

THE Harbinger of Light.

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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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SPIRITUALISM has two aspects, the scientific and the religious; the one dealing with the phenomena which indicate the action of invisible force directed by intelligence, not traceable to the minds of the investigators, and professing to emanate from those of men and women who have passed the portals of the tomb and exist in a less grossly material condition in realms surrounding and more or less contiguous to this planet. The other an ethical system appealing more to the ideal and aspirational nature of man. The usual result of a scientific investigation of the phenomena is a conviction that the intelligences referred to are what they profess to be, and the attainment of this conviction entitles the possessor to be called a Spiritualist. But the value of the knowledge depends upon the use that is made of it; it is more or less portentous in accordance with the calibre and condition of the mind that receives it and its capacity to utilise the fact in the acquisition of a knowledge of life in the broader aspect opened out by the demonstration of its continuity.

Up to this point reason has led the way, and the religious sentiment has found no room to manifest, but having reached this plane, standing upon the solid strata of facts, the mind of the thoughtful or religious man naturally reflects upon the importance of the result, and the religious sentiment is evolved. The unbiassed and philosophical man questions the unseen intelligences and judges of them by their fruits, accepting only that which commends itself to his reason as of value to him or the world; whilst those with a doctrinal bias, having a foregone conclusion of the correctness of their religious belief, determine that no spirit can be reliable whose

teachings do not accord with what they have laid down as a basis. We have a notable instance of this in a recently published book reviewed in another part of this paper; and we remember also a spirit, who from the nature of his communications appeared to have advanced considerably beyond the average plane of knowledge and wisdom, writing—"Were one of the highest spirits and brightest to descend or appear in *propria personæ* on the stage of man's existence again, and though those of the birth-world might be convinced of his superior nature, they would lose that belief in him were he not to enforce by his commanding eloquence, or other authorised means, his dogmas. They would lay down a track or course which, if he were good and true as they believed him to be, he would most assuredly follow; if he did not they would regard him as an imposter." It is for these reasons we encourage freedom of thought in its broadest sense, for true progress is impossible with those who are hampered with man-made creeds and dogmas; and whilst our general policy is constructive, we give space for the Iconoclast to do his very necessary work.

Primitive Christianity and Modern Spiritualism run well together, but to yoke the latter with the Christianity of to-day, is like coupling Pegasus to a mule, and calculated to seriously retard the progress of Pegasus without materially accelerating that of his companion. Therefore do we deprecate the action of those who endeavour to adapt Spiritualism to that which is called Christianity—a system utterly incongruous with it and calculated to be a dead weight on its progress. Rational Spiritualism has sufficient vitality in it to go on without extraneous aid or pandering to the prejudices of the orthodox. Our facts are solid, and our philosophy is harmonious; we can consequently march steadily on without fear of any material check, attracting towards us and augmenting our numbers with seceders from the ranks of orthodoxy, who having shaken off the shackles find in Spiritualism a system more in accordance with the requirements of the age.

Plain truths, like many excellent medicines, are often unpalatable; nevertheless, the judicious presentation of the former, like the appropriate administration of the

latter, is frequently of great benefit to humanity. We shall, therefore, continue to present them in this journal for the advantage of those who need them, whilst those with whom they disagree, or who disagree with them, can let them alone. If our conceptions of truth do not accord with those of any of our readers, they are at liberty to challenge them and point out wherein they conceive we err, and with the comfortable assurance that our aim and object is the circulation of truth, we court the strongest arguments that our orthodox friends can bring against our position, promising (provided reason is accepted as a basis), to allow them fair space for the presentation of their arguments: a concession, we opine, which would be refused to us by every religious journal in this country, but which, had they confidence in the vitality of their systems, they would rather court than refuse.

FAMILIAR LETTERS ON SPIRITUALISM.

IX.

"Never utter these words: 'I do not know this—therefore it is false.'
 * One must study to know, know to understand, understand to judge."

RESPECTED FRIEND.—I find myself at a considerable disadvantage in writing these letters, in consequence of the inability to lay before you all the facts and evidence which I have gathered during a long period of enquiry and investigation. I am compelled to be so brief, that some points I would like to dwell on must be left untouched. My own personal experience constitutes so large a chapter of evidence, that to place you in my own position would involve great outlay of time, and occupy more space than is at my command. As the result of my own mediumship, I have received communications of the most interesting and instructive character, and having put these to the test by a practical application of the sentiments to the conduct of my own life, have thus proved their intrinsic value. The renewed intercourse with dear friends which this spiritual channel has afforded, is truly a solace and a joy in the midst of life's trials, while it gives the promise of higher experiences in reserve in the next stage of existence. Can you blame me, therefore, for a persistent determination to make my acquirement of conclusions doubly certain by the most careful attention to these things, or for pressing the consideration of them and their claims on your attention?

I will now relate the particulars of another séance at which I was present lately, and at which I saw materialised forms walk about, and do several things which are common to intelligent human beings; these forms shaped out of, to us, immaterial elements, and then appearing to dissolve and disappear; having substance, being able to speak, and to move articles of furniture, and then becoming, so far as human physical eye-sight is concerned, invisible.

This séance was held in a room with which I am well acquainted, and containing only ordinary office furniture. Across one corner of the room damask curtains were hung so as to open in the middle and at each end. Behind these curtains there was only a chair standing in the right-hand corner of the recess as faced by the audience. There were present on this occasion seven persons in addition to myself and the medium, Mr. Spriggs. The audience was arranged in the form of a double half circle, having sufficient space between the front row and the curtain to enable the forms to walk about. The only light in the room, a candle, was shielded, but leaving sufficient light to see objects. We had the fullest evidence that behind the curtain there was only the medium, seated on the chair, with no appliances to enable him to personate others; and during the séance we had opportunity for seeing the

medium on the chair at the same time that the materialised forms stood before us.

The séance lasted about two hours, and during that time five different forms came out from behind the curtain; figures of different sizes, and having a different appearance. One of the forms removed a chair which stood outside the curtain, and shook hands with one of the audience, and spoke to him. Another came forward and taking a bunch of flowers from the chair, divided the flowers among the visitors, shaking hands with a lady next to myself. Another form was that of a woman, said to be my mother, but the attempt to materialise was imperfect. Another form, apparently a man, walked before us for a considerable time, and gave the fullest opportunity to enable me to observe that it had the appearance of a perfect human body, rendering by its opaqueness the objects on the other side from myself invisible. I had the fullest opportunity to observe these forms, especially the one which shook hands with the lady visitor sitting next to myself. This lady, who is not a spiritualist, declared that the hand of the materialised form was as firm as that of any ordinary human being. I know that it has been said these forms are no less than the medium in changed clothes, thus accounting for the naturalness of the whole appearance. I can only reply that, whilst such a thought might very reasonably occur, for myself, I am quite convinced that while the form stood before me, the medium, in his usual clothing, was behind the curtain in an unconscious state. During the séance there was a great deal of talking behind the curtain, professedly by spirit visitors; these utterances included statements addressed to the audience, giving information, asking questions, and replying to others. On several occasions I heard the medium respiring very heavily, and also at times groaning as if in pain. When the séance closed, the medium came forth evidently somewhat exhausted, but in other respects precisely as he was before the séance. I was quite satisfied that the medium did—could—not, under the circumstances, personate the departed; the question then arises—where did these forms come from—how were they materialised—and how sustained during their appearance before us? To the first I reply, we may conceive the materials were composed of innumerable invisible particles, brought together and solidified for the time being by a process unknown to us. To the second, that spirits out of the flesh, under certain circumstances, have the power of will to so control elements that they can effect the object in view. And to the third, that certain magnetic emanations derived from the medium and the audience, are utilised to keep up the process of materialisation. Who can form any idea of the ability of the human spirit when free from the trammels of the flesh, providing certain conditions attend it; and that the atmosphere around us is full of such elements as when combined can exhibit form and solidity is well known. That the human frame, in conjunction with a strong will, is capable of imparting vitality to others, has been proved over and over again.

The question of the materialised human form at such séances is not yet understood, but like many other things, when the knowledge of the process as effected by disembodied spirits shall be understood, then men will wonder that they did not always comprehend it. And the same may be said of dematerialisation, which is also at present not fully understood; even as in nature there are numberless processes which man has not yet arrived at a knowledge of. With reference to this phenomenon of materialisation, probably my personal experience has been limited when compared with the experience of others; not that I think as a rule, however, the repeated witnessing of such manifestations would make the phenomenon more certain as a fact, but the circumstances having been more varied, and in some cases more palpable, the conviction would necessarily be deeper in some minds; and when I know, and can tell you with the greatest confidence that such manifestations in the presence of others have been far in advance of anything I have witnessed, you might be sufficiently interested to make enquiry for yourself, and pursue this subject with greater earnestness. I desire, ere I close

this letter, again to refer to an aspect of Spiritualism which I believe is peculiar to all earnest investigators, and of which I have had a fair share; indeed, did I appear now to avoid a reference to this aspect of it, I might be charged with trying to evade considerations which in the unenlightened might go far towards condemning the whole question of spiritual operations; I mean the difficult, doubtful, and sometimes contradictory exhibitions which arise in the experience of the investigator. I should be very sorry to affirm that, in my own experience, there had been none of these characteristics. The question frequently arises, how can these things be? Moreover, how is this doubtful point to be settled? But more particularly, is not this blank contradiction quite enough to convince one that it is indeed all delusion? As I remarked in a previous letter, it is not, however, all mistake or contradiction; and mistakes and contradictions, with the difficulty attending thereon, are to so great an extent characteristics of all the pursuits of the enquiring mind, that when the circumstances of Spiritualism are found to be invested therewith, it need not excite surprise, and certainly need not cause alarm. I could tell you, in connection with my own experience, of such undoubted contradictions, as viewed from my then standpoint, would stagger the boldest investigator; but to those who have patience to wait awhile, and to take time to unravel these apparent mysteries and contradictions, there comes a period when clearer light brings the most satisfactory elucidation, and the contradiction is found to be more in the hasty conclusions of the investigator than in the operation of spiritual laws. In the business of life, I have found that nothing is easier than for misunderstandings to arise; and this is more particularly the case when conditions of intercourse are not fully understood or realised. Is there a single mechanical or scientific instrument in use by man which is so far perfect that its operations are not liable to error or deviation? and if this be so, is it not likely that spiritual operations, conducted by men in the world beyond, and man in this more material state, should yield their crop of difficulty, doubts, or even apparent contradiction? I have only to remind you of the Bible as a book; take that, and then ask yourself, how comes it that there are so many interpretations of its contents, and so many diverse sects and creeds arising out of its study? The fact is undoubted, my friend, that we must not quarrel with any of the results of human life as it progresses day by day; but assuming the attitude of a scholar in God's great school of the universe, patiently learn by all the means which are presented in our onward course—learners ever—and never so dogmatic as to say, I know all things, and feel assured that there can be no other explanation in the light of fuller knowledge! I feel assured that, I have both done myself and others injustice in coming to a too hasty conclusion on many questions; and, therefore, more than ever feel the need of laying down this rule to guide my conduct: to be positive about anything at the moment only in the degree in which I possess information, and always holding myself in readiness to correct or modify my conclusions in the event of fresh light arising, and always regarding it more than likely that that fresh light will arise, and whereby it will become easier to reject entirely or more fully accept the previous conclusions.

My friend, we live to learn; or, to speak more definitely, the very act of living is a learning the great facts of existence; and dogmatism is out of the question. One thing I would have you to do: forgetting the things which are behind, press forward to those which are in the future, by living a life which shall ever bear reflection in the light of that future—a life which shall indicate truth in the inward parts, and a determination to *know* that you may *do* the Will of Him in whom you live and move and have your being!

Your well-wisher,

H. J. B.

Melbourne, December, 1881.

THE CHURCH CONGRESS AT NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.

It is assuredly one of the signs of the times that during the Church Congress, held at Newcastle-on-Tyne, one of the subjects for discussion was "What is the duty of the Church in respect to the prevalence of Spiritualism?" On Tuesday, 4th October, the Lord Bishop of Durham took the chair, and this important subject was discussed. Spiritualists may surely congratulate themselves, that, by their continuous rapping and knocking at the door, the sleepy inmates, who, with their children, were in bed, have at last condescended to peep out to see what manner of people these Spiritualists are, and what they mean by disturbing those who are satisfied with things as they are. The subject was met in different ways by different speakers. Mr. Stuart Cumberland was of opinion that the movement should be put down, and exposed. He had tried to do so, by squirting liquid cochineal over the materialized spirit at a séance. Mr. Stephen Bourne condemned the movement, as Spiritualists had not been able to operate on him, and they had done nothing useful. It was folly for the Church to waste its time in meeting Spiritualism, for the Spiritualists possessed an amount of ingenuity which would tax that of the wisest and best men. Let it be left to scientists and conjurers. Dr. Eastwood, president of the North of England branch of the British Medical Association, assured the Congress that medical men generally were believers in the Christian religion, and that the British Medical Association commenced their meetings every year by prayer and praise, consequently the medical profession, as a whole, sets its face against Spiritualism. It was the universal belief amongst them, with very few exceptions, that the manifestations were not the manifestations of spirits, but were false. Spiritualism had added nothing to our knowledge of the human mind or spiritual part of our nature, and the manifestation might be fairly explained by the knowledge we already possess. The duty of the Church is to let Spiritualism alone, and let it die away.

In that Congress there were, fortunately, men of larger minds and greater abilities and more penetration than Cumberland, Bourne, or Dr. Eastwood. As on a former occasion there rose up a doctor of the law, who had a reputation among all the people, and said, "Take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men; if this counsel be of God ye cannot overthrow it." The Rev. R. Thornton, D. D., vicar of St. Johns, Notting Hill, in the presence of the Lord Bishop of Durham, and before that numerous assembly, gave utterance to these words, "There is much of the Spiritualist teaching with which the Church can most cordially agree."

1. It is a system of belief, not of mere negation of all that is not logically demonstrated. Its adherents are not ashamed to avow that they hold as true, propositions which are incapable of mathematical proof. They are at least Theists, if no more; certainly not Atheists.

2. It is in its very nature antagonistic to all Sadduceism and Materialism. It flatly contradicts the assertions of the miserable philosophy that makes the soul but a function of the brain, and death an eternal sleep. It proclaims that man is responsible for his actions, against those who would persuade us that each deed is but the resultant of a set of forces, an effect first, and then a cause, in an eternal and immutable series of causes and effects, and that sin and holiness are therefore words without meaning. It tells of angels, of an immortal spirit, of a future state of personal and conscious existence.

3. It inculcates the duties of purity, charity, and justice, setting forth as well the loving fatherhood of God as the brotherhood of men, to be continued, with a personal recognition, in the future life.

4. It declares that there can be, and is, communion between Spirit and Spirit, and so, by implication, acknowledges the possibility, at least, of intercourse between man and the Supreme Spirit; in other words, of Revelation, Inspiration, and Grace.

These be brave words to come from a vicar of the Church in the presence of the Lord Bishop of Durham.

The learned gentleman treats Spiritualism with respect. "Gross absurdity and gross deceit," he says, "have been exposed in the doings of pretended Spiritualists." But we must not rush to the conclusion that all Spiritualism is pure deception, any more than we must involve all statesmen and all ecclesiastics in universal censure because there have been political and religious charlatans. As rational men, and even more, as Churchmen, who trust in the presence with us of a guide to our reason, when the matters we deal with approach or enter the province of faith, we are bound to accept facts, though we may decline the inferences which others draw from them."

Dr. Thornton gave the following as his idea of what the doctrine of professing Spiritualists is:—"God is a spirit, and the visible universe is an expression to man of his infinite life. Man is a spiritual being. Each individual spirit is a part of a great over-soul, or *anima mundi*. The spirit is enthralled in a body during this life; when released it at once enters upon the possession of higher powers and more extended knowledge, and its condition is one of regularly progressive advancement. Disembodied spirits are able to hold converse with those in the body; not with all immediately, but through the instrumentality of privileged or specially gifted persons called mediums, who are on occasion influenced, or as they term it, controlled by the spirits. Spirits can also apply force to physical objects, perform certain actions such as unity and producing sounds. They can sometimes show themselves in materialised forms, some of the material being borrowed from the medium. A new era is now dawning on us. The old religions, Christianity included, have played their part, and must pass away in face of clearer light. By intercourse with the spirit world man will advance as he never has advanced before, in knowledge, purity and brotherly love."

An excellent report of the proceedings at the Congress in connection with Spiritualism is to be found in *Light*, of 8th October, and from that periodical the foregoing extracts have been taken.

A few more quotations from Dr. Thornton's address will more fully illustrate the style in which he discusses the subject, and not only so, but it will be evident from his remarks that the teachings of Spiritualists are influencing the minds of those who are leaders in the Church. He points out how the Church has hitherto taught that man has an immortal soul. "We too seldom convert the phrase, and tell men that they are really spirits, and have a body. Those who have learned with Socrates that the soul—or, more properly speaking, spirit—is the essence of the man, could never suppose that the existence of the reality depended upon the existence of its instrument. We should have taught, more carefully than we have done, not that men *are* bodies, and *have* souls, but that they *are* souls and have bodies, which bodies, changed from the glory of the terrestrial to the glory of the celestial, will be theirs to do God's work hereafter. Here, perhaps, some one will say to me 'You seem half a Spiritualist yourself.' Well, I am just as much a Spiritualist as St. Paul was when he wrote 'I knew a man in Christ, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knoweth, such an one caught up to the third Heaven;' "just as much as St. John when he bade his beloved to try the spirits, and said of himself that 'he was in the spirit on the Lord's day.'"

A considerable portion of Dr. Thornton's address is, as was to be expected, and as is quite reasonable, occupied with the objections he has to the teachings of Spiritualists. Spiritualists are glad to be argued with. They have hitherto submitted with the best grace they could to being told that they were deluded, insane, and weak minded. They have listened with as much patience as possible to the abuse and ridicule and charges of knavery that have been showered down upon them. They have been told by good men, who ought to have known better, that their journals were scurrilous, and the writers therein ignorant; and now, when reason seems to be retreating to the learned theological mind, and argument takes the place of invective, Spiritualists may well be allowed to congratulate themselves on the dawn of a better day.

"I am far from denying the possibility of intercourse with the spirits of the departed," says Dr. Thornton. "On the contrary, I believe that in God's providence it sometimes does take place. But I fail to see that the phenomena which they allege as proofs of spiritual agency and converse are by any means convincing. Strange knockings, we are told are heard, which on demand are made to represent the letters of the alphabet—frame mysterious words; musical instruments vibrate about the room, and utter unearthly melodies; sentences are written by unseen hands; shadowy forms are descried in the darkness; light touches are felt; in leel, one spirit has permitted herself to be kissed. The spirits give their names; one of the most active calls himself John King; and we read and hear of 'Ernest,' 'Poeby,' 'Irresistible,' and others. One is reminded of the 'Hopdance' and 'Smolkin,' which Shakespeare borrowed from Archbishop Harsnet's 'Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures,' and of Matthew Hopkins' 'Vulgar Pyewacket and Peck-in-the-crown.' Now supposing for a moment that these are real spiritual beings, one would see a great danger in the practice of conferring with them. How can we know their character? It is curious that they are considered to shrink from daylight in general. 'Your light hurts us,' they are represented as saying, though we read 'God saw the light that it was good.'"

Is it not strange that an intelligent reasonable man should permit himself to use, as an argument against the too much use of light at séances, the inapt quotation that "God saw the light that it was good." Just as in such natural phenomena as sleep, and germination of seeds, a condition of darkness is favourable to the processes going on, so in some spirit manifestations it is found that the condition of darkness is favourable to these manifestations. The request for gentle light, or sometimes total darkness, does not originate in caprice or trickery, but as being the laws or conditions under which certain manifestations do occur most successfully; and yet such a learned man as Dr. Thornton is satisfied to bring as an argument against the conditions of shade or darkness a quotation from Scripture, which refers to the general creation of light at the beginning. "God saw the light that it was good." But we must pardon him for this, and continue his remarks.

"There is no sufficient evidence that spirits are at work at all. The so-called spirit revelations seem to be limited by the intelligence and imagination of the medium. Just so with the beautiful dreams of the great Spiritualist, Swedenborg (and I mention his name with profound respect, though I esteem him a visionary): it is almost amusing to remark that, when he wandered under angelic guidance through the stellar universe, he was not taken to view Uranus, Neptune, or Vulcan. The failure to visit the latter may be accounted for by what I consider extremely probable, namely, that there is no such planet; but I fear that the others were left out, simply because he did not know of them. The spirits gave him no new information on physical astronomy; and no spiritual sciences have as yet, as far as I can ascertain, made any addition to our stock of useful knowledge. Whence, then, all the strange phenomena? for, deduct what you will for delusion and deluded imagination, it is proved by the evidence of men of unimpeachable veracity and sound sense, non-Spiritualists as well as Spiritualists, that strange things are witnessed at the séances. I suggest that all are manifestations of a simple human force, which we may call as we choose, psychic, biological, odic, ectenic, whose conditions are as yet unknown (as those of chemistry were a century ago), but may, before many years, be as well known as those of heat, electricity, magnetism, and light, with which it is no doubt correlated; and may be perhaps represented as Biot proposed to represent the conditions of life, by an equation. This force was distinctly displayed in a series of experiments conducted a few years ago with the aid of the celebrated medium, Mr. Home."

"What, then, is the duty of the Church in respect of the prevalence of this Spiritualism, so beautiful in part, in part so terrible, as it were an angel face with a serpent train in its rear? First let

us guard carefully against rash argumentative assertions, and obstinate ignoring of facts, lest haply we deny, through imperfect knowledge, something that is, after all, a law in God's creation. Let us simply shew that phenomena which we cannot now fully explain need not necessarily be referred to the agency of spirits, good, bad, or indifferent, but may well be manifestations of some hitherto unsuspected human force. Then let us try the spirits (or the teachers) by the revealed rule: 'Every spirit that confesseth not Jesus Christ come in the flesh is not of God.' Where the mystery of the Incarnation is explained away or denied, we can have no doubt about the judgment we are to pass. Let us tell of the true dignity and true ministry of the bodies of the regenerate members of Christ, and of the spiritual body, whose seed is in the natural body, to be quickened in his time. Let us thankfully acknowledge the truths of Spiritualist teaching, as weapons which we too are glad to wield against Positivism, and Secularism, and all the anti-Christianisms of this age of godless thought. Let us lay to heart the hints given as to our own shortcomings. But let us all the while remember that our Gospel is a final revelation till the Lord come, and boldly reply to those who would supplement or supersede it, 'Though an angel from Heaven preach unto us any other Gospel than that which has been preached unto us, let him be accursed.' Let us tell of the only true brotherhood, the only real unity; not that of a society whose bond is an intercourse, through self-asserting mediums, with questionable denizens of a spirit world, but that of the one Church, the one Faith, the one Baptism, the one Bread and Chalice of the Lord. Let us preach more consistently and more clearly, by our lives as well as with our lips, with all apostolic zeal and all evangelistic fervour, with the emotion of true Spiritualists, and yet with the calmness of true children of the Catholic Church—the Incarnate God, Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Just so. Here we have an instance of a rational and conscientious man permitting himself to look at the new subject of Spiritualism and Spiritualistic teachings without fear, and acknowledging that there must be truth in the business somehow; but his early teachings, the education which has become to him a second nature, cause him to shrink from the further consequences of the new philosophy; "Though an angel from Heaven preach unto me any other gospel than that which has been preached unto us, let him be accursed."

At this conference the Rev. Canon Wilberforce also spoke at considerable length on the subject. "It is obvious," says he, "that we have to deal with no mere commonplace infatuation, which can be brushed aside with indifference or contempt, but rather with a movement which is firmly established, and the influence of which is every day extending." The learned gentleman gave a sketch of the origin of Modern Spiritualism at Hydesville in 1848. That it was investigated by Dr. Hare, Professor of Chemistry in the University of Pennsylvania, and the Hon. J. W. Edmonds, Judge of the Supreme Court of Appeal, in the State of New York. The former became convinced of the spiritual nature of the manifestations, and published the results of his investigations under the title of "Experimental Investigations of the Spirit Manifestations, demonstrating the existence of spirits and their communion with Mortals;" and the Judge, with some members of his family, became mediums of some considerable power. He has published, in two large volumes, a narrative of his investigations, visions, and spiritual communications; also a record of the mediumistic powers of his daughter, who, in the trance state, could converse freely in languages which she had never learned. In the year 1854, the phenomena, which in America had been witnessed by thousands of people, many of whom were of the highest credibility, and whose testimony no one would think of impeaching in a court of law, began to attract attention in England when the visit of an American professional medium—Mrs. Hayden—brought the subject prominently before the public. Among many who investigated at the time was Robert Dale Owen, the Socialist advocate, who became convinced from what he

witnessed of the spiritual nature of the phenomena, and through them of the existence of a future state, and of the truth of Christianity. From that time the movement began, and continued to spread in England and on the Continent, although more slowly than in America."

"The exact position claimed at this moment by the warmest advocates of Spiritualism is set forth ably and eloquently in a work by Mr. J. S. Farmer, published by Mr. Allen, and called "Spiritualism as a New Basis of Belief," which, without necessarily endorsing, I recommend to the perusal of my brethren. Those who are following Spiritualism as a means and not an end contend warmly that it does not seek to undermine religion, or to render obsolete the teachings of Christ; that, on the other hand, it furnishes illustrations and rational proof of them, such as can be gained from no other source; that its manifestations will supply deists and atheists with positive demonstration of a life after death, and that they have been instrumental in converting many secularists and materialists from scepticism to Christianity. In corroboration of this statement may be appended the remarkable testimony of Mr. S. C. Hall, the founder and editor of the *Art Journal*. "As to the use of Spiritualism (he says), it has made me a Christian. I humbly and fervently thank God it has removed all my doubts. I could quote abundant instances of conversion from unbelief to belief—of some to perfect faith from total infidelity. I am permitted to give one name—it is that of Dr. Elliotson, who expresses his deep gratitude to Almighty God for the blessed change that has been wrought in his heart and mind by Spiritualism."

"In view of the spread of Spiritualism in its modern aspects, and of the consequences resulting from it, it becomes a most important question what ought to be the attitude of the clergy of the Church of England towards believers in the alleged manifestations. That they are affecting and will still more affect the Church is certain, and has made itself manifest here in Newcastle. Dr. T. L. Nichols, writing of its results in America, remarks that—'There can be no question about the marked effect of Spiritualism upon American thought, feeling, and character. Nothing within my memory has had so great an influence. It has broken up hundreds of churches; it has changed the religious opinions of hundreds of thousands; it has influenced, more or less, the most important actions and relations of vast multitudes. Immense numbers of those who, a few years ago, professed a belief in some form of Christianity, or were members of religious organisations, have, under the influence of Spiritualism, modified such profession. Great numbers, perhaps, who doubted or denied the existence of a future state, have found, as they think, incontrovertible proofs of its reality.' Just, then, recognising that the general teachings of Spiritualism are inimical to almost every organised body of professing Christians, I would, with much deference, suggest that we must shake ourselves free from the conventional wisdom of the ecclesiastical pooh pooh! which is our modern substitute for the "anathematism" of less tolerant days. We must abstain from contemptuous reference to Maskelyne and Cooke, remembering that these inimitable conjurers have more than once been publicly offered a thousand pounds if they would, under the same conditions, imitate the most ordinary spiritual phenomena in a private house; but they replied that, as their apparatus weighed more than a ton, they could not conveniently accept the challenge. We must call to mind the fact that such eminent scientists as Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace and Mr. William Crookes, the discoverer of the metal thallium and of the radiometer, the latter through his investigation of Spiritualism, have both declared that the main facts are as well established, and as easily verifiable, as any of the more exceptional phenomena of nature which are not yet reduced to law. The movement is here, in the providence of God, whether by His appointment or permission; and through it He calls upon us to do what lies in our power to control and regulate it for those who are or may be affected by its practice and teaching. If from Satan, we ought not to be content with ignorance of his devices."

"The suggested attitude of the clergy towards Spiritualists may be thus summed up:—Let: As careful

an examination of the facts, as time and circumstances admit, that we may not condemn in manifest ignorance; remembering the words of Solomon, 'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.' 2nd: A frank admission of facts, and a conciliatory rather than hostile or dogmatic attitude towards believers. 3rd: A rational presentation of Christian doctrine, so far as to shew that the truths revealed are in harmony with the nature of man in his filial relation to the Father, and his fraternal relation to the Son, and in accordance with the infinite love of Almighty God. 4th: While frankly admitting any good in its teaching or influence which may be fairly claimed for Spiritualism, it is also our duty to shew from the abundant written testimony of eminent Spiritualists that great dangers, physical and mental, frequently result from a too eager and unreserved submission to psychical control. 5th: To shew that in the Christian religion, rightly understood, is to be found all, and more than all, of important truth that any spirit has ever taught from the beginning of the world."

We have thus given a sketch of the discussion at the Newcastle Congress, and are sorry that the space at our disposal does not admit of more details. No doubt such discussions must result in either convincing Spiritualists of the delusions which they have adopted as truths, or they must result in the knowledge of the truth of Spiritualism becoming more widely known, and all for the glory of God and the good of his creatures.

MR. SPRIGGS' MATERIALISATION CIRCLES.

THE series for 1881 of the above remarkable seances was brought to a conclusion on the 16th ult., with an interesting and highly satisfactory meeting.

The phenomena on the 6th Dec. were of a notable character. Geordie and Peter having expressed a desire to write a letter, writing materials were placed on the desk in the seance room, and Geordie deliberately wrote about three pages, enclosed it in an envelope, and addressed to a lady resident in Sydney, who had twice visited the circle, and who from her earnestness and mediumistic promise had attracted more than ordinary attention from the presiding spirits of the circle. When the project of sending a letter was first mooted by Peter, it had been jocularly suggested that he would require to purchase a stamp, which he said he would do if anyone present would furnish him with the money. Geordie, however, took the executive portion of the business into his hand, and a member of the circle having handed him sixpence, he proceeded into the shop and tendered the money to the shopman, who being previously informed of the object of his visit, gave him in exchange a two-penny stamp, but omitted to give him the change. Geordie presently returned and held out his hand for it, bringing it to the lady who had given him the sixpence. He affixed the stamp and handed it to the writer, who without any addition to the address, posted it to its destination, which it duly reached. Taking some flowers in his hand, Geordie returned a third time to the shop, and distributed them among three persons who were there.

On the 13th ult., a reply, addressed to Peter and Geordie, was received from Sydney, and laid upon the reading stand. Geordie lifted it, and motioning for more light, broke the seal, and then standing in the full light of the candle, deliberately read the four pages of it, and refolding it put it in the medium's pocket. Presently Peter's voice was heard, telling us that he too had read the letter, and would give us the contents, which we could verify after the circle.

The evening on which this occurred was a particularly interesting one, six children occupying the place of the ordinary three adult visitors. Peter joined heartily in the singing, and at the conclusion of the first song, expressed his pleasure at meeting the children, calling them by name, and handing flowers for each of them.

Geordie having shaken hands with them, went to the desk and wrote, "I am delighted to meet the children to-night; hope I shall meet them again soon. Geordie."

Before leaving he gave each a flower, and kissed their hands. Peter gave the children an appropriate address, telling them not to be afraid of death, as there were kind companions and happy surroundings in the spirit-world for all those who had done well here; he encouraged them to learn all they could in the world, as they would find the acquisition of knowledge, of music and other accomplishments, of value to them when they entered spirit life.

After Peter had finished, the Nun came, showing her face plainly; then the child Lily; she spoke, telling her sister, who was present, to give her love to "Ma" and "Pa," and kiss them for her. Charity came next, and leaning over the medium took the letter before referred to from his pocket and handed it to me, and on reading it the contents were found to be in accordance with what Peter had told us.

On the closing night, Dec. 16th, a gentleman was present who attended the Cardiff circle, and was immediately recognised by Peter. Within 30 seconds of Peter leaving, Zion appeared, giving his usual military salute. He was followed by Geordie who, after shaking hands, stood in the full light, and pushing back the curtain, shewed the medium; then walking to the stand he wrote the following:

"To the Circle—My dear friends—I am pleased to be with you to-night, and before you close, wish you every happiness. May God's highest blessing rest upon you and your labour the next year, and may it be a greater success. Be careful with the circle and mind both the spiritual and material conditions.—PETER—GEORDIE."

Drawing up the blind, Geordie opened the window and looked out; closing it again, he offered his arm to Mr. Carson, and they walked to and fro across the room together. He then wrote a few words, expressing his regret to leave us, and sorrowfully bade us farewell. The two female forms which followed shewed clear and strong. Little Lily talked and pulled a chair about to shew her increased strength.

Charity and John Wright followed, the former posing gracefully, and the latter talking to the circle in reference to future efforts, encouraging the cultivation of good conditions, and concluding with a "Good night, God bless you."

Skiwaukie's voice was stronger and clearer than usual; he said the recess was good if we made good use of it, and met together with heads clear.

This concluded the seance, which was one of the most interesting and enjoyable of the series.

THE PNEUMATIC DESCENT OF JESUS CHRIST.

MOTTO.—"Ignoratur enim, quæ sit natura animæ.
Nata sit, an contra, nascensque insinuetur.
Et simul intereat nobiscum morte dirempta."
LUCRETIVS, l. 115.

At a critical time, like the present, when the foremost orthodox leaders of modern Christian thought, which is by no means a true reflex of the thought of primitive Christianity, are making strenuous, though happily futile, efforts, by all sorts of Jesuitical contrivances and alliances, to "smuggle a spurious Holy Ghost in at one end of their barren dogmatic creeds;" whilst at the opposite end a personified bugbear of a devil is appointed to guard the door of the house of God, built on a foundation of sand, it comes with particularly bad grace from the leading Spiritualists of the day to assist the false prophets and the falsè expounders of the pure doctrines of one of the few true prophets of humanity, Jesus of Bethlehem, by advancing utterly untenable hyper-metaphysical views and speculations about the probable descent of the "Son of Man" from so questionable a Father as the Holy Ghost, and asserting that it is quite possible to make the descent of Jesus, the son of Mary and somebody else, from a super-human, spiritual Father, although not exactly the third factor of the Holy Trinity, agree perfectly with the data and requisites of a physiological human embryology. This attempt has lately been made by no less a person than Mr. O'Sullivan, the distinguished collaborator of Count de Buleat, in a recent lecture delivered by him in London, on the sub-

ject of "Spiritual Phenomena in America," an abstract of which appeared in the *Medium and Daybreak*, of 12th August, 1881. Want of space compelling me to refer the curious and interested reader to that source for all the details of the case, I will only quote Mr. O'Sullivan's own words in support of the ghostly genesis of Jesus to illustrate the facts in question: "Spirit," says he, "being the quickening principle in all cases, and the power of spirits over the elements being well known, it is not so unphilosophical, after all, to adopt the opinions (only opinions!) of these spirits—Theodore Parker and Archbishop Hughes to wit—in favour of spiritual conception." Under more suitable circumstances, the speaker said, he could advance some ideas on that subject connected with the philosophy of human embryology, and that he now believed, so far as we can believe without possibility of knowledge (hear!) in the suprahuman birth of our Lord (? Jesus Christ!)

These views of a hyperphysical descent of Jesus, the lecturer alleged, were entertained by, in life, two such antagonistic spirits, as the Unitarian Theodore Parker and the Roman Catholic Archbishop Hughes, late of New York, speaking through the mediumship of Mrs. Haman; whilst another, and to my mind more sensible, *alter ego* of a spirit, gave it as his opinion, and this opinion is mine too, that those communications came from fantastic spirits. And what is more to the point, those recording angels in the flesh, of whom Mr. O'Sullivan is one, who are able to support such views as these by word and pen, cannot, in my opinion, be very far removed from the airy territory of Nephelo Kokkygia or cloud-cuckoo-town, inhabited by the above-mentioned "fantastic spirits." Similar airy speculations were indulged in, and even slightly endorsed, nearly twenty years ago, by that eminent author and Spiritualist, the late Robert Dale Owen, and are plainly expressed in a most elaborate foot note on page 203 of his masterly work, "The Debatable Land," where he says in connection with his new fangled theory of spiritual inception, that "these allegations—coming through the mediumship of a highly intellectual lady, a relative of mine—involve neither suspension nor violation of natural law, nor, I think, any improbability so violent that we must needs reject it straightway. The communication alleges that Christ's birth occurred under circumstances so peculiar that he grew to manhood devoid of appetite and passion (??) to a degree necessary to his pure integrity as Teacher, which no other person has ever shared." And again a little further on.

"At this stage of our knowledge (1871) I feel unqualified to avouch such a theory, and unwilling to gainsay it. Ungifted with spiritual clear sight—seeing here, but as through a glass darkly, why should I hasten to decide? I am content to wait, it can be a few years only now, for better discernment and broader light." Robert Dale Owen has now been in the world of spirits for a few years, but we have not yet heard from him whether he met Jesus the Lord and Christ there, and got the necessary information about his spiritual inception or conception from him *in propria persona*.

It is surpassing strange that two so earnest and experienced workers in the field of Spiritualism—two so acute observers and able recorders of its phenomena, should find it necessary for a due comprehension of the indisputably great power of Jesus as a reformer of an old error, and partly as an originator of a new one, to assume, or suppose that the "Man of Sorrow," who had also many hours of spiritual rejoicings, was differently conceived or incepted than the rest of God's children. It is indeed almost incomprehensible, that two such learned men, who must know as well as the commonest reader of fables and yarns of Mythology, that Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, and even Pallas Athene, have been in turn similarly represented as the offspring of extraordinary hyperphysical or suprahuman foetation and parentage, should not have been able to see, or should have been blinded by an overwearing hero-worship, disabling them to discern that all these fabulous accounts with respect to the origin of Jesus, through either spiritual conception or inception, rest principally on the words of the genealogy of Matthew, who, however does not forget to mention the

important fact, that Mary's husband, Joseph, being a just man, had his just suspicions about the chastity of his wife; whilst Luke speaks of Jesus plainly as the *supposed* son of Joseph, evidently implying a lack of knowledge or suspicion on the moot point of human or suprahuman descent of the great Rabbi of Christianity. Mark, again, does not say anything at all about either conception or inception by a ghost, holy or otherwise, and simply calls him the "Son of God," which, I trust, all of us are.

Furthermore, mentioning the *diverse* opinions of the Jews about the origin of Jesus, Mark only repeats the hearsay of the people, some taking him to be the be-headed John the Baptist come to life again, or reincarnated, whilst others believed that he was Elias, or one of the prophets. The illogical Logos speculations of John the Neoplatonist, on the same subject, are known to all readers, and do not throw the slightest positive light on the "pneumatic genesis of Jesus' humanity from God's or the Holy Ghost's divinity by immaculate conception or speculative inception.

It is strange, I say, that two such eminent scholars as Mr. O'Sullivan and Mr. R. D. Owen, should not have been able to rest satisfied with the fact, patent to all unbiased thinkers, that these fabulous accounts of the mysterious conception and birth of Jesus are themselves the offspring of a credulous age, an age fond of legends, loving the mysterious, full of the spirit of wonder, open to admiration and even adoration of man-made gods and heroes, an age, moreover, accustomed to call still living men "divine," in fact of an age ready to believe, on the authority of its priests or teachers, any absurdity or extravagance in favour of crucified Sons of God, whom in their life-time they often persecuted and cast out from amongst them as madmen, or men possessed by the devil, or as blasphemers.

Well, such is life now, and life was still more "such" seventeen or eighteen centuries ago. But why need we be surprised at the credulity of the early hero-worshipping ages of Christianity, when, in our own times, learned bishops and theological scholars, and would-be re-translators of an infallibly-inspired Word of God, apparently run no risk whatever, in the midst of gaping congregations of the faithful, of spoiling their reputation for veracity by promulgating doctrines far more illogical and untenable than the hyperphysical descent of Jesus? If millions of Roman Catholics are still able to believe that Jesus Christ is personally present in a little flattened dry dough, or in a glass of bad sherry; that women may have children and still remain virgins; that the Pope himself is God's ambassador to the court of Rome and to the world at large, and as infallible as the God whom he represents; I say, if sane people in these boasted enlightened days of ours can still manage to believe in such a *farrago* of unholy trifles, why should we wonder at people seventeen or eighteen hundred years ago believing and greedily swallowing such folly about an only-begotten Son of God, born by an immaculate Jewish maiden, tempted by all sorts of devils, blue and otherwise coloured, baptised by his interior, preaching for a year or two the truth to dead walls, and winding up by being crucified for having been the best man that ever lived, still dying with an accusation against his Father, with the famous "Eli," on his lips?

I repeat it again, it is unworthy of the talent and spirit of Mr. O'Sullivan, not to speak of the late R. D. Owen, on the principle of *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, equally unworthy of all enlightened Spiritualists to attempt to elevate the human—purely human—personality of Jesus of Bethlehem, and not Nazareth, so far above the ordinary level of flesh-and-blood humanity, moulded out of the original Adamic red clay, as to make an utterly incomprehensible, divine, spiritual monster of him, and that too against his own expressed wish and will, as indicated in his plain repudiation of the simple epithet "good," as applied to himself by a mob of admirers.

Are such Spiritualists, I ask, not playing into the hands of their sworn enemies, the priests of modern Christianity, the scribes and pharisees of heterodox orthodoxy; of men who try to make a living out of the

dry bones of a dead devil? Let us, for God's sake and for truth's sake, be genuine, positive, and not metaphysical Spiritualists; let us plough up and cultivate the rich soil of our positive modern Spiritualist phenomena on which we now stand; let us strictly follow and not disgrace the encouraging example of such truly scientific Spiritualists as the Crookes's, the Wallace's, the Zoellners, the Flammarions, etc., etc., and I am sure our sublime cause must and will prosper in spite of the diamond gates of hell, which are now widely swung open on their rusty and creaking hinges by a powerful league of true antichrists in the disguise of Catholic and Protestant Jesuits. If we do not do this, and stand together shoulder to shoulder in earnest and unflinching self-defence against the attacks of the powers of darkness, both spiritual and temporal; if, instead, we lend a ready and willing ear to the charming voice of "fantastic spirits"—half Catholics, half Unitarians, either in or out of the flesh, then shall we deservedly become the laughing-stock of this age and of future ages, and sober-minded men will point the finger of scorn and derision even at the formidable phalanx of our best facts and their best advocates. Let us avoid such a terrible consummation by adopting the motto: *sigillum veritatis simplicitas*; let us be simple in our lives, honest in our speculations, resolved to stick to positive facts, and eschew the inspirations of all "fantastic spirits" on both sides of the grave, remembering the words of Him who warned us not to believe all spirits, but to try the spirits whether they are spirits of truth or the ambassadors of the father of lies. Thus only, and only thus, shall and must our grand cause thrive and prosper in *secula seculorum*!

C. W. ROHNER, M.D.

Benalla, 19th Nov., 1881.

SPIRITUALISM.

AN ESSAY BY H. A. NESBIT *

ANOTHER Essay on Spiritualism is before us. This is from the West, and shows that the influence of the subject is being felt over a wide area. Mr. Nesbit's essay is an able one; he gives no evidence of the facts of Spiritualism, but shows its strength by exposing the weakness of its opponents and the illogical nature of most of the objections to it. In this respect his essay is unique, and would be valuable in the hands of those Spiritualists who, from inexperience, are at a loss to meet the many objections urged against their belief by well-meaning but ignorant friends.

IS THERE AN INVISIBLE HUMAN INTELLIGENCE?†

WE have received from the author (Mr. Geo. Smith), a pamphlet, bearing the above title, recently read before the Brisbane Psychological Society. The writer states that his object is to give reasons why he believes in an invisible human intelligence; and hopes, by the evidences he presents, to promote serious thought and reasonable consideration on the subject treated. The writer supplements his own experiences of Spiritual Phenomena, supporting his hypothesis of an invisible intelligence by some well selected and well authenticated accounts of seances with Foster and others, disproving the theories of fraud or thought-reading, and concludes his modest but well-written paper with some appropriate remarks upon the acknowledged potency of invisible forces.

THE SOUL‡

THIS latest work of our esteemed Oriental brother Spiritualist and Theosophist is an attempt to define by the aid of past and present philosophers the nature of the soul, and the evidences of its development in both worlds. Soul and Spirit are with most people

* Spiritualism; An Essay by Henry A. Nesbit. Adelaide: Frearson, Bros. 1881.

† Is there an Invisible Human Intelligence? By George Smith. Smith & Co., Brisbane. 1881.

‡ The Soul; its Nature and Development: by Peary Chand Mittra. Stanhope Press, Calcutta. 1881.

convertible terms, though in reality distinct. In this instance the author refers to the interior imperishable principle, the essential *Ego*, which the progressed Spiritualist recognises as the *true man*. Socrates, Plato, and Fichte all endorsed this idea. The tenor of the numerous quotations selected by Mr. Mittra is to show the natural affinity of the soul to God, and that this object of man in the body should be to release it as much as possible from the tridism of matter, rendering the latter subservient to its action. This is to be accomplished by purity of life and abstinence from excess of any kind, by meditation, and the cultivation of the spiritual faculties, and by aspiration.

An appendix to the book contains a brief but interesting account of the doings of the (Calcutta) United Association of Spiritualists.

VERIFICATION OF MESSAGE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "HARBINGER OF LIGHT."

Sir,—I feel it to be a duty to those who have reached, even through horror and suffering, the bright home of the immortals to recognise their message to friends in the flesh, and in making known their presence and perfect individuality in a public manner, to thus publicly acknowledge the same. This is called forth by a message in your last issue from a spirit-entity purporting to be Robert Wilson, late of Dunedin, New Zealand. The best acknowledgment I can make is to repeat the words of his daughter Lily—"that the matter and manner of the message was such that even if all names had been omitted she would still recognise it as the words of her father."

What will ye bring, O angels,

To soothe the troubled breast?

We will bring the cherished loved one

From the mansions of the blest.

Thus is the message of immortality to man and the blessing of Spiritualism made manifest.

One matter I must allude to, as it seems to be inconsistent with the fact, it is this:—"Also my servant Margaret escaped." The fact being that she did not escape, but was consumed with the others who were lost. The explanation which presents itself to me is this, the girl was a very ignorant Irish girl not long from home, now it seems most difficult for spirits with their minds filled with certain fixed ideas concerning the future state to realize that they have left this earth, they consequently remain on the earth sphere for a time, at least till they learn better, and to spirits of another sphere, who realized their own changed condition, would, to all intents, appear as still belonging to earth; hence the apparent misstatement. In another way, however, it gives evidence of its genuineness, for, if the circumstances had been obtained from other sources with the exactness of detail as given in the message regarding names, occurrences, etc., surely such a gross mistake would have been avoided.

I may state that I stand in the position of brother-in-law to Robert Wilson, his two daughters now living with us.

Hoping there may be many more messages of love to suffering hearts,

I remain, Dear Sir, Yours, in the Truth,

M. LANDY.

Briagolong, December 20th, 1881.

QUERY.—Why did the uninspired translators of the inspired Word of God leave out, in their new version of first and second Corinthians, the important postscripts: "The first Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi (not by Paul, but) by Stephanus, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, and Timotheus;" and again, "The second Epistle to the Corinthians was written from Philippi, a city of Macedonia, by Titus and Lucas?" Echo answers interrogatively, "Why?" Perhaps it would not answer the demands of plenary inspiration by adopting the simultaneous inspiration of respectively four and two letter-writers on the same subject. Forgive, then, the translators, for they know not what they did.

CAN IT BE?

A STORY OF THE DAY.

BY E. CYRIL HAVILAND.

CHAPTER I.

"No, all the talking under Heaven would not make me believe such stuff. Why, man alive, do you think I would not be better employed than coming back to a world I am already tired of, even allowing that we live after this life?"

Joseph Kingsbury and I were arguing about Spiritualism. He is a Materialist and an Atheist, and I, Thomas Arbuthnot Hawk, am a Spiritualist. We were seated on the verandah of my house alone, and I may say, we very often indulged in these discussions. I had in vain sought to get him to join in a *séance*, but nothing, he had over and over again said, could induce him.

"Well now, Joe," I replied, "you say, allowing we live after this life. Now listen to me for a minute. Do you believe you have a soul—a spirit?"

"No, most decidedly I don't. I believe as you know well enough, that when I die I cease to exist; there is no more of me. What I am now goes to join the dust, to form the very stones with which coming generations will build their castles—in fact, I believe that

—Imperial Caesar, dead, and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away."

"Well, Joseph, you don't believe in any life hereafter. No existence, no being, and that in death all consciousness ends?" I ask.

"Most decidedly, Tom."

"And you are tired of this world you say?"

"I am. Nothing but trials and troubles surround us here."

"Well then, Joseph, were I you, with your belief in nothing, I should either kill myself or become as a beast of the field, and idle time away in selfish enjoyment."

"Now what's the good of talking like that. I can't do either. I would not stain my name by suicide, and I certainly cannot lower myself to a beast of the field."

"What difference would it make to you Joseph. You believe there is no hereafter, you believe in no Supreme Being. You are, and you will not be. There is no future for you, therefore go and enjoy yourself or cease existing. But no, you Materialists feel as the author you've just quoted says,

'Who would fardels bear
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death—
The undiscovered country from whose bourne
No traveller returns—puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.'"

"Now Tom," says Joseph, getting a little triumphant in his speech, "now look here. There's this very author you quote now, as an authority to me, says, 'From whose bourne no traveller returns.' Now, he can't have believed in these spirits of yours, you know, to write that."

"I suppose not," I say, "or he would surely not have given us Hamlet's father's ghost, and the ghost of Banquo, not to quote the many instances where he mentions spirits and ghosts as actual beings; besides that, Joe, I don't care what Shakespeare's opinion was. I tell you I have seen for myself, and tested for myself, and I cannot but believe."

"Supposing, Tom, old boy, I were to convince you that one of your mediums was a fraud, would you give it up?"

"That depends. For instance, I know that there are plenty of men who pretend to expose Spiritualism, and they go down with the crowd who have never seen the true thing, but never yet was a true Spiritualist taken in by them. I also know that there are men who call themselves mediums, who are thorough frauds, and I have exposed several such myself."

"Well, if I were to prove that Charles Jamieson, the professional medium you swear by, was a fraud, and that what he does is all trickery, would you give in?"

"It would make me doubt, and might shake my faith considerably, and I would not believe in him any more, I promise you," I replied.

"Well, we will have a sitting, or rather three sittings. But you must promise me faithfully you do not see him or warn him beforehand. The first sitting I want to see what comes; the second sitting I will confirm my plans for exposure; and the third sitting he prepared for the thorough discomfiture of your spirit medium," said Joseph, in his usual dogmatic style.

"I promise you not to see him, especially as he is out of town, and won't be in his rooms till Wednesday next." This was a Monday evening, in February, 1880.

"If it is convenient to you then we'll go to him on Wednesday evening," said Joseph.

"It would suit me better, Joe, to go in the morning if it's all the same to you."

"Oh yes; only I thought these professionals never sat in daylight."

"Why he sits with his window wide open, and the sun streaming in," I reply with a smile.

"Does he though? Oh, very well, Wednesday morning at ten will do for me."

"All right. I wonder who is this coming; I heard the gate click," I say.

Then up the steps from the garden come two figures, and a voice says, "Well, Tom, how are you?"

"Why, Jack, I'm glad you've come over, and Mrs. Bronton, too. Come inside, Mrs. Hawk is there. Joe and I were in one of our arguments, and now you've come why we can introduce another element."

John Bronton, who was a thorough Church of England man, shook his head.

"No thank you," said he; "I'm sorry to have broken in upon your *tête-à-tête*, but I avoid such subjects, and think they are best left alone."

"Oh well, Jack, every one to his liking. Come inside then and we'll manage a game of whist; that will suit you better."

So we went inside, where my wife and her sister, Miss Langton, soon were enjoying a game at whist, with Bronton and Kingsbury as partners respectively.

Mrs. Bronton sat down to the piano, and treated us to a few pieces.

I was sitting near Bronton, just looking on at the game, and every now and then scraps of conversation would be heard.

"Your wife plays beautifully, Jack," I say.

"Yes, Tom. It's your dear Mrs. Hawk, shall I deal for you? That was two by honours and one by tricks we were. Yes, Tom, as you were saying, she does play well; and it's all by ear, she cannot read a note of music."

"Well that is curious; she is a sort of musical medium in a normal state, that is, I should say, some musical spirit plays through her by impression."

"Oh, bosh, Tom; now don't talk such rubbish to me. Here, is it my turn? I must not speak any more or we'll lose all our tricks."

"It's all very well for Tom to talk like that," says my sister-in-law, Mary Langton, who is flirting by the way with Joe, tremendously, "but I think he is gone mad on this Spiritualistic craze, and I am sure Mr. Kingsbury's opinion is much more probable than his, that we do not exist at all after death."

"Now, Mary," says her sister; "whist not argument, if you please; and you, Tom, be off and don't disturb our card circle."

"Very well, dear; and obediently I rise and leave them to their whist, and sit down near my musical friend who plays by ear."

"Don't you think, Mrs. Bronton, that Mary is flirting very much with Kingsbury?" I ask.

"Well, I do, and he seems rather partial to her. I should not be surprised if they made a match of it."

"And to tell you the truth neither should I," I add, "and I would not be averse to the match, for he is a very nice fellow; but I fancy your daughter is his greatest attraction."

"Well, Lily does not care much for him, Mr. Hawk, but I suppose you would account for all this love making by some such theory as the co-attraction of the affini-

tiveness of the psychic force existing in the human body," says Mrs. Bronton, with a smile. "That's good for me."

"I would not contradict you for the world, but I trust you have a dictionary handy. However, let us go to supper now they have finished their whist."

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CHAPTER II.

Wednesday morning, and half-past nine. It was a beautiful blue sky day, the sun shining just as the sun knows how to shine in February, in Australia.

Joe was with us, he had come to breakfast, and was in high glee at the coming discomfiture to my pet medium.

"Come along, Tom, we'll be late if you dawdle, and my soul is anxious for the fray. Good-bye, Mrs. Hawk, and good-bye, Miss Langton," said Joe, as we went down the steps.

"I'd give anything if you proved him a fraud," said Mary to Joe. "Oh, I would be delighted."

"Now, Mary, I've kissed my wife and with your permission I'll do the same to you, although you are my opponent. Good-bye, old girl," and I jumped down the steps and followed after Joe.

"By Jove, Tom, you will look blue over this, won't you?"

"Now, Joe, what are you going to do, do you suppose? Charles Jamieson will make you look blue at what he'll show you; but you talk as if no one had ever tested him, and all the world were waiting for your verdict."

"Oh, no, not at all; only you see it's like being blinded by love; you are all blinded by your fanaticism, and you don't look for tricks."

"But don't you suppose that men like Crookes, Wallace, Zollner, and a host of others would test all these mediums well when they got a chance. Look at those volumes Zollner published on Slade; why they are one mass of tests."

"Now, don't talk to me of Slade, a man who was in goal in London for defrauding the public. Did not Lankester expose him?"

"No, Lankester did not; and what is more, Slade was never in goal at all. It's a most infamous lie, the circulation of that report, and I will lend you a pamphlet on it by M. A. Oxon, called 'The Slade Case,' in which there is a full account of the trial, showing the thorough bias and unfairness of both judge and evidence. But here we are. I am not going to introduce you, Joe, and you understand that he is quite unprepared for us."

"All right," said my sceptical friend, and up we went to a sitting room, a boy in waiting informing us that Mr. Jamieson was engaged.

Before long, however, a gentlemanly-looking young fellow entered the room, saying, "Good-morning, Mr. Hawk, I am glad to see you. I only returned from the country last night."

"And I am glad to see you looking so well, Mr. Jamieson; this is a friend of mine. His name I won't mention just now, as he is a thorough sceptic, but we have come on purpose for a sitting."

"Certainly; I shall be delighted to help convince your friend. In a few moments we will go into the séance room, the girl is just dusting it."

Mr. Jamieson seated himself on a chair just opposite to us, and leaned his elbow on the table. "This is delightful weather, Mr. Hawk, is it not?" said he.

"Yes," said I; and I got no further, for three loud raps announced the acquiescence of our spirit friends. "There did you hear that, Joe?"

"I heard you kick your chair if that's what you mean?" "Your friend is very sceptical," said Jamieson, and then he addressed Joe. "You have never had an opportunity of testing these things, have you?"

"No," said Joe. "I want to get a thorough test, but I am somewhat deterred for fear of the medium feeling hurt or insulted. This is the last thing in my thoughts. I am very sceptical, and want to thoroughly satisfy myself of the truth or falseness of the phenomena."

"Oh, I will not feel hurt," said Jamieson, "at any test you propose."

"Thank you; then I shall take you at your word."

"For instance, if I gave you such a test as this.—Your name is Joseph Kingsbury; you are 32 next birthday, and you were born at 16 Durham Street, Edinburgh. What would you say to that?"

This came so unexpectedly that even I, used as I was to phenomena, was dumbfounded. As for Joe he just gazed and said nothing.

"Please, Sir, your room is ready," said the girl at the door.

"Come along," said Jamieson, laughing, "you are not so formidable a sceptic after all."

When we got in Joe remarked, "but Mr. Jamieson how could you tell all that?"

"The spirits told me; I saw them write it in the air over your head, and more that I will not tell you."

"Oh, please do," said Kingsbury.

"No, not just yet. Now sit down gentlemen, or if you like examine the table, and move it to any part of the room you choose; it does not matter to me."

Kingsbury turned it over and rapped it, and moved it some three yards from where it stood, and then we sat down.

"Now," said Jamieson, "write several names on slips of paper, and fold them up on the table while I am over here."

I showed Kingsbury how to do it, and then told Jamieson they were ready.

As soon as he seated himself, rapping came on the table.

"Our friends are very strong to-day," said he. Rap, tap, tap.

"They say 'yes,'" I remarked to Kingsbury; "those three raps mean yes."

"Would you mind turning your feet out so that I can see them?" said Joe.

We both did as requested.

"I see the name of Margaret Kingsbury, your mother; she died 22nd August, 1808, and she wants to say something to you. Have you a slate with you?"

"Yes," said Kingsbury, "one I bought just now."

Joseph got his slate out of the paper, and Jamieson said to him, "Now, I don't want to touch it; put the piece of pencil on it, and hold it close up under the table. That's right; now put your other hand on top of my feet on the table—so; now we will see if our friends will write."

Presently we heard scratch, scratch, and still more scratches on the slate, and then three taps.

"Now," said Jamieson, "read it."

I glanced over his shoulder and saw the message, and besides that, I have seen the slate since then often, and know what was on it:

"Dear boy,—I am your mother; you need not doubt me. Do not think of marrying Miss Bronton, for you never will; you will marry Mary Langton; and as a proof to you of my identity, I sign myself in full, your loving mother—MARGARET ANSTOW KINGSBURY."

"Well, that is wonderful; you will excuse my looking on it as yet, as very clever conjuring, Mr. Jamieson; but can any one else communicate?"

"We'll try."

Again a slate was held under the table, and presently we heard the same scratching sound; then Kingsbury drew it out, and written on it was, "You doubt, but we are here alive and sensible; you cannot be expected to give in all at once; you will not get further proof to-day, but at another sitting we will try and convince you."

Then, suddenly, as he finished reading, Kingsbury's chair was twisted round, he sitting in it all the time. This rather astonished him, but as the sitting was apparently at an end, he said he would call again and investigate further.

"Why, where is my hat? I left it down on that box when we came in," said Kingsbury.

We searched high and low for it, and at last I suggested the spirits had taken it. Three loud raps answered me:

"They have indeed," said Jamieson. "Will you tell me where it is?"

Three raps.

"Then," he replied, holding a slate under the table, "Write." We heard the writing and then read on the slate, "Inside the box; the key is in the sceptic's coat pocket."

"I am sure I never took the key," said Joe Kingsbury, "nevertheless I'll look." So he felt, and there it was in his breast coat pocket, and when we unlocked the box, the hat was calmly lying inside it.

We bade Mr. Jamieson "good-day," and left. Outside Joe began, "Now, look here, Tom, he is a good conjuror, as clever a one as I've seen, but in setting himself up as a *spirit* medium, he is a vast fraud."

"But, my dear fellow, look —"

"Never mind, Tom, don't trouble to explain it. I can't explain myself yet, but I will. It will take me longer than I supposed. There's a friend of mine though (a Dr. Serag, who is an amateur conjuror), and I'll get him to come with me, and between us we will bowl him out."

"But Joe."

"No 'buts,' I won't listen to them."

"Well, come over to-night to tea, and have a talk."

"Thank you, but I am engaged to go to Branton's or I would." So Joe and I parted in the street, he going to his business house, and I for a blow on the steamer to Manly.

CHAPTER III.

I had been giving my wife and sister-in-law an account of our morning's séance, as narrated in the last chapter, of course omitting that part referring to Mary and Miss Branton; and as it was then about half-past seven in the evening, and a moonlight night, I proposed we should go over to Branton's, for I was anxious to have my talk out with Kingsbury.

"I cannot go this evening, Tom," said my wife, "as I have a dress I particularly want to finish; but you and Mary go."

"No, let Tom go alone," said Mary.

"All right, ladies, I won't stay long. I only want to talk this out with Joe." So I got my smoking cap and stick and walked over.

Just as I got to the house door I heard through the shutters of the French windows that opened out on the verandah these words:

"But Miss Branton, won't you give me the right to consider myself engaged to you, for I do truly love you."

The voice was Joe Kingsbury's. I turned down the steps quietly and softly, and went out to the grassy lawn at the side of the house and so out to the gate, thinking to myself of the message of the morning, and the warning that he would not marry her.

"Now, they will never guess I heard them," I said to myself as I slammed the gate and started whistling "In the gloaming," all the way up to the house, stamping as heavily as I could. Not a word did I hear this time as I knocked at the door, and when I was shown into the drawing-room, there sat Kingsbury alone, looking over a volume of photographs.

"Why, Tom, I did not know you were coming."

"I only dropped in for an hour. But where are the Brantons?"

"Oh, they will be here presently."

"Have you thought any more of this morning?"

"Yes, the more I think, the more I am convinced he is a fraud; but Serag will bowl him out. I wrote to him to-day, and ought to get an answer to-morrow afternoon."

"Ah, Mr. Hawk, I am glad to see you," said Mrs. Branton, as she came into the room. "I suppose you have heard that Lily is going up to Queensland in a few days?"

"No, indeed I have not," I replied.

"Yes, she is going for some months to my brother's station. It will do her a great deal of good."

"You will miss her, Mrs. Branton, I should think."

"I must put up with that; some day I shall lose her altogether; I mean when she gets a husband."

I imagined and I suppose it was only imagination,

she glanced at Joe, but he seemed particularly interested in a photograph just then, for he asked her where the scene lay, and who took the picture.

Just then Miss Branton came in. She was a slight, pretty girl, with hair — but there I always skip these descriptions when I read books, and so I won't write one; what I've said is enough.

Jack Branton soon followed. He had been out at the back giving some man directions about a well he wanted sunk, and he apologised for his prolonged absence.

We had music and cards, and when I looked at my watch, I found it was half-past ten, so I had stayed over two hours.

"I must be off, Mrs. Branton, or my wife will give me a Caudle lecture the rest of the night. But when does Miss Branton go to Queensland?"

"Next week."

"Then do come over on Monday or Tuesday night, and let us have an evening before she goes. Will Monday night suit you?"

"Tuesday will be better."

"Well, say Tuesday, to tea, all of you," I replied.

And so it was settled.

Lily Branton and Joe had walked a-head to the gate as Mrs. Branton, her husband, and I followed. What Joe said I don't know, but for the first five minutes after we had started down the road together, he never spoke a word to me.

"You will come on Tuesday night of course," I said.

"I don't know."

"Are you engaged, Joe?" I asked, not thinking of the double meaning, that seemed to wake him up, for he gave a sigh and said,

"I beg your pardon Tom; what did you say?"

"Why, I asked you to come over on Tuesday night to tea to meet the Brantons, and you said 'you didn't know.' One would think you were in love."

"In love? Ha, ha; good idea. No; I was thinking of something else. Yes, I'll come with pleasure."

By this time we had reached my gate, and I took Joe in with me to get a cigar—he appreciates "Henry Clay's," of which I have a supply—and then we sat on the verandah smoking for half an hour. My wife and her sister had both gone to bed, as it was past eleven; so Joe and I sat and smoked and talked.

Now, when a man smokes a good cigar, generally he does not talk with the cigar between his lips; so, as he inhales the smoke he thinks, and then as he removes the cigar and blows the smoke out in a long thin jet, he crystallises his idea, and as the smoke ends, he gives his thought words, and speaks. Thus was our conversation. I began it.

"My brother-in-law, Charles Carlyle, wrote to me from London last mail, and he has been to see a great many mediums. He says he has seen Duguid, the medium painter, and Eginton, and several others, and he is delighted with them."

"By the way, do you ever mesmerise your wife now Tom?" asked Joe. "You remember—and mentioning Charles' name puts me in mind of it—that just before I arrived from the old counry, that excitement concerning the burning of Charles' house occurred, and you said it was through your wife's clairvoyance that the villain was traced. You promised me then to see Mrs. Hawk in this clairvoyant state, and I have never yet had the opportunity."

"Well Joe, to tell you the truth, I have not mesmerised her for about eighteen months, but some night I will, and you can test it for yourself; but you will be as sceptical then as you are now over Jamieson."

"No; you see Jamieson has to live by it, and your wife has not."

"Oh, then, the fraud is simply in living by your profession."

"Not at all; but he should not take money. Now, the other day, he received half a sovereign from you for our sitting, and he ought not to charge a penny."

"That is funny argument, Joseph."

"He should do something else; get into an office or something, and then let people come to him of an evening," said Joe.

"Well Joe, the clergymen live out of their religion, and why shouldn't he? He gives up the whole of his time to spirit work, and his time is worth so much to him, and so he should be paid for it."

"Now Tom, what do these spirits teach you? Tell me one thing."

"One thing they teach is, that by the power they exhibit they are able to do things we cannot do. I have no doubt that when the spiritualistic knowledge has progressed so far—and the progression must be both in the spirit world and here on this earth—that inventions of useful machines will increase, and all human knowledge will be vastly benefited by a closer spiritual communion. Messages will be delivered to our friends in England or America, quicker, surer, and at an immensely lower cost than by telegraph. I can see in the future, Joe, the time when there will be certain mediums who will be *en rapport* by spirit power with all the countries of the globe, and even with many of the worlds of the universe, and when merchants and others will seek their mediumship to order goods or even to converse with their London or American agents easier than by telephone. What we know, Joe, is nothing to what is coming."

"All I can say, Tom, is that if I did not know you I should say you were mad, and even now I begin to entertain fears of your health. Get thee to bed, friend, and in the words of that famous poet Anon, 'cool thy fevered brow.'"

"Good night, Joe; I'll make you believe before I have done with you. We'll see you here on Tuesday to tea; don't forget."

"*Au revoir*," said Joe, and he vanished out of my front gate leaving me to shut up the house and go to bed."

I had opened out a vista of thought before myself as regarded the future power of the spirits, and while I was away thus, I suddenly lost all recollection, and suppose must have gone to sleep, for I found myself in bed the next morning.

(To be continued.)

JOTTINGS FROM THE NORTH-EAST.

"A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR."

ANOTHER year has nearly faded into the long ages of the past. Many friends have joined the throng of those gone before into the bright and happy land of the hereafter, old faces, whose many kindly smiles shed rays of love and kindness on all around. And some friends have journeyed into other lands; while some have merely changed the scene of labor. Many yet remain. Our cause flourishes. Truth against the world. On all hands I see wonderful changes in the minds of men. Our cause is not looked on with that disfavor it was only a few short years ago. The press and pulpit favor (if favor it be where they receive more than give) us by making acknowledgments in indirect ways, that we are right in our conceptions of nature and of nature's God. The teachings of harmonical revelations are taking their place as the foundation of all true religion. Love God and your neighbour as yourself. Do all the good that it is possible in your humble sphere. Let those be our guides, and then I may, with all confidence, say that my wish of a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year will be fully consummated.

I once heard an anecdote about a minister who, being requested to pray for rain, excused himself on the plea that there was no good in praying for rain as long as the wind was "due east." He did not believe in his prayers being a failure. The same as a supplication that I once heard delivered by a very worthy clergyman of the Church of England, a man who was without doubt the truest gentleman I ever knew; and many will, I am sure, acknowledge with me that a kindlier man than the Rev. J. H. May never officiated in any pulpit. The occasion referred to was the opening of a large quartz crushing machine. Mr. May invoked the Almighty to bless and prosper the undertaking; in fact, by the tone of his supplication, he wanted the Almighty to look after and take charge of the affair, thereby, in all probability

securing a handsome percentage on the outlay of the shareholders. For it must be a success if divine favor was bestowed on it. His prayer was lengthy. The "Amen" from the assembled shareholders and others was hearty. The hymn following was sung with fervour; yet there never was a greater failure, or a quicker smash up, than the enterprise in question. Mr. May should have followed the caution of the before-named clergyman about the rain—"No use in praying for success on a crushing plant without the reef looks well."

Some writer has been taking the *Harbinger* and Spiritualism to task in the columns of the *Oceans and Murray Advertiser*, of October 22nd. It is a critique on that month's *Harbinger*. With the exception of one gross falsehood, and a few hard words, there is nothing of any moment in it. The falsehood referred to is this. Speaking of materialisations he says:—"Now, even if we did not know that, wherever any critical investigations of the apparent phenomena produced at these sittings has been allowed, they have invariably been traced to plain and palpable material causes." The writer of the article in question would naturally lead one to suppose that all the scientific men who have investigated the phenomena of Spiritualism, and in that class I place materialisation of course, must have been deceived. The bare possibility of such a thing is repugnant to common sense. Surely if we can trust scientific men to search into the mysteries of nature, and believe them when they give to the world the fruits of their researches in the laboratory, and when they say that their investigations have led to certain results; and if they take in hand to investigate into the phenomena of Spiritualism and they say such and such took place; we have used every possible means to discover trickery; we have brought science to help us, and we find that the phenomena of materialisation is true; why cannot there be the same amount of faith placed in them as when they said they had discovered the component parts in water, of air, or any thing else that was the object of investigation, particularly if they said we have experimented in our own rooms, and with our own apparatus, so as to discover any trickery? We have fully substantiated the astounding fact of materialisation. Yet this writer says we were always under the impression that the Katie King was an exploded affair, or words to that effect. Does he mean Crooke's Katie King? If he does, then I can say truth in his vicinity lies at the bottom of a remarkably deep well, so deep that there is not the slightest chance of the writer ever making her acquaintance.

The Rev. Mr. Gosman, chairman of the Congregational Union, lectured at Walsingham lately, taking as his subject "Creeds and Conscience." He acknowledged that the subject of "Creed" was creating a large amount of interest in all parts of the world, and he thought there would be a great crisis in ecclesiastical matters. He thinks the axe should be used at the root of the matter, viz., subscription to creeds, give the ministers freedom of thought and speech, and make them free-thinkers at once. It is said creeds preserve the truth and are a defence for the word of God. Now what defence does the word of God require? I should advise the rev. gentleman to ask Colonel Ingersoll that question. No doubt the answer would be very satisfactory to him and his brother clerics. It appears, from the report of the lecture, the rev. gentleman pitched right and left into all denominations on the subject of creeds. Battered at by a minister of the gospel, and torn to shreds by the Freethinkers, I can fully endorse the worthy gentleman's remark, that there is a crisis in ecclesiastical matters that will shortly culminate into a state that will make the churches of Christendom quiver to their lowest foundations.

The Rev. Canon Howard, incumbent of Christ Church, Beechworth, speaking at a tea-meeting held at a place named Oxley, said some things that may be taken as showing the way the pulpit is gradually following the van of modern progress, and I may also add, Free thought and Spiritualism. Coming as they do from a gentleman of the Rev. Canon's position, it shows plainly that the

Rev. Canon is fully alive to the peril the church is in if she holds on to the superstructure of the bygone past. He does not—by the report from which I quote—delight in wishe-washey speeches or “clerical butter” that generally prevails at tea-meetings. Men should not be afraid to exercise the faculties which God had given them. In speaking further on he said Egyptology had made great strides of late years. Manuscripts had been found that had been buried thousands of years. These had been deciphered and translated, and in the “Retreat of the book of the dead” forty-three commandments are given; everything contained in our Ten Commandments being found therein. Were the Egyptians inspired? The historical books of the Hebrews were no more inspiration than those of the Egyptians. He went on to say many mistranslations had occurred in the Bible. Everlasting torment did not once appear in the original. He once did believe in a devil and hell, but does not now. He would like to know where would all the brimstone come from for fuel. He believes the soul will live on until when perfected it will dwell with its eternal father. It might justly be inferred that God corrected us here to enable us to sustain further enlightenment in higher spheres of existence. Who amongst thoughtful cultivated minds can believe that the progression and advancement of the soul ceases when the vital forces that had sustained their bodies cease to act. Speaking of the words of Christ on the cross, “This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,” Paradise meant, he said, the place where our spirits dwell until fitted for translation to higher spheres. Jesus preached to the imprisoned spirits of the love of the Father. I ask any reader of the *Harbinger* whether there is not a great deal of the teachings of the philosophy of Spiritualism in the words of the Rev. Canon. I would have liked to have given further extracts from his speech, but I shall possibly have occasion to jot down in the future some more of the sayings of our orthodox spiritualistic minister of Christ Church, Beechworth, and so I refrain.

On dit. “A local light” of the Wesleyan Church, Yackandandah, has turned Freethinker, and now wonders how he never “thought” before.

The *Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, Beechworth, a paper with a large circulation, has in its issue of November 19th, a reprint from the *Harbinger* for same month of the materialisations through the mediumship of Mr. George Spriggs. The whole of the article appears without note or comment.

MR. WALKER'S LECTURES.

Mr. Walker's first course of lectures at the Temperance Hall have been well attended during the past month; one of them, “Peter, Paul, and Judas,” was specially reported for this paper, but as it would occupy about five pages, we are compelled from want of space to hold it over. Mr. Walker visited Sydney last week, and delivered two successful lectures there.

THE City of Sydney Printing and Publishing Co. have just issued a useful pamphlet, by E. C. Haviland, entitled “Hints for Beginners, with Rules for Seances.” Considering the fact of Spiritual intercourse as admitted, the author, after giving a condensed *resumé* of his own varied experiences, indicates in brief those things which conduce to success in experimental circles, followed by the concise rules published in the London *Spiritualist*, concluding with a list of standard works appropriate to investigators. Spiritualists who are often asked for instructions how to get evidence, would do well to keep a few of these pamphlets by them.

An account by Dr. Barkas, F.G.S., of some experiments in weighing materialised forms at Miss Woods' seances, appears in the *Spiritualist* for October 7th. The forms there seem much lighter than those which appear at Mr. Spriggs' seances, one of them weighing only 4 lbs., whilst the heaviest registered 45 lbs.

THE “FOYE” CORRESPONDENCE.

The following letter in reply to “W” was sent to the *Age*, but not published by that journal. Being very pertinent to the question we print it for the benefit of our readers:—

As one of the gentlemen to whom answers were given on Sunday night, at Mrs. Ada Foye's test manifestation, allow me to observe that your correspondent “W” is wrong in his theory, as far as I am concerned.

He assumes that the questioner must necessarily have his mind, wishes, and thoughts concentrated on the object in view before the medium can establish herself in the others identity. Now, in my case, it was not my intention to write at all when I went there; in fact, I went simply to hear Mr. Thomas Walker lecture, and it was only after being repeatedly asked by my wife that I consented to write a name. I put down the first one that occurred to me, without thinking seriously of what I was doing and more to please her than in expectation of eliciting the startling results that I obtained. Then again, if it is necessary for the medium's mind to be as he suggests *en rapport*, or a part of the investigator's mind, how could a third party, a stranger to both the medium and myself, step forward, and at the bidding of the raps, pick out from twenty or thirty other similar pieces of paper the identical one that I had written, which no one but my wife and I had seen. The medium's mind could not act upon his in the way suggested, for he did not know the paper himself when he came to it, and consequently could not by any complex action of his mind transmit any information which would give the slightest clue to the medium.

Again, another test that was given the same evening, where the writer of the name, after having satisfied himself on the genuineness of the replies, requested a mutual friend to ask a question, which was also truthfully answered, and in one instance an answer was given to the mutually asked question. No, Sir, something other than “W's” ingenious theory is the proper solution of the matter. I am not a Spiritualist, but I must say that the information I gained on Sunday night, be it from what source it may, to my mind deserves more than a passing notice. If it is true that spirits can and do communicate with persons alive, the sooner it is universally known and believed in the better. If it is untrue then why don't the clergymen investigate it, so that they could give authoritative contradiction to the statements. It will not convince the people of to-day that, by thus merely ignoring it, there is no truth in it. The age is passing when such behaviour would be believed in. The world is growing rapidly to require strong practical proofs of every assertion, theoretical, commercial, social, or on any subject that interests them; and when I see that such men as Crooks, Varley, Whately, Lytton, Sergeant Cox, Mapes, Edmonds, and a host of other practical, scientific, long headed men of business assert that, after investigation, they solemnly announce that Spiritualism is true, then I cannot help thinking that the testimony of those who have searched, patiently and intelligently, and after all arrived at that conclusion, is worthy of greater consideration than the testimony of those who ignore it, who have never investigated it, and yet say it is untrue.

As Mr. Walker justly said, in his lecture on “The Coming Religion,” if the clergymen are certain about their views on religion, why do they not court enquiry, not shun it? The greater the truth the greater the investigation it will stand, and all the brighter will that truth appear after such a test. It will not satisfy my mind if I am told by anyone that we must not question this, that, or the other, but must take it for granted that such is the case.

I believe our orthodox clergy are doing positive harm to their views by remaining quiescent at this critical period of the churches' history. They had far better be up and doing, or they will find they will soon be preaching to empty pews.

WM. BALL.

DUNEDIN LYCEUM AND FREETHOUGHT HALL.

THE following account of the laying of the foundation stone of the above hall is abridged from the *Dunedin Echo*, of October 22nd. The ceremony took place on the 15th October, and, after describing the arrangements for the accommodation of the Lyceum children and large band, the *Echo* says, "The crowd at this time was not less, we believe, than 3000 people," and, the band having played some introductory music, the choir and Lyceum children sang a portion of the New Zealand National Anthem, composed by Mr. Thos. Bracken (a member of the Freethought Association) commencing as follows:—

"God of Nations! at thy feet,
In the bonds of love we meet,
Hear our voices we entreat,
God defend our Freeland.
Guard Pacific's triple star,
From the shafts of strife and war,
Make her praises heard afar,
God defend New Zealand."

Mr. Braithwaite, as Chairman of the Building Committee, then stepped forward, and, handing Mrs. Logan a handsome silver trowel, said: I have the honour to ask you to lay in the customary fashion the foundation-stone of a building to be called the Lyceum, which, when erected, is to welcome within its walls people of all shades of opinion, and to be dedicated to freedom of conscience, to intellectual and social liberty, and to that higher morality which we believe results from obeying the laws of Nature. As Freethinkers we naturally feel proud of the event that brings us together, which in some respects is an auspicious one. To-day we are to lay the foundation stone of the first Freethought Hall in the Australasian colonies. Old and young are here to take part in the ceremony, each feeling hopeful of the ultimate results of such an unusual occurrence. We have with us—making glad the scene with their clear, ringing merry voices—the children of the first Lyceum started in New Zealand, an institution fraught with the deepest interests to our movement. We have also with us most of the members who in years gone by initiated and sustained in season and out of season the Dunedin Freethought Association, the first of its kind in this colony. Yourself and your worthy husband are two of the number. What more fitting, then, than that you should lay the foundation-stone of a hall to be used for the dissemination of principles for which you have ardently laboured? I take great pleasure, then, on behalf of the Freethought Association, in presenting you with this silver trowel to perform the work for which we have met. It bears the following inscription:—"Presented by the members of the Freethought Association to Mrs. John Logan on the occasion of laying the foundation-stone of the Lyceum. October 15, 1881. Mr. J. A. Burnside, architect; Mr. Henry Martin, builder." May you long be spared to keep this trowel as the memento of an occasion which, I feel sure, will be hailed with joy by Freethinkers everywhere, and which will encourage them in their efforts; and may the fruits of this day conduce in the future to the spread of our cause, and to the moral, intellectual, and physical development of humanity.

Mrs. Logan received the trowel, and, before the stone was lowered, Mr. Selby read the list of papers, &c., placed in the hollow of the stone, saying: Ladies and Gentlemen,—The following are the papers that are to be placed beneath the stone:—*Christian Record*, October 14; *New Zealand Churchman*, October 1; *New Zealand Presbyterian*, October 1; *New Zealand Tablet*, October 14; *Echo*, October 15; *Evening Star*, October 14; *Morning Herald* and *Utako Daily Times*, October 15; also, secular tract No. 1 of the Canterbury Freethought Association; New Zealand Anthem, and song, "Scatter Seeds of Kindness," and programme of the day's proceedings. The parchment also to be placed under the stone bears the following:—"Dunedin Freethought Association.—The foundation stone of the Lyceum Hall was laid this 15th day of October, 1881, by Mrs. John Logan. The following are the office-bearers of the Association and members of Building Committee, viz., President, Robert Stout; vice-presidents, William

Bolt and J. Ritson; secretary, I. Selby; treasurer, R. Malcolm; committee—Messrs. J. Parke, William Dickson, P. Cairns, W. H. Smith, J. Gore, I. Russell, I. N. Merry, J. G. Marshall. Building Committee—Messrs. Bolt, Malcolm, Parker, Low, Braithwaite, Thompson, Stevenson, Beverley, and Selby. John A. Burnside, architect; Henry Martin, contractor; W. H. Smith, inspector. Officers of Lyceum—Conductor, R. Stout; musical director, John Parker; assistant conductor, J. G. Marshall; guardian, I. Selby. Band—Miss Parker, Miss Logan, Masters Parker, Barrett, and Naumann. Leaders—Mrs. Champion, Miss Walker, Miss Davidson, Miss Dornwell, and Mrs. Luke; Messrs. Braithwaite, Criddle, Hunter, Macadam, and Cairns.

Mrs. Logan then tapping the stone, declared it well and truly laid, saying: Friends,—By direction of the Building Committee of the Lyceum Hall I have now to declare the foundation-stone well and truly laid, and may the hall, when erected, prove to be a place where much good will be done to humanity by the diffusion of knowledge and the promotion of freedom.

Three hearty cheers were then given, in which the crowd joined. The band played a selection from "Il Trovatore," introducing cornet, baritone, and euphonium solos, and the rendering of this selection was loudly applauded.

Mr. Stout stepped forward, and spoke as follows:—I have to state that I have received many letters of apology from members who are unable to attend. In one letter, which is a type of the rest, the writer says: "I look upon it (laying the foundation-stone) as planting an oasis of liberty and honesty in a wilderness of cant, and may it ever keep green in energy, and prosper." To-day is, I hope, an auspicious day for our Association. When we first met, and formed an Eclectic Association, who amongst us would then have predicted that to-day we would be able to lay the foundation-stone of a new hall—that we were to have for ourselves a hall where we could meet for mutual instruction, social intercourse, and for the moral training of our children? And, though we have not yet raised all the funds necessary to thoroughly complete and furnish our hall, I must here acknowledge the kind, generous, and magnanimous response that has been made to the request for subscriptions. One gentleman has given £1000 to us, we having only to pay interest for the term of the lease and not to repay the principal; another has given £300, another £300 on similar terms, and another £200, and another has promised £200, so that we have £2000 given to us—not to be repaid. Then our subscriptions have come to about £700, and we have promise of more; and we hope that during the first year, at all events, we will receive so much monetary aid as to leave our hall without debt and with the only liability to pay interest to which I have referred. As an Association, I do not know if we should have succeeded so well had it not been for the misrepresentation with which we have been assailed. It is well known that amongst those who do not believe the orthodox creeds there is not the same tendency to organise as amongst the sects. It is against the evils of organisation that they have to protest, and they are ever afraid of a new sect being formed. When, however, it became patent to all that the orthodox were organising, and rival sects were demanding State funds for the teaching of their creeds, then it became necessary that the Liberals should organise not for offensive but for purely defensive purposes. If we were not to lose even political rights and political privileges we must show a union. What, then, was to be the basis of our union? Practically speaking, we have had no basis. We formed an association and gave it a title, and threw our doors open to all—and open they are now. A Catholic, a Jew, an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, a Wesleyan, a Campbellite may join us. All we ask is that everyone shall have the liberty to hold and express his opinion, consistent with the like liberty to everyone else. We ask no member to sign a creed or declare his opinion, and hence it is that we have amongst us Agnostics, Theists, Spiritualists, Pantheists, and Atheists. We look upon religion not as a thing to be settled by authority but by truth; and we do not believe that men 2000 or 4000 years ago were better able to settle religious questions than we are. Wherever there has been civilisation there have been differences of religious views, and as the race has progressed—and it has progressed—we believe that its religious ideal

have become purified. There is ever a contest between the past and the present—between what is established and what is true. The poetical narrative of the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel is only the record of the struggle between what is the established and what others believe to be the true. The question said to have been put on Mount Carmel was: Was Baal (that was the King and Queen's religion, the Court religion) to be followed, or Yahvism? All through the ages the same struggle has gone on. Buddhism was driven into opposition of the popular Hindu religion by the way its first apostles were persecuted. And the records of the early struggles of Christianity and of Protestantism tell the same tale. The early Christians did not wish to found a separate sect. It was only persecution that made them go apart. To every race, in every age, the same question comes: Will you choose as your guide authority or truth? This is peculiarly the question in our age. The beliefs of the orthodox people are not the beliefs of the orthodox men of science. There is a great divorce between them. Is truth double? Truth and wisdom are one. We believe that it cannot be for the good of mankind that falsehood should be believed; and hence we think a man's religious aspirations should have as their basis, not the beliefs of the men of the past, but the discoveries of the men of the present. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." But we admit there is Free thought outside our ranks. It honeycombs the Church. How many men believe what their Church dogmas and doctrines say are true? Even what are called the cardinal doctrines of Christianity—the atonement and the Trinity—how many believe them? Our movement, therefore, can not be judged by the numerical strength of our Association. It is permeating the churches with this good result—that men are becoming "less mindful of creeds and more careful of deeds." Liberal sentiment is getting diffused. This is tending to break down the old bigotry that has worked so much evil in the world. Of course the narrow and unenlightened in this age, and in every age, cannot understand how we should not believe as they believe; but I hope the changed manner in which Free thinkers are now treated show that, as a race, we have reached a higher plane of civilisation. But even now how are Free thinkers treated by some? It is thought that all are immoral who do not accept the popular creed. This we are living, and we hope to live, down. We do not say we are any better than our neighbours—I do not think we are any worse. Our morality is cold—sanctionless—it is said. Those who thus talk do not know what morality is. Morality is a part of man's nature—man cannot live without it, any more than he can breathe without lungs; and it depends on no book any more than men planting corn depends on injunctions in a volume. But we can afford to let this cry of immorality alone. It is a cry with which every class that did not accept the popular theology has been assailed. We look forward with hope. What day is this, think you, the anniversary of? It is the day of Virgil's birth, and of Lucretius's death. But it is not of these two great Latin poets I would speak, but of an incident in our century. On this day, in 1819, Richard Carlisle was found guilty of blasphemy, and afterwards sentenced to pay a £1500 fine, to be imprisoned for three years in Dorchester gaol, and to find sureties for the rest of his life for good behaviour. What crime had he committed, think you? He had published the book of a believer in God—he had published Thomas Paine's "Age of Reason"—a book that nowadays sells by the hundred in our midst without question. Indeed, some people think Thomas Paine believed even too much. Could anything mark our progress better than this incident? And Carlisle's wife, for publishing the account of his trial, his speech for his defence, which contained the whole of the "Age of Reason," had also to be subjected to rules of Court, and she afterwards was sent to Dorchester gaol for no crime but publishing her opinions. The same tyrannical spirit exists, but its power is gone, never, I think, to return. We see even in this colony trustees of public libraries excluding any book or newspaper—the *ECHO*, for example—from a State-supported institution, because its theological views are not the popular theology; and we see the same spirit in the attempt to give State funds for the teaching of theology. It is the way it manifests itself nowadays. But what an advance have we made since 1819—nay, since

1841—for there were prosecutions for blasphemy so late as that. We have now a free Press, free printing, and free speech. As the State has become secular, freedom has grown. Relegate religion to the State and we will have back all the old bigotry, all the old persecution, all the old bitterness, and all that warlike feeling that was predicted would come into the world; members of the same family fighting with one another. We do not expect Free thought at once to become powerful. Everything is against it. Heredity, respectability (which Carlyle so satirised: "he kept-a-gig"), authority—all on the one side. True it is in every age, however, that the belief that is oft-treated with contumely succeeds. The stone that the builders reject becomes the head of the corner. The creed of one age is forgotten in the next, and that which was despised obtains the place of honour. But we have a danger. Do not let us harden into a sect and imagine that we are on a Pisgah-like eminence from which we can see all the promised land. Alas! we are not near the top of the mountain yet. We are still searching after truth. What we must do is to strive to get rid of dogmatism; to reverently accept the true, whatever cherished conviction this may compel us to give up. This is our duty. Do not let us try to put the new wine of science into the old bottles of authority. Be ever prepared for the true. If we do that we will not require to waste our energies or waste our time in attempting to reconcile science with religion. They will be one. The universe is one. To have two cosmogonies is impossible. One must be false. Our hope must be in the future, not the past. To-day we are pioneers, burdened with the beliefs of the age—burdened with the evils of the age—for we are not what we seem.

"Our deeds still travel with us from afar,

And what we have been makes us what we are."

This is true of us individually—it is true of us as a community—true of us as a race; and, knowing this, let us see that we ever keep the future before us. Let us never forsake truth. Follow her ever, follow her on. We, too, may have a faith. We may have a faith in Truth and Progress.

"I, too, rest in faith

That man's perfection is the crowning flower
Toward which the urgent sap in Life's great tree
Is pressing—seen in puny blossoms now,
But in the world's great morrows to expand
With broadest petal and with deepest glow."

From recent numbers of the *Spiritualist*, we perceive that there is a hopeful, cheerful feeling as to the progress of Spiritualism in England. The respectful manner in which Spiritualism was approached during the October Conference of the Church of England at Newcastle-on-Tyne, is one source of congratulation. Then as a minor matter, but still of importance, it is pointed out that the *London Daily Telegraph* has opened its columns to correspondents who can furnish well authenticated accounts of houses that are haunted, of the appearance of ghosts, and similar phenomena; a repetition is given in minute detail of the extraordinary events which occurred under the mediumship of Mr. Home, in the presence of the Countess of Caithness and other well-known persons, when that medium lifted red hot coals out of the grate, and carried them about the room in his naked hands. The death of Lord Airlie, at Denver, Colorado, has recalled the attention of the public to the musical dirges which have always been heard at Cortachy Castle on the death of the head of the family; a drum accompanied by fife is heard in the wood adjoining the castle, then after approaching the building, the music can be distinctly followed to the chapel, when it dies away in a plaintive dirge above the family vault, where lie buried the former lords of Airlie. The *London Court Journal*, the *London Daily Telegraph*, and the *Birmingham Daily Post*, have all admitted articles on this interesting subject. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, of the 28th Sept., gave an article entitled "A Ghost at Noonday," which is copied into the *Spiritualist*, as well as the above narratives.

The *Medium*, of September 30th, contains a beautiful sermon by Archdeacon Colley, entitled "Spiritual Light," it is from the *Church of England Sentinel*, of Natal, where the Archdeacon is now officiating.

EVENINGS AT HOME IN SPIRITUAL SEANCE.

BY MISS HOUGHTON.

LONDON: TURNER AND CO., LUDGATE HILL.

THIS book is written in an earnest yet easy and excellent style, and altogether Miss Houghton is to be complimented upon her choice of language and her power of expression. Evidently the work has cost her much labour and thought, and it bears the mark upon it of sincerity and purpose. We feel bound to acknowledge these and other merits, at the same time that we disagree with the talented authoress upon the subject she writes upon. Her mind is markedly of what may be termed the "Devotional" order, and in consequence the book is little else, so far as subject matter is concerned, than an "aid" to orthodox faith furnished by the evidence of spiritual phenomena. In the preface she says, "My great aim has literally been to show what the Lord hath done for my soul." This she religiously details during the progress of her work. In our eyes, therefore, this is only another contribution to the general literature of superstition. Miss Houghton is evidently superstitiously infatuated, in spite of her great talents, with the old system of orthodoxy. She is of the belief that Spiritualism is simply the third dispensation of Providence, the first consisting of the Revelation of God the Father to Abraham, the second of God the Son in the person of Christ, and the third of God the Holy Ghost through the instrumentality of Spiritualism. It cannot be wondered at, therefore, that the book is full of prayer, and has a flavour in every page of it of the influence of orthodoxy. On page 141 she writes, "In the second, the glorious Pentecostal séance, we received the bread and wine as He gave them to His own apostles in His farewell sitting with them, therewith ever to keep up the remembrance of Him in their hearts and lives, &c." At page 200 occur the following lines:—

Oh! sisters, don't get weary, get weary, get weary,

Oh! sisters, don't get weary to see God feed his lambs.

These two passages, along with the following which we take from the concluding chapter of the book, will serve to support our assertion that the book is only another contribution to orthodoxy, and, therefore, to superstition. "But none must attempt to fight the battle in their own strength, or they will assuredly be worsted. To God alone must they look. Again and again I would impress this one great truth, there are no intermediaries between us and the Lord. Our prayers need no carrying up; they go straight to Him. . . . The Lord Jesus Christ is the Only Way, but that is because He is The Lord. To use His own words, 'Before Abraham was, I Am.'" In this book, therefore, we are requested to believe that the Bible is indeed the word of God. That the doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement are true, and that the Church *plus* Spiritualism, as the authoress understands it, is the only road to our highest joys. We cannot but regret that the talents of this gifted lady should have been employed in thus opposing the rationalistic spirit of this age. Unconsciously, no doubt, she has wounded Spiritualism, because she has dissociated it from its main strength—the spirit of progress. By identifying Spiritualism with orthodoxy, and blending the two together, and by making them inter-dependent, she has prepared the way for the destruction of Spiritualism, from the same blow of Truth and Advancement that is assuredly destroying the faith of our ancestors. Another story erected upon a building with a rotten foundation is no guarantee of security, but rather the opposite. When the old building falls the new one built upon its summit must also perish with it. This is the grievous fault of the book, and we regard it as of so grave a nature that we trust we shall be forgiven when we say that we hope the class of books to which this belongs will find fewer readers as time rolls on.

An application has been made to Mr. Burns for the use of his rooms, for the application of healing mediumship; his reply is well worth reading, containing a psychological not generally understood. There appear to be a number of good psychopathic healers in London. —*Medium*, Sept. 16.

To Correspondents.

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

THE IGNORANCE OF SCEPTICS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "HARBINGER OF LIGHT."

SIR,—In your last issue another letter appeared from Mr. H. Malcomb, M.A., in which he again refers to me. In place of apologising, as I expected he would have done, for his false assertion that in M. Denon's work there is nothing said about a representation of Joseph and Mary fleeing into Egypt, Mr. Malcomb has the temerity to quote therefrom the very passage the existence of which in his former letter he pointed blank denied. Evidently for the purpose of misrepresenting me and thus carrying his point, he has again added inverted commas to my remarks in order to make them appear as if they were intended as a quotation from M. Denon's book, and then placed them in parallel columns with the passage referred to. Not content with thus stultifying himself and misrepresenting me, Mr. Malcomb has the effrontery to demand an acknowledgment that it is I who committed the error, reminding me of an account I once read of an intoxicated man who, in aiming a blow at a stranger who happened to be passing, struck his hand against a wall and then demanded an apology from his intended victim. Mr. Malcomb, doubtless, has been looking up Aikin's translation of M. Denon's work, for, in addition to extracting from it the passage, the existence of which in his first letter he emphatically denied, in his second letter he appears to be highly indignant at Aikin, the translator's name having been Anglicised by the printer of *Rational Christianity*, which grave error, I may remark, Mr. Malcomb passed over in his former criticisms, but which he will find I alluded to in my reply thereto.

I quite agree with Mr. Malcomb that churchmen would not endorse the opinion expressed in *Rational Christianity* that the new Testament accounts of Jesus Christ are mere romances, the principal features of which were, either directly or indirectly, derived from the more ancient fables in Sanscrit, respecting Jeezus Chriشنا, the lord and saviour of the Hindoos. They cannot well do this, for if so they could openly stamp themselves as hypocrites, in professing one thing whilst at the same time believing in another. It is, however, worthy of note that the orthodox Sir William Jones acknowledged that the main incidents recorded of Christ in the Gospels bear a striking resemblance to those related of Chriشنا in the Sanscrit Scriptures, which he admitted were written long anterior to the birth of Jesus, and probably to the time of Homer. In this he is corroborated by the Rev. Mr. Maurice, Godfrey Higgins, M. Jacolliet and other Sanscrit scholars, the latter of whom, like Sir William Jones, spent years in Hindostan. According to Mr. Malcomb these statements are denied by Max Müller, who, I understand, was never in India, and who has only had those portions of the Sanscrit writings to edit, which were obtained by an orthodox Government, or rather those portions which an orthodox Government has thought proper to preserve.

In regard to Jesus having been an Essenan, Mr. Malcomb refers to, ironically it must be, to the orthodox Keims' "Jesus of Nazara" and Dr. Presences' "Life and times of Christ," whilst he denounces as worthless authorities Josephus, Philo, and Pliny, whose writings I have referred to, as well as the best of modern authors who have followed them. If this is a fair sample of orthodox criticism Mr. Malcomb must excuse me for continuing to prefer the so-called ignorance of scepticism, —Yours, &c.,

HUGH JUNIOR BROWNE.

[We have received a final letter on the above subject from Mr. Malcomb, and, to save time, have at that gentleman's suggestion submitted it to Messrs. Browne and Rohner for their replies. The whole will be published in next issue.—*Ed. H. of L.*]

FORM MANIFESTATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "HARBINGER OF LIGHT"

I am glad to see that "M. A. Oxon" has again favored your readers with a communication from his pen. While in England, some of my best inspirations were drawn from the perusal of that gentleman's clear and logical writings upon the subject to which he has devoted so much attention. I sincerely hope the occasions will be frequent in the future on which your readers may have a like opportunity. If, in that country, circumstances have compelled him to withdraw for a time from the advocacy of our Cause, the progress of which he has so greatly at heart, I can assure him from experience that in this part of the world he will find sympathetic natures to appreciate, and ready intellects to grasp, whatever he may choose to lay before them from his well-furnished stores of experience and reflection.

He refers with pleasure to the valuable facts which have been accumulated in this Colony in regard to the phenomena of spirit-materialisation, and to which publicity has been given through your columns. He prefers to use the term "form-manifestation," as being a general one which will cover both that class of phenomena where there is the building up of an objective and vitalised form palpably distinct from the medium, and another class,—a kindred and yet very different manifestation of spirit-power,—which he denominates "Transfiguration of the Medium." This is a wise and necessary distinction, assuming that such a phase of form-manifestation is at times presented, and to this "M. A. Oxon" positively testifies. Interesting and important in its degree, however, as this latter phase may be, it seems to me that the conclusions which hang upon the former,—the presentation of the separate form,—are so much more weighty as to justify the invariable application to each phase of its own distinctive term, rather than of one general term to both, and I think that for the building up of the separate form the specific term "materialisation" should always be used, in preference to that of "form manifestation," whenever the phenomena are clearly indicated as belonging to that class.

During all the sittings, extending over five years, and nearly seven hundred in number, at which I have observed the phenomena presented through the mediumship of Mr. Spriggs, I do not remember to have witnessed anything which I can recognise as this phenomenon of "Transfiguration." This is, of course, out of the question, where the spirit-form and the medium are visible at the same moment, as was frequently the case, and it seems equally incompatible with that other phenomenon, which was also of frequent occurrence, of dematerialisation, where the form,—after demonstrating its substantiality as strongly as ever it has been demonstrated here,—would apparently sink through the floor, but really slowly dematerialise in our view from the feet upward, the upper part of the body moving downward, disappearing until nothing visible remained but a trace of white, mistlike substance on the floor, from which the full form would again be gradually developed. In those cases, however, in which the phenomenon of "transfiguration" of the medium does occur, it is of course a legitimate manifestation of spirit-power, with its own particular lessons, and implying its own particular phase of mediumship, and there is this important consideration connected with it, that where sepiets have adopted the rough-shod and ridiculous method of investigating by forcibly detaining the form, and, when the confusion has subsided, have found the medium in their grasp, it may in some cases have been but an instance of the presentation of the phase of transfiguration; if so, the septic has been deceived, not as he imagines by the medium, but through his own ignorance in regard to these form manifestations. It may well be that in such a case the current of spirit-power operating upon the medium's organisation would be violently driven back, and the medium restored to the ordinary state, only to be regarded with suspicion by friends and foes alike.

"M. A. Oxon" observes that it is "one of the drawbacks to the use of a cabinet for the seclusion of the medium that it is very difficult to say exactly what has taken place on a given occasion." We know not what

may be found possible in the future, but it seems to me almost as utopian to hope that we shall behold with our physical eyes the processes which result in the building up of the materialised form, as it is to expect that we can behold the processes which go on beneath the soil when the seed is germinating in its dark chamber, and extending those little shoots which ultimately blossom out into leaf and flower. As a rule, it seems that protection from the strong and penetrating vibratory action of light upon the molecules is necessary to success in the initiatory stages of the building up of the form, and equally so to the due preservation of the entranced medium from injury while in the highly sensitive condition of brain and body induced by the withdrawal of force. If the known action of light upon the organic world, as well as upon the inorganic, (as exhibited by its power to cause gases to unite and explode, solids to be precipitated from solutions, and other chemical effects,) be taken into account, its interference in the subtle processes of materializing may well be conceived. There is certainly the recorded (though I think solitary) experience of Archdeacon Colley, in which the materialised form was developed while both medium and spirit-form were visible in a good light, but it is significant that the medium's health was prostrated for years afterwards. Might not well-developed clairvoyant powers, combined with trained powers of description, be likely to succeed in the task of enlightening us on these points?

Like all thoughtful minds, "M. A. Oxon" craves for the means of solving the great problem of the method of producing these astounding results, and indeed, if in the domain of Nature there is so much to provoke a thirst for enlightenment, this is tenfold the case when one contemplates these phenomena, which give token of the operation, not of intelligence diffused, as in the universe around us, but of intelligence concentrated in individual beings. It is satisfactory to find that the facts recorded in your columns, in regard to the temporary substantiality and perfect bodily structure throughout of the materialised form are paralleled by those occurring in "M. A. Oxon's" own experience, inasmuch as the observance of like phenomena in different parts of the world by independent investigators is proof that all such phenomena are governed by general and universal laws. He notices, too, some of the peculiar accompaniments of the manifestations, as for instance what he describes as "the very flesh of some seeming to be in a state of flux and reflux, as though the material atoms were held together by a power of attraction that is variable," which is borne out by observations recently placed on record by you as to the extensive variations in weight of the form within the space of a few seconds. I attempted the expression of a somewhat similar idea in my remarks on the subject in your August issue, where I referred to an apparent interchange of force between the medium and the spirit-form, and spoke also of the aid which the mind would receive in realising the possibility and grasping the *modus operandi* of these phenomena from a theory of "matter" as being more dynamical and less inert in its character than the orthodox theory regards it. "M. A. Oxon" refers to this flux and reflux being "still more clearly the case with the drapery with which the forms are so abundantly surrounded," and this recalls to mind an idea which has frequently occurred to me, that this drapery seems as though an actual part, a continuation, so to speak, or an extension, of the physical form, rather than as thrown over it in the sense in which we would throw a cloak over our shoulders; as though it too, like the physical form, were but an outward material projection, held together for the time by, but having no existence (at least in the material realm) apart from, the will-power of the manifesting spirit. If this be so, it would account for the difficulty which investigators experience in obtaining—what they naturally desire—portions of this material, since unless special preparation had been made for the process, the separation of a portion of even the apparel might mean some inconvenience and even pain to the spirit. There are other valuable facts to be taken into account in forming a science of this subject, as, for instance, that when the form first appears the hands are often noticeably cold, and the movements lack vigor; that after a time there is an increase of

temperature, and an accompanying increase in the vitality and activity; that these decline gradually until the hands again become cold, with a corresponding decrease in activity, the form apparently drooping.

"M. A. Oxon" mentions an account of the melting away of one of these forms until nothing but the hands were left in the grasp of the sifter, and asks, "where did the liberated molecules go?" These things naturally excite a strong desire to understand them, but they may not after all be more mysterious than the ordinary processes of Nature, only that the latter are more familiar—just as the comet pursuing its eccentric path through the heavens awakens more attention than do the familiar orbs that roll majestically before our gaze every night—and it is, perhaps, by a closer and deeper consideration of the everyday phenomena of Nature, that we shall gain a clearer insight into the phenomena of the circle-room, so far at least as the physical side of the phenomena is concerned. We see matter exhibiting continually magical properties, vanishing away into the invisible realm, and entering even the imponderable (as in perfumes), or on the other hand, being evolved therefrom. Some instances of the mysterious behaviour of matter I referred to in your August issue, and others might be cited. For instance, Dr. Hands, in his "New Views of Matter," quotes a case in which "the earth placed in a box or tub was carefully weighed before a given tree was placed in the mould contained therein, which was again examined by the balance twenty years afterwards, without the soil in which the shrub grew being in any way diminished; in fact, the woody fibre of the tree so produced then outweighed the box and its contents together." Here we have a truly wonderful process, which we are far from fully comprehending, by which tough woody fibre has been formed out of invisible elements, contained either in the physical atmosphere (though Dr. Hands denies this) or, as he suggests, in the atmosphere of exceedingly ethereal and imponderable fluid pervading the universe.

"M. A. Oxon" touches upon the discussion at the Church Congress on the subject of Spiritualism, but his anticipation that it would there be pronounced as diabolic does not seem to have been quite realised. The speakers were by no means unanimous in their theories. This is ever the case when the facts are "explained" on any other hypothesis than the Spiritualistic one. No single non-spiritual theory will cover all the facts, so it becomes necessary to drag in a few more to cover the remainder. The theories presented at the Congress ranged from imposture, mental disease, and vague references to an unknown force, to admissions of the possibility of communication with departed friends, combined with a slight tincture of diabolism, sufficient to save the cherished dogmas of the Church. This public consideration and comparatively lenient treatment of the matter by a representative ecclesiastical body, will doubtless have the effect, on the one hand, of making many people more thoughtful on the subject than heretofore, but, on the other, of concentrating and bringing to a focus much of the antagonism arising from combined ignorance and bigotry, which has fermented for years past in orthodox ranks. There is so much the more need for Spiritualists to work steadily and self-sacrificingly on behalf of their Cause. Probably the antagonism most difficult to deal with is that arising from the fanatical notion of the Satanic origin of the phenomena. Here science may, if she will, do the Spiritualists service, and to scientists we must look (not to those representatives of the class who strut about so plentifully at the present day, flattering themselves that they have already all but weighed and measured the universe, but to men of a nobler and rarer stamp), to shew, not that the phenomena are genuine, for the phenomena can stand upon their own merits, but that they have their due place in the scheme of the universe. Though science, as Spiritualists have long ago known, will be compelled by the stern logic of facts to recognise the activity, intelligence, and earnestness of those who have passed from this to the inner life as the source of these phenomena, yet by shewing that in their action upon the physical realm of nature they are in perfect harmony with her laws, and can act only in accordance with law, she will do much to dispel that

blind, dangerous, and unjust antagonism towards spiritualists, mediums, and their co-workers in spirit-life, which is engendered by a fervent belief in the agency of the orthodox devil. By awakening and appealing to the rational faculty, science may enable humanity to cast aside the childish dread of the invisible, just as by shewing that the warring of the elements has its appropriate place, purpose, and set limit in nature, she has made us in these days strangers to the vague fears which filled the breasts of our earlier forefathers. Here, in truth, is a grand and noble opportunity for Science—using the term in its loftiest interpretation—to add to its glories this crowning one.

A. J. SMART.

Melbourne, December, 1891.

ENLARGEMENT OF THE "HARBINGER OF LIGHT."

IN consequence of our inability to find space for the large amount of interesting matter constantly flowing in upon us, and the records of the progress of Spiritualism and Free Religious Thought in other parts of the world, we have determined to permanently enlarge our paper by four pages. This will involve considerable additional expense, and our only prospect of a return for this is an increased circulation. We therefore ask our friends to do all they can in this direction by introducing it to friends and inducing them, when practicable, to subscribe.

We have just received a forty-page pamphlet, entitled "Spiritualism at the Church Congress," by M. A. (Oxon), containing a full report of the principal addresses given at the recent Church of England Congress at Newcastle-on-Tyne, with an introduction and copious notes, concluding with some excellent instructions for the conduct of circles. It is published by E. W. Allen, of London, and at the office of *Light*, at the low price of 2d.

THE work of the Theosophical Society for the restoration of Buddhism, in Ceylon, is making steady progress. In the Cinnamon districts, Col. Olcott received quite an ovation: triumphal arches were erected, and the road strewn with palm leaves for upwards of a mile. The national fund is growing, and is vested in trustees, Sinhalese gentlemen of known probity. A new branch of the society was to be formed at Tinnevely, Southern India, last month.

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