

SCEPTICISM
AND
SPIRITUALISM:

The Experiences of a Sceptic.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

“AURELIA.”

London :

F. PITMAN, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1865.

SCEPTICISM
AND
SPIRITUALISM.

SCEPTICISM AND SPIRITUALISM.

THE EXPERIENCE OF A SCEPTIC.

AT a moment when a succession of surprising phenomena are startling the whole London world out of their most cherished convictions and proprieties, it is time for all those who have found leisure to steal an hour from business or from frivolity, with a view of investigating these puzzling and astounding manifestations, to give the benefit of their experience to the world at large, in order that others may be induced to follow their example.

There is at least room to hope that among the reflecting and earnest minority there may be found some who occasionally feel that pounds, shillings, and pence were, perhaps, not originally intended to absorb the whole time and thoughts of reasoning mankind, and that there are matters of deeper import and more thrilling interest to the human soul than the accumulation of guinea upon guinea, or the indulgence of the *vanitas vanitatum* of worldly ambitions and aspirations in any of their multiform disguises. Perhaps, too, some few may be tempted to think that what is affirmed by so many disinterested and intelligent witnesses ought at least to receive the benefit of doubt ; and that where there is room for doubt on a question of such transcendent interest to the entire human family, it may surely be esteemed worth while, even by the most obstinate sceptics, to look a little beneath the surface for themselves ; nay, I go so far as to flatter myself that here and there some earnest searcher after truth, undeterred by squibs and

platitudes, may be induced to devote to a matter so extraordinary, a little of that patience, of that personal investigation, that persevering and grave research, which is indispensable to the acquisition of all knowledge or attainment, even in the most superficial and frivolous branches.

It is neither by rejecting all evidence and obstinately refusing to seek it for one's self, nor by pooh-poohing and denying all that is novel, startling, or apparently incomprehensible, that society has ever progressed, or that philosophy and science have ever profited. The golden rule of equity and wisdom,—that no cause should be judged without a fair and adequate trial; that no respectable, sensible, and impartial witnesses should be refused a fair and patient hearing because their testimony does not square with the preconceived ideas and inveterate prejudices of the multitude; that no marvel ought to be persistingly ignored with no other proofs, and for no better reason than because it is a marvel,—ought surely to be applied to Spiritualism, no less than to every other branch of honest and earnest inquiry. Least of all should these indispensable requirements of common justice and common sense be denied to the advocates of a cause who themselves come forward openly and straightforwardly, to fulfil all the conditions which honesty, equity, and reason exact.

The phenomena produced are physical facts, demonstrable to all who choose not wilfully to close their eyes to them. Believers are not sought for, but rather conscientious, honest, and persevering inquirers and witnesses. Ocular and tangible evidence is freely offered to all who will take the trouble to seek it for themselves; a necessary condition in all science no less than in all revelation. The witnesses are countless scattered over Europe and America, and, in innumerable instances, rank among individuals of the highest standing, both as to intellectual attainments and social position. The theory they advance is likewise the only one which can afford any rational or satisfactory solution of the astounding

facts they proclaim. What more then can be offered or required as inducements, if not to belief, at the least to patient, persevering, and profound investigation?

Into the theory, however, I am not here about to enter. The grand question at issue, for the present, between Spiritualism and its antagonists is a simple question of positive fact.

Are the extraordinary apparitions and manifestations which are now taking place in London, and which have been publicly reported to have taken place in almost every part of Europe, no less than America; which have been, and are being, attested on all hands by the most credible, respectable, and intelligent witnesses,—truth or delusion, fiction or facts?

It is this question of facts which I am about to discuss, or rather to illustrate, by a simple narrative of personal experience, which may prove not uninteresting at the present moment, evidencing as it does, that it is within the power of every individual willing to pursue the inquiry with that amount of patience and good will which is indispensable to carry out any investigation whatever with success or fruit, to satisfy themselves of the truth, even within the narrow limits of their own private circle, wholly beyond the radius or the possibility of any juggling or conjuring operations, true or supposititious.

It may appear superfluous or idle to state, resting as the assertion must, for the present, on an anonymous affirmation, that the writer of these lines is generally acknowledged to possess an amount of intelligence and sagacity considerably above the ordinary average of mediocrity; although, perhaps, time may yet prove that this is no vain boast. What, however, it is imperative to affirm, is that credulity is so far from being one of my weaknesses that I have never been able to accept even a minimum dose of the illogical and transparent fallacies and contradictions which are contentedly digested by so vast a majority of educated persons, on the strength of reputed authorities, whether human or

Divine ; and for no better reason, apparently, than the *reductio ad absurdum* which was formerly held up as such a convincing argument by erudite theologians.

In other words, I was a confirmed sceptic as to all which can be classed under the head "not proven," a determined disciple of the supremacy of reason, and an inveterate adversary to all blind faith, whether papal, puritan, or protestant ;—finally, one whom no theological anathemas, nor pulpit eloquence—were it even that of Bossuet or Lacordaire—has ever discouraged from the determined purpose of sifting all things with my own eyes and my own brains, and submitting every statement and every argument, it matters not whence claiming its derivation, to the sternest, most searching investigation, and to the severest logical criticism. In a word, I held, and hold, the doctrine that truth can but become more dazzling the greater the light which is thrown upon it, and that it is only falsehood which seeks and requires obsuration.

Thus much for myself. As far as my narrative is concerned, I have to premise that all names, initials, and localities, I have purposely changed, in order to prevent recognition ; a precaution due to friends, no less than to one's self, at the present stage of the inquiry, when, if one no longer need fear to be drowned in the first horse-pond, or burned at the first stake, one may, at least, anticipate the detrimental and mortifying consequences of being pilloried in every journal and in every drawing-room as a liar, a charlatan, or an imbecile, for having the courage to affirm what the prejudices and the ignorance of the *moutons de Panurge* are pleased *de but en blanc* to deny. With respect to the facts in question, however, I here beg to affirm that I am about to narrate them without emphasis, metaphor, or exaggeration—simply, plainly, and accurately, as I myself witnessed them ; and as any other individual might and may witness others of a similar nature, if he will devote to the research the time, the earnestness, and the trouble which I did not grudge to it.

Without further preamble, therefore, I proceed. Residing in Paris some eight or ten years since, a celebrated American medium arrived there from the United States. Soon the rumours of his marvellous powers filled the papers, and echoed through every circle, from the busy world of the *haute finance* to the more aristocratic saloons of the Faubourg St. Honoré, and even to the most recondite penetralia of the hotels of *la rive gauche*. Princes and peers were numbered among the witnesses, and the converts of the novel and marvellous phenomena; imperial highnesses and crowned heads held private *séances*, and were fairly frightened into the conviction that there exist talismans and occult powers in the world more omnipotent than the eloquence of money bags, and more redoubtable than *Cosacques* and *coups d'état*. Nay, it was even whispered that all the dismal denunciations of the Père Felix and the Abbé Doguerre failed to preserve their fair penitents from stealing a *petit quart d'heure* from vespers at St. Thomas d'Aquin or the Madeleine, to nibble, like incorrigible daughters of Eve, at the forbidden fruit. Calumny even went so far as to assert that more than one haughty *duchesse* or *marquise*, the purity of whose pedigree not even the hypercritical St. Simon would have ventured to contest, had been seen slipping into the *porte cochère* of the northern wizard's residence, under the shelter of a thick veil, and the protection of some discreet cavalier, as their aristocratic sisters might occasionally be espied slipping through the dark alleys and illuminated *bosquets*, *en partie fine*, at Mabilie or Chateau Rouge.

In short, all Paris was upside-down, and I, no less than many others of my literary *confrères*, began to think that the little wits and less sobriety imparted as a general rule to the *beau monde* of European capitals had fairly taken their departure to the moon, like those of Astolfo and Roland of yore.

The matter, however, began to look more serious when the first celebrities of the artistic and literary world, who vindicate the

claim of Paris to be the favourite capital of the Muses, began to show signs of being infected with the strange contagion. For the opinions and dicta of coroneted and diademed authorities, I have always felt a most irreverent disrespect. I am apt, on most occasions, to question their honesty, seeing that, with a few honourable exceptions, chiefly, be it said to our credit, confined to England, they show so little respect for it themselves ; and as for their judgment and talents, I consider that, taking them as a class, they fall decidedly below par. Moreover, I am an obdurate disciple of the Dumas theory, and hold genius, science, and talent to be the only aristocracy worthy the name ; a single scintilla of Shakespeare's crown of glory, a single stroke of Raphael's pencil, or one lightning gleam of Byron's genius appear to me worthier of ambition and apotheosis than all the blue blood that ever flowed in the veins of the haughtiest grandee, and all the jewelled tiaras that ever concealed the empty brains and selfish hearts of the loftiest of earthly potentates.

It was not, therefore, till one after another, names known throughout Europe for their transcendence in art or literature, were added to the lists of witnesses and believers ; it was not till pens and voices I was wont to revere and admire, joined in the chorus of astonishment and conviction, that I began to be aroused out of my indifference, if not out of my incredulity. I had thought little of the affirmations of imperial and royal lips, and less of that of lions and *lionnes* who had been no less eager of yore to form part of the circle round Mesmer's *baquet*, than to gloat in the Place de Grève on the execution of a Brinvilliers, or the breaking on the wheel of a Count de Horn, in their search after excitement at all price. But I thought much of men noted for the brilliancy of their perceptions, the shrewdness and depth of their powers of reason and observation, their talent, wit, and genius, staking their veracity and intellects on the demonstration of phenomena which altogether surpassed anything that juggling or legerdemain had

ever produced, and that under conditions which left no room for either.

I was neither surprised nor startled to find that the clairvoyant, Alexis, and the unrivalled conjurer, Robert Houdin, had been called in as detectives, and had been compelled to avow themselves baffled and eclipsed. But I am fain to confess, that although incredulous as ever, I *was* both surprised and startled when such names as those which daily appeared in the *feuilletons* of the Parisian papers, came boldly forward in attestation and confirmation of these incomprehensible wonders.

“There; what say you to that?” exclaimed a familiar voice, as I sat writing one fair spring morning in my study.

The visitor was an *habitué* of the house: an English author of well-earned celebrity; a great friend of mine then and now.

“As for me, I begin to think that the whole world is going stark staring mad,” he continued, flinging on the table the *Indépendance Belge*, where in one of its delightful *feuilletons* an animated relation was given of a meeting at the house of a great artistic *célébrité*, whereat the usual host of wonders were stated to have taken place, authenticated by the corroboration of several of the leading members of the Parisian press, by the master of the house, and two or three other notabilities of high literary and artistic standing. “I am so dumbfounded that I want to hear what is your opinion on the matter. You know I entertain a high esteem for your lucidity.”

“*Bien obligée.* Then if you really want my judgment, *le voici*, it amounts to this, that although these things appear far too strange to be true, nevertheless, as we know that all the world is *not* mad, as the individuals who daily sign their names to these extraordinary accounts are the very reverse of dull, foolish, or credulous; and as it is a patent truth that clever people neither disgrace themselves by telling falsehoods, nor imperil their reputation for intelligence and integrity without solid grounds, in

causes where there is nothing to gain by affirmation, and everything to lose by detection, we are only judicious to conclude that, however exaggerated or misinterpreted, there is, at least, a probability of there being something under the rose not altogether chimerical, and which may be as yet undreamt of in nineteenth-century philosophy. Consequently, I advise you strongly to investigate the matter thoroughly for yourself,—the only satisfactory and rational mode of arriving at a true solution of the mystery, and one to which I myself should certainly resort were I not, as you know, *pro tempore* invalided and confined to the house. Therefore you see, my counsel, like most others, is not wholly disinterested; for knowing as I do, that I can thoroughly trust your intelligence, sagacity, and veraciousness, disabled as I am, I want you to be my *alter ego*, a commission which I should certainly not confide to any other proxy, distrustful as I am of most eyes, brains, and tongues, except yours and mine.”

“Add to which, that you reckon not a little on my pertinacious Scepticism; is it not so?”

“Perhaps.”

“Well then be satisfied, for I had previously arrived precisely at your conclusions, and determined as I am to penetrate *le fin mot* of the enigma, I got introduced to the wizard last night, and have tendered him an invitation to come and spend six weeks at my chateau at Mendon next month.”

“I congratulate you. That certainly is the way to fathom the mystery without fail.”

“Yes, I think he will be very clever if he escapes detection under my roof and my watchful eyes.”

But I must try to be brief. The projected visit took place. The greater part of the phenomena which had created such a sensation in Paris was reproduced in this gentleman’s house, and that under conditions which precluded all possibility of deception, legerdemain, collusion with servants, or any other jugglery. The

room, a large hall in the house, where the *séances* took place, was scrupulously locked, the key being kept in the gentleman's pocket, neither the medium nor any one else being suffered to enter it till the moment when the *séances* were about to commence. The medium was narrowly watched, and not allowed to conceal anything about his person, while most of the phenomena produced took place in strong moonlight, let in from five or six open windows, and the light of a gas lamp shining through a large glass door.

It may be guessed how astounded I was to hear from the lips of one of whose shrewdness, disinterestedness, intellect, and veracity I was as certain as of my own, that he had beheld a heavy arm-chair advance to the table *wholly untouched*, and had clearly distinguished a cloud within it; that detached hands had appeared on the table, and had written papers he preserved—the whole in the presence of several witnesses, and being distinctly visible in the bright moonlight; that a heavy mahogany table had tilted up at an angle of forty-five degrees, with a large carcel lamp burning on it, which had never stirred; that it had risen four or five inches horizontally from the ground, and remained suspended in the air for several minutes, while the gentleman himself was kneeling under it, with a candle in his hand, to ascertain that there was no illusion or trickery in the fact, although a powerful man lifting up the table by main force could not have accomplished the feat, whereas the medium's hands were passively laid upon the surface.

These, and innumerable other phenomena of varied descriptions, I forbear to dwell upon, as I purpose only to narrate those of which I have myself been a witness. I pass over, therefore, all these and subsequent manifestations, no less extraordinary, at which other friends of mine were present; such as an accordion playing, untouched, at the request of one person, a man of business, assuredly not given to freaks of fancy; an unpublished air, written many

years previously by a long-forgotten composer, a relative of the gentleman who asked for it, was played, although it was beyond all question that neither the medium nor any one else there could possibly have known anything of it except himself.

While these proceedings were taking place at my friend's house, an *attaché* of a foreign embassy dropped in one evening by chance to pay me a visit of *prima sera*. He was a clever, intelligent young man, but a very recent and slight acquaintance.

The conversation was not long without turning, *comme de raison*, on the topic uppermost at the moment in every one's thoughts.

The phenomena produced at my literary friend's, of which he daily kept me *au courant*, were discussed.

"I am not at all surprised at what you tell me," replied the *attaché*, "for things quite as extraordinary have occurred in the embassy at Stockholm, in the presence of my mother, sisters, and other friends."

Pressed to narrate his experiences, he at last, somewhat reluctantly, informed me, that trying the tables two or three years previously, with a party of friends, raps and tippings had intelligently answered all their questions, including the correct number of rings in the gold bracelet of a lady present, which she herself nor any one else had ever dreamt of counting; and that finally, on one occasion, ordering the table, if animated by a spirit, to fling itself against the door, it had suddenly leapt a distance of about twenty feet, and fallen down precisely at the spot where it had been commanded to go, a feat which had so dismayed the assembled company, that one of the ladies present fainted, and his mother, vowing it must be the devil, had made him solemnly promise never to practise such unholy proceedings again. For here I succeeded in eliciting from him that the medium through whose agency these wonders had been produced was no other than himself.

This piece of information was even more interesting to me than the twice-told marvels he had related. Debarred from assisting at the *séances* which so greatly interested me by hearsay, and although not questioning the veracity of one whom I know to be incapable of swerving one hair's breadth from truth, yet absolutely unable, like all investigating and sceptical minds, to admit any conviction save on the evidence of my own senses, in a case of phenomena so strongly at variance with all the preconceived ideas instilled by education and science, my most ardent anxiety was to be enabled to obtain some personal evidence which might steer me a little less dubiously through this strange chaos of queries and enigmas.

Could there really be anything genuine in it? To one who from earliest youth had been brought up with, and had constantly mixed in, the society of persons gifted with high intellectual powers, developed by profound erudition and varied knowledge, the idea of ghosts, apparitions, and spiritual communications or inspirations seemed to be indissolubly associated with Hoffman's fantastic tales and the exploits of Jack the giant killer. Such hobgoblin absurdities appeared to me only suited to frighten babies, and to vary the monotonous village gossip of rustic *commères* at the evening *veillée*.

To behold a ghost *in corpore*, or to hold a polite conversation with a departed spirit, would have surprised me little less than to have seen our globe fizzing up in the embrace of that terrible comet which so pertinaciously disappoints the prophets of its destructive intentions, or to have contemplated the planetary orbs run mad—dancing a *gavotte* together in the heavens. What, then, could be this inconceivable delusion, which seemed to possess the unaccountable power of bereaving the wisest, the cleverest, the most sagacious, and the most honourable of their senses, which seemed to defy alike the scrutiny of sceptics and the reasoning faculties of the most highly gifted?

To say the truth, an incorrigible disbeliever of so-called supernatural agencies, I was considerably more interested in fathoming the subjective operation of the delusion than the objective nature of the facts.

Not being, however, a member of the Institute, an F.R.S., nor, indeed, an academician of any denomination whatever, British or foreign, I had succeeded in arriving at the decision that the only possible means of satisfying a mind which nothing can induce to believe without full and incontrovertible evidence, was to spare no pains to procure that evidence for myself, and to grudge no more time or research to what I considered seriously worthy of investigation, than I should devote, *au besoin*, to the acquisition of Arabic or algebra.

Here, then, was an opportunity not to be thrown away. I fell upon the *attaché* without scruple or mercy, and vowed I would not let him out of my sight till he had given me, at least, a slight sample of his diabolical powers. The victim was loth to be victimized. He strove hard to slip his head out of the noose into which he had so unwarily run it. He was going to a ball—his partners were waiting—he was inscribed first on the list—he would be on their black books for ever if he were not forthcoming in due time. I could not be so hard-hearted as to wish to damage his *affaires de cœur* for the entire season. There was no time; there was no table small enough for the manipulation of a *tête-à-tête*; and, what was worse, it was incontestable that there was no good will.

Never was a wizard so little disposed to give proofs of his art. He declared he would return in less than a week—in forty-eight hours—in a day. There was nothing he would not have bound himself to, provided only I would set him free then and there. But I was inexorable. One must have been greener than I am apt to be not to discover that there was some *arrière pensée* behind his extreme reluctance to assist me, other than the fear of losing

a *valse*. At last, *de guerre las*, the secret came out. He had been so pestered to display his mediumship for the idle curiosity of the frivolous butterflies of society, so badgered, harassed, ridiculed, and insulted, both by friends and enemies, that he had at last, like many other converts, and as many sceptics and Deists, been fairly bullied into silence; and, obtaining his translocation from the capital where he had endured such annoyance, he had resolved never again to expose himself to similar consequences.

My perseverance, however, overcame his obstinacy, and under a solemn pledge of not divulging his name, he consented. The mistress of the house lived in the *entresol* beneath. To her I sent to beg the loan of a small table for the experiment. The *guéridon* was immediately sent up, with a request that she too might be permitted to assist at the *séance*, being very curious on the subject.

She was the wife of a retired tradesman in humble life. Hence, of course, there was no chance of her ever coming across the *attaché* in the society wherein he moved, consequently, there could be no *inconvenient* in granting her the favour she asked. She came, and we all three sat down round the little table. It was a small square work-table, without a drawer, about two feet across, standing on four legs. No cover was on it; and we all tucked our feet under our chairs, so as not to touch it otherwise than by our hands, slightly laid upon the top. In about ten minutes it began to vibrate and jerk with a strange straining, creaking noise. In a quarter of an hour it began to turn very slowly. The *attaché* ordered it aloud to stop, and requested that if it were prepared to answer questions by means of the alphabet, it would rap on the floor with one of its legs. The table immediately tipped up one leg, and gave an audible knock.

So far there was nothing very wonderful. It was small and easily moved, and although I failed to detect any apparent motion in the medium's hands, I easily conceived that it would be no very difficult matter, for a person who had practised the trick,

to move or tip it up, so that it might be imperceptible to any one else.

“Will you tell us your name?” interrogated the *attaché*, while I with difficulty refrained from smiling at the seriousness of his countenance and tone. “One knock for yes, and two for no.” The table immediately returned one distinct knock. The *attaché* then began reciting the letters of the alphabet, after ordering the table to rap when it came to the requisite letter.

As he called out the letter *H* the table tipped up and knocked. He recommenced, and it did the same at the letter *E*; the process being thus repeated till it had spelt out the name of Henriette.

“Had either of you a friend called Henriette, who is dead?” he asked.

Both replied in the negative. “Who then do you seek?” said the medium; “tip up your leg next the person for whom you come.” The table tipped up at the angle next the French woman.

“Try and recollect; it must be some friend of yours,” said the *attaché*.

She repeated her *dénégations*. She knew several living Henriettes, but none dead.

Thus baffled, he turned to the table. “Will you give your family name?” The table struck two knocks, purporting to mean No.

Three times the refusal was repeated.

Thus far the experiment was anything but convincing. A little table-rapping, turning, and tipping, as any dexterous trickster might have made it, giving an anonymous name which no one recognised, and refusing to afford us any elucidation, were not precisely the sort of phenomena to which I was disposed to surrender my better judgment; and I inwardly smiled, as I thought that if the *attaché* had no better juggling arts in his sleeve, I, at least, was not to be caught by such paltry tricks as those.

The *attaché*, however, was *piqué au jeu*, and he persisted. “You

must give your surname," he continued ; " I request, nay, I insist upon it." A reluctant affirmation was extorted from the table at last.

Again the wearisome process of calling out the alphabet recommenced.

Six letters of a somewhat uncommon French name were slowly given. "*Ah, mon Dieu!*" almost shrieked the French woman, turning suddenly very pale, as the sixth letter was spelt out. " I am afraid I recognise it. Let it go on."

Two more letters were added. "*Dieu de Dieu!* it is *she*, as I suspected; who could have dreamt of such a thing? It is the name of a young school friend of mine with whom I was very intimate, but who died ten years ago. So that I was no more thinking of her than of Malbruck. What a marvel! She died in an out-of-the-way place, and in a strange manner; if you can get her to tell us where and how, *ma foi!* I shall believe anything henceforth."

To abbreviate the process, the *attaché* proposed to name in succession the various towns in France. The table being ordered to strike two knocks for no, so long as he guessed wrong, and one rap for yes, when he mentioned the right one. He went through a long list of names, but the table persisted in a succession of reiterated negations, till at last he named a remote provincial capital, near the Spanish frontier. The table struck a most decided Yes. The reply was correct. Other inquiries were then answered alphabetically with no less accuracy.

I was decidedly startled. The *attaché* might move the table indeed, but how could he possibly have hit upon the *bourgeoise* friend of this woman he had never seen before, a person deceased ten years previously, and thus answer all questions, he had no means of knowing, with perfect accuracy? That the woman herself was not moving the table was likewise very evident, for from the moment the spirit had announced itself for her, I had made her place her

fingers upon the table so lightly that she could not possibly have stirred it without pressing them down in such a manner that it could not have escaped detection ; not to speak of her being ashy pale, and trembling with terror ; besides the fact that it was on her side that the table continued to tip up : whereas, had her fingers been pressing on it, it must have been the reverse.

Meanwhile, these operations, tedious as the A B C always is, had been protracted for nearly two hours. The *attaché* fairly *à bout*, if not of his Latin, at least of his patience, started up, and declared that he really could not remain any longer.

But I wanted some evidence more satisfactory to myself, and I entreated him so earnestly to let us make another half-hour's experiment, that at last, *bongré malgré*, I prevailed. On this occasion I requested him to invoke a spirit who might be able to answer me. In a few minutes after we had again sat down, the table moved and rapped. "Who are you?" he asked.—"Louise." This was the name of the spirit who, he had told me, always came to him.

My object now was to obtain some data for myself, and I inquired if the spirit could answer my questions. On receiving an affirmative, I demanded the name of a deceased friend, a stranger to the place where I was then residing, wholly unknown to any one of the circle wherein I moved, and whose name I was positive I had never mentioned to any one there. A wrong letter was struck.

"Is that correct?" asked the medium.

I shook my head.

"Have you made a mistake?" he inquired.

The table struck, "Yes."

"Then," he said, "begin again."

This time the name, of seven letters, was unhesitatingly spelt out. I asked various questions concerning him. Messages were conveyed to me from him, extremely like the language and ideas I should have expected from him ; but this, of course, being only

presumptive, was useless for conviction, so I returned to my tests.

“What sum of money did I send to another friend two years since? For every hundred francs strike one rap.” Fifteen raps were struck; the number was correct; the fact being wholly unknown to any one save myself. “How many pictures are there in the room?” There was a considerable number scattered on the walls. Eighteen raps were struck; the number, on counting them, turned out to be accurate; for I did not even know it myself; and as for the medium, as it was only the third time he had been in my house, and he had never appeared to pay any attention to them, it was very unlikely that he should; although, of course, there was a possibility there which was not the case in the previous two instances.

Various other questions were thus answered. I could not trespass any more on the patience of my victim, so to bring the *séance* to a close with something even more striking, I implored him to repeat the Stockholm experiment and to order the table to fling itself to a distance. He complied, and desired it to throw itself on an arm-chair at some seven or eight feet's distance from where we sat.

On receiving the command, the table, which had been previously quiet, staid, and gentle in its movements, began to oscillate suddenly and strongly to and fro. We all three immediately took our hands off it, and drew back our chairs, to leave its motions perfectly unimpeded.

The oscillations continued for about the space of half a minute, with increasing force, till it swung so violently from right to left that by all those laws of equilibrium and gravitation, so irrefragably argued by Professor Faraday and other learned pundits, it must inevitably have fallen on one or other of its sides, on or about the spot where it then stood; the consummation which, as a matter of course, I expected. When lo! to my utter stupor and

amaze, it suddenly made one strange, unnatural, convulsive bound, no longer in its previous direction, from my left to right, but *in the opposite diagonal*, straight away from me; leaping the intervening distance, and falling precisely on the foot of the designated arm-chair.

Such were the first facts of spiritual phenomena of which I was a witness in my own drawing-room, with two chance visitors, unknown to each other, and nearly as unknown to me; on an improvised occasion, neither prepared nor anticipated, either by them or me. And it must be confessed that they were sufficiently startling, although, of course, not conclusive to any philosophic and sceptical mind.

There was quite sufficient singularity in what I had seen, however, to induce an individual who takes a real interest in anything beyond mere temporal concerns and aims, to look more deeply into the matter; for although the experiment was insignificant and trifling, it was characterized by features that were not easily explained away. How came it that the table should have correctly answered in so many instances things which, whether the medium moved it or not, he could not have suggested, not knowing them? If he were a clairvoyant, and read in my mind what I was thinking of—a thing of itself sufficiently extraordinary—he could not have read in the French woman's a long-forgotten name she was *not* thinking of. If again *she* had moved the table for herself, which I was perfectly positive she neither had thought of, nor could have done, from the position of her hands, the way it moved, and the closeness of my scrutiny, she could not have made it answer me; and for my own part, I could vouch that I had not been an accomplice. If, on the other hand, as some of my wiseacre friends suggested, the medium had read in my glance the letters and numbers at which to make it rap, which I well knew he had not, as I had cautiously taken care to give no sign that could not in any wise account for the inexplicable fact witnessed by me in the full light

of a carcel lamp—of the table springing forward in a direction *contrary* to the one which its oscillations had taken when our hands were still on it, and flinging itself precisely on a designated article, at a distance, when no human being was touching it, or could touch it unobserved, inasmuch as we were all removed two or three feet from it. Here was, at once, the combination of intelligence and of that favourite impossibility on which Professor Faraday so complacently perorates.

The question was decidedly becoming more and more of a charade. Not being, I repeat, an F. R. S., as my definition of impossibility is a thing that cannot be, I came with unacademical *naïveté* to the conclusion that since what I had beheld was an undeniable fact, which the lucid scrutiny of my acute waking senses bore incontrovertible testimony to, and was not produced by any juggling, preparation, or *ficelles* whatever, tangible or metaphorical; the *résumé* amounted to the affirmation that since it *could be*, it was clearly not impossible.

Being moreover quite as deeply convinced as Professor Faraday that inert matter is wholly incapable of rebelling against the laws of gravitation unaided, I felt myself driven into a corner, and could only arrive at the surmise that such “fantastic tricks before high Heaven” could only be played by wooden tables when under the influence of some antagonistic force sufficiently powerful to counter-balance the laws of equilibrium and attraction.

Query, what was that force? There indeed lay the brunt of the question. “Time will show, and shall show to me at least, *Deo volente*,” I muttered to myself, as I laid my puzzled head on my pillow, wearied with pondering upon the insoluble paradox; while I inwardly recorded the solemn engagement to myself, never to suffer the waters of Lethe to efface the memory of what I had that night witnessed, meagre and unsatisfactory as it was; and never to neglect an occasion of obtaining new light upon the subject till I had succeeded in fathoming the mysterious problem one way or another.

Such was my first personal experiment in Spiritualism. The sequel will show how I kept my vow, and how far the results exceeded, and the phenomena I subsequently witnessed surpassed, all I could possibly have anticipated, or anything that my inveterate Scepticism could have credited from the testimony of those dearest, most highly appreciated; and implicitly believed; I will not say from apostles or from saints, for I am afraid that the peculiar temper of my mind rather induced me to be particularly suspicious of the latter category; however much this candid avowal may damage me in the opinion of their modern emulators.

Summer advanced. The migratory swallows began to scatter right and left, and I, like the rest, took my flight to cooler breezes and purer skies than those of the avenue de l'Etoile. The wizard, too, had taken his departure, and the nine days' wonder excited by his miraculous performances had rapidly faded away in the bustle and perpetual excitement of Parisian life. A new batch of Arab fire-eaters, and a troupe of Spanish danseuses had already taken his place in the mobile fancy of the fashionable world. The *cachemires* and the diamonds of Dwarkanauth Tagore had set all the belles and *petites maîtresses* of Paris on the *qui vive*, from the proudest inhabitants of the Rue de Varennes or St. Dominique down to the most racy *princesse* of the Rue de Breda, and the most humble *debutante* of la Chaumiere. Last not least, a novel importation of Siamese or Japanese ambassadors, fondly supposed to be gilt from top to toe, and to scatter diamond-dust like dross, had just landed at Marseilles, and it will hardly be deemed wonderful that the wizard should have been already forgotten, and that Spiritualism bid fair, to all appearance, to die a natural death, so far at least as the fashionable world was concerned.

As for my literary friend, he had taken an insurmountable disgust to the spiritual theory, because having endeavoured to call up spirits on his own account, he had been provokingly *berné* by the agencies in question, whatever they might be. They had given

him such contradictory answers, talked such nonsense, and told him so many falsehoods, that he declared they could not be spirits at all.

I pointed out to him that the conclusion was decidedly illogical, for that one might as well deny the existence of men because they speak falsely and act foolishly as that of spirits for no better reason ; seeing that it is not a necessary sequence that all spirits should be perfect. But he declared that they were decidedly *mauvais genre*, and that he saw no reason why he should *encanailler* himself with the souls of individuals simply because they were no longer of this world, whom he would not have suffered to cross his threshold while they were.

To this argument I likewise demurred, it appearing probable to me, simply on logical grounds, that, admitting the supposition that spirits do possess the faculty of corresponding with men, it could hardly be supposed that the privilege should be confined to inferior spirits alone, or that higher entities were debarred from similar powers. Consequently I suggested to him that if he really had conversed with invisible intelligences, as he appeared to believe, it might perhaps have happened to him in the spiritual world as so often occurs in this, namely, that arriving there as a stranger, without proper introductions, a good *carte du pays*, or any patron of lofty standing or high degree to act as his cicerone, he had fallen into very doubtful and compromising company. In his place, however, I assured him that if I had once been so fortunate as to obtain the *entrée* I should certainly make good my footing, and endeavour to work my way up to the *crème de la crème*.

But my friend was obdurate. He was a busy and ambitious man. Time was precious to him ; the spirits, if spirits they were, had unquestionably used him unhandsomely, he had been bamboozled, cheated, and, as he averred, fairly made a fool of, by them, and he had irrevocably decided that "*le jeu ne valait pas la chandelle*."

On this moot point I differed from him *in toto*. Had the evidence I had personally obtained been as conclusive as that which had been vouchsafed to him, I felt that I could not have thus easily dismissed the inquiry. To my mind it was evident that if it were indeed true that incorporeal intelligences could place themselves in communication with us, even in this world, it cannot have been the design of Providence that only confusion, absurdity, falsehood, and inanity should be the result. But it was in vain that I represented the profound interest offered by the investigation of this *terra incognita*; that I assured him that if I ever succeeded in sighting the unknown shores beyond the grave, I should think little of the discoveries of a Columbus or a Vespuccius in comparison; that the perseverance of the great Genoese would be, if possible, surpassed by mine; and that were I met by a whole score or legion of *folletti*, or spiritual black legs at the *débarcadour*, all the malicious tricks and the audacious lies that ever Puck or Rübezahl played off upon their hapless victims, would not deter me from prosecuting my explorations in the superlunary spheres. My friend was not to be moved from his purpose. He had cut the entire concern, and washed his hands of it. Not that he had seen any cause to discredit the facts he had witnessed, but simply because the spirits he had called had turned out deceivers, that time was valuable, life was short, and investigation slow and troublesome.

Reasons which, I believe, resume those of many thousands who see, hear, doubt, and turn back on the threshold, like the gentleman in question.

As for myself, I was more than in doubt. I was, and remained a sceptic. Something there was in it no doubt, something strange and puzzling; but as for spirits, bah! that was too absurd to dream of. After the first three months had blown over, I had fairly succeeded in explaining everything away to myself except the preternatural leap of that possessed table. The thought *would*

recur to me that it was a downright impossibility. The gravitation stumbling-block was quite as indigestible to me as to Professor Faraday. As for the rest it might be understood on the theory of clairvoyance.

“But,” demurred Scepticism, “clairvoyance is only a degree less incredible than Spiritualism. I thought you had fully made up your mind as to the *charlatanerie* of mesmerism. If you admit that another individual can see into your mind and read your thoughts as clearly as if they were written on your forehead,—that his soul can quit his body, travel away to any distance, and tell you what it there beholds, there need be no limits to your credulity.” “Yes,” replied reason, “but I must be allowed to believe in something. If you refuse to let me accept Spiritualism you really must permit me to take refuge in clairvoyance. Something it *must* be, that is certain. Trickery it was not, and could not be; *that*, at least, I know; and as for believing in effects without a cause, you will never induce me to accept that illogical theory.”

En fin de compte, poor reason thus uncomfortably tossed to and fro between Scepticism and fact, was compelled to arrive at the conclusion she ought to have adopted from the first, and to decide that the matter was dubious, and deeper investigation both necessary and desirable.

So passed a year. I had not forgotten my experience, nor renounced my curiosity; indeed, that unlucky antigravitation leap would not suffer me to forget it had I been so disposed, for it kept perpetually rising up before my mind's eye with pertinacious perversity. But mediums were scarce, Spiritualism was at a discount, and study, worldliness, and pleasure swept all before them.

At last, my wanderings led me to Spain. I was in Granada. It chanced one day that I was standing in one of the windows of the Hall of the Ambassadors, looking down upon the “silvery Darro” of poetic fame, and thinking most prosaically that it was wonderfully muddy, considering its reputation.

“Ah! you are looking at those curious gipsy caves in the Baranco. They are strange dens certainly, and there is more within than meets the eye. I wish I could fathom their mysteries.”

The speaker was a gentleman to whom we had brought a letter of introduction, and who had installed himself, *pro tempore*, as our cicerone.

“Yes,” he continued, “there is more within them than ordinary observers suspect. Many a buried treasure, both there and in the caverns beneath the rocks on which this wondrous palace is built. But I do not despair of discovering some of them yet.”

“I thought,” said I smiling, “that the Spaniards had made so many fruitless efforts in that direction that no one was likely to be sufficiently adventurous to renew the research.”

“Certainly the pickaxe and the spade have been so long used in vain, hercabouts, that I for one should be little disposed to resort to those common-place methods of exploration, but I have a more recondite, and effectual talisman to assist me in my attempts.”

“And what may that be?” I asked with curiosity.

“Communion with spirits. But this *entre nous*. For although they can no longer throw me into the dungeons of the Inquisition, *Dieu merci!* the *parti pretre* is still so powerful with a large majority in Spain, that they would fairly persecute me out of the city if they knew of my unhallowed proceedings; so I need not ask you not to betray me. The fact is, I am a very powerful medium,” continued the Count, drawing himself up, evidently rather vain of his supernatural gifts, “and I am surrounded with spirits who tell me everything I want to know.”

“But, in that case, you ought to have fished up all the treasures of the Alhambra long ere this,” I said, smiling.

“Ah! but you see, I have not succeeded yet in evoking the spirits of those obstinate old Moors. I suspect they have still an inveterate prejudice against Christians, and that they are resolved

that no hated *giaour* shall be the better for their wealth; for do all I can, they will not come; and as for my particular friends, Plato and Demosthenes, Newton, Byron, and Galileo, they are altogether above such sublunary matters, and tell me that they neither can nor will help me."

I looked up in surprise, half supposing that the speaker must be jesting.

"No, I am quite in earnest," said the Count, catching the interrogation in my glance. "I know it sounds extraordinary, but it is all perfectly true; and if you are curious about it I will bring them some evening to converse with and convince you.

Here was the coveted opportunity: a medium who evidently asked no better than to be drawn out. I resolved "*saisir l'occasion par les cheveux*."

"Oh, by all means!" I exclaimed; "I ask no better than to see, hear, and be convinced. When shall it be?"

"To-night—to-morrow—when you please, provided only you keep it a secret."

I am rather impatient by nature, so I fixed on the same evening. The Count came. We were alone. We sat down to a little table. It moved, as a matter of course, and precisely in the same manner I had witnessed before. Various answers were rapped out by the foot. One only was singular. I inquired the name of the country house of a deceased friend—a strange Baroque Breton name, consisting of three words, and referring to a remote spot far away in one of the most unfrequented provinces of France.

The three words were correctly given, although, mindful of the suggestions of my friends, I had taken special care to give no sign of affirmation or negation till the whole was accurately spelt out. Nay, I had carried my scruples so far, that I had kept my eyes immovably bent down on the table, in order that I might be unable subsequently to accuse them of having betrayed me. It was strange, therefore, to say the least, that the answer was thus accu-

rate, for the name was far too peculiar to have been hit upon at hap-hazard; and indeed it was for that reason I had selected it as a test. But here, of course, clairvoyance came in to the rescue.

Nevertheless I thought I might as well seize the occasion of seeing something more on another evening. This time the medium was of the most amiable disposition; it was clear that if I were not convinced it would not be *his* fault. Unfortunately, however, nothing being perfect in this world, his brains did not take rank precisely in that category which possesses the secret of influencing mine. He might be a medium certainly, but he was unquestionably no sage,—a conclusion at which I had arrived at the close of his first visit, and which every subsequent interview tended to confirm.

Warming with the interest which I appeared to take in his favourite pursuit,—wherein, it struck me, judging from the mania which seemed to possess him on the subject, that he was very likely to leave the little sense he could boast,—he offered to let me see an extraordinary clairvoyante whom he was in the habit of magnetizing, and another medium who, from his account, appeared to be his chief informant on spiritual matters, and who, I gathered from his scattered anecdotes, were in even closer *rapproch* with the spirits than himself.

The proposal was not to be spurned by one really desirous of seeking for information. The rendezvous was fixed for the following night. The clairvoyante was a poor girl of humble parentage, residing in one of the faubourgs of the city. The medium was a young clerk employed in a counting-house.

At dusk, the following evening, the Count called for me, enveloped up to the chin in a sombre cape; for the visit, of course, was to be wrapt in profound mystery.

It was no easy matter to thread one's way through the intricate and ill-lighted streets of the old Moorish quarter. Many were the turnings and the windings, innumerable the suspicious-looking

lanes, the narrow passages, the quaint-looking places, through which we zigzagged up and down on the sharp stones and the steep spurs of the cliff, on the summit of which the vermillion towers, famed in song and story, overlook the no less famed Vega of Granada.

Had I not been fully persuaded of the innocuous nature of my companion, I should almost have suspected him of carrying me off surreptitiously to some gipsy or brigand haunt, some sinister *tapis franc*, on fell designs intent.

As, however, on the score of his innocence I felt perfectly assured, I pursued my path in all confidence, picking my way over the sharp pebbles whereby Granada shines conspicuous, surpassing even the acute angles and piercing points of Bolognese paving stones; as if the Catholic penance of walking upon peas were expressly provided for the daily martyrdom of the pious inhabitants of these two most Catholic cities.

I was rewarded for my faith: for after all these vicissitudes I was safely landed at my destination without having experienced a single qualm, or having heard anything more sinister than the tinkle of a distant guitar, or the whisper of a pair of *novios* here and there; nor beholding anything more alarming than a little white hand passed through the traditionary *reja* (grate), to charm the *ennui* of some constant worshipper conscientiously fulfilling the duties of that truly Spanish institution, "*pelar la pava*,"* a spectacle which, however London or Parisian scepticism may contest its possibility, is not the less to be met with in any nineteenth-century Spanish town, as easily as in the days of Cervantes and Lope de Vega, or the "Impressions" of Alexandre Dumas.

It was a gloomy, penury-stricken, lofty house, through which we clambered up interminable flights of stairs, to the fourth story.

* "To plume the peacock," the curious *chic* term for balcony and grate flirtation.

After ascertaining that we were neither brigands on a nocturnal raid, nor *sbirri* or *mouchares* in disguise, or any contraband interlopers whatever, by one of those precautionary interrogations which so surprise neophytes in Italy or Spain, in the form of a "*chi è,*" or a "*quien es,*" bawled through the door, we were cautiously admitted.

The janitor appeared, in the form of an elderly female who displayed her wrinkles and grey hairs in all that unadorned and unattractive repulsiveness which old age assumes in these southern climes, where female charms being solely confined to youth and good looks, the woman who feels that both have irretrievably deserted her, abandons herself to the ravages of time with a neglect and apathy generated by the recklessness of despair. Through two or three of those large desolate rooms, whose cold stone floors, bare, ungarnished walls, lack of furniture, and ignorance of comfort strike a chill to every English heart, not always confined either to the dwellings of the low and the poor, we were ushered into the *soi disant salon*, which was rendered somewhat less dismal by a few rush chairs and a square wooden table, in the centre of which stood a tall brass *lucerna*, whose three oil wicks had been lighted, *par extraordinaire*, in our honour.

The clairvoyante, a sallow, sickly-looking, dark-eyed Spanish girl, was decidedly in keeping with her ghostly avocation. Not so, however, the medium. The latter was a chubby, brown-haired lad, of about seventeen or eighteen, with a simple, inexpressive countenance, rather ingenuous and dull in appearance than otherwise, certainly the very reverse of astute, roguish-looking, or sagacious, and particularly quiet, unassuming, and natural in his tone and manner.

The *séance* began with the clairvoyante. She was duly magnetized, the Count being the operator, and in about ten minutes thrown into a real or assumed trance; a fact ascertained and accepted by the usual query, "Do you sleep?" Various questions

were then put to her concerning her own health and that of the magnetizer, which were answered by details and prescriptions of the value or genuineness of which I had no means of judging. At last she was interrogated with respect to me. The answers returned were not inappropriate, but, to my mind, at least, they were vague, and altogether inconclusive. In one instance only did she succeed in making a hit that bore a close approximation to circumstances which certainly neither she nor the magnetizer had any means of divining, unless indeed she read them in my mind. I inquired whether she could tell me anything about a near relative recently deceased. She replied, after some thought, that she saw him; that he was young, and had died a violent death in a barbarian country. So far she was correct, for he had been killed in war in the heart of India. Beyond this, I could get nothing out of her; and the Count, considerably mortified at the result, affirmed that her want of lucidity was due to indisposition.

It was now the turn of the medium. A small round table was introduced, about two and a half or three feet in diameter. A sheet of paper was placed on it, and on this the youth laid his hand, holding a pencil between his fingers, so loosely, I am bound to say (for the purpose, he declared, of convincing me), that certainly I could not have written with it in the same manner. In a few minutes the table began to swing to and fro, till at last it got into the most rapid, violent vibratory, oscillating motion, shaking the pencil back and forward in his hand, till, under this strange jogging motion, it began to form letters, and presently wrote a running hand currently and with apparent ease.

The feat was decidedly curious, for the table continued to shake with the same violent, convulsive velocity during the entire performance; so violently indeed that my first acquaintance, the female janitor, was obliged to place her hand on one edge of it to prevent its toppling every two or three minutes.

This last circumstance seemed suspicious, for I could not tell

how far her fingers might contribute to the motion, although I saw no signs of her doing more than preventing its falling.

Admitting the suspicion to be just, however, the singularity of the writing remained not the less unaccountable; for, how any one could form even an intelligible word, not to speak of the long sentences and pages which were thus scribbled off, in a very clear hand, before my eyes, under these anticalligraphic conditions, seemed altogether mysterious.

But I was desirous of obtaining tests still less ambiguous. The first spirit who presented himself was the celebrated Hahneman, who, it appeared, was an *habitué* of the house. Here was a chance. I requested that he would speak German to me, and asked some counsel about my health. A long sentence, containing rather a clever prescription and some good advice, was shaken out, for I really cannot call it written. There were however two flaws in it, which I could not get over. The great homœopathist had fatally committed himself by perpetrating one gross grammatical blunder, and secondly by misspelling his own name; *i.e.*, he coolly wrote *gebracht* for *gebrochen*, and signed *Haneman*, thus omitting the second *h*. Here was a poser. I am rather squeamish, habitually, about orthography, and was altogether indisposed to admit that the celebrated *savant* should be ignorant of the participles past of his own language, or have forgotten how to spell his own patronymic.

I inquired of the medium if he knew German. He replied naively that he could speak a few words of it, but was very slightly acquainted with the language.

If the medium were a trickster, as I had already fully decided that he must be, on the strength of Dr. Hahneman's orthographical delinquencies, it became evident that he was a very green one, for the natural thing would have been to have denied all knowledge of German whatever, it being a rare acquirement in such southern latitudes.

I requested that another spirit might be evoked. Off started the table again with all the excitement of a special train; and a good deal of the unpleasant jarring side-to-side motion of its high-pressure velocity. This time the new arrival was a celebrated Italian writer, the Abbate Casti, whose anticlerical and antimonarchical satires, cutting, sparkling, and brilliant as diamond, were very nearly as much dreaded, and quite as bitterly proscribed in the Bourbon and Papal Italy of ten or twelve years ago, as those of his rival, the popular improvisatore, Giusti.

The witty author of "Gli Animali Parlanti" apparently thought it beneath his dignity to speak from the other world in anything beneath the sublimity of verse, so he launched out, full tilt, into the soaring flight of Italian *terza rima*. Thus were three pages of poetry dashed off with an unhesitating rapidity, only exceeded by the restless activity of the dancing table on which it was scribbled. I read the effusion with considerable surprise, for the Italian was pure, the diction was poetical, the ideas were brilliant and witty, and moreover it was addressed to me, and specially *apropos* to the occasion for which it was evidently composed.

I tried to read in the eyes of the lad if they bespoke any of the mettle or the fiery inspiration which betrays the *estro* of southern improvisation, and which had so often electrified me in the countenances of the famed improvisatrici, Rosa Taddei or Giannina Milli. But no, he looked, if possible, more stolid and uninspirable than ever. Clearly the poetic *verve* had never originated behind that bread-and-butter mask. "Bah!" replied Scepticism, "your visit was announced beforehand; what easier than to get some clever rhymester to pen off these stanzas by anticipation?"

"I should rather like to know that individual, for he must be a decided genius, considering the excellence of the verses, their length, and the little time he had to prepare them," I thought to myself. But it is with spirits, not with improvisatori, that I am seeking to make acquaintance for the mo-

ment, so *en avant*, let us seek something more satisfactory than anonymous rhyme.

In pursuance of my testing plan, I requested the medium to call a dear and near relative, by whom I had been brought up. He complied; the spirits reannounced themselves, according to their custom here apparently, by another furious jiggling of the table.

“Is it the friend I have invoked?”

“Yes.”

“Will he address to me whatever he would wish to say to me himself?”

The table shook out a long rigmarole speech, full of wise saws, first-rate morality, and excellent advice, but entirely composed of generalities, which might have proceeded from any one, and been addressed ditto: consequently, anything but what the clever and intelligent individual I had called up would have directed as a mode of persuasion to a mind of my calibre, which it would have been his first object to convince. Moreover, nothing could induce him to address me in any other language than Spanish. This to me was a clincher, for polyglot acquirements being completely at variance with his antecedents, and a decided preference for his native English, the only tongue he had ever been able to speak and write with fluency, being one of his marked characteristics, I felt perfectly satisfied that whoever had been polite enough to give ear to my adjuration, it was, at all events, not the one to whom I had addressed it.

The medium was fatigued, as well he might be, for the shaking his hand and arm must have received during the preceding hour's operations would have dislocated my bones, and jarred my whole nervous system for a week. The *séance* was therefore raised. Several bulky volumes of manuscript were then displayed for my benefit, purporting to be the *post-mortem* lucubrations of Solon, Plato, Demosthenes, Socrates, Numa, Pliny, Aristotle, Theodosius

the Great, Byron, Homer, and various other worthies of a similar standing. The greatest part of these communications, the Count informed me, had been vouchsafed by these great authorities to himself, first through alphabetical raps, and subsequently by spiritual dictation; *i.e.*, by making his hand write under the propulsion of their volition.

I glanced cursorily over the pages with an irritation which, but for my sense of the burlesque gaining the upper hand, would almost have amounted to indignation. Could I have brought myself to swallow Hahneman's oblivion of German, and my own friend's newly acquired foreign propensities, the grotesque idea of the noblest intellects and most brilliant geniuses of ancient and modern times deserting the empyrean spheres, in order to bestow their leisure moments upon such palpable mediocrity as the Count's, and devoting their lofty faculties to the hopeless and ungrateful task of enlightening his addled brains, to me was altogether insurmountable.

True, had I been as logically lucid for myself as in the preceding instance for my literary friend, I might perhaps have called to mind the arguments I had used on that occasion for his special benefit. Having so shrewdly reasoned in his behoof, that incorporeal intelligence is not necessarily synonymous with truth or perfection, and that there is no logical evidence afforded of a spirit's nonentity, from the fact of its not being addicted to veracity, I might on the present occasion have reflected that one lie is as good as another, and that if spirits can and do indulge in such derelictions from the rules of propriety, spiritual or mundane, it might appear quite as amusing a lie as any other to malicious or mocking beings to put on the tragic or epic *cothurnæ* of Euripides and Homer, to assume the stoic's mantle or the bays of Cæsar, for the pleasure of befooling and turning into ridicule the absurd vanity of imbeciles who think that such lofty beings are likely to come at their beck, or to frequent their society with any greater

condescension than they would have done during their lifetime. I might have remembered that even among our tangible contemporaries, many a wit and punster would think it a capital joke to pass himself off on the credulity of friends or enemies for the ghost of Theodosius the Great, Shakespeare, Milton, etc., or even to overwhelm the flunkeyism, and delight the aristocratic aspirations of the Smiths and Browns* of cockney celebrity, by persuading them that he was the Czar of all the Russias, or the Kaiser of all the Austrias, travelling *incognito*, specially ambitious of cultivating their acquaintance; and that the jest would be reckoned *impayable* if he only possessed the ring of Gyges to render himself invisible, and might thus count on eluding detection.

In a word, I might at least have reflected that the fact of an unseen intelligence answering to the name of Solon, Plato, or any other notability, ancient or modern, was, logically speaking, no proof whatever that it could lay any genuine claim to the title, and that these high-sounding denominations might be as easily assumed by way of an amusing hoax as any other.

Hence it was clear that, so far as logic went, I had as little ground for resting my conviction of the impossibility of these being spiritual communications mainly on the absurdity of the supposition that they could have emanated, under the circumstances, from their reputed authors, as my friend in his negation of their existence, from the mere fact of his having been deceived by them.

Doubtless these self-obvious considerations, to any really reasoning mind, supposing the question to be hypothetically argued on purely logical premises, would not have escaped me, had my friend's cause been on the tapis instead of my own, and, last, not least, had I not been *froissé* on one of my weak points.

The truth is that I am altogether uncharitable to that particular genus that comes under the denomination of bores. They produce upon me something nearly akin to the unpleasantly exciting effects of galvanism upon a frog.

They irritate my entire mental epidermis to a degree which must be felt to be believed or understood. Half an hour's infliction of the platitudes of a bore sets all my nerves ajar, and sends the blood rushing down through the minutest veins of my body, and boiling up in downright effervescence through every tissue of my brain. In short, if I have not altogether decided that they have no business to live, and if I should not precisely, like Caligula, desire to annihilate the race at one fell swoop, I am afraid that no amount of Christian charity would ever induce me to put up with the society of a single individual of the species, were I even reduced to live like Robinson Crusoe on a deserted island.

The idea, therefore, that the idols of my cherished genius and hero-worship should be at the mercy of a Count M—— and his medium to defame and calumniate; that any fool should dare to flatter himself that he could call their glorified spirits back to earth to entertain him or her *en tête à tête*, or to be held up as a raree show for the benefit of his acquaintances, not to speak of the outrage of having any trash or bathos which such brains might generate, posthumously foisted upon their glorious intellects, was to my feelings downright revolting. Indeed I hardly ever remember to have boiled with such a burst of posthumous irascibility except on one unlucky occasion when I chanced to behold Lord Byron in wax, tricked out in a Greek dress, all tinsel and finery, at Madame Tussaud's.

Thus it happened that I proved infinitely less logical for myself than for my friend, a case at which none may marvel, for it is remarkably general.

It is really unaccountable how lucid one's reasoning faculties are when they are brought to bear on the cases of conscience or the fallacies of our neighbours, and how easily, the moment our own inclinations or prejudices come in question, they become the converse. Doubtless some of the ingenious wits who are so rife just now, will

think it very smart to fling this dictum in my teeth on the present occasion. But I am quite prepared to brave the attack, and, I have reason to believe, am fully armed to meet it. Not that I labour under the gross delusion common to pontiffs, professors, and academicians, that I, any more than any other mortal, can boast of being infallible, but simply because I make it a point to be prudent, and to observe scrupulously the wise French axiom, "*Dans le doute, abstiens toi.*" Consequently, as I never advance a positive affirmation on the strength of any other grounds than what I know to be true, I have good cause to be certain that I can never be compelled to beat a humiliating retreat.

Thus I have no fear that any one will be able to disprove my postulates, that admitting the probability of the existence of spiritual intelligences, there are no reasonable grounds for arguing that they should be either all good or all evil; secondly, that starting from this premise, if we presuppose the possibility of their communicating with us, there is no sound reason for denying that evil or worthless spirits may be liars as well as evil men; consequently, that the fact of their telling falsehoods, or assuming names to which they have no right, affords no logical premise whence to deduce their non-existence.

Such, however, were not the impartial conclusions at which I had then arrived. Prejudice and passion had got the mastery over me too. Demosthenes, Homer, and Byron degrading themselves to party quarrels with Count M——, his clairvoyante, and his medium, was altogether revolting to me. All that I had seen and heard, by my friend's senses no less than by my own, I resolutely argued, subtilized, and explained away in the most satisfactory manner. All but one sturdy fact; the antigravitation leap of the little table in Paris. It was in vain that I turned and twisted that troublesome detail in every conceivable manner. Do what I would, I could not dispose of it so as to satisfy my reason, notwithstanding my utmost good will and my most ingenious theories. No mental

phenomena I could have stumbled on, would have proved half so insurmountable to me. Had I been one of the gaping thousands who, history informs us, heard with stupor the infant prodigies of the Camisards lisping their cosmopolite eloquence in every known tongue, I should have smiled with pity at the credulity of the multitude, and affirmed that the small parrots were very cleverly taught. Had I heard rustics declaiming Ciceronian Latin, or seen the paralytic walk, and heard the dumb speak, I should have persuaded myself it was a sharp trick. There was no psychological marvel my fertile brain would not have accounted for. But the one unlucky *physical fact* stood its ground in the teeth of all opposition.

“There were both intelligence and an antigravitation in the leap,” quoth reason. “Ridiculous and impossible,” retorted Scepticism, insultingly.

“It is precisely because it is impossible that it makes such an impression upon me,” said reason.

“Bah! a paltry, inert little wooden table, absurd!” pooh-poohed Scepticism.

“I don’t care whether it is absurd or not, it is a patent fact; I saw it with my own eyes, and I can swear to it,” persisted reason.

“How can you maintain such nonsense? Do you not know that Professor Faraday has publicly declared it as a downright impossibility, and that none but fools or madmen can believe it,” says Scepticism.

“I don’t care a straw for all the professors in the universe, when they contradict the demonstration of my own lucid senses. I am quite willing to bow to his superior knowledge in electrical phenomena or scientific problems, of which, no doubt, he is a much better judge than I. But I altogether contend that on a question of plain matter of fact he is not one atom more competent to decide than I am. If I required his or any one else’s leave to credit the

fact that I see my dinner on my table, or that I have swallowed it, I must be a confirmed imbecile ; and if Newton or Bacon were to come down from the seventh heaven on the same fruitless errand, they might swear never so determinedly (not to speak of Professor Faraday) that what I saw was impossible,—I know I *did* see it ; I know too that I neither was nor am mad or dreaming, and that is fully convincing to *me*, if not to others,” sturdily persisted reason.

Here I must state, that I am quite prepared to meet the full quiver of the satirical shafts that will doubtless be levelled at me by the lively critics who make so merry on the other side of the water, over the amusing antics performed by young ladies descending in parachutes, detached hands administering impolite corrections, and possessed fiddles and tambourines performing jigs and polkas over the bamboozled brains of dyspeptic hypochondriacs and hysterical spinsters, verging to that grand climacteric when spiritual *cavalieri serventi* may become more and more desirable, in proportion to the alarmingly increasing scarcity of their corporeal rivals.

I hear them inquiring, with the flippancy which they are so innocent as to mistake for wit, to what amounts all this smart verbiage. I hear them too informing the simple public who are foolish enough to indorse their feeble mockery and still feebler sophisms, not indeed because they have not brains enough to see through them, but solely because it costs less time and trouble to accept another's shallow fiat than to reason for one's self—that the whole may be resumed in two words, *i.e.*, that an *incognito* somebody, or nobody, pens off a dozen or two pages, rather amusingly written, in order to convince an indifferent public of what nobody cares to know, nor is bound to believe ; viz., that the anonymous writer saw a little wooden table take an antigravitation leap.

To these microscopic Walpoles and Boufflers I here respond, that their retort may be very witty, but in order to be either

cutting or *a propos*, it lacks, like most of their arguments, three indispensable ingredients, *i.e.*, depth, truth, and relevancy.

If I am not very much mistaken, the difficulties which confirmed the Scepticism of myself and friend comprise the three strongest theoretical objections which ever have been or can be urged against spiritual phenomena. In demonstrating, as I believe I have, on the clearest logical grounds, that all three are based on incontestably illogical premises, I may fairly flatter myself that some sensible individuals may perhaps open their eyes to the fact that before they blindly accept the decisions of *soi-disant* authorities, they would do well to submit to the criticism of their own reasoning faculties the data upon which these authorities take their stand. Neither will these pages prove either so vain or supererogatory if they succeed in recalling to reasoning minds an incontestable fact which somehow or other seems on the present occasion to be altogether overlooked in the argument; viz., that those who set out upon false premises may calculate with tolerable certainty upon arriving at false conclusions.

As for the leap of the little table, I have not dwelt thus diffusely upon its vagaries with the hope of convincing any one of the fact through my nameless affirmation. My intention lies much deeper and aims much higher. It would be of small consequence that I should succeed in persuading a few dozen individuals that I really did behold that or similar phenomena. Such facile converts "delight not me," for one, and can be but a very slender acquisition to any cause. If, however, I thereby suggest to such persons as are capable of reasoning for themselves, that it is not altogether impossible that the saltatory freaks of wooden tables may not be quite so useless and unmeaning, consequently so ridiculous and puerile, as the sapient critics on whom they pin their faith gravely or mockingly assert, I shall have achieved one step at least towards inducing numbers to investigate these curious things for themselves, who are now weakly and foolishly deterred

from the attempt by apathetically accepting the fallacious arguments and transparent casuistry which is daily foisted on the common sense of the British public.

One simple question I would put to these satirical gentlemen and their disciples. Let us suppose for an instant that Moses and Isaiah, Peter and Paul were to return upon the earth in nineteenth-century garb, and to start upon a reforming mission throughout civilized Europe. Let us imagine them thundering forth their eloquence, their prophecies, and their denunciations from every pulpit, and in every thoroughfare between London and Kamschatka. Would they not be the first to put them in one basket with Messrs. Spurgeon and Co., and to set up their healing of the blind and the lame with the ingenious performances of winking Madonnas and bleeding wooden Christs.

I ask them, too, if all the wisdom and the speculations of the greatest theologians and the profoundest *savants*, ancient or modern, could they even be condensed into a volume whose dimensions might induce them to skim it over, would have power to force upon their minds suggestions so startling, or induce queries so insatiable, and a conviction so irresistible, as the motion of the untouched arm-chair, and the antigravitation leap of the table, beheld by my companion and myself.

It has been, and no doubt will be, asked to the end of the chapter, why such paltry domestic articles as chairs and tables should be resorted to? May it not be precisely because they are familiar objects at every one's disposal? Or is it absolutely necessary to remove the planetary spheres from their orbits, if a wooden table is fully adequate to accomplish the purpose intended?

There is a lucid definition of Divine wisdom I happened to light upon the other day in a little book designed to teach young or uneducated minds how to shoot, which, it strikes me, that many an adult and educated mind might ponder and digest at the present moment with considerable advantage.

In a little treatise on the solar system, published by the Religious Tract Society, (I trust my authority will be considered sufficiently orthodox and edifying, more especially when quoted by a sceptic,) we are told that "Wisdom is the perfection of an intelligent agent which enables him to proportionate one thing to another, and to devise the most appropriate means to accomplish important ends."—It then proceeds to state that a person would be reckoned foolish in the extreme who should construct, at an enormous expense, a huge piece of machinery solely for carrying round a grate, for the purpose of roasting a small fowl, instead of making the fowl itself revolve, and it concludes, that what would be "the height of folly in mankind," cannot be "characteristic of the plans and operations of Divinity."

These premises are logically incontestable. And I ask these sapient critics, therefore, may not the fowl perhaps aptly represent the case of the wooden table? And since it is just as impossible for a wooden table, two feet square, to move a yard of its own accord, or to give an intelligent answer to an intelligent question, as for a granite mountain to move a mile, or to reply to our queries by courteous nods, is it not just conceivable that Providence may think it wiser to make use of wooden tables than granite mountains, for any mysterious end He may have in view?

That the singular phenomena which are now developing themselves around us are not, however, confined to saltatory wooden tables, my subsequent experience has, at least, amply demonstrated to me.

Shortly afterwards I left Spain. Of Count M—— and his medium I heard little more. My indignation at his audacious desecration of the great names he had outraged, cured me of all desire to enlarge my experience on the subject of Spiritualism by cultivating their society.

Circumstances took me back to the North. Two years elapsed,

which were spent in wandering over Tyrolian mountains and sojourning in German capitals. It might be presumed that the land of water sprites and mountain gnomes, of Undines, Lurleis, Rübezahls, Leonoras, and illuminati would have been specially adapted to illuminate my mind on this phantasmagoric topic. It proved otherwise, nevertheless. There are certainly some elements of the *Tudesque* nature which are incontestably antagonistic to that of their British collaterals. Any proportions whatever of beer, sauerkraut, bad tobacco, garlic, and other foul emanations seem to be compatible, in their cases, with the development of the bump of ideality, and the Olympic flights of their æsthetic faculties; witness the striking illustration of this peculiar feature of German idiosyncrasy, recorded by Lewis in his interesting life of Goëthe, wherein he narrates that Schiller could never satisfactorily call down inspiration except by inhaling the fœtor of a drawer full of rotten apples, under his writing-desk.

Such, however, are not the accessories that my imagination requires. I have a decided predilection for violets and *eau de rose*; am apt to feel my soul dilate under the influence of azure skies, balmy breezes, and aromatic odours; am afflicted with a special aversion for garlic and tobacco fumes; and shiver cruelly at the chilling aspect of frost and snow.

Add to this my inherent disrespect for the little great, my absolute disregard for all the high-sounding titles whose hollow sonorousness seems chiefly destined to disguise the insignificance of those who bear them, my invincible contempt for all flunkeyism and servility, whether of home or foreign growth, and it may be easily conceived that the atmosphere of German courts and German *kneipe* did not prove particularly genial to my peculiar temperament.

Two things, however, did, to a great extent, reconcile me to the country and the people; viz., German erudition, and German literature. Into them therefore I plunged heart and soul, seeking

compensation in the glowing imagery of German genius, and the profound mines of German thought, for the southern charms which I missed.

Profoundly immersed in these absorbing studies, I had little time and less thought to spare for spiritual investigation and meditation.

No wonder that the two years passed, rapid as a thought, till again I was free to follow the bent of my inclinations, and I steered my flight once more to my beloved South.

I was again in Venice. Venice, the city of my predilection. How I revelled once more in gliding about on the Canaletti, in wandering beneath the Procuratie, and feasting my eyes on that "treasure-heap of gold and precious stones," glorious St. Mark, in company with "The Stones of Venice," that most glowing inspiration of one of the grandest artistic thinkers of ancient or modern times.

I was at last in my element. Thought and inspiration flowed thick and fast into my soul. My days were spent in wandering about the little campi, in exploring all the mysterious penetralia of that most mysterious and beautiful of cities, in lingering among its churches and palaces, admiring their noble monuments and antique splendour, and drinking in the lofty creations and gorgeous colouring of Titian and Veronese.

My evenings passed scarcely less delightfully, in the society of Venetian literati, savants, artists, and composers,—many of them men of the past generation, and of advanced age, but still flashing with all that spirit and fire of sempiternal youth which is the unquenchable privilege of genius. Of course, in such companionship, various abstract questions were brought on the *tapis* which do not generally find a place in the conversation of drawing-room butterflies, or in the *batons rompus* dialogues of quadrilles and waltzes. Spiritualism, which was again exciting attention in Italy, was, naturally, not excepted.

Among the narrow but chosen circle of my most intimate friends were a Russian gentleman and his wife. He, the possessor of a large fortune and high station, was essentially a man of the world, agreeable, clever, well-bred, and thoroughly *distingué*. She, the native of another country, was one of those rare and gifted beings endowed with an organization of the highest order, and conspicuous for intellectual power.

In her presence, on one of our artistic evenings, I narrated my brief and unsatisfactory experience of Spiritualism. She had never occupied herself with the subject, and holding it to be only a paltry *charlatanerie*, had scarcely given it a second thought. Hers, however, was one of those lucid minds which seizes at once upon the true pith and brunt of an idea, and grasps the whole bearing of a question at one glance.

"If what you saw is a fact, and appreciating, as I do, your intelligence and veracity, I can scarcely question it," she said to me the next day, "then be sure that there lies much more beneath it than meets vulgar eyes; much which is worthy of the deepest and the most profound investigation. By all means let us give it the fairest, the most impartial, and the most serious trial. I cannot conceive how you could thus lightly renounce the inquiry. Believing in your word as I do, and certain as I am of your sagacity, I should look upon myself as little better than a fool, were I to let such a mystery pass by me without endeavouring to elucidate it."

"For my part," said her husband, frankly, "you won't be angry with me, I humbly opine that the *attaché* must have thrown some glamour over you, or that you had just then an unusual fit of '*la berlue*,' for the days of miracles are past; and were I even to behold it myself, I should much sooner believe that I had mistaken an *ombre Chinoise*, or an optical delusion, for a physical fact, than that the laws of nature can be thus absurdly interverted in the nineteenth century, and for no better purpose

than to amuse drawing-room idlers by the romantic evolutions of wooden tables."

Madame de N—— laughed somewhat scornfully at the sapient speech. Such "*monstra horrenda*" as intellectual and literary females will occasionally perpetrate the enormity of deriding the dicta of the "lords of the creation" when they compromise their supremacy, as they occasionally do, by displaying a deficiency of logic and an overplus of arrogance; which, *par parenthèse*, may be the very reason why literary and intellectual females have been looked upon with such alarm and repugnance by their male rivals, from the days of Juvenal to our own.

To return, however, to my theme. "You would singularly oblige me," continued Madame de N——, "if you can inform me what the laws of nature are; but as I have laboured under the conviction hitherto, that all that science has been able to ascertain on that extensive subject, is, as yet, of the most meagre and limited description, I am compelled to conclude that your reason for refusing to investigate the phenomena of intelligently-answering and self-moving articles of furniture is miserably illogical, and altogether irrelevant; and as for the absurdity of the purpose in view, I confess, that until I have cause to believe that Providence has taken you a little more into His confidence than at present, I can scarcely admit that you are a competent judge as to His ulterior aims."

"As for my opinion on the matter," said a learned and clever geologist who happened to be one of the party, "I look upon it as unworthy of consideration, because, evidently, as Professor Faraday and other men of noted abilities justly affirm, science cannot grapple with it."

It was my turn to interpose: "Excuse me," I said, "if, as I understand by the term grappling, you mean that science can neither explain the phenomena, nor subject it to chemical or analytical tests, nor trace it to its origin, etc., etc., it strikes me that such

is precisely the position of science with respect to all the higher facts of physical and psychological phenomena. The province and attributes of science appear to me, hitherto, to have been, *nolens volens*, confined to ascertaining and affirming the positive existence of such facts, to observe their operation, and thence to deduce the laws and effects that are necessarily derived from them. Were it necessary for science to grapple with extraordinary phenomena in order to admit their existence, then I am afraid science would be obliged to deny the possibility of the planets being suspended in space, life and death, ultimate atoms, the existence of the soul, electricity, magnetism, and a host of other marvels of the same elevated class ; for I am not aware that science has ever been able to explain to us the origin and nature of gravitation, or to do more than to verify its existence, and hence to observe its laws, and give it a name. Neither do I believe that the scalpel of the anatomist has yet discovered the principle of life, nor the seat of the soul ; that the chemist has ever been able to analyse and to reveal the nature and origin of electricity and magnetism, or the essence, and even extension, of ultimate atoms, any more than the physiologist has yet been able to define the limits and the distinction between vegetable and animal life. I might prolong *ad infinitum* the list of existing phenomena with which science altogether fails to grapple, but which, nevertheless, it is constrained to admit, were not the above quite sufficient to demonstrate that in asserting the pretension that nothing should be accepted by intelligent minds except what it can analyse, dissect, and explain, science completely overlooks the limits of its faculties, and oversteps the province wherein they have been hitherto permitted to range. In a word, science places itself in a false position altogether, in starting from *a priori* arguments and surmises, to lay down theories and laws unsupported by facts and undemonstrable by logic, science returns to the fallacious and delusive system which was formerly the fertile source of so much obstinate error,—the system

which Bacon's luminous intellect overthrew; and in basing on such ill-grounded and deceptive premises the negation of facts which have neither been seriously investigated nor logically or mathematically disproved, science retrogrades to the ignorance, folly, and presumption of the dark ages from which Bacon rescued it. As for the designs of the Omnipotent in the matter, I agree with Madame de N——, that it would be decidedly more philosophical, and considerably more prudent, to wait till it pleases Him to reveal, or till we are better able to fathom them, before we presume, with our finite knowledge and shallow wits, to question their wisdom, and to scoff at their ways. We should, at least, be certain then to be on the safe side."

"Let us leave academicians and professors to hug themselves in their self-conceit, and to pay its penalty again and again, as they have so often done before," said Madame de N——. "For my part, I have always endeavoured to follow the dictates of common sense, to ascertain and to conform to the principles of sound logic, and to investigate all things that lie within my reach, by the testimony of my own senses, and the light of my own brains. *Par conséquent*, as I have hitherto found this system particularly advantageous, I shall certainly not derogate from it in a question which, if there be anything in it at all, as from the mass of honourable and intelligent testimony in its favour, we have good reason to believe there must be, is decidedly more curious and interesting than any of the scientific and literary matters to which I have thought it worth while to devote a large proportion of my life."

Madame de N—— was one of those tenacious individuals who never lose sight of an aim when once they have decided that it is worthy of attainment, and who, in small no less than in great matters, adhere pertinaciously to any resolution which they have once maturely determined to carry out.

Six weeks had passed over since the preceding conversation. The

troublesome to investigate. But that is not my nature. I think that whatever is worth knowing is worth studying, and I have been reflecting how to do it best. We might have easily got up a few *séances* with our friends here, but they would not have answered my purpose. We should have been *distract*, disturbed, confused, and annoyed. Whether the experiments succeeded or not, they would have proved little or nothing either way. With spectators and co-operators dropping in and out,—frivolous, indifferent, or scoffing,—interrupting our trials, distracting our thoughts, and biassing our minds by their superficial observations, their baseless conjectures, and their puerile ridicule, they would have taken from our powers of concentration and volition, consequently from the magnetic force which, if Spiritualism be true at all, is, doubtless, one of the chief agents employed. Hence, had the trials failed, not having been made under the necessary conditions of success, the *fiasco* would prove nothing. On the other hand, if we succeeded, the same endless *pro* and *con* of reciprocal accusation and suspicion would likewise render them futile. I do not want to be wasting any time contending with the eternal ‘You pushed it—No, I did not—Then Mr. So-and-so did—No, I did not—You did—Your fingers pressed it down—You jerked it—You lifted it up,’ which, either spoken or thought, forms the *résumé* of all such experiments when essayed in the ordinary giddy way, and among miscellaneous groups. *Au bout du compte*, one remains no wiser after such discussions than before; and the knowledge one seeks, subject as it is to all sorts of questions and misgivings, remains in abeyance. If, as it appears, it is difficult or impossible to make these experiments alone, then, at least, one should select co-operators on whom one can absolutely depend, both as to seriousness, conscientiousness, integrity, and sense, and consecrate to them both the time and the grave and uninterrupted attention they exact. Such being my view of the case, it is this which I now propose to do: I have invited M. de M—— also to form one of our party at Como. You

know him ; he is grave, earnest, sensible, thoroughly conscientious, and a perfect gentleman. My husband is perhaps the most worldly of the party ; but he is intelligent, has a great deal too much sense and *savoir vivre* to indulge in vulgar and silly hoaxing on any subject, much less on serious and interesting questions ; and he has quite enough curiosity to elucidate a matter which he finds I do not look upon as either puerile or childish, to summon the requisite patience to assist in the experiments. We shall, therefore, be four intelligent and earnest persons, who can fully depend upon each other ; and we shall have four quiet months before us to devote, in retirement and leisure, to the trial. It will be, to say the least, a small loss to give our evenings to this inquiry, instead of playing whist by way of an intellectual recreation, as we are in the habit of doing ; and, at the expiration of the summer, we shall, at all events, know *à quoi nous en tenir* on the subject. What say you ?”

“That the plan is excellent and judicious, but that there is one drawback which you have overlooked. You forget that unluckily I am not a medium. It is in vain that I have essayed. I have seen plates, glasses, all sorts of articles waltz under the fingers of my friends, but nothing would ever perform the smallest gyration under mine.”

“It is a pity, no doubt, but never mind. The question stands thus : either these things are facts, or they are not. If the first, it is clear that such marvels can only take place by the permission and ordination of Providence, hence, for a wise and definite purpose. That purpose, to me at least, it is evident, must be the intention of proving to intelligent and sceptical minds that the spiritual world is no myth, and that it is in our power to realize the fact, and to communicate with its denizens, even in this corporeal condition. Starting from this reasonable hypothesis, we have fair grounds to conclude that God has decided that the age is mature for this greatest of all revelations to be divulged to mankind

at large. Under these circumstances, it may be justly anticipated that to all those who seek information on the subject, not with the preconceived determination of scoffing, and deterring others from personal investigation, but with the serious purpose of ascertaining its truth or falsehood, for their own guidance and the benefit of others; and who follow up that end with earnestness, sincerity, and perseverance, the light will be vouchsafed. Consequently, I am fully persuaded that if there is really anything in it, our four months' evenings will not be wasted on it in vain, however little medium power we may be gifted with. Moreover, if we find that we are too few, I shall take care to enlist two or three other persons subsequently, on whom we can depend."

"*Soit.* I bow to your judgment. Logically speaking, no doubt your conclusions are correct."

Neither was I loath to be persuaded; for the doubt that I had perhaps cast aside an opening to a branch of knowledge more extensive and singular than I could suspect or conceive, had always hankered unpleasantly in the depths of my mind. What, if I were mistaken after all! if I had been precipitous in my judgment, too presumptuous in my condemnation! That there was positively *something* in it I, at least, knew. Others might fancy that I laboured under a deception or a delusion; but personally, *I* was certain that there had been no preparation, no trickery, no illusion in what I had seen. What then, if I had seen no more? Was not *one* indubitable fact as good as a thousand? The unknown agency which could produce that one impossibility might evidently carry its powers much farther still. So argued reason in the very teeth and in absolute defiance of all that scepticism could bring forward on the other side.

"Well, at least, there will be one point gained, if nothing else. *J'en aurai le cœur net*, at least. I shall not think it time lost if I succeed in silencing these captious cavillers within, for once and for ever."

We started for Como the following week. We were no sooner installed in our villa, on the shores of the ever-lovely lake, than we inaugurated our *séances*.

Fortunately, our conjuring and necromantic appliances required neither time nor preparation. We sat down in the most prosaic fashion after dinner, at about seven o'clock, to a small *guéridon*, upon which we simply laid our hands, without forming any chain. It was a circular rosewood table, with an ornamental border, underneath it was of dentillated form, the teeth, or points, being turned downwards, and placed at regular intervals of three or four inches. A watch was laid beside us. A necessary precaution, for it is so wearisome to sit for any length of time concentrating one's mind upon an invocation in the effects of which neophytes can have no serious belief, that minutes are apt to appear hours. For one whole hour we persevered according to our resolve, managing to be tolerably silent during the time, and conscientiously refusing to give ourselves the benefit of a reprieve till the full sixty minutes had elapsed. The table gave no sign of animation whatever. Our first essay had turned out a decided failure.

"*Ma foi!* one thing is certain, at all events, that spiritual experiments are anything but entertaining," said M. de N——.

"Did you find it particularly entertaining to learn the Italian verbs by heart, or to study the Rule of Three? For my part," continued Madame de N——, as we rose up from the obstinate *guéridon*, "I confess to having found it dreadfully dull work to study the rudiments of Latin and Greek, and even to draw from *la bosse*, but I am rather glad to have had the courage to brave the drudgery, now that I can read Homer and Sophocles, Virgil and Juvenal in the original, and that I can paint something better than eyes and noses. *Ergo*, I do not expect to obtain spiritual knowledge on easier terms than earthly science, and I shall esteem it cheaply purchased at any price, if I attain it."

To be brief, for four successive nights we repeated the trial with-

out any better success; not the slightest symptoms betrayed any inclination of the table to respond to our aspirations or to our magnetising powers. At heart I despaired, and had already decided, according to the bent of my natural scepticism, that our experiments would assuredly end in a complete *fiasco*.

Not so, however, Madame de N——; her resolute mind, wholly unbiassed either way, was not to be thus easily turned aside from its well-meditated designs. “If we were to give it up now,” she said, as on the fourth night I hinted something about the fruitlessness of pursuing the matter without a medium, or some better prospect of success, “we should be exactly where we were before. The trial would be inconclusive. Spiritualists might fairly affirm that we are wholly incompetent to pronounce upon it, and we ourselves should be conscious that we had no just grounds to deny what we had so imperfectly and hastily essayed. I have resolved to give it an hour and a half every evening for ten nights. If we do not succeed by that time I shall then successively augment the number by the addition of two or three at a time, till we are twelve, and with those persons, whom I shall take care to select judiciously, and to keep in due order, as one always can with a fair proportion of dignity, tact, authority, and brains, I shall continue our experiments every second night, an hour and a half at a time, for two months. Then, and not till then, shall I consider that we have given Spiritualism a tolerably fair trial.”

As she continued, I looked at the watch; a minute had elapsed beyond the hour.

“Let us give it an additional quarter to-night,” said Madame de N——. Two or three minutes passed in silence. A slight creaking noise caught my ear. I observed upon it. M. de M—— and my friend had heard it too, but it was so extremely faint as to have escaped M. de N——. Once, twice it was repeated, the second time so audibly that we all heard it.

“*Parole d’honneur*,” exclaimed M. de N——. It strikes me that

"I tell you it does oscillate; I am scrutinising all my sensations closely," said Madame de N——.

"I feel it, too," said M. de M——.

"So do I."

"You are all dreaming. I feel nothing. Ah, *sac à papier!*" cried M. de N——, who, like all Russians of rank, was thoroughly *Parisien*, "it *did* move that time, and no mistake."

The table had creaked and given a slight jerk to the right.

"You pushed it, M——."

"I most assuredly did not. We are all under a pledge to behave sensibly and honourably, and I am neither a child nor a trickster," returned M. de M——, angrily.

"I thought it was understood that our quiet and rational circle was to be free at least from this unmeaning and silly recrimination and suspicion," said Madame de N—— to her husband. "If it *does* move we shall no doubt obtain more satisfactory proof of it than little jerks and imperceptible oscillations. Till then let there be a truce to childish nonsense, which is unworthy of us all, no less than of the purpose we have in view."

As she spoke, the table began to move perceptibly, but apparently with great difficulty, from right to left, with that faint creaking, straining, jerking sound which no one can forget or mistake when they have once heard it. Twenty minutes elapsed in these evolutions. At last it moved slowly round in a circle, acquiring force rapidly. When its gyrations were decided, and appeared to suffer less obstruction, I, being the only person present who knew anything of the subject, took the speaking part upon myself, and addressed it.

"Cease to turn round."

It stopped suddenly.

"Can you answer my questions by means of the alphabet? If so, lift up your foot and give one rap on the floor for yes."

Up tilted the table, with a force and suddenness which took us all by surprise, and struck one stroke.

“Are you a spirit? If so, one knock.”

It was given.

“Will you tell us your name? One rap for yes, two for no. Who you are? your history, if you are desirous to communicate with us?”

To these questions the affirmative was given.

I then commenced with the alphabet. The name spelt out was Mira.

“We do not know you.”

A negative.

“Who are you?”

“A priestess of Thebes,” was rapped out by the alphabet again. We looked at each other in surprise.

“Well, I hardly imagine we were any of us thinking of that,” said Madame de N——. “Ask her how long since she lived.”

“Will you tell?” One rap.

“Knock the number of years,” I said. Two negative raps were returned.

“But you said you would tell us when you lived,” I urged. Another affirmative.

“Perhaps it would be too slow to rap out the years,” suggested the quick mind of Madame de N——. “Ask.”

Before I had time the table gave one affirmative rap.

“Ask her if she will answer by Olympiads; that will be quick,” said Madame de N——. Instantly an affirmative was returned.

I put the question, and a number of raps were given, which placed the date at an Olympiad corresponding with the reign of Ptolemy Soter.

To make a long story short, an interminable list of questions was made and answered, giving us various particulars of the history of the *soi-disant* priestess: some of them amusing, and all

singular. We did not find the time hang quite so heavy on our hands then, for not one of us thought of the waning hour till all of a sudden the *carcel* lamp gave one expiring flash, and left us in total darkness.

"Ah, *Sacriste!*" cried M. de N——, forgetting the proprieties in his sudden surprise; "that is pleasant, certainly."

"No matter," said his wife, quietly; "there are the matches and a *bougeoir* on the piano. Just go for them."

"I shall never find my way there in the dark, without upsetting something, I am such an awkward fellow; you go."

Madame de N—— and I both burst out laughing. "I will go," said I, standing up. "No necessity," said M. de M——; "I have matches in my pocket."

"Ah, *sac à papier!* so have I; I quite forgot it in my confusion," exclaimed M. de N——, as the light being struck, he recovered his equanimity.

"It appears," said his wife, laughing again, "that the *esprit fort* of the party, *par excellence*, is the one who is most afraid of ghosts."

"I afraid!" cried M. de N——, indignantly; "*pour qui me prenez-vous*. You don't suppose that I believe for a moment that a priestess of Thebes has condescended to entertain herself and us by flying about within the four walls of your saloon for the last two or three hours."

"Far be it from me to surmise anything as to your subjective impressions on the point," returned his wife; "only, I beg to observe that, objectively, you look unusually pale, *mon cher*. But what hour is it?"

It was past four o'clock. We stood up in amaze. So absorbed had we been in astonishment and interest in the unexpected results of our experiment, that we had sat round the table, unconscious of the lapse of time, for no less than eight hours.

The next evening, as we took our usual row on the lake, the question was of course discussed.

“I am just as sceptical as ever,” said M. de N——.

“Excuse me; you should say that the sunlight has restored your scepticism to its original vigour,” objected his wife. “But admitting that you are, how then do you account for the facts you witnessed?”

“I am not insinuating that any of the party purposely played tricks, pledged as we all are, on our honour, to abstain from any such folly, which, *du reste*, is only worthy of school-boys, grown-up children, or vulgar fools; that suspicion of course is out of the question. But I make no doubt that, as the *savants* say, we all impress a certain motion on the table involuntarily by leaving our hands upon it so long.”

“That, at all events, would be utterly inadequate to account for the rational and curious answers we received; for the alternations of one rap and two, as yes or no, no less than for the reckoning up of numbers, when numbers are asked, and the spelling out of long, intelligible phrases. Besides, how came it, if it is our volition and muscles which involuntarily move it, that for three evenings the table remained perfectly insensible to them? If the action were ours, it must be exercised as much at one time as another. But *à quoi bon* to argue these points at this early stage of our proceedings, *nous verrons*, later, when we are wiser, we may reason with more foundation.”

This evening we sat down to our *guéridon* with feelings very different from the sort of listless resignation which M. de N—— and I had betrayed in our countenances, if not in words, on the preceding night.

In something more than three quarters of an hour, the table moved and replied. The spirit who answered, however, absolutely refused to give his name, on the plea that as we did not know it, it could not interest us; and that, moreover, he had already borne several names,—a startling piece of information, for which we were quite unprepared. Various other questions were put, and replied to,

none of a very high order; for, according to Madame de N——'s programme, we were reserving our inquiries on matters of importance till the facts were more clearly and incontestably established, and till we ourselves were more *au courant* of the method, and more familiar with the spiritual world, if indeed we stood upon its threshold.

The third evening after our success, the seventh of our experiments, the table moved in little more than half an hour. It was in vain, however, that we endeavoured to enter into a sensible conversation with the animating power. By means of the alphabet, we extorted from it, after various negations, the answer that its name was Zulma, and that it was a native of Africa, but to no other question would it reply. In compensation the table danced, rocked to and fro, and knocked on the floor with a violence as yet unprecedented, and which could not have been caused by any one whose hands were on it without using an amount of pressure and propulsion which could not have escaped observation.

Seeing that we could get nothing rational out of it, I asked whether it would beat time to a tune I should hum. It stopped its fantastic evolutions to give one affirmative rap, and then beat accurate time to Schubert's Serenade, which I selected as being a difficult rhythm.

As it appeared more musically than conversationally inclined, I inquired whether it would go to the piano and play. It consented.

We stood up, pushed back our chairs, and laid the tips of our fingers very slightly on the table. Immediately it wheeled round, and gyrating on one of its legs, using each alternately as a pivot, it advanced to the piano. On arriving at it, it proved too low to reach the notes, and began knocking its edge with extreme violence against the projecting ledge beneath them, the piano being open. I wanted to seize the opportunity to obtain a certitude, and I insisted.

"The piano has notes that respond; I want to hear music," I said.

The *guéridon* swung back about a yard, pivoting on two of its legs. Not knowing what it was about to do, we all four watched its motions with the closest scrutiny. Determined to achieve conviction one way or the other, I never took my eyes off its legs, except to glance at the fingers of my companions, whose hands were all placed lightly on the top, and, at Madame de N——'s request, near the centre, so that no one could slip a thumb or a little finger under the edge unperceived. While we were thus watching it, it gave two or three uneasy jerks, and then one sudden spring *entirely off the floor*, lighting on the notes of the piano. Not a hand had touched it otherwise than on the top, and not a foot or knee had come within reach of it, facts of which I was positive, never having taken my eyes off it, in the full glare of the carcel lamp. But this was not all. Suddenly, using one of the teeth of its ornamented border, it dragged it down from the top to the bottom of the piano, sounding every single note from first to last as distinctly and perfectly as I could have done with a finger.

"Give us melody," I urged. Suddenly it pounced alternately on various notes in the treble, bass, and centre, sounding each with the same clear, distinct sonorousness as before. "Let us hear harmony," I asked again. Instantly five or six *perfect chords* of six or seven notes, *without one discordant tone* marring the harmony of a single chord, responded to my demand.

I shall not easily forget my feelings at that moment, nor the looks of my companions, to which I presume that my own formed an appropriate *pendant*.

De M—— was fairly aghast. The *esprit fort* was as white as a sheet, his hands trembling like an aspen leaf, while Madame de N——'s dark eyes had opened to twice their usual size, and her face became preternaturally pale.

The same sudden, irresistible conviction had burst upon all of us,

that what we had seen and heard was an *absolute impossibility*, not to be accounted for by any other explanation save that of an invisible, intelligent agent. The table had sprung up upon the notes without any assistance whatever ; of that we were all positive, for we had watched each other too narrowly to admit of a single motion having escaped the three pairs of Argus' eyes that must have instantly detected the operator. But there were impossibilities greater still. No one could have made the table sound every successive note, and alight clearly, loudly, and sonorously on the separate notes it had touched up and down, by pressing his fingers ever so intensely upon its surface. Lastly, to produce the perfect chords was in every way, and under every surmise, an absolute impossibility. The teeth of the table being placed at *regular* intervals of three or four inches, had one of us even taken it up bodily, and pressed it down by main force on the notes, instead of lightly touching it on the surface, the consequence must inevitably have been a crashing jumble of discordant sounds. It was beyond all question, in short, that harmonious chords could by no possibility have been produced by the table ; consequently, the inference was no less incontestable, *i. e.*, that they must have been sounded by an invisible agency underneath it.

Another experiment was then tried. Madame de N—— took her guitar and held it on her lap, requesting the spirit to sound it. The table pivoted up to her, while we three were touching it so lightly on the top that we could see the light under each other's fingers.

The table then bent over, dug one of its teeth under the great silver string, and pulled it out forcibly with a loud twang, which rang through the room. This, though less extraordinary, since it might have been done by an individual lifting up the table in his arms, was no less impossible, under the circumstances, considering that we simply touched it on the top.

“This night's experiment is absolutely conclusive to me,” said

Madame de N——, in her decided, uncompromising way, as we sat down for rest at midnight, fairly exhausted by the evolutions of the table and our own emotions. “I am positive of two facts; first, that in what I have witnessed there was neither deceit nor delusion of any sort whatever. Secondly, what is still more incontrovertible, that it *could not possibly* have been caused by any one present pressing down, jerking, or otherwise impelling the table. Hence, as I am entirely of opinion that a table is not, and never can be, a self-acting, still less, an intelligent agent; the only theory tenable to my mind is, that the marvels it has performed in our presence have been achieved by the volition and propulsion of an intelligent and invisible, consequently, an incorporeal agent. *Ergo*, as an incorporeal intelligence—call it what you please—is neither more or less than a spirit, I conclude irrevocably that spiritual force is the key of the enigma; and were all the *savants* and academics in Europe to endeavour to silence me, or to disprove the testimony of my senses, they would find it out of their power to prevent my asserting in their teeth, from this hour till the day of my death, that Spiritualism is *a fact*, and spiritual intercourse a possibility even in this world. You see,” she concluded, turning to me with a smile, “the harmonious chords are the antigravitation leap to me.”

I am not about to give a detailed account of all our subsequent *séances*. They were unremittingly pursued during our four months’ sojourn at Bellagio, and the records that we kept of the sayings and doings of our spiritual visitants would fill a volume.

I can only narrate here a few of the more striking incidents, and sum up by a general *résumé* of the conclusions to which they led us. We soon discovered that the spirits were growing more familiar, and seemed to enjoy our society; for with every succeeding evening they made us wait their pleasure for a briefer interval, till ere long we had but to place our hands on the table and to invoke them, when it immediately tilted up to inform us of their presence.

It was evident that they expected our call at the usual hour, and were only awaiting it to answer.

This was very satisfactory at first, but we were not long before we began to aspire to higher things. As it may be supposed, we had innumerable questions to ask about the mysteries of the other world, life and death, spiritual pursuits, the higher spheres, and a host of unexplained phenomena which seem beyond the reach of science, unless spiritually illuminated. To the greater part of these we failed in obtaining any satisfactory answers. So long as we kept within the limits of ordinary topics the spirit who frequented our society, for it appeared to be always the same, was decidedly entertaining, and by no means deficient. He was amusing, *spirituel*, lively, and even given to jocularities. He was fond of having a jest at our expense, but he was certainly not malignant nor wickedly inclined.

Thus, for instance, he enjoyed frightening the *esprit fort* of the party, who could not bring himself to believe in spirits, but who, in more than one instance, betrayed the fact that he would just as soon not meet one in the dark. He would suddenly announce to us when we least expected it, that he was about to appear to us : a threat which made even me, who am not given to puerile terrors, feel rather nervous. On another occasion, M. de M—— having been requested by a family in the neighbourhood who had heard of our proceedings, to call up the spirits for their benefit, he had coolly announced himself as the devil, to the infinite dismay of the party, who at heart believed that Satan was certainly at the bottom of the affair. He was irascible and impatient too, for he would scold us roundly, in words rapped out alphabetically, whenever we annoyed him by our discussions and disputes among ourselves, or by asking him questions he either would not or could not answer.

That he was not evil, however, we gathered from the fact that his counsels were never bad, and that he showed many traits of

good feeling. Thus, on one occasion, he had declared that he would visit me alone in the night. My bedroom was in the furthest wing of the villa, overlooking the lake. I was particularly desirous of beholding a spirit, but never having experienced the effect of an apparition, I felt alarm at the thought that it might produce some dangerous shock upon the mental faculties. The idea had hardly entered my mind than he rapped out, "Do not fear. I shall not come." It was in vain, however, that we tried to obtain what we most wished to know. Various scraps of information we elicited, but none of a very high order, or of a satisfactory description, as we had no means of controlling the replies. Thus, on inquiring what was a comet, we were told that it "was a world in its expiring conflagration," an assertion I give for what it is worth, and of which the only value in my eyes was the evidence it afforded that the answer did not reflect our thoughts, inasmuch as both Madame de N—— and I, who were alone at the table, held the converse and general opinion that they are worlds in embryo.

We were told that every one has a guardian angel, that the first way to progress in spiritual knowledge is to be good, and other common-places of the like nature, which somewhat aroused the spleen of Madame de N—— and myself, as we both declared that we did not require spirits to communicate them. But whenever we sought to dive deeper, and to soar higher, we were met by an evasion or a negation.

Once, the spirit replied, "I cannot tell; I must ask my masters."

I exclaimed, "What! are you a spirit, and yet ignorant of these things!"

"*Moi écolier*" (I a scholar), he replied in French, the language we habitually conversed in, as being familiar to us all.

Apropos of this curt answer and most of the others we received, I must here observe that we soon discovered there was one striking distinction between spiritual and human communications; *i.e.*,

the exceeding brevity of the former. Nothing could exceed the laconism they displayed on all occasions, for we never could exactly tell if one or more spirits were in the habit of coming.

Their object, it soon became evident, was that of making us comprehend their meaning with the least possible expenditure of time and words. A proceeding wherein, by the way, it strikes me that men, and still more, women, would do wisely to take a hint from the spirits. In the commencement they were tolerably sober and accurate; but by degrees, as they reckoned more and more on our confidence and intelligence, they grew daily more careless and audacious, till at last their orthography so far exceeded the limits of all poetical and spiritual license, that it would have made even a purist's hair stand on end. The first decided symptoms of these grammatical improprieties manifested themselves in the omission of all supererogatory letters. Thus *vous* was invariably called *vou*, *faire* spelled without the final *e*, every duplicate was left out, and indeed every syllable or letter meant that is not pronounced. Again, every conjunction, every word not indispensable to enable us to gather the sense of the phrase, was cut out no less unsparingly.

"This is certainly a curious language," I observed one evening, as in reply to what the spirit considered an impertinent interrogation, we received the graphic though ungrammatical reply, "*Vou stupid, moi pa dir.*"

"The spirits are quite right," replied Madame de N——. "Their object is clear. The alphabet is simply an intellectual telegraph; a means, not an end. Provided they can convey the sense to our minds, the mode is of no consequence. To adopt the most concise form is consistent with logic and common sense. What need to spend another half-hour in spelling out three or four additional words, and half a dozen superfluous letters, neither of which would add to the weight or luminousness of the idea they desire to transmit? Would it not be sheer waste of time?"

The spirit spontaneously gave an affirmative rap. "You see I have guessed right," said Madame de N——.

There was small cause for wonder if the spirits had grown impatient of our alphabetical system, for nothing could have been more wearisome. If it had been annoying from the outset, in the long run it became intolerable. Sometimes it took us half an hour to spell out a phrase of a few words, for among other drawbacks it was necessary to delay a few seconds upon each letter we called out, to ascertain clearly which was the one the rap was intended to designate. Mistakes, too, notwithstanding this precaution, were of frequent occurrence, in which case we had to recommence the word or the letter, occasionally two or three times.

It was in vain we endeavoured to abbreviate the process. We had numerous little tables made, of different sizes, to place on a larger table. I invented one to turn upon an axis, the letters being placed round the circumference, with a needle stretching from the centre to designate the letters. This, however, gave us more trouble than the alphabet, for the gyrations seldom stopped so short and accurately that the needle pointed exactly to the place intended.

The spirits, luckily, were more ingenious than we were. We had returned to the A B C again, and were methodically calling it out one evening, when the table tipped a number of times in succession with great rapidity. It was in vain we appealed to the spirit to be quiet, and to listen; every time it stopped for an instant, it was but to recommence the same *manège* more energetically than before. At last we were fairly nonplussed.

"What can it mean?" said I.

"I guess what it is," exclaimed Madame de N——, always of quick apprehension. "It finds our calling out the letters too slow, and it is rapping them out itself."

"Is that it?" I inquired. An affirmative was instantly returned. This, of course, hastened the operation; for, instead of waiting at

each letter, they were rapped out as fast as we could repeat them, the raps stopping at the requisite letter.

But this was not all. The spirits were still dissatisfied at the tediousness and loss of time entailed by the spelling process, and soon they inaugurated, on their own account, a new system even more expeditious. Presently we found their answers becoming altogether unintelligible. We had previously commenced the system of writing down the letters rapped out, as in long sentences we had found it impossible to trust our memory to retain them accurately.

The first symptom of this new innovation presented itself in the form of a succession of consonants being given, of which it seemed impossible to make head or tail. We were trying the spirit in English, which, at our request, it had professed itself ready to speak.

A *u* had just been rapped out. The next letter given was an *R*. "This must be a mistake," said I; "I know of no English word that begins thus." A negative replied. "Then we are to go on?" "Yes."

We proceeded. The next letter given was a second *R*. "Are we right?" I asked. An affirmative. Thus we continued to spell out *O N G*.

"This is a new species of English; I think the spirit must be speaking Russian in your honour," said I to M. de N——.

"Is the phrase complete?" I asked. It was intended to be an answer to a question I had proposed. An affirmative rap was given.

We examined the paper curiously.

"*Il se moque de nous*," said M. de N——, shrugging his shoulders.

"It is certainly sheer nonsense. What does *U R R O N G* mean?"

Madame de N—— took it in her turn. "How dull you all

are!" she exclaimed suddenly; "cannot you see that it means, 'You are wrong'?"

"*C'est, ma foi ! vrai !*" exclaimed M. de N——.

And so it was. After anticipating the American orthography, the spirits had forestalled Sir William Armstrong's strictures on the circumlocution of the English language, and had ingeniously struck out a phonetic system for themselves.

From that evening, wherever it was possible to do so, the sound of the letters was substituted for the correct spelling; a fact which, had any lingering doubt been possible, under the circumstances, in our minds, as to the spiritual authenticity of all the communications we received, must have set the question at rest in every sane and intelligent mind; for it was seldom now that we could form a guess as to the purport of the phrase rapped out till it was entirely written down, and constantly, even then, it had to be conned over and commented on by us all before the meaning was accurately defined, especially when the sentences were long.

"I begin to suspect," said I one evening, after we had been all puzzling in vain, for full ten minutes, over some hieroglyphics of the above description, more than usually enigmatical, "that I was rather severe on the German Professor. His omission of the second H in his name, and of the two letters of the participle past, appears to me a very venial sin now that I am familiarizing myself with spiritual orthography, and comprehend the motive."

"It looks very like teaching us a lesson that it is always unwise to be precipitate in our conclusions on matters we do not understand, I confess," replied Madame de N——.

So far our experience had certainly proved fruitful. It had enabled us to elucidate many moot points in the matter which could only be appreciated and understood by personal experiment. But in other respects it was far less satisfactory. We failed in obtaining answers on the questions that most interested us; we could

produce no great or singular phenomena. We sought in vain to evoke the spirits with whom we most desired to communicate. To the first demand our spirits pleaded ignorance. To the second, that a suitable medium was requisite. To the third, that they had no power to bring the spirits we wanted, and that they could only be induced to come of their own accord.

What was worse, was that we sought in vain to dismiss the spirit who had taken possession of our domicile. We invoked others; we ordered him peremptorily off: to all our objurgations he replied, with pertinacious indiscretion, that he liked our society too well to give it up so easily, and that if we sent him away we should repent it, for that he would let no others come in his place. We tried all sorts of experiments. We sat down two and two to different tables. At both we were answered, but the familiar spirit said that the new comers were friends of his; and, indeed, so it appeared, for they were evidently of his own calibre.

It was unquestionable that if our incorporeal visitors were not the black legs I had promised to defy, they were, to say the least, very mediocre authorities. But what was to be done? We had evidently brought around us a second-rate set, and it seemed as difficult to get rid of them in the spiritual as in the terrestrial world.

A few more striking incidents, nevertheless, varied, from time to time, the somewhat monotonous entertainment vouchsafed to us by our pertinacious persecutor. One evening, Madame de N—— had gone to Como with M. de M——, and after dinner her husband and I sat down to the *guéridon*. We had scarcely laid our hands upon it, when, as usual now, it tilted up. The preceding night our familiar spirit had chosen to take exception against my investigating turn, and had launched out in no measured terms against my various delinquencies towards him. I commenced, therefore, by asking him why he had been so severe upon me.

“*Pas moi*” was the answer given, minus the *s*. The conversation took place in French.

"You are not then the spirit who comes habitually?" I inquired.

"*Non de passage*" (on passage), replied the spirit in the usual laconic way.

Here was a chance; a new spirit, who had dropped in for a moment to take a peep at us, on his way, perhaps, to the moon or some other sphere. I seized the opportunity to question him on various points of which we had failed to obtain any solution. But the spirit was impatient, or had some pressing business on hand, for, after he had given me some curious replies, as I was proposing another question, he cut me short by rapping out decidedly, "*Je m'en vais*" (I am going), interpreted by the hieroglyphics, *g, m, n, v*. If he were a stranger, he was clearly a disciple of the phonetic system, for he continued giving the sound of the letters, as pronounced in French, answering my inquiry why he was in such a hurry, and if he were fatigued. "Spirit (*esprit*) *san fatig*." "Why then do you want to go?" I persisted. "*De passage*," repeated the spirit with the same laconism, thus curtly giving us to understand that he was *en route*, and had no time to spare.

"One question more then before you go," I urged. "Is there any hope of evoking the spirits I aspire to call down?" "*C difficile*" (*c'est difficile*), answered the spirit.

"Difficult is not impossible," I persisted.

"*Rien n'est impossible à l'homme*" (nothing is impossible to man), was the startling reply. Here was glorious news indeed. I began to hope that we should succeed yet in making good our *entrée* to the *crème de la crème* of the spiritual world, according to my programme, notwithstanding our unpromising *début*.

Another time we had spent the day wandering about the beautiful grounds of the Villa Sermoneta, and Madame de N——, who was a great botanist, had discovered a rare wild flower in our promenade, and was, in the evening, anxiously endeavouring to class it.

Hence her husband and I had sat down alone to converse with the spirits, while she and M. de M—— were vainly poring over a large botanical work in search of the plant.

I was addressing a question to the spirit which it refused to answer, repeating several times "*A la table*," while I interrupted it each time to reiterate my question.

"Let it speak; it has got something to say," interrupted Madame de N—— from the other end of the room.

I obeyed. "*A la table au complet*" rapped out the spirit, evidently displeased at being abandoned by two of the party.

"We will come directly," cried Madame de N——. "I wish you would ask the spirit," she added, laughing, "if it can tell me where to discover the plant, for we can neither find the index nor the genus, and I am afraid it is a hopeless research without spiritual aid."

The question was asked as a mere jest, for we had become quite familiar with our spiritual visitant, and were in the habit of treating him like a *bon enfant*, as, indeed, he appeared to be. Before I had time to put it, however, the spirit rapped out, "*Page huit, vol quatre*."

The fourth volume was sought for. It was not on the table, and was found in the book-case, and there at the eighth page, Madame de N—— discovered the missing index, and the name of the flower she sought.

We were all not a little amazed, for we had no very high opinion of the infallibility of our spiritual friend, and were altogether taken aback by his unexpected clairvoyance.

On the whole, however, to say the truth, our *séances* verged occasionally on the *ennuyeux*, between the spelling process, which we looked upon, especially Madame de N—— and I, as somewhat *infra dig.* for our scientific and literary brains, and the hieroglyphics, not omitting the contestations they engendered, and the perpetually recurring disputes among ourselves. For

perfection being a desideratum not yet discovered in this sublunary sphere, even spiritualists are not always distinguished by concord. Indeed, in that respect, it cannot be denied that they are very nearly as bad as doctors. It would have been in the highest degree edifying to an impartial and disinterested auditor to have listened to our discussions. First and foremost, there being four volitions and four intelligences to satisfy, and only one unfortunate wooden table to respond, it was next to impossible ever to agree upon the interrogations we were desirous of putting to it. Each came to the *séance* armed with a batch of profound queries, the greater part of which one or other of the party pooh-poohed.

Another source of dissension was, that every one wanted to be served first, well knowing that if not, he ran a considerable chance of not being served at all, like the unfortunate last arrival at a *table d'hôte*. Exterior courtesy was, it is true, not forgotten in our well-bred circle; but nevertheless those who were set aside, and there were always three of us in that condition, *au fond*, looked upon themselves as the victims of social *convénances*, and consequently gave way, as far as *savoir vivre* would permit, to the irascibility common to those who believe that they are decidedly ill-used individuals.

Add to this that every one laboured under the intimate conviction that the spirit came specially and mainly for them, and *par conséquent*, that, to a great extent, he was their property. Hence, we all thought that we were not alone victimised, but defrauded. In short, there was good cause to ask *où la vanité humaine va se nicher*; and I could not help thinking sometimes that we must have afforded rather an amusing comedy to our spiritual friends, considering too that they had the advantage over us of comparing the *ce qu'on dit, et ce qu'on pense*. To say the truth, I never could have realized the fact how next to impossible it is to get even two or three individuals to be of one mind, but for that four months' experience; Charles the Fifth's

refractory clocks were a bagatelle to our anarchical dispositions. Neither were the spirits behindhand in the race. To vindicate apparently their quality of independent intelligences, they not unfrequently threw us some exciting little apple of discord which gave additional zest to the mild internécine warfare that prevailed among us, under cover of the most perfect *verniss de société*, although, occasionally, somewhat transparent. Now they would scold one person, or reprobate another, or lay the blame of their own shortcomings on the delinquencies of a third; reproaches always of a venial description, it must be admitted in their defence, but which, nevertheless, drew down the suppressed wrath of the remainder of the party on the luckless culprit.

They were somewhat unreasonable themselves too, for every now and then they would keep us for a couple of hours rapping out phrases which could only be classed with the far-famed "unknown tongues" of Irvingite celebrity. So absolutely unknown, indeed, that among the polyglot accomplishments of our *quatuor*, which, being all four of different nationalities, and each of us pretty widely acquainted with foreign languages, happened to be rather extensive, no one succeeded in deciphering them. Even Madame de N——'s ingenious brains were baffled in the attempt, for on no principle, phonetic or otherwise, could even she discover their interpretation. These latter, however, were eccentricities fortunately of rare occurrence, or I am afraid that our patience would have been fairly *poussé à bout*.

Now and then, too, the spirit, or spirits, would reprove the whole party, by way, it appeared, of making no jealousies. Thus, on one occasion it rapped out spontaneously, before we had put any question, "Be more united, more harmonious among yourselves, more earnest, more pure in your aspirations, less disputatious, less antagonistic, less self-sufficient, more ambitious of spiritual than of temporal knowledge, more holy in your hearts, pray to God with loftier aims and more elevated desires, and

you may yet attain the knowledge you seek, and communicate with those you invoke.”

This was excellent advice, no doubt, but the difficulty was how to put it in practice. And I greatly fear that we felt it to be so difficult that we none of us made any very serious efforts to realize the spiritual programme.

Certain it is that our contentions were very slightly modified, and that our spiritual circle remained as mediocre as ever.

What seemed, moreover, particularly mortifying was, that symptoms were occasionally afforded us that some spiritual sage had dropped in, given us a look, thrown us a word of advice, or of higher knowledge, and then taken his leave with as little ceremony as he had come; apparently so little attracted by our company that he never returned. Such was the spirit *en route*, who had spoken to me. Hence, too, the admonition above quoted, and a few scattered fragments of the same description every now and then vouchsafed to us, which, it was evident, could not proceed from the same source as our daily communications.

Two or three incidents of a more peculiar description varied likewise the monotony of our habitual *conversazioni*. One evening, the *guéridon*, which now moved as easily under the hands of any two of the party as of the whole four, continued answering my questions when I remained alone at it, as the remainder had stood up to go to tea; and when I too followed them, it continued, to our great surprise, tipping and rapping out letters for a few seconds *wholly untouched*, and when no one was near it.

The day after, M. de M—— came down in great triumph, with a scrap of paper which, he informed us, had been written by his hand, impelled by the volition of the spirits. He had, he said, magnetized a pencil, then taken it in his hand, which had moved after some time, and written, independently of any volition or motion of his own, “*Il n’est pas encore temps d’écrire.*”

Subsequently, a still more singular fact occurred to myself. The

spirit had repeated his threat three or four days previously of paying me a visit in my own room at night. I had paid no attention whatever to the promise, for he had so often reiterated it before, both to myself and the rest, that we no longer regarded it as anything more than a playful menace with which he was somewhat childishly fond of exciting our curiosity, or trying our nerves. The night, moreover, when he had promised to come had passed without any token, and I had dismissed the idea altogether from my mind.

I had gone to bed with a candle on the table beside me, which, having the bad habit of reading in bed, I had left lighted, having fallen asleep over my book. I awoke suddenly with a strong impression on my mind that I felt something lying on my shoulder. For a moment I fancied that my arm was asleep, but I was lying on the other side, so that could not be the case. Then I reflected and thought that it could only be a nightmare. All the time I was meditating these explanations I was wide awake, the candle being still burning, and I myself perfectly calm; when suddenly it struck me that I still continued to perceive the same weight resting on my shoulder. I lay perfectly still, scrutinizing my waking sensations. There was no mistake; I distinctly perceived that the pressure which I had felt, in what I had already decided to be a dream, was still there, unquestionably resting on my shoulder. For the nonce, I confess, that as the conviction forced itself upon me that the nameless something was still there, although I was positively awake, and my senses perfectly lucid, my heart, which up to that moment had been perfectly still, began to throb with a rapidity and violence which was anything but agreeable. Then, and not till then, the thing glided softly off my shoulder down to my elbow, where I distinctly felt it pass off.

Could it be that the spirit had at last kept his word, and paid me his long-threatened visit? I hesitated to believe it, but that something, whatever it was, had been resting on my shoulder, my senses incontestably assured me.

Somewhat afraid of being laughed at, or suspected of an hallucination, I kept my own counsel, and made no allusion to my nocturnal visitant, till, on the following evening, my friends being at the table, where I had not yet joined them, I asked with apparent indifference why he had not kept his word of paying me a visit.

“I did,” replied the spirit, under the hands of Madame de N—— and her husband. “*I visited* you last night in bed.”

To say the least, here was something more than coincidence. Two nights after, the *esprit fort* was favoured with a similar distinction, which, even by his own account of it, he did not appear to have relished.

We were not behindhand, meanwhile, in endeavouring to progress, although the results did not correspond to our efforts. We sent to Paris for the celebrated works published by the spiritual societies which have long been exercising their *propaganda* there—to some purpose, it would seem, for spiritualists are now reckoned by thousands throughout France, and already number among their ranks many of the most distinguished names in literature and art.

I likewise wrote to the celebrated Judge Edmonds, in New York, and in due time received from him, with his usual disinterested courtesy and supreme philanthropy, replies of the most interesting nature, with some of his works upon the subject, wherein, what struck me far more even than the wonders he narrated, were the luminous and lucid reasoning faculties, and the transcendent intellectual power of the mind that bore witness to them.

The “*Livre des Mediums*” and the “*Livre des Esprits*,” the first being the manual of neophytes, and the second the *résumé* of the doctrine taught by the spirits, both edited by Alan Kardec, the director of the “*Revue Spirite*” of Paris, were the most important of the French books we received, among which was likewise a famous work of the well-known Marquis de Mirville.

By the manual we learned that our *guéridon* was a telegraph of the most primitive description, and that our more advanced *confrères* had altogether discarded such a clumsy and unsatisfactory contrivance; besides a vast deal more of practical details, and information upon the subject. In the doctrine, curious and striking as it was, I should have felt a much deeper interest had not our experience of spiritual lucidity and veraciousness been so very unsatisfactory.

As for the Marquis de Mirville's work, it amused us all in the the highest degree. The author, talented, and erudite, but an ultramontanist *enragé*, having gone deep into Spiritualism on his own account, and having verified the phenomena by incontestable evidence, deeply imbued with Romanist dogmas, prejudices, and narrow-mindedness, and altogether under the thumb of his confessor, brings to bear upon the subject a vast mass of extremely interesting information and evidence, traditionary, historical, and contemporaneous, all tending to prove, by the strongest testimony, and the most circumstantial demonstration, the existence of spiritual intercourse, uninterruptedly, through every age up to the present day; he finally sums up the total by assuring his readers that the whole is diabolical, and that the arch-fiend is at the bottom of every spiritual phenomenon.

"I must say," observed Madame de N——, as we were rowing one morning towards the Villa Sommariva late in October, that loveliest of all months in the year in Italy, "that if Satan is the originator of all these spiritual wonders, he is a very *pauvre diable* after all. If he has really turned saint in his old age, and taken to preaching holiness, pure aspirations, lofty morality, heavenly aims, and Christian fraternity, I am afraid that his house, thus divided against itself, has a very small chance of standing."

We disembarked at the Villa, and after admiring for the twentieth time the exquisite canovas and other precious works of art which decorate the rooms of the Casino, and having culled, *con*

licenza, a few of the rare flowers in which my friend took especial delight, we wandered out into the restricted but romantic grounds, and promenaded up and down on the terrace which overlooks the lake, and commands such an extensive view of its lovely scenery.

"Our four months *villeggiatura* is drawing to a close," she exclaimed, after a pause, glancing at the fallen leaves and reddening hues of the rich foliage around.

"It is indeed; alas! that hours so pleasant should ever terminate, or that companionship so genial should ever be severed! but *ainsi va le monde*; time speeds on, heedless of our desires either to hasten or to stay his flight, and man must resign himself to what *Dieu dispose*."

"One consideration ought to console us at all events, that it has not been four months thrown away."

"Certainly not, in one respect. I never look upon time as wasted if it is spent either usefully, instructively, or agreeably; failing to achieve at least one of my three *sine quâ nons*, I do. If, however, you are alluding to our spiritual investigations, I confess that I do not view them with quite as much complacency."

"*Pourquoi pas?*"

"They have fallen short of my expectations. After our first success, I was sanguine of our arriving at less trivial and fruitless results. You must admit that they are unsatisfactory."

"That remains to be seen."

"*Comment donc*, are you satisfied?"

"Certainly. Far more than I had hoped; for, *entre nous*, I had no belief in our success. What you narrated to us seemed to me so impossible that I felt convinced some trick, some delusion must have misled your clear senses. Nevertheless, I was determined to discover the truth, for the *doubt* alone *my* mind could not endure without elucidation. I am amply rewarded. To have seen what we have seen, heard what we have heard, and ascertained, beyond all doubt, what we have ascertained, is worth, in my eyes,

all the acquirements I have achieved, and far surpasses the science I ever hoped to attain."

"No doubt it is strange and marvellous to have ascertained that it is possible for man to commune with the spiritual world, and to have established the fact on evidence which, to ourselves, at least, is altogether unquestionable; but *cui bono*? If all that we have gained by it is to have spent about one hundred and twenty evenings as unprofitably as we have done in spelling out broken phrases, platitudes, and common-places, which we might have enjoyed with a much less sacrifice of time and trouble, in the edifying, though somewhat hackneyed, eloquence of the Bible Society, and in frequenting the society of individuals who certainly had no better claim to our indulgence than the accident of being somewhat less heavily weighted for the time being."

"If that were all indeed, you would be justifiable in quarrelling with the spirits; but I altogether deny your postulate. Is it nothing to have obtained a mathematical certitude on that great *vexata questio*, the immortality of the soul, and the positive existence of incorporeal entities? To me, at least, it is everything. Thence alone does logic unavoidably deduce all that I have most intensely longed to know, and most supremely aspired to realize. What if the spirits we have been able to attract are puerile or insignificant, if *they* exist incorporeally, who shall contest that space must be peopled with beings infinitely purer, loftier, more sublime. If this be true, does not the indefinite perfectibility of the human soul ensue as the inevitable sequence; for what logical mind can doubt that to have attained that glorious pre-eminence, they must have earned it by successive phases of trial and progressive development? Do not all the laws of analogy, the clearest of all logical and philosophical guides, point to the providential ordination that no intellectual or spiritual pre-eminence can be attained otherwise than by self-sacrifice and self-exertion? or can any other law be compatible with Divine justice, wisdom, and benevolence? Hence,

are we not fully justified in concluding that it depends upon ourselves to attain the highest eminence of spiritual supremacy and beatitude?"

"Admitting all this, what is there novel in the information? Has not every preacher that ever held forth from the pulpit, and almost every philosopher of repute, repeated the same *lieux communs* to satiety? What then have we gained by spiritual intercourse, if this is all that we learn by it? Are there not hundreds and thousands of those who call themselves good Christians in the world who believe as much as this?"

"The very word in common use, which you have just employed, is the answer to your interrogation. Pray what is the genuine interpretation of the word belief? What expression do you make use of when anything is demonstrated beyond all question to your mind? Do you say you believe it? As Christians honestly say they *believe* in God, in the Divinity of Christ, in immortality, etc., do you say of the friend or lover, of whose heart you are as sure as of your own, that you *believe* they love you? Do you not say unhesitatingly that you are certain, you are convinced of it? Would you say that you believe you see the sun in the heavens? What else, in a word, does belief mean other than an aspiration and a trust, qualified by a doubt? And can you assert to me that where there is room for a doubt, darkness and desolation do not sadden all the consolation of faith, and dim all the glory of hope? How comes it that the Christians of modern times mourn and weep, as if their losses and separations were to be eternal? Was it thus that the ancient martyrs went to the stake, or that they beheld their friends and their beloved ones fall beneath the headsmen's knife? Did not their countenances beam with joy, and their lips resound with hymns of bliss? How came it that their faith was of such a different order, and produced such converse effects, to the faith of modern times? How, except that their faith was *not belief*, but certitude derived from the demonstrative

evidence of spiritual intercourse ; a fact which, now that I know it to be possible, I no longer question, experiencing, as I do, that *it* alone has power to impress absolute conviction on the human mind ?”

“ It strikes me that, on the strength of the mere demonstration of spiritual existence, you assume a good deal more than is warranted by the premises,” I replied. “ Admitting the fact of spirits and spiritual intercourse being a reality instead of a fiction, which of course, after the personal evidence I have received, I can no longer doubt, to what does it all amount ? We have discoursed with incorporeal intelligences, consequently with spirits: *Soit!* But does that prove anything more than the existence of intelligent essences under conditions differing from ours ? What proofs have we obtained that they have ever been men like ourselves, or that we shall ever become like them ? Consequently, how is it thereby demonstrated to us that our souls are immortal, or, if immortal, that they retain their memory and identity in the future phases of existence ? Without memory and identity, what becomes of individuality ? and without individuality, what is immortality but a mystification, *pur et simple*, disguise it as you will ? If we neither retain our inward self-consciousness, our affections, nor our specialities of intellect and inclinations, what then remains of our intimate self ? Our bodies, we know, we leave behind ; if we do not retain our minds, what then do we retain ? In what, pray, consists the individuality which distinguishes one mind from another, if not in the peculiar bent of its affections, sympathies, aspirations, and capacities ? Deprive us of these special characteristics, and you fuse every human soul into one. Resuscitate us spiritually without these individual specialities, or with different ones, and to another body you give another mind. In what, pray, does this differ from creating a new being altogether ? Unless it be for the purpose of economizing the spiritual essence, or fluid, or intelligence, or whatever it may be, that constitutes the soul,

I can conceive no other reason why God should not suffer us to perish altogether, and replace us by other generations ; for, as far at least as we are concerned, it is incontestable that the results would be absolutely identical to us. And as for the consolation, what sympathy or interest can independent and incorporeal essences feel for us, if there is no tie of remembrance, of affection, of a common humanity between us ? Can they understand our feelings, or make allowances for our weaknesses and our follies, if they have never shared them ? And if they can neither comprehend, nor sympathise with, nor compassionate us, what species of consolation can their intercourse afford us ? Fancy a seraph, who had never known what it was to be subject to the conditions of humanity, beholding human hearts and human minds, with all the failings, shortcomings, and pettinesses which deteriorate even the highest characters and the loftiest ambitions ; can you conceive his contemplating us with any other feelings than contempt and repugnance, unless indeed he has gone through the same educating process, and remembering that once he himself was no less imperfect, should qualify his scorn ? On the other hand, what consolation would it afford to the profound attachments of elevated natures, if a thousand seraphs, cold, bright, unsympathising, foreign to their souls, were to gather round them, if the lost one, whose presence and whose love nothing can replace, is not restored to their breaking hearts ? Ask the bereaved and the despairing, even among the gifted few, which would cause them the greater rapture,—the companionship of all the great and the glorious who have preceded us, or the restoration of their second self ? What consolation then could even seraphs afford us, if they are not our own seraphs ? And how does intercourse with the spiritual world afford us any proof of the benevolence, the providence, and the love of the great Creator, if there is no more to be learned by it than we have learned ?”

“ It is as I guessed,” replied Madame de N——. “ With con-

firmed, because reasoned, Scepticism, it is ever thus. If it be driven out of one intrenchment, it is but to take its stand in the next. I have gone through all its phases, and I know them well. The question of fact is decided. *There* you are beaten; and now you take refuge in the *cui bono*. Let us see now what ground you have to stand upon there. Logically speaking, you would be right, were the premises on which you base your conclusions, correct; but if we examine them with less prejudiced eyes, and a less superficial glance than you have done, I think we shall find that they are completely false. *D'abord*, your starting-point, upon which the entire argument depends, is, that the spirits with whom we have communed are entities of a different nature from ours, with whose existence and conditions we have nothing in common, except our intelligence. Hence, that the dead do not return, or that if they did, we have no means of verifying their identity. This is the clear inference of your primary postulate; for were it otherwise,—if the dead do return, and can certify their individuality to the living, the whole of your chain of reasoning falls to the ground. You must admit that?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Secondly, you affirm that there is nothing worth knowing to be acquired by spiritual intercourse; nothing more, in fact, than one can learn by associating with mediocre men, beyond the bare fact of their existence, and the objectless possibility of communicating with them. Whereupon you base your proposition, *cui bono*. Thirdly, you state that we have thrown away our time, and are none the wiser nor the better at the end of our four months than we were before. Excuse me if I prove to you, as I am about to do, that you never showed yourself a poorer logician than in the present instance; except when you decided that the spirits could not be spirits because they chose to pass themselves off for entities your reason justly told you they could not be;—and let me console your discomfiture beforehand, by assuring you that I am

quite aware that now, as formerly, it is only prejudice and passion which have had power so to obscure your logical brains as to prevent your being the first to see through the flimsiness of the fallacies you have advanced. To commence in due order : your two first premises are simple hypotheses, wholly unsupported by logical demonstration, or evidential fact ; consequently, built altogether in air, and possessed of no intrinsic weight whatever."

"Pardon me ! not so," I interposed, somewhat nettled ; for having always, I must confess, entertained a rather high estimation of my bump of logic, I felt this direct and cutting attack upon it to be decidedly insulting.

"Let me proceed ; you can reply when I have finished," continued Madame de N——, who, like most literary and logical females, was altogether intolerant of interruptions, although by no means sparing of them to others ; and decidedly given to running on. To which, as a saving clause, however, it should be added, that she generally ran on to some better purpose than descanting on the delinquencies of the menial tribe, on babies cutting their teeth, or on the flirtations and *ménages* of her neighbours.

"I repeat, then, that your two first postulates are ungrounded surmises ; and the third is worse ; for it is demonstrably false. As for the dead not returning, and the impossibility of identifying the spirits who do come, the utmost that we are justified in asserting upon that score is, that *we* have not succeeded in ascertaining the possibility of either desideratum—a fact which merely leaves the matter open to question with us ; and which in no way negatives or disproves the contrary assertions of more advanced spiritualists. Your second proposition I shall refute under the head of the third. We have thrown away our time, you say, and are none the wiser than before. Let us see if this be true. Intelligent persons are generally characterised by directing their aims in life to definite ends, and employing, in order to attain them, the most plausible and sagacious means. If the result corresponds to the

original aim, and to the just measure of the means employed for achieving it, surely they have no reason to complain. Suppose, for instance, that you have resolved to learn German or Greek, and that, as a rational being, you make up your mind to devote to the acquirement the necessary time and study. If you succeed in achieving either of these aims, in the measure of the leisure time and attention you have consecrated to it, can you reasonably think yourself ill used that what was barely sufficient to initiate you into the rudiments of the language should not have enabled you to analyse Kant and to dissect Hegel, or have rendered you a profound Hellenic philologist? Take another example. Imagine a clever man setting out in life, with the determined purpose of making a fortune. He succeeds. Has he any right to complain at the last if he has done no more? He discovers that there are intellectual enjoyments of a higher nature than riches, but he has not taken the proper road to attain them. Whose fault is it if he has only gained what he sought?

“Apply the moral, and you will see that it upsets your proposition altogether. What was our definite aim in undertaking these experiments? Was it not simply and solely to ascertain if the existence of spiritual beings, and the possibility of their intercourse with man, could be evidentially demonstrated or not? As for any ulterior inquiries into the subject, they were not in the least calculated in our programme. Have we not fully attained the purpose we had in view? How then shall any one say that he has lost his time if he has achieved the end to which he consecrated it?”

“But”—— I interrupted.

“There are no buts whatever in the case. The means I adopted were only adequate to the aim proposed. Had higher ones been the ultimate purpose, I should have resorted to others better adapted to attain them.”

“You cannot deny that it is both unaccountable and discouraging

that we should have so signally failed in our attempts to obtain any loftier knowledge.”

“If you had meditated the subject more deeply and dispassionately, you would have discerned, as I do, that it is neither the one nor the other. In the first place, before it ought to discourage us, it should be unaccountable ; this it is not. There are two sides to every question. To form a reasonable judgment it is indispensable therefore to scrutinize the opposite side as impartially as our own. This you have not done. You have denied the spirits a hearing altogether, and you have only examined their cause from your own point of view. I will be the spiritual advocate, and we will see who will have the best of the argument, as far as logic is concerned. Your inculcation amounts to this : that we, being gifted with intellectual faculties of a high order, spirits of the same class ought to have responded to us, and that their not having done so implies either that they were powerless to hear or to favour us ; consequently, that spiritual intercourse is worthless for any purpose of consolation or enlightenment ; hence, void of all wise or satisfactory aims. To assume all this, it must first be premised that we ourselves were not deficient in any of the conditions requisite to attract them.”

“There is truth in what you say, no doubt,” I replied, as soon as I could get in a word ; “but nevertheless I am at a loss to conceive any reasonable grounds why, having attained our first aim, the verification of the fact, the spirits should have so resolutely withheld from us that higher knowledge we were so anxious to acquire, unless indeed it be that they had nothing to tell which could concern or interest us. Why, too, should all those we invoked have so obstinately abstained from hearkening to us. We are surely as worthy or worthier of the favour as numbers of those who profess to obtain it. To me, I confess that the fruitlessness of our efforts in recalling them affords the strongest presumptive evidence that either the dead do not hear, or that they cannot come.”

“*Nous y voila.*” I knew *that* was the sore point. “Others pretend to recall the spirits of the beloved, the great, and the famed ; and *we* have tried, and failed. You, like me, feeling yourself to be considerably above the level of *le commun des mortels*, cannot understand why the favour should be denied to you, of all others, except on the score of impossibility. *Entre nous*, I have been harassed with the same doubts, and was very near arriving at the same conclusions, only I have one advantage over you, I am less hasty. There was a fault somewhere, that was clear to me, but there was another side to the question. Let us now see what the spirits have to advance in self-defence on this score.” Here Madame de N—— drew a small memorandum book from her pocket. “I have been, for the last few days, looking over our spiritual archives, and extracting from them all the hints of any importance that we have derived at intervals from these communications, in order to collect the gleanings of information scattered among them, and my impression of the sum total. Here, then, is their reply to the first clause.

“You remember that one evening, when you were specially indignant against their pleas of ignorance and subordination, you asked them, angrily, why those came whom we did not want, while the ones we did invoke, kept away. ‘We come because we choose, and those you call abstain because they do not choose,’ was the answer. ‘Why do *you* not bring them then, when we order you?’ was your *trenchant* reply, somewhat despotically worded, it must be confessed. ‘We cannot compel them,’ quoth the accused. ‘Spirits are free, like men. You may at least presume *that they are not worse off.*’ I ask you, who was the more logical there, the spirits or you? Is it indeed presumable that superior beings should be deprived of men’s most godlike privilege—freedom ; that *we* should be left free and independent, and spiritual intelligences be enslaved? or does logic admit that inferiors should have the supremacy over superiors?

“Establishing the primary postulate, that spirits must be, at the least, as free as men, what motives does logic indicate as the only sufficient inducements to persuade spirits of any degree to obey our invocations? It is clear that spirits of a low and mediocre order may have many and various reasons for so doing. Being of an inferior class, they may have many different motives in view. They may be fond of society, and be banished from it in the spiritual world,—a conjecture logically presumable; for since it appears, as we have occasion to know, that spiritual beings have power to read the mind, we may be sure that evil ones are not received among the purer and loftier circles of spiritual society. They cannot have many resources among themselves, for they must inevitably hate each other,—the necessary consequence of evil deeds and evil minds shown undisguised. With men they can pass themselves off for what they are not; with spirits they cannot. They are well received in the one case; despised and kicked out in the other. Excellent reasons, even in a temporal point of view, for frequenting human society in preference. Secondly, they are frivolous, puerile, ill disposed, and ignorant. To them, therefore, there is some entertainment in mystifying the weak and foolish, and in deceiving and leading them astray. They feel vanity, like presumptuous men, in passing themselves off for *savants* and sages on those who fail to discern their want of knowledge and intelligence. They are exiles and pariahs in the spiritual world: they are received as counsellors and bosom friends in ours. Are not these reasons amply sufficient to account, on general grounds, for their easy frequentation of our society? As for the high and glorious spirits, however, the case is diametrically the converse. Their time is fully occupied in the acquisition of science and skill. They are surrounded by adored friends and intellectual companionship of the most incomparably delightful description. They are welcomed wherever they go by every superior being. They are in the enjoyment of a bliss so supreme

that nothing can picture it, and so exquisite that every moment is worth a century of earthly enjoyments, and if otherwise disposed of, seems a century lost. What possible motive, then, can induce them to forego the society of their spiritual companions, and to condescend to listen to men, unless it be a motive of duty, lofty benevolence, or affection? Say, for instance, that it is God's will that this new revelation should be divulged among men. The inferior spirits, like every other existing thing, can be turned into useful instruments in God's hand, even by their own impulses, for the mere purpose of convincing sceptics of the fact of a spiritual agency originating the physical phenomena they witness. Their ministry is amply sufficient to lift a piece of wood, or perform any other antic in defiance of the recognised laws of inert matter. The spirit of the last clown who departed this life at Astley's or the hippodrome, is fully adequate to this. To communicate inspiration of a high order he is evidently unfit, since it is beyond his knowledge and his capacities. For this latter purpose, manifestly only those spirits can be selected who are themselves high in the sphere of spiritual intelligence; and who, cognisant of God's intentions, anxious to testify their gratitude to Him for His ineffable love and unbounded generosity to themselves, have no greater desire than to make themselves useful in any way that may conduce to the accomplishment of His providential designs. With this view, therefore, it is quite conceivable that they may condescend to communicate their knowledge and inspiration to minds of a lofty description, gifted with superior natural capacities; hence, capable of appreciating the inspirations thus received, and of bringing them to full fruition, both for their own benefit, and in order to transmit them to the world at large, with the authority of genius and the persuasive eloquence of indisputable fame. They may likewise be attracted by intense intellectual and pure aspirations, and feel pleasure in educating and exalting souls enthusiastically ambitious of intellectual advancement and spiritual light. Or they

may be recalled by profound personal attachments, and the supreme desire to comfort and sustain the sinking hearts of the bereaved ones who mourn them with an affliction which nothing but their companionship can restore to happiness and hope. Beyond these three just and sufficient motives, there are none, logically conceivable, which can authorize us to presume that beings of a high spiritual hierarchy should consent to obey our invocations.

“It now remains to be seen if under any one of these three heads we had a right to expect that they should come to us. As for the first, that could have been occasioned only by the presupposition that we were placed in the most favourable conditions for receiving spiritual light of a high order ; that we were capable of, and disposed to undertake, a spiritual apostolacy with perseverance and self-sacrifice ; that we deserved the supreme boon of Divine inspiration, at least by the soaring, ardent, disinterested, and sublime nature of our aspirations ; and that the constancy, unworldliness, and resolution by which they were sustained, rendered us not unworthy, or unapt to receive the loftiest of all earthly honours, that of being selected as a fitting instrument to transmit the Omnipotent’s sublime revelations. Frankly speaking, do you think that any of us can lay claim to be looked upon in that light, even in our own partial eyes ? Have you forgotten the spiritual admonition we received ? Were we not antagonistic and disunited ? Are our warmest aspirations of the most exalted, pure, and disinterested nature ? If we had our choice between spiritual light and temporal aggrandizement, which should we spontaneously select ? Are our minds so wholly free from worldliness, vanity, earthly lusts, egotism, and social frivolity ; are we so philanthropic, so energetic, so determined, that we should be chosen for propagandists of the greatest truths ever divulged to humanity ? Pretty apostles indeed we should make ; who should be far too pusillanimous to brave, in the promulgation of the glorious truth, not, indeed, the fagot, the axe, and the rack, but the paltry annoyance of

being ridiculed by the ignorance and folly of the shallow, self-sufficient minds we justly scorn.

“On that score you certainly must admit that the loftier entities have given proof of their judiciousness in not obeying us. Would it not have been edifying for a seraph or an archangel to have assisted at our nightly discussions; to have been assailed by M. de M——, to have had his celestial wisdom questioned by the puerile scepticism of a superficial *homme du monde* or even, *entre nous*, to have humbly awaited our good pleasure, till you and I had settled our little squabbles as to which should speak first and most, and what was best worth asking him? We are not precisely of the stuff of which apostles and martyrs, or even prophets are made, that is quite clear; neither were we in the temper or the conditions which may be supposed to befit men for the reception of Divine inspiration. On the first count, therefore, you cannot but avow that the spiritual world deserves an honourable acquittal. As for the second, it may be dismissed in a few words. Purposes of lofty benevolence there could have been none in our case. We are none of us suffering under the weight of any intolerable calamity; we are not sufficiently benighted to precipitate ourselves head foremost into the dismal chaos of materialism; and we are none of us sufficiently philanthropic to go about devoting our lives to the enlightenment or consolation of our neighbours. There only remains therefore the third reason, of personal attachment.”

“There I have you,” I exclaimed, slightly crest-fallen at having had the worst of the argument hitherto, which it was undeniable that I had. “You will not find it quite so easy to get out of that.”

“*Pazienza*; we shall see. Let us first establish our premises. I presume you will admit that for the spirits of our beloved lost ones to come at our bidding, two conditions are necessary; firstly, that they should possess the power of returning; secondly, that they should continue to feel a profound attachment for us. The

two conditions combined imply the evident inference that they have doubtless returned even when we little dreamt of calling them, and have in all probability kept a pretty close watch upon us when we little suspected it. Thirdly, in order for them to become spirits of a high order immediately on quitting this life, they must have been very remarkable and lofty exceptions in this world. Now such individuals are very rare in social or family connections. Have you been so fortunate as to have discovered any such persons among your deceased friends to invoke?"

I reflected. "I had one relation of a high order," I said, "but I cannot say that I have very persistingly or earnestly invoked her. I was bent on various other things, and I was rather desultory and versatile in my appeals."

"Then you certainly have no reason to wonder if she did not come. For as it is evidently by magnetic attraction that the message is conveyed and responded to, it is clear that without the most complete, intense, and persistent concentration of volition and aspiration, the magnetism is non-existent. You, at least, have no right to complain if the spirit of your relative neither heard you nor came. Now we will see what is to be said on my side. I had a friend to whom I was deeply attached, and whose love for me was no less intense. We had, in short, been engaged to each other early in life. He was killed suddenly, in the prime of youth, and at the zenith of our mutual passion. I mourned him with inexpressible grief. For several years my despair was profound and hopeless. But I was still very young. I could not bear the fearful burden of such woe. I was impatient of suffering; I sought to shake it off; to crush it out of my heart by frivolity and gaiety. I went into society. I struggled to be gay. I sought to be attractive. I was surrounded by a host of empty flatterers who thought me charming, and whom I despised, but whose admiration I coveted as a tribute to my powers of fascination. I found no happiness, but such gratification as can be derived from

satisfied self-love. At last I chose one out of the herd who united to the manners and distinction of a high-bred man, those advantages of rank and fortune which sum up the height of feminine ambition. My first love was the spirit of all others I sought to invoke. Superior in intellect and heart to all that I had seen among men, I knew that, sublime on earth, he could only be sublimer still in the spiritual world. Ardently and passionately I invoked him."

"You did, and he never came!" I exclaimed. "Surely that is a stronger argument on *my* side than any other."

"I thought so too, at first," said Madame de N——; "but on reflection I began to see that perhaps even there too the fault lay with me, rather than with the spirits. Had I deserved that he should return at my call? had I kept his memory sacred, his love inviolate in the sanctuary of my heart, as love should ever be kept? Was the ball-room belle, the flirt of cosmopolite triumphs, the devoted bride he had left behind? Could such love as ours bear such desecration? I felt that it could not. Had I so acted, to his knowledge, during his earthly life, I knew that he would have renounced me without hesitation, had his heart been broken by the effort. If then he had been watching me with eyes no less keen, with feelings perhaps even more scornful and more intense, from his spiritual eminence, how could I wonder if he disdained to answer the wife of another man?"

I was silent for a moment. "You are right," I said at last. "He might refuse to hear. I should myself, in such a case; as mine is a stern and unforgiving nature. He might have been more merciful. If his deeper love were fled, he might have come to comfort you with his friendship, to illumine you by his counsels."

"I thought of that too; though that would not have been merciful but cruel. The mere idea of communicating with him, and finding him altered, caused me a paroxysm of anguish. Would it have been kind or wise then for him to have come, if his doing so

could arouse feelings to which his heart could no longer respond, and awaken regrets which would be henceforth fruitless?"

I was silent again. I began to perceive that the spirits and Madame de N—— had decidedly the best of the argument.

"You see, then, that on every one of the three counts of indictment you have brought against the higher entities you have no ground to stand on. Let us now examine if there is any more truth in your assertion that we have learned nothing from the spirits who did come. In the first place, when we asked what was the way to attain to spiritual light and spiritual bliss, they repeatedly told us to be good, and once they said to you, 'Be a Christian.' You call these counsels platitudes, on the strength of their not being novel. But if that is the road, was it requisite that they should have told us falsehoods or fallacies in order to be original. Again, might there not be some wisdom in the application? Your god is intellect, you do not require any incitement to cultivate that; but I believe that in your eyes goodness is a very secondary consideration to talent or genius. I ask you is it altogether improbable that the reply in question was addressed to you with a view to the *apropos*? Again, we were informed that 'nothing is impossible to man.' You must admit *that* to be a very suggestive hint, and one that opens a wider field for speculation and inquiry than many a ponderous folio. We were informed too, frankly, lucidly, and logically, what are the obstacles that have prevented our attaining to higher knowledges, and the proper means to surmount them, whenever we choose to resort to them, besides various minor items which I forbear to enumerate. It appears, then, that even in our incomplete and ill-organized attempts three great lights have been afforded us. An infallible moral rule, backed by the evidence of spiritual authority; a glimpse of the glory that is in store for those who fulfil the conditions by which it is attainable; and an explicit, logical explanation of what those conditions are. It strikes me

that to tyros like ourselves, no more important items of information could have been vouchsafed. Hence, it is entirely erroneous to assert that we have learned little. Let us not then be thus ungrateful to Providence for the supreme boon He has vouchsafed to us; incontrovertible evidence of the most sublime and suggestive truth that has ever been revealed to humanity, the actual existence of the spiritual world, and the possibility of holding intercourse with incorporeal entities. Neither let us presumptuously insult His bounty and omniscience by opposing our finite judgment and ignorance in contradiction to His supreme wisdom.

“The question of fact was and must be the first to establish. That we have succeeded in ascertaining by tangible demonstration. Who can be so absurd or so illogical as to assume that, the phenomena once proved, they can be supposed to emanate from any other source than His providential will? and who then shall be so arrogant or so insane as to assert or believe that, proceeding from *His* will, they can be either trivial, unmeaning, or void of supreme wisdom and sublime ends, like all that He ordains? Even in our case, be sure that the evidence will not be thrown away, and that it can only be our own fault if it does not bring forth good fruit in due time, and subserve some beneficent and lofty purposes. Let us then beware how we wilfully close our eyes to the ray of celestial light that has beamed on them when we least expected it. For, no doubt, it depends in a great measure on ourselves, to turn the great knowledge to a good account. Such is the general law. In all things human and Divine, man is ordained to be the originator of His own exaltation or his own abasement.

“The omnipotent Creator spreads the glorious banquet before him. He gives him the senses and the power to enjoy it. He throws open to him the gate of celestial felicity. He invites him to behold its splendour, and to enter; but he leaves him free to select his own path, to profit or to squander; to open his eyes, or wilfully to

close them ; to cross the open threshold, or to turn back from its portal ; to reject or to embrace the felicity that he magnanimously proffers to him. Such have ever been the just and wise conditions of all revelation, of all progress, of all Divine gifts. It is only weak, foolish, interested man who distributes unearned rewards, and showers undeserved honours on the insignificant, the trivial, the base, and the vulgar-minded. God does not thus select His favourites. He cares not whether they are born in the purple or the sheep-skin, in the palace or the manger. He looks not to what they wear without, but to what they bear within. The paltry soul concealed beneath the royal ermine has no charms for Him. The cruel heart and feeble intellect disguised by a red or blue ribbon and an imperial or royal tiara are an abomination in His sight. Hence, He has cursed royalty with incapacity, short-sightedness, and egotism,—three cardinal sins which have condemned it irremissibly to extinction, in the course of advancing humanity. His sovereigns are the kings of mind ; His peers and princes are the pioneers of art and science ; His chosen ones are the pure, the good, the unselfish, the high-minded, the intellectual. His ministers and children are the disinterested, the earnest, the enthusiastic, the lofty aspirers to heavenly light and to spiritual glory ; and it is they whom He has destined to precede all others in the march of intellect and the progress of revelation, as being those who best deserve it, and who are alone adapted to receive the light, and to fecundate the seed. It behoves us then to cast from us, in considering these weighty things, all puerility, shallow cavils, and ill-timed worldliness,” concluded Madame de N——, “for that one or other of our party is predestined to be an instrument in God’s hand I have long felt an unaccountable but intimate presentiment. Were I in doubt on the point, a curious circumstance that I have just discovered would have set the doubt at rest. You remember the name that was given to us first by the spirits ?”

“Yes,” I said, “it was an uncommon one, Mira.”

“It is the Greek word for destiny or fate, an idea which never struck me till the other day, when I was deeply pondering the events of this eventful summer. Evidently a *nom de guerre* so suggestive was not adopted as the inaugurator of our spiritual experiments without a definite purpose. If you meditate seriously the whole chain of circumstances, you will perceive likewise, as I do, that they are providential. You had arrived at a period in your life when you had got sick of what is so inaptly designated by the misnomer of the “gay world,” for according to my view, and my experience of it has been tolerably extensive and cosmopolite, I decidedly dub it the “dull world.” I had been forcibly withdrawn from its vortex by the delicate state of my eyes, and my fear of injuring them by strong lights and hot rooms. We were thrown together by an unforeseen chance. We became, through intellectual sympathy, and particularly favourable circumstances, far more intimate than casual acquaintances hardly ever have a chance of being, in the ordinary run of society. We were thus enabled thoroughly to understand, and mutually to appreciate, the nature and the power of each other’s intellectual faculties; consequently, to attach great weight to each other’s judgment. Both of us had found out the secret, to our cost, that the utmost this world can afford of temporal pleasures, falls short of our ambition and our soul requirements. Both of us were ripe, therefore, for loftier aspirations and sublimer hopes. We were sufficiently unshackled to dispose of four months’ time in retirement together, according to our taste, a difficult combination for three independent individuals (for *selon* mundane conventionalities, my husband and myself, of course, reckon as one). Observe, too, the peculiar nature of the evidence we have received. Half the persons whom chance or idle curiosity brings in contact with these phenomena see nothing that is absolutely convincing. They behold tables turning and tipping, people writing and drawing, they say, under spiritual influence, which no one but themselves can avouch, etc., etc., and they

remain not much the wiser or the brighter than they were before. But how different is it with those whose intellects, whose genuine desire of ascertaining the truth, and whose capacity for receiving the light, render them worthy of the special interposition of Providence to convince them! Take your case and mine, for instance. What is the first evidence you receive? Things are told you which you are positive the medium does not know, consequently, cannot suggest. Lest you should explain them by mesmeric clairvoyance, a strange woman is brought in, and a deceased friend of hers, called up, or named, whom neither of the others present can by any possibility have heard of, and of whom she herself is *not* thinking. Thirdly, one of the rarer and still more extraordinary physical phenomena is presented to you. The table leaps clean off the floor *untouched*; and in order that *no doubt* may haunt your mind, and impair the force of the evidence, it *continues* its oscillations from *right to left* for several seconds, *after* it is left untouched, in order that its subsequent leap in the *opposite* direction should not be attributed by you to any impulsion given by the medium; hence, that you may be irresistibly led to conclude that an invisible and intelligent agency is the originator of the volition, the intelligence, and the apparent impossibility you have witnessed.

“What then is the demonstration afforded to induce supreme conviction in another mind, whose judgment and intellect you value; hence to convert your hesitating and rebellious Scepticism into irresistible conviction, when you *first* take the trouble to seek information with some earnestness? *D’abord*, we succeed after a much briefer trial than with our small numbers and lack of medium force we could have hoped. The third night afterwards the table leaps off the floor—another impossibility. But observe, in this instance it was not untouched. Our hands were on it. Such critical minds as ours would therefore, in course of time, have suggested that perhaps some foot or finger contrived to give it a helping lift, unobserved. Hence, the leap being subject to a future

doubt, the harmonious chords are struck, which we *know* the table could not possibly have produced by any pressure or impulsion of ours. An absolute impossibility, therefore, *solely explicable* by the agency of an invisible intelligence. Hence, supreme conviction again. For my part, the hand of God is clear to me throughout the entire chain; and as I always reason by analogy, and on logical premises, I am thereby convinced that there is no one whose sincere interest in the futurity of the soul, whose intellect and aspirations are worthy of the supreme illumination, and who seeks the truth with earnestness and perseverance, who will not be conducted to its attainment by the same providential guidance and assistance. Nay, I feel certain, that there are no sincere, deserving, and lofty spiritualists but who, if they consult their remembrance, and ponder on the mode in which the great revelation was brought before them, will recognise that destiny led them on in the same unforeseen and providential manner to the proffered light. Whether it is one or both of us who are predestined to the supreme honour of being numbered among the Almighty's chosen ones, I know not; but this I *do* know, that could there be such a thing as chance in the world—an empty word which has no meaning to my brains—such a train of providential circumstances, conducing to a definite result, can never be classed under that head. Time will show whether I am right or wrong; but of one thing we and every one may be certain, that to whomsoever a gleam of light is manifested, and the appointed path thrown open, that one will pay the penalty of folly and worldliness, or reap the supreme rewards of spiritual knowledge and heavenly love, accordingly as he blindly rejects or nobly welcomes the Divine boon.”

Winter was approaching. I resolved on going farther south, to one of my sojourns of predilection, beautiful Naples.

My friends and I parted. They were bound for Rome.

It was one of those lovely November days which shame the fogs of London and the sleet of Paris. I was enjoying one of my soli-

tary but delightful strolls through the ins and outs of Pompeii. I was groping about in my usual desultory way, and had just taken out my sketch-book in order to etch off some graceful frescos in a ruined atrium, when a sudden exclamation in French arrested my attention.

“*Quelle chance !* I have been hunting you out all over Naples, like a needle in a bundle of hay.”

The voice seemed not unknown. I turned. It was indeed a curious chance. The speaker was a Turkish ambassador, one of the Porte's most distinguished diplomatists. I had known him intimately during my residence in the Levant, where I had taken letters of introduction to him. He happened to be a man of lofty intellectual powers ; remarkable for an erudition and an education acquired in France, which had happily developed all the brilliant faculties of a mind, exceptional everywhere, but particularly so in the East. Hence we had become great cronies.

Not unmindful of the merry *beaux esprits* on the western side of the Channel, I must here interpolate a parenthesis on their behoof.

“What a specially fortunate individual this anonymous authority must be !” exclaim the gentlemen of parachute and dyspeptic causticity. “Every person who comes in contact with this favoured *incognito* is gifted with lofty intellectual faculties and shining talents. The receipt would really be worth knowing.” Anticipating their curiosity on this score, I here beg to offer it to them. My secret is of the simplest description, wholly devoid of any sorcery or unholy arts whatever. It has but one drawback, *i. e.*, that it does not depend on every one to put it in practice. In a word, I hold the Italian axiom, *Meglio solo che mal' accompagnato* ; consequently, I scrupulously avoid cultivating the acquaintance of any but intellectual and superior minds. These I make it a point to pick out whenever I find them ; and as my sympathy is generally reciprocated, it is seldom that my advances are not met

half-way. It is this latter part of the receipt which renders it easier in theory than practice, and which compels me to decline guaranteeing success to the witty critics in question, should they feel any lurking desire to make the essay.

To return to my Moslem sympathy. He was quite of the "right sort," according to my peculiar view of mankind; consequently, the pleasure caused by our unexpected meeting was mutual. It was greatly enhanced, moreover, by learning that he had taken a villa on the Strada Nuova, and proposed remaining two or three months in Naples, to recruit for his next diplomatic campaign against ministerial *finesses*, and autocratic covetousness and duplicity.

As for myself, it was no wonder he had not been able to discover my whereabouts, for, with my usual odd propensities, I had niched myself in the most out-of-the-way place imaginable, a quarter so wholly unfrequented by foreign visitors, as to be almost unknown to the majority of my gregarious compatriots. I allude to the Pizzo Falcone. Here, in the fine street of the Monte di Dio, the *place royale* of Naples, which formerly, like the now-deserted Quartier du Marais of Paris, was the aristocratic quarter of the *noblesse de robe et d'épée*, I had ensconced myself in the *piano nobile* of a fine old house, not far from the Duchess of Noja's magnificent palace. My inducements for so doing were manifold,—being quiet, large rooms, an open terrace and pretty garden, commanding a magnificent view of the Vomero, Posilipo, and the exquisite bay, and last, not least, segregation from the commonplace tribe of migratory English, who every winter throng the Chiaja, the Chiatamone, and the Mergellina, and turn the alleys of the Villa Reale into a Kensington Gardens or Hyde Park Lane.

"You will sup with me to-night," said the ambassador, as, after chatting for some moments, we turned down the Street of Tombs. "I expect a Greek lady and her husband who are *en route* for

Paris. She is the *belle* of Syra *par excellence*. Such a lovely creature! a perfect *odalisque*! *la volupté incarnée*! She alone is worth coming to look at. I will take no refusal."

"*Ma foi! ce n'est pas de refus*," I replied, "I have preserved too pleasant a recollection of our evenings in your beautiful yali, on the Bosphorus, not to feel the prospect of renovating the *souvenirs* of Candilly positively exciting."

"I am sorry I cannot send my *caïque* for you, as at Stamboul, but, *faute de mieux*, my carriage will be at your door at the Aksham, as of yore. *C'est convenu*—is it not so?"

"As you please," I replied, as he handed me into my carriage.

It was a lovely site where the villa stood to which I drove that evening, at the Ave Maria, not very far from the well-known Villa Matilde. It stood on the summit of a cliff overlooking the Gulf; facing the mountains of Sorrento and Massa, surrounded by wild, romantic grounds descending the face of the precipice.

The supper was gay, as suppers always are when every gastronomic luxury is enhanced by the brilliancy of *genuine*, not spurious wit, more sparkling than the champagne; and the responsive flow of sympathising minds more harmonious than Bellini's melting strains.

"I have not yet inquired what you have been about since we met last," said the Bey, as we strolled out into the grounds after supper, to enjoy the moonlight, I will not say the fresco, for it was a sultry, scirocco night. "Something uncommon, I make no doubt, for I have never met with a more eccentric orbit than yours."

"For once you have made a hit," I replied, somewhat saucily; "I have been dabbling in nothing less than the black art."

"That becomes interesting. Pray tell me all about it; I have always had the greatest desire to make a personal acquaintance with Sheitan. It is near the witching midnight hour too; just the very nick of time."

I briefly resumed the narrative of my first experiment in Paris. The ambassador listened incredulously. "Surely," he said at last, "you do not take all these *contes bleus* seriously."

"That one portion of the story is no *conte bleu*, I at least can guarantee," interrupted the Greek lady, Madame D——; "for it was I, the rings of whose bracelet the spirit counted at the Russian Embassy in Stockholm; and for the correctness of the *attaché's* version of the *séance*, I can vouch."

Here was a curious coincidence. The Bey was surprised no less than myself. "Shall we try?" he said.

No one objected, and we sat down to a large tea-table in the saloon. We were six; a foreign officer in the Turkish service, and the usual Greek secretary, being of the party.

In a few minutes the table moved, as I had expected. To make a long story short, the ordinary process was gone through. A spirit announced himself as a Turkish pacha, a deceased friend of the foreign officer, and various curious answers were rapped out.

"This is strange, certainly," observed the ambassador, as we stood up at last, after a *séance* of two hours; "but nevertheless, my incredulity is very far from being vanquished yet. It would require much more to convince me."

"*Je le crois bien*," exclaimed the Greek secretary. "It was I who moved the table the whole time."

I looked at him with indignant surprise, being perfectly certain that he was telling a falsehood, by way of one of those vulgar hoaxes in which common-place minds take so much delight. I had been narrowly scrutinizing every one during the whole *séance*, and I knew positively that a table so large and heavy could not possibly have tipped up, rapped, and turned in such a manner, under the fingers of any one person, without efforts being made which could not escape our eyes.

The ambassador turned on his heel, looking too as black as thunder. "You may have thought it very good fun to have been amusing

yourself at the expense of the whole party for the last two hours," he observed; "but *I* have never been accustomed to be made a fool of, and least of all am I disposed to suffer it in my own house."

The first experiment had been unfortunate, and I was not surprised that from that evening the Bey's unbelief was more rooted than ever. Indeed, he scarcely ever saw me during the next three weeks without railing at my credulity and chimeras,—an attack upon my brains which, although I could have endured with exemplary equanimity, had it proceeded from logicians and philosophers of the calibre of the parachute punsters aforesaid, from a mind like the Bey's I felt to be decidedly exasperating. He endeavoured too, like other kind friends, to induce me to reject the evidence of my senses, till at last he made me downright cross at his persistence, although, after the paltry lie told by his secretary, I was scarcely surprised at it. Neither was the ambassador's an uncommon case, for many a scepticism has been confirmed by a similarly false and foolish boast.

Thus badgered and provoked, I resolved on convincing him in sheer self-defence. But how? for, alas! I was no medium, and there was small hope of inducing him to exercise his patience in the matter.

Providence, however, had resolved that I should accomplish my purpose when I had well-nigh renounced it. I had not forgotten my friend Madame de N——'s admonition, nor, to say the truth, notwithstanding my discontent with the result of my investigations, had I the slightest desire to give up the study, now that spiritual intercourse was established as a positive fact in my mind. Hence I had already enlisted one or two acquaintances as my co-operators, amongst others the foreign officer I had met at the ambassador's. He took a decided interest in establishing the fact, and thus he became one of my most assiduous *habitués*.

One evening, I was trying to call my friends the spirits, alone with the officer, when the Bey dropped in. For a wonder, I suc-

ceeded in inducing him to join us. We were employing a very small table, about a foot in diameter, placed upon a larger one. He laid his fingers on it with us. Presently it turned, tipped up, and rapped. The Bey smiled, and looked at us both suspiciously. I interrogated the spirit if it would employ some method which might convince him. It consented.

“What means will you resort to?” I asked.

“I will speak Arabic to him,” replied the spirit.

“Oh, *ma foi*! if it does that, I shall be convinced,” replied the ambassador, who, being well acquainted with both the officer and myself, was perfectly certain that neither of us could write a word of Arabic.

The spirit began, the Bey himself calling out the letters, while, as if expressly in order to add to his security, it was no longer the little table on which our fingers were laid, but the larger one underneath, which no one was touching, that rapped.

A conversation of nearly two hours ensued, in the course of which the spirit informed the ambassador of numerous particulars concerning himself, and promised him some political information on matters of importance, if he continued to consult him and the spiritual world; the whole taking place in Arabic.

I had obtained my *revanche* indeed. Like all people of a high order of intelligence, once convinced of the marvellous fact, the ambassador was almost wild upon the subject. He coincided in the opinion of Madame de N——, that all which science has ever attained is a trifle to this wondrous revelation. I should have feared that he would have gone mad about it, as it is erroneously said so many have done, except that I knew this to be the result upon weak, not upon strong brains. His excitement and interest were unbounded. He pursued it from morning to night. The officer and the Greek secretary were in perpetual requisition. Often he would send for the former at midnight, or any hour, no matter how undue. Even over the secretary I triumphed, for he was at last

one of the family coming upstairs for a short time, mentioning that we were trying an experiment, and that a third person was requisite; I forbore to say for what. The landlord was a Jewish merchant, whose family consisted of a wife and children, and two sisters of his, all residing in the house. They sent up the eldest daughter, a child of twelve years old, probably none of the rest liking to be disturbed, or to appear *en déshabillé*. She was a pale, dark-eyed, Jewish-looking girl, tall, and intelligent for her age, but of a sulky and unpleasant temper.

I desired her to sit down and lay her hands on the table, without giving her any explanation of my reasons, first, because she would have been incapable of understanding them; secondly, for fear of frightening her away at the mere name of ghosts or spirits. She obeyed, giggling.

In little more than five minutes now, the table, so immovable before, began to turn, and then rapped.

To my inquiry, the spirit replied that its name was Rachel, and that it was a relative of the child. I questioned her. She knew nothing of any deceased relative of that name. I went and called up one of the aunts. She immediately informed me that there was a little sister of that name, who had died in childhood, twenty years previously. We continued questioning the spirit. It gave various messages to its relations and parents, etc. I had guessed immediately that the child must be a strong medium, and made various inquiries on the subject. The replies far surpassed even what I hoped. The spirit declared that the girl was a medium of the highest order; that her magnetic faculties would be rapidly developed; that she would soon be able to write and draw, under spiritual influence, and that she would eventually see the spirits, and be able to produce the strongest spiritual phenomena.

Here was a discovery! The very desideratum of all others I should have sought, had I known where to find it. I then inquired if any other spirits were present and desired to communi-

cate with us. Another replied, who gave his name as David. The aunt immediately stated this to be the name of an uncle of theirs who had died two years previously.

“Is there anything you wish to say?” I asked.—“Yes,” was the reply, “to tell my wife not to marry again.”

“But she is married,” exclaimed the aunt.

“Did you not know this?” I asked in surprise.—“I learn it for the first time,” replied the spirit; a curious admission, which I give as I received it, without pretending to explain the enigma. The spirit then requested that his wife and children might be summoned to speak to him that evening, and we raised the *séance*.

Here indeed was an answer to my query, as to whether the dead returned. Neither the officer nor I had ever known or heard of a single one of the relations of this obscure Jewish family. I began to think that Madame de N—— was right, and that the spirits were really destined to solve a few problems for me which I had never hoped to fathom on this side of the grave.

That evening the widow of the deceased uncle was sent for, and the girl and I sat down to the table with one of his sons. Immediately the spirit answered, and addressed himself to his wife. Requesting likewise that his second son, a boy of fourteen, should also come to the table, which at last he was induced to do. As for the widow, after a brief interchange of messages, she burst into an hysterical fit of weeping, and had to be taken downstairs where she fainted. Subsequently, as I inquired if other spirits wished to communicate, about a dozen different names were given, all unknown to me, but which the family who, on this occasion, were all present, recognised as their deceased relatives, grandfathers, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, etc., etc. It appeared that the entire family of spirits had taken rendezvous in my drawing-room, and the *séance* was not ended till midnight.

I need not describe the stupor of the terrestrial portion of the family. They had never heard of Spiritualism under any form in their lives, yet they could not impute any trickery to me, knowing that I was wholly ignorant of everything concerning them. As for the daughter, deceit was out of the question with her, for the child could not have known how to imitate what she had never heard of or seen. Neither could she have eluded my vigilance and the precautions I took in placing her hands.

But this was only the *début*. The girl's medium powers were not destined to rest upon such slender evidence, nor was I inclined to let the golden opportunity slip, of beholding some of the more marvellous phenomena which as yet I only knew by hearsay.

The next evening we recommenced; no one being present this time except two friends of my own—the wife of an English naval officer, and an English clergyman. We sat down to the table, when I laid a paper before the child, put a pencil in her hand, and desired her to leave it motionless till she felt it impelled by a will not her own.

Presently, to our great surprise, her head fell back upon her shoulder, her face being averted. We spoke to her; she did not hear; she was in a trance. In about ten minutes her hand moved, and began to write a few words, purporting that it was enough for that evening, and we must let the girl repose. We then tried to arouse her; but it was in vain that we essayed all the approved demagnetizing methods. Half an hour elapsed before our united efforts succeeded in recalling the child to herself.

The next attempt took place the following morning, in the presence of the mother and aunt. Again the child fell into a trance, when, to my astonishment, she commenced passing her hands down her own face, shoulders, and limbs, with a number of strange gestures, which induced the two women to inquire what she was doing, but which I recognised as magnetic passes; a fact sufficiently curious of itself alone, for neither the child nor the parents

had ever heard even the name of magnetism, much less suspected what it meant.

I must forbear to narrate every subsequent *séance* in the order that they took place, as they were of daily repetition during a period of several months. I can only therefore enter into details concerning the more extraordinary phenomena which came to pass during this interval. With every succeeding trial the child's powers seemed to be developing themselves. Soon, various other spirits announced themselves, not belonging to the family; amongst these strangers, the most constant was a young physician who had been killed suddenly; a friend of theirs, who presented himself on all occasions, with the entreaty that they would invite his brother to be present, with whom he was eagerly desirous of communicating. It was perpetually the same entreaty, urged in the most moving manner. On one occasion the table wheeled round and walked across the room, when we least expected it, to the mistress of the house, on whose knees it bent over, rapping out its supplications to her to ask his brother to come there. This the family could not be prevailed on to do, for they were not acquainted with him, and were loth to expose themselves to unbelief and ridicule.

Another time I came home and found them at the table; and on inquiring what had taken place, I was told, nothing of any consequence, only an unknown spirit had come, who had given a curious name they had never heard,—“*Cavour*,” and they had refused to speak to him. Great was my distress and indignation at their ignorance and stupidity,* for if there had been a spirit *par excellence*, with whom I should have wished to communicate, the great minister, then recently deceased, was the one to whom my *Italianissimi* propensities pointed the first. The mischief however, was done, and my only remedy was to insure a more courteous reception for him another time.

* It should be remembered that the scene did *not* lie in Naples, or probably Cavour would not have met with this affront.

At last, one evening, it appeared that something more striking than usual was impending, for after an unusually long *séance*, the spirits refused to allow us to retire at the wonted hour. It was near twelve o'clock, and we were all very much tired. The child was sulky, and begged hard to be allowed to go to bed, but the spirits insisted upon retaining us. We were three at the table—the child, a cousin of the family, and myself. Presently it moved towards the door, where we followed it, slightly touching it on the surface with our hands. Before the angle of the door it commenced making several low inclinations, dipping down so far on one side that I expected it to fall over.

“What can it mean?” said I.

“It is saluting the name of God,” replied the master of the house, pointing out to me a little tablet inscribed with the names and attributes of Jehovah, which in the houses of strict Jews is suspended in every doorway. The table now went down the stairs, pivoting upon its three legs, and performing the same evolution on every landing-place, before the tablets, till it came to the hall door. But the most curious part of the performance was its returning upstairs. It refused to be carried up, as we proposed, and insisted on ascending as it had descended. This it accomplished by pivoting round, lifting up and placing the alternate foot on the step above. When it came to the angle, however, this manœuvre was no longer possible, for it happened that the stairs were too narrow to enable it to take the necessary swing. After making several ineffectual efforts therefore, it took a couple of strong jerking bounds, and, at the second, lighted on the upper step. Here was an antigravitation impossibility again, for the only persons near the table were the cousin and the child, who stood on the steps above it, barely touching it on the top with the tips of their fingers, whereas I was on the lower steps, holding a light close to it, in order to verify the facts. This leap the table repeated at every successive landing-place, but always with a

considerable effort, till we reached the last storey. By this time it was one o'clock. The family, accustomed to early hours, were completely worn out, and earnestly entreated to be allowed to postpone the remainder of the *séance* to the following night. No, the spirits would not hear of it. At last they said they wanted *bujo* (darkness). This was curious, for I was the only one of the party who knew this to be one of the conditions generally exacted for the production of the higher physical phenomena. We took the table into my bed-chamber, it being the only room of my apartments that could boast of shutters. We sat round it, and extinguished the light. Presently it tipped up violently and turned over on its side. We now were four—the cousin, the aunt, the girl, and myself. We felt the table slipping from us. We lit the candle, and perceived that it had thrust its legs under the bed, resting on its side, with the top facing us. It began rapping out with the edge of the leaf, on the floor, “darkness.” We crouched down in a row before it, touching it with the tips of our fingers, and put out the light. In a few minutes strong raps were heard *behind* the table, as if with knuckles. Then the sound varied, and became metallic, growing louder and louder till it vibrated through the room, like a small gong beating time in various modes. Again other sounds of a different nature were heard, till at last it rapped out to us to light the candle and lift it up.

We obeyed. What primitive simplicity! cry the wits. How easy for the medium, or the cousin, or any one, to have struck upon the table in the dark with a key or anything else of the like description. But to this I beg leave to demur. All these and similar explanations are in the highest degree satisfactory to the public who have not been ocularly, orally, or tangibly witnesses to the phenomena referred to, but to these latter pertinacious and wrong-headed individuals they altogether fall short of the mark. Thus, for instance, I who had been a witness to the whole, knew that no preparation could have been made for the occasion, the

whole having been improvised, and altogether unforeseen. I knew likewise what extreme difficulty I had had in inducing the weary manipulators to obey the injunctions of the spirits, and that nothing but my extreme urgency and pertinacity had prevailed over the somnolent propensities of the rest of the party. Though I could not see, the clearness of the rest of my senses was by no means impaired. It seems to be universally assumed by critics in such matters, that when people cannot make use of their eyes, all their other organs of sense become unaccountably obtuse in the same ratio; whereas it is the converse which is actually the case. Thus if I could not see, I could both hear and feel with the utmost nicety. I kept one of my hands moreover on those of the medium, who was next to me during the whole time, while I scrutinized every sound with the sharpness of Fine-ear in the fairy tale. Hence I could perfectly discriminate that the greater part of these sounds were produced on the *back* of the table, on the side next to me; and of the other two persons touching the table neither could have moved or stretched round the back of the table, under the bed, without making such motions as I must have both felt and heard. Several of the strangest noises too were evidently not produced on the table at all. They were clearly such as, by natural means, could only be produced by metal on metal; and they unquestionably resounded from under the bed. All these and such-like minor details, in reality constitute the demonstrative evidence that witnesses cannot resist; but they are swept away with a single stroke of their dashing pens, by the aforesaid critics! and consequently a totally false impression of the facts is conveyed to the mind of non-witnesses.

I was not destined, however, to be compelled to trust to my auricular faculties alone, for it appeared decidedly ordained that every species of demonstration should be afforded to me successively. On this night, when we had obediently restored the table to its normal situation, and reseated ourselves round it, we were

again desired to extinguish the light, and were then informed that the medium was about to behold the spirits. A silence ensued, for the impression at such moments is solemn in the extreme, on all superior minds; and even the more frivolous and worldly are awe-struck, at least for the time being, and are seldom inclined to be talkative or facetious till the light of the sun has remounted their disturbed equilibrium.

After a pause of a few minutes, the table rapped out the word "now." A moment after, the girl screamed out, "Oh! I see them! I see them! they are coming towards me. Let me go! let me go! I am frightened,—I cannot bear it," and so on; a succession of exclamations of surprise and alarm, poured out in accents of passionate terror and dismay. It was with the utmost difficulty that we succeeded in holding her down, and soothing her into a little calm and courage, for the child appeared stricken with a panic terror, and wanted every moment to rush out of the room. This was the more provoking, inasmuch as one of the strange features I had remarked from the first in the girl's mediumship was her remarkable self-possession. From the first moment when she had been thus fortuitously brought into contact with the spiritual world, she seemed to have understood and accepted it as a matter of course, and to find it as easy and natural to familiarize herself with spirits as with human beings. Now, however, when she beheld them for the first time, she manifested intense terror, to such an extent that it was with difficulty and only imperfectly and at intervals that we could extract from her what she saw.

Supreme was my desire of beholding, at last with her eyes, what escaped my own. "Where do you see them, and what are they like?" I urged, in the intervals of her broken exclamations, and entreaties to be set free.

"There is a great light on the wall, at the back of the bed; I see them there," she replied. "They are all in white; they have long flowing robes, and golden crowns on their heads. They are

coming towards me. Oh, do not let them come near me! Keep them back; keep them back. They want to place a crown on my head. Oh, do not let them touch me!" shrieked the girl, in accents of such extreme alarm that I feared she would have gone into a fit, or, at the least, have burst away from us forcibly. "Oh, they are gone back again," she said, recovering.

"But what are they like? Do you see what they are? who they are? Describe them to us," I insisted.

"Yes, I know them. There are angels crowned with glory. And there are virgins carrying golden lamps. Oh! they are pouring oil into the lamps," she cried out suddenly. "They are very beautiful, they are all light; they have long, floating veils. They come and go, and now there are two more—two others. Oh, I see! I know them! It is Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary!"

"Are you sure?" I asked, surprised and incredulous.

"Quite sure. It *is* them. I see their names written in letters of light upon their foreheads. Oh, I am not mistaken! it *is* them! Ah, they are coming towards me with golden crowns in their hands. Oh, don't come near! don't touch me!" she screamed again with renewed terror.

The scene continued for another hour, in alternations of dismay and amaze on the part of the child, and descriptions of what she saw, of the same nature, given in the same fragmentary and incomplete way as the above. As for the other actors in this extraordinary episode of real life, we none of us beheld anything, except the aunt, who declared that at the first moment when the child screamed out that she saw the spirits she had beheld a sudden light dart up from the table, and ascend to the ceiling like a cloud of vapour.

Many were the discussions raised by, and the conjectures mooted on, the events of that night. The following day the parents called me into consultation, to inquire whether I thought it possible the child could have been acting a comedy, for they observed, not

unnaturally, that what she had described were all Bible scenes, which she might have known. I perceived that the vision of Jesus Christ and the Virgin had proved exceedingly unpalatable and suspicious to Jewish religionists fanatically attached to their creed, as this family was. I could only reply that had they witnessed the child's ebullitions of irresistible terror, and the extreme difficulty we had experienced in inducing her to remain, they would hardly have called in question the genuineness of her impressions, for it would have been scarcely less marvellous for an ignorant child of twelve years old to have acted such a part to the life, so as to deceive the most sagacious, than for her to have beheld the spirits.

"How would Madame de N—— reason on the subject?" I meditated. "She would resolve it under all points of view in her mind," I said to myself, "till she arrived at a solution of the problem logically demonstrable."

"Let me see to what conclusions this philosophical method leads me," I continued. "First, is there any presumable motive which could, on the present occasion, induce an entity of so high an order as Christ to have presented himself last night to this obscure, and by no means high-minded or interesting Jewish child? The family are far too fanatical, worldly, and ignorant to be susceptible of conversion, or suitable for purposes of propagandism, and the child herself is too young and far too apathetical and indifferent on the topic of religion, to be capable of receiving any deep or durable impressions concerning it. The first two motives therefore being wanting, what remains? The next cause for the production of spiritual phenomena is to induce a conviction of the reality of spiritual communion in the minds of men. Query—how far would the apparition of Christ and the Virgin Mary conduce to that effect in the present instance?" I reflected. "The medium powers of the child enabling her to behold spiritual beings, whom the lack of higher spiritual perceptions on our part rendered invisible to our sight, what might best convey to the minds of the

witnesses present, the assurance that the girl did actually see what they failed to distinguish? Clearly, no method could be so effectual as to make her behold beings of whom it was altogether improbable she should spontaneously think, and next to impossible that she should invent. What names then were the least likely of all others to occur to a Jewish child, brought up in the strictest Hebrew observances and belief? and who were the spirits reason pointed out as those, of all others, it was most improbable she should imagine or invent, as appearing to her in beatitude and glory? Clearly the last of all were Christ and his mother, so anathematized and condemned in her creed." Here, then, was the explanation at once, lucid, logical, and providential. The spirits had thus appeared to her, in order that we might clearly apprehend that there was no fiction on the child's part. Here, then, was conviction impressed on my mind by another ingenious form of demonstration.

Decidedly I began to think that the hand of Providence was not altogether inactive behind the scenes.

From that night forward wonders began to crowd upon us thicker and thicker. I must relate a few of the more remarkable. One evening we had been forewarned by the spirits that we might expect things of higher import than the ordinary conversations. Two or three friends of the family had therefore been invited to assist. We sat down, seven of us, round a circular table, which just admitted that number. A candle was placed on the table, and a box of matches, in order that a light might be struck without any one leaving the table.

I must premise that the drawing-room was furnished in the usual meagre manner common to foreign houses of the ordinary class. The furniture consisted of two tables, a sofa, and stuffed chairs; nor was there any article behind or within which a person could have been concealed, or I should have examined it. The room had but one door, opening on the stairs; this was duly

locked, no one being allowed to remain in the room besides the seven persons seated at the table, whose hands were all held alternately by their neighbours, while our chairs were so closely packed that no one of the party could have moved without causing a stir and a noise, which must inevitably have been both heard and felt by the others. I sat next to the girl, holding one of her hands in mine; the person on the other side, a respectable merchant of the city, held the other hand. In a few minutes a hair-pin was dashed on the table, then a second and a third, up to seven or eight.

“The spirits are unplaiting my hair,” said the child. After a few moments more, I received two or three drops of water in my face; then another person announced the same fact; then a third, and so on, till every one had been sprinkled in turn. The table now rapped out “light.” We obeyed, and then to our amazement we perceived that the girl’s hair was all stuck full of flowers; and whereas we had all seen it, when we sat down, rolled round her head in one large plait, it was now let down her back in a number of small tresses. But where did the flowers come from? that was no less puzzling. As we consulted, one of the party exclaimed that a vase on the chimney-piece, which had been full of flowers when we sat down, was empty; and so indeed it was. The spirits had made use of all the flowers it contained to decorate the child’s head, and, moreover, it proved that they had emptied it of all the water, thus accounting for the general sprinkling we had received.

After we had verified these strange performances we were again desired to put out the light. Presently we heard on a table at the other end of the room, whereon were laid some sheets of blank paper and pen and ink, the rustling of the paper, and the loud scratching of a pen rapidly writing.

This was in the highest degree interesting; for it was nothing less than the marvellous phenomenon of the “direct writing,” *i.e.*, the writing by a spirit, without the intervention of any human hand, on which so much has been written by the famous

Baron Guldenstubbé, who is so well known among spiritualists in Paris.

Immediately afterwards the candle was lighted again, when it was found that various sentences had been written, while two papers on which the girl had been writing previously, had vanished altogether. As we were seeking for them, the remainder of the family who were locked out of the room came running to the door to inform us that the other papers had been carried over their heads down the stairs, at the bottom of which they were actually found, and this occurred previously to our having unlocked the door.

Subsequently an interruption took place in our *séances*, for some intermeddling friends succeeded in persuading the father of the girl that the magnetic trances into which she was constantly thrown might be injurious to her health. He therefore refused to let her continue, nor was it till a fortnight had elapsed that my entreaties and their own curiosity got the better of these unfounded scruples.

Several times now the table rose up and supported itself horizontally in the air, untouched, except on the surface ; but this was in the dark, and consequently less satisfactory. What however was equally curious was to hear the spirits answer to any sound made on the table, which occurred constantly, in the full light of my lamp. Thus, if I scratched on the table, immediately the distinct loud sound of nails responded, scratching in precisely the same manner underneath the very spot where my hand lay.

On one occasion, a Polish gentleman came to call on me, who, from various circumstances which had come to his knowledge, was a believer in spiritual phenomena, although he had never been so fortunate as to witness any.

He was extremely desirous to see the medium, and at his request I called her upstairs. The spirits answered, of course, by rapping, as they never failed to do under the medium's hands. I inquired whether they could show the gentleman any striking phenomena. They promised to do so if I would darken the room.

I replied, that as there were no shutters, I could only let down the curtains. "Never mind, try," replied the spirits.

The curtains were closed so as merely to exclude the sunlight. The Pole, the medium, and her aunt, sat down to the table; an English lady who had come in the interval to pay me a visit, and myself, looking on at a little distance. Presently the table began to make various jerking motions, trying to rise off the floor; at last it made one bound, and rose about a foot in the air, falling heavily back on the floor, as if let suddenly drop. I then made the girl kneel on a chair, to avoid suspicion, while I stood at two or three yards off, looking underneath it as it rose several times. Again it leapt, but at last it succeeded in maintaining itself, or rather the spirits succeeded in sustaining it, *horizontally in the air*, at a height of about two feet from the ground. In this position it answered all the questions put, by moving from one side to the other, for about ten minutes, falling down heavily again at the end of that time. This marvellous feat it achieved eight or ten times, myself and the other spectators looking under it the while, whence all suspicion of surreptitious aid from hands, feet, or knees, was altogether out of the question. During one of these ascensions or suspensions, it moreover beat time to a polka mazurka which I hummed.

Decidedly this experiment, in my own drawing-room, in *broad daylight*, on an improvised occasion, with no paid, interested, or practised medium, with no preparation or trickery possible, and performed in the presence of two other casual spectators, as indifferent and disinterested in the question as myself, was absolutely conclusive as to the fact of Professor Faraday's fiat being to the full as fallible as the Pope's. At least I believe I may safely certify that it would have been even more difficult to have persuaded any of the witnesses present that morning, that what they beheld was not a fact, than to convince Professor Faraday that it was.

Curious incidents of these and the like description now varied our experiments every day, but all were interesting, chiefly as manifestations physically marvellous, for the spirits were evidently all of that mediocre class adapted to the sordid and uneducated family to whom the medium belonged. Several instances occurred too, fully corroborative of the fact asserted by Judge Edmonds and other spiritualists, that inferior and imperfect spirits retain all their earthly propensities and recollections, and are wholly unchanged by their transition from carnal to spiritual existence. Thus, one of the spirits who presented himself, was an old dancing-master who had given lessons to the girl, and who, evidently, remembered his terrestrial vocation, for he insisted on beating time, whenever he came, to various dancing measures.

One day when I was trying the table with a couple of friends, a spirit came who would only beat time to the Marseillaise, which he did very accurately, remaining resolutely still every time I sang God save the Queen. On my inquiring why, he stated that he was a republican, an admission which no doubt would make the aristocratic world set him down as a spirit of low degree and decided *mauvais ton*. In this, however, they would be, according to their wont, much mistaken, for subsequent experience of a much higher nature than any here narrated, has led me to the discovery that democracy is the supreme belief in the spiritual world, and that there is nothing so *bien porté* there among the *crème de la crème* as to be uncompromisingly *rouge*. In point of fact it appears that all the spiritual entities of the highest order are *sans culottes* of the most flagrant description, treating blue blood, blue ribbons, stars, garters, royalty, red books, Almanacks de Gotha, genealogical trees, and *toute la boutique* of fictitious distinction and terrestrial vanities and lusts, as mere frippery and tinsel, altogether below contempt. In a word, it would seem that the society of the higher spheres is absolutely *le monde renversé*. But of this more anon : I only allude to it here *en passant*.

Meanwhile, being, for the nonce, genuinely interested in these spiritual investigations, all the more so perhaps from discovering how infinitely more the spiritual world realizes my *beau idéal* of society than that among which I am at present sojourning, I was not idle in endeavouring to discover if there were any adepts extant in the city besides myself. My researches were very soon rewarded by the discovery that there were at least half a dozen spiritual societies, completely organized and in the habit of holding weekly meetings at the houses of the respective members ; a fact which I should have little suspected had I not inquired into the matter. And here I must add, that the same curious evidence has been afforded me, of the under-current of Spiritualism which is rapidly filtering through every class of society, altogether unknown to the majority, who pursue their path absolutely unaware that the ground is being daily more rapidly mined beneath their feet, and will fall in with them and their worldly concerns, their unjust privileges, their ill-gotten wealth, their unearned honours, their painted masks, and usurped authority, when they least expect it. There is scarcely a city or a considerable town in continental Europe at the present moment, where spiritualists are not reckoned by hundreds if not by thousands ; where regularly established communities do not habitually meet for spiritual purposes, and where they reckon among them individuals of every class and avocation, and intellects of the highest order ; where, in short, spiritual doctrines and adepts are penetrating the substratum in every direction, with the same subtlety and ubiquitousness as the early Christians of yore, and the *carbonari* and *illuminati* of past and present times.

I had small difficulty therefore in finding a whole nest of spiritualists, even where I was, so soon as I took the trouble to seek for them ; nor did it prove a mare's nest either, whatever the anti-spiritualist's wits may be tempted to conjecture.

Among two of these societies I got introduced without difficulty,

for if Spiritualism is not actually synonymous with concord, it is decidedly inscribed with the republican formula, "*Liberté, égalité fraternité.*" Strange to say, I found that the greater part of their members appertained to a rank and avocations least of all, one might have presumed, given to spiritual or imaginative propensities. They were mostly rich shop-keepers, merchants, professors, and others whose minds and time were wholly occupied with money-making trades and pursuits, or with public and private instruction. There were even several physicians of the number—those incorrigible materialists *par excellence*. There were also various individuals of eminence in their respective departments, among others a *savant* and antiquarian of high reputation, one or two directors of normal schools, and numerous teachers of all descriptions. One of the houses where these meetings took place was a school kept by a French professor, his wife, and three daughters. These latter, young and nice-looking girls, were all mediums in various ways. The *séances* were curious and interesting. They generally began with music, one of the girls and an Italian professor playing under spiritual inspiration. The remainder of the party sat round a large table, every one with a sheet of paper before them, the advanced mediums writing away as fast as they could, and others waiting for inspiration, while the tyros were making strange arabesques and fanciful figures of all kinds. For it appeared that mediums were often only enabled to write after repeated essays, and a period of probation more or less protracted.

I here had occasion to realize the necessity of physical phenomena, and the signification and value of the paltry wooden telegraph which has so often aroused our impatience, and caused us to repine at not being able to hold our conversations by any less tedious and imperfect method. The communications by writing, *i.e.*, the medium's hand, writing, under the volition of the spirits, though in every way satisfactory to the medium himself, who of course can be under no uncertainty as to the fact of the thoughts and the motion

of his hand proceeding from an impulsion extraneous to his own will, is completely the reverse to the on-lookers. No one but the writer himself, unless among advanced spiritualists, certain of each other's integrity, and able to verify it by their own spiritual intercourse, can have any security as to the fact of the medium being wholly passive in the matter; consequently, no conviction whatever can reach, through this method, the minds of any who are not writing mediums. Not so the tables, or whatever material article it is that is used for the purpose of a telegraph. This humble A B C, so ridiculed and scoffed at, is alone capable of conveying certitude to the incredulous, as to the extraneous source of the communications, it being easy to subject it to a control and scrutiny which the spiritual writing escapes.

One of the most curious manifestations to me was the drawing. One evening I had taken the ambassador and the officer with me to one of these meetings; all were seated round the table, we three neophytes included. Presently the Italian professor's hand started off as if possessed, and began with furious rapidity to cover his paper with heaps of little dots. Soon the dots formed themselves into figures of various descriptions, and in about twenty minutes a curious design covered the whole sheet with fantastic-looking flowers, lamps, bells, and numerous *bizarre* devices and emblems. The drawing was handed round for inspection. It was curious and quaint, and so intricate, elaborate, and enigmatical that it must have taken considerable time and trouble to the most sagacious mind to have given a rational solution of its signification, even from imagination. Another medium, however, achieved this difficulty in the same rapid manner, giving a very striking and ingenious elucidation of the various symbols, all of which were referred to the opening prospects of Spiritualism, its progress, futurity, and connection with the reform and development of modern society.

The whole performance was interesting and curious in the

extreme, and had I been no believer in spiritual phenomena, I should have been much puzzled to understand how both the designer and the interpreter could have succeeded in accomplishing their tasks without pausing an instant, either in the elaborate designs, or no less elaborate interpretations.

It was in vain, however, that I tried to write, my hand remained immovable. But not so the officer, for after an essay of about a quarter of an hour, his whole arm was seized with a sort of convulsive movement, jerking violently about, and the pencil he held, drawing extraordinary figures on the paper, which were not susceptible of any rational interpretation whatever, being evidently the pot-hooks and hangers of spiritual caligraphy.

So much for one of the ordinary spiritual meetings, which I only occasionally frequented, for I found on the whole that my own private ones were more interesting and satisfactory.

Innumerable other curious phenomena of various descriptions took place during the ensuing two months; too long to enumerate, and supererogatory to the end I have in view. I shall therefore close my narration with one of our most remarkable *séances*.

It had been promised that others besides the medium should behold the spirits, and I invited the officer before mentioned to join our party.

The *séance* commenced at eight o'clock, several other persons being present. After different communications had been rapped out, we were informed that we were about to see and feel the spirits, and that darkness was indispensable. Such being the requisition, I took the precautions I made it a point never to omit under similar circumstances. For although certain that no trickery was intended or possible, on the part of either the child or her parents, my object being to obtain absolute conviction as to the genuineness of all I witnessed, it was my special desire to make assurance doubly sure, and to leave no loophole whatever whereby any doubt or question could subsequently arise in my mind as to the facts; a

practice which I strongly recommend to all those who are anxious to arrive at any decisive convictions or conclusions whatever.

I therefore enacted that no one should remain in the room except the co-operators ; and in order to be able to control their motions, and thoroughly to satisfy myself, I separated the party, consisting of six, into two sections, three, including the girl's father and aunt, being seated at a table at the opposite extremity of the room, while I kept the medium completely under my own *surveillance*, by placing her at the table with the officer and myself, thus isolating her entirely from any friends of hers. Lights and matches were placed on both tables, in order that no one should be authorized to move from his place in the dark. I then made the girl place both her hands, one above the other, on the table, laid the officer's hands in the same fashion upon hers, held down their four hands with one of mine, and then, having extinguished the light, I placed my other hand on the top of theirs, not one of the three persons at the table being able thus to move a finger, much less to withdraw or make use of a hand, without the knowledge of the two others. The same precautions were taken at the other table, which was removed from ours by the entire length of a tolerable-sized room.

Stillness and silence ensued for about a quarter of an hour. At last a slight current of cool air passed over my hand—a peculiarity I had often previously remarked. A few minutes after I felt a slight touch, like that of a feather, pass over my fingers, which, as before mentioned, were crossed on the top of the other four hands ; the same light feathery touch was then drawn across my forehead. And now the persons at the other table called out that they were touched in the same manner. Then the officer exclaimed that he had been touched on the face and arm ; then the medium said that the spirits were passing hands over her.

It was *my* turn now. The spirits were apparently gathering strength, for I distinctly felt a hand upon my shoulder, and then

upon my knees. The next variation was a hand laid upon my cheek, and then upon the side of my head. There could be no illusion in my sensations, for although the pressure was still soft and light as a feather, it pushed my head thrice down upon my shoulder. Neither was there any probability of deceit, for the four hands of the only two persons at the table besides myself, were still immovably clasped together under my own; and the three individuals at the other table were far beyond our reach. Neither was there any possibility of their moving from their places without our hearing them, in a room perfectly quiet and still; besides which they were exchanging words with each other and with us during the whole of the time.

Again the hand of an invisible was placed upon my head, clasping my forehead, whereon this time I distinctly felt the four fingers and the thumb. I took one of my hands off, and held it over my head. There was no tangible arm to the spirit-hand, but no one whose senses are lucid and discriminating could have been in doubt upon the subject; for there was an unquestionable distinction between what I felt and the pressure of a human hand. Analysing my sensations, during the whole time, with the nicest accuracy, I distinctly perceived that the spirit-hand, although perfectly formed in human shape, and warm and soft to the touch, felt more like down than flesh, and that I could perceive no joints or bones in it whatever. Moreover it possessed a power peculiar to itself; for the pressure which had forced my head down was actually so light and soft that, had it been human, it could not have moved my head at all.

On the whole, the impression produced by this, my first tangible contact with spiritual entities, was singular and marvellous in the highest degree, and not wholly free from awe.

While we were thus scrutinizing our sensations, the medium cried out that she beheld the spirits; but this time it was in a sort of magic picture on the table.

“Who do you see?” I inquired.

“It is a Turkish Pacha,” said the child. “Oh, I see; it is R——. Pacha of Aleppo.”

“How do you know?” inquired the father from the other table.

“I see it written in letters of light upon his forehead,” again said the child.

“Oh, my God! I see him, too,” suddenly exclaimed the officer. “It is my dear friend; he who came the first evening to us at the Bey’s.”

“But how do you see him?” I asked, fevered with eagerness and curiosity.

“The table is like a field of light, and I see my friend’s head upon it; but for Heaven’s sake do not speak; it is too solemn,” he concluded, bursting into tears and sobbing audibly.

“I see my father on the table in the same manner,” now cried out the master of the house, from the other table.

Meanwhile I strained my eyes in vain. Nothing was visible to me except a few electric sparks, which I distinctly perceived, glittering here and there upon the table.

For several hours a repetition of the same phenomena took place, various spirits alternately appearing to the three persons aforesaid, in the form of magic pictures invisible to the others, while in compensation they kept touching from head to foot the remaining three who did not see them.

This manipulation, we were subsequently informed, signified that the spirits were magnetizing us, in order to enable us to see. Whether they would have been successful or not, in course of time, it is impossible to say, for after three or four hours, the officer and the other persons present got tired, and at two o’clock we were forced to raise the *séance*, much to my regret. Doubtless the gentlemen in question had often remained till four or five o’clock, at a ball, and would have thought little of sacrificing a

night again to any temporal pleasure or advantage, of an equally interesting description ; but nothing being to be gained, as is generally supposed at least, by investigations into spiritual matters, except information concerning the world beyond the grave and the futurity of the soul, he could not, of course, any more than the ordinary run of mankind, be expected to submit to similar inconveniences for such comparatively unimportant considerations.

Many other curious phenomena took place subsequently under the mediumship of this girl, no less than in the house of the Bey, and with two Polish ladies of my acquaintance, who turned out to be mediums likewise. Most of them, however, resembled the above, except on one occasion, when the family having agreed to consult the spirits at twelve o'clock on the following day, and not coming to the rendezvous at the appointed hour, the table in their drawing-room, habitually used for the spiritual telegraph, suddenly moved, *untouched*, a couple of yards along the floor, and rapped loudly of itself, in the presence of one of the aunts who was sitting working, and of the servant who was dusting the room, both of whom came rushing upstairs in astonishment and alarm to announce the extraordinary fact, and to call down the truants.

I forbear to narrate any more of the *séances* which took place, the phenomena produced having been chiefly repetitions of incidents of the like nature to the preceding. For having shortly after quitted Naples, I was unable to follow up the development of the girl's medium powers, always a matter of progression, more or less slow or rapid, according to circumstances.

What I had been so fortunate as to witness was amply sufficient, nevertheless, to certify the marvellous extent of the physical phenomena, and to point to the conclusion logically deducible therefrom—that where such powers are included in the attributes of spiritual entities, there is no limit which, in our ignorance, we are

justified in assigning to the marvels we are doubtless yet destined to realize.

It fully sufficed, likewise, to prove the incontrovertible nature of the evidence thus afforded, and the facilities providentially granted for its attainment, to all those who conscientiously and perseveringly seek the light.

In every single instance when I had seriously directed my attention to the subject, or rather, when I had sincerely aspired to ascertain the truth, and honestly taken some trouble to obtain the necessary evidence, light and demonstration of the most incontrovertible nature had been vouchsafed to me. To any reasoning, intelligent, and unprejudiced mind, the hand of Providence was unmistakably visible throughout the whole.

The chain of providential circumstances which Madame de N——'s clear and logical mind had first pointed out to me, was confirmed by the sequel.

Nothing could have been more evident than the fact that design, not chance, had brought about the display of the last and more extraordinary phenomena narrated.

I had found unusual and unaccountable difficulties in discovering a house to suit me on this occasion. It had been, according to my custom, my wish to reside in the country, and, if possible, on the sea-shore. Various residences had been pointed out to me; several of these I was on the eve of taking, when each time some unforeseen obstacle had intervened to break the bargain. A lady with whom I had become slightly acquainted, to all appearances by the merest chance, resided in the Jew's house. Without any assignable reason, she suddenly took it into her head to offer to cede me her apartments, and persisted in urging me to take them, till, sick of the hotel, I accepted the proposal. The rest I have narrated. It certainly cannot be attributed to chance, that when I casually requested the attendance of some grown-up member of the family, the child should have been selected whose

medium powers were absolutely unknown to every one, herself included.

If I dwell on these personal matters, it is with the view of calling the attention of all those who are sufficiently earnest, intellectual, and aspiring to take an interest in topics of a higher order than mere worldly gain or frivolous amusement, that it is within the power of every private person to investigate and ascertain the truth for himself; and that, moreover, those who pursue the research with perseverance, sincerity, and good-will, may reckon upon arriving at the goal, and being providentially assisted in their efforts. No one knows who may prove mediums among their own family circle, or their acquaintances and friends. No one can tell, till they essay. The probability is, that on an average, among every group of seven or eight people, at least one medium might be found. Hence there is no necessity whatever to have recourse to those who make a trade of their powers, and are consequently liable to suspicion, in order to obtain evidence as to the facts. Upon this the entire controversy turns for the present. The whole matter, vast as it is, lies in a nut-shell. It is, I repeat, a simple question of fact, which it depends on every one to verify for themselves.

Theory and *à priori* arguments are altogether premature at the present stage of the inquiry. The question stands thus:—Hundreds, and not alone hundreds, but thousands and hundreds of thousands, of educated, intelligent, and disinterested witnesses assert, like myself, that they have had ocular, tangible, and incontrovertible evidence of physical phenomena indicative of the agency and volition of invisible intelligences; *i. e.*, of spiritual entities. Thousands of others, who have been brought up to believe that if spirits exist they cannot communicate with men, contradict the affirmations based on collective testimony and evidential fact, by simple negations based on nothing at all, except their own prejudices, on an arrogantly assumed definition of the laws

of nature, of which they are in complete ignorance, and, likewise, on *à priori* theories and arguments which they fail to prove, either by facts or logic, the only two species of demonstration which can claim the title of evidence to rational and intelligent minds. So far it can hardly be questioned which party has the best of the controversy. As yet the anti-spiritualists have nothing on their side but that worst of all arguments, "*la raison du plus fort.*" They make considerably more noise, and are still in greater numbers, but that is all that can be said for them.

To retort upon them one of their favourite expressions, nothing can be more unphilosophical than to meet a question of fact by unsupported denegations, without having given the facts alleged any fair, honest, accurate, or sufficient investigation. But when the empty denegations are ostensibly based on assumed theories, which are not alone undemonstrable, but which can be proved to be logically untenable, the lack of philosophy becomes a peccadillo, and the arrogance of the denegation attains to the *ne plus ultra* of presumptuous absurdity.

I have already shown the utter fallacy of several of the theoretical objections which are urged against Spiritualism. Nor do I fear that the cleverest of our antagonists can find any logical ground whereby to refute my demonstrations. He will be a shrewd man who finds means to dispute my premises, that, admitting the existence of spiritual entities, a surmise which there are no reasonable grounds for denying, and innumerable analogical, psychological, and philosophical grounds for admitting, there is no reason for assuming that they are all either good or evil. Secondly, that, admitting them to be of mixed natures, it is infinitely more presumable that inferior spirits should be ready and willing to come at the beck of every insignificant individual who calls them, than intelligences of a lofty order. Thirdly, that the fact of an intelligence being inferior, puerile, or mediocre, does not imply that it is no intelligence at all, for mediocre men might by the same rule

be declared to be non-existent, if the fact of inferior or frivolous communications being received from frivolous or inferior spirits could be accepted as an argument of their non-existence. Fourthly, that as freedom and independent volition here are essential characteristics of the human soul, which is a spirit, it is logically deducible that in a spiritual condition souls must possess them likewise ; and that as, moreover, it is contrary to all reason, that beings in a superior condition of existence, such as the superiority of spirit to matter, should be less privileged than their inferiors, or subjected to them, it follows, as a necessary consequence, that spirits cannot be presumed to be worse off than men. It follows hence, too, that the parachute and dyspeptic wits are altogether hypercritical when they fall upon the poor mediums who honestly confess that the spirits come, or do not come, at their own pleasure.

How far this may or may not prove convenient to the said mediums is totally irrelevant to the question. I should say it was decidedly the reverse of convenient, but this is a matter of opinion. That, however, which is no matter of opinion, but of logical evidence, is, that these gentlemen are really not justified in falling foul of the mediums for not being able to compel spirits to assist at their assemblies whenever it suits them to call them, when they themselves would find it impossible to compel the least clerk or errand-boy of Moses & Co. to honour their tea-table with his presence, if he did not choose to do so, and when the Czar of all the Russias could not bring his shoeblack to his Imperial dinner-table against his will, otherwise than by a grossly tyrannical abuse of power.

I have said likewise that if the motion of a table or a chair, without any human agency, produces exactly the identical effect, and conduces as efficiently to the purpose in view as the removal of a planetary sphere from its orbit, it is not altogether foolish or unphilosophical to suppose that the table or the chair may be used

in preference to the planetary sphere ; and I shall now proceed to elucidate that portion of the argument which affords such an inexhaustible source of pleasantry to the facetious gentlemen in question. We shall then see whether they or the spiritualists have the best of the argument on that point likewise.

In the first place, it is absurd, and unmeaning to dispute as to the wisdom or propriety of the manifestations, while the question of fact remains yet in abeyance. The critics who presume to ridicule the phenomena without having any genuine evidence to adduce in proof that they are false, and that the innumerable honest, intelligent, and disinterested witnesses who avouch them are consequently all either fools or impostors, forget it is the supreme wisdom of God which they are presuming to arraign before their petty tribunal.

For if the facts are *true*, who shall deny that they proceed from God's will? and if from Him, who shall presume blasphemously to assert that they can be either puerile, foolish, or vain? Before, therefore, they have succeeded in disproving the facts, it is the climax of arrogance, folly, and impiety to scoff and criticise what they are too shallow, ignorant, and frivolous to comprehend or to investigate. Setting this obvious consideration aside for the present, let us now examine the question theoretically, and ascertain how far, in a purely logical point of view, the manifestations can be justly stigmatized as puerile, ridiculous, or unphilosophical.

To commence with the *à priori* considerations, I presume that it is a generally accepted truth that the human race is progressive and perfectible. History teaches us that civilization and revelation have been alike progressive hitherto, and were history silent on these points, philosophy, common sense, analogy, and logic would alike combine to demonstrate to us that it is both rational and indispensable that the education of the human race should be adapted to its successive degrees of intelligence and advancement. Who is ignorant that the education of a child or a savage can only

be judicious or advantageous when it is suited to their receptive faculties? We do not put a child to learn algebra before he is capable of digesting the multiplication table; nor do we lay Euclid before a peasant or a savage before he has learned to spell and read; or if we did, it would certainly not be held to be a proof of our wisdom, or an experiment likely to be successful.

Hence it follows, that revelation must necessarily be suited to the degree of enlightenment and development of the minds destined to receive and turn it to account. In other words, to be judicious or efficacious, it must inevitably be progressive. For where all around is progressive, it is a patent truth that whatever stands still recedes. Revelation, to be wise and efficient, must therefore progress with progressive man, for the self-evident reason that more cannot be judiciously imparted than his existing faculties and intelligence are equal to receive and turn to a good use. Consequently, when those faculties have attained to a higher order of development, he has outgrown the preceding revelation, as a child outgrows his primer and his baby clothes. Revelation therefore can never be final, since more cannot be conceded to the mass than what is on a level with the receptive faculties of the epoch; and when those receptive faculties have enlarged their scope and powers, a supplementary revelation becomes indispensable.

Christianity was the supplement afforded to the dawn of modern civilization.

For the last two centuries, science and enlightenment have been rapidly outgrowing it. I do not mean, of course, its moral precepts. This is simply a logical necessity, for moral principles being synonymous with truth, must evidently be eternal. They may be amplified and developed, but they can never be radically altered.

In saying that modern civilization has outgrown Christianity, I mean therefore solely its evidence; the innumerable absurdities, superstitions, metaphorical exaggerations, and falsehoods with which the folly and ignorance of men, and the sordid aims of in-

terest and priestcraft of all sects and denominations, have surcharged, disguised, and defaced the pure, sublime, and inspired revelations of Christ.

Hence the hour is now arrived, when, if men are not to reject revelation altogether, and to lapse into the dismal chaos of materialism, with the irretrievable degradation and despair it entails, a supplementary revelation has become absolutely indispensable.

I am quite aware of the hue and cry that this declaration is calculated to call forth among a certain set in England, although not on the Continent, where, among the educated and enlightened classes, there are none who will be disposed to deny my postulate, except a small minority of priest-ridden ultramontanists, who either abdicate their entire judgment and surrender their responsibility to the hands of their confessor, or who hypocritically profess, for interested purposes, the direct converse of what they think.

It is to the English, therefore, that I specially address myself on this point. And here it is not irrelevant to state that the large majority who think they have discharged all the obligations of a Christian by going to church on a Sunday, are completely mistaken in supposing that the indifference which they mistake for religion, and which enables them to pursue their jog-trot routine without even troubling themselves to inquire what it is they really do believe, or outwardly profess, is the general condition of minds of a higher order even in England. The empire of exterior observances, and the tyranny of public opinion, or rather of public hypocrisy, in England being of the most intolerant and oppressive description, it is only a very small proportion of the enlightened and intelligent minority who possess sufficient moral courage and temporal independence to venture to stem the tide, or to risk the buffets and bruises they are likely to encounter in the contest. Very few, moreover, take a sufficiently deep interest in the controversy to induce them to risk the unpleasant consequences they

foresee, merely in the cause of truth and abstract principle. Hence it arises, that by far the greater number of those whose reason absolutely rejects the popular creed take special care to suppress their opinions except in confidential intercourse with congenial souls. It is thus that in England the large majority whose time and interest are mainly absorbed by lucre, worldliness, or frivolity, have remained in profound ignorance of the widely extended under-current of Scepticism which has been rapidly modifying the convictions of the more intellectual and gifted portion of the community; very different in this respect from the Continent, where, the majority freely expressing their thoughts on all subjects except politics, Scepticism has been long known, and universally acknowledged to be the spirit of the age.

For myself, however, being one of those who have never condescended to yield the mind to intolerance, bigotry, tyranny, or prejudice, and who feel supreme scorn for those who do, no less than for those who are weak or dastardly enough to profess opinions they do not hold, having always taken the initiative of frankness on such topics with all those whose brains I considered worth picking, I am enabled here boldly to affirm that Scepticism is very little less widely diffused among the intellectual and reasoning portion of the British nation than abroad. This, at least, I know, that I have never yet found a mind of a high and powerful order among my English compatriots which, in reality, believed a single syllable on faith that is contrary to reason, or incompatible with justice, morality, wisdom, supreme benevolence, and logical demonstration,—a wide category, under which, *nota bene*, much of the doctrines and the fables received as Divine revelation by the Protestant no less than the Catholic Church are indubitably to be classed.

On inquiring wherefore these individuals so carefully kept their convictions to themselves, I invariably found that the reason was the same with all; *i. e.*, that they do not think it worth while to

expose themselves, as they express it, to "being chalked on the back."

The fact therefore remains averred to me, and doubtless to all those who, like myself, have taken any trouble to inquire into the question, that Scepticism is as much the order of the day in England as throughout continental Europe; for it is assuredly the meditative, the erudite, and the philosophical minority whose opinions can alone claim any weight and value,—not the frivolous, the worldly, and the unthinking mass.

What then does the prevalence, and rapidly increasing extension of Scepticism throughout the civilized world signify and indicate? Scepticism means doubt; what is doubt but darkness, ignorance, uncertainty? Uncertainty of everything most interesting and important to mankind,—at least, to the superior portion of it. Where does doubt arise? Clearly, from the want of such evidence as is of a nature to induce conviction. Wherever there is ample and incontestable evidence, there neither is nor can be any doubt. It follows thence, irrefragably, that Scepticism being the tendency of the present day, this alone demonstrates that the evidence of Divine revelation has become insufficient to satisfy the advanced condition of enlightened nineteenth-century minds; for did the evidence amount to demonstration, Scepticism could not exist, or, at least, must be wholly exceptional, instead of being, as it unquestionably is, the general bent of higher intellects at the present day; for otherwise it would be that logical impossibility, an effect without a cause.

It must be no less evident to every rational being, that if the immortality of the soul be a fact, and the providential interposition of God, both in revelation and human affairs be a certainty, it is beyond all else desirable that these sublime truths, in which we are so deeply interested, should be demonstrated to men, in order to moralize, to console, and to enlighten them as regards their present trials and their future destinies. Nor, I believe, are there

many, if any, individuals, whether sceptics or believers, who would venture to deny that the perpetuation of our existence beyond the grave is a universal aspiration, even with those who question it most. It may indeed be assumed as a certainty, that there is no human being who would not recoil from the idea of annihilation, and aspire to immortality, especially if freed from the dismal perspective of eternal punishment, and certain of having a chance of redeeming his past errors whenever he chooses to profit by it.

Scepticism has likewise another evil; namely, the egotism and worldliness it inevitably propagates among all but exceptionally elevated natures. If ordinary men question their chances of a future existence, they immediately consider it a *métier de dupe* to sacrifice any tangible advantage for a doubtful contingency. Hence the majority of society ends, by putting in practice that most revolting and fatal of all principles, "*après moi le déluge.*" To this is clearly traceable the intense anxiety for the acquisition of wealth, which, when it absorbs all the higher aims and ends of existence, becomes the most sordid and debasing of all human passions, a trait eminently characteristic of the present century, more than any preceding period of the world's history. It is this supreme love of money, above and beyond all things, which renders men more worthless, selfish, and ignoble than almost any other failing, and which finally extinguishes every noble feeling and every high principle, while it silences even the voice of conscience, no less than every genuine sense of honour, dignity, and uprightness. Hence Scepticism is in every sense an evil, and one whose direct consequences not alone darken, but inevitably tend to degrade and demoralize the world.

It may be objected by some, that the lofty precepts of Christianity are fully adequate to religiously instruct, and to elevate humanity. Those who take this side of the argument overlook the obvious objection, that to him who questions its Divine authority it possesses no more weight than the philosophical lucu-

brations of a Socrates or a Plato ; hence, that its conclusions, its revelations, and its teaching, in their eyes, are no more impressive than erring human speculation, and dogmatising human wisdom. It is to this cause that is no less clearly attributable the remarkable discrepancy between Christian doctrines and Christian practice. When men received the first with implicit faith, as proceeding directly from Divine authority, the single recommendation of St. Paul, that it was better to be single than married, was sufficient to induce hundreds and thousands to go and bury themselves in caves and rocks, in the trackless deserts of Egypt, or to renounce every human enjoyment for the dismal prison of the convent cell. When men have ceased to feel any reasoned conviction as to its Divine origin, it has likewise ceased to influence the minds and conduct of the majority, any more than the teaching of the *académie*, or the Sunday sermon.

It must be evident, therefore, to all reasoning minds, that when the evidence of a revelation, purporting to proceed from God, has become totally inadequate to convince the majority of superior minds, and when it has, in consequence, ceased to exercise any substantial influence upon the great mass of mankind, it has become totally inefficient for the purposes which revelation is designed to fulfil. That such is the present aspect of the question, few liberal, unprejudiced, and intelligent minds will be tempted to deny. Hence, that the moment is evidently arrived, when, if revelation is either a truth or a necessity, it is indispensable that the preceding ones should be supplemented in a manner calculated to meet the advanced requirements of modern civilization.

It now only remains to be seen whether the new revelation comes in a form to fulfil these conditions ; for if Spiritualism be true at all, as the new revelation it must evidently be accepted.

It is universally recognised, that education and science have obtained of late years an extraordinarily wide and rapid extension.

The impulsion once given, it is inevitable that it should proceed henceforth at a geometrical ratio ; *ergo*, education being, above all, the development of the intellectual faculties, and science the demonstration of facts, the rapid propagation of both must conduce to render logical and tangible demonstration the chief requirement of men's developed reasoning faculties and increasing knowledge.

Let us see whether the spiritual phenomena can be classed under this head or not. They are ridiculed as puerile, petty, unmeaning, foolish, and unphilosophical. Now, it strikes me, that if the ends and purpose of a design be in the highest degree important, necessary, and sublime, it cannot be held liable to any one of the censures aforesaid. Secondly, that if the means adopted for that purpose can be proved to be not alone admirably calculated to attain every one of the ends in view, but are moreover the *only adequate, efficient, judicious, and possible* means to attain those ends, they can hardly be held to come under the above sweeping criticism either.

That both these postulates can be proved respecting spiritual manifestations, I am about to demonstrate.

I must not, however, omit in the list a last objection which has been gravely urged to me by intelligent and serious persons. I have heard it asserted that it is unworthy of the dignity of Providence to resort to such means. It is so amusingly absurd to assert that anything can be unworthy of the dignity of Providence, as if it were possible for God to let Himself down by anything not unjust or unwise.

To return, however, to arguments which are less palpably ridiculous, though no less untenable. I have said that I can demonstrate that if the ends of the new revelation are sublime, the means are no less admirably and judiciously adapted to attain them.

I have shown, likewise, that a new, more complete, and convinc-

ing revelation cannot be held to be supererogatory or undesirable for the great majority of mankind at the present epoch. I proceed to prove the second postulate, that the means now resorted to are the best, most sagacious, and most efficient to fulfil the purposes of revelation, and, what is more, the only ones compatible with the well-being of men and the wisdom of Providence, or adequate to achieve those aims at the actual stage of intellectual development at which men have arrived.

First, then, the ostensible and logical aims of all revelation, universally avouched and acknowledged, are threefold ; namely, to moralize, to console, and to enlighten men throughout the trials of temporal existence, by certifying to them their moral responsibility, the immortality of the soul, and the providential government of God throughout the universe. The first point requisite, then, is to convince men's minds of the Divine authenticity of revelation, for in this primary postulate its entire authority and weight resides. If not directly emanating from God's infallibility, it is at once reduced to the level of questionable human speculation.

There are but three ways, that I am aware of, by which this fact can be demonstrated, and conviction superinduced in reasoning beings ; these being inspiration, miracles, or the return of the dead, *i. e.*, of departed spirits, to bear witness of their existence and condition beyond the grave. Let us see how and in what form these methods are available at the present time. To commence with inspiration ; what chance would that intimate and personal assurance of Divine communication have of transmitting its convictions, and impressing its dicta on the anti-inspired brains of modern critics, *savants*, and sceptics. I have elsewhere declared that were Moses and Isaiah, St. Paul and St. Augustine to appear in the monk's frock or the minister's surplice, and to thunder forth their eloquence in every capital of modern Europe, the sole acknowledgment their inspiration might hope to receive, and

the utmost effect it could produce would be to become the fashion, and attract a crowd, like the *conférences* of Lacordaire, or the sermons of *Père* Felix and Mr. Spurgeon. I here say far more, for I boldly avouch that were Christ to return upon the earth, modern Scepticism would scout His Divine authority, and both ridicule and deny the miracles by which He averred it, unless of a totally different description from those which sufficed to convince His disciples, if not the Jewish nation.

I ask the public of the present day, what weight they would attach to the self-arrogated pretension of Divine authority set up by any reformer, if all he had to support it were the miracles performed by Christ. On the healing of the sick I need not dwell. That is too obviously susceptible of explanation and question to require comment. But to take those more indicative of supernatural agency, is there any one who would venture to assert that, were the miracle of the loaves and fishes performed to-day by the most admirable of preachers, and the most virtuous of men, in the Champ de Mars or Hyde Park, before assembled thousands, there would be any considerable portion of those witnesses, much less any non-witnesses whatever, whom it would be possible to persuade that no other loaves and fishes had been surreptitiously introduced than the original five. Again, would the devils running into the swine, and the swine into the sea, conduce to the conviction of any other minds than those which still consent to digest the supernatural performances of winking Madonnas, and sweating wooden Christs? Would even a second Lazarus resuscitated produce any other conviction in the public than that of delusion or imposture? and would not the least sceptical attribute the miracle to a fortunate restoration from trance or catalepsy? In a word, is there any Bible miracle or record which could not and would not be successfully confuted by modern Scepticism, were it to be repeated in our times?

This brings us to the second manifestation of revelation, by

miraculous phenomena. What species of miracles are susceptible of successfully withstanding the ingenuity of modern incredulity and the vast resources and scope of modern science? Evidently, nothing of the description which in a less advanced age was sufficient for the purpose of conviction—the chief aim of all miracles. What then, I repeat, is of a nature to produce that effect even upon the most invincible Scepticism? Clearly, nothing but the realization of actual and undeniable impossibility.

This alone is adequate to stand the brunt of modern disbelief, and to set at defiance the explanations, the ingenuity, and the speculations of modern science. How then can the evidence of impossibility be incontestably afforded? Only in two ways—either by the production of extraordinary and supernatural marvels on a stupendous scale, or by the realization of physical impossibilities of every minor description, absolutely unquestionable to each individual witness. Let us now see which of these two methods is best adapted to conduce to the three ends of revelation. The first must evidently consist either of extraordinary revolutions in the heavens or on the earth, or of astounding spiritual pageants appearing to thousands of spectators. Such events could assuredly not be matters of frequent occurrence, for several obvious reasons. First, great revolutions of the planetary orbs would be inconsistent with the laws established by Providence for the regulation of the universe. Neither would they, if constantly repeated, produce any greater effect, or be classed, in the long run, under any other head than the marvels they already reveal to us.

On the other hand, extraordinary revolutions on the earth would be destructive of the economy of nature, and injurious to the avocations and the tasks allotted to men. The apparitions of vast spiritual pageants are equally liable to the latter objection. Men who have been startled out of their ordinary senses by the sight of a legion of seraphim careering through the skies, or of paradise opening before them, are not likely to recover their equani-

mity sufficiently to bring their ordinary faculties to their daily work for many a day and week.

But forcible as is this objection, there exist others to this method, of a still more insurmountable description. It would be absolutely inefficient to attain any one of the three aims of revelation. It would be powerless to convince, because it would be utterly disbelieved by all, save the ocular witnesses; and as it could not be constantly repeated, the greater part of those witnesses themselves would suffer themselves to be persuaded, after a time, that they had been deceived by an optical delusion, or some extraordinary species of aurora borealis or fata morgana. That this is no unwarrantable conclusion, history may serve to convince us, by the numerous instances therein recorded, wherein angelic hosts—not to speak of the questionable cross of Constantine—were beheld in the heavens by assembled armies, whose testimony failed to convince contemporary nations, much less their posterity. For purposes of permanent conviction, therefore, such means would be vain; for moralization or consolation they would be still more futile, inasmuch as they would fail to convey any certitude to men's minds concerning their own individual futurity, or that of the beloved dead, and the probability of their final reunion,—the main objects, to which every other is secondary, and comparatively uninteresting, to the great majority of human souls.

There remain, therefore, only the last two methods capable of attaining the ends in view; *i. e.*, spiritual phenomena of a minor description, and the return of the dead from the spiritual world. The latter is evidently the most convincing, consoling, and efficient of all, and the only one that completely attains and fulfils the three ends of revelation. The testimony of a fellow-being who has passed the great bourn of the grave, and who has learned the impenetrable mysteries of the spiritual world from personal experience, must evidently be more convincing and ample than any other. When, moreover, it proceeds from those we have loved and

lost; when we are thus enabled to communicate with the departed dear ones, whom we never hoped to behold and hear again; when *from themselves* we obtain the certainty of their existence and the information for which we so intensely long; when from lips whose affection never deceived us, whose supreme interest in our welfare we know beyond all doubt, we learn their actual condition, the providential interposition of God, and the fate that awaits those who live in vain, as well as the supreme bliss prepared by the love of the great Creator for those who fit themselves for spiritual life by their virtues and their aspirations in this; when we learn from those we mourn, that it depends on us to rejoin them for ever in realms of supreme felicity, or to be separated from them for indefinite and perhaps countless ages,—who will have the courage or the folly to pretend that any conceivable consolation, that any possible mode of instruction and reformation can even approach to the impressiveness and the efficiency of this?

Hence has the universal aspiration been to receive testimony from beyond the grave. What was Byron wont to say?—"Let one return from the dead, and I shall believe." How often have I heard sceptics of lofty intellects declare that no other evidence, save that of the departed speaking from the spiritual world, could be deemed conclusive, or force absolute conviction upon their minds. In what form then does the new revelation come, but in that which is universally felt to be the most desirable, the most consoling, and the most convincing, by every intelligent mind. It comes in the form of the spirits of the departed returning to this earth, and communicating with those who mourn and love them; or with those who invoke them, if they so please. It comes in the form of information imparted by the lips of the so-called dead, conveying knowledge of the amplest and most profoundly interesting description, concerning the conditions of spiritual existence, the future of the soul, the providence of God, the genuine and rational nature of the rewards and punishments that await us,

and true methods whereby to avoid the one and to attain the other.

But there is another side to the question. In order that the testimony should be convincing—for the revelation to be incontrovertible, efficacious, supreme—it is indispensable that the authenticity of the spiritual communications should be so amply demonstrated as to place their nature and origin beyond all doubt, so as to force irresistible conviction upon the most sceptical and stubborn minds. How can this be effectually accomplished? At a superficial glance, nothing seems easier, presupposing the possibility of ghosts or spirits returning to the earth and rendering themselves visible and audible to men, than to convince these latter of the fact. Viewing the matter practically instead of theoretically, we shall find, however, that it is not quite so facile a task as might be supposed.

How can spirits demonstrate their tangible presence to the minds of disbelievers in ghosts, or spiritual communication? By appearing to them, or rendering themselves positively audible, is the first idea that presents itself. But if that would suffice to convince mankind of spiritual phenomena, it would long since have been universally acknowledged as a patent fact; for innumerable are the apparitions on record, authenticated by testimony of the most unquestionable character, and which no one would dream of questioning on any other subject. How is it that spirits invariably appear at night, in the dark, to persons alone, under circumstances always liable to deceit, delusion, and suspicion? say the anti-ghost seers. Why do they not come in broad daylight? at times and in places when nervous or dyspeptic individuals cannot be scared out of their wits by an old tree, a linen rag, a cow, or anything else, which in the phantastic mirage of the moon or stars they mistake for a phantom?

I need not here allude to the far-famed and often-repeated story of the ghost who persecuted the Wesley family for many months,

and made his presence audibly and tangibly evident to the thirteen intelligent members of that family ; neither is it necessary to recall the apparition which appeared to General Winyard in broad daylight, or that of the Empress Anne, of Russia, seen by twenty persons or more, in the throne-room of the palace of St. Petersburg. The list is much too long to find a place here. But among many others publicly recorded in every country, and among the far greater number that are known only to the private families wherein they have taken place, two or three have chanced to come immediately under my own observation, which are too much to the point to be passed over in silence, fulfilling as they do the chief requisitions of sceptics. The one was narrated to me when at Berlin, where it occurred, and is well known. The others I heard from the lips of the gentlemen to whom they happened.

A celebrated Prussian professor whose name is famous, but which I do not at this moment recall, entering the public assembly room of the Academy of Berlin, at three o'clock in the afternoon, beheld seated in his accustomed place another professor, an intimate friend of his, who had been dead three months.

It cannot be suggested that there could be any alarm or delusion to predispose the mind of the seer to behold, or fancy he beheld, a ghost. A learned and intelligent man, going to a customary meeting of *savants*, in broad daylight, traversing the busy street of a great capital, is certainly most unlikely to have selected such a moment to think of ghosts. If it be urged that he had been used to seeing his friend there, and that fancy might have pictured his apparition in his empty seat, such an explanation cannot be rationally accepted, for if his imagination were thus deeply impressed by his loss, the effect would evidently have been produced at the time, or immediately after, not when an interval of three months had worn off the edge of his regret, and had accustomed his eyes to the empty *fauteuil*.

Neither is it a very usual thing for imagination, under normal

conditions, to be so vividly excited as to give to the pictures of the mental vision the force of objective realities. We call up the image of our absent friends whenever we think of them, but it does not occur to people in their senses to fancy they are tangibly before them, or to feel disposed to walk up and shake hands with them. If imagination were suffered to lead us astray to that extent, there would be no distinction between sanity and madness. Yet such was the impression produced on the professor in question, who, according to his own version of the story, declares that he never beheld any living person more distinctly or tangibly than this apparition, so much so that, had he not been positively certain that his friend had been dead and buried for three months, he should have gone straight up to welcome him.

The second story concerns a gentleman, now an eminent lawyer in London, whose name I am not authorized to divulge. He is a travelled and highly educated man. I need hardly add that he is a sharp, sagacious, and discriminating one. He narrated to me, that awaking one fine summer's morning in broad daylight, the sun streaming full into his chamber, he beheld, on opening his eyes; as distinctly as ever he saw anything or any one in his life, a strange man standing before the fire-place, and leaning his elbow on the mantel-piece.

He started up in bed, rubbed his eyes to assure himself that he was not dreaming, and called out wrathfully, "Who are you? What brings you here?" The man returned no answer, and did not move. Mr. C—— sprung out of bed, walked straight up to the intruder, *continued to see him till he came close up*, when, as he was about to collar him, the figure instantaneously vanished.

Another gentleman, a highly scientific and intelligent man, one whose veracity none who knew him would question for an instant, informed me that riding home one night across a common familiar to him from infancy, he beheld, in the broad moonlight, three individuals coming across it in his direction. It was past midnight,

The hour was unusual for labourers or workmen to be abroad ; the apparition was consequently suspicious. Bold and daring, as most Englishmen are, he spurred on his horse and rode straight up to them. He continued to see them advance towards him, till when they were within a very short distance, all three suddenly appeared to sink into the ground. He rode up to the spot. He knew it well. There was not a burrow or a bush, much less a quarry or a limekiln, within a mile, wherein a man could have concealed himself, yet he groped round and round, on all sides, in vain. The three men had totally vanished. He confessed to me that he had never felt so startled in his life, or had such strange misgivings as during that solitary gallop homewards.

Here, at least, are three persons who might be presumed to have some faith in ghosts, if objective apparitions have power to impress the belief on their eye-witnesses. Yet far from it ; these three gentlemen were among the firmest disbelievers in ghosts and spiritual communications. Each of the three was thoroughly persuaded that he had been the victim of optical delusion.

What species of apparition, then, can convince sceptical minds if such was the impression made on three intelligent eye-witnesses by apparitions beheld under the least ambiguous conditions ; all three being in perfect health, never having suffered from optical or any other delusions before or since, and knowing themselves to have been uninfluenced by any fear or predisposition whatever.

It will be retorted, perhaps, that if the spirits rendered themselves visible to several witnesses at once, the optical-delusion theory could not stand their united testimony. That, however, is taking an erroneous view of modern Scepticism. It is not so easily baffled. If apparitions are more frequently visible to individuals alone, there are too many instances authenticated, wherein numerous spectators, or members of one family, have beheld or heard the same thing, for collective testimony to have escaped its ingenuity.

Such was the ghost who persecuted the famous French actress, Mdlle. Clairon, and whose strange freaks, performed in the presence and the hearing of half the *beaux esprits* and *Voltaireiens* of the last century, during two years, caused such a sensation in Paris at the time, and are so minutely recounted in half the memoirs of that day. Such, too, was the Wesley ghost, and various others no less celebrated. Hence, Scepticism has been driven to take refuge in one of the most original, and certainly one of the most illogical and absurd solutions of the problem which it is possible for a sane mind to conceive; it has of late years supplemented optical delusions by "collective hallucinations."

Here let me ask all reasoning individuals, what species of domestic apparition can possibly escape being classed in one or other of these two categories? I ask them, likewise, supposing it to be desirable to reveal to the world at large the possibility of communicating with departed spirits, by what means men's minds can be convinced of the fact, if the dogmatism of modern science, rendered arrogant by what should have made it humble—*i. e.*, by recent discoveries which clearly indicate that it has scarcely yet crossed the threshold of the higher knowledge now dawning upon mankind—has led men to reject the most incontestable of all demonstrations which in former ages no sane person would have doubted for an instant; namely, the lucid evidence of their own senses, and secondly, the united testimony of the most respectable and credible witnesses?

If they look into the matter a little less superficially than is their wont, and interrogate their own brains as well as those of their friends, they will find, if I am not much mistaken, that nothing, save physical and tangible *impossibility*, is equal to meet the emergency.

Let us see now how this evidence of impossibility is rendered palpable and undeniable, in the case of the spiritual phenomena, to even the most mediocre intelligence. Every human being, not an

idiot or a lunatic, is aware that inert matter of all descriptions possesses no intrinsic volition, action, nor intelligence. Hence, if it displays any one of these three attributes of spirit, there is no one, down to a child or a peasant, who is not positively certain that the cause cannot by any possibility originate in itself.

Let a table, a chair, a candlestick, a pencil,—in a word, any inanimate object whatever, move of its own accord, obey intelligently an intelligent command, or reply intelligibly and intelligently to a question, it becomes instantaneously evident to every witness of the fact that some other agency than its own has produced the marvel.

It is very easy for those who are seriously bent on investigating the phenomena, to make such dispositions and take such precautions, as can positively certify them that none of the human spectators have contributed to it. This ascertained, the conclusion is self-evident and absolutely irresistible, that an invisible agency is the cause. Were motion alone produced, it might be attributed to some yet undiscovered physical force ; but intelligence being invariably the concomitant, that surmise becomes at once wholly inadmissible to any logical mind ; for every individual who is capable of reasoning at all, knows that independent volition and mental spontaneity are altogether incompatible with mere matter. The electric telegraph conveys a message from one end of the earth to the other, but it transmits it passively as it received it. Were it to alter its tenour, even by one idea or one word, electricity must at once be recognised as identical with spirit.

Those, therefore, who, admitting the spontaneous motion of tables and chairs, etc., etc., attribute their independent action to a recondite physical force, entirely overlook the fact, that, as by far the greater part of these motions are accompanied by intelligence, being either in obedience to some express request, or in reply to some interrogation, they are altogether unaccountable by any other agency than that of an invisible, consequently an incorporeal, in-

telligence, which means a spirit, for it is a patent fact that there can be no effect without an adequate cause. It follows thence that *absolute conviction* at once forces itself upon every lucid mind which witnesses the intelligent motion of any portion of inert matter, under conditions which place the passiveness of all the human spectators beyond all possibility of doubt.

But why such ignoble and paltry articles as tables and chairs? reiterates Scepticism, driven to its last entrenchments.

The cavil is puerile and disingenuous; for every one who has seen or heard anything on the subject is aware, by this time, that it is not tables and chairs alone, but any and every species of article composed of inert matter, by which the same species of phenomena can be and is reproduced. As for greater and more important things not being used for the purpose, the reason already given is obvious, since the sole object of giving intelligent motion to inert matter is to prove, *by the impossibility* of the fact, the co-operation of an invisible, intelligent agency; it being every atom as impossible for a chair, a stool, or a hat to nod and answer, or rise up in the air by its own unaided action, as for a house or a church steeple, it may naturally be concluded, that the stool or the hat may be selected as more convenient for the purpose than the house or the steeple.

But there is another reason less obvious. The nature of the evidence is such that it is absolutely indispensable that each individual should obtain it for himself. No intelligent person can possibly accept it implicitly on the testimony of others, be they ever so trusted or so trustworthy. The utmost second-hand evidence can effect, in their case, is to induce curiosity and research. Hence it becomes indispensable that the phenomena should be easily and conveniently producible, since it is requisite that it should be incessantly and universally reiterated. The most familiar and common-place objects being equally available for the purpose in view as the rarest and most inaccessible, it is entirely

consistent with supreme wisdom that the first should be selected in preference to the second, the phenomena being thus placed within the reach of the poorest peasant, no less than of the wealthiest peer.

It may be objected that familiar physical marvels may prove the fact of spiritual existence and communications, but that they can do little more. There are others, too, who will declare, like my literary friend, that if inferior, ignorant, and puerile spirits more generally respond to men than entities of a lofty order, their acquaintance can hardly be esteemed worth cultivating, and their instructions can still less be expected to contribute to the enlightenment of mankind. To this the reply is simple. The physical phenomena are the means, not the end. They are not intended to afford any other enlightenment than that of evidence. They are simply the corroborative testimony of the fact of spiritual intercourse and Divine inspiration. It is the same with the communications of inferior spirits ; they are not destined to enlighten, but to *prove* the return of the departed. The inspiration of a higher order is communicated in a very different manner, and under totally converse conditions. This, the supreme boon of revelation, is reserved, like all that God in His justice and wisdom decrees, for the chosen ones who deserve it best and are most capable of bringing it to full fruition by the purity and loftiness of their aspirations and the receptive power of their intellectual faculties. These nobler natures may alone hope for communications of a superior description, and for the intercourse of spirits of a high degree and possessing supreme knowledge.

But in order that these communications should obtain the influence and the authority which we believe they are destined to acquire, it is indispensable that their spiritual origin should be authenticated by evidence capable of accrediting them to human minds. Hence the necessity of the revelation coming in a double form, that of evidence tantamount to demonstration, and of lofty intellectual illumination.

All spiritualists of a high order are aware that the table rapping and other physical demonstrations cease to be the accompaniment of spiritual communications as soon as the minds of adepts are absolutely convinced of the facts, and seldom return except in case new doubts arise in their minds, or they are desirous of convincing neophytes. This results from natural causes, like all the other physical phenomena, which are no violation of a law of nature, since spiritual evocations and intercourse are no new miraculous power granted to man, but simply a development of the powers originally latent within him, providentially revealed at the hour when it has become necessary that what was only known to the favoured few should be universally divulged to the mass.

Hence, when a *lofty* mind is convinced of the facts, it is ripe for higher spiritual intercourse. It aspires intensely to the supreme light which has dawned before its mental vision ; it supplicates for greater and higher revelation. Higher and purer spirits are thus attracted. As a necessary consequence, inferior entities are compelled to withdraw, since, wherever spirits of an elevated description congregate, evil or impure ones are pretty sure to be excluded.

Thus, by a natural law, physical phenomena are replaced by that form of spiritual intercourse which is denominated in the present day mental impression, unless it is spiritual dictation, the more ordinary method which is resorted to.

There are some too, more highly favoured still, either in consequence of intellectual power and lucidity of a high and peculiar description, of exceptional virtues, or aspirations whose disinterested, unworldly aims and spiritual intensity render them no less rare. To these elect it is conceded that their latent spiritual perceptions may become so highly developed, even in their carnal condition, as to enable them to anticipate the faculties of the disembodied soul, and to behold the, to us, invisible spiritual world, and converse directly with its inmates, independently of any of the customary adjuncts.

In *résumé*, the new revelation differs from those which have preceded it, chiefly in the evidence by which it is made manifest,—evidence which is adapted, with supreme judgment, to the requirements of a scientific age, which nothing but irrefragable demonstration can convince. It differs likewise in another characteristic, no less incontestably wise and providential; namely, the vast advance which it makes beyond all that has hitherto been vouchsafed to men for their information and guidance.

In this respect it is clearly adapted to the developed knowledge and reason which are now so rapidly gathering around us. Nothing has ever approached the nature of the evidence now afforded, in regard to its universality, its supreme conviction, and the vast and glorious perspectives it opens to progressive humanity. Imagination can scarcely conceive, nor reason embrace, the stupendous horizon that is now in process of revelation to the world at large. Meanwhile, one truth at least results from the present stage of the investigation; *i. e.*, that there are no limits assignable by our finite conceptions to the heavenly faculties and transcendent spiritual light to which men may attain, even in this material world. In other words, it becomes evident to all reasoning minds which have taken the trouble to ascertain the facts, that the spiritual programme is no myth, and that, in sober earnest, nothing is impossible to man.

One reserve, however, qualifies the sublime boon. Men cannot obtain it in its higher aspects unsought, develop it without persevering self-exertion, or conquer its loftiest privileges without special aptitude, high moral worth, and aspirations of the purest and most elevated spiritual intensity,—conditions which render the best gifts of the new revelation absolutely unattainable to the sordid, the narrow-minded, the worldly, the unintellectual, the frivolous, and the base. To the vulgar herd, spiritually not temporally speaking, the general evidence will be afforded which may enable them to realize the main truths that concern the soul, and are sufficient to point the

way to higher things and to moral transformation. But not till that transformation is radically effected will the supreme glory of Divine light dawn upon their gross perceptions, materialized as they are by their animal propensities, carnal frailties, and sordid instincts.

Should there be any who thoughtlessly inquire why, if Divine revelation be a truth, it should not fulminate mankind with the unchangeable splendour of sunlight, I reply, that the answer has already been given here, and is afforded to them by every law whose operations they behold around, no less than by every page of history and every rational conclusion. It is clearly God's will that every step of physical and moral advancement, in the career of reasonable and responsible beings, should be worked out, or at least furthered, by their own intelligent, zealous, and persistent efforts. When they have done their best, He will doubtless come to their assistance, but not till then. In point of fact, the French axiom, "Help yourself and God will help you," is evidently the complete *résumé* of His providential government. If we look around us, we shall see that nothing which possesses any intrinsic value, that no personal merit or acquirement of any description, can be obtained by any other means than our own exertions. Millionaires, peers, and princes find it alike beyond their power to purchase brains, genius, or moral excellence.

If we look back, we shall see that no onward movement of civilization, that no moral or Divine revelation, has ever been granted to men under any other conditions. Was the world indoctrinated at one fell swoop by the inspired teachings of Christ? Did they not work their way onward to credit and to sway in the identical manner that Spiritualism is doing in the present day? Were they not withstood and rejected for several centuries by the great majority of society, and especially contested by all the wrong-headed and presumptuous *savants* and philosophers of that age, precisely in the same ratio as Spiritualism is contested by the

obstinate and arrogant scientific minds of this? Did not a Plotinus, a Porphyry, a Celsus, the whole reigning school of the new Platonicians, *et hoc genus omne*, ridicule and revile that revelation with no less virulence than the parachute wits of the present day? the only perceptible difference in the two cases being, the infinite superiority of the former in causticity and logic to their feeble modern emulators; and the only similarity between them being the signal *fiasco* which will infallibly attend the antagonism of the last no less than of the first. I say infallibly, not from any presumption of infallibility on my part, in emulation of that of the omniscient critics in question, but simply from my positive certitude of the facts, and the logical deduction that one single voice that whispers truth has greater power than those of a million who vociferate falsehood, inasmuch as, truth being eternal and immutable, it can never be quenched, silenced, or refuted by any amount of ridicule or clamour.

Spiritualists may therefore boldly maintain their opinions, with the certainty that the future will amply compensate them in all ways for the petty annoyances to which the propagators of every novel theory are invariably subjected. There is a French proverb which says, "*Rira bien qui rira le dernier*;" *Anglicè*, "He laughs best who laughs last." Time will show which of the two parties is likely to have the best of the argument in this sense, no less than in all others. One thing is certain at all events, that when the tables *are* turned, as we who have ascertained the truth are fully assured they will be, never will a discomfiture be more complete or more humiliating than that of our opponents, or a triumph more supreme than that of the bold hearts and clear intellects which have dauntlessly taken their stand upon demonstration, and defied all insult, all mockery, all moral persecution, scientific arrogance, and vociferation to silence them. Well may they take their stand on the position they have intelligently conquered and energetically maintained, and say with Galileo and posterity, "*Eppur si muove.*"

There is much more of the deepest interest connected with Spiritualism which escapes the ken of superficial observers, but which the limits and the aim of these pages preclude me from doing more than alluding to here. It is evidently the key of all that has hitherto appeared enigmatical and inexplicable in the history and faith of all nations and all ages.

It has been well remarked by the erudite director of the *Revue Spiritualiste* of Paris, that the new light now bursting on the world clearly points to the fact that every preceding revelation has been based on truth Divinely communicated to men; that the gross superstitions, absurdities, and abuses which have subsequently overlaid them are human excrescences not originally contemplated by their inspired founders, and that each revelation has been evidently adapted by its form and expression to the zone and race for which it was intended, in order to give it life and efficiency.

It may be added that this is but another illustration of the law which we behold in operation throughout the universe—variety in unity. That this philosophical view is correct, those who care to investigate such unworldly matters may easily assure themselves. There is, I believe, no existing record of a religion established among a civilized nation, that is to say, among a race whose intelligence has reached a degree of development which renders it susceptible of receiving the higher truths of Divine inspiration, which is not traceable up to the great fact of the one supreme Creator—alone, increate, omnipotent, unrivalled, unapproachable. In every form of polytheism, even the most exaggerated and debased, the same great root forms the foundation-stone of the whole superstructure. Thus even under the fanaticism of the Hindoo creed, this grossest of polytheisms, we find the great Brahm, the unique, the eternal. So with Bouddhism, with Lamaism, with the belief of the Egyptians, with Sabaism, Islamism, etc. Other features distinctive of all these ancient forms of revelation, which clearly mark their affinity to each other and to

the present influx, are the Divine inspiration on which they are all avowedly based, and the spiritual phenomena which have ever attested the superhuman illumination of their prophets, and have accompanied their manifestations whenever they have broken out. It is no less remarkable, and evidently providential likewise, that these wide-spread and sudden outbursts of spiritual illumination and phenomena have invariably taken place at epochs of transition and moral degradation, when the preceding revelation had ceased to find credence among the superior intellects of the educated classes of society, whose Scepticism, filtering down through the mass, renders the popular creed powerless any longer to influence the feelings or the conduct of the majority, and when, as the inevitable consequence, materialism and its accompanying temporal lusts, sordid passions, and unmitigated egotism have invaded and corrupted society at large.

These are considerations which might and ought to suggest themselves to every reasoning mind that studies history and psychological phenomena, past and present, with intelligence and earnestness, but there are others, if possible, still more striking, which fall less within the reach of ordinary observers.

When occupied with these investigations, I had occasion, in my cosmopolite wanderings, to discuss these subjects with learned individuals of many races and creeds. I was greatly surprised to find that among all, without exception, the tradition of spiritual intercourse is believed and maintained by those most versed in the recondite tenets of their faith, not alone in the past, but in the present day. Justly reasoning from analogy, I make no doubt that the same fact may be verified throughout the far East, by any one whose opportunities of investigation may be still more extensive than mine. To mention a few of the instances that came under my own observation: My friend the Turkish ambassador, once convinced of the facts, placed himself in communication with some of the most venerated and erudite dervishes of Stamboul on the subject. They

informed him that his discovery was no novelty to them, for that the holy men of their sect had been in possession of the secret of communicating with spirits for twelve hundred years.

I myself, previous to this, on going to visit the howling dervishes, at Scutari, instantly perceived that the inauguration of the ceremony was entirely a spiritual evocation. Incense was burned in a censer before the chief dervish and his two principal assistants, precisely as we read of in the magical operations in the "Arabian Nights," while all three prayed inwardly and with Moslem solemnity for a quarter of an hour, the remainder of the confraternity muttering in the interim a sort of chant. But this was not all. The sequel fully confirmed my first observation, and converted the surmise into certainty. Previous to that part of the ceremony when the dervishes cut and transpierce themselves with knives, poniards, and hooks, *every one* of the fanatics who took part in this performance went up to the head dervish, who *magnetized each in succession*, palpably, and incontestably, after the most approved fashion of modern magnetizers; first taking hold of the hands and pressing the thumbs between his own for a few moments; then stroking him down with both hands on the cheeks, shoulders, and thighs, gazing fixedly into his eyes the whole time,—an operation which took between seven and eight minutes for each individual. I need not remind those who know anything of magnetism, that less time is requisite to induce magnetic effects with some subjects, and even trance, with clairvoyants and those who are in *rapport* with magnetizers.

At the close of the ceremony, three infant children were brought in for the chief dervish to heal. He was a large, tall, corpulent old man. The babies were laid on the carpet at his feet. They were from a few weeks to two or three months old. Two assistants then helped him to mount upon their bodies, having done which they withdrew, leaving him standing with one foot full on the chest, and the other on the stomach of the infant, which,

as if purposely, kept smiling and crowing during the entire five or six minutes that this perilous feat was protracted. Three times it was repeated, the baby each time being carried away in the mother's arms, without having shed a tear or uttered a cry, though wide awake, laughing, and evidently uninjured,—an absolute impossibility, had not some occult influence preserved it from harm; for under ordinary circumstances the ponderous weight of the old man must inevitably have crushed in the stomach and chest of the infant, and have broken its feeble bones. As for deceit or delusion, there neither was nor could have been any capable of eluding my eyes, for I was seated with various other spectators, on a low step within a couple of yards of the dervish, watching his naked feet the whole time, placed as they were full on the top of the babies' bodies, his arms, the while, crossed on his chest, and nothing whatever within reach to take any portion of his weight off his human pedestal. Yet so dull are the generality of observers, that these strange facts, and their elucidation, scarcely attract more than a cursory word from travellers, and not one, I believe, has remarked the details I have previously given.

Had I known nothing of Spiritualism till that hour, I should then have made it a point to look into it, so self-evident was it to me that only by some occult agency could the singular performance I had witnessed have been thus innocuously achieved.

Discussing the topic subsequently with the then Seraskier of the Porte, a very learned and sagacious Moslem of the old school, in whose house I was staying on a visit, he informed me that it was a fact only known to the initiated in the deepest mysteries of Islam, that certain individuals have always possessed the secret of communicating with the spiritual world, and, moreover, of receiving direct inspiration from God; that the means are a mystery scrupulously concealed from the profane; that they can and do communicate it occasionally, but only to adepts of the holiest lives, the purest

aims, and the loftiest aspirations, and seldom, except at the point of death when they are desirous of transmitting it to a disciple and successor; while no money, no bribe, can purchase it from them. One of the first preparations to facilitate the operation of their superhuman gifts and the mysterious agencies they call into action, the Pacha informed me, is intense asceticism. Most of these individuals, he assured me, reduced their corporeal requirements to the extreme of human abstinence, some gradually reducing their food till they brought themselves to live upon a single date a day. More, he either could not or would not tell me.

Since then, questioning the Jews in the Levant and in Morocco, I have found that they hold exactly the same creed. They, too, assured me that there are still holy men among their Rabbis and most religious sects, who, being absolutely detached from all temporal lusts, and leading a perfectly pure, religious, and ascetic life, obtain the faculty of receiving direct inspiration from God, and performing miracles by prayer and volition, aided by superhuman agencies. It is supposed likewise, that they possess a secret by means of which they attain to these gifts, and which is never divulged to any but adepts, and then under certain solemn conditions. Many extraordinary narratives are treasured up of the actions of these holy men.

In Algeria, I found the identical belief prevalent among the natives. Moreover, in addition to many an extraordinary tale, recounted of their marabouts, or saints, there still exist there two famous Zaouias (the name of certain religious institutions where dervishes and priests reside and are educated). One of these is situated in Grand Kabylia, the members of which profess openly to hold communion with the spiritual world, and where persons of holy aspirations retire, and in order to obtain visions of direct intercourse with superhuman entities, and miraculous gifts; give themselves up to an ascetic life, a condition apparently greatly conducive to this result, probably by etherealizing the body as

much as possible, and thus by disembarassing it of much of its material grossness, facilitating the development of spiritual perceptions.

I need not here allude to the more current traditions of the Catholic saints, but I cannot forbear pointing out the remarkable coincidence between the spiritual phenomena recorded of them and those which attend spiritual mediums in the present day. In half the convents of Italy are to be seen pictures representing St. Francis of Assisi, St. Bruno, St. Catherine of Sienna, etc., etc., rising into the air, in a state of trance, before their astonished communities; representations founded on the traditions handed down in their convents. This is precisely the parachute phenomenon which has been repeatedly witnessed in the present day, in the case of Mr. Home and other powerful mediums, affirmed, as the wits declare, by persons whose testimony is in all ways unexceptionable, when not given in favour of facts to which these gentlemen are pleased to take exception.

I have often heard it observed by determined sceptics, who had read the famous writings of St. Theresa from curiosity, celebrated, as they are among Catholics, for their unction and eloquence, that there was one startling characteristic pervading them which had taken them by surprise, namely, the supreme conviction which inspires every line. The accents of impassioned truth in which she narrates her visions, and the heavenly raptures derived from the presence of her superhuman visitants in her convent cell, are generally admitted to bear so striking an impress of veracity and reality, that it is hardly possible, when reading them, to attribute the whole to imposture or self-delusion.

The mystery is now solved—as is many another problem, past, present, and future, that has hitherto baffled explanation—by the sublime revelations of Spiritualism. It is the great Isis of antiquity; “all that is, that was, and is to be; whose veil no mortal had ever lifted.” It is the source of every ancient prophecy, of

every miracle, of every oracle, of every wonder that history has ever recorded. It is the wisdom of the magi; the secret of the hierophants and gymnosophists of Egypt; of the mysteries of Eleusis, of Mithra, and of Trophonius; the illumination of Pythagoras; the demon of Socrates; the inspiration of Plato; the ring of Solomon. Its invisible and fluid entities are the gods and demi-gods of every mythology. They are the nymphs, naiads, fauns, sylvans, and satyrs of Greece. They are the lares and penates, the manes and lemures of Rome; the valkynes and nornas, the gnomes, elves, fairies, sylphs, brownies, vampires, latins of the North, and the peris, genii, houris, and afreetts of the East. Their occult agencies are the wand of Merlin, the lore of the sibyls, the Druids, and the augurs; the demonology and witchcraft of the middle ages; the miracle-workers of Apollonius, of the apostles and the saints of Mahomet and Albertus Magnus, of Paracelsus, Cagliostro, and the Count of St. Germans, no less than of Hindoo and Arabian sorcerers. They are the doctrine of the *illuminati*, the conviction and strength of the martyrs. In a word, spiritual agency is the key of every enigma, and the explanation of every phenomenon at which short-sighted *savants* and sceptics have strained and revolted from the earliest dawn of scientific arrogance to its full development in its present noonday, and with which baffled science, from the days of Herodotus and Aristotle down to those of Professor Faraday, has invariably failed to grapple.

If these conclusions are sweeping, they are not the less founded on logical and warrantable deductions. Those who take the trouble to verify the facts with unprejudiced eyes, and who read the darkness of the past by the light of the present, will be able to affirm them, if they study both with reasoning and careful investigation. They will find, on looking deeper into the question, that in all avowedly superhuman phenomena, in ancient as in modern times, the evocation and the indication of spirit presence was the indispensable and universal preliminary. Thus Pythia could pro-

nounce no oracle till the laurel-tree beside the grotto *shook its branches spontaneously*, to announce the arrival of the invisible. The brazen basins or cymbals, suspended on the trees of Dodona, *sounded untouched*, previous to the oracle's transmission, evidently for the same purpose. The apparitions and communications in the imitations of Eleusis and Mithra, the visions and prophetic dreams in the cave of Trophonius, in the fanes of Æsculapius and other gods, were all the sequel of spiritual invocations. Throughout the entire history of revelation and occult science from the remotest records of mythology and history, spiritual evocations and spontaneous evidence of spiritual agency may be traced in one unbroken sequence, as the method adopted by every thaumaturgist, and as the generating action of all occult and superhuman phenomena that have ever fallen under the observation of men, and been transmitted to a wondering and sceptical posterity by their written or oral traditions.

Before bringing this dissertation to a conclusion, there is one remaining point on which I think it not irrelevant nor unimportant to dwell, for the enlightenment of those who, only knowing Spiritualism by name, might perhaps imagine that the new revelation, confirming the debated question of the Divine inspiration of its predecessors, may claim to be the consecration and confirmation of the superstitions and the illogical absurdities which priestcraft and human presumption have interpolated in them all, and which even in our day, are foisted upon the human understanding as an integral part of the original dispensation, consequently, as Divine truth. The reverse is the case, as reason tells us must be, with all that proceeds from God. The abdication of our reasoning faculties in favour of tenets which every conclusion of sound logic demonstrates to be contradictory, absurd, and immoral, hence, necessarily at variance with every Divine attribute, is a requisition evidently incompatible with the wisdom, justice, and truth of the Almighty. That we should place trust in His supreme goodness and omnis-

science is totally different from the egregious demand upon our faith exacted by theologians of all creeds, who tell us that we have no right to question His decisions, and that He has a right to do what He pleases, because He is omnipotent; a strange method, certainly, of extenuating the crimes and blunders laid to His charge in writings reputed Divine, notwithstanding the intrinsic evidence of human passions and human ignorance which they afford.

It is hardly conceivable that any rational person should seriously urge so shallow and untenable an argument as that God has a right to do what He pleases simply because there is no judge above Him to call Him to account for His actions, which is the true interpretation of the theory of justification by omnipotence. Its real bearing is to impute to God the same unwarrantable abuse of force as that which disgraces and condemns human autocrats, and accusing Him of justifying it by the basest, the most illogical, and the most revolting of all arguments, the "reason of the strongest." In a word, it is reducing God to a level with the ruthless Czar, or the sanguinary King Bomba.

It is quite conceivable that God, leaving men to the exercise of that free volition with which He has endowed them, in order to enable them to acquire that moral and intellectual merit which even omnipotence *could not* give them, unless they acquire it by their own exertions, and by their own intelligent selection between good and evil, should turn their own crimes, errors, and follies to account for His providential purposes, as we daily see around us; but it is inconceivable and inadmissible, on any plea of expediency, omnipotence, or prescience, that He should originate, ordain, or favour their evil instincts, guilty deeds, and ignorant blunders.

Fortunately for the futurity of Spiritualism, and the great consolation, happiness, and enlightenment which it promises to mankind, it is not these obsolete and irrational tenets which it comes to confirm and approve. Everywhere the sublime and

glorious truths discovered by spiritual entities of lofty hierarchies, destroy all these abominations, and combine to divulge revelations of a nature so sublime, so perfect, so stupendous, so logically conformable to every Divine attribute, that nothing the human imagination has ever conceived, or its loftiest ambition aspired to, can surpass or image the glory of the providential scheme which is now first dawning on man's limited and clouded horizon.

This much briefly resumed of spiritual doctrines and illumination to rectify any misconception on the part of the uninitiated as to the theoretical bearing of Spiritualism, or the nature of the recantation of Scepticism avowed by the author of these pages. While admitting the fact of spiritual intercourse, on incontestable evidence, were the spiritual entities, who testify their presence by the physical phenomena around us, to endorse the dismal credos of the past, I should assuredly be as little disposed to give them credit for a Divine authority as I should be to accept the fiat of another Hildebrand or another Loyola, against the testimony of reason, even if the days when popes and saints were reckoned infallible could ever return. Such, however, is not the alternative thrust upon us. To all those who have sought to dive into its deeper mysteries with sincere and lofty aspirations, and with minds unbiassed by preconceived prejudices, and a *parti pris* as to certain rooted sectarian ideas, the information conveyed is such as must convince any intelligent mind that the advent of this new influx of Divine revelation is specially destined to convince a scientific age of the tangible reality of truths, whose unapproachable splendour has hitherto only flashed in faint and uncertain gleams across the purest souls and the grandest intellects.

Before dismissing the topic for the present, there are two remaining categories of antagonists, who take their stand on special grounds, which it is likewise necessary to refute, not having hitherto had occasion to allude to them.

The first, question the fact that any Divine revelation has ever

the prospect of a general felicity originated by purely human causes, independent of any providential interposition whatever, he states, that "Good laws are the first necessity of civilized communities, since without law, no *security* can exist." While, failing security, there can be no happiness for reasoning beings, since they can otherwise reckon on nothing beyond the enjoyment of the present moment,—a species of satisfaction which could only content unreflecting animals. Strange to say, he fails to see that this one admission upsets his entire theory of possible happiness for intelligent beings, independently of immortality or revelation, since the *primary security* most essential of all others to happiness, *that of life*, is precisely the point which no amount of physical improvement can ever insure. Not all the sanitary ameliorations and advanced science he boasts can ever guarantee to men immunity from the fatality or accident which may send either themselves or those they love best, prematurely to the other world, at a second's notice.

Hence, the first of all securities, that of existence, being wholly unattainable in this world, under any conditions of material or moral advancement, happiness is no less beyond the reach of intellectual beings, on any other conditions than those of a reasoned conviction of immortality.

There is another striking point entirely overlooked by the advocates of utilitarianism, which is equally destructive of all their conclusions; namely, that with loftier and more widely propagated intellectual development, spiritual aspirations and perceptions augment and deepen in the same ratio. As the intellect becomes more enlightened and more refined, its instincts and feelings become perpetually more exalted, acute, and profound. The mind embraces a wider radius and purer aims, while its aspirations to immortality and progress become more absorbing, more intense, and more soaring, with every successive phase of mental development; thus, with the universal diffusion of education, spiritual instincts and affections must ever become more and more widely propagated,

and more active and powerful in their operation. Hence, instead of the world becoming a paradise with advancing science, it would approach nearer and nearer to a moral Tartarus, unless the progress of spiritual science kept pace with its physical rivals.

The necessity, therefore, of immortality, implies the necessity of revelation, since the first would be an unjustifiable deception without the second. Immortality implies the responsibility of free and progressive souls. Hence follows the necessity of revelation, since no one can justly be held liable to the penalty of his acts, unless he is duly apprized of the fact; and being warned of their consequences, is thus induced to reject evil and to aspire to excellence. It is unquestionably, therefore, in the highest degree important that men should be assured of the truth, in order to regulate by it their conduct here. It is only on the surmise that both providence and immortality are a delusion, that it can be admitted that revelation would be supererogatory.

On premises as logically incontestable, it can be demonstrated that revelation is an essential concomitant of the dispensations of an omnipotent and perfect being. There is an argument which I do not remember to have seen suggested either by philosophers or theologians, which to any logical mind must, I think, afford absolute demonstration; namely, that admitting the existence of God, He cannot be inferior to our highest conceptions of Him. This stands to reason; for could the human imagination realize anything superior to the nature and attributes of the Divinity, men would virtually surpass Him, since all that failed them to do so, would be, not the will nor the conception, but simply the material power. Hence it follows, that God's providential government of the universe must be a fact, and not a myth, unless we deny that there is a God at all; for evidently, providential government, pre-supposed to be perfectly just, wise, beneficent, ubiquitous, omniscient, and omnipotent, is incalculably superior, both theoretically and practically, to a government ruled by general laws alone.

These can evidently operate efficiently and satisfactorily only when applied to inert matter. Intelligence and free volition necessarily entailing infinite variety of character and adventitious concomitants, no general laws, conceivable or possible, be they framed by God or man, can by any amount of ingenuity or power be adapted to meet the immeasurable modifications, and the extenuating or aggravating circumstances which in justice ought to be weighed in the balance of each individual case. So far, therefore, as they concern the government of free, intelligent beings, they are clearly only a paltry human expedient, destined to supply the deficiency of the Divine prerogatives which are indispensable to the efficient carrying out of the first.

I proceed to illustrate my meaning.

Let us suppose that a human sovereign were supremely good, unselfish, just, and generous; that he were absolutely incapable of permitting any but the most impartial, upright, wise, and elevated motives to impel his actions; that he were, in short, the exact converse of what sovereigns generally are. It would evidently be infinitely more grand, bountiful, and beneficial, that he should inquire into every individual case, administering justice, distributing favour, protection, or condemnation with due consideration for the peculiar circumstances, and the intrinsic character of each several person, including every element which has contributed to bias it. For this, however, it would require the faculties of seeing into men's minds, of weighing their deeds by their genuine intentions, desires, and motives, of attending to myriads of different matters at once, and of seeing, hearing, accomplishing everything one's self, hence, being everywhere at one and the same moment. It need scarcely be pointed out that such a task as this wholly exceeds the limits of human life, capacity, knowledge, and power. Hence, recourse has been judiciously and indispensably had to general laws, by which much injustice, much suffering, and much evil is necessarily occasioned,

since they cannot possibly be adapted to every individual case, but which is nevertheless infinitely preferable to the futile and pernicious attempt to carry out what it is far beyond man's power to put in practice,—a fact of which we possess the daily illustration in the miserably inefficient and evil working of all so-called paternal or autocratic governments.

But an expedient is only acceptable *faute de mieux*, or conceivable, on the plea of the impossibility of doing better. Is there any rational, upright, and conscientious being who would select the imperfect in preference to the perfect? or any philanthropic mind which, having it in its power to confer vast benefits on humanity, and the option of two methods whereby to effect it, the one being capable of doing some good, tempered with a large proportion of evil, and the other effecting the *ne plus ultra* of good, without any admixture of evil at all, would, in full discernment, select the first in preference to the last?

Should there be any one so blind as to contest the fact that providential government, under those Divine conditions which can alone render it efficient, practical, and perfect, would be infinitely superior to a government by general laws, I would propose the following query:—

Let us suppose a bishop full of philanthropy, disinterestedness, and wisdom,—in a word, the precise converse of bishops in general. He establishes the most sagacious general laws for the government and guidance of his diocesans. He provides for their spiritual and temporal wants, *en masse*, as far as in him lies. He lays down general directions of all descriptions, for the enlightenment, and assistance of the good, the reformation and reprobation of the evil. He omits nothing, in short, which judicious general laws can do to ameliorate their moral and physical condition. In the neighbourhood there lives a model clergyman, one of those professors of Christianity who practises charity instead of only preaching it. He, instead of laying down general laws, visits every cottage and every

household in his parish; makes himself intimately acquainted with the character and history of every one of their inmates (for beneficent, not for interested or prying purposes). Fortunately for his parishioners, he is wealthy, influential, wise, just, and munificent. He personally ascertains the wants and aspirations, the virtues, weaknesses, capacities, and shortcomings of each individual. He metes out to each with judiciousness, impartiality, and benevolence whatever is best suited to the circumstances and the minds of each person, whatever he knows to be best adapted, whether as trial, correction, consolation, or reward, to the faults, the evil tendencies, the afflictions, and the merits of each and all. Will any one venture to deny that the providential ministration of the benevolent clergyman, presupposing it to be perfect and infallible, would be infinitely more beneficial in every respect, moral and temporal, to his parishioners, than the wise general laws of the sagacious bishop?

What is true, therefore, on a minute scale is no less true on an infinite one, with the advantage on the side of Divinity of being able to carry out the providential system without any of the flaws, errors, and shortcomings inherent to all that is human.

It is evidently quite conceivable that God being supremely good, perfect, wise, and just should govern the reasoning, feeling, and responsible beings He has created by providential care and love, rather than by general laws which amount to leading men on to their destiny, whatever it may be, like a flock of sheep, or straws floating on the stream. It is, moreover, infinitely more just, beneficent, sublime, and glorious thus to govern the universe and its myriads; and since, to a being who possesses the necessary qualifications of omniscience, ubiquitousness, and omnipotence, there can be no difficulty in realizing this stupendous scheme, it cannot be logically supposed that God should give the preference to the inferior and imperfect expedient, *the option being in His power*.

This argument, to my mind at least, amounts to demonstration,

and, I trust, will produce the same effect on many another. Following it out in its necessary consequences, it results thence that the immortality of the soul is a certainty, for there can be no providence for intellectual beings, under other conditions. This involves the necessity of revelation; for immortality and the moral responsibility it entails would be, as before stated, an unjustifiable snare, unless men were duly prepared for them, and assured of their truth.

This brings us back to the question previously discussed; *i. e.*, the necessity of revelation being proportioned to the enlightenment of the age, and of its coming in a form, and accompanied by evidence of a nature, fully adequate to authenticate its Divine source and to convince the most sceptical minds.

These requisitions I hope that I have demonstrated Spiritualism completely to fulfil, always starting from the premise that the marvellous manifestations to which I and so many others bear witness, are undeniable facts. For I repeat once more, it is the question of fact which is the turning-point of the entire controversy for the present. If these wonders are facts, no rational person can any longer contest their source or their purpose, unless it be the somewhat prejudiced members of the sacred college, and the disciples of Loyola, the inquisition, and the *propaganda*. These facts it is within the power of every intelligent individual to test and ascertain for himself; and it is assuredly the duty of every one to test them who cares about the future of his soul, or, indeed, about anything except temporal interests and mundane pleasures. They have only to do what I and my friends did,—to give the matter serious and impartial investigation; to devote to it a fair proportion of the time and patience they so liberally consecrate to cricket, or whist, or interesting morning visits and evening re-unions, in order to obtain the evidence for themselves.

To those, however, who find this too great a sacrifice in a matter of such trifling importance as the future condition of their souls,

and the revelations of God, I have a few observations to address. As they do not choose to seek the evidence which they can obtain on no other conditions than that of self-exertion, the question of fact must, to them, inevitably remain doubtful. Nevertheless, as hundreds of thousands of educated, intelligent, and disinterested witnesses corroborate these facts, both in the Old World and the New ; as they number among their converts some of the brightest intellects and the most brilliant reputations in Europe ; as spiritual societies are spreading to such an extent over intelligent, sceptical France, and among the upper classes of quick-witted, brilliant Italy, that the whole Catholic clergy have taken the alarm, and are everywhere vainly endeavouring to stem the tide by multiplying their predications and diatribes against Spiritualism and spiritualists from every pulpit and in every pastoral letter,—it is only a rational conclusion, that in order to progress so rapidly, to spread so wide, and to become so formidable, they must have some ground to stand upon. In other words, it might be clear to any one who reflects at all, that there is at least a very strong probability that there is something in it.

Another sign of the times, which those who are shrewd enough to give certain significant indications their due weight might digest to some purpose, is, that the “ *Civiltà Cattolica* ” has recently come boldly forward and *proclaimed the certainty* of the spiritual phenomena and intercourse, in a series of articles which have excited world-wide attention among Catholic circles, and which are not yet or only just terminated. I think little of the asseverations of Jesuits or Ultramontanists, where their own interests are concerned ; but where the reverse is the case, the value of their testimony is considerably enhanced. In another point of view, moreover, this avowal is in the highest degree significant. For those who do not know it, I have to state that the publication in question is the chief organ of the Roman Catholic party. It aims, as its title implies, to be looked upon as the interpreter of Catholic civilization, the vindicator of

the intellect, the erudition, the progressiveness, the enlightenment, and the science of the Catholic Church. It is intended to be a triumphant refutation of the reproaches of obscurantism which are flung in its teeth by its opponents. It is directed by the picked brains of Catholic *savants* and *litterati*. It is the particular organ of the Jesuits, and to its *rédaction* the special talents of the most remarkable writers of that very learned and sagacious body are particularly devoted. When they thus boldly pledge their veracity and brains in attestation of the reality of the physical phenomena, it is very evident that they must have ascertained them to be facts beyond all question, before they would thus venture to stake their reputation and science on the truth of marvels which it is within the power of all investigators to ascertain, and of which the ultimate and incontestable solution cannot now be long protracted.

This is not a question of a local miracle, which can only be verified in one particular spot, and which is seldom looked into by any other eyes than those of a few devotees. These are matters reproduced in every part of the world, under every possible condition, and among all classes of the social community, throughout the civilized globe. Let those who question these facts look into the correspondence of the French spiritual reviews, and learn therefrom what vast and increasing groups of spiritualists are scattered over Brazil, the French Antilles, the principal cities of the Levant, Spain, Algeria, France, and Italy. Where this is the case, there is assuredly good reason for concluding that there must be something in it more than smoke.

Two peculiar features in this novel propagandism are specially remarkable; the one is the extraordinarily rapid extension of a belief so marvellous, and so contradictory to the universal tendencies of a scientific and incredulous age; and the other is the ubiquitousness of the manifestations, and the general character of affinity the phenomena present throughout the world. It is only about twelve or fourteen years since the first outburst in

except the merchandise which is assuredly at the lowest discount in the social market of the nineteenth century ; *i. e.*, heavenly light, spiritual happiness, and information of that world beyond the grave, from whose mystic spheres the most glorious news ever transmitted to humanity would assuredly interest two-thirds of mankind considerably less than the last telegram at Lloyd's, provided their pockets were concerned in it. Far from promising any material gain or advantage, it is, for the present, a service of danger, and a source of obloquy and mortification, to take up the cudgels in its defence, while, temporally speaking, there is everything to lose and nothing to gain by its advocacy, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. What then can be the inducement to imperil one's position, and confront the ridicule and clamour of the multitude, and the insult of the *soi-disant* leading authorities, who, notwithstanding the innumerable contusions they have already received in their hereditary warfare against innovations and facts, and the signal defeats their assumption of omniscience has already undergone, still persist in asserting their infallibility, in defiance of the long list of blunders already recorded against them ? What is it or can it be, except the irrefragable and irresistible demonstration of tangible fact, and the certitude, thereby attained, that the future will fully and incontestably demonstrate the truth of all that we have witnessed and assert, to the unspeakable confusion and humiliation of our obstinate, shallow, and presumptuous adversaries ?

It is, logically speaking, altogether inadmissible, to surmise that hundreds of thousands of perfectly sane people, educated and civilized, should be labouring under the identical delusion concerning a creed which bases all its affirmations on a simple question of tangible, physical facts, which it urges every one to test for themselves, and which every one who arrives at conviction has tested, and continues to test for himself. It will no doubt be urged in reply, that there have been such epidemics before ; that

the Camisards of the Cevennes rose up in thousands, proclaiming their spiritual intercourse and inspiration; that thousands, too, were burned as witches, who avowed their convictions of spiritual, or as they then miscalled it, demoniacal intercourse ages before; that in the last century we had the famous convulsionists of St. Medard, etc. To this the answer is even more simple; namely, that these thousands were labouring under no delusion or hallucination whatever, and that what was laid to that score was simply direct spiritual intercourse of an inferior and pernicious description, as the present revelations prove. Whence we may deduce that such a thing as collective hallucinations on questions of positive fact are a logical and mathematical impossibility, as reason alone suffices to assure us, among sane and intelligent people, and more especially when the same supposed hallucinations are reproduced independently and simultaneously, under all kinds of circumstances, among all classes of society, and in the most remote and dissimilar regions of the globe,—particularities specially characteristic of the present spiritual influx, to an unprecedented extent.

Under such conditions, delusion is altogether impossible and inconceivable, on any question, much less on one of physical fact.

One of the peculiar characteristics of the present manifestations, I have said, is their ubiquitousness and independence of each other. The instances of this remarkable feature of the new dispensation are too numerous to be cited here; but one remarkable episode of spiritual influx is too singular to allow me to pass it over in silence, more especially narrated and attested as it is, by the most determined adversaries of Spiritualism. The society of the Catholic propaganda publish a monthly account of the labours of its missionaries throughout the globe, under the title of “Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.” In number 216, for the month of September, 1864, published at Lyons, there is a graphic account, by an eye-witness, of a great spiritual manifestation which broke out last year at Madagascar, previous to the death of King

Radama II. The writer describes it as having first displayed itself in the south of Emirne, where suddenly bands of people had been seized with convulsions, and received a mission from the deceased queen-mother Ranavalona, to come and speak to the king in her name. The missionary narrator declares that "the epidemic has just burst like a bomb on the capital, Tanariva," and that while he is writing, thousands of these fanatics are encamped at Machasina, where they make such a noise as to prevent every one sleeping at two leagues' distance. He proceeds to state, that on Holy Tuesday, when a great review took place, more than one thousand soldiers left the ranks and began dancing, one of the features of the *obsession*; and that, no menace availing, it was necessary to stop the review. He describes the epidemic as commencing with convulsions, pains, and hallucinations, *unaccountable to science*, after which "*the living enter into communication with the dead.*" They then see Queen Ranavalona, Radama I., and other high personages deceased, who "speak to them, and give them various commissions," most of them specially directed to Radama II. The missionary *naïvely* adds, that "they appear specially deputed by the old queen" to signify to her son to return to the old regime, and to drive out the whites, with other minor details,—an avowal which, as the requisition involved the downfall of Catholicity, to which the old regime was opposed, and the exclusion of the priesthood, comes amusingly to attest the veracity of the narrator. One particularity he notes as most inexplicable, viz., that numbers carry jars of water on their heads, to drink from, which said jars stick on their heads "as immovable as if they were nailed to them, notwithstanding their most convulsive springs and bounds,"—a fact only to be explained on the same principle which can retain a carcel lamp^{*} immovable on a table tilted up at an angle of forty-five degrees.

These singular manifestations at Madagascar took place as late as the holy week of last year, and were followed by the assassina-

tion of Radama II., who thus, it appears, was not warned without good reason by his spiritual friends,—a fact which I presume it is as difficult to deny as that this strange outburst of spiritual phenomena among the blacks of Madagascar can hardly be attributed to the contagious influence of spiritual propagandism, nor can the authenticity be contested, as the evidence is furnished by its most inveterate opponents.

Thus from all parts of the world concurrent testimony is converging, to the demonstration of the marvellous phenomena which is now becoming more general every day, in order to corroborate the Divine inspiration of the new revelation and the great truths promulgated by its delegated adepts.

That a large portion of the English public should be still ignorant of the vast movement now in progress throughout the Continent, is only to be expected from their antecedents and their character. If they do not actually parody in words the famous dictum of the *Grand Monarque*, "*L'état c'est moi*," practically they certainly act up to the conviction, *l'univers c'est moi*. If, as individuals, the English can be munificent and charitable in money, more especially when their names figure in a long subscription list beside my Lord This and the Duke of That, collectively, there is certainly no nation so entirely wrapt up in self-adoration and self-interest, so cold, exclusive, and unsympathising in its foreign policy, and so completely absorbed by lucre and material aims. Hence, there is no country and no people so inaccessible to novel theories and generous ideas. When the Utopian but lofty programme of French republicans thrilled every superior mind and generous heart in continental Europe, they found no other response than ridicule in England: the English say, they have too much sound sense to accept Utopias; but if the Utopias had promised any profitable per-centage or flattering speculations, they would doubtless not have found the English quite so sensible, or so indifferent to them.

Among a nation who offer up their incense to the golden calf, in preference to all intellectual and spiritual altars, it cannot be matter for wonder that Spiritualism should penetrate least and last of any other. This is no reason, however, for ignoring the fact of the extraordinary progress of the new revelation among continental nations, infinitely more quick-witted, sceptical, sharp, and penetrating than the English, *en masse*, and who boast, now as always, many of the greatest *savants* and the deepest thinkers in Europe. Those who question this, among the presumed frivolous French, will do well to read *Jean Reynaud* (not *Rénan*), and to ask themselves how many Englishmen there have been in the past, or there exist in the present, who are capable of electrifying the philosophical world with thoughts so profound, a logic so splendid, and speculations so sublime, as those assembled in his last work, celebrated throughout France, entitled "*Terre et Ciel*,"—a philosophical treatise specially interesting at the present moment, confirming as it does every spiritual theory on grounds of pure logic, laid down by a scientific man, not himself a professed adept, or a believer in the spiritual phenomena,—an anomaly evidently providentially originated in order to give greater weight to the independent and unbiassed testimony of one of the most powerful of contemporary intellects.

One evidence results unquestionably from all this concurrent testimony; *i. e.*, that there is at least room for doubt. Those who do not think it worth while to clear up the doubt for their own benefit, ought at least to remember that if there be anything in it at all, that anything is Divine revelation; hence, that if the punishment of the indifferent and the worldly may be chiefly the deprivation of that Divine light and supreme consolation it was in their power to obtain, they can scarcely hope to be held guiltless, or to be let off so cheap, if they venture to ridicule and revile it in their presumptuous ignorance, and thus to deter others from investigation and conviction. In a doubtful case it is always well to be on the

safe side, and I recommend the parachute wits and their disciples to take this axiom to heart.

I need hardly remind them either that there has never been any revelation, whether physical or spiritual, which has not been ridiculed or pooh-poohed by the shallow wits and the so-called *savants* of the day. But I venture to ask them, how would the Faradays and the Voltairians of the last century have demolished the scientific discoveries of the last twenty or thirty years, and what cutting sarcasms and merry puns they themselves would have made some fifty or sixty years ago, upon express trains and electric telegraphs? In fact, it is a striking characteristic of ignorance, folly, and presumption, to find everything ridiculous or absurd which is above their comprehension or beyond their knowledge. I never remember to have seen any one laugh so heartily as a Bosnian peasant, whose intelligence I took upon me to enlighten by telling him a few of the wonders of steam. I recommend these gentlemen to take this hint to heart likewise, and to take heed, too, lest they should not be classed pretty nearly in the same category as the merry Bosnian, at no very distant date,—a possibility which is likely to be realized much sooner, perhaps, than even spiritualists calculate.

Having, I sincerely flatter myself, distributed a few wholesome corrections, and some tolerably severe home-thrusts among our decidedly feeble antagonists, which I am fully assured will tell rather mortifyingly against them in the future, both in their own estimation and that of the public, however little impression they may make on them at present, I address myself now to another class of individuals, to whom I am desirous likewise of administering a valedictory admonition; namely, the cowardly time-servers who have not the courage to avow their conviction, and the contemptible false witnesses. They are in a still worse case. It might be supposed that among the upper ranks the last category were, at least, wholly exceptional, but such is not the fact. In my brief experience I have met with

two despicable instances of individuals whom no one would suspect of such meanness, denying what they had seen, for fear of compromising themselves by admitting their conviction. One was a friend of my own, who, cowed by the authoritative *fiat* of an English ambassador,—one of those miserable specimens of humanity who disgrace aristocracy; a peeress who distributes her favour according to wealth and pedigree, and distinguishes them by granting one finger to an *attaché*, two to a baronet, three to a lord, and five to an earl,—was so weak and contemptible as to deny all that he had witnessed at my house. Another was an eminent Scotch professor, high in the scientific world, who was present at the remarkable *séance* first narrated in these pages, when the table tilted up at an angle of forty-five degrees, with the carcel lamp on it, and subsequently rose up entirely from the ground, in my literary friend's house. This learned gentleman, not content with being too cowardly to give evidence concerning this *séance*, to which his reputation would have given great weight, was so base as to publish an account of it wherein he suppressed the more surprising phenomena and garbled shamelessly his narration of the rest.

Should either of these two individuals recognise themselves in this brief notice, I can only tell them, and those who may be inclined to imitate their example, that, apart from a meanness for which every honourable mind must feel the most supreme contempt, I would not be in their place for anything the world could offer me, convinced as I am, that if there be one crime which God will visit with supreme reprobation and retribution, it will be the cowardly falseness of those who, having had the evidence proffered to them, are not afraid to bear false witness against His providential dispensations, from paltry worldly motives.

One word more, in conclusion. Among the many reflections suggested to me in the course of these investigations, two or three observations have specially impressed me. One is the extraordinary indifference felt by the generality of society to everything

concerning the world beyond the grave ; the entire absorption, in short, of the ordinary run of human minds in temporal pursuits and pleasures, unsatisfactory, puerile, and precarious as they are, to the total exclusion of every philosophical, intellectual, or spiritual aspiration,—a fact which nothing could have made me realize to its genuine extent, except these spiritual inquiries.

Another is the amazing number of apparitions and spiritual phenomena *spontaneously* occurring on all sides, of which no one ever hears, scrupulously as the cowed ghost-seers abstain from alluding to them, unless the subject be mooted by believers. During a brief interval of two or three months, conversing on these subjects with persons of various nationalities, I reckoned between thirty and forty persons who had, either themselves or some near relation or friend, beheld an apparition ; and I make no doubt, that any one curious on the subject, pursuing the same method, namely, inquiring into the matter with interest instead of ridicule, will obtain precisely the same average results.

Thirdly, I have been in the highest degree amazed at the flimsiness, the sophistry, and the transparent fallacy of the arguments brought forward by the wits, *savants*, and sceptics in the anti-spiritual crusade, and at the placidity and extra-verdant simplicity with which the public contentedly swallowed them.

The recent Davenport controversy is rich in specimens of this parody of logic, which one might think the least perspicuous must see through. To select only a few of the more prominent quiddities which the unsophisticated public are so ingenious as to accept for argument : one intelligent individual observes, that “ one of the principal *séances* having taken place in the house of a theatrical manager, all sorts of nefarious contrivances might have been expected.” The critic in question, it would appear, has never entered the dwelling of so necromantic and suspicious a personage as an *impresario*, but he might have ascertained from the *habitués* of Mr. Lumley and others, that these mys-

terious individuals are not in the habit of transporting the trap-doors, pullies, and side-scenes of the stage to their private domiciles in London or Paris. The public, too, might naturally reflect, that if pullies, trap-doors, Bengal lights, subterranean thunder, and other contrivances, are very effective on a distant stage, by the help of drop curtains, side-scenes, and numerous other accessories, which do not even render the effect altogether illusory on the stage, it is rather too much to surmise that pullies, trap-doors, etc., could pass muster quite as easily before the shrewd eyes of twenty-two intelligent English gentlemen, within the four plain walls of a London drawing-room.

Another no less brilliant suggestion, which has found more adherents than is flattering to English brains, is, that one or two other individuals can slip their hands out of knots likewise, and that many very clever tricks are performed by other ingenious individuals. With Robert Houdin beckoning us to his little theatre in the Palais Royal, and the Polytechnic inviting us to its experimental curiosities, we really do not want to be informed that legerdemain and electric machines can achieve very curious and amazing feats indeed. But the question is not whether others can perform feats by the help of due apparatus for the purpose, the real question is, whether they can perform the *identical feats without any apparatus whatever*. Until that has been demonstrated of their emulators, as it has been of the Messrs. Davenport, this ingenious elucidation, unfortunately, labours under one radical defect common to its fellows, and exceedingly detrimental to its powers of persuasion; *i. e.*, that it proves nothing at all. When Robert Houdin can give his fifty or sixty different *liqueurs* to amateurs, without any bottle; when he can show ghosts and hands without any mirror or contrivance whatever; when other experimenters can produce electrical, or any other phenomena, without any machines or apparatus of any description to produce them,—they may enter the lists with spiritual mediums, but not till then.

As for slipping one's hands out of knots, that I believe is only an accessory of the performance destined to assure the sceptical spectators of the passiveness of the mediums, certainly not what they purport to display; and until the conjurors can perform something more spiritual than that achievement, they will be compelled to cede the palm to their adversaries. Nothing, moreover, is easier than to ascertain, that the Messrs. Davenport make use of no apparatus. Every English gentleman has it in his power to invite them to his own house, and inspect their preparations and performances under his own roof, and thus place the question, as did my literary friend, beyond all possibility of jugglery or deceit.

Another sage inquires if rational people can believe that God concedes the power of performing miracles to a pair of speculators, for the sake of putting guineas in their purse, entirely overlooking a few telling considerations which are something more than a reply to his pert and shallow query. He forgets, first of all, that Christ declared that "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Secondly, he forgets that his argument applies equally to clergymen of every rank and description, who make a livelihood by preaching God's revelations. Thirdly, he forgets that the Davenports have no monopoly of mediumship. Fourthly, he forgets that if this be a Divine revelation, which God is desirous of propagating by human means, as every other revelation has been propagated, no more effectual method can be adopted than that of exciting the sordid minds of men to display their medium faculties by the incitement of cupidity, and thus placing the evidence within the reach of every idler who has a guinea to spare; while at the same time attracting public attention to the subject in a manner which no private medium can ever achieve, since those who do not want to make a living by it will certainly not hold themselves or their faculties up, *en spectacle*, for the benefit of public curiosity. All these, and a great many other qualifying considerations, do these

sapient critics overlook, and what is even more inexplicable, the gullible and unreasoning public consent to overlook with them.

As for the *cheval de bataille* of our opponents, the obscurity demanded for many of the principal phenomena, I have already had occasion to observe that the want of eyes does not preclude the full use of our remaining senses, and that it is perfectly easy to prevent the possibility of delusion, even in the dark. The fact in itself is a point yet unexplained, but evidently dependent on some conditions of the physical or magnetic force, which the spirits require to achieve the physical phenomena.

On purely scientific matters I am quite disposed to bow to Professor Faraday, and *qui de droit*; although certainly not on a question of plain, demonstrable fact, whereon I bow to no one in contradiction to the direct evidence of my lucid and discriminating senses.

In a little popular treatise on atmospheric phenomena, I find the following observations, which are so apposite to my theme, that I think it not irrelevant to quote them here, evidencing as they do the independent judgment of an eminent scientific man on the irrational and unscientific method of treating novel discoveries which I have been reprobating, and which, unfortunately, still obtains among the learned world, no less than among its ignorant echoes, notwithstanding the supposed enlightenment of the age. Speaking of the universal opposition with which the announcement of the fact of atmospheric pressure was met two centuries since, and of the host of celebrated names numbered in the ranks of its most inveterate antagonists, including that of Galileo, he remarks, that the history of this famous controversy ought to "guard us against the influence of preconceived notions, foolish prejudices, and the *authority of great names*, which are some of the *greatest obstructions to the expansion of the human mind and the reception of useful knowledge.*"

He proceeds to point out that it is only "since men began to

emancipate themselves from these shackles, that science commenced the brilliant career which has issued in our times in so many interesting and important discoveries." He adds, that "we are only yet beginning to cast off the yoke of that *ignorance under the guise of wisdom*, under which the men of other times bowed with abject submission."

In all probability, this gentleman, being a scientific man, would treat Spiritualism precisely with those one-sided, prejudiced assumptions, and irrational, unfounded denegations which he so wisely condemns with regard to physics. It behoves every rational person, however, to remember that the only difference between physical and psychological science is the infinitely greater elevation, profundity, inscrutability, and importance of the latter. In other words, that they are only distinguished by the vast gulf which divides matter from intelligence, the terrestrial from the Divine, the finite from the infinite, but that in all other respects they are both fields for scientific inquiry of the most supreme interest; that both should therefore be entered upon in the same philosophical, unprejudiced, and investigating spirit, with this sole difference, that if every lesson of experience, and every dictate of common sense teach us that the domain of physical nature should be approached with unbiased, patient, humble, diffident, persevering research; far more are we bound to apply the same scientific and philosophical method, to the far higher, more marvellous, and more inaccessible regions of spiritual spheres and Divine essence.

Such at least, is the system which logic, philosophy, experience, and common sense alike indicate as the only rational mode of inquiry by which men can ever hope to progress, and to arrive at the truth.

LIST OF WORKS
PUBLISHED BY
FREDERICK PITMAN,
20, PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.

Second Edition, demy 4to, cloth, price 7s. 6d.
The Psychonomy of the Hand;
or, the Hand an Index of Mental Development, according to MM. D'ARPENTIGNY and DESBARROLLES. With thirty-one tracings from living and other hands. By R. BEAMISH, F.R.S., &c., Author of "Life of Sir M. I. Brunel."

Third Edition, Revised, demy 8vo, extra cloth, price 6s. 6d.; half-morocco, 12s.; morocco, 15s.
Life : Its Nature, Varieties, and Phenomena. By LEO H. GRINDON, Lecturer on Botany at the Royal School of Medicine, Manchester; Author of "Figurative Language," "Manual of British and Foreign Plants," &c. *This work can also be had in Twelve Sixpenny Parts.*

Cloth, price 2s. 6d.
A Manual of British and Foreign Plants,
consisting of the Latin and English names of those likely to come before the Botanical Student; with other useful information. By LEO H. GRINDON, Author of "Life : Its Nature, Varieties, and Phenomena," &c.

Third Edition, crown 8vo, extra cloth, price 2s. 6d.
Our Eternal Homes.
By a BIBLE STUDENT. Contents:—1. What is Heaven? 2. Guardian Angels. 3. Heavenly Scenery. 4. Death the Gate of Life. 5. Do the Departed forget us? 6. Man's Book of Life. 7. Infants in Heaven.

To be completed in Twelve Parts, price 1s. each.
Parable, or Divine Poesy.
Illustrations in Theology and Morals, selected from the great Divines, and systematically arranged. By R. A. BERTRAM.
The various illustrations are placed under appropriate headings; and each subdivision is chronologically arranged. In addition to many advantages of arrangement, the divisions and subdivisions constitute outlines of sermons; so that, in addition to several thousand illustrations, the work will contain nearly five hundred homiletic skeletons. The value of such a volume to the Lay Preacher and the Sunday-school Teacher will be at once apparent.

Fcap. 8vo, extra cloth gilt, gilt edges, price 3s. 6d.
Love : Selections from the best Poets.

Cloth, price 3s.
Forty Moral Lectures for the Young.
By the REV. W. MASON.

Fcap. 8vo, extra cloth, gilt edges, price 3s.

Poems.

By B. H. FARQUHAR, Author of "The Pearl of Days," &c.

Fcap. 8vo, cloth, price 3s.

Vegetable Cookery, Pastry, Pickling, &c.

By the Author of "Fruits and Farinacea the proper Food of Man."

This volume supplies a want long felt. Cookery-books exist in abundance, but they relate almost exclusively to the preparation of dishes from animal food. This work is devoted entirely to the proper cooking of vegetables, to preserving, pickling, the preparation of sauces, soups, beverages, &c., &c., and forms a complete treatise upon the subject.

Second Thousand, crown 8vo, cloth, price 5s.

Hidden Springs.

By the Rev. JOSEPH PARKER, D.D., of Manchester.

Extra cloth, gilt edges, price 2s.

Seven Stories for Children.

By MARY C. (HUME) ROTHERY.

Crown 8vo, cloth 5s.

The Wedding Guests ;

or, the Happiness of Life. A Novel. By MARY C. (HUME) ROTHERY.

Paper boards, price 1s. 6d., 254 pages.

Hits.

A collection of the best Tales contributed to "Household Words," "Temple Bar," "Once a Week," and "Chambers's Journal." By LEWIS HOUGH, M.A.

18mo, extra cloth, price 1s.

Original Nursery Rhymes,

for Girls and Boys. By ALEXANDER J. ELLIS, F.R.S. With Four full-page Illustrations by EDWIN J. ELLIS, engraved by J. D. COOPER. This book is an attempt to substitute playful sense for serious nonsense.

Cloth, price 1s., with 102 illustrations.

Reading Made Easy ;

or, Child's First Book ; in which the elements of knowledge are arranged in a pleasing and attractive form, and by which Spelling, Reading, Writing, and Drawing are taught simultaneously. With full directions for Parents and Teachers. By GEORGE VASEY.

Cloth, price 2s., with 160 illustrations.

Knowledge Made Easy ;

or, the Arts of Spelling, Writing, Arithmetic, and Short-hand, taught simultaneously ; and (by means of the short-hand characters) the Elements of Architectural, Geometrical, and Ornamental Drawing, easily and pleasantly acquired. By GEORGE VASEY.

LONDON : F. PITMAN, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.