

SPIRITUALISM

AND

COMMON SENSE.

BY
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"The master of superstition is the people, and in all superstitions wise men follow fools; arguments are fitted to practise in a reversed order."—BACON.

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P R E F A C E.

THE first part of this pamphlet was published in a provincial journal some months since, where Spiritualism was rampant, and which I know was not without its effects. After-thoughts, influenced by reasons which need not be mentioned here in detail, led to the expansion of the pamphlet to its present size. The first intention was to publish the second and the third parts, as well as the first, in a local journal; but it was found to be too long, except it appeared in a very fractional form, which would have destroyed partially its unity and effect; and could only be transient and local in limit and influence, after all, if published in that way and form. If there be any apparent or real repetition, or want of consecutive classification and order in the thoughts that are here put before the reader, it is owing chiefly to the way in which it was originally intended to be published, and that one part was printed some time before the other was written; but I venture to hope that even these things, when the arguments are weighed and considered, will not be found to exist to any great extent.

Spiritualism boasts of having created an extensive literature, and consolidated itself to wide-spread and united organisation, both in England and America, and more especially in the latter

country; assertions, if these be true, as doubtless they are in a degree at least, such a system demands some special thoughts and tests, perhaps more extensive and severe than yet it has received. The examination and the arguments used are honestly made and uttered, in intention and motive, which I hope will be considered to be so both by friends and foes. It would be too much even to hope that the reasons and conclusions here used and arrived at will be acceptable to all, governed as men are by so different and varied interests, predilections, and influences, both inwardly and outwardly. The pamphlet is offered to the candour of a free and an open public, hoping that it may do something, however small in degree, towards clearing the way to a better understanding of the subjects it treats upon, and of truth generally.

October, 1868

SPIRITUALISM.

I.

EVERYTHING demanding human belief or unbelief must be capable of evidence for or against its truth and reality, for without these, belief and unbelief are alike unreasonable. The first demand of belief is evidence; the absence of it is rational unbelief in the absence of evidence belief is unreasonable; and where it clearly exists, unbelief is criminal. The same test of evidence we require relative to what is called spiritualism, as in other matters of common belief and interest.

Let nothing be condemned unheard, and that in an honourable court and before competent jury; on the other hand, let nothing be believed before going to court and fair test of evidence, by the power of fancy or the influence of predisposed opinion, sentimentalism, or prejudice. Before the case of belief or unbelief is decided, let witnesses be cross-examined, and all possible secrecy and reserve come to light; then the judgment can be formed positively or negatively according to the quality and degree of the evidence given.

I am willing to accept of spiritualism on the same ground of evidence that I accept of other things, and must refuse it in the same way and for the same reasons that I do other things, which satisfy not the conditions of reasonable evidence. It is always possible, of course, that we fail to read and judge evidence correctly, and there may be other things which, if we knew, would have altered our opinion in the matter. Notwithstanding all this possibility, we must do the best we can with

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the evidence we have; and the probability is, that the evidence, negative or positive, is sufficient to lead us to a right conclusion in all matters of responsible importance.

The misfortune often is, that men believe things before evidence is given and examination made; and often after the greatest proof is given for or against a thing, they believe or disbelieve the same. Very few disbelieve things because of the intelligent reason of want of evidence, or on the ground that the evidence of truth is against them; but they disbelieve because their habits, or taste, or ease, or interest is against them. Equally few believe on the high ground of rational and pure intuitive evidence; the belief of men runs ever in the channel of interest, fashion, social influence, and position, of ease and indulgence; it is often hereditary, like certain diseases and physiological temperaments.

The fact of existence carries with it always sufficient evidence of belief; otherwise, it could not be a fact to us, because it would involve a possible doubt. But other matters connected with the fact of being are often beyond our understandable conceptions. The fact of ourselves and other things is clear, but the how of them is beyond our most industrious inquiry. The fact in space, as well as in time, may be so clear that it cannot be denied in itself; but as to the mode of its production, and the exact time of its occurrence, are things often beyond our most accurate knowledge. The question of utility, answering to the interrogative why? or what? is clearer; yet there may be conditions when this is neither required, nor yet even possible, to understand all in all; though in the ordinary matters of life this is possible, for without this, things in many cases could not be carried to their proper end and use. But the questions when? how? and why? beyond a contracted limit, are matters beyond our duty and reach alike; the fact of being is ever clear to our simplest experience and most genuine faith.

There are certain common evidences applicable to, and demanded of all things alike, which we demand of spiritualism, and refuse to accept of it, as we would of other things, when such criteria are wanting. Any one thing failing in the common evidence which tests the general order of things has no

claim of any particular test, for that would involve that the particular is not comprehended in the general, which is inconsistent with the law of thought and reason.

If spiritualism fails in this common test in the court of common law, provided this is true of other things and rightly applied, it cannot claim any special privilege peculiar to itself, without proclaiming itself outside and different to the system within the reach of common thought, and not to be judged of by the available tests of the laws of thought generally. To put it outside the reach of common test is self-destruction, for in that case nothing can be known of it by its advocates more than by its opponents, for all know and judge under the same conditions and by the same laws of thought.

First, Everything true and real has some worthy and important design or designs which it is intended to produce. Our way of judging phenomena is from their fitness to accomplish some good and important purposes which in themselves are needful and useful, and could not be accomplished otherwise. Now what is the end of spiritualism? What important and useful services has it done, or is capable to perform for the race? This is a fair demand; it is demanded of all other things; and spiritualism has no claim of exemption, and that more especially as it is considered so great and important a matter. But, very remarkable, nobody among its most enthusiastic advocates, claims for spiritualism any addition to human science, or any amelioration of the woes of society; for the mediums themselves disclaim any special knowledge or particular skill beyond the common possession of men generally.

A system that pretends such extraordinary things, and yet cannot give us a fair evidence of its power to perform some important service that nothing else could do, and fulfil some great purposes committed to its special care and keeping, has no claim upon our faith and respect, but rather our unbelief and disrespect are demanded in such a case. It is said that it comforts the sorrowing ones, and also that it gives additional evidence of the truth of religion relative to another state and immortality. As to the first of these hypotheses, it is a very obscure, uncertain, and indefinite kind of comfort; it is only the comfort of a ghost;

it is through tables and bells, and such clumsy and dull expressions as these can give, and it is not certain after all whether it be the departed friend who speaks or some one else. At best the news is uncertain, and cannot even be got as it is, except through certain mediums and under certain conditions of tables and the séance; if it were intended to make the sorrowful happy, one would think in a government of goodness that it would be accessible to all, and that without a doubt and uncertainty, which would spoil the whole matter. But there is another side: suppose the news from the dead to the living is not comforting, what then? Is that joyful and helpful to the living or not? But somehow, like fortune-tellers, the message is generally a happy one, which shows a wish to please and not to pain the living; and so far good; only, if it were all true! As to the latter part of this excuse, namely, that it gives an additional evidence of the truth of religion, it is only needful to say that religion is supported by reason and revelation, and appeals to the whole of our nature and universal analogy, as witnesses of its truth, need, and importance.

Religion requires no such evidences to substantiate its truth and importance; they are foreign to its character as a system of faith. It existed before their pretension, and disdains all dependence upon such uncertain phenomena, either as evidence of its truth or means of its propagation. I think it is clear, without going further in this direction, that spiritualism must advance some different and greater proofs before it can in the least have any claim to any need or utility among sorrowing mortals.

Secondly, Impartiality is another rational test which must be applied to this and all other matters of law and order. The order of providence and religion is impartial, and if this be in any way connected with them, to be unique and consistent, it ought to be alike impartial. The laws between the spiritual world and this are the same impartial mystery to everybody, (except it be mediums;) the beneficence of God's order and the sympathy of good spirits, I suppose are impartial, and if some of the living are comforted from the dead, why not more? Why not all who need it, and might be thus comforted? To say the least, it is most fitful and partial; it cannot belong to

law and order, for all in them are regular and impartial. Why is it also that the spirits of the dead are partial to tables, chairs, bells, and other like things, to convey their messages to the living? Can they not convey them in a way at once more intelligible and spiritual, with less noise and better manners? Why is it that the spirits tell their secrets to some men, who make a trade of it, more than to others? Is it because of their extra wisdom and piety? I appeal to them for an answer to these inquiries, which I take to be fair and reasonable. Why is it also that the spirits are more willing to communicate sometimes than others? And may I ask further, why are they more disposed to favour some tables and localities in preference to others? and why generally preferring the night to the day? Why partial to some lands and times more than others?

Religion is of universal relation; the spirit world is all-pervading; all have their friends, and need the same comfort occasionally, if comfort it be; and yet the thing which is pretended to be a comfort from the dead to the living, and an evidence of the truth of religion, is so uncertain and partial that it must be very unequal to its professed end, or committed to some inefficient and unfaithful administrators: the spirits are very unkind and unfaithful, or all except a number of mediums in the nineteenth century are most dull and stupid to understand and practise the order existing.

Thirdly, Universality is another test which must be applied to spiritualism, in common to other essential matters, in the primordial order of being. The laws which govern us are universal; so are our need and the provision made for us by the hand of grace and providence. Unless there is some rational exemption claimed for spiritualism, which does not belong to the order of being generally, we expect, consistently with general order, to find the same universality in its terms and application we find in other things. If it be a matter of order, why not universal with that order? If a matter of comfort and benefit, why not make it a general thing? that is, if anybody has power over the spirits of the other world so to do. It is confined to few countries, to contracted localities, and to a few individuals, who disclaim any special knowledge, art, or commission from God

or man to enter into the spirit world, and bring the spirits down into this world to knock tables, ring bells, and sometimes worse and more criminal things than these ; and I venture to believe, unless they can show greater authority for such service than they have done, and the spirits themselves, on their appearance among men, behave more in accordance with the order and safety of this material state, that nobody would regret if such things ceased, and table and bell spirits never in that way would visit this world any longer, for it would be hard to show one made wiser and better by such transactions.

Fourthly, The evidence must be such that there can be no possible deception or mistake in the matter at all, from any source or in any way. It is said that men and women of every rank and profession have witnessed the phenomena of spiritualism : yes, and it is possible that men of every rank and profession may be deceived as well. It does not follow, because men practise certain professions in life, and have attained to certain rank in society, that they possess always high logical powers, skill at the examination of evidence, freedom from predilections, great resources of knowledge, and are not easily played upon ; on the contrary, among all ranks and professions are found some of the feeblest intellectually, of the smallest resources of knowledge as to the attainments of the law of things and evidence, as well as most easily persuaded in any groundless matter, as any in society. So this assertion goes for what it is worth, and that is nothing as an argument : it is no more than a feeble special plea, if it can be called even that. Even a knowledge of the business or duties of a profession is no voucher of knowledge and competence in other matters, and those things, it may be, extremely different from and to the things known and practised. The power of fancy alone has wondrous influence, and a hundred things which go for creditable facts among respectable folks have no other source or evidence than the illusion of fancy to prove their veracity ; and may it not have some power even in this ? There are some tables more spiritual than others ; are they, I wonder, like all tables ? Is there no concealed trick of preparation in order to make them fit for this spiritual *séance* ? Why cannot it be done on any stone or pillar of materialism ? for it cannot

be argued, I suppose, that spirits are weak, or that they have special preferences for certain tables. When bells ring, I ask whether it is not possible, on the ground of prearrangement, that somebody was to ring them at a certain time, and that even in such a way that some of them might fly off at a tangent? or, as often is the case, bells are rung by some one, nobody knows who; and if every servant who goes to the door failing to find the ringer were to attribute it to spirits from another world, we should have much more about spirit-ringing than even we at present have. And, I submit, may not this have been the case at a time when companies of table-turners have met, and at once, by these expectant wonder and spirit appearance folks, were made into messages from another world?

It is enough to have mentioned these, without many more things that might be suggested, to show that deception is possible; and so long as no sufficient guarantee has been given, and perhaps can be given, that they do not play upon human credence a kind of deceptive sleight-of-hand, the thoughtful will not accept and believe in the system of spirit-rapping and table-turning as based upon fact and evidence.

Fifthly, It is fair and reasonable to demand that anything offered to our attention and belief does not contradict any established condition in the order of known law and truth. On common ground, we ask the same of spiritualism; and though we may not be able to detect in it any violation of known law, it does not follow that it is true, for it may be that our knowledge and examination are at fault. So it does not follow in such a case that we must accept of it. But if we can detect any discord between it and anything in the order of truth and known laws, we reasonably refuse it at once, as unworthy of our belief and acceptance. The pretension of spiritualism is contrary to common experience. Common people have never had such experience of power to communicate with the dead: it is a new and peculiar thing in the creed and experience of men. It is not professed to be a miracle, but a thing within the range of ordinary law. On this ground we have a reason for expecting it to be within the range of common experience. There is nothing in the analogy of reason which supports such

pretensions : if it be not contrary to reason, it is most decidedly beyond its defence.

I think the fair inference is, as it does not profess to be supernatural, that if it were in the order of things, we should have had an analogy of its truth and reasonableness in something or other ; but of the existence of these I am not aware, in anything or anywhere. It disturbs the profound mystery of the invisible, and thus tends to make common, and so to destroy, our profound reverence for the unknown and the unseen. Revelation never pretends to have made them known ; our curiosity is never satisfied, and our vain inquiries never answered. The soul of revelation is, " I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." The spirit of spiritualism is, we need and can bear the things of the invisible world now ; and in this it comes in collision with the spirit of revelation. Christian life is one of faith, and not of sight ; and the effect of spiritualism is to get beyond this submissive confidence, and bring all under the cognisance of sense. It is an effort to sensualise the spiritual, and get free from our humble and patient dependence upon reason and faith. " Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." The spiritualist says table-turning and bell-ringing are the evidence of things not seen ; and in this I cannot but think revelation and this system contradict each other. I have not exhausted the tests which spiritualism must satisfy before it can be accepted by reason and science ; more might have been named, if required by the necessity of the case. Having no individual party to oppose, nor any theory to propound, I have not willingly misapplied any argument for any personal victory or mere show of truth. If the arguments be not sound in root, or if they be twisted or wrongly applied, it can be easily pointed out. And when this is done, logically and conclusively, it will be seen and known by others, as well as myself, that such is the case ; and till then I must adhere to my conclusions. Spiritualism professes to transcend the limit of human knowledge, and that without giving a proof of such power, nor yet showing any happy benefit to society from such acquisition. It assumes the most extraordinary power, and denies the evidence of it. All I ask is, if such a power exists, let

it be tested, and let us know whether it be so or not ; for truth is all the better for passing to us through a crucial test of reason and impartial evidence.

II.

The search after causes is at the same time both natural and profitable. The questions who? what? when? how? are found in every language, they even pass in a quiet process through the child's mind before he is able to express them in words and syllables to others. The inquiry into causes strengthens and expands the reason; it quickens and invigorates the perceptive powers; it trains and refines the analytical faculties; it gives soundness and independence to the judgment, and makes the soul at the same time more conscious of its power and weakness, of its spiritual nature, and of its mysterious high destiny. That such results should be derived from the study of causes is reasonable and clear from the fact that we are led in such a study into contact with mind, the infinite, the mysterious, and the unknown; we are led in every instance in the end to some final and inexplicable causes, mysterious and unknown. As it would be unnatural and dangerous to let persons become members of the civic, domestic, and religious organisation of society, without knowing something of their names, their past conduct, their intention and capabilities, and the countries from whence they came; so is it of equal importance not to admit any pretended dogma into our acceptance without subjecting it to a full and fair examination and test as to its character, use, and the source from whence it proceeds.

How can these things be? is a question that always has been asked, and always will be, by those at least who will take nothing in the market of thought upon credit, and that because they wish to be true to themselves and others; and they are those who are true to truth, and the deep order of being generally, who thus interrogate things. Such a question is the province of the philosopher, and always will find its true subjects and pursuers; to the artificial, the superstitious, and the men of small detail, it may be very annoying to trace things ever to their causes, but it is the salvation of society, the protection of truth,

and the education of the intellect to do so. It is possible to believe too soon, as it is to carry unbelief too far. It is a happy thing to know how far to go, and where and how to stop. There are profundities we cannot fathom, and mysteries beyond our possible knowledge; to be really convinced of them, and know that they are real and genuine, and not of human fancy and deception, are all we can do, and all that is required of us; and we are bound to examine into their causes and laws to know even these things. To say that everything has a cause is perhaps a matter which no one doubts; but it is far otherwise with the character, variety, and the operation of things. Matters are traced to their causes, and are judged accordingly; and as in the common things of life, so must spiritualism submit to the same ordinary ordeal.

Without entering into minute analysis, nobody, I venture to suppose, will dispute that there are real and fanciful causes, bad and good, conditional and absolute, finite and infinite, secondary and primary. It is possible for men to believe many things in an uncritical and delusive state of mind, which have no real cause beyond their fancy, or their illusion, or their peculiar temperament and persevering will. As it may be in other matters that have no direct and indubitable evidence, so is it possible with spiritualism; hence, like other matters, it must be tested whether it is so or not, by other and legitimate proofs.

Causes have certain canons of test, in the absence of which they cannot be accepted by the law of truth and reason.

1. They must be competent to account for their results.
2. There must be an equality of nature between them and their results, so that one can be seen in, and proved by the other.
3. It is required that they should be in harmony with the real order of being; at least, not to contradict it.
4. To be true and convincing, it is demanded that they should be competent to verify their intended purpose and end. Spiritualism, as a result of some cause or causes or other, either fanciful or real, must, in general with all phenomena, undergo the ordeal of such a test as the common laws of things demand before it can be rationally accepted into the favour and confidence of thoughtful people. If things fail in testing their causes philo-

sophically, they are groundless and worthless: the same with spiritualism; if it be not true here, it is false everywhere.

The phenomena of spiritualism have been attributed to the power of evil agents, which is neither complimentary to the mediums, nor comforting to its disciples. If it be in the power of evil agents thus to move chairs, tables, bells, and such things, how is it that we have not heard of them before? or why is it that it is only occasionally, in certain places, and through certain mediums, that they do so now? According to the confession of spiritualists themselves, lately, there may be lies communicated as well as truth; hence the source is not good in such a light; but in the absence of all evidence to the contrary, I venture to believe in the innocence of all evil invisible agents in the matters of table-rapping; hence the misstatement and falsehood have their origin in some other agent or source. It is a comfort to us to believe that evil agents have no such power over tables, chairs, bells, and other small articles of life. I fear, if they had, we should be disturbed more often than we are.

It is attributed, again, to good agents, as saints or angels; which I submit that the statement has nothing more in it than the most groundless and fanciful assertion of those who make it. Whoever attributes such things as rapping tables, moving chairs, ringing bells, and such unintelligible confusion, cannot have very high views of the intelligence, good taste, and love of order, of the saints or angels who do such things. Are they wanting in power or will to communicate their messages at once, more clearly, decently, and harmoniously with the order of law and common reason? One would have thought, if such messages were to be communicated in the order of law by such beings, that there would have been provision for such a thing agreeably with the order of truth and reason, rather than left to clumsy accidents and uncertainties.

But the messages sometimes happen to be false; and to make saints or angels the communicators of such things is very different to what we have been taught concerning them, and destroys our confidence in the best and highest finite beings in the universe. But it will be said that false messages come from another source;

but who can tell all this? for the medium himself does not know who sends them, which is nothing but a deceitful evasion to avoid an awkward alternative. But how is it that saints and angels have not always done the same? Why only few, and to some individuals? Have they not always been the same? Are they not the same in all places, and to all men? Are all saints not good, and of the same benevolent disposition? As the matter does not proceed from any scientific discovery, and as the laws of the universe have been the same at all times and in all places, and the sentiments and relatives of saints and angels have been the same, we have grounds to demand satisfactory answers to such questions.

It is more absurd still to attribute such communications to God. Such vulgar communications come in collision with his absolute knowledge, veracity, and impartiality, for they may be false, partial, and often show great ignorance of things as they are. If anybody can believe that such messages can possibly come from God, their views of Him must be very curious and contradictory. I cannot but think that such things go far towards leading those who accept them to a final unbelief in God, or to a most monstrous conception of Him in character and dealings towards His creatures. The messages of God to men are through law and order, and in the degree men study and understand these in true spirit and earnest enlightened faith they are known and respected. God communicates His purposes and blessings through ordained mediums of law and regular order, and we have no warrant or encouragement to trust in any other way.

The question returns upon us—How, then, a belief in such phenomena can be accounted for? Every false thing, as well as true thing, has a source which the philosopher must seek out and explain. If the phenomena be not true, there can be no truth in the foundation of them, for reason in its natural and most simple form leads to the conclusion that there is a near relation between results and their causes. All manner of things may be believed in this world; there are, what from selfish and corrupt motives, ignorance, unsuspected simplicity, and prepared dispositions, some disciples to be found for everything, however

preposterous and outrageous to human reason and conscience. In a world so full of darkness and governed by so many different influences and interests, nothing in human belief and conduct should be considered strange. The history of the world is full of things of the greatest absurdity, invented and believed in by people of every grade in society. Nothing is more convincing of this to the human mind than the history of the absurdities believed in and supported in every age by all people in their time, thus showing the vanity and credulity of the human mind in some of its phases and conditions.

Spiritualism is not singularly strange, for there have been many things, and that many times over, as strange, if not more so some of them, which attracted the gaze and belief of many followers for a time. Time and events have thrown into oblivion many theories and delusive forms of belief and fancy; and as with other favourites, so ultimately with what is called spiritualism. It has no truthful substance to bear the wear and tear of ages; it has no foundation to withstand the stormy tests of great events.

If we fail, as certainly we do, to find any real cause in the legitimate order and reason of being generally to spiritualism, we cannot recognise it as a thing of reality and truth. How then can it be accounted for, as a thing of acceptance and belief by many? We account for the belief of it as we do many other matters of credulity, and firmly believed in by men; and viewing it in the light of the susceptibilities of the human mind, to the different influences which constantly mould it, and the erratic history of human belief in different times and countries, it is not difficult to show even a cause for this, though it be a secondary and false one.

There are three classes which are counted believers in this sensuous spiritualism: the agents of it, who may or may not be sincere; the many who are perplexed by it, and will not speak against it because they are in a state of mental suspension and confusion, and can hardly tell their own view in the matter; and those who sincerely believe in it as a matter of sober truth and reality. Such a belief may be accounted for, and that in harmony with history, law, and reason, on different

grounds. First, The tendency of men generally to pierce the veil, and know the things of the unseen world. Men of all creeds and countries are thus included, which accounts for great superstition, even sometimes among the greatest sceptics. It is not hard to persuade men who have cultivated by thought and events this natural tendency, to believe in a system so congenial with their wishes, and so satisfactory to their sympathies and desires. Second, Morbid state of the feeling and judgment, after the death of friends is by various influences and sympathies a prepared condition to accept of such a belief. In such a state the mind communes more with the invisible than with the visible. It desires to speak and know all about the dead, until at last, in many cases, I doubt not, the mind is reduced to this state of self-delusion, to believe this to be the case; and every knock and sound are thus made, in the hand of sentimental fancy, to be messages from the dear dead. Third, Wrong application of causes is another source of delusion in the vague system of spiritualism, which mislead so many simple adherents to conclusions which are not warranted by evidence, though accepted without doubt or examination. Nothing is more common in the phenomena of life than this application of agent and cause, and nothing leads to such errors and contradictions. This mistake led the Jews to say that Jesus performed his gracious deeds by an evil power; and many times over has it attributed the worst of things to the best of causes, and the best to the worst. In many cases, doubtless, artificial causes have been employed, and closely concealed by the selfish and designing, to gain an end over the willing and unsuspecting credulity of many already susceptible to such influences. Fourth, The novelty and the high pretension of the system, with the ease of performance, may be mentioned as another artificial cause of its acceptance by many. Many people are weary of things which have always been, and are ever anxious to grasp a new thing without asking a question as to its credentials; and the more outrageous often a thing is, the greater it is welcomed, and the firmer it is believed. Everybody feels some interest in the unseen world, and when it was announced that an entrance was opened through tables, bells, and chairs into

it, thousands of wonder-struck disciples accepted it as the thing long wanted and desired, and fit to meet the sentimentality of sorrowing and anxious men and women in this life of death and doubt; and many saw that it would be worth while to make a trade of it, and a gainful policy to confine its mystery to a class, and bring artifice to its assistance and support. Some other sources of artificial causes might be mentioned, but the above are competent, if I mistake not, to account for the influence of spiritualism, which, I believe, withal, is greatly magnified by the advocates of this monstrous system. It would have been possible to expand greatly, by proofs and illustrations, the above suggestions; to exhaust is not the end I have in view, rather to suggest things for others to think upon, and work out, if so desired, to further limits in evidence and application.

It is different from that bold visionary spiritualism, of which Swedenborg is the chief, great, and prominent representative; it is also different from that intellectual, intuitive spiritualism, of which the late Mr Theodore Parker, and at present Mr Emerson and others, are representatives, and the last is nothing but a modification of ancient gnosticism. Though it has something in common as to some of its causes and several of its characteristics with these, it is much ruder and more vulgar than the first, and incomparably less rational and intellectual than the second. It is a problem in psychology to solve, How is it that where these systems flourish most there spiritualism has the deepest hold, and the largest number of adherents? It proceeds doubtless, from congenial sympathies, prepared susceptibilities, and some latent inherent likeness between them.

III.

The opponents of the assumption of spiritualism are not of necessity disbelievers in the spiritual when rightly conceived and interpreted, and so make their opposition on that ground; rather they make their stand by reason of their belief in a higher and deeper spiritualism than spirit-rapping can reveal to them, and in defence of it. Such spiritualism that expresses itself through the medium of house furniture is only a very rude kind, if

it can be called under that name at all. It is more consonant with reason that it is altogether a matter produced on this material side, and the other side has nothing whatever to do with it. It is a clumsy, sensuous pretension, without evidence of support either in fact, reason, or revelation. I propose now to look at this anomalous system very briefly from different standpoints, and see whether or not it is what its advocates make it to be, true and genuine. It will be seen that the more we look at it, and the greater the number the standpoints from which it is viewed, its groundless pretensions and its delusive character will appear all the clearer.

First, it is right that we should view this anomaly, in common with other things presented to our faith and acceptance, through its own pretensions and arguments, and put ourselves as near as possible in the place of its subjects, only reserving the independency of our opinion, and the unbiassed character of our judgment, from being swayed unduly to the other side. Suppose I wished to be a believer in spiritualism, and anxious to get such evidence as would sway my understanding and convince my judgment, what are the facts and arguments that could be produced for my conversion? Are they plausible? Is there any semblance of truth in them at all? Whilst all should put themselves in an independent and unprejudiced attitude, fit and prepared to be swayed by truth, however it leads, everything presented to our credence and acceptance should possess enough of evidence of its truth to sway our judgment in its favour and reception; and so long as this is not the case, rationally it cannot be received into our favour.

And what are the evidences by whose strength and veracity we are persuaded to accept of spiritualism? Let us see whether or not they are such that we can accept of them? They are not numerous, and they are not so profound and complicated, in thought at least, as to be beyond our comprehension. The arguments used to support spiritualism are mainly three, and not one of them is scientific and philosophic either in sympathy or result; hence it is not requisite to enter into delicate analysis, comprehensive generalisation, and abstruse sifting, to appreciate their worth or to meet their force.

One argument in support of the hypothesis is the large number which believe in it. The advocates of spiritualism never forget to tell us that men of the highest attainments, and of the most illustrious rank, even many of the royal blood in England and Europe, believe in it ; therefore it must be true and worthy of our acceptance ; and, of course, those who do not thus follow the many are blind and stupid. Even if it were granted that spiritualism can reckon upon its thousands, and among them many of the royal blood, the argument proves too much : it is worthless as a test. Truth is not decided by number, neither is it true that a thing is not false because royal personages patronise it. Error often has the largest number, and carries with it the bloom of fashion and respectability, and there is as much ignorance of a kind and superstition of a form among royalty as there are among humbler folks, and often more. If the argument of number and respectability were worth anything in this, it would be good in other matters as well, which would alter the sides of truth and error, of religion and irreligion. If number settled matters, then Buddhism, Brahminism, Mohammedanism, and even Mormonism, must have the pre-eminence, among religious systems ; and worldism, ignorance, and sensualism must be honoured before and above their opposite, for number and outward respectability outweigh in their ranks. Not only is this unsound in fact, but it is vain and boastful, betraying a conscious weakness and want of better resources.

It is also adduced as an evidence of the truth of spiritualism that the mediums are subject to peculiar experiences, which at once are extraordinary and special. It has been stated, apparently seriously, and is repeatedly asserted in print and orally, that certain mediums are elongated in body, taken to the air, and become unconscious to things sensuous and terrestrial. 1. Suppose anybody believed sincerely these things, it is reasonable to ask what purpose have they in view ? Do they fit the agent or medium for his work ? Does he receive thus a higher power over the spiritual world ? Is this an evidence of his authority and commission for the work ? It proves nothing, except that those who undergo such experiences are unfit for the business of life, and are not to be trusted as mediums of truth and reason.

2. If such phenomena are real, under what influence are they produced, or by whose agency are they brought about? Are they good or bad? Are they by God or somebody else? The mediums themselves are not explicit on the matter, which betrays suspicious doubt. It would be almost too bad to expect them to say that they are from the source of evil; it would spoil the whole affair. It would be a little too presumptuous to attribute them to God: no, there is a little sense of truth after all. And to attribute such phenomena to themselves would, visibly to all, open the box of mystery, and let all look into it, and see the bottom of the scheme. They must be the production of some one, for we cannot conceive of any act without an actor; they must be also good or bad, for all things done by moral beings must be one or the other.

3. What are the laws by which such phenomena are produced? Things in the order of nature and religion, belonging to mind and matter, are under the control of law, and if these things be real and true, we have a claim upon those who proclaim them to show us the law or laws under which they are performed. Things are safe and useful to us in their laws, and all things have their laws, and God has given us wisdom and means to know the laws and order of things.

4. When the mediums lose all consciousness of the sensuous and earthly, are they conscious, I wonder, of the super-sensuous and the super-terrestrial? If they are not, they are conscious of nothing; it is the same as sleep, and who can tell but what it is, after all, that restorative, refreshing thing. In that case, we are all every day of life more or less transcended to the super-sensuous, and thus undergoing the qualification of mediums. But to be quite serious, if they are not conscious of anything seen or heard on the other side of sense, what can be the advantage of being thus raised above it? A state without consciousness is not known to us apart from that of sleep, or of nervous insensibility, or of death. If it be a state of unconsciousness, so far as we have knowledge, it must be one of these; or if of consciousness at all, it must be so of things sensible or above sense, or both. Now, to say that it is below consciousness, is to make it useless; to say that it is a state of super-sensuous consciousness is above our experience; it belongs to mediums only, and they alone can declare of it. Such a thing

is above our limited experience, and equally distant from our conception of truth and reason.

It is maintained by the upholders of spiritualism that it is supported by indubitable facts. What is called fact often is more delusive than fiction: the name misleads; things are taken upon the authority of a hearsay, without any reflection and examination. If what are frequently called facts were tested, it would make people more careful what they would receive and trust in as facts. Now, it is fair to ask what are the facts which prove spiritualism to be true? And what are the proofs that such facts are genuine and real? The facts themselves are certain expressions through tables, chairs, and bells; the outward phenomena depend upon the senses of the spectators, and the meaning of them upon the knowledge and veracity of the medium. Supposing such phenomena do appear, even that could not prove them to be facts in the sense claimed for them; for it is possible that such phenomena are the results of other causes different from what the unsuspecting believe them to be, and so long as that is possible, and far more probable than otherwise, they cannot be proved facts. It may be also mentioned that so long as it cannot be proved that illusive fancy cannot absorb sense and reason, there is another form of difficulty to establish such phenomena as real facts.

But even if the phenomena could be established as facts, they would be useless and insufficient to cover and come up to their pretended intention. 1. No one can be certain what these pretended phenomena mean; even the medium himself has no class-book of precise definition, and clear and minute explanation. He has not been under any spiritual training on the other side of sense; the spirits have not committed to his keeping the exact meaning of every knock of the clapper, or whirl of the table, or turn of the chair; it is all his own arbitrary guess or meaning; he has no affidavit from any invisible spirit that so and so is the meaning, and nothing else. So long as this uncertainty remains, even if the first had any truth in them, it would be useless and a false pretension. 2. Such phenomena are insufficient as symbols to meet their pretended design. Let the ringing, moving, and turning be as varied as possibly they can be, is it possible that they

are in such variety and comprehension as will cover the relations between the spiritual world and this? or even can accomplish what the spiritualists assume them to do?

If we take even general views of the laws and correlatives of facts, we shall find that the phenomena of spiritualism equally fail. Facts carry with them such evidences which cannot be reasonably doubted, which is not the case with spiritualism. The more facts are examined and understood, the more the reason is convinced of their truth and reality; but the more spiritualism is examined, the more doubtful and groundless it appears. The operative facts of nature and moral order are regular and universal, subject to certain laws and conditions, which is not the case with this anomalous hypothesis. Without going any further on this ground, if I mistake not, enough has been said already to show that spiritualism cannot be classed with indubitable facts.

Secondly, Let us for a moment or two consider the theory of spiritualism on the ground of utility. The argument from utility is legitimate, and carries with it weight and authority; and if it could be proved that spiritualism has been the means of accomplishing, or was fitted to do something useful and needful that nothing else could, it would be so far a favourable presumption in proof of its pretensions. It is said that it gives knowledge of the spiritual world, that it has been the means to convince infidels, and that it is calculated to give knowledge of many secret things on earth, by its power of consultation with the departed. These are high pretensions, and if they could be made good, it would be some proof of the utility of the thing that could accomplish such things. When we push for proof, I fear we shall not find the evidence so easily given and satisfactory in results as the boast is loud and daring. What knowledge does it give of the spiritual world? Is such a knowledge as it pretends to give legitimate and certain? Does it tell us anything beyond what we knew, or does it come up to our present knowledge? I am confident, if we were dependent upon spiritualism for our knowledge of the spiritual world, it would be more obscure than it is; the confusion and contradictory reports relative to it would lead us to dismal scepticism con-

cerning it. What infidels has it converted, and of what has it converted them? I fear, if it can number any infidel converts among its trophies, that their conversion is very indefinite, doubtful, and superficial; and unless some higher evidence is given and more solid foundations felt than spiritualism can furnish, they will soon relapse into their former condition, and be harder and worse than before. As to furnishing knowledge from spiritual beings to help us in the affairs of life, it is enough to say that provision is made for this already in the laws and order of things, and that we are not dependent upon the spirits of the dead to carry on the business of life; neither are we responsible for not consulting them, and that for reasons clear—we have no means to do so, we need it not, and perhaps it is beyond their power to do so.

Every wrong theory will ever, if we are true observers, show its incompatibleness with truth somewhere or other; so spiritualism shows its unfitness for the service its adherents vaunt it can accomplish, and for this our belief cannot accept of it under such an aspect. 1. The service it professes to render demands distinct and indubitable utterance, which it can never render, and this alone makes its service as a medium between us and the spiritual world nugatory and worthless. Bells, chairs, and tables cannot define and make nice logical distinction, minute analysis, and clear expression; and what value can there be in a message from the dead unless it is clear and sure? what power is there in an argument to convince infidels if it be not precise and distinct? and what instruction can we derive, amidst our care and trouble in this world, from the messages of the dead, except they be definite and understood, which they never are nor can be through such rude expressions. 2. According to the confession of the spiritualists themselves, there are elements of uncertainty in the phenomena, and these destroy necessarily the possibility of their accomplishing those services attributed to them. It is not certain who speaks through chairs and tables. It is not certain either, according to their own confession, whether they always speak the truth or not; and it may be added that it is something more than doubtful whether they speak at all. With these elements of uncertainty how is it possible that such things can convey to us

the things of the spiritual world, convert infidels, and give unto us certain knowledge concerning matters in this life received from the invisible world, as will be of great advantage to us? It is a thing which carries on its own surface its refutation. 3. The phenomena of spiritualism are governed by no law of regularity, so that by doing certain things we invariably get certain results. Even the mediums themselves fail to induce the spirits to meet their wishes in all matters, and that either because they cannot or will not, and either shows that such a system of fanciful construction cannot accomplish what it pretends to do. Without, on this ground, detaining the attention of the reader any longer, it must be clear, as I think, that the dogma of spiritualism has no support from any utility in it, but rather it is exposed as helpless, convicted of unfitness, and thrown overboard as unworthy of our faith and acceptance.

Thirdly, But does this latter-day spiritualism receive any support from the reason of things, or the natural relation and order of being? The natural order of things is the same everywhere, to everybody, and is within the reach of every one's knowledge; and whatever is not included in it, or adverse to it, is not a part of it; and unless such an order be deficient or wrong, it is not required by reason and truth. It is a natural ground of appeal and test. We, almost unconsciously to ourselves, when anything new is presented to us, appeal immediately to order, which accords with our reason; if we cannot do it extensively and correctly, it is because our knowledge is limited, and our understanding and judgment not correct.

It would be a glaring contradiction to make spiritualism a supernatural revelation, for the question would be asked and must be answered, How then has it been made known at all? Has it been specially made known to the mediums, and to none besides? Why was it made known to them more than to others? Thus, unless the mediums could show some special qualifications which other men possess not, to be thus honoured with such special revelations would present itself as a reasonless fabrication, without support in fitness and truth. But even to make it a special revelation could not remove it from the test of

natural order, for no revelation of truth can contradict the order of truth which exists.

Spiritualism is very much the hypothesis of sentimentality; hence it is not generally tested by the laws and processes of severe examination and evidence. Rather than testing it by the order of law and reason, men are ever blinded by assertions of facts, and parade of mysterious extraordinary phenomena. Anybody wishing to conceal its shortcomings and make blind dupes, it is no doubt a clever policy to keep as long and as far as possible from all contact with fair and rational tests; and its advocates appear to be aware of this, for it is not often, if ever, claimed for it a philosophical evidence from the reason and order of being generally: even if such a claim were made, it could not be substantiated and made good by the evidence of law and reason.

1. The natural order or the reason of things does not show the necessity of spiritualism. The order of reason is complete in itself for all wants and demands. This vaunted theory can add nothing to its resources, neither in any way can it make it more fit for any useful end, or more useful for any good purpose. It is not a part of the order that exists; therefore not needful for it: it is complete and efficient for all high and happy ends, without the light and service of spiritualism. But it may be asserted further, not only the reason of things does not find it a part of the order of being, it does not find the need of it anywhere, either inside or outside the order which universally prevails.
2. The facts of spiritualism cannot be proved, by direct or indirect proof, from the reason or the natural order of things. I am not aware that anybody ever tried to prove the facts of spiritualism from the rational fitness of things; and if it had been done, all would have been absolutely impotent in the matter. We have no example of such a thing on record; we know of no truth or principle in the whole range of order from which we can draw from it such a conclusion; our reason cannot grasp it, because it has no ground to stand upon, or any analogies of comparison and ground to place any premise upon; and we know that it is a matter utterly foreign to our consciousness.
3. It may be said further, without prejudice and partiality,

that the preponderate decision of the reason of things, is positively adverse to the hypothesis. Reason cannot see that it can add anything to the order of law and reason as means of knowledge and usefulness; moreover, if it were the order of God to give such revelation as spiritualism to men, the fitness of things would lead us to believe that a more intelligible and dignified manner than through the medium of chairs and tables would convey to us such designs.

Fourthly, but does spiritualism fare better when viewed in the light of science? The advocates of this misnomer theory never appeal to science for proof and illustration of the truth and utility of their views; often affected believers in spiritualism, like fortune-tellers, evade the searching examination of science, as if they were conscious of their weakness, and wished to conceal their doubtful fond hypothesis in the shade, rather than bring it forward to be tested in the light of knowledge. Our natural tendency is to avoid the thing which shows the deformity of the object we love, and makes known the groundlessness of our fond fancies and theories; but it is disingenuous and unfaithful to truth and reason to perpetuate the doubtful and the false. Truth is bold and fearless, it fears nothing but partiality and the dark; and the lovers of truth fear nothing more than fancies, and are anxious to test their views and examine their foundation by all means and light, that they may believe the firmer and build the safer.

Whatever contradicts true science is adverse to the laws and relations of things, for science, in its right conception and interpretation, is the real knowledge of things in their right place, true use, and real character and condition. Science being also the comprehensive curriculum of human knowledge within the reach of reason and natural means, it follows that whatever is outside it is above our natural means and power; hence must be a revelation, or known by some supernatural way not known to science. There is no alternative to choose. If a thing be not within the compass of science, it must be supernatural, or it is a fancy or a falsehood. In common with all matters of knowledge, spiritualism must choose between one of these three alternatives; there are none possible besides. Not that everything that

goes under the name of science is always true, for in the hand of man there is a false science as well as a true one. Men substitute fancy for evidence, subterfuge for demonstration, opinion for knowledge, and delusion for true consciousness; and true science is corrupted and debased into the condition of a mixture of truth and falsehood, light and darkness, good and bad.

Science, as in the vaunted hands of men, often is too assumptive and proud; it is too much mixed with human feeling and prejudice; hence it loses its modesty, and becomes too dogmatic and infallible. True science is absolutely free from human predilections and opinions. In its right conception it is nothing less than the right understanding and classification of its objects according to the laws of truth and right order. True science is broad, but that of man is often narrow. The science which becomes men is modest and believing, but in men's hands and lips it is often immodest and unbelieving. The science intended by heaven is comprehensive and dignified, but the one we see among men on earth is often selfish and mean. And here we mean by science not opinions and human interpretations, but the science of the universal and true—immutable knowledge. In this view it is the comprehension of all good, and the test of all truth within the limits of human thought and reason.

Science, it will not be denied, in the degree it is true and pure, is a real test of all within the compass of reason. If true knowledge were not a test, it follows that we have no test whatever, or it must be ignorance. It is true that our science is not perfect either in development or quality. Such is the case, some way or other, with most things in this state; and if this were a real argument against testing things by the light of science, it would bear an equal force against all things done in politics, jurisprudence, arts, and even religion, for all are surrounded with the same imperfectness as science is. Imperfect as we are in our knowledge, it is the best thing we have, and we must use it as well as we can, until it will be both greater and better, and a right use is the only sure way to both. We do not boast of an infallible science. If we judge by the light of the best science within the reach of our attainment, we do what is required; we are not responsible for any more; and if

our knowledge, so far as it goes, be correct and pure, even our larger attainment will not contradict it when we shall reach and possess it.

Spiritualism may be tested in different ways in the light of science, for both have different sides, and must be viewed accordingly. Is science the source or the power which called into requisition what is called spiritualism? Science denies this, and the advocates of spiritualism do not claim it. It is not within the power of science; it understands it not; it is not the result of its wisdom and activity. But can science prove the phenomena? Clearly this is beyond its power, for science, no more than anything else, can go beyond the limit of its knowledge. It is beyond its knowledge; hence it possesses no facts and data of proof; in fact, the thing which is beyond our knowledge is also beyond our power of thought and affirmation. Science cannot do the impossible, nor unite the contradictory. To prove the fact of spiritualism would involve both, because not produced by it, and being outside its limits and knowledge. But is it in the power of science to account for the influence and belief of it at all? This, it appears to me, science is able to do, in the light of history, psychology, and metaphysics, and perhaps also by the assistance of some of the branches of physical science. As it has been already hinted at in a former page, the way science accounts for the phenomena of spiritualism is unfavourable to its pretensions, and unwelcome to its zealous and unreasoning devoted advocates.

As it is the end of this production to throw out a few suggestions rather than to enter into minuteness of detail, it may be said, in conclusion on this matter, that science cannot accept of spiritualism for different reasons:—1. Its mode of operation is unwarrantable and unscientific. 2. The evidences it adduces for its truth are unscientific and unwarrantable to be taken as vouchers for its truth. 3. In the eye of science the end it has in view is both impracticable and unnecessary. It cannot recommend its pretension or results to the belief and acceptance of men upon rational ground.

Fifthly, Let us see whether or not spiritualism receives any sanction from revelation and religion, notwithstanding our failure

to get a favourable verdict for spiritualism in the court of general science. We shall try whether the language of religion is one with science in this matter. There are matters which demand, from their character and natural relation, scientific test more than religious, and others there are which demand to be religiously tested, rather than scientifically. It is possible, where religion cannot give proof and clear up a thing, science may ; and where science fails, religion can ; and that without involving necessarily any contradiction, because their premises differ, and one may go beyond the other in means and evidence. When science or religion denies the possibility or speaks of the entire falsehood of a thing, it would be a contradiction for the other to speak of it as possible or as true ; but in a matter of the greater light and fitness of one beyond the other, it is different, and involves no discrepancy. Religion itself is a science, for it has objects and laws of knowledge, like all matters of rational conception and activity. Viewing it as a system of faith, of experience, and of life, it has objects, laws, and conditions, about which the reason predicates its negatives and affirmatives, and which must be matters of rational understanding and conviction ; only there is at least this difference between the science of religion and other sciences in general, whilst natural science is absolutely to be judged and tested by reason, religion is not ; and this obvious difference proceeds from the fact that religion claims supernatural source, objects, and service, whilst natural science is a predication about natural laws and objects, and that by reason only. Whilst divine revelation cannot contradict reason, it may go beyond it ; and whilst science cannot be a test in all matters of religion, yet they must agree so far as they go, for their laws and ends are common.

Now, does religion in any way side with spiritualism ? If it do, it must do so directly or indirectly. The proof must be sought either in the letter or in the spirit of religion, or in both. Is there anywhere an evidence in the formal law of religion, which is revelation, of the truth of spiritualism ? We are bound to say, if there be, we are not acquainted with it. There is one instance which the friends of spiritualism may claim of a medium, and we will grant it to them : the woman of Endor calling up

Samuel, according to the wish of Saul. If this transaction could be proved a fact, it differs greatly from the spiritualism of the present day. It was far more intelligible; it was not through tables, bells, and chairs, but in clear distinct words, the communication was made. It was done without any of those preparations which spiritualism requires before one can appear from the dead. It was also to meet an important exigency and necessity, and not a mere trivial fancy of men and women, boys and girls of latter times, as if the spirits of the unseen world had nothing to do but attend to the whims and fancies of everybody that may call upon them, through tables or any other way on earth. If Samuel appeared at all, the truthfulness and form of his language was something different from the spirits which come in answer to the calls of these latter-day mediums, which we point out to their imitation. We willingly concede to the spiritualist the company and example of the woman of Endor, with all the facts of the case; they are welcome to all its social honours, and all the evidence they afford, which are neither creditable nor advantageous in any way.

We have a remarkable paragraph in the New Testament on the same point, (Luke xvi. 19-31:) "*There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom; and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from*

thence. Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house ; for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." This awful passage is so far from being favourable to spiritualism, that it clearly in principle opposes it. There is an acknowledgment of another state of consciousness and suffering ; also that there may be good wishes and desires even in torment towards the living on earth. But is there the least intimation that the dead communicate with the living ? If such a communication were a matter of law and order, one would believe that it would have been in this case, for it was in a case of mercy and salvation, and also to five individuals. What is the import of the answer to the request of this rich unfortunate man, and the comment of the Saviour upon it ? 1. That all social intercourse between the good and the bad is at an end ; 2. That those living on earth have all needful means of knowledge and salvation, without any messenger from another world to warn them ; 3. That if the living listen not to the law and the prophets, which they have, the dead, if they rose, would not convince them. The request made, on the ground of reason and order was denied, as useless and inconsistent.

There is no verbal passage in the whole of revelation that gives the least support to this anomalous hypothesis which can be pointed to by either friend or foe. Is there, then, something in the character and spirit of religion that supports it in any way ? Though religion is spiritual, and leads to the invisible and the unknown, and communes in faith and sympathy with the faithful dead, there is nothing to warrant the belief that the dead communicate their thoughts and wishes unto us in a different way. We cannot communicate our wishes and sympathies to the dead but in feeling. We have no suitable mediums to reach them in visible expression ; and we have no

reason to believe that the dead do express themselves differently to us, the living.

For reasons decisive and clear, which may be expressed in a few sentences, spiritualism has no support from religion either mediately or immediately. 1. It needs it not; it is complete in itself, and has legitimate agents for all purposes and ends. 2. It is a spiritual system, hence it is a thing of faith and not of sense. 3. Religion depends not upon uncertain contingencies, but is regulated by laws which are constant, and conditions which are practical, natural, rational, and certain. 4. Religion is not a matter to trifle with, or a thing to please human curiosity, but a thing to meet the demand of truth and universal relation. This is a fertile subject, and much more might be said to the same purpose; but enough has been said to show the general tendencies and conclusion of the whole.

Sixthly, But if we look at spiritualism through its tendency and results, shall we be more influenced in its favour, and inclined for its reception? So far we have failed to get the verdict, in one instance, in favour of spiritualism, though we have entered several courts without a wish to be influenced by anything but the spirit of truth and fairness; yet, in all instances alike, our conclusions have been unfavourable to its pretensions. The evidences, when tested, failed; the witnesses, when pushed, faltered; the ground, as we examined and sounded it, gave way under us; and equity and reason drove spiritualism out of court as having no case of truth and reason made out, and nothing to defend itself with, but sentimental and most partial special pleading.

It is not needful to show, by any elaborate process of analysis and reasoning, that the natural result of things is their preponderate tendency. This is understood and believed by all in the most common matters of life, and can never fail except by an interference with the inherent nature and the laws of things. The tendency of a ponderous body is to fall downward; the tendency of smoke and fire is to rise upward; and a thousand of other things in nature around us which we might name; and as it is in the natural, so is it also in the intellectual and moral world the same. The relation between tendency and result is

as deep as nature, and as regular and certain as law. If the tendency be good, the result will be the same; but if it be bad, so will be the result; and no one can prevent it, but by changing the inherent principles of things, or by effectually stopping by force the natural course and process of things. The result proves the tendency; so does the tendency alike prove the result. It will not be denied that the argument from tendency and result is both natural and fair, to support or to oppose any position, as it may appear to be required. It cannot be said that the premises are either too narrow, or unnatural, or partial; on the contrary, it is competent to sustain all demanded by the reason of the case: it is natural, and of universal application. Does spiritualism then justify itself by its tendency and results, or does it not? Does it ameliorate human misery? or does it in any way advance human society, knowledge, usefulness, or happiness? If it have not done these things already, does it in any way tend to these, or to some other virtuous things? Has it the power, if rightly used, to produce any such beneficial results? We appeal to its devotees and the initiated illuminators for evidence of any good tendencies and results. I, like many more, fail to see anywhere or in anything such results; and if it be blindness, it is not a voluntary one: if they have greater light and clearer evidence, let them be given, and they will be thankfully received.

Just think of a party meeting together to disturb or raise the dead, either from purposes of curiosity, or, still worse, for some deceptive and selfish design. They stand around some table, mute and solemn, or laughing and frivolous, with fingers and will expecting some spirit to come and obey them in their charm-like exercise and anxious expectation. I ask, Can there be in this exercise, with all the highest associations that can possibly belong to it, any elevating tendency, any ennobling results? It is hard to believe that the most intense believer in the system can sincerely answer in the affirmative. Even if the motive in such procedures were superior, it would not serve to make the process a superior one in result upon those who practise it, for men are made by their doings and their associates; and if the means be not equal to motives, they are reduced to the level of their doings and their surroundings.

It would be a very curious sight for an Australian native to see a company of spirit-invokers standing around a table, with their hands steadily pressing the table, their lips closed, and their faces full of anxious expectation. Such a person would ask in wonder, "What play was that? what skill was in it? and what pleasure was in it?" for he could see none. On being informed that they invoked the dead to speak to them, would he not be amazed, and exclaim—"Are these the people who sent us missionaries, and told us of the science and advancement of England? I tell you, superstitious as we have been, we never were so silly as to think that the dead would answer us through the mediums of chairs and tables." I fancy he would, in his simplicity, ask further questions—"If the spirit of the dead answer you through tables, do they live under tables, or in tables? Why do they answer through tables more than something else? Australian as I am in ignorance and superstition, I see no utility in it; I cannot believe in it; I prefer our superstitious customs and legends to yours; after all your boast of gospel light and civilisation, I believe you are little behind us after all." Think of a party, after some dinner or supper, of different class and sex, surrounding some table, either for play or for the purpose of invoking the dead. One prominent among them is a minister of the gospel; there is also a lawyer, also a physician, a magistrate, a merchant, a pale-looking widow, and several more of rank and position. These persons have lost different friends and relatives, and if they are sincere, they turn their thoughts first to those departed friends, and expect them to answer by some sign or other. As there are so many of them, who is to receive the first answer? for every one is intently thinking of his own, and all cannot answer at once, or perhaps could not in succession, if they were there even all night. But suppose an answer was given by a tremendous table-turning, or bell-ringing, or chair-moving, or such things, would it be pleasant and congenial with the tender and sacred feeling of those present, to associate their dear departed friends with these rude communications? would the widower like to associate his elegant departed wife with table-turning? or the parent his child, or the wife her lately-departed husband? or any relation, or even common friendship? I cannot but think that

such associations are so extreme, unnatural, and adverse to the state and feeling of tenderness and sacredness of those who have been deprived of the dearest objects of their love and joy, that their deepest and best feelings would revolt against them. O, if the dead spoke to the living, they would speak differently and in a different way than by table-turning; a thousand times more terrible—a thousand times more comforting. Did the murdered innocent but speak, the murderer could not rest. Did all the persecuted and injured but speak, could the oppressors of them be happy? Ah! if they did but speak as a spirit might, could we do the business of life with comfort and efficiency? The dead are not in a state to attend courts and give evidence in matters of earthly concern, and for similar reasons they do not speak to men on earth in words, much less through tables, either to disturb or comfort. If the dead spoke ever so comforting to the living, it could not heal and console; it would rather keep the wound open, and perpetuate the distress of conscious loss and absence, for their society and not doubtful expressions could give real comfort.

Would those who are around the table, trifling with the name of departed spirits, like to hear and meet the spirits of those that might speak, with clearness and effect, of their doings? Would the minister like to hear the dead accusing him of his shortcomings? or would the lawyer like to hear the dead speaking of his equivocation and dishonesty? or would the physician like to hear the dead speak of the large number killed by either inattention or experimental ignorance? Would parents like to hear of the wrong they did to their children, from the dead? Would politicians like to be accused of their selfish schemes, or the merchant of his cupidity, or the tradesman of his constant falsehood and dishonesty, from the dead? This would be a terrible thing for men to hear: the business of earth would be disturbed; and would make the spirits of the unseen world busy, and not always in a pleasing and dignified employment either. Men have nearer and clearer witnesses of their wrong-doings than the dead, in their conscience, reason, and religion; and, happy for us, we have a nearer and a surer source of comfort than the

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dead either can or are allowed to give us—our consciences, religion, truth—and God.

In conclusion, I may say in a few words what might be extended and amplified very much more than is needed or aimed at here. (1.) The tendency of spiritualism leads to a species of feeble superstition. (2.) It tends to a fanciful and sensuous sentimentality, and that upon the expense of weakening our reason, judgment, and our common moral sense. (3.) It tends to the doing away of the spirituality of religion, the need of faith, and reduces all to sense and irreverent transaction. (4.) It tends to trifling and frivolity in matters beyond the warrant of human knowledge and power. All kinds of people, under all conditions, in all relations, and having all kinds of motives, turn tables; which, according to spiritualism, is nothing less than invoking and communing with the spirits of the dead. It may be that it is an exercise after the dinner-party, under the influence of things which do not always make people grave and wise; young women and young men practise it to try their power and skill, when time is heavy on their hands, whether or not they can charm some spirit to obey their invocation. And if such things are not trifling about matters beyond the business of men on earth, it is hard to tell in what it consists. Simply as a matter of innocent pleasure and recreation it is harmless, and I should not be inclined to condemn it; but when sacred things are made matters of trifling amusement, it is unfit in itself, and leads to unhappy results. If amusement and recreation are wanting, let us not trifle with the dead on grounds of ignorant presumption, for there are abundance of places and objects provided for such things in other matters and objects. I cannot persuade myself that the person or persons who think that spirits will appear by feeling of tables, and some other matters of the kind, can have great reverence and high esteem for the dead, or of the laws that permit or appoint it. (5.) It tends to a species of clumsy materialism. It reduces the spiritual world and its inhabitants to the level of this; it makes them even lower; for the spirits can only knock tables and play tricks of that kind; whilst we can express

ourselves in language and other superior forms. The dead commune with us in spiritual sympathies, invisible and unknown as our sympathies are to them, which is not expressed so cheap and common as the spiritualism of these latter days would have us to believe. (6.) It tends to an assumption of power which would prove unwarrantable and dangerous if believed in. A man who professes to have power over the mystery of the spiritual world becomes deluded himself, and has, in the degree he is believed in, power to sway others, and always some will believe in such a thing. Such a person may mislead many, and destroy happiness, and lead to distress, and ruin many a blind follower. Every great delusion begins in the assumption of power over the spiritual world. I need only name as instances Mohammedanism in the seventh century, and Mormonism in the nineteenth century. If anybody will happen to think that too much has been said in the foregoing pages on such an obscure hypothesis as spiritualism, I can only say, in conclusion, that I cannot consider anything insignificant which concerns man. Things must be viewed, not simply in themselves, but in their relations and results, and their power over matters which concern men generally. Falsehood, however small, is of immense damage. One truth, however insignificant in degree and appearance, is always of inestimable value, for it influences and leads to other things besides itself. If anything has been written in these pages to check falsehood in any degree, and make truth plainer in any measure, something worth doing has been accomplished, and the results will remain for ever as a part of the universal system of goodness and happiness.

THE END.