

SPIRIT RAPPINGS.



BY

ONE

WHO HAS

“TRIED THE SPIRITS.”

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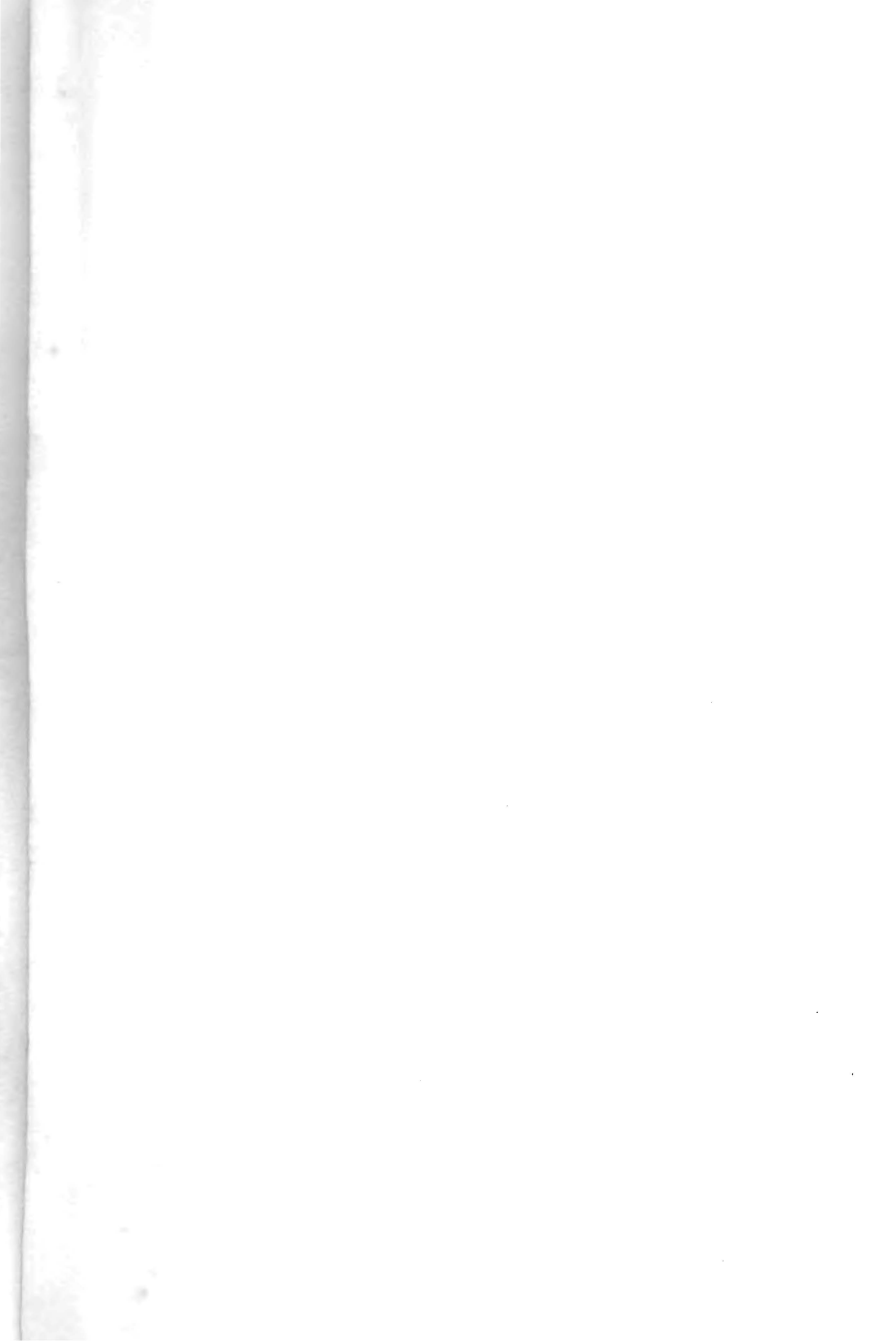
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SPIRIT RAPPINGS.

“Can *such* things be, and overcome us like a summer cloud, without our special wonder?”—*Shakspeare*.

AMERICA is *the* land of wonders! In the moral as well as in the physical world her maxim is, “Go a-head.” Accordingly, whatever emanates from that gigantic country seems to bear the stamp and impress of that bold daring and energy* which, if it does not assure us of its importance, is almost certain to startle us by its novelty. If any intelligent man, no matter of what country, had been asked from what nation such a marvellous stride in the moral world as “Spirit Rappings” would probably come, he would have been certain to have fixed upon America. An old, steady-going nation could never have embodied such an idea. Germany, it is true, might have conceived it “from the depths of her moral consciousness;” but what other nation than America could have practised it?†

But in the present rapid state of communication between all countries, a novel idea or practice cannot long confine itself to the country in which it originated. So very soon we find mysterious hints in the English papers—here and there extracts from the American journals of some very extraordinary revelations—and the lovers of the marvellous feast upon the little they get, and, like young Oliver, ask for more. The marvel-loving in England, accordingly, have now the satisfaction of having a genuine importation in the shape of an American Medium; and if the stories of the

* The “Friends in Council” very happily hit off the characteristic of our transatlantic neighbour, when they defined him “John Bull working with his coat off.”

† Mr. Spicer informs us, that there are 30,000 “mediums” in the United States, each the centre of a circle. This is probably an exaggeration, as he does not appear to be an accurate or philosophical observer, and all his “facts” rest on secondary evidence.

repeated visits of many of the most aristocratic personages be correct, the manifestations which the medium can supply, can hardly be equal to the demand. Mr. Stone, who acted as her Barnum, is now off to America for another ; so it is to be hoped that soon the enlightenment of "British" ignorance will be complete, and that the supply of spiritual aliment will be brought in accordance with the demand.

But some of our readers would perhaps like to know *how* these media go about their business. They shall hear. As an indispensable *preliminary*, then, you pay your guinea ; this is certain, beyond all scepticism. You thereupon take your seat at a table, the medium sitting opposite to you, or by your side. An alphabet and list of numerals are placed in your hands, and you are thus equipped for the spiritual encounter. All breathless and eager for the fray, you are kept waiting for about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, to heighten the effect, during which time

"Not a *sound* is heard, not a *spiritual* note,"

except the medium imploring the spirit to come, in such terms as the following :—"Will the spirits have the kindness to manifest themselves?" No answer. "Is the spirit that said he would get me some information, present now?" No answer. "Is the spirit of any of my relatives present?" Silence says, No. "Dear me!" exclaims the medium, "I hardly ever recollect waiting so long." "Are you quite sure they will come? Did you ever know them not come?" "Oh no," replies the medium, with emphasis, "they never failed me." While she is speaking, she stops. "Hush!" she exclaims, "I think I hear a rap." The spirit-seeker stretches his neck and intently listens, and a sound like the dripping of water is distinctly heard. After which the raps wax louder and louder, and our anxious friend soon feels satisfied that he will have *something* for his guinea. He now asks, under direction, whether there is any spirit present who wishes to communicate with *him*. Several raps of a very distinct character instantly respond, and the medium, with a smile, resigns her friend into the spirit's hands. He now puts his questions direct,

somewhat as follows :—" Will the spirit that I have wanted to speak to, spell out his name on the alphabet ?" The raps signify yes ! He thereupon passes his pencil over the alphabet, and when he gets to a particular letter, a rap is heard ; it is taken down. He begins the alphabet again, gets another letter, and so on till the spirit stops. He is much astonished at the result ; the name spelt out is the name of the spirit he thought of. He now asks when he entered the world of spirits (" never say, *die*") ; he is told the exact year ; how many children he left ;—the number correct ;—how much he left the enquirer ? the account correctly answered, and so on, to the amazement of our friend. He gets all his friend's past history that *he is acquainted with*, and all his own correctly rendered, even to the minutest particular. Now, asks some unsophisticated reader, have you not, in these singularly correct replies, something more difficult than you can grapple with upon the assumption that it is all imposture ? No ! The "*Leader*" is quite right when it says, it is not the *facts*, but the false inferences from them which lead astray. Take an illustration. Columbus was, on one occasion, with his crew, nearly perishing from hunger, in consequence of the natives of the country refusing to supply his ship with provisions. From his knowledge of astronomy he knew that an eclipse would take place on a certain day. He prophesied the fact to the natives, as an act of the Divine displeasure for their withholding from him and his men the necessary supplies. They laughed at him. But the event came ; and affrighted with terror at the darkened heavens, they rushed to the ship with provisions, and implored him to interpose to stay the vengeance they so much dreaded. This he did, and, almost immediately after the sun shone forth in his accustomed splendour. The ignorant natives swallowed the deceptive inferences* immediately

* " When something is told them which ' it is impossible the medium or any one else could have known,' they—forced to accept the *fact*—believe they are forced to accept the *inference* which the impostor wishes them to accept : but a cautious thinker would accept the fact and examine closely the inference. He would say, ' It is true, I have been told such and such

the *facts* were established, and thus ever after believed in Columbus's holding communication with heaven.

The enquirer before us, on being convinced of the truth of the communication, immediately rushes, like the poor Indians, to the conclusions presented to him. Thinks it *must* have been done by some supernatural means, or something very nearly allied to it, as "some of the things told him were only known to himself, and had never been breathed to a living soul." Our friend will be surprised to hear that *he* told them all to the medium first. How? By his finger, his eye, his face, and by his intonation, when he repeated dubious letters. *This* is the *secret* of the whole affair. If any one doubts it, let this following simple test be applied. Let A write all the questions on paper, and place them downwards upon the table—the *nature and purport of them not being known to B*. Let B then take the alphabet and ask the spirits to give him the answers to A's questions verbatim, he, B, taking them down as they are spelt out for him. Then let the questions be turned up, and the answers compared, and they will be found nothing more than the most absurd and ridiculous hotch-potch. The author of this pamphlet has applied this test to Mrs. Hayden with precisely this result.

"Oh," but it may be said, "the spirits *may* not be able to read paper, but they *may* be able to read *thought*." Good! but where is the application to this case? If they were spirits they could *read the mind of A, who put the questions, as well as if B, who recorded them, had asked them*; but they *do* not, therefore we infer that that they cannot.

things, but does it, therefore, follow that they were told me by departed spirits? May there not be some juggle in it?"

"We dwell on this distinction between scepticism of facts and scepticism of influences, because it is important, and because men commonly fancy they are bringing strong evidence in support of their opinions, when they say, 'I assure you I approached this subject as complete a sceptic as you can be; I thought it monstrous humbug; I laughed at the idea; but I was forced to own the truth at last.' If you interrogate these sceptics, you will find they all imagine the fact proves the hypothesis, as if no *other hypothesis* could explain the fact."

So that this theory fails. Well, says a candid reader, that seems conclusive, but how do you account for the *rapping*? Nothing more easy. First, admit that a clever woman, with wonderfully keen perception, can gather from various indications the letters you wish to come, and then nothing more simple than to produce the raps. If the table, close to which the medium WILL sit, has branching feet, let the* upper leather of the shoe be rubbed gently against the leg of the table, and the *exact* sound of the rap is produced. If you want to give the impression that the raps are in different parts of the table you vary the raps on the bottom part, and the petticoats shield every movement of the foot.† On one occasion a circle was struck to fall a yard from the table, but the medium would not commence without putting her feet *right underneath* the table. This was very suggestive! If, however, there are any who think the raps are the effects of some electrical or other phenomena, perhaps they will account for their ceasing the moment any one *looks, or gets under the table*. This the author has done, and in *all* cases the "manifestations" instantly ceased, and on his lifting his head, resumed. He, therefore, has not the slightest hesitation, reserve, or misgiving, in declaring the whole thing from beginning to end a most shameless, impudent, and blasphemous Imposture.

The author has only seen Mrs. Hayden, but as she has been represented as a sample, he is so satisfied of the quality that he need not examine the bulk. Mr. Lewes, of the *Leader*, on one occasion, *took down* the replies to questions that his *friend wrote*, he not knowing them. One was, "Is Mrs. Hayden an impostor?" and the reply given was in the affirmative. It was put again, with the like result.

Another medium (an English one) conveyed this message from the spirit-world—"Wo be to those in the latter days who believe in those people named Haydens! They are not words from God, but

* The *Zoist*, in an article which exposes the whole trick, mentions the *sole* of the shoe as the means employed for producing the sounds; we think that the polished leather of the boot against the polished surface of the table or chair gives the precise sound and intensity of the spirit "raps."

† A lady, named Madame Bernard, the other day, *would* keep her eyes upon the medium's feet *the whole time*, and consequently the party had no rappings.

from the Devil. They are false and wicked spirits who respond to Mrs. Hayden." This the *rival* medium wrote, and declared she knew not its meaning!

And yet to defend such arrant imposture as this, Mr. Henry Spicer, forsooth, must rush into the fray, and proclaim himself the champion of this "spirit" trading woman.* We would advise him to prepare himself not with helmet and lance, but with wig and brief, for certainly the only appropriate place for such a tournament would be the district police office of Queen Ann Street.

It may be mentioned, Mr. Spicer has written a work entitled "Sights and Sounds," perhaps one of the most unphilosophical and unsatisfactory works ever published on an interesting, and to some extent, scientific subject. He see-saws backwards and forwards—one page leading you to imagine that he believes, the next flippantly sneering at everything, and leaving you at the end in greater confusion and perplexity than when you commenced. He, like Gratiano, "Speaks an infinite deal of nothing! His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you have them they are not worth the search!"

To those who wish to see this subject treated in all its ramifications in a calm and philosophic spirit, we commend a new American work, entitled, "Philosophy of Spirit Rappings," by Rogers, which we cannot praise more forcibly, than to say that it is the exact opposite in style, scope, and argument to the work of Mr. Henry Spicer.

On the highest authority we are instructed to "try the spirits." We have done so, and found them *anything* but respectable. Mrs. Hayden, we are twice told by her *own* spirits, is an impostor, while Mrs. Roberts' set of spirits denounce "*Woe* unto her," and declare that her spirit-crew is made up of imps from hell. And yet these are the exhibitions that the *élite* of our nobility are patronising! The sooner English society washes its hands of these vile and mendacious impostors, the better for its own fair fame.

* Professor Anderson has completely exposed this Imposture, at Richmond, in America. The originators (women) it appears have realized upwards of 75,000 Dollars. Statistical accounts from the various Lunatic Asylums report 573 lunatics from this cause, while 17 persons have committed suicide under its influence.