

THE Harbinger of Light.

A
MONTHLY JOURNAL
DEVOTED TO
ZOISTIC SCIENCE, FREE THOUGHT, SPIRITUALISM,
AND THE HARMONIAL PHILOSOPHY.

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

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CONTENTS.

	Page.
Spiritualism as a religion.....	187-8
Poetry—"Providence".....	188
Rev. Mr. Nish's Lectures on Spiritualism.....	188-9
The origin of things.....	194
Spiritualism at Stawell.....	195
Annual Address of the President of the "Spritual Association".....	190-3
Theology of Spiritualism.....	194
Communications.....	188
Ghost Stories.....	189-90
On the Cultivation of the Judicial Faculties.....	196
Rev. Mr. Tyerman's Lectures.....	197

THE discussions that have lately occupied public attention respecting what is called Spiritualism are not to be passed over without some words of serious comment. The general opinion concerning Spiritualism is one which varies widely in almost every individual person who has addressed attention to the subject. Time and space will not allow of our now going very fully into the question what is the main and most important object connected with the Spiritualistic teaching, but a few remarks must be made in view of recent occurrences.

The enquiry is continually put forward, what is the outcome of Spiritualism as a religion, or system of philosophy, or whatever it may be termed? To this we would reply that, in a broad sense, the great object of the creed of the Spiritualists is to satisfy mankind as to the certainty and nature of the future state. The physical phenomena, such as table rapping and mechanical writing, are permitted for wise purposes to interest and attract the attention of the public for a while, but they are of no real importance. The principal benefit that results from these manifestations is the stirring up of wonder and discussion, and the consequent result of the more truly valuable teachings of Spiritualism, thereby gaining the attention of thoughtful minds and earnest investigators. When men come to be convinced of the nature of their existence in this world, and that it is as in a halting place on their road to another life which is to endure for everlasting, they will have gained a knowledge the value of which it is not possible to over estimate. It requires a very little reflection to see how far the conduct of men in this world will be controlled and directed when they once fully apprehend that life here is but for a very brief space, and that according as it is conducted or exercised so will men have fitted themselves for spirit existence after this mortal body has been quitted. When once people begin to realise that in

accordance with the character and disposition which they cultivate and acquire on this globe will be their state and station in the next world, then the highest possible inducement than can present itself to the mind's contemplation will operate with mankind to live in a just, peaceable, orderly and beneficent manner among their fellow creatures. This, in brief, is the practical outcome of Spiritualistic knowledge. To those who ask what is the good of it all—to the continual parrot cry of *cui bono?* this answer is sufficient. Some will be ever ready with such remark as, why should I trouble myself about those mysteries, (or superstitions, as they may please to term them.) I am very happy in my present belief. These matters of religious enquiry are looked to for me by my Bishop and Clergy. I pay for all this sort of thing along with other taxes and imposts. I was brought up in respectable religious training. My godfathers and godmothers gave abundant promises on my behalf that I should make no mistake in my theological belief, and I pay handsomely for religious establishments and teaching—and I really think all this is quite enough. These persons will not address themselves to the just and proper consideration of Spiritualism. Why should they trouble their minds about a question that merely concerns the life in the next world, ("supposing there is such thing," they will say.) Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, and why should we bother ourselves concerning what is all wrapped in the obscurity and uncertainty of the future."

But, is the future so folded in obscurity, so shaded with doubt? This is the really important enquiry. To determine this matter is the essentially valuable, and indeed vitally important, purpose of the study of the revelations that are now coming through the channel of what we call Spiritualism. This is the only point of actual vast consequence to mankind which will result from the study referred to—the table rapping and writing, and other such phenomenal exhibitions, are the mere leather and prunella in comparison. We have thus sketched a short outline of what may serve as an answer to the question which is continually put forward either earnestly or flippantly or sneeringly, what Spiritualism aims at or tends to. But there are other matters in connection with the subject which we cannot allow to pass

without reference. "Spiritualism" is a term which is most unhappily chosen. No one can be spiritual in this world. There are no created beings who have any title to be called spiritual or spiritualistic, while clothed in mortal body. The word is at present used for convenience, but it is time that it were replaced by something else. Just for a while we will continue it, under protest, as it might be said, but some better expression will be found. Perhaps, as it is understood to signify a right interpretation of Nature with all her great truths and teachings, a more appropriate term would be Naturalism. At any rate, we make the Spiritualists an offer of the suggestion.

So much remains to be said on this subject that we propose to continue these remarks in the next issue. With regard to the name Spiritualism, it may be as well to remind our readers that there is no more fertile source of confusion of ideas in religious or philosophical discussions than the careless employment of wrong terms, and therefore it may be well to consider the expediency of setting aside the words Spiritualism and Spiritism.

COMMUNICATIONS.

I.

UNNUMBERED hosts around the earth are constantly watching and waiting for signs from those who inhabit it indicative of their desire for spiritual guidance. Without these they cannot work. The aspiration must come from within, before those without can help or assist in any way. How important that this should be recognised, and yet how little is it understood! This is the secret of our being unable to affect particular individuals at stated times and places. If this were known more generally there would be less foolish ridicule of spiritualism. We, who are aware of the natural laws governing this matter, look with infinite pity on those who, to their own detriment, lose the light and happiness of the only true belief in the world. Doubtless as time rolls on there will be a change, but in the present condition of human knowledge there is a great stumbling block in our way. We cannot imagine a more painful sight than the world presents,—souls, miserable and filled with wretchedness, to whom this belief would be immediate heaven, striving and struggling against their redeemer. Absolutely Christ, as said in the bible, knocking at their doors, which they refuse to open. The time must come, slowly may be, but none the less surely, that the belief in spirit communion will be the sole religion of enlightened mankind. This wilful ignorance is therefore to us the more painful to behold, because its victims simply knock and bruise themselves against the bars of fate.

II.

THE lot of man on earth is a hard one, for life to him is a continual struggle between right and wrong, brain and might. Yet he has in spite of all attained an eminence beyond compare with any other living creature. We cannot give you an idea of the magnitude of the work ordained for man on earth. He will have to grow god-like ere he leaves its sphere to become one of the angels. This is the meaning of creation. From the zoophyte man will arise eventually a God. Time works wonders—miracles. Time is to man what manure is to earth. It gives the nourishment to improve his growth. You will say then—"how much better for those born now than in previous eras." But recompense for inequalities comes in the second earth-sphere where justice is meted out to each soul according to his or her deserts. By degrees the labours of the teachers in the higher spheres will become considerably lightened by man's progression on earth. There will remain other and different things to do. There is work enough here for all. Nature still for us continues to unfold her masterly creations which we—as you in an inferior degree—have to learn to study and to comprehend.

STELLA.

Poetry.

PROVIDENCE.

"The sky is clouded, the rocks are bare;
The spray of the tempest is white in air,
The winds are out with the waves at play,
And I shall not tempt the sea to-day.

The trail is narrow, the wood is dim,
The panther clings to the arching limb;
And the lion's whelps are abroad at play,
And I shall not join in the chase to-day.

But the ship sailed safely over the sea,
And the hunters came from the chase in glee;
While the town firm builded high on a rock
Was swallowed up in the earthquake shock."

Subscribers are reminded that the Subscription for the current Year "No. 13 to 24" is now overdue, and are particularly requested to forward the same to the proprietor, Mr. W. H. Terry, to save the trouble and expense of written applications.

To Correspondents.

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

THE REV. MR. NISH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

DEAR SIR,—Since the days of the lamented Jack Bunsby, I have never read anything so thoroughly characteristic of the "wisdom" of that ancient mariner as the explanation of the phenomena of Spiritism given by the Rev. Mr. Nish of Sandhurst. "Imagination," says that gentleman, "borne along by a mysterious electric or psychic force, of which we have examples in dreams, mesmerism, somnambulism and catalepsy, is sufficient to account for them." Now, granting the truth of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, I think it will be convincing to the meanest capacity that old Jack Bunsby has come to life again in the person of the Rev. gentleman above quoted. How can mesmerism, psychic force, &c., account for phenomena of any kind, unless they are first explained? Is it possible that the lecturer was unconscious that he was begging the question? Why did he not, in his profound utterance, declare that psychic force was—psychic force; that mesmerism would account for mesmeric phenomena?

But there is another point in which the Rev. gentleman is even more at fault. Does he not see that his whole course of reasoning could be used against his own religion with quite as much weight and pertinency, as against Spiritualism? Upon what grounds could the Jews for instance, be asked to accept Christianity? They had Moses and the Prophets, and manifested the same self-complacency that Mr. Nish does. Throughout their Scriptures nothing was said upon which to base the doctrine of the Resurrection. Yet here arises a sect among them declaring that its leader, after having been put to death, had actually risen from the grave, and appeared to his followers; and also enunciating, as a leading tenet of the new faith, that there would be a universal resurrection. Well might the Jews retort (in the identical spirit of Mr. Nish)—There is no warrant for this new fangled doctrine in the Scriptures, and we believe them to contain the sum of all divine wisdom. God manifested himself by vision to the fathers, and to Moses, and spake to us by the mouths of the Prophets; but for many centuries there has been no open vision, and it is clear that the work of revelation was long since closed. And especially, they would reiterate, must we guard ourselves against receiving any doctrine not taught in our Sacred Books.

Now, what says our preacher, all the way from Sandhurst? "It is the design of God that all our knowledge

of the unseen world should be derived, and derived exclusively, from the Bible." Is my suppositious reasoning of the ancient Jews more absurd than this narrow-minded and bold statement? Can we be quite certain that the whole of God's designs are confided to this modern teacher—this "Daniel come to judgment?" Again: "It is easy to raise questions regarding the future state which the Bible does not answer; and it is for us to respect that silence, as being better for us than pretensions or premature disclosures." Just so might the bigoted Jews answer: "Our Sacred Books are silent upon this new doctrine of yours, and it is for us to respect that silence. Go to; we will have none of it."

A notable instance is given us in history of this same spirit. When the Saracen conqueror of Egypt was remonstrated with in reference to his determination to burn the famous Alexandrian library, he is reported to have asked whether there was anything in the many thousands of volumes—that vast storehouse of ancient wisdom and learning—which was contrary to the Koran? If so, that was sufficient to condemn it to the flames. And if there was nothing inconsistent with that sacred Book, then there was no need of the great pile of rubbish, and so it should be burned anyhow! It is evident that the Saracens are not all dead yet!

Mr. Nish refers to the fact that the persons who are said to have risen from the dead on the morning of Christ's resurrection, had nothing to tell us of what they had seen and heard. Now, in the first place, the account in the 27th of Matthew only indicates that, on that occasion, many were favoured with *apparitions* of their departed friends—not that there was a permanent resurrection, and continuance of life in the body. In the second place, this argument is about as conclusive as that of the man who was arraigned for assault and battery. The victim produced witnesses of the assault; but the defendant, in rebuttal, contented himself with bringing forward several persons who swore they did not see it!

And now for Mr. Nish's great point—that Paul, having been permitted to see the glories of Paradise, heard such things as it was not lawful for a man to utter. This prohibition, as Mr. Nish is pleased to call it, settled satisfactorily that it was unlawful to disclose the things of the spiritual world. Upon this hypothesis he should reject *in toto* the last book of the New Testament collection—the Apocalypse—which professes to be a revelation of scenery and events in that invisible world: and John wrote after Paul. To what conclusion, then, can we rationally come at upon this subject? Why, that Paul was not sufficient for that work, which John afterwards performed: only this, and nothing more. Let Mr. Nish, and those who hold with him, ponder this well; and perhaps they may yet find room in their minds for the proposition, that one man may be better fitted for a certain work than another, and that one age may be able to receive and appropriate what to a previous age would have been as gross darkness and confusion. "We preach Christ crucified," said Paul, "unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." And so the New Gospel—yet in its incipency—if not a light to the sectaries of this day, may be to others—others not so entirely satisfied with fossil creeds. On them let no one forbid it to shine!

SOUTH YARRA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

"The critics who presume to ridicule the phenomena, forget it is the Supreme Wisdom of God which they are presuming to arraign before their petty tribunal. For if the facts are true, who shall deny that they proceed from God's will? And if from Him, who shall presume blasphemously to assert they can be either puerile, foolish, or vain?"

Sir,—The Rev. Mr. Nish started from the Treasury Buildings, and walked the length of Collins Street, to the Spencer Street Railway station. He met a crowd the whole distance, packed as closely as possible from one side of the street to the other. Each man said that he had seen (and that Mr. Nish might see) John Jones, risen from the dead and walking in Bourke Street. The very John Jones at whose death the Rev. Mr. Nish had

attended only a month before. They thought the Rev. gentleman would have seized with avidity such overwhelming evidence and Omnipotent aid to his sacred calling in impressing the hearts of all with the fear of God and drawing men's minds from a dead to a living faith in the truth of life beyond the grave and consequent wisdom of spiritual mindedness, in preference to the all pervading material or worldly mindedness of the people.

To their utter astonishment they found that his Reverence did not reflect, that such misinformation from so many, as to what they had just seen, would be a very far greater wonder than the resurrection of John Jones!

He therefore did not cross over to Bourke Street to see if he was truthfully informed, but he flatly contradicted the hundreds he met with at every step of the way, and told them that it was impossible, because a resurrection from the dead was without Bible precedent, and that therefore it would be very wicked for anyone to go into Bourke Street to look and see by personal investigation what was the truth, and explanation of the matter. He observed that, besides being wicked to go and look for such a thing, it would be yet more wicked if they did indulge in seeing what it was impossible for them to see. He went on to state that this latter sin was the besetting sin which, (through weakness of the flesh), they naturally inclined to, and therefore, the sin he thought it best to devote his time to warning them against. His hearers thought it very odd, that he had not the sense, and courtesy, just to step over and look into Bourke Street before so rudely, and so flatly contradicting so many, whose motives for truthfulness were as unsuspected by him as they must have been incomprehensible to him.

What I have to ask you, Mr. Editor, is this. Could his bad logic, and arrogance of denegation further go, or is this the ne plus ultra of presumptuous absurdity?

Your obt. Servant,

W.

P.S.—1st. The Rev. Mr. Nish represents the clergy of all denominations. 2nd. The resurrection of John Jones represents the phenomena and manifestations of Spiritualism. 3rd. The crowd in Collins Street, represents a portion of the population of the world, of very superior intelligence, good character, religious disposition, and numbering 20,000,000.

They unanimously aver, that the testimony of two of their senses, hearing and seeing, and in some cases a third, feeling, has produced certain absolute convictions in their minds; and that what they have been convinced of is, so far from being unreasonable, of exactly the same nature with the spiritual influx and supernatural manifestation of Divine power recorded in the sacred books of all ages and all nations, particularly those of Christendom.

WHAT WERE THEY?

A LECTURE upon ghosts was delivered some years ago in various parts of the colony by a well-known Victorian writer and politician. In an article in the "Colonial Monthly Magazine," Vol. I., page 370, the lecturer tells us that "the number of ghost stories told to him" as a result of the lecture, "by persons who held undoubtingly by the truth of their several narratives, would fill a small volume."

It is unfortunate that most of these stories seem to have been imparted in confidence, otherwise we might have been favoured with a considerable additional amount of amusing if not altogether reliable evidence relative to that unseen world, the existence of which, just at present, is so strongly affirmed and denied by spiritists and antispiritists.

The above-named author goes on to quote the Italian proverb "that there is a skeleton in every house;" and adds there is, at least, a ghost story in every family circle, and also devout believers in the same. My object in writing is to give at least two real stories that have come under my own immediate notice.

A writer in a Colonial paper some few weeks ago refers a good deal of the superstitions of the past and present day to the circumstances of a gloomy climate.

the near vicinity of volcanoes, the frequency of earthquake phenomena, and the prevalence of wild and rugged mountains or dark and sombre forests, as peculiarities of the particular region wherein these superstitions first have birth. The Kentish county, however, is not characterized by any of these features, and that especial part of it wherein the following incidents are said to have occurred, is as sunny and as cheerful looking as is any portion of 'merrie Englands.' Nevertheless the locality, innocent of any natural object more appalling than, perhaps, a pollard oak seen in the glooming, has its ghostly legends by the score. And these for the most part scarcely ever assume a weird-like form as do those so common among the marchers of the Germans or the old wives' stories of the Scotch; but rather seem to be examples of phenomena such as are explained by the spiritualistic theory, and by none other.

Among my father's workmen was one who, whatever might have been his character as a boy, was certainly not remarkable for truth telling as a man. This person informed me that when he was a child his elder sister lay at the point of death. He had been sent, for some offence, into his own room. The sister was taken suddenly worse, and the mother, whilst in the act of closing the eyes of her daughter, heard a piercing shriek uttered by her son, and on going into his room found him lying on the floor senseless. The first words of the boy, on coming again to his senses, were—"Mother, I saw my sister, dressed in white satin, come into the room just now. She pointed upward with her finger and seemed to vanish through the wall."

Candidly speaking the narrator of this was altogether unworthy of belief; but how is the testimony of the mother to be disposed of? She belonged to the better kind of the peasantry, was a woman of known probity and honesty, and not at all of an imaginative turn of mind. She never confessed to a belief in ghosts, and could only by much persuasion be induced to speak concerning the above-named incident; and yet her account of the event corroborated the statement of her son in every particular. Granted that the boy had fallen asleep and had dreamed this, how singular that the time of the dream should so exactly coincide with the death of the sister. The vision may have been subjective, and not objective, still the circumstances of the coincidence referred to would seem to show the existence of some mysterious connection between the minds of the dying girl and her brother, call this spiritism, biology, magnetism, or what we may.

Many years after this event there occurred another, in which, as two persons saw the same object, the theory of mere subjective vision would seem to be put altogether out of the question.

A man and his wife were proceeding homeward on an exceedingly cold and frosty winter's night. The ground was covered with deep snow, and as the time happened to be that of the full moon, objects were discernable almost as plain as in the day time. Suddenly, at about a mile from their home, the pair noticed as they thought a neighbour, a half idiotic woman, who was known to be in a delicate state of health, rapidly approaching them. The man addressed her, but instead of speaking she pointed in a forward direction with her hand, and passed on.

In this instance, also, the witnesses were not what would be termed reliable ones. The circumstance, however, of the sick woman being out at all on such a night seemed so extraordinary that on their return home they made a point of alluding to the fact, as a proof of the cruelty of the woman's friend, to some half a dozen neighbours. Nothing like an instance of the supernatural seems to have been thought of for a moment. I, myself, heard the story read the next morning, and it was simply told me as a bit of village scandal, got up at the expense of a not very popular neighbour. An hour afterwards, however, the thing took quite a different turn, since the sick woman was found lying on the floor of her room dead and cold, and, by the evidence of the family, went up stairs to bed, and, most probably, must have died almost simultaneously with the appearance of her supposed apparition on the previous evening.

THOMAS HARRISON.

THE FIRST ANNUAL ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE MELBOURNE BRANCH OF THE VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUALISTS.

FELLOW SPIRITUALISTS—

It has been suggested that on the occasion of the termination of my office as President of your association for the first year of its existence a short address might not be out of place. On all anniversaries it is but natural to take retrospective views. In ascending mountains it is enjoyable to pause and look down upon the path; so in the ascent of the interminable hill of progress up which we have started, the history of this the first attempt at organization in Australia must ever be one of interest. Strangers must not imagine that Spiritualism in Victoria originated with us. There have been known believers in the phenomena termed spiritualistic for many years in Melbourne. Animal magnetism was successfully practised. *The Zoist* arrived regularly from London to subscribers; Dr. Berigny was among the earliest experimenters; clairvoyance was recognized as a truth, and demonstrated more than twenty years since, of which members of this association bear witness. Owing, however, to the unsettled state of society consequent on the discovery of gold these things were known only to a few, and these few became scattered and isolated. Gradually, however, the seed sown has been developing, and the truth unfolding.

Twelve months ago eleven persons, one of whom was a lady, met for mutual counsel. They were Spiritualists; they differed perhaps on many points, but were all agreed on at least these—firstly, that there is an all-loving Parent Spirit who controls all things by wisest law; secondly—that there is a state, condition, or locality, to which, after the change called death, our spiritual body ascends; thirdly—that communion between the inhabitants of the two worlds is possible. These persons were not born believers in these three points: they had received their convictions from separate and independent evidence. Fully persuaded in their own minds they were unable any longer to repeat creeds demanding faith, not the application of reason, entirely beyond human comprehension, and the negation of which involved the alternative of eternal damnation. They felt that hypocrisy was a greater burden to bear than the charge of infidelity, unbelief, or blasphemy: to them truth was the pearl of the greatest price. They missed from early habits the custom of meeting together for united thanksgiving and praise. They therefore determined to adopt a devotional service free from all suspicion of sectarianism, and with a base as broad as humanity. On taking office I remarked that we began as did a similar association that met 1840 years ago in an upper room, a handful of persons, but that before very long I predicted our present hall would be insufficient to contain those desirous of worshipping with us. Our progress has been apparently slow, but I doubt not as rapid as advisable. If it had been the best for the cause our service would have had ere this the Bishop, Dr. Cairns, or His Excellency as celebrants; this has not occurred, and I therefore infer we are best without them at present. It is not by accident that some things are "concealed from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes." Most of us are assured that the cause is in good hands, and that we are acting under guidance. The wonder is not that our progress has been gradual, but that our first attempt at organization being so thoroughly human and experimental, has not resulted primarily in failure. It is true we have had to withstand the jeers of the ignorant and the sneers of the self-sufficient and scientific: moral persecution still exists among us: some have suffered in their business relations in consequence of their connection with Spiritualism. We have the satisfaction, however, of being assured that Time, that great worker of apparent miracles, will demonstrate the correctness of our convictions, to the inconceivable confusion of all those who now wilfully or in ignorance put aside or explain away the facts which demonstrate our confession of faith. We have no desire to return railing for the harsh terms used by our numerous accusers, we think it no blasphemy to employ

the language the same charges elicited 1800 years ago—"Father forgive them, they know not what they do."

We accept all religions now existing, as we do those of all ages, as steps up the never ending ladder of progress, glimpses of light from the great central Spirit, flashes of inspiration from the all-pervading Infinite. Believing this, then, we see good in all religions, and bigotry is illogical and absurd. Moreover we have all been sceptics and unbelievers in what we now profess: most probably every Spiritualist first heard the doctrines, first approached the subject, with disdain and derision. Let us, therefore, be charitable to those who are still ignorant of the majestic sublimity of the Harmonial Philosophy. We, too, have sat in darkness, but we have seen a great light. The honest sceptic who does not see in the evidence of any subject sufficient demonstration of its reality pays as high honour to the truth by his rejection as does the believer who is convinced by it.* Depend upon it there is some wise law operating for and regulating the spread of new truths. History tells us that the reception of all has been alike: the grandest discoveries, the most serviceable inventions, have had to pass through several stages. Agassiz said all are first denounced as false, untrue, ridiculous delusions: secondly, they are real, but are explained by other than the true cause, they are dangerous, diabolical, atheistical: thirdly, they are admitted as well understood facts, with which everyone is perfectly familiar.

The human mind appears to be normally sceptical, conservative of acquired opinions and dubious of anything novel.

Dr. Newman says—"When anything which comes before us is very unlike what we commonly experience, we consider it on that account untrue; not because it really shocks our reason as improbable, but because it startles our imagination as strange." Does Spiritualism strike us as unreasonable? If we spirits, clothed in material and gross encumbrances called bodies, have the power of exchanging ideas and holding converse with each other, how much more probable that refined spiritual beings have a similar power; if then communion with kind is probable, is it unreasonable to infer that disembodied spirits can commune with embodied spirits here. That intercourse with those gone before strikes the imagination when first heard of, as strange, cannot be denied; it is so foreign to all the teachings of our youth, to the ideas laid down for the last few hundred years in the different schools of science, philosophy, and religion. It was, however, a well recognized fact in early church history, that the lives of the saints are not all fiction; witchcraft had a foundation of reality; it was known to certain persons in every country; it was universal as life and natural as death. Priestcraft, however, seems to have debased this naturalism, and a reaction set in which, operating for centuries, finally landed European thought in materialism, a cultivation of the sciences appears to have excluded spirituality. Mr. Tylor notices this, and writes—"Now, however, not only are Spiritualists to be counted by tens of thousands in America and England, but there are among them several men of distinguished mental power. I am aware that the problem of the so called spirit manifestations is one to be discussed on its merits, in order to arrive at a distinct opinion how far it is concerned with facts insufficiently appreciated and explained by science, and how far with superstition, delusion, and sheer knavery. Such investigation pursued by careful observation in a scientific spirit would seem apt to throw light on some most interesting psychological questions. But, though it lies beyond my scope to examine the spiritual evidence for itself, the ethnographic view of the matter has nevertheless its value. This shows modern Spiritualism to be in a great measure a direct revival from the regions of savage philosophy and peasant folklore. It is not a simple question of the existence of certain phenomena of mind and matter. It is that in connection with these phenomena a great philosophical religious doctrine, flourishing in the lower culture, but dwindling in the higher, has re-established itself in full vigour. The

world is again swarming with intelligent and powerful disembodied spiritual beings, whose direct action, on thought, and matter, is again confidently asserted as in those times and countries where physical science had not as yet so far succeeded in extruding these spirits and their influences from the system of nature. As of old men live now in habitual intercourse with the spirits of the dead."

The *Church of England Messenger* has, during the past year, asserted that our doctrines are identical with those held by some ignorant persons who lately figured in the courts of law in this city. As none can approach Spiritualism without either benefiting it or themselves, you will remember that this calumny had the good effect of eliciting from the pen of "*Excelsior*" two able letters, the second of which remains unanswered. Recent lectures by our friend Mr. Naylor appear to have induced some of the clergy to notice the subject. The Venerable the Archdeacon of Ballarat preached lately to a crowded church, and assured his audience that he had some knowledge of Spiritualism. He, however, offered no explanation of the facts and phenomena beyond that raised against all new teachings—the Devil; and he condemned the whole thing because it was opposed to the conflicting, irrational, and sectarian dogmas of the many hundred denominations whose very existence proves that Spiritualists are not singular in agreeing to differ. This is only following the Bishop and Dean. They do not deny that the phenomena may be real, but as the teachings of Spiritualism are rational and consistent, and recognise no human authority in spiritual matters, they are of course anathematized. An article reprinted from "*The Messenger*" has been put into circulation during the last few months; it informs the public that the Anglican Bishop is the author, and says—"All our readers have doubtless heard of the pulling off of bed clothes, the passing of cold hands over the face of persons in their sleep, strange knocks and rappings, and many mischievous acts, reminding us of the ill-natured goblins of fairy land; also of the feats of the planchette, the writing of a pencil without a hand to guide it, answers given to questions respecting the subjects of which the organ of communication could have no knowledge, and various other wonders said to have been wrought by intercourse with the spirits of the dead. We ourselves know nothing more of these things than what we have read or heard related. But from the statements which we have seen, whether of its advocates or opponents, we believe that the Spiritualism of America and Victoria differs in no essential particular from the ancient divination of Egypt, Chaldaea, Canaan, and other heathen lands, or from the modern magic of various parts of Asia." Now the foregoing admission is important, and you will perceive that with the spiritual guides of the people it has absolutely reached the second stage of Agassiz. They attribute it to the "agents of the great evil spirit employed by him to deceive men to their destruction." You observe the whole thing is condemned on hearsay evidence, or on what scraps may have come under the writers' observation. Personal investigation they conclude is not their business. The mightiest movement of the nineteenth century is occurring under the very eyes of those who believe that the injunction "prove all things, hold fast that which is good," is the infallible command of the living God. This question that is agitating all classes, that is disturbing and will continue to disturb all churches, is referred to the supposed opinions of a few men who lived several thousand years ago; whose correspondence with, and directions to members of infant churches then, is held to be binding infallibly on us; whose sayings and doings were copied down after they died from hearsay; re-copied by ignorant and interested persons, they were added to in every age; the genuineness and authenticity was disputed by the early Fathers, and is far from being settled yet. From a vast mass of old manuscripts a few were selected by certain interested persons. The collection was, however, never deemed infallible inspired truth until certain other men subject to like passions as ourselves rebelled against the authority of those opposed to progress in theology, and translating these documents into the common language of their countries, endued them

* The Alpha.

† Primitive Culture, Vol I.

with an authority never claimed by the writers. Mr. Baring Gould in his interesting work says:—"It is impossible to prove the all sufficiency of the Bible from itself. It nowhere professes to contain the whole faith; Christ never commissioned his apostles to write books to contain the faith as authorized standards of doctrine." He directs attention to the fallibility of their own judgments—"And the contention was so sharp between them that they departed asunder one from the other."—Acts xv. "But when Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."—Gal 2., 11.

To these manuscripts then, of doubtful authorship, abounding in contradiction, by no means free from error, this, the demonstration of immortality in this age, is to be referred. This is their final test for Spiritualism. We not only meet them on their own ground and say—"disbelieve this, and you prove the Bible a fable," but we declare solemnly that Spiritualism is a positive affirmation of the absolute goodness of God. This is a sufficient answer to the cry of Satanic agency.

Dr. Candlish, a leading Scotch divine, has said that "the doctrine of God's universal Fatherhood was the cause of all the infidelity of the age." This zealous minister uttered a majestic truth, for those who recognise the parental relationship cease to entertain ideas of him that were they true of any human being would make him a fiend of infinite malice. They are thus forced into unbelief in the horrible conceptions of Calvinism, and are driven into what is termed "infidelity." With whom lies the fault of their infidelity? Is it not with the teachers of barbarous and effete ideas? "When a clergyman," writes Bishop Ewing, "teaches that which the heart cannot receive, all else he teaches is likely to be rejected with it, and in this case men cannot help themselves, for their instructor tells them that all he teaches is bound up together, and stands or falls together, and if on a large scale what is the consequence? Universal scepticism!"

Free thought and rational belief have made good progress in the community during the year. Upwards of 20,000 persons resident in this city have protested against dogmatic teaching and clerical intolerance. The action taken by the upholders of narrow puritanical notions was thus productive of immense benefit by shewing progressive religionists their strength, and by convincing our friends on the other side that we are too numerous to be coerced, and too intelligent to limit our religious ideas by the ignorant conceptions of past generations on the Sabbath or any other question. In this feeling we have a large majority with us here and at home. "Theology," says a writer in a Nonconformist Review, "must progress with the progresses of the world or fall out of its march. The old vessels of the state creed can contain it no longer, they must be unbound or it will burst them to pieces. The belief of this age about God, man's relation to God, God's work for man, God's way in the government of the world, demands readjustment quite as much as the biology, the chemistry, the geology, which our fathers handed down to us, and the idea that the new spirit must be made to let theology alone, that theology is too sacred, too settled in a fixed form by a Divine hand to be capable to progress or expand, is the nurse of Atheism and the mother of despair." "Everything," says the Reverend Mr. Davies, "is an advance in theology which enables men to know God better and to think of him more worthily." We, then, are endeavouring to think more worthily of God, and we are only being borne along by the great wave which is sweeping over the world. Those who are not against us are for us, and their name is legion in all churches. The Anglican is rapidly separating into two sections, one bowing more and more to supposed infallibility, the other applying year by year the faculty of reason to belief. A clergyman of that church, reviewing a recent issue of the Bampton lectures on the Divinity of Christ, argues that either man's reason must be an all-sufficient guide or there can be but one Catholic Church. On the

continent the oldest Christian Church is again being convulsed by internal rebellion against dogma. The Greek and Mahometan churches are sharing in the progresses of the age. The visit of the Baboo Chunder Sen a Hindoo theist, to England caused a great sensation, and the remarkable sight was witnessed, of a member of the Church of one God travelling from heathen India the cradle of mythology, to teach Christians the virtue of toleration. The Bible is allowed to contain mistakes, by Dr. Raleigh, president of the Congregational Union. The original, says the Rev. Dr. agent for the Bible Society, is the word of God, the translation is the word of man. The first chapter of Genesis is a sublime hymn of creation says the organ of Dissenters; the tree of good and evil never grew in garden mould said Dr. Bromby; the future state is being recognized as one of progression; I suppose we must allow, says Bishop Perry, that the days of Genesis were not days of twenty-four hours; I suppose he also said we must give up John 1., 5, 7. Two ministers at least in Victoria preach continuous evolution; "I have found," says the Rev. W. R. Fletcher writing from England, "that a liberty, both of thought and expression, which is far beyond what was customary in olden time, is everywhere conceded—for myself I am not afraid of it." A generation hence, writes the Rev. W. L. Clay, "educated Christians will be as incapable of believing in endless perdition as they now are in believing in the diurnal revolution of the sun around the earth."† Thus revolt against the popular mythology is wide spread; the drifting from the belief in the supernatural universal. The doctrines of the infallibles, whether church, book, or men, are fading before reason and science. Nature affirms that God reveals Himself to every man; and Spiritualism declares that "the word of God, interpreted in history and nature, is a grander object of study than even the Bible."

It is impossible to conceal the conclusion that this is antagonistic to the christianity of the nineteenth century; but it by no means follows that it is opposed to the teachings of him whom Jew will yet unite with Gentile to honour, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and a glory to his own people Israel.

The human erection may totter, and, according to Carlyle and Dean Milman, subsequently yield to pressure from without, but what there is of truth in it, and the Bible, can never be destroyed. Its best friends are unable to conceal their anxiety; Archbishop Manning says—"there never was a period when the signs of the times were so ominous, and yet so completely baffled speculation as to the course of future events. It is only plain that in our day has begun a struggle between good and evil such as never before has been witnessed. He attributes a force, an intensity, and a compactness, to the agencies on the one side and the other, such as would seem to manifestly distinguish as before the birth of Christ the hosts contending for and against the law of God. He invests the struggle with an apocalyptic character, such as goes far to impress upon one the belief that the world is about to enter upon a new epoch of its history, which will be distinguished by events that signally mark the interposition of Divine Providence." Mr. Baring Gould, in his work already quoted, writes—"The western part of Europe cannot much longer be held in the thralldom of a supposed belief in the fall of Adam, of original sin, of an incarnation, as described in Matthew and Luke; a Saviour, a judgment, a last day, and an everlasting hell. In what, then, will the new Protestantism consist? will not all religions worthy the name perish with the rejection of the Biblical creation, fall, redemption, heaven and hell? By no means, for a Deity ever working, and in all, is an object more worthy of adoration by a reasonable being, than one making a globe in six days, and resting on the seventh, nor does a conviction that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap, imply a Heaven and Hell, as preached by the orthodox churches." "It is not to be denied, says the Rev. John Hunt, †† "that we are, at the present time, in the midst of a great religious crisis. The educated classes, it is said, are renouncing Christianity. Scepticism is

† The Origin and Development of Religious Belief.

‡ Present Day Papers.

† Contemporary Review.

‡ Grant's Religious Tendencies of the Times.

‡ Advocate.

†† Contemporary Review.

widely spread in the Universities; the highest intellects are no longer at the service of religion, and even the clergy themselves are making shipwreck of faith. During the last ten years we have been compelled to give up positions which we once thought were the strongholds of Christianity. We have entered on a new era, and all men are musing in their hearts what the end is to be." At this period of unrest, when the old faiths are being discovered to be unequal to the necessities of the age, consequent on the demands of reason and the discoveries of science, there comes a still small voice appealing to the heart and the head, the better nature and the intellect of each son of God. Respecting no persons, recognizing no class, supporting no dogma, it permeates society, penetrating each household, occupying the columns of each newspaper, and winning converts from all creeds. It comes neither with imperial patronage, nor heralded in with the approval of scientific associations, nor yet sanctioned by any of the multifarious sects or religions taught as the only true faith; it acknowledges no leader or order of priesthood; it professes no infallibility; it makes no claim to exclusive salvation for its votaries. This regenerated faith teaches the royal descent of every son of the king of all kings, the individuality of each child of the Father Spirit; purely democratic it affirms that each must be to himself his own king and priest, that he that can control his own spirit is greater than he who taketh a city; "that what one actually would do, if free from the coercion of necessity or the constraint of prudence, is the measure of what he or she really is." This is Spiritualism! a restoration of revelation, a recognition of inspiration, a demonstration of the life immortal; the advent of the millennial epoch sang by poets, and dimly seen by prophets and inspired mediums in all ages. The past year has been an eventful one, perhaps the most so in the history of the movement. You may remember that in the early part portions of the report of the London Dialectical Society found their way into print; they were confirmatory of the facts elicited by all previous inquirers who had devoted sufficient attention to the subject. The report, in detail with important additions, was advertised in the *Athenæum* for August, as about to issue from the press in October. The publication of Mr. Crookes' experiments, about what Mr. Sergeant Cox names "Psychism," is further confirmation of how gradually the human mind accommodates itself to new truths. Twenty years ago Robert Hare, Professor of Chemistry in one of the best universities in America, performed the identical experiments, and published them in a work—*Spiritualism Scientifically Demonstrated*. The subject has been honoured by being noticed at the last meeting of the British Association, and convincing proof of its truth is that it has been condemned uninvestigated by the same conclave who still regard phrenology, animal magnetism and clairvoyance, as delusions. It will, without doubt, be heard of again before that eminent assembly. Each mail brings accounts of marvels occurring among an astonished public in England. The inspirational orations of the gifted Mrs. Brittain Hardinge have, to some extent, aroused a prejudiced nation. The new gospel was American in its origin they said, and ignorance classed it with free love and Mormonism; no good thing could come out of Nazareth. Spirit power is exhibited by persons being carried miles in minutes, and deposited in closed rooms with locked doors; there thus seems hardly any limit to the power of spirit over matter, provided that the accessory circumstances, the necessary conditions, be favourable. The immutable laws now exist that obtained in the time of the Apostles, and the idea of the constant interference of a non-corporeal Deity is thus not necessary to a proper appreciation of the narratives and inspired writings considered as containing all necessary truth by some of the churches. We are told that the "Spirit of the Lord" (mark the reverential expression) "caught away Phillip that the Eunuch saw him no more, but Phillip was found at Azotus." Now a reference to your geography will show you that Azotus was thirty miles from Jerusalem. We hold that the spirits of the Lord are around us as they were around the Apostles: our friends of the churches deny this, and denounce God's

holy invisible beings as evil spirits, agents of their Devil, who, according to them, really rules the world. From all quarters come narratives of visions, mysterious sights, noises, dreams; we are told that in former times there was "open vision," and it appears extremely probable that the next generation may, if they cultivate their natural faculties, enter upon a similar state of clairvoyance. Circles meet regularly in all parts of the colony; mediums are being developed. Mr. Leech, Barrister at Law, has been preaching Spiritualism all the year; the friends of free thought are organizing at Castlemaine, Sandhurst, Stawell, and Clunes. Our friend the Rev. Mr. Tyerman has been ordained by the church authorities as a spiritual teacher; vainly imagining that the cause could be crushed out, they have given to him a pastor in a retired hamlet, a sphere of action and a pastorate, that could perhaps never have been obtained had he remained content with imagining that God had ceased to speak to men. He is the first, but assuredly will not be the last, that will be called. Now how have we individually assisted in the glorious work of reform? To whom much is given of him much will be required. Has our daily conduct been such as to reflect honour on our belief? Is it guided by intelligent love? Has our light so shone before men that they have seen our good works and glorified our Father who is in Heaven? If not our meeting here, our professions, are but mockeries, and will be as millstones around our neck when we ascend to those "immortal mansions whence all goodness emanates." It was deemed advisable that during our first year our proceedings should not be made public. Many think it is now our duty to announce our services, and to invite the poor and the doubting, the dirty and the immoral, to the gospel offered here without money and without price, and to the salvation free to all without bargain. Your attention will have soon to be directed to the formation of a children's Lyceum; aware from sad experience of the pain and difficulty of having to unlearn. I recall to your recollection what Professor Huxley said at a meeting of the London School Board in reference to orthodox teaching:—"It is a most unfair, and unjust, and abominable thing to implant in a child's mind what would by and by be removed with difficulty and grief. To do this would reduce our boasted Christianity below the old Pagan idea of treating even children with respect."

Let us hope that our progress during the ensuing year will be even more marked than it has been, that the present reproach of being a Spiritualist will soon be exchanged for honour, and that each may feel that it is a glory to be engaged in the task of elevating this, the natural or first sphere, to the present condition of the second or spiritual; and when at last the time of our anastasis, or standing up, or resurrection, shall draw near, when distant objects fade, and the near and dear ones around our couch grow dim to our bodily senses, we may listen with sure confidence for the celestial tones which shall say and sing—Friend, come up higher.

W. L. R.

November, 1871.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN N——R AND D——Y T———PH.

N——r. Mr. D——y T——ph, how do you explain those higher cases of phenomena—well attested as true—which claim to be spiritual manifestations?

D——y T——ph,—I cannot explain them—they are wonderful; but I am in doubt. I ask information; I desire the truth.

N——r,—Mr. D——y T——ph, what is your view of Spiritualists and their creed?

D——y T——ph,—Monomaniacs, fooleries, dupes, delusion, Bedlamites, charlatans, knaves, lunatics, humbugs, crazy, witches, harpies,—Can't think of the rest.

THEOLOGY OF SPIRITUALISM.

THERE is nothing in the theology of Spiritualism repugnant to the rightly interpreted teaching of the Scriptures. It presents us with like *apparent* discrepancies, which give way before a general and comprehensive survey of its purport as a whole. The Scriptures and Spiritualism both teach—God is Love; a merciful Creator, a heavenly Father, who sent his son Jesus into the world to lead us into the way of life eternal. He was to the extent of his capacity a manifestation of the Father's presence, and a saviour, teacher, guide. God will not punish men *forever* for their sins; he will leave them to the retributions of that moral law which they have violated while in the body. He desires their salvation; and he will unfold to their view the way of its progressive attainment. The Spirit-world is a world of degrees of happiness and misery. It is a world of progress in which all advance; the good, to higher states of happiness; the bad, as they use their privileges, to mitigations of their woe, and eventual peace. Men are not saved by faith alone; they must do good works; they must trust in God, and love their neighbours; they must be honest, pure in heart, benevolent, kind, tolerant. Creeds are of no account. Good men of all creeds, all nations, are accepted of God. God is one; there is no trinity of persons. Men are not saved for the sake of another; there is no vicarious atonement. God gives His Spirit to all who ask Him, and in His love to mankind permits this intercourse between men and spirits, for their improvement, and as a means of augmenting their happiness.

Furthermore it is averred by Spiritualism, that the souls of deceased persons at their death enter at once upon the Spirit-world, without change in their mental or moral condition. As they lived, so they die; and as they die, so they appear and assume their former characters. Hence the good and the bad remain such still; only that, this being a progressive state, they have opportunities for improvement, and will improve. The grosser spirits linger near the earth, and long after those objects which attracted and gratified them while in the body. But they are measurably in darkness and great discomfort; seeking but never finding; ever consumed by truant desires which are solaced by no satisfaction. The purer spirits enjoy a greater degree of happiness in proportion to their goodness. To them the celestial world is more fully laid open, and it appears to them inexpressibly beautiful. But all spirits, as they increase in conformity to the laws of the heavenly condition, depart from the earthly sphere, and ascend to those tranquil abodes of the blessed into which no sorrow or care can enter. Spirits do not become, as men suppose, all-seeing and all-knowing so soon as they leave the body. Their powers of observation are greatly increased, but they are still very ignorant. This depends very much upon their previous knowledge, and their capacity for improvement. Hence the reason of their sometimes contradictory answers to our questions. So some being malicious and evil, deceive in their replies. The responses of such men as Wesley and Channing may be implicitly relied on to the extent of the spirit's knowledge; while those of his *grace* the Duke of Cumberland, or of his *holiness* Pope Alexander VI., ought to be carefully sifted and taken with many grains of allowance.

All this can hardly be said to be in startling contradiction to a rational faith, while its advantages are manifest. It robs death of its terrors, and opens a scene to our hopes, of inconceivable beauty and happiness. Above all—if it be true—it settles the question on philosophic grounds, of man's immortality—a question, the importance of which alone swallows up all others, and reduces all earthly sorrows and disasters, in the comparison, to mere trivial annoyances, unworthy our attention. What a prize to virtue! What discouragement to vice!

The character and amount of the testimony offered in support of the truth of this philosophy, must be seen to be as great as testimony can be without actual experience. Perhaps the most remarkable feature in the whole matter is the testimony offered by men and women of standing and character in Europe as well as in this

colony—of whom there are thousands—and of whose veracity and sanity we cannot entertain the slightest suspicion. What, then, is our duty in regard to it? Surely not to ignore it by contemptuous silence; not to ridicule it; not to treat it with levity, but seriously, and to point it out to the public as a subject deserving investigation.

A great deal has been written and said with a view to its exposure as an imposture. But it may truly be said, that these efforts, however honest and able, have entirely failed to account for the phenomena. Indeed, upon many minds, they have had the effect of strengthening belief in their truthfulness and reality.

THE ORIGIN OF THINGS.

THIS question has lately formed a subject of correspondence between two men much interested in advancing the current of human thought, but slightly differing in regard to the particular channel in which it should run. Both concur in thinking that solely by the multiplication and comparison of ideas can we hope to distinguish the true from the false. For the benefit and criticism of our readers we give the letter of one correspondent and the running commentary of the other, as the most convenient form in which to present and compare their opinions.

My dear —, I met with the following which I copy—supposing that it will interest you,—“It is absurd to say that before anything *was*, something came into existence.

True.

If so, it follows that, since things do exist, *something* must have always been in existence.

True.

What is that *something*, which has always been in being?

Matter.

A very brief analysis of the nature of those things which exist, will show that that something is a *unity*, an *infinity*, an *intelligent creative force*.

Why a *unity*—further than as all things are included under the denomination—matter? We know not that matter is infinite, and the word *infinite* is improperly applied to anything except,—space—and time. The idea of infinity applied otherwise is gratuitous and inappropriate, meaning nothing; and no attempt is here made to show how it can be connected with the premises.

It is evident that the axiom, ‘Nothing can exist without an adequate cause,’ can only apply to *such things* as have had a beginning.

Such as the various forms which we find matter continually assuming.

Those things which are *uncreated* and self-existent, need no cause to produce them, for there never was a time when they were not.

‘Creative force,’—‘uncreated.’ No words require definition more than these. If ‘create’ has any distinctive meaning, it means more than *make* or *fashion*; inasmuch as it involves the creation of the materials out of nothing. But this signification is now exploded. Nothing can be created. Matter—in time—does and must change its form or condition, but is not *created*, for not a single additional atom can be produced. The transfer of matter from one form to another is not creation. Were it so, every breath we breathe, every morsel we digest, every change we effect, would be an example of it. Definition is fatal to such obscure and really unmeaning phrases. ‘Self-existent.’ This seems to me a more (if possible) unmeaning phrase than creation. For it implies that something exists by its own effort, and therefore—began by its own effort! Matter does not exist by its own effort, and therefore, though it is eternal, I would not call it self-existent. It exists as an ultimate fact—necessarily; and cannot be deprived of,—or have any more added to—its existence. Matter was never produced, because its original production implies an impossibility—its production from nothing.

Hence before we can apply the axiom ‘that nothing can exist without a cause to produce it,’ we must first show that those things to which we seek to apply this axiom, have not always existed.

‘Nothing can exist without a cause to produce it.’ When we say this we cannot apply it to *matter*,—but only to any of the multitudinous forms which we find matter constantly taking, and which cannot be stable, while time is progressive; and time cannot be otherwise. ‘A cause.’ I don’t think there is any such thing as a *cause*. That is—*no thing*, *no one thing*, can be properly named as the cause of any other; everything being the outcome of all preceding circumstances;—and no one can say of any one of them that it was not a necessary antecedent.

The enquiry begins thus: It is absurd to say that before anything *was*, something came into existence,—For *nothing* cannot make *something* out of *nothing*.

Things exist. Therefore something must have always been in existence. "What is that something?"

Matter.

That which has always existed must be self-existent and eternal. It must be *absolutely independent* of all other things. But if it is self-existent, eternal, and absolutely independent, it must also be *one*. Two things cannot both be absolutely independent.

"Independent." Matter is the only thing necessarily existent and eternal, and as it is *all things*, it is dependent on nothing else. To call matter—*one*, seems a misapplication of terms, except that matter is the one only thing eternal, uncreatable, and indestructible.

That which is self-existent, eternal, and absolutely independent, is also infinite. That which is infinite is *one*.

"Infinite." The word infinite is wholly inapplicable to anything whatever, except *space* and *time*. Nothing else is *wholly limitless*, and space and time should be only cautiously called *things*, as they are simply *conditions* in which universal matter exists and changes. But we do not know matter to be infinite, still less any form in which it appears.

Since there is but *one thing* which has always been in existence, it follows that *all other things must have had a beginning*. But all things which are not uncreated, which have had a beginning, require an adequate cause to produce them.

"All things but *one* have had a beginning."

All forms, not excepting *ONE*. Matter alone is eternal; that of which all things are formed.

Hence that *one thing* was the only thing that existed anterior to all other things. Therefore *it alone could have been the cause* which produced all other things, for there was no other cause in existence to produce them.

It cannot be too often repeated that there is but *one thing* eternally existent,—i.e., matter. There are therefore *no other things* in the same sense. The only other things in any sense, are the forms which matter takes;—and it has always through eternity taken *some forms*—though not like the present ones perhaps. But matter cannot ever have existed without form of some kind, it probably was never altogether homogeneous, but always exhibited perhaps as many forms as it does now. But no permanent ones. Matter—substance—is eternal, and requires no cause. Neither can matter be the *cause* of any thing—of any of its forms. Its conditions at any one instant could evolve no others in the next instant, than those that are evolved. For anyone who believes in cause at all, must admit that for any fact or condition of things to be different from what it is—or was, involves a difference in its antecedents, and in their antecedents, back through the past eternity. So that nothing could now be different, without the irrevocable *past eternity* having been different also;—which would be absurd. Therefore the idea of any original cause of all things, or of any *initial* cause of any thing,—i.e., of any cause without a prior cause,—must also be absurd.

This is not idle speculation. Without clear ideas of causation, morality is stultified and impossible. Till a man understands that his neighbour's acts are caused by the operation upon their particular constitutions of various circumstances, he cannot be charitable to them or consistent with himself. While he is taught and believes that his neighbours have a power of initiating causation,—of acting in this on that manner irrespective of their particular constitutions and of the circumstances that move them, he cannot but be sometimes uncharitable to them, as well as inconsistent with himself. The persecuting them to death and burning them alive—were light evils, compared to the imputation to them of wilful wickedness and sin. Can he not discern that as wilful wickedness and sin are contrary to the true interest of all, no one would willingly and knowingly commit them? and that to suppose it is therefore an inconsistency? It is simply impossible that men can be just or charitable to each other until they learn to attribute each to his neighbour intentions as good as those of which he is himself conscious.

PHILANTHROPOS.

SPIRITUALISM AT STAWELL.

JUDGING from the rapid advance of Spiritualism at and around Pleasant Creek, we are disposed to predict that ere long the numerous orthodox "Joss houses" which bedeck that go-a-head locality, will be transformed into more useful purposes than *Sunday* receptacles of spurious Fashion-observers. Apropos of our prediction we present the following paragraph from the "Pleasant Creek Chronicle" of the 10th ultimo:—

"Mr. James M'Lean will deliver a discourse on Sunday evening next at the Assembly Room, on the subject of "The doctrine of eternal punishment shown to be

irrational, unscriptural, and untrue." Mr. M'Lean's popularity as a lecturer upon kindred subjects and the interest taken in spiritualism in this district will no doubt attract a considerable audience. We understand that an efficient choir has been formed and will be present on the occasion. The address commences at seven o'clock."

The following notice of Mr. M'Lean's discourse is from the "Pleasant Creek News" of the following Tuesday:—

"Mr. M'Lean's lecture which was delivered in the Assembly Room on Sunday evening last was well attended, there being about 200 persons present. The subject chosen was "Eternal punishment, irrational, unscriptural, and untrue." The audience was very attentive, and evidently followed the arguments of the lecturer with great interest. At the close about twenty-five gentlemen formed themselves into a committee for the purpose of taking steps to continue these lectures, as also to secure the services of able speakers when available. A great deal of earnestness was, it is said, evinced by the members of the committee who, we learn, are prepared to defray all expenses in connection with the services."

At a meeting held in the Stawell Psychological Rooms on the evening of Wednesday, the 15th ultimo, it was unanimously determined upon to adopt the Declaration of Principles which guide the Universalists of Castlemaine under the heading of the "Stawell Progressionists." The following is a copy of the aforesaid Principles.—

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES set forth as a general expression of the teachings of the Stawell Progressionists, but they are to be interpreted as embodying the opinions of those only who individually accept them.

1st—That there is one God, the Infinite Father of all.

2nd—That man, as the offspring of this Infinite Parent, is His highest representative on earth: that Jesus of Nazareth, having fully lived out the divine elements of our humanity, was the most complete embodiment of the Father's goodness which we can contemplate: that each man has, by virtue of God's parentage, within him an element of divinity, which is ever prompting him to do right, and which will ultimately free him from all imperfections incident to the rudimental condition.

3rd—That man, as a spirit, is immortal: that death is but the birth into another condition of life, where the soul retains its experiences of the past, and where development or progression is its endless destiny.

4th—That the spiritual world is not far off, but is near to, and encompasses us in our present existence.

5th—That he who loves the Infinite Father with all his heart and his neighbor as himself, has begun to enjoy eternal happiness, whatever might be his race, or whatsoever kind may be his religious opinions.

6th—That what is called 'evil' is but the corruption of that which was originally good, the latter becoming perverted by our material nature not being sufficiently under the control and guidance of the soul.

7th—That the excessive yielding to the material nature is, for the most part, punished in this life, though the soul, after the physical change called 'death,' also suffers therefrom, but these sufferings are not eternal.

8th—That Divine Inspiration, or the promptings to the human soul from the Infinite Parent, is not a miracle of past ages, but a perpetual fact.

9th—That the Creator in the beginning made natural laws for the government of our world, and these laws have never since been varied, altered, or departed from.

Stawell, 15th November, 1871.

Strange to say that Mr. M'Lean, who is the principal founder of this body, had a leading part in establishing the Castlemaine progressionist movement.

THE NECESSITY FOR CULTIVATING THE JUDICIAL FACULTIES.

In this age of mental activity, when so many new ideas are agitating mankind, it is highly desirable that everything presented for our acceptance as truth should be well weighed and considered, so that no erroneous conclusions are arrived at. A little consideration will show us how largely we are dependent for our knowledge on the testimony of others. The printing press sends forth a continuous stream of accounts of persons, places, and events, the majority of which we are unable to verify for ourselves; and as these accounts are often inaccurate, and contradictory, they point to the paramount importance of cultivating the judicial faculties, that we may weigh fairly all evidence brought before us, and not found conclusions on *ex parte* statements.

A short time ago I read in one of the daily papers an account of a lecture delivered by a gentleman holding opposite views to those held by the said paper, and was both surprised and amused at the absurdity of some of his arguments. I pointed them out to a judicious friend of mine, who remarked—"They seem very absurd, put in that way, but remember they are not the lecturer's arguments, but a travesty of them written by an opponent." I was much struck by the remark, and felt that I had been guilty of an indiscretion in laughing at a man without having first ascertained whether he had really made use of those absurd arguments or not. I immediately turned to another paper, more favourable to the lecturer's views, and found, as therein reported, the lecture was in every way an admirable one, without any trace of the absurdities which had been caused entirely by a few adroit omissions which had turned very common-sense statements into something supremely ridiculous. At another time, I read of a deputation that had waited on a certain Chief Secretary, to lodge a complaint against the hares and sparrows, and a member of the deputation was represented as having made use of this delightfully illogical argument—"Some birds—sparrows, he believed—had picked his peach-buds, therefore, he inferred that hares ought to be shot!" Of course he did not perpetrate any such absurdity, and a very small paragraph appeared next day to say so; but that was utterly powerless to remove the ridiculous impression created the day before, which rendered a serious consideration of his arguments hopeless.

Coming nearer home, we see another artifice sometimes used by reporters to gratify their sense of the ridiculous. Mr. Tyerman, in his late lecture, stated some very interesting facts which had convinced him of the reality of spirit communion; as tests they were as satisfactory as could be asked, and utterly inexplicable, except on Spiritualist's theory. Following these facts, however, was a short communication purporting to come from the spirit of Sir Robert Peel, but in this case no test as to identity seems to have been either asked or given, so the truth of the communication could not be proved, and it was only worth consideration when taken in connection with those which had been absolutely verified. These test communications—and this is a point to which I wish to draw attention—were quietly ignored by some of the papers, while the untested one concerning Sir Robert Peel, was fully reported, as though it were a strong point, whereas it was the weakest that could have been selected from the whole lecture.

I have selected these instances from the daily papers simply because they are good specimens of a very numerous class of cases to be met with every day, both in and out of print.

Another fertile source of error is the tendency, now so common, to exaggeration. This arises not so much from a desire to mislead, as from the desire to convey a sufficiently forcible impression. For instance, a person is much struck by an incident, he gives an account of it, and fearing it may not have the same effect on his friend as it had on himself, he exaggerates somewhat. His friend, in retelling it to another, actuated by the same desire, but without the slightest idea of misleading,

exaggerates still more; and so the tale goes on, gathering as it goes, until what a first was a very simple occurrence, becomes so altered, that it is no longer recognizable by the original narrator.

This tendency to exaggeration is not the only thing we have to guard against when taking evidence at second-hand, because when the exaggeration is absent, there is almost sure to be distortion of some other kind. Everything that passes through a human mind is sure to be more or less tinged by that mind, and the more it passes through, the more likely is it to be distorted. So in our inquiries after truth, we must be careful to ascertain through what channels the information we receive has passed, that we may make due allowance for the distortion it will have received.

One of the most common methods adopted by persons wishing to make out a case in their own favour, is to state all the facts which tell well on their side, and ignore or suppress those that tell against them; or what is still more misleading, with affected candour give facts apparently against themselves, but only those that can easily be disposed of, keeping the unanswerable ones carefully out of sight. This is not uncommon in the pulpit, and is often practiced with the best intentions, but has led to innumerable controversies.

The tricks of controversy are very numerous, but only require to be known to lose their power to mislead. One very frequently used by theologians, is to take certain *postulates*, and argue from them as though they were absolute facts. The arguments are often so sound in themselves, that many people never dream that they are founded on mere assumption. It is astonishing to what a large extent the orthodox world allows itself to be imposed upon by this expedient. It is scarcely credible that the whole system of dogmatic theology is founded on the assumption that man has fallen, assumed without a shadow of proof; and when anyone questions the fact, man's present unsatisfactory condition is pointed to as a conclusive proof that he *has* fallen, thus throwing dust into the half-opened eyes of the would-be inquirer. When Dr. Bromby, in one of his admirable lectures, pointed out the vast amount of evidence there is to show that Adam was not the first man, and that the account of the "fall" was merely allegorical, he aimed a blow at existing theology, which blow, properly followed up, will be the means of finally demolishing the whole theological system. Because, if man has not *fallen*, he does not need a *Saviour*, therefore the Atonement and all kindred doctrines fall to the ground.

But to return to the tricks of controversy. One of the most common is that of setting up a man of straw for the pleasure of knocking him down again; or, in other words, putting weak and foolish arguments into the mouth of your opponent, and by refuting them, lead people to suppose it is your opponent you have defeated. Another trick, not so common, but used with great effect occasionally, is to continue a controversy until confronted by some thoroughly unanswerable argument, and then throwing up the cap with a cry of victory, refer to the last argument as being too absurd to require answering; thus arrogating a degree of mental superiority over those who cannot see wherein the absurdity consists.

It is to be hoped the time is not far distant when the reasoning faculties of all will be so well cultivated that all these plans for misleading others will be rendered worse than useless, and when men will fight for truth, and not for victory.

In conclusion, it would be well to impress upon all the necessity there exists for exercising to their full extent those powers of mind that will enable us to weigh with judicial calmness all the conflicting statements we hear from day to day. Remember there are two sides to every question, and we ought not to be misled by *ex parte* evidence, any more than a Judge is misled by special pleading. In fact, we ought in our daily lives to look upon ourselves as holding a similar position to that held by a Judge in a court of justice. We must be careful to weigh all information received, and be particularly guarded against the special pleadings of our own prejudices.

We cannot begin the cultivation of the judicial faculties too soon, and it should form part of every boy and girl's education. Everyone *sees* truth differently, and everyone *states* it differently; add to this the verbal confusion resulting from an imperfect acquaintance with our imperfect language, and then you have a wide field for the exercise of the utmost caution in receiving evidence, and charity in interpreting it.

SCIOLOGIST.

SPIRITUALISM.

THERE are many to whom the following question might well be addressed:

What is that which now, for some twenty-three years, has occupied the attention of so many persons—which has challenged and received the severest scrutiny that the acutest minds and the most accomplished scientists could devise, and which, after all, has compelled the belief of millions of intelligent persons, in the most highly cultivated portions of the world, and which is extending its circle of believers with marvellous celerity? Is this thing a humbug or a deception, think you, or is it worth looking into?

To those who ask, what is the use of it all; a short and conclusive answer would be—that it affords the *only demonstration* of a future state of existence—the *only ground* upon which a man is enabled to exclaim, "O Death! where is thy sting—O Grave! where is thy victory?" If people would go to the Spiritual literature, and search and study among the more than a thousand volumes already published on this subject, they would soon find an answer to their inquiry that would startle them. But unless people are prepared and willing to abandon their most cherished opinions for *truth*; I would advise them not to search into this thing. For *so sure* as they do *investigate*, *so sure* it is that they *will believe*. They cannot help themselves.

In the meantime, the bare possibility of error might suggest itself to a candid and careful mind as a *caution* against the exposure, that must sooner or later visit such exhibitions of blind bigotry and persecution as we have witnessed lately.

Let Spiritualists keep calm—let sceptics scoff—bigots rave—the press ridicule—Let us keep an eye on the pulpit, the clergy will be sure to commence a mighty onslaught soon; hew straight, keep cool, and welcome them into our ranks.

MR. TYERMAN'S LECTURE.

We take from the *Age* newspaper the following report of Mr. Tyerman's first public lecture delivered by him to a Melbourne audience, on "Spiritualism."

"The rev. gentleman commenced by stating that it was his deliberate conviction that historians of future ages would pronounce Spiritualism to be the mightiest religious movement developed in the nineteenth century. He explained how, after coming to this colony, he had been led to investigate the subject on its merits, considering that it was his duty as a religious teacher to do so, and if finding it false in principle to oppose it. The reasons which led him to investigate it were—firstly, his regard for personal consistency; secondly, that the subject was one likely seriously to affect the church; thirdly, that it was a religious movement in all intents and purposes; and, fourthly, that it was possibly true. The rev. gentleman proceeded to put himself in close communication, by means of mediums, with the spirit-world, and had, as he says, some extraordinary communications, which convinced him of the truth of the theory, that disembodied souls can, when they please to do so, put themselves into intimate connection with the inhabitants of this world. He gave instances of communications he had received, and chiefly amongst these were some writings in the original hands of Cromwell and Sir Robert Peel. These, he said, were so convincing that he had no

option left him but to embrace the doctrine. It was true that some puerile stuff was often received through the mediums, but this was to be accounted for by the fact that the spirit leaving the body carried with it to the other world the character it had inherited in this. He referred to the other kinds of spiritual manifestations, such as those of seeing hands, hearing music, drawing, and of mediums writing that which to them was unknown. The reverend gentleman went on to explain how, when standing in an abyss of darkness, he was met by the various theories opposed to the possibility of the existence of Spiritualism, as those who understood it believed in it. The first objection offered to it was a negative one. That was the objection of those who said the phenomena testified to were not possible. That he met at once by the answer, before made clear to his own mind, viz., that the phenomena really occurred, no matter what agency caused them. Secondly, he was asked to believe that the whole thing was a wilful imposture. That he answered by saying that it was decidedly strange that the imposture had not been discovered by the scientific men who had set themselves to do it. Other points were self-delusion, mechanical contrivances, involuntary muscular action, and some power in nature not yet discovered, psychological operations, and, lastly, Satanic influence. On this point the lecturer became warm. He asked what had not been fathered on the devil? He was charged with the rebellion in heaven, the fall of man, the afflictions visited on Job, and the temptation of that world-teacher, Christ. One of the great arguments against Spiritism was that it was so late in being discovered. That, surely was no argument against it. Why, it might as reasonably be asked, did not Christ come before? It was acknowledged that the locomotive engine had done much for the world—why did not that come before? He denied that the doctrine was contrary to the teachings of the Bible, and contended that by its light many parts the Bible could be the better explained and understood. It preached morality to all the world, and did not, as was alleged against it, subvert moral obligations, and give a licence to evil passions and noxious practices. After touching on some personal matters, and stating that the Bishop of Melbourne had in a letter expressed his regret for the manner in which he had been dismissed, the lecturer said that his object was to modify prejudice with regard to spiritism, correcting misapprehension and stimulating investigation. Having done this he would be satisfied. He then went on to deal with the leading principles of the spiritists, the teachings of spiritualism, and its bearings on popular theology. He contended that spiritism proved the twofold being of man, and showed that he had both a material and a spiritual existence. This was a grand thing in this age of materialism, which was fast drifting towards atheism. This new religion met the views of atheists, for it gave them what they had so long asked for—proof. It demonstrated that there was a future state, and that man had a soul which came back to tell us of its existence and condition. Spiritism gave a more rational and satisfactory theory of the world to come than any other system supplied, as was proved by the difference of the belief of the creeds. Some thought and believed that the soul lapsed into a state of unconsciousness, and remained in a long sleep till the trumpet-call woke it; others that a portion of mankind must be utterly annihilated, and only a favored few finding their way to the realms of bliss; others in a purgation of souls. Spiritism proclaimed the progressive state of man to a glorious end. It would yet be found that reason, with science, would rule the world. The speaker was most attentively listened to. Mr. James Smith occupied the chair.

—o—
We are glad to state that the Rev. Mr. Tyerman has met with the most unqualified success at Sandhurst. On Sunday evening last he lectured in the Lyceum Theatre to an audience of some 2000. The building was completely filled, several hundreds being unable to obtain admission. We regret space compels us to omit a fuller report of the proceedings. During the week the rev. gentleman will visit Lockwood, Eaglehawk and Kangaroo Flat.

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