

THE

Harbinger of Light.

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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It can hardly escape even the most cursory observation, that the spiritual manifestations of the last few years, besides increasing immensely in frequency, which may be mainly due to the more extensive and thorough organisation of circles, are also increasing in variety. From this fact, we may fairly infer that greater power to manifest is gradually being collected in the hands of spirit friends, and that probably a much greater number and higher class of mediums are being developed among the spirits as well as among ourselves. It may not be known to all our readers that the spirits, in giving directions for the formation, or alteration of circles, generally point out the fact that they, on their side, are obliged to use the services of a medium, or spirit of peculiar organization, in order to establish communion with us, just as much as we are. There are thus two mediums necessary, and any great increase of control on the part of the ultra-mundane medium, or any increase in our medium's knowledge of the true laws of spirit intercourse, must surely facilitate the process, and secure more brilliant results. This seems to be what is actually occurring; how far it may go, to what extent the increase of power and knowledge may bring us, it would of course be vain to speculate. For our own part, we are inclined to think that there is good ground for the hope that the gift of open vision may one day be general among us, as there is much reason to suppose it was, at one time, among the ancient Semitic nations of the world.

There can be no doubt, however, that it is wise and right often to take stock, as it were, of the progress that we have made, and to note, as far as possible, the means by which it has been obtained. With this view, we will glance over the facts that lead us to the statement that

spirit manifestations are rising in character, and increasing in variety, as well as in frequency.

When spirit manifestations first began to attract public notice twenty-five or more years ago, they consisted chiefly of raps, table-tippings, and other movements, sometimes coming apparently at random, and without any definite object, sometimes giving intelligent answers to test questions. Levitation was also not unknown about the same time, though much less spoken of than now. We ourselves, just twenty years ago, saw a young lady, of ample proportions, raised to the ceiling of a room brilliantly lighted with gas, and brought down again, without any appearance of weight. This was repeated several times, and in several different parts of the room. All these manifestations, however, allied themselves so closely with the already known phenomena of electricity and magnetism, that many persons who saw them, and who were not crazy enough to disbelieve the evidence of their own senses, still refused to attribute them to the intervention of disembodied spirits, but considered them as the results of electro-biological laws not sufficiently understood. Many who accepted this explanation were themselves mediums, and had the manifestations proceeded no further, possibly this would have come to be the popular theory. But this was only the beginning. When you have need to rouse a sleeping household, in the middle of the night, how do you set to work about it? Do you go to the house and utter your important message in vigorous and elaborate language as you might do when they were all awake, ready to attend to you, the daylight showing your approach? No, you knock long and loudly at the door; you wait to see if that rouses them; if not, you begin again, louder than before, the same mere noise with no message in it at all. Not till some of the household are sufficiently awake to understand you fully, do you deliver your message. Just so the spirit messengers have dealt with us. They rapped on walls and tables, dragged furniture about, and answered foolish questions with endless patience, just to rouse us from the sleep of spiritual incredulity which for two centuries had succeeded the superstitious mysticism of the middle ages. Thanks to Franklin and Mesmer, and their followers, we had learned to know something of elect-

ricity and magnetism; therefore any phenomena that allied themselves with these we were able to believe. They led us on to further knowledge. Writing mediumship soon produced examples that could not be explained by electro-biology, but when independent clairvoyance and trance began to have such examples as A. J. Davis, T. L. Harris, and others less widely known, the magnetic theory alone was insufficient, though the phenomena exhibited still linked themselves closely with what was already known of animal magnetism. The new developments were specially characterised by their usefulness to man. News brought from distant or long mourned friends; correct diagnosis of hidden disease; regions of oil wells, or water, pointed out; successful treatment, by magnetism, of diseases that had baffled medicine; these were things sure to excite a universal interest among mankind. Whatever doctors and clergymen and philosophers might say to the contrary. Unfortunately, this very usefulness brought Spiritualism face to face with one of its greatest dangers. Shoals of deceivers on both sides of the curtain of death rushed in to supply the demand of shoals of fools and mercenaries on this side who would rather be humbugged than taught; and who desired success rather than knowledge. Had the manifestations stopped at this stage, we are of opinion that the cause would have been swamped by the flood of spurious or deceitful communications that poured upon the world, and the spread of the good tidings of Spiritualism would have been delayed indefinitely.

But several new modes of manifestation have occurred of late years, and are daily increasing in variety, which put the origin, the purpose and the fate of Spiritualism beyond doubt. These are notably the direct writing of spirits, without the intervention of any material medium whatever. This very remarkable mode of intercourse between men and spirits, is now of frequent occurrence in some well advanced circles; it is testified to by Robert Dale Owen, in his "Debatable Land," page 375, and forms the subject of a very interesting book (in French, we fear not yet translated) by the Baron Guldenstubbé, "*La Réalité des Esprits et le Phénomène merveilleux de leur Ecriture directe démontré.*" To these may well be added the materialization of spirit forms, which startled most of us not so very long ago, and which are becoming more and more frequent and wide spread, not only in England and America, but in these colonies also, especially at Sandhurst, and in New Zealand, at Dunedin. Not to be confounded with this, but of at least equal importance, is the opening of the inner sight of some to perceive the spirit forms that are ever and everywhere around us. These phases of spirit manifestations entirely remove Spiritualism from all connection with electricity or with animal magnetism, so far as we yet know of either of these sciences. True, the spirits themselves tell us that the materialisation of spirit substance is accomplished by means of electricity; but that must be from their knowledge of the science; ours, certainly, does not yet give us the clue to how it may be done.

The very fact of these new developments bring so far removed from all we know of other science, makes them so to speak, more peculiarly spiritualistic, and precludes the possibility of their being misinterpreted either as

regards their origin or their purpose. Few who have found themselves face to face with the buried dead whether in the quiet of their own home or in the busy streets, the very publicity of which would render trick impossible, can ever doubt the reality of life beyond the grave, or be satisfied with any explanation that makes the apparition merely subjective. Nor can the high purpose of Spiritualism be easily distorted, or disguised under the new and increasing light. These shadowy visitors have never yet consented to point out mines foretell the event of races or otherwise make themselves generally useful to man. In a few cases they seem to have come expressly to right some great wrong. But these are exceptional instances. The general object they have in view is plainly, to convince, to teach of the hereafter by demonstration, by showing it, to turn faith into knowledge. They come to deliver man from the fear of death—that slavery which has lain at the root of all ecclesiastical tyranny. They come to save the mourner from the "grief that saps the mind." And, as Christ, risen from the dead, was the first fruits of them that slept, so these are the fuller harvest of the resurrection which it is our especial privilege to behold, even while yet dwellers in the flesh. Their mission is a high and holy one; and, if we have intelligence enough to appreciate duly our own share in their work, and to co-operate heartily in it, it may well be that the future has in store for us states as much more enlightened and knowledge as much higher than that which we have yet attained to as ours is above the ignorance, the slavery and the feudalism of the dark ages.

COMMUNICATION RECEIVED AT THOMSON'S CIRCLE, SANDHURST.

DEAR FRIENDS,—If you reflect on the consequences involved in the opposite views of Deity, you will at once perceive how immensely different must be the influence issuing from them on the moral and social condition of the world. In all modern popular religions the spiritual is to a great extent shaped and limited by the pressure of the physical, whilst Spiritualism claims absolute dominion over the material and uses it simply as an instrument, and gives it whatever beauty and value it can receive. Dear Friends, what do you mean by spiritual? Why this, it is that interior sense of moral distinctions and that perception of great and glorious truth which men, as soon as they are awakened to it, recognise as the highest function of their being, and which connects them by a secret feeling with the invisible sovereignty of the universe; whilst the many different modern religions split up Deity into many parts, and make out of them a multiform whole subject to the sway of a dark mysterious fate; it is the profoundest conviction of Spiritualism that there can be only One, all perfect Being, only one God, and the Spiritualist feels that his intercourse with God can only be mental—that nothing hinders it but moral impurities, wilfully retained and cherished, and he shrinks from every attempt to approach or propitiate Him by any material process as the height of impiety. And, again, the preachers and teachers of all sects who keep to the ancient practice, (once inevitable) of judging the universe from the point of view of their own minds, instead of learning to take their stand out of themselves, investigating from the universe inwards, and not from within outwards, must necessarily think ill of a work which exposes the falsity of their method, and the worthlessness of the result to which it leads; and as Spiritualism treats of Orthodoxy as destined to pass away, its defenders must necessarily abhor, dread, and despise it. Dear Friends, they merely express their own natural feelings on behalf of the object of their reverence, and the purpose of their lives, when

they charge Spiritualism with *irreverence*, they are no judges of the case, those of you who are, those of you who have proved the reality of Spiritualism will pronounce a very different judgment upon it, the aspect in which it presents man, is favourable to his moral as well as to his intellectual taste, he finds himself suddenly living and moving in the midst of the universe, as a *part of it*, not as its aim and object, and to those who have leanned the difficult task of postponing dreams to realities, till the beauty of reality is seen, in its *full disclosure*, while that of dreams *melts into darkness*, the moral charm of Spiritualism will be as impressive as its intellectual taste. Certainly you cannot conceive of any instruction so favourable to aspiration as that which shows how great are your facilities, how small your knowledge, how sublime the heights which you may hope to attain, and how boundless an infinity may be assumed to spread out beyond.

Good Night,

H. R.

Poetry.

Written for the Banner of Light.

A WELCOME HOME TO "THE PILGRIM,"

Our Brave Friend and Worker, J. M. Peebles.

BY WILLIAM BRUNTON.

Hail, Pilgrim, hail! a thousand welcomes ring
Like choral music in thine ear,
And all around bright spirit garlands fling,
To show how loved thou art and dear.

Thy travels now a little time are stayed;
"Well done!" thou surely needest rest;
To come from noonday heat to soothing shade,
Return to home and there be blest.

Thou art most blest, for, lo! thine eyes have seen
The lands of youth's enraptured dream;
In Orient climes of love thy feet have been,
And wandered far, like Jordan's stream.

Thou hast not been, like foolish pilgrims old,
On superstitious fancy bent,
But like philosophers that sought for gold—
For wisdom pure with bold intent.

Thou hadst the eye to love the varied flowers
Of Christian soil or heathen ground,
And heart to wander free through all earth's bowers,
Where Eden yet in love is found.

Oh blest thy feet! attuned to Pilgrim's heart,
Be ever blest thy noble life!
Now home and wife and friends perform their part,
And all the social joys are rife.

We hail thy presence as the fields the rain,
And as the birds do hail the morn;
Our hearts are glad to see thee once again,
Our hearts and minds are less forlorn.

Oh come with all thy gathered store of love,
With sympathy and bravery true!
Come, aid the angel ministers above,
Come, strengthen us and us renew!

Oh come with richest wisdom to the fight,
Help us in all our struggles dire;
Give us thy aid, asserting still the right,
And live the life our truths inspire.

Be in our midst a light and help indeed!
Be all thou wert and promised fair,
And by kind acts proclaim thy creed,
And let the world thy beauty share.

Albany, N. Y.

To Correspondents.

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

"ENERGETIC CIRCLE" AT SANDHURST.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

DEAR SIR,—In your last issue appears a lengthy report of the experiences of the "Energetic Circle" of Sandhurst. One little paragraph of this report I beg leave to comment upon, for like the postscript of an "old woman's letter," it is pregnant with "coming events." It appears that after long dreary sittings covering a period of twenty-three months, the process of incubation has resulted in a "resolution." "That the time has arrived for the formation of a Spiritualist Association at Sandhurst." The sleepy nature of their seances one can gather from the dismally exhaustive report of Chairman, and the somnolent effect on the circle is obvious when they so innocently ignore the existence or progression of others, where phenomena infinitely more startling to intellectual investigators, are of constant occurrence. Did the Energetic Circle while hibernating in their sleepy hollow assume that all nature slept, or that Chairman held in his grasp the whole spiritual life of Sandhurst, to be quickened at his fiat? Sufficit! To those unacquainted with the facts and for those who may pretend to ignore them, I extract from the minutes of the "Sandhurst Progressive Spiritualist and Freethought Association" the following narration—a bare extract of facts as they occurred, which would have been sent to you in sequence at an earlier date had it not been currently reported and believed that you would insert *no* communication from Sandhurst that was not filtered through the "Energetic Circle."

EXTRACTS FROM THE MINUTES OF THE S.P.S. AND F.T. ASSOCIATION.

With a view of keeping a record of a movement that is likely to leave a mark behind, and from which its progress may be estimated, I briefly narrate the circumstances that have led to the establishment of the *Sandhurst Progressive Spiritualist and Freethought Association*.

Some of the investigating circles of Sandhurst had been long desirous of establishing a platform on which the various phases of thought arising from the consideration of the phenomena daily witnessed in our circles, might find expression. Some months previously Mr. Albert Fletcher with great kindness and liberality had opened a room to *which all* who were desirous of listening to the beautiful inspirational addresses of the medium of Mr. Thompson's circle, (Miss Phillips) had free admission. Mr. Thompson's room being unable to accommodate the numerous visitors, Mr. Fletcher threw two rooms into one, and supplied seats for the invited, the members increasing rapidly, and other mediums of great promise being in course of development, a general desire was expressed for an enlarged gathering of Spiritualists and investigators at some centre open to all. Upwards of fifty addresses of varied beauty and power, many of them consisting of hundreds of lines of exquisite poetry were delivered on these occasions; at length Mr. M. Rosenberg took action in the matter, having obtained the consent of Miss Phillips to occupy the platform at starting, and a few gentlemen guaranteeing the expenses. An advertisement was inserted in the daily papers convening a meeting of Spiritualists, at the Oddfellows Hall, for Sunday, 16th November. The meeting was of a preliminary nature, and led to the immediate formation of the Association. The proceedings were opened by an address from Mr. Albert Fletcher, as follows:—

Dear Friends,—You have been invited here this day as members of a family council, a brotherhood of thinkers (linked by affinities of a spiritual nature) to consider the advisability of establishing a public service that will harmonise with our altered convictions. Convictions that are the inevitable outcome of the strange revelations of these later times. The wonderful phenomena that has broken the slumber of the world in matters spiritual, and

roused to reflection those most insensible to ordinary impressions, is now deeply permeating the advanced thought of man. These wonders in our very midst in the heart of our home lives, are forcing upon our convictions the evidences of a great truth. "A cloud of unseen witnesses" are stimulating thought. The spirit influences around us united to our inner life by imperishable ties are whispering to the inner man, incased in material form—Brother! we invite you to communion. Yes! the unseen world, whether saint or sinner, shades of the departed yearn for communion with their earthly friends. Again! after a long silence they speak, and the darkness that had settled down like the last hours of night is lifting before our material sense. The rays of *early* light are dawning again upon the world. This spirit action is but the influence of our "kindred gone before" whose aspirations when on earth were like our own to-day. Now my friends, it is only in a community by organised and co-operative action that we can break the fetters and shadows in which custom and prejudice has enmeshed our minds, and not only us but successive generations of men. I ask of you to declare, "if the time be come." Melbourne, Castlemaine, Stawell have long had platforms on which individual experiences and aspirations can find a voice. The little hamlet of the White Hills has moved in this direction. Will Sandhurst with its numerous investigating circles be a laggard? It is for you to pronounce. A strong desire for union and co-operative action has long been widely spread, and the outside public make it a reproach that we "tickle their ears with wonders, but exclude them from our seances." If you will it you can remove this reproach. Support a platform on which the home experiences can find public expression and where the inspirations of our spirit friends may be heard. Let us unite with the unseen world around us. Offer up our heartfelt spiritual adoration to our Heavenly Father, and in accordance with the promise to "two or three gathered together." His spirit will be amongst us. It is not my purpose to give a long address. Briefly, we have invited the spirit world to aid us in this object. Listen to their utterances through the media they inspire and afterwards let us interchange our thoughts upon the subject. The programme laid down is as follows:—Singing—Guide us oh thou great Jehovah; Lord's prayer; spirit's prayer through medium; spirit addresses, by impress; Doxology.

The spirits controlling the medium exhibited the greatest interest in the proceedings, and evidently controlled many of the audience; the utmost harmony prevailed; the members present were enrolled to support the association, a committee of eleven was chosen to organize the movement; they proceeded to elect a chairman, Mr. Martell being chosen unanimously; subsequently the office bearers for the year were elected:—Mr. Martell, president; Mr. Quilty, vice-president; Mr. A. Fletcher, treasurer; Mr. Phillips, hon. sec. Mr. Finster kindly volunteered his services for the harmonium; a choir was immediately formed, and the association fairly launched. Its progress since has been a marked success. An excellent trance medium, Mr. Harris, has joined the association, and occupies the platform alternately with Miss Phillips. Mr. Martell has ably filled the presidential chair, and the numerous additions to the members roll is a convincing proof of progress. The unavoidable length of my communication prevents any extended remarks at present; their significance may be better understood hereafter.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

HON. SEC.

Sandhurst, 14th January, 1874.

[We wish our correspondent had shown a little less animus in the introductory part of his letter; it fosters a feeling of antagonism which Spiritualists above all others should eschew. We should have been happy to have received information of any movement for the advancement of Spiritualism and freethought, and given it due publicity, but when the association which he represents withholds the information on the assumption of a baseless rumor, we do not think they are entitled to reflect upon the quality of the matter supplied by our other local correspondent. Had "Hon. sec." sent us a communication last month, it might have led to the curtailment of "chairman's" report, and thereby obviated one of the evils he complains of.—Ed. *H of L*]

PHYSICAL CIRCLES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

SIR,—One is so constantly hearing from some of those who pin their faith to trance speaking mediums and circles, that physical circles are only attended by spirits of a low order, that, unless contradicted, it may come to be generally believed. I am one who sees some good in all the different kinds of manifestations, although most in favour of the physical, because the most reliable and convincing. I could never see the force of the reasoning that physical manifestations were produced by low spirits. For my own part, I can say this much, that I have attended many trance speaking circles in Victoria, and, with one exception, never was much edified or convinced by what I heard at them. If the spirits are higher and more advanced than those who attend physical circles, they certainly do not give us much evidence of their superiority, and I suppose it is the evidence we are to go by if we are to allow our reason to have the sway. At some of the boasted superior trance circles, I have heard the most miserable twaddle talked which it ever was my misfortune to listen to, and which was calculated to drive inquirers away from Spiritualism rather than bring them to it. Now, this cannot be said of physical circles, if properly conducted. In all the leading books and magazines connected with Spiritualism, it is the physical manifestations that have convinced all the eminent men and women who have become converts to it, and in England and America, at the present day, crowds continue to flock to all the seances of the principal physical mediums. These few remarks are not made in disparagement of trance circles, but are merely meant as the writer's opinion in favour of the physical ones. Of such trance speakers as Emma Hardinge, Mrs. Tappan, and J. J. Morse, I have—as all must have—the highest respect for them; but these are exceptional cases. On the physical side, I might point to D. D. Home, the Davenport Brothers, the celebrated Fox family, Mrs. Andrews, Herne, and Williams, Miss Florence Cooke, Mrs. Guppy, Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, and many others, whose wonderful manifestations of spirit power have converted tens of thousands to the spiritual cause, thus bringing home to their hearts by ocular demonstration the grand truth of the immortality of the soul. It is by such fruits physical manifestations must be judged.

Yours fraternally,

P. S.

AURELIA CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

SIR,—Harmony means I believe perfect accord with the laws of nature, and an institution having such a noble aim must command the sympathies of all who aspire to it, but it may be, some who enter it are anything but qualified to assist in its consummation—the fate of the Aurelian organization which was wound up on Sunday the 11th prox. is proof conclusive there must have been minds amongst its numbers who were mere harmonialists in theory—whose presence could not have been otherwise than suicidal to its realization—these (would be) harmonialists then have buried their baby "because it cried," it was no sooner out of the way than they fathered another one on that mild and gentle parent "harmony," because, say they, Aurelia is not dead, it is only undergoing a change—but bear in mind this protegee is not harmonial—it is called co-operation and means making money, or rather, "discord;" undoubtedly it is an improvement on the grinding slavery so universal at present, but I think it is a great pity it should be reared under the shadow of Aurelia which is identified with harmonialists and harmonialists *only*, and who are already astir in the work they have set themselves, namely the complete success of the harmonial institution known by the name of Aurelia.

I am, yours fraternally,

AURELIAN.

22nd January, 1874.

MATERIALIZED SPIRIT HAIR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HARBINGER OF LIGHT.

SIR—Having read in the *Harbinger of Light* for December, an account of the presentation to you of some hair as purporting to be a portion of the hair of Katie King. I should feel greatly benefited if you, or some of your readers could explain to me through your valuable paper, by what law of nature, either physical or organic, in their various degrees of form, constructiveness, and continuance, that hair could be so materialised as to retain its colour, form, and texture in and under the action of our atmospheric conditions. I have made it my study for a long time to learn the various methods and conditions of the control of mediums, both male and female, from the lowest phenomena of table-moving to the highest test and clairvoyant state, both travelling, and for the diagnosis of the human frame, and thus I have had to bring into requisition every faculty of reason to discriminate between truth and error, besides the senses of feeling, seeing and hearing, spirits make themselves known through those processes. I can readily understand how and by what means a circle or individual could be shown the phenomena of materialisation through the aura of a medium suited to the conditions necessary. But I must plead ignorance of the governing principles that has produced what has been presented to you. I have asked some intelligences on the other side well versed in sciences of various descriptions, and I can glean no information upon the necessary conditions for such wonderful phenomena, or the acting principles that are employed in the production and continuation of texture as the materialised spirit hair. I write thus for instruction, and if any person can give it me, they will ever be retained in grateful remembrance by me in my search for truth in all its aspects.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.,

W. J. MARTELL.

January 14th, 1874.
High-street, Sandhurst.

A SEANCE WITH DR. MONCK.

The *Bristol Daily Post*, of November 6th, gives a long account of a seance with Dr. Monck, at which their reporter was present. It appears that he was requested to lock the door, and keep possession of the key, also to tie the hands of everybody present except his own and the medium's, and did so to his entire satisfaction. Several distinct voices spoke through the medium, and upon the reporter expressing a desire for a physical manifestation, some very good ones were given, one of which we insert his account of:—

"I should have mentioned at the outset that there were upon the table an accordeon and a couple of tambourines. The former instrument (which I had examined) was so tightly bound round with strong string that it appeared utterly impossible to produce a sound from it. 'Samuel' asked me if I thought it possible that he could make the accordeon speak; and on expressing my doubts, he (or rather Mr. Monck) took the instrument off the table, and immediately a long musical note resounded through the room. In a second afterwards the instrument was thrust back into my hands, and the gas re-lighted. The accordeon certainly seemed as tightly bound as ever; nor could anybody in the room make it emit a sound. This was repeated several times; and the accordeon made to float about the room, playing the while. I then sealed the string that was round it, and was asked to lay hold of the keys—and again the instrument sounded. Now, I express no opinion as to how this was accomplished, beyond this, that the presence of a second instrument in the medium's hands would explain the whole thing; and as the room was pitch dark, this could hardly be said to be impossible. It is fair, however, to repeat here, that I thoroughly searched the room."

Then followed the levitation of the medium, and exhibition of spirit lights, &c. In the midst of an attempt at materialization, when the spirit form was partly visible, the reporter took advantage of his position, and suddenly turned up the gas, but seeing nothing, concluded that the spirit was too quick for him. He was justly rebuked by the spirits for his conduct, and the circle shortly after dispersed. The reporter was allowed to search Mr. Monck, both before and after the seance, and indeed seems to have had it all his own way. He is constrained to admit the facts, but like the late Sir D. Brewster, "Will give in to anything but spirits" as a cause.

DEATH-BED EXPERIENCES.

It can hardly be doubted that one of the useful works which Spiritualism is performing, is the collecting and recording of innumerable instances of spontaneous spirit manifestations and communion, which have never been wholly wanting upon the earth, but which failing a systematic record have hitherto been dispersed among the legendary literature of nations, so overlaid with imaginative additions as to be of little use as data, or else entirely lost and forgotten. From an extended collection of such records, much future knowledge of the laws of spirit intercourse will arise, and it is very desirable that all such facts that may come to our knowledge should be carefully noted down. However simple and unsensational they may seem, provided they are facts—unadorned facts—they will form the necessary material from which to build the future science of Spiritualism.

One interesting class of such phenomena are those experiences which not unfrequently attend the last moments of the dying, and which occur to those who through life have been against or out of sympathy with Spiritualism, quite as much as to those who have worked most ardently in the cause. The laborers who wrought but one hour in the vineyard were paid as much as those who had borne the heat and burden of the day and the lord of the vineyard was justified. Of numerous instances of this character that have come to our knowledge we have selected the following, because they all occurred to persons who had no connection with any phase of the Spiritualistic movement, and one of whom, was much opposed to it. A young and very charming lady was proposing to accompany her family for a somewhat lengthened stay to a very gay watering-place, when she was attacked by a violent hemorrhage from the lungs, which, developing into a rapid consumption, prostrated her on a sick bed, from which she never rose again, but as a freed and happy spirit. Her life, though sweet and blameless, had been what in some religious circles would be called a careless one. Brought up in the Church of England, religion had to her consisted in the observance of certain days, the fulfilling of certain rites, and the verbal acknowledgment of certain dogmas, which she did not profess to understand, and for which she could not reasonably be held responsible. Life had been a short, busy, sunny day, full of loving, and pleasing, and being pleased. Now it was to end, and then!—ah, what then? The church said judgment, and after judgment, eternity, so vague and dim that it seemed scarcely more real than annihilation. But, fortunately, there speaks to the spirit of man voices stronger than that of the church, and these were busy teaching the dying girl what creed and dogma could not teach.

She lived but six weeks after the first attack, which had come on when she was apparently in blooming health. The march of death was therefore very swift, and its changes could be seen and felt almost hourly. As her failing strength indicated that but a short period of suffering remained to be endured, she became very anxious that her family should be as constantly as possible around her. She especially desired the presence of one brother, much older than herself, who was known to have decided materialistic opinions. Her object was to describe minutely to them the process and experience of dying, so that some knowledge of the dim hereafter might be given them through her. During the last few days of her life, she frequently spoke to them of being conscious of a state of separation from her body, not only unaccompanied by distress or regret of any sort, but actually bringing a sense of relief from physical pain. At such times she did not lose the use of her faculties, but remained feebly and with a great effort speaking to those around her, and describing minutely her sensations. To Spiritualists it will perhaps be surprising that such a state should have been unattended by any power to perceive the spiritual beings around her. But so it was, and we tell the story exactly as it occurred. Though fully realising the commencement of her own disembodied existence, she remained unaware of the presence of others in a similar state, or at least, never mentioned them. As the failing hours of earth-life dwindled to minutes, she begged earnestly that the brother for whom she had

so much solicitude, might be called. She seemed to save her fast failing voice to speak particularly to him. As he stood at her bedside watching her last moments she told him that she felt more distinctly than ever the separation of her spiritual being from its earthly tenement, and that as this separation went on she became more and more sensible of existence independent of the body, and more able to look down upon the form that lay almost helpless on the bed, as upon any other inanimate object in the room. "And yet," she said, "I have a body, or form, which is as much mine as ever that dying one was in my best health; and I am living more and more, not dying at all. I feel as if I were being gradually drawn away from out of that dying thing which you are all looking at. Look at me, I beg of you, as I stand over it, not at it. As I leave it, I feel all pain leaving me; yet I am not growing unconscious. I do not feel weaker, but stronger. I see and hear you all more distinctly than I did." Even as she spoke the eyes glazed, and the voice failed. She had passed away from their sight! But from her death bed, a light has beamed over the lives of all those who stood around it, a light which they cannot forget, and which they would not willingly forego.

Another somewhat similar experience of death occurred in the case of a lady who died of the same disease, but in a more lingering form. The two were in no way connected with one another, lived thousands of miles apart, and had never heard of each other. Mary Elliott, as we will call the second one, had never been a sickly person, until she met with a severe fall from a carriage, by which her hip-joint and spine were much injured. The general health was affected, and finally consumption set in. She lingered for about eighteen months from the time the fatal disease declared itself, suffering much, and expecting, hoping, indeed, to be released long before the time came. About a month before her death she was in such a state that her attendants thought she could not last more than a day or two, but she assured them she was quite certain the end would not be for a month at least—not till three days after a particular day—a day of national celebration,—but of no special family or personal interest. When asked why she thought so, she told her sister that in one of the unconscious states into which she sometimes fell, and from which she hardly expected to return at all, she had found herself consciously, but in a very weak state, with two or three other persons whom she did not know, and could describe but vaguely. They seemed to be engaged in tending and watching her, and the principal impression they gave her was of great strength combined with great sweetness. Recognizing the strangeness of her situation, she asked them if it was by death that she had come among them. They told her no, that she was not yet dead, but that it would not be very long before she was. Remembering distinctly the state of her health, and the probabilities of her speedy death, she asked them how long it would be before then. They then showed her, as in a distinct landscape, the scene of the usual national celebration, and said:—"Three days after that, and a little more." She also enquired if she was then asleep and dreaming. To which they replied, "Not exactly dreaming." Losing the consciousness of this scene, she re-opened her eyes, and found herself with her sisters and friends around her, endeavoring to bring her back to life by rubbing, and by hot applications, and the other usual restoratives. The physician in attendance considered it almost impossible that she should remain alive so long as the time specified. Nevertheless, her prognosis proved correct. With frequent recurrences of these unconscious states, in which she seemed all but dead, she lived nearly a day beyond the time she had specified. On returning to consciousness, so soon as she was able to speak, she always gave most interesting accounts of what she had seen and where she had been. Nor were those descriptions vague and general, but each one was clear and precise, without the possibility of one being mistaken for any other. She was not, however, in the slightest degree clairvoyant, in the ordinary sense of the term, though that is so common an experience with the dying. Nor had she either at this time of her life, or at any other, a tendency to mediumistic powers, as they are

commonly known. Her experience was rather that of one who, dying lingeringly, is intermittently in two different states, in one of which she was truly more dead than living, and already experienced much of the great change, and great relief of death; in the other she came back to suffer and to teach. On one of these occasions she spoke of herself as forming one of a vast multitude of human beings, all quite unknown to her, who seemed to be sweeping rapidly and unresistingly on in one direction, like drops of water in a river. So vast did the concourse seem of which she was a part, that she got no other impression of place or climate or scenery, for the mighty multitude of human beings that were around her. Her own feelings, and those of her companions, so far as she could ascertain, were not in any degree of terror or unwillingness, but rather of surprise, and expectancy; and her interpretation of the scene was, that she beheld the mighty river of death of which she was then as it were, one of the atoms, and which is forever flowing from earth to spirit life. Many other such experiences she had, but all comforting, all elevating; none saddening, or depressing. Her only trial was the coming back to this life and its sufferings. That such blessed teachings are not uncommon attendants upon death-beds, we think there is good reason to believe.

We will give one more instance of somewhat similar incidents attending the death of two sisters, one about twenty-two years of age, the other about ten; and in this instance there was, at least so far as the older sister was concerned, a strong aversion to all Spiritualistic teachings and theories. The two were in splendid health, and had just returned from a pleasure excursion of several weeks to the sea port city in which the family were residing, when the youngest was attacked with typhoid fever of a very severe character. From the first, her illness was most alarming, and one or other of the family were watching her day and night. Three weeks of such nursing had worn them all pretty well out. One afternoon the little girl's sufferings had increased so much that they hourly expected her death. They were all assembled round her, watching her agonies, when the strength of the oldest sister who was her favorite nurse, gave way, and she was carried fainting from the room to a distant part of the house, where she was left to the care of a trusty servant. She remained unconscious for some hours, and before she was restored the little sufferer was released by death. The night passed, and the morning came, when the mother, surprised that her eldest daughter, now quite restored to consciousness and to composure, still made no enquiries as to her little sister's welfare, said to her: "Alice, my dear, it is right that you should know that our darling little Emma is out of pain and suffering; but we have lost her—she is dead." "Mother," exclaimed the daughter, with astonishment, "is it possible you thought I did not know that? Why, I was with her; I never left her till we met others, who came to take care of her. I would not have left her then, but I could see they were far more able to care for her than I was, and glad to do it. She sent me back to you. I would like to have stayed with her." However closely she might be questioned on this occurrence she gave always the same account of it. She had found herself with Emma going along an ascending pathway, the external scenery of which had made no impression on her. Emma seemed well, was in her usual dress and went hand in hand with her; but they were both conscious that they were not in the earth life. After some time they met first three, then more persons coming to meet them, who received Emma most joyfully, and to whom her young heart seemed to open at once. Her home they told her was ready for her, and they had been waiting anxiously for her, but Alice they said could not stay with them, not yet. The two sisters parted unwillingly but not mournfully; indeed Alice seemed to regret her own inability to remain more than Emma's loss, tenderly though she had loved her. Something more also passed at that remarkable interview, but what it was Alice never revealed. In little more than a month she had rejoined her little sister in the beautiful home she longed for. A mere cold attacked her, no danger was apprehended, but within three days, without any apparent effort or

struggle of Nature to retain her in this world, she passed away. Her short illness was chiefly marked by an ever increasing drowsiness or stupor, from which towards the last it was quite impossible to rouse her, so that whatever further intromission into the coming life she may have enjoyed was never known. But it is very certain that she went more willingly for the glimpse she had had of her sister's home.

Such experiences, of which many more might be given, arm the soul against the fear of death, which is the natural instinct of its companion, the body, and which has been studiously enhanced by most of the religious teachings that have found favor with mankind. That a brighter light is being now cast over the great questions of man's spiritual existence, most of our readers believe, and that similar happy death bed incidents will become more frequent with the increasing light, is by no means improbable. When it comes to our turn to make the great change, may some such blessed influence cheer and enlighten us and may the knowledge of our experiences dissipate for others, who remain behind, the dark clouds that still, for many, hang round the entrance into the Morning Land.

AN ESSAY ON LIFE, ITS ORIGIN AND OBJECTS.

BY HENRY T. CHILD, M. D.

CHAPTER II. VEGETABLE LIFE.

Having briefly traced some of the prominent causes which have operated in the production of our common mother earth and her sister planets, and having followed some of the evolutions of matter in its progress through the plane of the mineral kingdom, we come now to examine more minutely the changes and combinations upon this planet.

We find, even upon this low scale, evidences and foreshadowings of those wonderful phenomena which fall within the domain of the life-principle. First, there is a combination of similar elements forming a homogeneous mass, the particles having selected their kindred associates. Then, with more favorable conditions for combination, under the beautiful law of crystallization, the positive and negative forces have marshalled their hosts of particles in more exquisite order than the most skilful commander could arrange his battalions of men. The step from the amorphous carbon in charcoal to its beautiful congener, the diamond, is as marked a progress as is that of vegetation, from the beautiful forms of water crystals to be seen upon our windows of a frosty morning. The form of the crystal is fixed as soon as its particles have been arranged; it dies as soon as it is born. The plant is always changing. To be born, to grow to maturity, to decay and to die, are stages which characterize all living things. The forms of the crystal are straight lines and plain surfaces, making angles at their intersection; the forms that life presents are in curved and spiral lines, without angles and on a higher and more complex plane.

How little can we comprehend the grand depths of that profound philosophy and foresight which planned and directed the mechanism of this world. Long ages before the first planet or the first animal was brought into existence, the elements, which now enter into their organisms and furnish them with external bodies, existed, and were arranged in proportions adapted to all conditions past, present and future. So accurately was this plan devised and calculated, that not an atom could have been different without changing the aspect of the world.

In the first chapter, reference was made to the electromagnetic currents radiating in and revolving around the globe and its constituents; we shall soon speak of the effects of these currents on a higher plane of matter.

The circular current manifests itself by producing the globular form of a drop of water, and its power is more strikingly manifested when the drop is thrown upon a red-hot surface, where it not only assumes a globular form, but revolves rapidly upon its own axis as a miniature world. These currents are all manifest in the spiral and rotary motions of fluids passing through small apertures.

In the mineral kingdom the masses or compounds range from a union of two to ten or twelve of the primates or elementary substances. The law of affinity, ever moving onward in its progressive development, is gradually increasing the number of primates in a compound, and when this family numbers fourteen or more, and the compound is a semi-fluid mass, floating in water, these currents manifest themselves, first by producing a nucleus or central point, and then by moulding a ring or cell around it, which cell is the first rudiment—the basis—of that beautiful kingdom known as the vegetable world.

Here we have the beginning of life. What grand thoughts cluster around this first cell! This basis of all organisms, and of all life! All the forms that ever have been, that are now, or ever will be, are but multiples and extensions of this primary basis of cell life. Here is the type of life throughout the vegetable world; and from the first monad, or single cell of animal life, through all the varied grades up to the serried hosts of discs, each one of which is a living monad, that are rushing impetuously through the great red river of life driven by the human heart, and the positive and negative forces through a million arteries, veins and capillaries, carrying with them the elements for building up the various tissues of the human organism, that most fearful and wonderful temple which the life-principle in its culmination has formed.

An eloquent German writer has said:

"Let us tarry a moment with the vegetable world. From the slender palm, waving its elegant crown in the refreshing breezes high aloft over the hot vapors of the Brazilian forests, to the delicate moss, barely an inch in length, which clothes our damp grottoes with its phosphorescent verdure, from the splendid flower of *Victoria Regina*, with its rosy leaves cradled in the silent floods of the lakes of Guiana, to the inconspicuous yellow blossom of the duck weed of our own ponds, what a wonderful play of fashioning, what wealth of forms! From the six thousand year old Baobab, on the shores of the Senegal, the seeds of which, perhaps, vegetated before the foot of man trod the earth, to the fungus, to which the fertilizing warmth of a summer night gave an existence which the morning closed—what differences of duration! From the firm wood of the New Holland oak, from which the wild Aboriginal carves his war-club, to the green slime upon our stagnant pools, what uniformity, what gradations of texture, composition, and consistence! Can one really believe it possible to find order in this embarrassing wealth, regularity in this seeming disorderly dance of forms, a single type in these thousand-fold varieties of habit! The basis of the structure of all the so very dissimilar vegetables is a 'cell'."

We have said life is a lever for raising matter to a higher plane. As soon as affinity had brought matter to a plane high enough for the introduction of vegetable life, it is probable that innumerable myriads of these simple cells were formed, and the matter which passed through their organisms, in the brief period allotted to them for life, would be left upon a higher plane. The combination of the external forms of these primates, formed the bodies of living organisms, while the union and combination of the internal principle that governed these primates composed the life-principle. The vital principle of plants, as well as animals, is not simple, but a compound of all the principles which have been operating in the lower kingdoms, and each step in advance is the result of some addition to the former principles which have been acting, and which still continue to act. This rule extends throughout every grade of vegetable and animal life up to man, whose vital principle not only contains all the principles which have existed below him, and which are now combined more or less harmoniously in him, but by virtue of his more perfect organism, spiritual and material, has something added to all these.

The first cells had, by virtue of the life-principle, a certain absorbing power by which they selected particles adapted to build up and sustain the organism for a limited period, which would constitute the life-time of that cell. It is not probable that so important a function as reproduction was introduced at this early period; on

the contrary, spontaneous generation—the birth of cells by the plastic force of nature without any specific and distinct parentage—would seem to have been required to advance matter in this early stage of its progression to a plane high enough for the introduction and establishment of the important function of reproduction.

At the present day there are three modes of propagation observed in vegetable cells. First, that in which in a single cell or ring, a line is formed across it, causing it to assume the appearance of the figure 8 when viewed under the field of the microscope. This is soon followed by an entire separation, forming two cells of one. Secondly, we have what is called germination, or budding, in which a small loop is formed upon one side of the cell, which rapidly becomes as perfect a cell as that from which it proceeded. These new cells are sometimes separated, as in the former case; at other times the new cells or buds continue attached to the parent, and, giving off in a similar manner other cells, that form a chain-like stem or body. This process may be readily seen under the field of a microscope in the common mold and various other plants of this character. The common mold is a beautiful plant, composed of muleated or dotted cells, which, in the growing plant, are linked together in the form of a chain, sometimes in a single stem and sometimes having branches. When dried, each separate cell forms a distinct plant, and they are so small and light that they float about in the atmosphere in incalculable numbers, and are so generally diffused as to become annoying from their frequent appearance in places and substances where they find suitable conditions and soil for development, as in various articles of food, sweetmeats, paste, ink, &c., &c. Another familiar illustration of this chain-like cell growth, which may be seen in like manner with a common microscope, is the yeast plant, *torula cererisa*. The third mode of propagation in cells, and the most common and rapid, is by the formation of numerous cells in the interior of the primary or parent cell. The first act of life in the cell after its formation, is the absorption of nutrient matter; all parts of the surface take this up and pass it into the interior of the cell; when this matter accumulates there, new cells, called secondary or daughter-cells, are formed, and when these are matured the parent cell is ruptured and dissolved, its elements going to supply nutriment to the new cells.

Doubtless at one period of the earth's history, these were the only modes of growth or development of plants; they continue and may readily be seen at the present day. The rapidity of the multiplication of cells is almost beyond credibility. It has been estimated that in the *borista gigantea*, a fungus plant, new cells are formed at the rate of twenty-thousand per minute. The cryptogamia, or flowerless plants, which are the lowest in the scale and the oldest, have the property of absorbing oxygen and giving off carbonic acid gas, a function similar to that found in the animal kingdom, while the phanerogamia, or flowering plants, absorb more carbonic acid gas and give off oxygen. The mission of these early plants was evidently to prepare the carbon, which is so essential an ingredient in the structure of the higher plants, for their use. It may be mentioned that the chief ingredients in the structure of plants are carbon, oxygen, and hydrogen, while in animal organisms nitrogen holds a prominent place in conjunction with the other three.

The primitive cell plants lived in and upon the surface of the waters, and their prototypes of the present day are found in stagnant waters, in temperate and warm latitudes, forming the green scum which presents such a loathsome appearance to the natural eye, but which under the field of a microscope presents views of unsurpassing beauty. The observations and discoveries with the microscope, within a few years, have revealed a new world of living beauty, a world as marvellous and wonderful as any which can claim the attention of the human mind. Forms as perfect and as wisely adapted to their design as any that are to be found in any portion of the wide domain of nature, are here seen.

Agas unnumbered must have rolled away in which these lower forms of vegetable life, were thus silently and industriously performing their mission of refining

and progressing the elements and especially the carboniferous elements which necessarily form so large a portion of the earth's crust, vast quantities of which must be locked up in the coal beds and in the living vegetable world before any breathing animal could exist. We may turn to God's great Bible, NATURE, and all through, from the Genesis of Geology, from the mosaic dispensation of animal life to the highest revelations on the plane of humanity, we find chapter after chapter revealing to us the changes which have taken place in these various epochs of the world's progress. Our globe was once "without form, and void." It escaped from this condition and "the spirit of the Lord," or attraction "moved upon the face" of this fluid mass and moulded it into form, and then chapter after chapter were written by the hand of the Infinite. The chapter of the coal beds, though not one of the longest in the book, written as it is with the pen of a diamond, took its Divine Author more than a hundred thousand years to print and bind up.

We learn from this same divine and inspired volume, that very great changes must have taken place in the temperature of the globe. At the period when the first plants were introduced, and for countless ages after, the temperature of the earth and of the waters, in which these plants lived, was much above that of the present day; and from the distribution of the coal, and the character of the plants found therein—the TYPE used by the Divine Author in publishing these books—we perceive the character of these changes; but of these we shall speak in the next chapter, on flowering plants.

The flowerless plants, and the mineral kingdom, though far from being devoid of beauty and interest, present as a most prominent trait, USE. While on the plane of the flowering plants we have an admirable union of *beauty* and *use*—a poetical combination which, when considered in conjunction with the fragrant aroma, the incense, that is so commonly attendant upon these little ministering angels from the plane of vegetable life, gives us a most exalted and sublime idea of the great Poet of the universe.

GOD AND THE DEVIL.

The English poet, Gerald Massey, delivered a lecture in New York last week, on the natural theological inquiry—"Why God does not kill the Devil?" If the former is the truly superior being, and is indeed supreme, why, it may be asked by common sense, does he permit the Evil One to baffle him in this way in all his plans, carry off his children in Satanic triumph, upset the divine arrangements, and practically change the order of things as originally instituted. Gerald Massey took for the text of his discourse the artless and unsophisticated question of Robinson Crusoe's man Friday—"If that God so strong, why he not kill that devil?" So far back as Defoe's day, infidelity on this point of theology had thus manifested itself. Mr. Massey said that in this single passage of Defoe's there is more food for thought than in anything he had ever written. The lecturer searched through the ancient mythologies to ferret out the authorship of this same Devil, which theology insists on keeping alive as a main part of its machinery. And he demonstrated conclusively that much of what is accepted by mankind in general as "revelation," is nothing more than inverted mythology. He further showed by actual comparison and derivation that many of the words which we now use to frighten people with, were originally words of peace and solace to man. The New York journals concede Mr. Massey's learning, but they forget that he is a confirmed Spiritualist.

In the year 1827, Dillon, commanding the East India Company's surveying ship "Research," visited the island of Vanikoro (lat. 11.40 south, long 166.40 east) in the Santa Cruz group, for the purpose of enquiring into the fate of the French Expedition under La Perouse. At this island, where Dillon remained twenty-three days, he tells us, there were *large houses set apart for the use of disembodied spirits*. Markham, in the cruise of the "Rosario" in the South Seas in 1871, refers to the fact as related by Dillon, but he himself in his voyage passed by Vanikoro without landing.

THE LYCEUM.

ONE of the most interesting features in the Lyceum system is the answers to questions. At each ordinary session questions are suggested by individual members. If (as is generally the case) more than one question is proposed, the selection is decided by vote of the whole Lyceum, and the answers are returnable on the following Sunday. The children are particularly enjoined to give their own ideas, and not seek the assistance of either their elders or books for replies; by this means thought is induced, originality developed, and self-confidence cultivated.

At the usual Sunday session, held December 28th, a visitor from Sandhurst who was present, feeling much interested in this feature of the Lyceum, offered two prizes for the best answers to the question propounded that day. One for the best answer from the officers or leaders, another for the best one given by the juvenile members. The question selected was—"What is God?" The decision of the merits of the answers was left to the conductor and guardian of the Lyceum. At the next session (January 4th) a number of answers were given, and the conductor announced that the award would be made on the following Sunday. Accordingly on the 11th, before the usual questions and answers were taken, Mr. Terry made a few remarks in reference to the onerousness of the duty that had devolved upon him and the guardian, inasmuch that the only standard of judgment was, their own conceptions of God, which might be, and doubtless were, erroneous; still it was satisfactory for him to know that not only the guardian, but the donor, were unanimous with him in the selection of the "officer's" answer. With regard to the children's answer there was some difficulty in deciding between the relative merits of two of the answers. One was admittedly the cleverest, but the simpler one, embodying within itself the idea elaborated in the other, was finally decided to be the most meritorious. He, however, did not like the second one to pass without recognition, and would, therefore, give an additional prize himself on the next Sunday. The prizes, which consisted of two volumes of R. D. Owen's "Debateable Land" (value 10s. each), were then handed to the successful competitors, viz., Officers,—Mr. G. A. Stow, the Secretary of the Lyceum; Children—Miss Mary Powell, Sea Group. We print the prize answers, and as many of the others as we can find space for. We also put two of the answers to the question which followed, viz:—"What proof have we of the existence of God?"

OFFICER'S PRIZE ANSWER.

What is God?

This I understand to be a question of great importance, and one that will arise again and again in the course of our unfoldment, not only while on earth, but throughout all time; for our conception of Deity must change with the unfolding intellect, and in accordance with our knowledge of nature's laws.

The word "God" is (so far as I can at present understand it) but a *Tern* which indicates the presence of the first great cause, the all-pervading intelligence which manifests itself throughout the universe, and in every conceivable form.

This principle in nature is perfect, but is *seen* in its most perfect form in the most advanced or developed man.

The object of this great principle seems to be to unfold and develop every form in nature, in whatever stage of being it may be, to its end, which is harmony.

So far as I can know, this force is self-existent—without beginning and without an end.

It is the great centre of the spirit-world, and to which all spirits have a strong tendency and a desire to better understand, which indicates its positive influence over the world of mind or spirit.

In conclusion—that individual who is most harmoniously developed will have the truest conception of God, which must change from time to time as his spirit develops to different planes, in which he will discover new laws of nature in action, giving more light, by which God will become more incomprehensible because of his majestic infinitude.

CHILDREN'S PRIZE ANSWER.—No. 1.

The "Great Spirit" or life of all things, to be sought after through His works in nature, which teach us that He is love. The pure in heart know most of him.

CHILDREN'S PRIZE ANSWER.—No. 2.

What is God?

We can know God only by his works. We cannot have a conception of any one attribute but by following some principles that leads to it. We have only a confused idea of his power if we have not the means of comprehending something of its immensity. We can have no idea of his wisdom but by knowing the order and manner in which it acts. The principles of science lead to this knowledge; for the creator of man is the creator of science, and it is through that medium that man can see God, as it were face to face.

What is God?

The finite cannot describe the Infinite, but I saw God once, as in a vision, an immeasurable globe of light, heat, motion, that is to say of all life; which flowed into and vivified all things, and in which were all things, earthly and heavenly, spiritual and material.

What is God?

God is—and to be—is to have a being, and to be a perfect being is to be God. God is an essential intelligence, perfect in every principle of that intelligence, viz., wisdom, love, and power, in building up the inanimate in germinating and generating all animate nature. He is the soul of all things; in him we live and have our existence, as the animalcule live and move in the ocean, and that we are the crown and flower of his creative forces of wisdom, love, and power, as it is not possible that he can receive outward impressions, He must be the only perfect intuitive being.

What is God?

From my present stand-point I recognise God as the great moving principle of the universe; but, looking back into the depths of the past, and onward to the present, I see God as the ultimate of all progression, inasmuch as there never was a time when "nothing existed," for the simple reason that it is self-contradictory. I, therefore, conclude that God is inside, not outside, nature, that he is the essence of all life, the ultimate of all progression—the principles upon which the universe moves, or love, will, and wisdom.

What is God?

The Father of all—the Great Spirit, by whom we live, and move, and exist.

What is God?

Our conceptions and personification—*crude indeed at the best*—of the supreme, intelligent creative and sustaining power of the universe.

What is God?

The all-sustaining self-existent spirit intelligence of the universe, of which man's soul is a part, and who is thereby formed in the image of his maker.

What is God?

The intelligent first principle of all things, as incomprehensible in our present stage of development as the end of a straight line extended into space.

What is God?

The infinite idea is—and God is the infinite idea—less than this is not God. Thou shalt not bow down to nor worship a finality a spirit form of God or of any image and likeness of love, or of life or of mind and intelligence in heaven above or in earth beneath. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven images nor ideal ones of God on the cross or on the throne, to worship them, for thy utmost conceptions of Him now are less than the all of God to come. Thou shalt not worship the definition of any age because it is finite, for the Lord thy God thy infinite idea is ever more greater than all possible expressions in us and is not ever made manifest in totality to the finite.

What is God?

Our divine creator, and our highest ideal of perfection.

What proof have we of the existence of God?

As the ingenuity and skill, shown in the construction of a piece of mechanism—say either a watch, or a steam engine—is *certain and demonstrative evidence* of an intelligent constructor of the same. So is the far surpassing intelligence and skill shewn in the construction of our own bodies, *correspondingly certain and demonstrative evidence* of the existence of our great Creator.

What proof have we of the existence of God?

The existence of God is a problem to which the mathematics of human intelligence seems to furnish no solution. On the threshold of the theme we stagger under a weight of words, we tread amid a dark quagmire bestrewed with slippery terms. Now the clearest miss their way, now the cautious stumble, now the strongest fall. The creation we behold revealeth to man all that is necessary for man to know of his Creator. Do we want to contemplate his power; we see it in the immensity of his creation. Do we want to contemplate his wisdom; we see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his beneficence; we see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy we see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. Do we want to contemplate his will! so far as it respects man—The goodness he shows to all is a lesson for our conduct to each other.

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE SPIRITUALISTS.

The annual meeting of the above Association was held at the Masonic Hall, Lonsdale-street, on Tuesday, January 13th, Mr. H. Sanders (President) in the chair. The Secretary, Mr. G. A. Stow, read the report of the retiring committee, which was as follows:—

REPORT.

In accordance with the usual practice, the committee desire to lay before the association this evening a report showing the progress of the Association during the past six months. There has been but little occur to make this report interesting, the subject of Spiritualism not having been brought very prominently before the public of late and the attendance at our lectures having been smaller than heretofore. The appeal made for an increased subscription at the last general meeting had the desired effect, many of the members having considerably added to their subscription, thus enabling the committee to meet their current expenses and nearly clear off the balance against the Association. The Committee believe they have taken a step in the right direction in securing the services of Professor Hughes to conduct the business of the choir. The Committee regret that the list of members remain much the same as it did, notwithstanding the general progress which Spiritualism is making in and about Melbourne. During the past three or four months the Committee have found great difficulty in providing suitable lectures for the Sunday evening services, some of our friends having left Melbourne, and others have apparently grown weary in well doing. The Committee have decided to hold a concert and ball every quarter, the profits of which should be devoted to the formation of a building fund. The first came off on the 9th of this month, and so far as we can judge at present—though in other respects successful—will not be a success financially.

The united picnic held in the Survey Paddock on Christmas Day was an enjoyable occasion, and we have good reason to think that if continued next Christmas Day a much larger and more successful gathering will be the result. The Lyceum continues to give satisfaction, and the Association has achieved a decided success in fairly establishing it. The Committee, in resigning, trust that the Association will put forth more earnest effort in the future than it has in the past. It is to be hoped that the Association will elect officers who will feel an interest in its well-being, and be more successful in securing able lecturers, upon which depends in a great measure the success of this movement.

Some conversation ensued, after which the Treasurer, Mr W. H. Terry, presented the balance sheet for the past half year, which showed an improved financial position. The report and balance sheet were adopted.

The next question taken into consideration was the future conduct of the Sunday services. The question presented was, should the object of them be the edification of the members of the Association, or Propagandism. It was suggested that by making the services interesting to the Association, they would be equally interesting to visitors, and this idea seemed to meet with most favor, as it was considered that the Association was not in a position to adopt any other course successfully. It was also suggested that the names of lecturers should not be advertised, but this was left for the committee to decide. The Chairman then announced that the various offices of the Association were now vacant by effluxion of time, and requested the meeting to elect its officers for the ensuing year, when the following were elected:—President, Henry Brotherton, Esq.; Vice-Presidents, H. Sanders, Esq., W. B. Bowley, Esq.; Treasurer, Mr. W. H. Terry; Secretary, Mr. G. A. Stow; Committee, Messrs. T. J. Clark, Bonney, Veevers, Plimpton, Hutchens, Syme, Mrs. Bonney, Syme, and Plimpton, and Miss Armstrong.

Votes of thanks were passed to the volunteer lecturers, ladies and gentlemen of the choir, retiring officers and committee, ladies who had assisted at soirees, and chairman.

The meeting then closed.

PRIVATE PURGATORY.

The laws of transition, from major to minor keys and conditions, are unchangable. Everybody has gone, or will go, through an endless series of crises. Vibrations and librations are parts inseparable from the harmonious play of principles. The consequence is, that no healthy mind can long endure monotony. An unbroken plain, a flat, undeviating prairie, stretching boundlessly away on either side, melting like a mystic sea, with the deep blue heavens at the verge of the horizon—how bewitching at first to the fatigued and lacerated mountaineer! No more huge rocks to overclimb; no more struggling between seasons and stones for daily subsistence; no more circumscriptions of vision by obtrusive trees and broad-shouldered hills. And so he begins gleefully to plow and sow and reap upon the unruffled ocean of rich soil. But the day soon dawns when his weary frame longs again for the grand relief which great mountains bestow upon the human soul. And the evening comes when the prairie pilgrim departs for the rocky furniture and huge varieties of his mountain home.

But there are purgatorial experiences in all countries and amid any imaginable group of circumstances. No soul, no body, is exempt. The good Father and Mother of mankind have wisely distributed the inexhaustible sources of happiness; so that no desire may go ungratified, no want unsupplied, no attraction without a perfect response and satisfaction.

The divine law is, however, to the effect that nothing permanent is attainable without just and honorable effort; and further, that nothing of exquisite beauty and loveliness is retainable, except by perpetual merit and watchfulness. There is a purgatorial realm hidden within the petal of every beautiful flower. Hades is very near Elysium. Bitter to me may be sweet to you. What is flat, stale, and unprofitable in the sight of one soul, may be round, fresh, and a fortune to another of equal merit and intelligence.

A person devoted to the mysterious power of the religious sentiments, a Fenelon, a George Herbert, one whose affections are truly shorn of all stock-jobbing propensities, shines with bewitching splendor in the eyes of certain minds. But such a devotee is quite as likely to see the world's allurements, and to long for a taste of the golden apple. Shocked by the suggestions of Satan, the devotee hastens to his closet of prayer. A brief struggle with the temptation, an increase of confidence in the special protection of an all-seeing but *partially*-acting Providence, and the Saint walks forth pure and undefiled. His beaming countenance betokens victory. The world looks on with amazement and admiration. The mild simplicity of the good Channing, for instance, his chastened intellect, his apparently unquestioning faith in God and immortality, invest his whole being and life with peculiar charms. But let no one fancy, because the angels of other spheres aided and guarded him, that his private heaven was very remote from purgatory. His bodily trials, the clouds of doubt in the sky of faith, the intellectual perplexities inseparable from the moral adjustment of public questions, the presence of the incomprehensible in the scenes and changes of diurnal experience—these, and yet other trials which never get written, except in the "book of life," comprise a few of the purgatorial visitations to the seemingly tranquil and happy.

Look at the professional man of God. His pale, inexpressive countenance, his thoughtful eyes, his delicate hands unused to labor, his measured and imperative speech, his majestic and authoritative bearing, his reverence for high officials and church dignitaries, his personal chastity, his unearthliness, his respect for sacred emblems used in divine worship—taken all together—how ineffably impressive to the vivid imagination of the young! and how equally *oppressive* and unnatural to the man of exact methods in machinery and merchandise. And there are in every large community many sweet-spirited maidens, and many saintly minded mothers, too, who yearn for a life of equal reconciliation to the will of God! They fancy that the professional man of theology is daily basking in the eternal sunshine of Heaven. [We wonder whether persons who so believe, ever applied

for the use of the Meeting House in which a reformer might deliver a lecture on Progress?] While, on the other hand, they imagine themselves to be hastening into purgatory. The unthinking admirers of the professional minister, are apt to exaggerate his happiness, while counting themselves candidates for the under world of chronic sin and savage sorrow.

But be ye no longer deceived. Open your mouth, take in a full bosom of fresh air, then use your reasoning faculties. Behold! The laws of cause and effect are divine, and never suspended. The professional man of God is like you, a man of flesh and blood. His material necessities are identical with wants realised by any other human being. There are positive loves and minor attractions in his constitution. The eternal soul of universal Nature lives in his life just as it liveth and ruleth in yours. There is no difference, either in quality or mode of operation—for the true God is a God of impartial manifestation and distributive justice.

If the man of theology be not enfeebled by the folly or necessity of over study, if not stultified and incapacitated by disease, his life is just as natural and robust as that of any other sinner. His food, his clothing, his shelter, and his religion, cost somebody just as much hard manual labor as do the same commodities and necessities for any other equally healthy and natural man. And, in order to get these bodily and social wants supplied, in order to live up to the common aspirations in the matter of external luxury, the minister is compelled to come into mercantile and business relations with his fellow men. Whether these relations be equitable and honorable or otherwise, he is, to a considerable extent, obliged to conform and act as others act in the departments of trade. Hence in slaveholding States it is considered just as right for a minister to have and hold property in human beings as it is popular and convenient for his lay members to do so. In like manner, in the non-slaveholding States, it is considered neither unpopular nor unrighteous for a man of God—a follower of the houseless, homeless, seamless-garmented Nazarene—to live in a marble front mansion, to buy and sell Real Estate, to loan money and receive interest, to deal with bankers, and take part in many other worldly transactions.

In truth, a clergyman cannot be *unlike* other men without submitting to a thousand purgatorial tests and trials. If his digestive organism calls for "the good things of this life," he will have to resist the devil with his moral convictions and volition just as any other man would or should. And thus is manifested the fact that it is not so much the spirit and habit of prayer, as the purgatorial checks which a sincere attraction toward refinement impose upon the appetite, that constitutes the secret cause of discipline and habitual temperance. If a professional man of God, like a Catholic Bishop or other official, resists the attractions (which a true God hath implanted), toward the relations of husband and father, if he turn away uncompanionated and seek the charmless seclusion of private devotion to questions and duties of eternity, he does so at the risk of violating the holiest principles of our being. Hence he cannot shun these beautiful relations without subjecting himself to a purgatorial experience which will require a hotter and a more protracted suffering, to restore the man to his right place in the system of Nature. When a human being is bitter, and denounces the inter-connections of love and friendship, you may say: "Here are sickness and error." We have heard clergymen lament the world's passion for material progress—not seeing that there could be no great spiritual growth without physical health and success—and yet the congregation of fine-minded persons labelled his sermon, "Beautiful!" We heard one prominent minister strain to think *unlike* the sinners about him, in doing which he not only thanked God for our Republican form of government, but straightway prayed to the same God to check the free-thinking which was guaranteed and promoted by virtue of such a government!

Now, therefore, let us avoid all manner of pretence and unnaturalness. There is already enough of purgatory in life by means of the laws of transition. Let no man set out to twist and persuade Nature out of her

eternal course. He who turneth away his eyes from those who bring suffering upon themselves, and who wraps himself in his own cloak, saying, "I thank God that I am not as other men," is wanting in some nobler attribute of reason and spirituality whereby love is wedded to wisdom and perfect harmony is enabled to master the discords of life.—*Herald of Progress.*

THE CREED OF SPIRITUALISTS.

A sermon upon this subject was preached by Miss Turner at the Unitarian Church, Grey Street, on the evening of Sunday Jan. 18th. A very large audience, more than the regular seats of the church could accommodate, was present, attracted partly, no doubt, by the well deserved popularity of the speaker, partly by the wide spread interest taken in the subject. Besides many well known Spiritualists who were present, there were also many strange faces not belonging to the regular Unitarian congregation, and we know, at least, some instances in which these might have been classed among those of whom Miss Turner spoke, when she said that for one Spiritualist who acknowledged this faith, there were probably ten who secretly believed in it.

To speak fully and fairly of a faith that is not one's own, is always a difficult task. In fact, we believe it to be nearly impossible. Either ignorance interferes, and we err by the omission of points necessary to the formation of a correct judgment, or lack of sympathy makes it impossible for us to understand the belief, or even to state fairly the *doings*, of those on whom we sit in judgment. This last was the point in which Miss Turner failed, and we submit that it is a vital one. When she accused Spiritualists of "miracle mongering," she went in exact opposition to the statement she had just read, declaring our belief that there is no inspiration or revelation that is infallible, and to the faith of most Spiritualists, which is, that there is not, and never was, such a thing as a miracle upon earth, in the sense of a contravening of God's laws by His omnipotence, and in this sense she used the word. Moreover, when Miss Turner ridiculed Spiritualists for "cajoling a table leg, to teach them divine truth," she spoke of that which no intelligent Spiritualist ever did. We believe that there is no way but one to arrive at Divine truth, that is, by the exercise of our God-given reason upon *all* the manifestations of Nature, and of our judgment upon all the words of man's mouth. She too, believes this. Why, then, should she exclude the phenomena of Spiritualism from scientific observation any more than the phenomena of the rising vapor and falling rain or the structure of the minute particles of dust which are supposed to carry the germs of the most potent diseases.

These things too were inconsiderable and of no moment till by carefully observing them we began to learn the laws of Nature and of our own being from them. Miss Turner was bitter on our listening to the twaddle of a trance medium and the rubbish that purports to be communications from the great dead. And in this she hit us a fair blow, which if it teach us our weak point will be of value to us. What she said was simply untrue of the more vigorous minds among us; but it is true that there is a class of persons, untrained to habits of thought, whose hearts are captivated and satisfied by the certainty of a future life which nothing but Spiritualism gives them, and who accept too readily as valuable,—we will not do them the injustice to say, as authoritative,—any communication that comes from beyond the grave.

There is no cure for these but a higher education and that Spiritualistic experience which will enable them to realize that just as a continual stream of human life is passing every moment from earth to spirit spheres, and that from the present state of ignorance and degradation upon earth, the greater part of those who are so passing, are very evil and very much benighted, so therefore, the lower spheres of spirit life must be far below the average intelligence of our own society, just as an average of all mankind, would, in intelligence, be below an average of a civilized and educated community like that of Melbourne.

These lower spheres, too, are probably those which communicate most readily with earth. No one who bears these things in mind will be likely either to accept as divine doctrine the communications of spirits or to fall foul of mediums when they speak neither wisely nor truly, for, as mediums, this may happen to the best of them. Were the communications all wise and true, we should take it as *prima facie* evidence that they were "cooked" to suit the market. As they are, we hold them to be proof positive of the continuity of man's existence after death and of the possibility of intercourse being established between our own and other states of being. There have been Kings who would have given their crowns and philosophers who would have sacrificed their fame, to have this proof of immortality, and there are thousands now, to the tumult of whose hearts, peace would come if they could receive it. But the mean things of the earth confound them, they cannot receive truth when it comes through a table-leg.

Miss Turner should feel for them for she shares their difficulty. If it were not for the terrible phenomena of Spiritualism which she cannot abide, we should call her a good Spiritualist. The whole services were replete with intimations of the organic oneness of the two states, the earthly and the spiritual; chosen, probably, to show that Unitarianism has all that is worth having in Spiritualism, except the proof,—*except the proof*. And the lack of this proof has made Unitarianism the cold, colourless, and un-attractive faith it is, unable to spread even in those societies where it has most deeply taken root.

We understand the failure of Unitarianism, as a power in the world, better than we ever did, since we have heard Miss Turner on Spiritualism. In conclusion, we cannot do better than recommend our readers, especially our Unitarian readers, as regards Spiritualism, to follow Miss Turner's text rather than her practice and "be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

PERPLEXITY OF A SPIRITUALIST IN THE MESHES OF A GREAT SCANDAL.

BY ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS.

Among the numerous letters which have recently found their way to my eye, the following is no more than a fair sample of a large number on the subject to which it refers:—

DEAR BRO. DAVIS.—Matters in reference to the cause of Spiritualism do not improve much to my thinking. Laura Cuppy Smith is, I am told, preaching Woodhull and her crucified! Recently she said Mrs. W. could prove every word she had published about H. W. B. Why don't Henry, or Challis, or Theodore, stop her mouth by a direct action for malignant slander? I've got almost astride the fence. If Theodore writes one more letter, I think I will get clear over to the Woodhull side. Ever fraternally yours,

B.F.W.

New York.

ANSWER.

My thoughts return to one memorable Monday morning almost twenty-one years ago (namely, 9th August, 1852, see "*Present Age and Inner Life*," Session III, of the Spiritual Congress), and distinctly I recall, with feelings of awe and tearful gratitude, a conversation with a distinguished guest from the Summer Land. He was subduing my enthusiasm and zealous anxiety to multiply converts to our most exalted principles. In my youth I was impatient to increase our believers from hundreds to thousands, and from thousands to millions. "Numbers will tell," I thought. And thus, without confessing the fact in words, I was inwardly asking him to instruct me, as to the quickest way to increase our believers. But as on a previous occasion, he kindly cut down my numbers to "twelve!" Privately I swallowed my impatient enthusiasm, my hot zeal for a host of believers, and quietly asked if I might be permitted to know *who* were to become "the twelve teachers," by whom our great and im-

mortal principles of human progression would be expounded among men, and truly exemplified in life and character? He responded by delicately reminding me that I was seeking to know things too far in advance of time. But yet he assured me that I might aid the advent of the true believers, by myself teaching certain ennobling principles. And when the "twelve" should have truly arrived, the celestial visitor assured me that everybody would recognize them by certain signs of *life, disposition and character*, which signs could not be assumed by pretenders, nor successfully counterfeited by persons ambitious of chieftainship. "They will," he said, "show signs in *deeds* of goodness, truth, temperance, integrity; they will teach, and heal the sick; they will love and liberate their fellow-men; they will condemn or despise no man in anger; neither will they retard any more the union of love with wisdom; nor procrastinate the development of Nature's Own Religion in the earth."

Let us now return to the letter above introduced. Would you, my kind reader, believe that the writer of that letter is a spiritualist of the most pronounced type? I have the pleasure of his acquaintance, and know that he is a man of cordial sympathies, thoroughly honest in his dealings, a constant participator in the Sunday meetings, and is about twenty years old in the new faith and knowledge.

But behold his position on the subject of progress! He asks: "Why don't a certain man turn upon his adversary? Why is he silent when the tongue of persecution is turned against him? Why don't he stop the mouth of his enemy by an appeal to law?"

Silence reigns! The man does not turn upon his adversary! What then? The answer comes from a twenty-year-old believer in Spiritualism, and it is this: "If he don't I shall conclude that he can't; and I will go over the fence, and help hold up the hands of the assaulting party." Let the reader just here contrast this state of mind with that which would characterize any one of the "twelve," through whose exalted ministrations and personal influence the kingdom of heaven was to be promoted amongst men.

Permit in this place a touch of autobiography. For years upon years I myself was made the special target for every marksman with shot gun and bow and arrow. It would be impolite, not to say profane and vulgar, to put in print the stories which refined and wealthy church members, including very respectable ministers of the several orthodox denominations, privately and publicly circulated against me. I was reported and denounced as the walking embodiment of all that was vile and satanic. The published charges against the parties named in the foregoing letter, are simply gossip and child's talk compared with charges which have been and are yet brought against me personally by quite respectable opponents.

Now, what have I done to stay the power of my traducers? They have "damaged me" beyond measure. Socially, they have slammed in my face the hospitable door of hundreds and thousands of very excellent men and women in all parts of the United States and throughout all the cities of Europe. In my business, as Author and Publisher, my adversaries have damaged me to the amount of at least \$100,000, making all due allowance for the unpopularity of the subjects of my publications. The blighting and hampering influences of my respectable enemies and slanderers meet me at every turn in life, in society, in business, in every relation I sustain to my fellowmen.

What then? Ask a twenty year old Spiritualist what I should do, and he replies: "Why don't you stop the mouth of your adversaries and accusers by a direct action for malignant slander?"

I am silent. He repeats the question; and yet I make no answer. He insists that I shall turn like a practiced gladiator upon my public and powerful calumniators, and immediately put them to flight by a direct action at law! Silence is my only reply. What then does my Spiritualist friend say? Here is his speech: "Inasmuch as I esteem you and your writing, if you don't come out and refute these charges against you, I shall conclude it is because they are true, and you can't refute them; and, sir, as a just punishment for your

conduct, as pictured before the world by your enemies, I shall go over the fence and side with them."

Well, beloved friends, here is my final reply: "You may, if you choose, go over to mine enemies; the experience you will get from your errors may improve you in the future; but, as for myself, I shall not stop to contend with evil; I shall strive, both in this world and in the next, to overcome evil with good; and I feel that strength will be given me to travel forward without you. Therefore with a sad heart, but while a sweet joyousness is streaming with the magnetic power of true light through my positive will, I bid you adieu!"

As to my friend's letter I have this especially to say: Whether the charges be true or untrue, it is not for any believer in our principles to inquire. To all high-minded and philanthropic reformers such assaults upon the social private lives of individuals, is cowardly and despicable to the last degree. If the parties privately grieved, by deeds said to have been committed against their conjugal rights and happiness, see fit to take "direct action" to bring the known offenders to justice, that is their own affair and not yours. What shall we think of a public expounder of our principles, who, under the sophistical plea (pre-eminently worthy of a New York legal *savan* in quest of professional business) that "free speech and free press are in danger," undertakes to advocate and defend persons incarcerated because they burglariously entered and assaulted the private rights of hitherto highly esteemed citizens? Can such a teacher be one of the "twelve"? Or, is it possible that any one who is inclined to go over to the side of the assaulters, because the accused don't stop and strike back like prizefighters, is one of the twelve whose "deeds" would be numbered among the best and noblest in moral grandeur? We may well despair of even making any progress in human goodness, if, after twenty years in Spiritualism, its believers are as ready and as willing to listen to evil tidings and to believe in them, too, upon the most flimsy (not to say reprehensible) testimony that could be offered to a show-seeking and sensation-loving generation. After these twenty years I find myself still asking: "Where shall we look for the twelve teachers of our principles? Who is superior to retaliation? Who works exclusively for the development of good in our fellow-men? Who works to exalt and to purify human life and society, and not to demoralise our faith in humanity? Who wants to shun the evil and cleave to that which is good?"

While waiting for an answer to these questions let us pray that all Spiritualists who believe evil reports so readily, may be led to reflect upon the inconsistent and contemptible figure they make in the mirror of truth and history.

BRITISH NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SPIRITUALISTS.

We have received by last mail a proof sheet of the rules and articles of association of a new organization to be called "The British National Association of Spiritualists," the objects of which are set forth in rule II as follows:—"To further the interests of Spiritualism, by correspondence, by printing and distributing publications, by the formation of a library of works on Spiritualism and kindred topics; by public meetings and lectures; by influence of the public press; by offering a medium of communication between local and provincial societies; by promoting the establishment and affiliation of such societies which shall, notwithstanding, maintain their own separate independent government and action; and by taking such other steps as may be incidental or conducive to the attaining of the above objects."

Provision is made in the rules for the appointment of a president, twenty vice presidents, and a council of seventy, so that it is evidently intended to be an extensive organisation, which if properly conducted will exercise a world wide influence and be productive of much good. An association of this kind can do much more to correct popular errors in regard to Spiritualism than can possibly be accomplished by isolated individuals, and we hail its advent with pleasure.

SPIRITUALISTIC SOIREE AT THE MASONIC HALL.

The first of a series of quarterly entertainments in the form of a concert and ball, was held at the Masonic Hall, Lonsdale-street, under the auspices of the Victorian Association of Progressive Spiritualists, on Friday, 9th January. The concert was under the direction of Professor Hughes, the performers being amateurs, principally selected from the choir of the association. The programme was gone through in a very creditable manner, several of the singers being warmly applauded. Two recitations, "Sigurd and Gerda," and "The proud Miss M'Bride," were given by ladies, and were much appreciated by the audience. The concert terminated about 10 p.m., and after an adjournment for refreshment the ball was opened with the usual "first set." Dancing was carried on with spirit until shortly before 2 a.m., when the company dispersed, evidently well pleased with the evening's entertainment.

LESSONS OF THE SKY.

BY JOHN RUSKIN.

It is a strange thing how little people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which Nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him, and teaching him, than in any other of her works; and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them—he injures them by his presence—he ceases to feel them if he is always with them. But the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not "too bright nor good for human nature's daily food;" it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for soothing it and purifying it from dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful—never the same for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its affinity; its appeal to what is immortal in us is as distinct as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential. And yet we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought, but as it has to do with our animal sensations. We look upon all by which it speaks to us, more clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intention of the Supreme, that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew that we share with the weed and the worm, only as a succession of meaningless and monotonous accident, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness or a glance of admiration. If in our moment of utter idleness and insipidity we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says it has been wet, and another it has been windy, and another, it has been warm. Who, among the whole clattering crowd, can tell me of the forms and the precipices, of the claim of tall white mountains that gilded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south, and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust a blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when sunlight left them last night, and the west wind blew them before it like withered leaves? All has passed unregretted or unseen; or, if the apathy be ever shaken off, even for an instant, it is only by what is extraordinary. And yet it is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, not in the clash of the hail, nor the drift of whirlwind, that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not always so eloquent in the earthquake, nor in the fire, as in "the still, small voice." They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature which can only be addressed through lampblack and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, the calm and the perpetual—that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood—things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally, which are to be found always yet each

found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given.

* TRACTS FOR THE TIMES.

We have received two of the above, which are reprints from the *Progressive Spiritualist*, got up in a cheap form for more extensive circulation. The first, "Spiritualism in its relation to Orthodoxy," argues the untenability of the Christian Spiritualist position, compares Spiritualism or the spiritual philosophy with modern Christianity, and shows them to be irreconcilable. The second, "Creeds and Dogmas," a lecture delivered by Mr. Tyerman, addressed to the clergy and Christians of all denominations, is a plea for the revision of the Creeds and Dogmas of the Established Churches, and after an impartial presentation of the advantages and disadvantages of an infallible Dogma, concludes by showing that the only hope of the churches consists in a revision of their creeds, without which in the present enlightened state of society they must inevitably lose all power for good, and rapidly collapse.

SPIRITUALISM EXPLAINED.

The *New Quarterly*—a magazine whose name is significant of its history—has a short article in which the author, having in one seance! obtained a full and satisfactory explanation of Spiritualism and its phenomena, kindly offers the same to his readers. As the title is a taking one, and the style agreeable, there will probably be many readers,—and among them some Spiritualists, no doubt. We imagine, with some amusement, the dismay of an earnest, humble soul, who has reached his own conviction of the truth of Spiritualism by careful toil and prolonged investigation, at finding that *one seance* sufficed to explain away—for that is the result—the entire phenomena of Spiritualism,—table tipping, raps, levitation, manifestation of spirit forms, &c. The description of the seance, which is purposely made as sensational as possible, is given by a Dr. C., who, as well as the other members of the circle, is a sceptic; the medium and her brother alone being believers. After Dr. C. has thrilled you with the account of the wonders seen, and the effect they produced on all, Mr. F., the author of the article, and the person at whose house the seance took place, proceeds to give you the explanation—which is simply that he was the impostor, not the medium, nor her brother. He had had the room expressly arranged beforehand, with grooves for table tipping, a hook and rope, and two or three accomplices for levitation, a mirror, and a girl concealed in another room for the manifestation of spirit form, &c. This is the explanation! It is very much as if he should say—"I thought there was a door knocker on the house, but on going close up to it I found it was only a painted one—in fact, I painted it myself beforehand; therefore there are no door knockers on any of the houses in that street; this is proved beyond dispute!" One thing, however, remains still doubtful to the candid reader's mind. It is, whether the man who could invent such an explanation for the phenomena of Spiritualism, is more fool or knave. Does he not know that there are numbers of men in London who publicly advertise as jugglers, to imitate the more usual phenomena, but that they, like himself, must have their own room, and paraphernalia, and assistants, whereas no medium requires anything of the sort? Does he not know that these same men, whose business it is to do these things, have been challenged, in the lecture halls of the London Spiritualists, to do them under the same conditions that any medium would accept; and that they have publicly declined the challenge, and acknowledged that they can do nothing without machinery, costly and cumbersome, and taking time to prepare, and skilled confederates to work it? And when he admits that the medium and her brother—who came shortly before the others—asked for no private arrangement of the room or furniture, for no access to it unaccompanied by himself, and brought no machinery with them but a box containing a violin and

an accordion—does he not see that, in leading them into this trap, he grossly wronged two innocent and unsuspecting persons? If he does not see it, we do.

There are certain things necessary to the investigation of Spiritualism, but they are not confederates, machinery, nor dupes,—they are candor, perseverance, and moral courage. Given these requisites, and the results never fail, though they may, and often do, take a form unexpected, or unwished for, by the circle. True, manifestations do occur without these moral qualities, and astonish or convince even the incredulous; but they lead, when unsustained by them, to no real knowledge of Spiritualism.

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