON.

South Yarra, 18th July, 1871.

THE DIAMOND RING AND STUD.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

DEAR SIR,—As you can only have for your purpose the furtherance of the cause of truth, it becomes a matter of serious importance, as well as of deep interest to you and those who feel with you, how this can be best accomplished. And I (with many others) am of opinion that it will not be by publishing in your columns such as that which appeared in your last issue, referring to

the loss and recovery of a ring and stud. These may be very interesting subjects to the persons who witnessed them, and no doubt serve their turn, in convincing certain individuals of the reality of Spirit-power. It is a pity however that your valuable space should be taken up with matter that will admit of other explanation than that of Spirit-Agency, which these evidently will, to every reasoning mind, I must therefore repeat that, if your columns are opened to such articles, you not only exclude much more valuable matter, but fail in that which is your special aim and object.

Hitherto there has been but one opinion respecting your Journal, and that is that it supplies a want which has been long felt, and its appearance is now being hailed with delight.

Please insert these few remarks, and oblige,

Yours truly,

VERUS.

Melbourne, 15th July, 1871.

NOTES OF PHENOMENA OBSERVED AT CIRCLE MEETINGS.—Continued.

SEANCE XV.

PRESENT four ladies, and three gentlemen, one of the latter for the first time. Ther. 60°; Barom. 30.1, no wind; air cold and damp. Slight noises on the table occurred in fifteen minutes. Conversation was rather argumentative, and nearly an hour elapsed before any movement was observed. The following were replies to some of the questions asked:—Can you give your initials? The alphabet was called, and the first letters of three names, being those of a relative recently released from suffering, were given. Have you music and flowers where you are? Yes. Are you as fond of them as you were? No. Are you near us now—in the room? No. Am I correct in supposing that you may be able to indicate your presence although you are some distance, some miles from us? Yes. Are you visible to other Spirits? Yes. Can you see, smell, and touch the flowers you say you have? Yes. Can you pluck them? No. Have you any night where you are? No. Do you enjoy the light of the sun? No answer. Are you much changed? No. Are you bright? No. Is it within your own knowledge that you will be brighter? Yes. Have you seen God? No. Is he invisible? No answer. Have you in your present condition better evidence of the existence of an all-powerful, wise, and perfectly just being? Yes. Is the evidence external or internal? No answer. Is the movement of the table, or the answers to these questions, the result of our wills? No.

SEANCE XVI.

Present four ladies, and three gentlemen; one of the latter again for the first time. Ther. 62° good fire Bar. 29° 84. High wind from north during preceding twenty-four hours, and glass falling; ground and air dry. In thirty minutes after invocation, slight noises and gentle movement were remarked. At the expiration of an hour a change was made in the circle, but with no better result. This was the first evening since the ninth, at which we had no strong movement of the table,—and although disappointing to the visitors, the fact of complete failure may not be without interest to students of the phenomena attributed to Spiritism. Several circumstances in connection with this seance deserve noting. Firstly, the evening was very boisterous and rough, the windows, blinds, and doors creaking; secondly, one of the circle had been suffering from influenza for the previous week; thirdly, there had been again a change in the constituents of the circle. We were all agreed in desiring evidence and the wish "that they would come" was expressed aloud by more than one person; we were thus taught that success in this matter was beyond and outside the volition of the circle.

SEANCE XVII.

Present three ladies and three gentlemen, all of whom had met before. Ther. 61°. There had been a high wind from north, with a falling bar. for 48 hours. It marked during afternoon 30°; heavy rain for two hours previous to meeting; sky then cleared, and the moon came out.

Detonating sounds occurred within twenty minutes, and movement of table within half an hour. In thirty-five minutes it moved east and west, and these, with one movement south, were the only courses it adopted all the evening.

We had difficulty in eliciting any intelligent response for nearly half an hour. Our friend who professed to be present at previous meetings did not for some time respond, for the table was moved in a different manner, and towards the master of the house. At last the alphabet was called over, and the following notes were taken by a young gentleman seated at a side table:—M.A.R.T.I.N. W.H.I.T.E. Q.U.E.E.N.S. C.O.U.N.T.Y. I.R.E.L.A.N.D. Q.U.E.S.T.N. M.E. We were all naturally amazed at this stranger visitant, and it was asked were you murdered? No. Did you die a natural death? Yes. Are you happy? Violent movement, which was accepted as an affirmation, without contradiction. When did you die? Years were called up to ten, no response; months to four, was followed by movement. It was elicited that he died in America. We then asked, have you anything to communicate to the advantage of the circle? Yes. The alphabet was called over, and the following was noted:—Y.O.U.R.E. T.O.O. U.N.S.T.E.A.D.Y. In what respect? was asked aloud. I.N. T.H.E. M.E.M.B.E.R.S. W.H.O. E.E.T. Y.O.U.R. T.A. S.H.O.U.L.D. N.N.O.T. C.H.A.N.G.E. S.O. O.F.T.E.N. Our usual two hours had elapsed, and I expressed an intention to adjourn at half-past-ten, when the usual good night was mentioned by rising of the table, after which no further movements could be obtained. No one present knew any such person as Martin White. It may, however, be reasonably supposed that he was brought to assist us, and that he will do so on some future occasion.

SEANCE XVIII.

Present four ladies, and two gentlemen. Ther. 60°. High wind from north. Barom. 29° 91, falling for twenty-four hours previously, and continued doing so for forty-eight hours after. We sat for one hour and twenty minutes: the only result being a few feeble sounds and one or two slight movements. One of the circle had been attending the sick all the previous night, and was thus enervated. One gentleman was unavoidably absent, and a gale was blowing. It will be observed that the conditions attending the two evenings on which failures occurred were similar, and the result cannot fairly be set down as co-incident only. Other observers will doubtless record the influence atmospheric changes may seem to have upon the delay or production of the phenomena, and by tabulating notes of several circles some laws regulating conditions may in time be evolved. The duty of observers is to fairly record facts, and to leave the deductions until a sufficient number of facts are collected. If the intelligent movements of tables, that is the movement in reply to questions, and the indicating certain letters which form a sentence, be not from a force apart from the bodies and minds of those present, it is at least singular, that science cannot afford a satisfactory explanation. If the cause is subjective, it does not say much for physiologists, that with the evidence before the world they persistently ignore facts testified to in every civilized country. The belief in the supernatural is displaced by the revelation by science of the universal reign of law, and this, at present ridiculed "table turning," must be as subject to law as the dew drops or the planet Jupiter.

I am, Sir, Yours,

TRUTH BEFORE ALL THINGS.

SPIRIT VISION.

The following extract, from a letter received from Mr. H. Bamford, of Castlemaine, will doubtless be read with interest by many of our readers, it being a lucid explanation of the *modus operandi* of the Spirits in controlling a circle. Mr. B. has been a writing medium, through whom many interesting communications have been given for some years, but has only recently developed to see Spirits. The public circle spoken of is the same as that described by our Castlemaine correspondent in previous issues. It appears to be a very successful one, and attracting a great deal of interest in the neighbourhood:—

"As I stood at the head of the public circle, at which eighteen people were sitting, male and female about equal:—

There appeared to my vision, just above the heads of the sitters, a bright cloud of magnetism, nearly as dense as a bright white smoke, about a foot in thickness, and extending a few inches beyond the backs of the sitters, forming a complete canopy or cover. Above the circle were numerous groups of Spirits at different elevations, each group appearing to be in communication with the different sitters. A bright stream (like sunbeams) of magnetism, descending from them in some cases upon the heads, and in others upon the shoulders or arms of the sitters, penetrating the canopy, forming the cover of the circle, except in the case of two of the sitters, to whom more dense and apparently coarser shafts or streams of magnetism were being sent down from Spirits above them, which, directly it came in contact with the canopy, sputtered out like sprays of water. They could not penetrate the canopy, so the two sitters were perfectly still whilst all the others appeared to be controlled.

I also noticed that Mr. S., who was acting as conductor of the circle, also P., who was attending and assisting, were both enveloped in a cloud of magnetism similar to that which formed the canopy; and when they moved about for the purpose of magnetizing different individuals in the circle, the shaft of magnetism which was passing into the individual was removed, and passed through them (Mr. S. and P.), along with what they were receiving themselves, through the head, and down the arms, into the person operated upon; and when they had finished the shaft passed back again, the same occurring to all magnetized except the two afore mentioned, who merely became the recipients of the magnetism supplied direct to Mr. S. and P. The magnetism coming from those Spirits who wished to come in contact with the two, directly it came upon Mr. S. or P. (they being protected, as it were), sputtered out like it did on the canopy."

Castlemaine, 8th July, 1871.

DOGMATIC THEOLOGY OPPOSED TO PROGRESS.

For a definition of theology, I must refer the readers of the *Harbinger* to the article on "Religion and Theology," which appeared in the second number, wherein I called it the science which instructs in the mode of worship.

By the term Dogmatic, as applied to this science, I wish to imply that condition of things where men's opinions or interpretations of the Scriptures have come to be accepted as truths, and have thus more weight and importance attached to them than I think they deserve. Keeping this in mind, we will at once proceed with our present subject.

In my last two papers we were occupied almost exclusively in noticing some of the phases of what I conceive to be God's grandest and most beautiful law. The law of Development and Progression.

We traced some of its steps or stages as they showed themselves in its onward march from the mineral through the vegetable and animal kingdoms to man; and lastly, in man, by the gradual outgrowing from all low and debasing passions, and the increasing power of the moral and spiritual part of his nature, which would ultimately enable him to "lead a righteous life."

The subject, however, is such a vast one, ramifying, as it does, throughout all that we see or have any knowledge of, that we have as yet only touched upon a few of what seemed to be the principal landmarks or finger-posts in the journey we have been taking together, leaving for after-consideration some of the less prominent, but perhaps equally important features of the landscape. Important, because of the influence they exercise over our beliefs and our actions, in this life, and our preparation for and position in the life to come.

In the paper on "Sin and Forgiveness," we saw how man, being in all probability at the time therein mentioned a mere animal, but a few degrees superior to other animals, has advanced, by gradual and slow stages, to his present relationship with his Heavenly Father, and now partaking of his divine nature. In the present

paper we shall endeavour to trace how the religious or spiritual part of man is also constantly progressing; how finality in his theology is as totally opposed to this law as it possibly can be, for neither in man's material nor Spiritual nature shall we ever reach the stage, where we can go no further. Always mounting higher and higher, evolving as we advance new ideas and gaining, let us hope, a clearer sight into God's laws. But to proceed with our enquiry.

This world is composed of atoms, or units, which require to be bound or associated together before they are capable of exercising any perceptible influence; and it seems to be one of the phases of the law of Development that there shall be combined action. That atoms shall be attracted to each other by a natural affinity, and so work out the ends of their great designer. Man probably saw at a very early stage of his existence that "Union is strength," and acted accordingly.

Union is undoubtedly strength; but the strength so gained by man is not always used in the best way; and we have all heard of another equally true axiom, that "might is not always right."

Wherever we see nature at work, collecting and arranging the various atoms of matter, and therewith building up new structures, we may be pretty sure that she is right, and that she will not have to undo her work and do it over again. Man, however, is not nearly so reliable in his combinations, and is very prone to make sad blunders. To act as if he believed that might is always right.

This age is markedly an age of progress, and a democratic age; and for thorough, downright radicalism I yield to very few. But however strongly I adhere to the belief that the majority should rule, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that they are often in the wrong. All reformers, of whatever kind, are necessarily in the minority at first, and only succeed in carrying out their reforms by converting the majority opposed to them to their side. I do not therefore feel myself in any way bound to accept the truth of any dogma or set of dogmas, theological or other, simply because the majority believe them to be true. A perfect system of democracy requires a much more highly educated and intelligent community than the world at this day possesses. And if this be true of to-day, how much more forcibly does it apply to a thousand years ago? Then, the bulk of the people were easily acted upon and influenced by the better educated and more intellectual few than they are even now; and if we examine the ancient history of any nation, we must inevitably perceive the enormous power wielded by its priests in the name of religion. This brings us to the subject immediately under consideration—"Dogmatic Theology."

We have already, in the papers just alluded to, noted the growth of the religious element in man, and the crude ideas first entertained as to the existence of one or more superior beings called deities; but as yet we have made no mention of a class of men whose sole occupation was the conducting of the rights of worship supposed to be required by these said deities.

These men, known as priests, it would appear, soon discovered that the surest way of exacting obedience from the masses was by playing upon their fears; and punishments, in the name of one or more of their gods, were threatened against all who disobeyed their commands.

From that time to the present, and throughout all nations, priestcraft has had tremendous hold upon the people, and that hold has invariably been exercised to conserve the interests of the church.

The blackest pages in history, sacred or profane, are those telling of persecution, cruelty, and wholesale slaughter, in the name of the most high God.

The Zend-avesta of the Persians, the Koran of the Turks, the writings of Confucius of the Chinese, the Old Testament of the Jews, the New Testament of the Christians, and all profane historical writings, are full of it.

Fraud, deceit, lying for righteousness sake, and all manner of evil, have not only been permitted, but most actively encouraged by the priests of olden time.

This may, and no doubt does, seem harsh language to use, but is it too harsh, or in the least untrue?

Who can read without a shudder of the fearful and cruelly unjust wars narrated in the Bible, and the wicked prayers of David and many other kings—prayers to God to scatter their enemies, and to pour down upon them all manner of plagues and punishments, that he (God) might be glorified, and his people blessed? And who now-a-days can believe for a moment that our Heavenly Father, who is pre-eminently a God of Love, can commend, or ever could have countenanced any of these atrocities?

And yet the people who committed them, and the priests who promulgated such low and debasing ideas of the Supreme Being, fully and firmly believed that they were doing what was good and right, and glorifying God thereby.

Not one church or sect could have been found to admit the possibility of their being in the wrong. And yet, when we of to-day look back upon these things, how clearly we discover the magnitude of their errors, and see that they were doing all in their power to retard the grand and beautiful law of Progression.

But does it not at the same time increase our awe, and excite to the utmost extent our wonder and admiration of its grandeur and perfection, when we see how, spite of man's misdoings, and spite of the continued antagonism of the churches of old, the world has continued to advance, and man's whole nature has gradually but most surely undergone its purifying influence, and has developed or progressed to his present condition.

We must not, however, "halloo, till we are out of the wood"; for it seems to me that we have not quite given up our endeavours to oppose progress, even now. There still exist churches which hold to the opinion that they only are quite right, that they are the only real interpreters of God's word, and the only persons who are possessed of the true knowledge of him and his laws, his promises and his supposed threats.

Even in this, the nineteenth century, we have among us clergymen of all sects, opposing progress of any kind, opposing the new and undoubted facts revealed by astronomy, geology, chemistry, and other sciences; and in a constant state of fear and trembling lest something should be discovered to upset their pet theological teachings and expositions of inspired revelations.

They fight a hard fight, and are beaten back, step by step, from their old positions, but very few among them ever have the courage to admit the possibility of their having been mistaken, and that instead of doing all they might have done to ennoble men's minds, and to elevate their ideas of the Supreme Being, they have rather kept them down, and tried to prevent, or at least to discourage enquiry, and the honest use of their most God-like faculty—Reason.

With this evidence before us, we must indeed be blind if we fail to see that Dogmatic Theology is an evil, and one the magnitude of which it would be difficult to overrate.

Let us now trace briefly some of the most distinctly marked eras of the theology of the past, and we shall no doubt discover that progress is made by the use of natural means, and without any arbitrary or miraculous exercise of power on the part of God, who, as I have said before, made all laws, and made them so perfect that he never requires to set them aside for any purpose whatsoever. In noting these eras we may, I think, take for granted that the theology of a nation is a tolerably sure index of its intellectual and spiritual development. A highly civilized and refined people could not possibly be satisfied with a low and debasing mode of worship; and it would be quite as unlikely—I might say impossible—that a nation of savages should entertain any very advanced ideas of a supreme being, or refined method of expressing them.

Commencing, then, with the religious, or, as I prefer to call them, the theological teachings of Moses, we shall discover that the Jews of his time were just such a race of people as one might reasonably expect to find under the circumstances in which they were placed—slaves to a despotic and not over-just King. Dirty, thievish, and selfish. Probably of small intellectual power, and of low moral feelings. Now we all believe Moses to have been inspired, to have been instructed from above on the nature of the laws requisite properly to regulate such a

people, and instil into their minds some regard for honesty, decency, and cleanliness, and at the same time to inculcate higher religious principles than they at that time possessed. He was also to endeavour to raise their estimate of, and implant more perfect trust in the great and all-powerful Jehovah.

With the manner in which these instructions were carried out, we are all well acquainted; and we cannot fail to perceive that by these means the Jewish nation was not only held together, but impelled onward in the march of civilization. Space will not admit of exhaustive argument or illustration, even if I were able to supply them, I have therefore contented myself by merely drawing attention to the progress we can easily trace in their theology, leaving my readers to work out the various phases I omit at their leisure.

From the time of Moses to that of Jesus many great and beneficial changes had been made. Reformers had repeatedly sprung up, and had promulgated advanced views of the Almighty Ruler and Governor of the universe; and of man's spiritual nature. I must not attempt to dwell upon them, but refer you to the Bible (which should be examined in its chronological order), and to the works of Josephus, where you will find ample evidence of progress in the teachings of those who were the instruments used in the great work.

You will also notice the usual amount of opposition and persecution by the churches; but then, as now, they were as powerless to prevent the spread of enlightenment, as was Canute to stay the advancing sea. The divine nature in man supplies him with a power to progress which no opposition can overcome; and those individuals of any era, past or present, of suitable organization and untrammelled by dogma, can and will readily adopt new beliefs which they find satisfy their yearnings after something better, purer, and more elevating—either morally, intellectually, or spiritually—more completely than do those beliefs they already possess.

In connection with the progress we are endeavouring to trace, there will be found this striking peculiarity, that always preceding one of what Huxley calls the "catastrophes" in nature,—and equally in science or theology—many small changes or discoveries, or minor reforms, are brought about; just as we know that many slight rumblings and tremblings invariably precede the outbreak of a volcano.

Doubts and misgivings arise as to the efficiency or sufficiency of the existing state of things, and these go on increasing and spreading, producing an unsettled state of mind in many of those who had been hitherto contentedly floating with the stream. This was unquestionably the condition of Jewry nineteen hundred years ago.

The law of progression had been at work, and was then making itself felt by unmistakable signs. New sects were being formed by those seceding from the old church and its dogmas. Men were continually coming to the front, with cries for reform. The rumblings of the earthquake were making themselves both heard and felt, and they culminated in the appearance of one whom I believe to be the greatest religious reformer the world has ever seen. The field was ripe, and "white already to harvest," and to use the simile I adopted to express the epochs of the world's physical growth; the hand again pointed to the hour, and the clock struck with unprecedented effect and with momentous consequences—consequences which are felt to this day, and will continue to be felt for all time.

As we have now reached an age or era with which we are all more or less familiar, let us pause for a moment or two, that we may trace how this grand reformer brought about such important changes. Let us see, by his teachings, which have been carefully preserved, whether he came in the interests of Progress or of Dogmatic Theology. And whether the Church received him with open arms, and assisted him by all the means at their command, or whether they still followed their old practice of opposing any change, or altering any of their dogmatic beliefs.

This new messenger of God, chosen as the means of assisting man's progression, says of himself, "Think not I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." How he fulfilled the law

we may all see for ourselves in the whole of that beautiful Sermon on the Mount, published in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Matthew.

It is not in the nature of progress that we should still adhere to all that is taught there; but what an advance from the ideas then commonly entertained.

The maxims therein contained were by no means new, as they had nearly all been in the possession of one or other of the different sects for many ages; but the natural and simple way of expressing them and of dovetailing them together constitute their great charm and efficacy. In all the teachings of Jesus we can see that he possessed, in a pre-eminent degree, that intuitive power which enabled him to select the grains of wheat from the surrounding husks, and so to present them to his disciples, that they should easily comprehend their true meaning, and derive from them a more accurate knowledge of their Heavenly Father's love, and of the best manner of utilising that knowledge in their daily lives.

But while he was thus engaged, do we find any evidence that he merely destroyed one set of dogmas in order to introduce new ones? On the contrary. Just as he was the greatest reformer, so he was freest from that disastrous failing. His teachings were all of the simplest kind, and within the understanding of every one who heard him. No wranglings about any of the absurd and trifling details of ceremonial worship. No metaphysical disquisitions. No temple with golden gates for him: nor priests with costly robes, cut to a particular size or shape. But in the place thereof simpleness itself, and illustrations almost invariably drawn from nature, or every-day customs, and all tending to the one object—love to God, and to your neighbour. Let us turn to the 23rd chapter of Luke, to see how the priests received him.

In the 10th verse, we find an answer. "And the chief priests and scribes vehemently accused him." The 23rd verse says: "And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and the chief priests prevailed."

In a paper on the "Origin of New Truths," published in a late number of the "Australian Free Religious Press," at Sydney, I think we shall find a solution of the mystery, a cause for the opposition of the priests. The writer there, speaking of Jesus, says: "The truths he taught were, however, the very opposite of what they (the Churches) conceived; for he was about the last of men to frame a system. He hated systems, because he knew how they operate to cramp the mind; and thus it was that he did not write out a religious code or build up a church. Had his successors imitated his example, we should never have had the tales of persecution to read, which now disfigure the pages of history. Calling themselves his followers, they enslaved themselves to a system, and set of doctrines quite foreign to his conceptions, and utterly at variance with his idea of a real religious life." Peebles, in his new work, "Jesus: Myth, Man, or God?" says: "Caring nothing for the cowardly, 'What will people say?' Jesus went forth, a 'sower of principles,' without where to lay his head." He left no writings, no creeds, no codes, no formal rules of life, nor fossil forms of worship. All this business belonged to the Pharisees and hypocrites of his time. He talked of no 'Trinity,' no 'total depravity,' nor 'vicarious atonement.' These credal matters belong to Roman Catholics and aping Protestants. He authorized no form of faith, instituted no baptismal ceremonies, ordained no cowed priests, nor established any external church," &c.

The grand and beautiful, but very metaphysical Paul, was—as I think very unfortunately—the first to introduce a new era of "Dogmatic Theology," and from his time to the present we Christians have been adding dogma to dogma, until—as it appears to me—we have almost entirely lost sight of the spirituality of the teachings of the great master Jesus, whom we all profess to follow.

Evidences are not wanting, however, that a new epoch is fast arriving. New truths are making themselves felt, and the priests of the various sects are gradually but surely dividing into distinct classes. They are either striving to keep pace with the progress of the age, and are humbly accepting new and more liberal theological opinions, or they are entrenching themselves—as of old

—behind empty pomp and ceremony: either going with the stream which is ever flowing and ever widening, in accordance with the law of its maker, or endeavouring to stay its flow and dam it back. It is not very difficult to prophesy on which side will be the victory.

The rumblings of the coming earthquake are again making themselves heard, more and more distinctly, throughout all the civilized world, and the thinking men of all nations who have given any attention to this subject, appear to agree that these rumblings are, as usual, but precursors of another great epoch, when new and still more beautiful truths will probably be made known to us, when our theology will advance another stride, and when we shall perhaps be able to discern with greater clearness and force the working of this grand law of Progression and Development; and when Dogmatic Theology will receive a severe blow, from which I sincerely trust it will never recover.

J. W. H.

SUNDAY FREE DISCUSSION SOCIETY.

THE Debate on Spiritualism at the above Society's meeting, extended over three meetings and attracted crowded audiences. The arguments all through were decidedly with the Spiritualists. The debate was opened by Mr. Cook and closed by Mr. J. Ross. Mr. Cook's opening paper will shortly be published, and will be found well worthy of perusal by non-Spiritualists as well as Spiritualists.

THE ECLECTIC SOCIETY AND SPIRITUALISM.

THE subject of Spiritualism still keeps the Boards at the Eclectic Society's Hall. At the last meeting, Mr. H. G. Turner, in his reply to Mrs. Jackson, asserted that Spiritualism had done nothing for the good of man. He would like its advocates to point out one single discovery it had made, etc. Its advocates might retort on Mr. Turner, by asking him to point out one single discovery Christianity had made?

The whole of the Spiritualist literature was, according to Mr. Turner, trash, and the poetry contemptible. He did not understand the difference between coarse and fine magnetism. He ridiculed the whole of the so-called Spirit manifestations, and considered Spiritualism a mental epidemic. He attributed the cause of its extensive growth to its being a compendium of all religions, and hence all religionists were attracted towards it! He considered that the *onus probandi* lied with the Spiritists, and deprecated the sensitiveness of the Spiritual Press. The *Harbinger of Light* was said to literally "shriek" at opposition. Poor deluded creatures that we are, we have been stuffing ourselves with husks, and thought we were eating corn. We have been happy in our blissful ignorance. Cruel, Mr. Turner, to destroy our peaceful visions. However, let us not lose all hope; there is just a possibility that Mr. Turner's perception of things, "especially Spiritual things," is not quite infallible; that the one or two thousand Spiritualists in this colony, and the many millions in other countries, are not all suffering from a mental epidemic, or distortion of vision, and weakness of perception; and when we come to look again at our so-called husks, and find them as attractive and nutritious as ever, we are obliged to believe that they are corn, and to conclude that Mr. Turner has been looking at them through cracked spectacles or warped glasses. Mr. Turner's idea of the cause of the extensive growth of Spiritualism is not far from our own. Spiritualism is a compendium of all religions, or, rather, of simple religion, a little of which is to be found in all religious systems. We dissent from Mr. Turner's proposition, that "the *onus probandi* lies with the Spiritualists." The true Spiritualist is no proselytiser. He is ever ready to give information when it is sought, but never to force his opinions on others. We trust our shrieks are not very painful to Mr. Turner—we will endeavour not to hurt his sensitive feelings any more than we can help, but we must call out, just a little, when our toes are trodden upon. The debate which followed Mr. Turner's paper did not elicit anything striking, but the argument was on the side of the Spiritualists, the oppositionists confining themselves chiefly to

assertions that it was opposed to natural laws, and a demand for the Spiritualists to show them a sign, or demonstrate the physical theory forthwith. The debate was ultimately adjourned to this month, when it will be opened on the affirmative side by Mr. Charles Bright.

THE ANTIQUITY OF MESMERISM.

(FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA OF HUMAN MAGNETISM, BY THOMAS BREVOIR.)

HUMAN Magnetism as a curative agency, as well as in other relations, has been extensively practised from a very early time among the vast populations of China and of India, and was known to all the great nations of antiquity, especially to the Egyptians. "Magnetism," says Ennemoser, "was daily practised in the temples of Isis, of Osiris, and of Serapis." In these temples the priest touched the sick and cured them, either by magnetic manipulation, or by other means of producing somnambulism. Several of the Egyptian monuments present scenes of magnetic treatment. On a mummy case, of which a representation is given by Montfaucon, an individual is shown in the act of magnetising a sick person by "passes." In an ancient Egyptian chamber, where are hieroglyphics referring exclusively to medicine, a priest is represented in the act of magnetising a sick person. On their talismans, amulets and mummies, are similar representations. Some of these will be found in Montfaucon, and in Denon's *Voyage en Egypte*, tom. iii. On one of these talismans, given by Montfaucon, the magnetiser has one hand on the feet, the other on the head of the patient; in a second, one hand is laid upon the stomach, the other upon the head; in a third, the hands are upon the loins; in a fourth, the hands are placed upon the thighs, and the eyes of the operator are fixed upon the patient's countenance. The magnetiser it would seem was generally a priest, and the healing manipulations were accompanied with religious ceremonies. After these manipulations the patients lay down on the skins of the animals they had sacrificed, and having prepared themselves for sleep by fervent prayer, awaited the visions which Isis was supposed to send them. The Egyptians appear to have always associated cures by magnetic operation with spiritual agency. With the representations of these to which we have referred are the emblems of their divinities. Diodorus Siculus informs us that "The Egyptians report that Isis found out many medicines for the recovery of man's health: being very expert in the art of physic, she contrived many remedies for that purpose, so that even now when she is advanced to an immortal state, she takes pleasure in curing men's bodies. For clear proof of this they refer, not only to the usual fables of the Greeks, but to the undoubted evidence of the facts . . . Many who have been given up by the physicians as incurable, have by her been recovered; nay, many that were perfectly blind have, by her aid, been restored to sight and soundness of body." From Strabo we learn that the same ceremony was practised in the temple of Serapis, and also as Galen tells us, in the temple of Vulcan, near Memphis. Frictions during ablution was one of the secret remedies of the Egyptians.

I have referred more especially to magnetic healing as practised by the Egyptians, as much of what is said in this respect concerning them applies also to their contemporaries, as well as to the later nations of antiquity. In Greece, similar ceremonies to those of the Egyptians were observed in their temples, and the baths were always accompanied by frictions and other manipulations, and the cures so wrought were commonly recorded on tablets erected in the temples, or on the walls or pillars of the temples. The Greek writers testify to the healing powers of the hand. Hippocrates remarks, "There exists in the human hand a singular property to draw away and remove pains and divers impurities from affected parts by placing the hand upon them, or by pointing with the fingers towards them." Manual frictions for curative purposes were also practised by the Romans. Caelius Aurcliaricus describes the manner in which these should be variously conducted for the healing of different maladies. In epilepsy, the

head and forehead are to be chafed; then the hand is to be carried gently over the neck and bosom. At other times the hands and feet are to be grasped, so that we "may cure in the very act of holding the limb." Celsus informs us that phrenzy was cured by frictions, and adds that when these frictions were long-continued they produced a lethargic state. Plutarch relates of Pyrrhus that "he cured the swelling of the spleen by pressing his foot over the part affected, gently pressing it while the patient lay down. . . . He did not refuse to give this relief to any persons who applied to him, however poor or mean they might be." Pliny relates the same fact to show that there are some persons whose bodies are endowed with medicinal properties, which under the influence of imagination and mental excitement produce these salutary emanations.

If any credit is to be attached to the accounts we have of Apollonius of Tyana, and to the biography of him by Philostratus, he was not only a clairvoyant of singular lucidity, but possessed the power of healing in a most remarkable degree. It is related of him that on one occasion he met a funeral procession—that of a girl who had fallen down apparently dead during the solemnization of her marriage. He ordered it to stop, and after touching the young woman, and muttering some secret words, she recovered, began to speak, and returned to her paternal home. Many of the Roman Emperors, and especially the Emperor Vespasian, are said to have exercised the gift of healing. A man who had lost his sight, directed as he said by the god Serapis, requested the emperor to condescend to moisten with his saliva the face and the balls of the eyes; another who had lost the use of his hand, under the inspiration of the same god, begged that he would place his foot on the part affected. Vespasian smiled at requests which seemed to him so wild and extravagant, but was at length prevailed on by the importunity of the sufferers to make the attempt. The paralytic hand recovered its functions, and the blind man regained his sight. The story may be seen in that fine historian (Tacitus, Hist., lib. i., cap. 8), where every circumstance seems to add weight to the testimony. Suetonius, in his life of Vespasian, gives nearly the same account. The former historian says: "By living witnesses, who were actually on the spot, both events are confirmed at this hour, when deceit and flattery can hope for no reward." Suetonius adds the circumstance that the cures were wrought before a public company. David Hume, in the celebrated essay *On Miracles*, just quoted, calls this, "One of the best attested miracles in all profane history." He directs attention to "the gravity, solidity, age and probity of so great an emperor, who, through the whole course of his life conversed in a familiar manner with his friends and courtiers, and never affected those extraordinary airs of divinity assumed by Alexander and Demetrius." He points out that the historian Tacitus was "a contemporary writer, noted for candour and veracity, and withal the greatest and most penetrating genius, perhaps, of all antiquity, and so far from any tendency to credulity, that he even lies under the contrary imputation of atheism and profaneness;" and that the persons from whose authority he related the miracle were "of established character for judgment and veracity, as we may well presume; eye-witnesses of the fact, and confirming their testimony after the Flavian family were despoiled of the empire, and could no longer give any reward as the price of a lie. To which (continues Hume) if we add the public nature of the facts as related, it will appear that no evidence can well be supposed stronger for so gross and so palpable a falsehood." Voltaire acknowledges that "of all miraculous cures, the best attested, the most authentic, are those of the blind person to whom Vespasian restored sight, and the paralytic person to whom he restored the use of his limb."

Could these great apostles of the modern sceptical philosophy have known the now familiar cures wrought by human magnetism, they would not, while admitting the strength of the evidence in favour of the cures by Vespasian, have stigmatised the accounts of them by candid veracious historians, as in the language of Hume, "gross, palpable falsehood," and "exploded and idolatrous superstition;" they would have seen that these

cures were not in Hume's sense of the word, "miraculous"—contrary to the course of nature and to all appearance; for facts of the same kind are of daily occurrence, witnessed both in public and private; and thousands now living have had in their own persons the experience of cures of the same nature, and no less marvellous than those effected by the Roman Emperor. Whether we call them "miraculous" or not, is in itself of little consequence;—it is only a question of the terms by which the facts can be most correctly designated. According to Hume, "There must be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation." Whether this is a correct definition of what are called miracles is a question with what we have no present concern; but I may remark that Hume's appeal to experience is so far unfortunate for him, as experience—present experience confirms that of the past, and to the admitted weight of evidence for "miraculous cures," adds further probability that the evidence is true. At all events, it can now be seen that Hume's objection is pointless in presence of the well-attested cases of magnetic healing which history records, and of which in this day examples are so abundant.

WHAT AN ANGLO-INDIAN HAS RECENTLY SEEN OF SPIRITUALISM IN AMERICA.

THE following account of a seance with Mr. J. V. Mansfield is from the pen of Mr. Whitten, an Anglo-Indian, who visited the United States for the purpose of investigating and witnessing the Spiritual phenomena occurring there. We copy from the *London Spiritual Magazine* of April 1st, 1871:—

"Monday, May 31st.—Another medium of considerable celebrity in New York is Mr. Mansfield, who resides at the corner of Fifteenth Street and Sixth Avenue. He is a writing medium, and to-day we paid him a visit. Like Mr. Forster, he has no occupation besides Spiritualism, and devotes his whole time to it. In former years he was a member of the Stock Exchange, and took little interest in Spiritualism, but occasionally accompanied his wife to a *séance*, or public meeting, where the subject was to be discussed. At one of these, he was desired to practise spirit-writing for a certain number of days—I think he said thirty—but finding nothing result after what he thought a fair trial, his zeal waned, and he contemplated giving the matter up, when he became possessed of a power, of which until then he was ignorant—namely, that of being the involuntary agent through whom spirits could communicate messages in writing to those who sought them through his mediumship. All this we learnt from Mr. Mansfield himself during our interview, of which and of his manner of proceeding I will endeavour to inform you in as succinct a manner as possible.

"On arriving at his residence, we found him at leisure, and he consented to give us a *séance*. We were quite unknown to him, and he to us, except that we knew his name, and that he was a professional medium, while ours was withheld, so that we might test his power without giving him even the advantage of knowing us or where we came from. He is a very quiet, sedate, and methodical man, about fifty years of age, and wins one's confidence by the sincerity of his manner. The room into which we were conducted was a comfortable sitting room with windows, at which flowers and creepers were growing, opening to the street. The walls were hung with pictures, some of which were spirit-drawings, while on the tables were numerous nic-nacs and quaint ornaments. Near one of the windows there was a long writing table, at which Mr. Mansfield was seated, and having explained our wish that he would give us an opportunity of testing his mediumship, he placed us so that by extending our hands and touching each other we formed a circle. More than once he changed our positions, like men on a chess-board. This being settled apparently to his satisfaction, those of us who desired to do so were invited to go to the table and write a message to, or make enquiry of, any spirit with whom we wished to correspond.

"While one of our party was so engaged, Mr. Mansfield remained in conversation with us at the end of the room farthest from the writing table, so that he could not possibly, even if he desired, see what was written. He

appeared quite indifferent as to the proceeding of the writer, until he was informed the message was complete, when he desired the paper might be folded up, so that the contents could be seen by no one. The paper was in long slips, such as is used for printer's 'copy,' and when rolled up, the writing was hid in a dozen folds of paper. Then the ends were fastened down with gum; and without any address or writing on the outside, the letter was allowed to remain on the table. The writer then joined us; and Mr. Mansfield resumed his seat, and for a few moments gently rubbed the letter with his fingers, without moving it from the table. He then took a sheet of paper, such as that on which the letter had been written, passed the gum brush over the upper end of it, and attached the folded-up letter to it. Then he sat, pencil in hand, prepared to write, while the left hand was allowed to rest lightly on the table by his side. For some minutes he sat thus, talking to us, on any subject that was started, until presently we heard a gentle and even click on the table, and saw the index finger of his left hand move up and down, each time giving a tap on the table, and this, he informed us, indicated the presence of the spirit-agency working through him, he might call it—as it was frequently named—the 'spirit-telegraph,' and in his case its presence was so infallible 'he would stake his existence on it.' He was convinced the spirit to whom the message had been addressed was there, and would, through him, reply to it. We watched with the utmost curiosity and interest, and remarked that when the finger tapped regularly and with an unbroken movement, the pencil held in the medium's right hand began to move, and then pass rapidly over the paper, line after line, the medium unheeding what was written, until the answer to the message was entirely completed; he then folded the original message and the reply together, and handed the paper to our friend, and resumed the conversation then going on. Curiosity at once prompted the opening of the roll of paper, to see the nature of its contents. It was a letter of many lines, written in a free hand, and bore at the top the usual inscription, and was signed at the end with the name of the departed spirit whose message it purposed to be. We then opened the letter our friend had written, and which had been so carefully fastened up, and found it was addressed to a person whose Christian name only was written, while the message sent in return was signed with the name in full. Then we read the letter and the reply. It related to matters of a family nature, which I need not repeat; but as to the answer, it was so complete, entered so fully into the particulars on which information had been sought, and was so satisfactory, that no living being could have given a more rational or direct an answer. We were astonished at the result, which seems to pass belief—yet it is no romance. Nor was this the only instance we had of Mr. Mansfield's mediumship. During our interview six or seven letters were written by ourselves, and each was folded and sealed, put into double envelopes or otherwise secured, so that inspection of their contents was impossible.

The medium, as I have said, saw nothing of the writing, knew nothing of what had been written, or the names of the writers, or those of the dead to whom the messages were addressed, and yet the replies were as perfect in every respect as if he had known all these, was well posted in the family history, and had at his fingers' ends information which we knew he did not possess. Then again, in one particular case, an inquiry was written to a dead sister by the most sceptical of our party, requesting an expression of opinion on some important family subject. The letter was folded and sealed as before, and a reply was sent, occupying a long sheet of paper, signed with the Christian and surname of the spirit, and so entirely satisfactory, and to the point, as to be marvellous. The medium could not have replied of his own knowledge; he had no help from any human being; and the conclusion was forced upon us, that the message in this and in other trials could not have been communicated without spirit agency.

"It is not necessary to visit Mr. Mansfield to obtain these spirit replies. He receives from all parts of the world letters enclosing communications from the departed, from their living relations or friends, and having

obtained, in the manner I have indicated a written reply to the messages or inquiries contained in the enclosures, they are returned unopened to the senders, accompanied by the spirit's reply. Many such letters were lying before him at the time of our visit; some were fastened up in tin, or wax cloth, or linen; or were tied up with string or ribbon, and sealed in a dozen places; indeed, every sort of device that ingenuity could invent seemed to have been resorted to, to prevent the contents of the letters being tampered with."

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SPIRITUALISM IN THE UNIVERSITIES.—From a newspaper we cut the following paragraph:—"The subject of the last debate of this term at the University Union last night was—'That this house sympathises with those engaged in the study of Spiritualism.' The subject was introduced by Mr. William Cunningham, of Caius College, and on a division was carried, their being fifty-four ayes and thirty-eight noes."

REASON.

BY J. R.

ALTHOUGH few, in the present day, may be ignorant enough to object to Reason altogether, there are those who object to place entire reliance upon it, because it is not infallible. It is said of the Naturalist, Buffon, that, in his vanity, he caused to be inscribed on his tomb—"A genius equal to the majesty of Nature." Were such a genius possible, Reason might be infallible, but not otherwise. Notwithstanding its imperfection, it is our only guide to knowledge; the only voice to which the understanding can listen, so as to form its opinions, and pronounce its judgments. Man cannot desist from thinking; the Spirit of inquiry is as essential an element of his intellectual nature, as hunger and thirst is of his physical; and it would be as great an absurdity to forbid him to eat of "the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil" as to forbid him to crave after any other natural want.

As Reason cannot exercise its functions without materials to work upon, I now ask what those materials are? And accept the answer, that *Divine Revelation* must be the basis of all reasoning. The two factors, then, are *Divine Revelation*, on the one hand, and *Human Perception* on the other. As the human factor is fallible, it is clear that the Divine factor must be infallible; otherwise, there could not be any safeguard from confusion. Error, then, is the absence of clear perception on the human part. The inexperienced senses are easily deceived. Opticians say, that were a blind man suddenly to receive the powers of vision, he could not distinguish the difference between a real object, and an artistic full-sized likeness of it; but the sense of sight could be aided by the sense of touch. In this manner, primitive and comparatively inexperienced Man acquires false notions of truth, which have to be corrected by further experience; and this imperfect beginning, inconvenient as some may think it, is necessary to initiate a process, by means of which comparative certainty may ultimately be reached. Hence, the fallibility of Reason is a temporary imperfection which marks its progressive character. The errors consequent upon reasoning prove that, in the process of acquiring knowledge, the human element is the active one, and that the Divine element is objective only. As a creative power, the Divine element is the "all in all" activity, and this activity is the revelation which man perceives and reasons upon. If our notions of truth depended upon the Revelation itself, we could not err; but, since our notions depend upon the finite character of our perceptions, and the finite powers of our Understandings, we must necessarily be in error. This one consideration condemns Oracular Revelation as unreliable. Oracular Revelation, to have any meaning, would require to consider man as only capable of receiving truth, not of discovering it; and its office would be to instruct man according to his capacity. Each portion of knowledge so communicated, however, coming, as it is said to do, from an Omniscient, Omnipotent source, ought to be accompanied with positive demonstration (not miracles, but arguments) as to its truthfulness; otherwise, man would not be treated as a rational

creature. Knowledge so obtained, would be as unquestioned as a demonstration in Euclid; but, to demand of man to put his faith in a mere declaration, because it is said to be divine, is to treat him as an unreasoning slave.

If man be allowed to reason, he must first reason about the truthfulness of the declaration, before he can receive it as Divine. This necessity makes truth itself the Authority, and not the oracle which may declare it; for a demonstrable error cannot be true, whatever Authority may sanction it. More than this, we commit error if we put faith in any assertion, the truth of which we cannot see, although we may not be able to refute it. The assertion may be true, or, false, for all an ignorant person can know for or against it; and he who makes the assertion is bound to furnish the proof (that is, if he insists on belief) otherwise it is an irrational tyranny, demanding irrational credulity. All sects acknowledge this by their various differences, the opposite characters of their ideas, and demand for toleration. Toleration implies, that thought is fallible. If any idea were as certain as that thieving is a social crime, there could not be any toleration to teach aught to the contrary. Such toleration would be treason against the welfare of society; for every erroneous idea leads to practical error—so that toleration means uncertainty, and the demand for it acknowledges it. One religious system employs reason to prove the absurdities of other systems, and only ceases to be rational when it comes to announce its own dogmas. Faith is the basis of orthodox reasoning: after this adherence is given to the so-called essentials of a theology, Reason is permitted; but only to defend—it dare not destroy. If the premises of an argument be false, the closer the reasoning the more inevitably must it arrive at a false conclusion. In scientific reasoning, if conclusions palpably erroneous are arrived at, it is readily admitted that either the argument is at fault, or, that there is something wrong in the premises. In theologic reasoning, the basis dare not be doubted; therefore, to avoid egregious error, the argument must be adjusted, and re-adjusted, until strict logic (to avoid a logical conclusion) is corrupted into special pleading, to arrive at a special conclusion. Any opinion received as a matter of faith, cannot be the result of Reason, but, of accident. The accidents of birth, and nationality, determine a man's faith and religion, and this alone is proof sufficient that faith is not trustworthy. Chillingworth, who wrote his great work on the *Religion of Protestants* in the first half of the 17th Century, says—"For my part, I am certain that God has given us our reason to discern between truth and falsehood; and he that makes not this use of it, but believes things he knows not why, I say it is by chance that he believes the truth, and not by choice; and I cannot but fear that God will not accept this sacrifice of fools." In another portion of the same work he says, "For faith is not knowledge, more than three is four, but eminently contained in it; so that he that knows, believes, and something more; but he that believes many times does not know—nay, if he doth barely and merely believe, he doth never know!"

Reason, then, is the only means by which we can arrive at conviction. Butler, in his justly celebrated work on the "Analogy of Religion," says—"Reason is the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything—even Revelation itself." But Reason cannot make truth—it can only discover it; so that wherever we find facts demonstrably reliable, there we must find the true source of all Revelation." This can only be done by studying physical nature. We can only get glimpses and conceptions of the Great Spirit by studying the Great Structure, and whatever moral, or metaphysical, philosophy may teach, may be vicious, but cannot be useful, until tried and rectified by physical and social tests. There cannot be absolute knowledge without experience—something that we positively know. Dr. Chalybaeus, in his Historical development of speculative philosophy, says—"Nothing is to be believed which we have not experienced in ourselves—i.e., in the consciousness; in short, nothing in the domain of philosophy is to be simply taken on trust, but, on the contrary, whatever is received, is only to be allowed on the ground that we ourselves have been convinced of its correctness, and that we ourselves know it." All knowledge, then,

must be founded upon positive facts. Although we may speak about positive fact as being a simple matter, yet it is not always so easy to determine what may be a positive fact. A thing is not a fact, because we think it—rationally, and honestly think it—to be so. Our inexperienced senses are certain to deceive us at first, and although we cannot have evidence without them, still, their evidence is not to be received with unquestioning imprudence. That man is born and must die, that he hungers and thirsts, that he is capable of feeling certain passions, and so on, are experiences which seem never to vary as to being plain matter of fact; but, other experiences, apparently as true as those already mentioned, are being constantly exposed as fallacious. What could have been more apparently true than the old notions of sun-rise and sun-set, and yet how fallacious in reality. Too great a reliance upon the experience of any sense, or the experience of any individual source, is a great obstruction to the progress of knowledge. Knowing our own fallibility, we ought to know that any of our opinions, however strongly we may feel convinced of its truth, may turn out to be error; that, as a matter of certainty, our opinions contain error, although we may not know wherein it consists. Thus, a free mind—a mind equally as free from dogmatism as from credulity—is necessary to acquire knowledge. I said, free from dogmatism, instead of free from scepticism. I am aware that careless speakers and writers often employ the word scepticism, when they mean dogmatism. Dogmatism insists, in contradistinction to the rationalism which argues; but scepticism doubts, and is an essential element of progress—for unless there be doubt, there cannot be inquiry. Every scientific, and every other, experiment is the result of scepticism. The experiment is a mode of inquiry, so as to lead to certainty, and uncertainty is doubt.

It is not so easy to obtain knowledge—it requires constant, ever-watchful, intellectual activity. It is comparatively easy to obtain information—to know the different views and opinions on the different topics of importance; but to convince ourselves of the truthfulness or falsity of such information is another thing. This is too laborious for the bulk of mankind, whose natural love of ease causes them to leave their thinking to be done for them, by the few who are either paid, or, pleased, to do the work. Thus many blindly follow the different leaders of orthodoxy and scepticism, without possessing convictions of their own. The difficulty is to lead men to think for themselves. Were each individual to rely upon his own personal experiences, and on his own individual thoughts, he could make very little progress. Each individual requires the experiences of others, to rectify his own experiences—the thoughts of other men, to advance his individual thoughts. The experiences and thoughts of other men, and other times, become ours by means of *thinking*. When Dr. Chalybaeus says, in the passage already quoted, that nothing is to be received unless "that we ourselves know it," he means, unless *that we ourselves have thought it*. Indeed without thinking, we have no right to receive or reject anything: the difference being that some things require more, some less, thinking than others.

Philosophy and Facts go together, like soul and body. By facts alone can we arrive at true philosophy. Each additional phenomenon, when verified and accounted for, confirms, modifies, or alters previous conceptions; for we can have no philosophy without consistency. This implies that there could be no reasoning without consistency. Consistency means that Nature acts according to order, which we call *law*—similar causes producing similar effects. When we have discovered the laws which produced certain events, we can calculate upon producing similar events, if we can initiate similar causes. From a knowledge of the past, we can, with every confidence in the truthfulness of Nature, speculate upon the future; and, if we had infallible knowledge of present conditions and all the causes which conduced to them, we could, with almost equal infallibility, predict a vast portion of the future, as astronomers predict eclipses. But if, at any moment, an arbitrary power can step in, and irregularly break through the chain of natural consistency, order fails, and reason becomes purposeless. Arbitrary power means unreason, while reason implies

law and order. Law and Reason possess mutual correspondence, and develop a consistent philosophy.

Facts, then, are our guides to knowledge, and as each individual cannot discover facts by means of his unaided experience, testimony is necessary, and in the inconsiderate reception, or rejection, of testimony, the greatest blunders are committed. If an alleged event be in harmony with our preconceived notions of things, and if the testimony be of ordinary respectability, we are ready to believe it may be true, because we believe it to be possible. But if the alleged occurrence be subversive of all our preconceived notions of things, no mere testimony can make us believe it to be true, as long as we believe it to be impossible. In the latter instance, we cannot know, for a matter of fact, that the alleged event is an impossibility, or, that it did *not* occur; but, as we cannot believe it to be possible, neither can we believe that it *did* occur. In the first instance, we do not know, for a matter of fact, that the alleged event *did* occur, but we believe it *may* have occurred, because we believe it to be possible. It is not, therefore, the character of the testimony which we have principally to consider, but the character of the thing testified to; for we readily receive a testimony to an ordinary event, which we as readily refuse to an extraordinary one. Not only that, but we receive testimony to a common-place event very much inferior to the testimony we are obliged to refuse, when it applies to an event of a very extraordinary character. Those, therefore, who ask of us to believe testimony, and testimony alone, violate the laws of evidence, and insult our reason. But although testimony can never produce rational conviction, it may be of such a character as to attract attention, and create inquiry. Ancient testimony to ancient miraculous events are unworthy of notice, because, whatever attention we may grant them, we can never demonstrate them either probable, or possible. The myth of the Egyptian phoenix was fully believed in by the early Christian Fathers, but who, in the present day, would waste time and effort to inquire into the probability of what we are obliged to consider an absurdity? If, however, living men, of known fame for learning and scientific attainments, and for the skill and caution with which they conduct their scientific experiments and make their observations, were to testify to a series of events, even of so extraordinary a nature as that their occurrence was likely to produce a revolution in the world of ideas, and give new conceptions of the operations of natural law, such testimony must needs arrest attention, and place the world on tip-toe of expectation to find "if these things be so." I said *series of events*, because I consider that a single event, of this unique character, would not be likely to receive credence beyond those who might be fortunate enough to witness it. The character of the witnesses might cause their narrative to disturb the public mind, but as all the means to produce rational conviction could not be obtained, it could not affect the general character of thought. By means of such events, when proved and accounted for, knowledge progresses, and the material and intellectual interests of mankind are advanced.

Philosophers of the Kantian School classify the senses under one faculty—the faculty of *Receptivity*. Objects affect this faculty by means of *sensibility*—i.e., by sensibility we are conscious of our own existence, and of the existence of external objects. This furnishes us, what are called, *intuitions*; which signifies that, by means of the senses, owing to their sensibility, we receive impressions from external objects, and that these impressions are called intuitions. But they are not intuitions in a strict sense until they are thought by the understanding, and conceptions arise. These conceptions are mental intuitions, and give color, character, and tendency to all future thinking, and to them all future thinking must refer; for to us they are our consciousness, or knowledge, of right and wrong. To have true ideas, we must at least, have harmonious ideas; for we cannot hold two ideas, and suppose each to be true, while the one contradicts the other. Unless subsequent ideas harmonise with those already possessed, either the one or the other must be wrong; perhaps, partly, both. Preconceived, and subsequent ideas ought, therefore, to be used mutually to correct each other, for in this manner only can

truth be approximated. Those who are too tenacious of old opinions, reject every new idea which does not harmonise with them, and make their opinions the test of truth; while those who inconsiderately fly to every new idea are less actuated by love of truth, than novelty. Both extremes are to be carefully avoided. No consequence ought to be attached to any opinion, as such—the questions ought to be *is it true?* or, *is it false?* To have conceptions of one's own, one must think for himself. He may not be able to discover much for himself (few are) but he can take the thoughts of other men and study them. Thus a man builds up a philosophy of his own by his own thinking, aided by the thoughts of other men, which he appropriates unto himself. The propositions of Euclid are not our discovery, but we can make them our property by studying and understanding them. How can any one be so irrational as to believe in a "great mystery," which is something so greatly mysterious that no rational man can understand it! Rational consciousness is proved by rational tests, but unreasoning recipients by faith have their consciousness made for them. They have their convictions also, but they are through the feelings only. They feel in their consciousness that one thing is true, and another thing false, and to this they appeal as evidence superior to reason. A thing may be proved, by the clearest demonstration, to be true—no matter, they *feel* it to be error. A thing may be proved to be a very absurdity—no matter, they feel it to be true—they *know* it in their consciousness to be true, and from this there is no appeal. This puts faith and mental impressions above reason, instead of being the result of reason. In the face of this dogmatism all reason is in vain. Better far to believe, as a matter of rational conviction, what, by-and-bye, may be proved to be error, than put unreasoning faith in what can only by accident be true. Since we must be in error, better have the errors of a free mind, which are open to rejection by evidence to the contrary, than the errors of blind faith, which are incurable—they cannot change, so they must die. Reason is the only means, Nature the only source, of knowledge, "so that," as Locke observes, "he that would put away Reason to make way for Revelation puts out the light of both, and does much what the same as if he would persuade a man to put out his eyes the better to receive the remote light of an invisible star by a telescope." Nature is our loving mother, and the source of all we require physically and mentally, but the mind of man elevates itself above the native element of his physical nature, and puts itself into correspondence with the universe of which it is a citizen, always applying to the home of its truth for tests to rectify its deductions.

I admit that it is not an easy matter thus freely to discuss, receive, and reject opinions, according to strict method, unbiassed by any other consideration than that of love of truth. The terrible importance attached by orthodoxy to mere belief vastly increases a difficulty rendered sufficiently great by natural conservatism and natural indolence. When a marked advance is made in political, social, and religious thought, men stand aghast at the exposure it makes, and the revolution it threatens. Church creeds and institutions, Political creeds and institutions, Social and Commercial creeds and institutions, all are in danger. Prevailing notions and prevailing interests are so intimately connected that the war of opinion has to be won over the tumbling-down of monopolies, which offer the most strenuous and most uncompromising resistance; for if the march of rational opinion be allowed to go on it will reach the multitude, and the people (so long the victims of ignorance) by means of reason and knowledge will come to their own inheritance of religious, political, and social freedom.

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