



DEVOTED TO RATIONAL SPIRITUALISM AND PRACTICAL REFORM.

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Phenomenal and Philosophical.

MYSTERIOUS INCIDENTS.

BY BAYARD TAYLOR.

Let skeptical, hard, matter-of-fact men talk as they may, there is a lingering belief in the possibility of occasional communication between the natural and the supernatural—the visible and the invisible world—inherent in human nature.—There are few persons whose lives do not contain at least some few occurrences, which are incapable of being satisfactorily explained by any known laws—remarkable presentiments, coincidences, and sometimes apparitions, even, which seem to be beyond the reach of accident or chance, and overcome us with a special wonder.

An undoubted instance of the kind happened to me, while in California, in November, 1849. Starting from Sacramento, on horseback, for journey to the Mokelumne and the American Fork, I was detained three days at a lonely rancho near the Cosumne River, by a violent storm of rain. On the fourth morning the clouds broke away. I saddled, swam the river, and took a faint trail leading over the plains, intending to make Hicks' Rancho, twenty-four miles distant, among the foot-hills of the Sierra Nevada. Very soon, however, I lost the trail, which had been completely washed out by the rain. Riding at hazard toward the mountain, a sudden blind instinct—which I never felt before, and cannot intelligibly describe—told me to strike a bee-line in a certain direction. I thereupon took my bearings by the distant snowy peaks, and rode slowly on—my mare sinking to her knees at every step in the loose, saturated soil. It was during this ride that I came upon four grizzly bears, eating acorns in a little grove of oaks. Our interview was like that of two Englishmen in the desert; a momentary pause—a long stare—and each hurries to get out of sight of the other. To be candid, I did not desire an introduction.

I made such slow progress, that night came on as I was entering the foot-hills. I had kept my bee-line faithfully all day; and when I halted at dusk, in a little wooded dell, blazed two trees, so that I might resume the direction in the morning. Giving my mare the length of her lasso, that she might crop the shrubs—as there was no grass to be had—I built up a large bonfire of dead limbs, and sat down beside it on a fallen tree. There was no moon; but the stars twinkled clearly through the bare branches overhead. I had depended on reaching the rancho, and was therefore without provisions. My supper consisted of a segar and some rain-water, which had gathered in a hollow. What a comfort there is in a fire! I might give a thrilling picture of my sensations—lust, alone, and famishing—which my peevish reader would shudder at, behind his lobster salad. But it would not be true. I felt as cozy and comfortable as if before my own wide fireplace in the oak-on chamber (not built yet), and the starry silence of the night filled my heart with a soothing sense of happiness and peace.

Taking the saddle for a pillow, I wrapped myself in my blanket, and lay down, with my back to the field and my feet to the fire. But my slumbers were short and fitful. The neighborhood was famous for bears; and I was apprehensive that my mare would take fright, get loose, and forsake me. So I lay awake half an hour at a time, watching the culmination of the stars on the meridian line of a slender twig over my head. It was perhaps, an hour past midnight, when, as I thus lay with open eyes gazing into the eternal beauty of Night, I became conscious of a deep, murmuring sound, like that of a rising wind. I looked at the trees; every branch was unmoved—yet the sound was increased, until the air of the lonely dell seemed to vibrate with its burden. A strange feeling of awe and expectancy took possession of me. Not a dead leaf stirred on the boughs; while the mighty sound—a choral hymn, sung by ten thousand voices—swept down over the hills, and rolled away like retreating thunder over the plain. It was no longer the roar of the wind. As in the wandering prelude of an organ melody, note trod upon note with slow, majestic footsteps, until they gathered to a theme, and then came the vibrant, simultaneously chanted by an immeasurable host:—"Vivant terrestrial!" The air was filled with the tremendous sound, which seemed to sweep near the surface of the earth, in powerful waves, without echo or reverberation.

Suddenly, far overhead, in the depths of the sky, rang a single, clear, piercing voice of unnatural sweetness. Beyond the reach of human organs, or any human instrument, its keen *alto* pierced the firmament like a straight white line of electric fire. As it shot downward, gathering in force, the vast terrestrial chorus gradually dispersed into silence, and only that one unearthly sound remained. It vibrated slowly into the fragments of a melody, unlike any which had ever reached my ears—a long undulating cry of victory and of joy; while the words—"Vivat Cælum!" were repeated more and more faintly, as the voice slowly withdrew, like a fading beam of sunset, into the abysses of the stars. Then all was silent in the dell, as before.

It is impossible to describe the impression produced by this wonderful visitation. I slept no more that night; and for

days afterward, the piercing sweetness of that skyeey voice rang through my brain. Walking Broadway, years afterwards the memory of it has flashed across my mind, as sharp and sudden as a streak of lightning; and if it now returns more faintly and less frequently than before, its weird and supernatural character remains the same. I was undeniably awake at the time, and could recall neither fact, reflection, nor fancy of a nature to suggest the sounds; but I was fatigued, famished, alone in the wilderness, awed by the solemnity and silence of the night—perhaps even more than I suspected—and my imagination, acting involuntarily and unconsciously to myself, produced the illusion. I have often observed that complete repose of the body, after great fatigue, is accompanied—when continued to a certain time—with a corresponding repose of volition, a passive condition of the mind, highly favorable to the independent action of the imagination. Then, if ever, are we in a fit state to hear—

"The airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses."

The dream is no less a wonder. How does one faculty of the brain act, so far beyond our conscious knowledge, as to astound us with the most unexpected images? Why should it speak in the Latin tongue? How did it compose music—which would be as impossible for me as to write a Sanscrit poem?

There is another interesting fact connected with this adventure. When daybreak came, I saddled my mare; and with the aid of the blazed trees, resumed the bee-line of the previous day. It was no easy matter to follow it, up and down the precipitous hills; but I had not proceeded an hour before my course was blocked by the very rancho to which I was bound! My blind animal instinct had guided me for twenty miles, over hill and plain, and hit the target exactly in the centre.

One more incident of a more decided character closes the list of my experiences. During my last visit to London, I accepted an invitation to pass two or three days with a banker, who occupies a fine estate on the Thames near Windsor. The house—which was a palace in its extent and the character of its appointments—was built by a former Earl of T—, who ruined himself in erecting it. Gardens, graperies, and a noble path, stretching along the bank of the Thames, completed the attractions of one of the loveliest places in England. When the hour for rest arrived, I was conducted to a chamber looking toward the towered entrance, and a group of magnificent cedars of Lebanon, on the lawn. The night was misty and moonless—so that, after I had extinguished my candle, the room remained in almost complete darkness.

It was midnight when I went to bed; and I had slept, I suppose, until somewhere between two and three, when I suddenly awoke, and to my surprise, found that my candle was still burning. My first idea was that I had forgotten to extinguish it. Closing my eyes while revolving this question in my mind, I opened them again upon a room darkened as before.—Through the uncurtained window, I saw the dim tops of the cedars rising against the misty November sky. At the same time I detected a slight noise at the door—as if some one was cautiously trying to enter. But as the key was turned, the attempt was in vain; and I presently heard the same noise at the door of the adjoining dressing-room. Listening intently, I became aware of a slight creak at the door of communication between the two rooms. This was followed, not by a footstep, but by the hushed, rustling sound of a long dress trailing upon the floor. The sound marched slowly across the room, and approached the bedside, where it stopped. Then the gentlest touch—as, indeed, of airy fingers—drew the bed-clothes straight, and tucked the ends of the coverlets and sheets into the space between the mattress and bedstead. Meanwhile I lay perfectly still, in a passive state of surprise and wonder.

When, however, the gentle ministry ceased, and I again caught the rustle of the trailing dress on the carpet, I sprang bolt upright in bed, and peered into the gloom, in hope of seeing the figure. But the room was a gulf of darkness, except the bit of window not covered by the cedars; and by this time the rustle had reached the dressing-room door. In a few seconds more, it had passed away completely; and after exhausting myself in speculations as to the character of the visit, I slept. On mentioning the incident at breakfast, I found that none of the guests had been disturbed; nor could I learn that anything of the kind had previously happened in the house, although one gentleman affirmed that the old mansion which was pulled down by Lord T—, before building the present one, had the reputation of being haunted.—N. Y. Mercury.

LIFE IS A STRUGGLE.

I have done at length with dreaming; henceforth, O thou soul of mine, Thou must take up sword and gauntlet, waging warfare most divine. Life is struggle, combat, victory! wherefore have I slumbered on, With my forces all unmarshalled, with my weapons all undrawn? O how many glorious records had the angels of me kept, Had I done, instead of doubted; had I warred instead of wept! Yet, my soul, look not behind thee: thou hast work to do at last! Let the brow toil of the present overarch the cumbered past. Build thy great acts high and higher; build them on the conquered sod Where thy weakness first fell bleeding, and thy first prayer rose to God

For the Spiritual Age. ATTRIBUTES OF HUMAN NATURE.

BY GEORGE STEARNS.

The cardinal attributes of Human Nature are Immortality, Progression and Responsibility; and the sooner we come to realize and act upon the moral force of this trina conception, the better for our welfare, here and hereafter.

Human Immortality is so innately desirable, that the majority of mankind have always believed themselves entitled to the boon, with no thought of evidence, save in this blind instinct, which makes the authority of every special religion. This faith satisfies the soul in its embryonic state; but when it begins to unfold as an agent of individual intelligence, it loses the zest of belief and yearns to know itself immortal. This birth of a conscious individuality is marked by three transitional degrees, known as the ages of *doubt*, *inquiry* and *conviction*. Such of my readers as have passed the first degree and are passing the second, will be likely to relish the following demonstration of a deathless selfhood:

1. Nothing not eternal is without cause; and the Universe indicates but *One Cause*—hence, *One God*.

2. Instinct is the language of the Creator; and the Author of Human Nature is no deceiver. Therefore instinct is a Divine expression of Truth, and *Man's innate wish is God's foretold Will*.

3. I can not but *wish* for everlasting Life; and I am only an individualism of Human Nature. Therefore, not I alone, but *every soul*, shall live for ever.

Now, since the principle of Immortality is natural, it must have its rationale. We surely cannot live always in the present state, nor would this be desirable. Are we not perfectly reconciled to the past? None of us would go back to childhood and re-enjoy its sports, however satisfying in their season. Contrariwise, when we were young, we looked forward to riper years, anticipated a growth of enjoyment, and in no case lamented the transiency of our aimless toils and unconscious vanities. And are we not still looking forward and upward to the everlasting future, as the great *more-house* of all that is to make us blest? Who would not be sad to-day, to know that he was doomed to bear forever the burden of physical life, to plod the same round of yearly labors, never to taste the untold bliss of Hope's extatic sphere, but to eat and drink, and toil and sleep, asking questions which none could answer as now by pointing up to Heaven?

No human spirit prays to live forever as a mere man, shrouded in all the ignorance and error incident to life on Earth; and if some should, it were a foolish prayer, of which, once granted, such would soon repent; for Earth has no enjoyment a soul could always keep. The game of life, full-played, is long enough to sate the merriest heart. The very child sometimes eyes the stars and wishes to talk with God about his works.—But children have the game of life to play. Not so the full-grown soul, to whom the scenes of time and sense seem futile as the toys of infancy to men of great exploits. Like some caged bird grown weary of its song, one longs to shuffle off this clog of flesh, and follow whither Hope's bright angel beckons. And as this longing, so our destiny. We shall go whither Hope as an angel woe us. Yet shall go with us nothing of sense but its memory; a memory, too, prompting no wish to return. For we shall have found a New World, transcending in blessedness all that Hope tells us of here. Nor shall we ever cease growing and finding the Good we seek.

In the future there's no limit to the soul's felicity,
And no man on Earth can fathom what this Son of Man shall be.

This is what I mean by Progression as an attribute of Human Nature. It is the law of development—the method of God's Creation—the way we are born to Life, Intelligence, Virtue and Bliss. It is therefore the mode of Immortality, and indeed of all existence, for without it nothing ever comes to life, or lives a day.

Progression being the grand law of Nature, everything is estimable in its place, as a means of universal development; and unending Progression being an attribute of *Human Nature*, none of its temporal specimens, however puny, ignorant, ugly and wrongful, is essentially hateful, "wicked" or worthless. If a man walking through an orchard in Spring-time, should despise the trees and call their fruits good-for-nothing because they are bitter and unpalatable, he would be called *green*, as well as the apples he condemned. Is the inference less logical, or the epithet less merited, when applied to one who throws away certain personalities of Human Nature, merely because they are young and undeveloped, calling them "knaves" and "fools"? Green apples may fall from their parent stems and come to nothing; but the like is not possible to any human being. Every child is certain to attain maturity in the upshot, hereafter if not here; and every savage is bound to become a sage. "He that is least among you all, the same *shall be great*," said the most worshipful of mankind, who claimed to be only *older* than whom we miscall "rascal." Verily, I say unto you, the "wicked" are not always guilty, and their judgments are often half as "green."

When we contemplate the numerous errors and consequent forms of suffering which mark the personal and social condi-

tion of Man as he is—the atrocities of war, the miseries of poverty, the tortures of disease, the cruelties of slavery, the anguish of superstition—all the deplorable workings of seemingly malicious wrong, it is consoling to reflect that *Humanity is young*; that Human Nature is as yet undeveloped; and that in time the World will out-grow these fruits of ignorance, inexperience and indiscretion, as individuals do the foibles and petty calamities of childhood. The history of mankind demonstrates a gradual improvement of the race from savagism to civilization; for the forefathers of the most polished nations in either continent were cannibals, whose older ancestors were sheer brutes; and since "history is philosophy teaching by example," the wise men of Greece, and the worthy of the nineteenth century, are only Nature's acorns for future human oaks. With the better yearnings of every heart, the oracles of conventional faith, and the earnest of poetry in all time, concur the best assurances of Reason, in presaging the final desuetude of evil in the growth and culture of Human Nature, to the consummation of all anticipated Good.

The principle of Progression is precisely that of Creation.—Its agent is no other than God himself. It is therefore absolute, and its onward march is irresistible and interminable.—There being originally no power but that of the Creator, his will must be forever supreme. All its apparent contraventions by finite error, having been foreseen and permitted, must be consonant therewith; and hence his work can in no wise be permanently frustrated nor essentially mutilated. We may dam the flowing river, or divert its course, but for a season; for the current is unremitting, and the liquid force accumulates beyond constraint, till anon the tumid flood leaps over its barrier, seeks its accustomed channel and reaches its destined goal. So little chance may hinder Nature's order.—Every seed is meant for use—to serve at once some alimentive want of Man or brute, or be the germ of some plant as mediator to the same or an ulterior end. Failing of this immediate use, the fortune of a seed preventing its germination, the seminal essence liberates itself by the reverse process of decay, and seeks a new vehicle of adventure, conciliating chance with change, to the fulfilment of its special agency. So little finite will may contravene the Infinite. Man often seeks unwittingly to frustrate the work of God; incipiently interrupting parts of the creative process; by virtue of his blind conservatism regarding his own development. This begets multifarious forms of suffering, which men call *evil*, but which in reality constitute the proper dissuaves from wrong, and insure the transiency of error.

As, by virtue of Progression, Man becomes more and more endowed with Reason, he cannot evade a growing discernment of his former mistakes and misdeeds; and, since none can love evil when understood as such, nor forbear to shun it by correction of conscious error, Reform must every where follow convictions of misjudgment or guilt. Moreover, since the germ of Conscience is implanted in every human brain, the nurtured soul must foster love of Right; and this enjoins *amends* for all injustice wrought, on pain of a self-damnation horrid as Hell.—Thus Progression is seen to be the natural root of Human Responsibility, certifying the momentous doctrine of a future Retribution; for it contains the absolute surety for personal amendment of life to final Rectitude and universal Reparation of wrong. Then shall appear the Divine loveliness of Human Nature, and then shall be realized that Age of Virtue foretold by Isaiah, foreseen by Belshazzar, foretasted by Jesus, and looked for and longed for by poets and philosophers of every human age.

A GREAT MYSTERY.

The great mystery of God's providence is the permitted crushing out of flowering insects. It is maintained by the respiration of oxygen and of sentiments. In the long catalogue of scientific cruelties there is hardly anything quite so painful to think of as that experiment of putting an animal under the bell of an air pipe, and exhausting the air from it. I never saw the accursed trick performed, thank God! There comes a time when the souls of human beings, women, perhaps, more even than men, begin to faint for the atmosphere of the affections they were made to breathe. Then it is that Society places its transparent bell over the young woman who is to be the subject of one of its fatal experiments. The element by which only the heart lives is sucked out of her crystalline prison. Watch her through its transparent walls; her bosom is heaving, but it is in a vacuum. Death is no riddle compared to this. I remember a poor girl's story in the "Book of Martyrs." The "dry pan and the gradual fire" were the images that frightened her most. How many have withered and wasted under as slow a torment in the walls of that larger Inquisition that we call Civilization!

Yes, my surface-thought laughs at you, you foolish, plain, over-dressed, mincing, cheaply organized, self-saturated young person, whoever you may be, now reading this—little thinking you are what I describe, and in blissful unconsciousness that you are destined to the lingering asphyxia of soul which is the lot of such multitudes worthier than yourself. But it is only my surface-thought which laughs. For that great procession of the unloved, who not only wear the crown of thorns, but

must hide it under the locks of brown or gray—under the snowy cap, under the chilling turban—hide it even from themselves—perhaps never know where they wear it, though it kills them—there is no depth of tenderness in *my nature* that pity has not sounded. Somewhere, somewhere, love is in store for them—the universe must not be allowed to fool them so cruelly. What infinite pathos in the small, half unconscious artifices by which unattractive young persons seek to recommend themselves to the favor of those towards whom our dear sisters, the unloved, like the rest, are impelled by their God-given instincts.

Read what the singing-women—one to ten thousand of the suffering women—tell us, and think of the griefs that die unspoken! Nature is in earnest when she makes a woman—and there are women enough lying in the next churchyard, with very commonplace blue slate-stones at their head and feet, for whom it was just as true that "all sounds of life assumed one tone of love," as for Letitia Landon, of whom Elizabeth Browning said it; but she could not give words to her grief, and they could not.

"MORE LIGHT" NEEDED.

Rev. Samuel Lee, in his late work on *ESCHATOLOGY*, after showing the differences and confusion of "Orthodox" authorities on the subject of the Resurrection, etc., has the following telling passages:

What now is orthodoxy on the subject of the Resurrection? We doubt if, at the present day, there can be found many who will subscribe to the grosser theory. . . . What, then, is the criterion by which to try opinions on this subject? . . .

This is a day, unlike any other, of independent thinking. The community are educated as never before, and trained to habits of reading and study. The literature of the day is addressed, as was not that of a former period, to the reasoning faculty. Our civil functions, even, encourage every man, as sharing in the responsibilities of his nation's governmental administration to think for himself. Authority no longer forms the creeds of men, political or religious. The Past does it not. We must see for ourselves. So it should be. And we have derived erroneous inferences from facts that have fallen under our observation, if there are not many readers of the Bible, who are pursuing an original investigation, and forming their own independent creeds. We have found the man of gray hairs in this attitude, and those of younger years in such numbers, as to justify, we think, the inference that the Spirit of God is, by an all-pervading influence, leading the lovers of truth right to the fountain.

If this be so, then, while we may expect a general agreement, we shall have, of course in greater number than before, specific differences. And our charity must adjust itself into harmony with its obligations in the premises. Men must and will think for themselves. And the cry of *heresy* will not deter those who are of the day from this duty and privilege. Far from it. On the other hand, it will have the effect to drive those, whom the church and orthodoxy most need, into relations other than those of the most effective auxiliariaship. Unity with variety is the order of things in nature. And if, in the sphere of theological opinions and functions, that variety is a little in excess, and includes some error, that excess is a less evil than the want of unity. There are good men in our day, who would be made better by cultivating a more familiar acquaintance with the fourteenth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans. The divinely authorized standard of orthodoxy is,—
"FOR GOD HATH RECEIVED HIM."

There are topics on which the public mind is in an especial state of unrest. The subject of this volume belongs to this class. The formularies above quoted, do not satisfy the common mind of the church. And it is asking for light. The doctrine of Inspiration needs to be examined. And as bearing not only on the subjects discussed in these pages, but on others, and some of them the most momentous of our holy Religion, the question of *what is and what is not tropical language*, needs a thorough investigation. On this subject, we think the language of Robinson may be applied with special emphasis: "The Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his holy Word." The attitude in which for the church to be found, then, is that of incitement to investigation, and of willingness to receive more light. And let her tolerance and her encouragement be extended to the humblest of her sons, who would hope to shed, if but one and the feeblest ray of light upon what are yet regions of comparative darkness and obscurity.

DO NOT WEAR MOURNING.—Cyprian, one of the early Fathers, says in reference to the departure of the loved ones:

"We ought not to mourn for those who, by the summons of the Lord, are delivered from the world, since we know they are not lost but sent before us; that they have only taken their leave of us, in order to precede us. We may long for them as we do for those who are on a distant voyage, but not lament them. We must not put on the dark robes of mourning here below, while they have already put on the white robes of glory; we must not give the heathen just cause to accuse us both of weeping for them as lost and extinct, of whom, nevertheless, we say they are alive with God, and of failing to prove, by the witness of our hearts, the faith we confess with our lips."

