

REPLY  
TO THE  
QUARTERLY REVIEW  
(No. 262)  
ON SPIRITUALISM.

BY  
THE REV. R. W. DIBDIN, M.A.

TO WHICH IS APPENDED  
THE LECTURE ON TABLE TURNING REVIEWED THEREIN  
DELIVERED BY HIM NOVEMBER 8, 1853.

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LONDON:  
HARRISON AND SONS, 59, PALL MALL, S.W.

1871.

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*To the Author of the Article in No. 262 of the  
Quarterly Review, on "Spiritualism."*

SIR,

I thank you for admitting my "honest candour," and wish to know, what is the "benighted prejudice" which you lay to my charge. Do you mean my belief in the power of evil spirits to do such things as are indicated in my lecture? If so, I am content to bear the odium in common with many much wiser men than myself, who have believed the same in all ages. I have never meddled with "table turning" nor "table talking" since my lecture was published. The years which have passed since then have not changed my opinion. Nor has your elaborate attempt to explain how these effects are produced succeeded in convincing me. Without disputing your notions of "unconscious muscular action," "latent thought" and "unconscious cerebral action," I submit that all you have said fails to meet the plain and matter-of-fact difficulties of the case. As for Professor Faraday's childish toy to prove that they who move the table do so *without being conscious of it*, I wonder

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you do not see that it assumes that all who lay their hands on the table *unconsciously* move them in the *same direction*. There can be no collusion on their part, for they are said to be unconscious of their action. To make the table turn in a given direction all the party (twelve or more), must *unconsciously* press in that direction. If half pressed in one direction, and half in the other, the table would not move unless the *unconscious* pressure toward one side was so strong as to overcome the pressure on the other side. So that the "infallible indicator" is by no means so satisfactory an explanation as that I am to be accused of not being open to conviction because it does not convince me. Moreover, how will it account for a party of young children *unconsciously* causing a heavy dining-table to move round by laying their hands upon it, when they *could not* make it move if they consciously tried to do so? Professor Faraday has not provided for this case, though thousands are aware it is a very common one.

As to the *answers* given by the table revealing what was unknown by the person who puts the question. It seems to me a very unsatisfactory explanation to say he DID know the answer, but was not aware of it. Take the following case:—I and another person sat at a table. There were seven adults present.

A lady said, "Ask the age of 'M. G.'" This was the first time I ever heard of "M. G." My companion at the table, like myself, knew nothing of "M. G.," who might have been five or fifty, for anything I could tell. The table gave a reply stating the age. The lady said, "No; that is a year too much." I told the table to try again. It gave the same age. She said, "That is wrong—I have her age in a family Bible." The Bible was brought and proved the table to be right. What "latent thought" could I or my fellow-worker in this matter have had to guide us to "M. G.'s" age? Nothing you have said can solve this case. There must have been an intelligent agent at work. Not the table of course, nor either of the operators upon it; nor the lady, for she never touched the table and was wrong in her opinion as to "M. G.'s" age. What *was* that agent?

I have great respect for science and scientific men, but have not the great advantage you ascribe to a proper "scientific education." I have only had that afforded by one of our great Public Schools and Cambridge University, in both which I was enabled to distinguish myself honourably; but I submit that I learned quite enough to fit me for judging whether the answer of the table was the result of my "unconscious" knowledge of the age of "M. G." It was simply *impossible* that I could know any-

thing about it. There are seven living, credible witnesses to this fact.

Believing, as I do, that the spirits of departed human beings cannot do such things, that God Himself would not do them, and that your scientific explanation is a failure, I know no other agency to assign than that of evil spirits.

I think you ought to have noticed my argument that the method you adopt for explaining away the evidence of *unscientific* witnesses, who are, you say, not to believe their own senses, since "seeing is *not* believing," would go far to disprove the miracles of the New Testament. A Sadducee, who believed neither angel nor spirit, would have found what you contend for very convenient for his purpose to deny the casting out of devils by the Lord and his Apostles.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

R. W. DIBDIN.

## TABLE-TURNING.

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I THINK it right to say that I intend to perform NO EXPERIMENTS; and that if any have entered this hall under the expectation that I intend to speak of this subject of Table-Turning in a light and flippant spirit, they will be disappointed. I consider it, in *any* point of view, a SERIOUS SUBJECT, and *as* such I mean to treat it. I know very well that the bulk of my hearers are of the same opinion with me, and are not prepared to sympathize with those who can make that a theme for laughter which has already proved so fearful a source of sorrow and suffering to many, and which (unless this evil be checked) is likely to prove more extensively mischievous.

I wish also to reply to those *cautious persons* who think it not desirable to lecture on Table-Turning for fear of *spreading it* by saying that it is *past* fearing, for it *is* spread all over the world, and daily practised by tens of thousands. And it is to endeavour, if I can, to stop the further spread of it that this lecture is given.

Table-Moving is a fact.

To attempt to account for it causes a controversy.

Various theories have been proposed as explanations of its marvels.

The *manner* of its development is ascertained by experience, or testimony. Those who have had experience of it, or believe the testimony of others, must judge for themselves which explanation is most satisfactory. Those who have *not* witnessed its wonders, and disbelieve (or attempt to explain away) the statements of those who *have*, must be passed by as impracticable subjects, acting precisely on the principle of the Infidel Hume, who, because *he* never saw a miracle, would have us infer that no one else ever did.

Those only can be reasoned with who are willing to *believe their own senses, or the testimony of others*. I appeal to the candour and dispassionate judgment of all those who think that *clamour, jesting and dogmatism* are *not* the weapons with which to carry on a rational inquiry.

Those who turn the serious belief of others into a *jest*, and answer serious arguments with a laugh, know, or *ought* to know, that this is ill manners, or something worse. It is certainly not being "courteous;" and we may justly say, that, even if a good man be *wrong* in his notions, —upon this or any other subject,—it is quite

contrary to the spirit of the 6th chapter of Galatians, verse 1: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

It may seem very wise and great to laugh down a weak brother; but surely it is neither kind nor brotherly.

Let me, then, observe, that the FACT of TABLE-MOVING is as well established as any fact in history or science. I will just show how the operation has been frequently performed by myself, and by others in my presence.

Some (though probably few) may be present who have never seen any experiments. I am not going to perform any. Most of my experience has been on occasions when two or more persons laid the tips of their fingers gently on the table and just touched, each of them, the little fingers of their neighbours with their own little fingers. But I have seen others move a table by simply laying their hands flat upon it and not touching each other.

The mere fact of turning a table round and making it move in any given direction has been so very commonly seen that I will not remark upon *that*, except to say that in this (as in all other experiments that I have seen) it is necessary to *keep the hands upon the table* as long as the experiments last.

I shall now come at once to that part of Table-Moving which is most remarkable. I mean the *fact of a table answering questions by lifting up a leg.*

Here I shall not rest my arguments upon the evidence of the Rev. Mr. Godfrey, or Rev. Mr. Gillson—neither of which gentlemen I am personally acquainted with. I have read their books and have no doubt whatever of the truth of their statements, even if I could not confirm them by my own experience. Neither do I differ from them in their view of the matter as being the result of diabolic agency. The main point in which I differ from Mr. Godfrey is in his supposing that the spirits of departed men and women are *really* the parties who answer the questions. I incline, rather, to believe—though, of course, I would speak with modesty upon so difficult a subject, upon which no man is warranted to dogmatize—that devils alone are the agents in these cases, and being *lying* spirits, it is quite credible that, for purposes of their own, they might *assume* the names of departed men and women. I will now state what my own *experience* empowers me to say on this subject.

I will first show you how the table answers a question. This is the very table with which several times I have made experiments. When we want to ask a question we say, *e.g.*, “If there are so many people in the room, strike three;”

and then the table lifts up a leg and strikes on the floor—one, two, three; sometimes faster and sometimes slower—sometimes higher and sometimes hardly lifting the leg from the floor. That is the way in which my inquiries were conducted. “On Thursday evening, the 28th of July, 1853; present, my wife”—I may take the liberty of using her name, but I shall mention the names of no other persons.

ON THURSDAY EVENING, 28TH July, 1853.

Mr. B. and I laid our hands on a small square table, standing on three legs, the feet having castors. It moved right to left, and from left to right, at our command. Finding we had command of the table we now began to ask questions. It was agreed, that what either of us asked the other should consent to.

I cannot remember the order of the questions, nor the number of strokes demanded each time. The following questions were answered:—

1. If there be a God, strike three with this leg next the fire-place. That leg was raised, and struck thrice.
2. If there be a devil, strike so many times with this leg.—It did so.
3. If the Pope be the head of the Church strike, &c.—It did so.
4. If Martin Luther was a good man, strike, &c.—No reply.
5. If Emanuel Swedenborg was a good man, strike, &c.—It did so.
6. If Socinius was a good man, strike, &c.—It did so.
7. If Jesus Christ be come in the flesh, strike, &c.—It did so.
8. If salvation be by faith and works, strike, &c.—It did so.
9. If salvation be by faith alone, strike, &c.—No reply.
10. If Dr. Achilli be a good man, strike, &c.—No reply.

11. If Dr. Achilli be turned Swedenborgian, strike, &c.—It did so.

12. If Dr. Newman be a good man, strike, &c.—It did so. (Very quickly.)

13. If Mr. Tonna be a good man, stop moving.—It continued moving.

14. Strike the day of the month.—It struck twenty-eight.

15. Strike the hour.—It struck seven, and a gentle lift of the leg. [It was half-past seven.]

16. If it be right to go to a Socinian chapel, strike, &c.—It did so.

17. If right to go to the theatre strike, &c.—It did so.

18. Say how many years it is since Her Majesty came to the throne.

No one present knew the date of her accession. I may here say that I asked several questions upon facts with which none of us were acquainted.

It struck sixteen.

None of us could tell whether this was right or not and therefore one of the party left the room to fetch an almanack, and when we had got the almanack we found that it was right.

19. Give the age of Mrs. B.'s nephew. [Neither of us knew the age.]—It struck five, and then gently lifted the foot a little way from the ground. [The boy is a little more than five.]

20. Give the age of the Prince of Wales. [Neither of us knew his age.]—It struck eleven, and then raised the foot a little way. On referring to an almanack, we found he would be twelve in November, 1853.

21. Give the age of Mr. Dibdin's youngest child. [Mr. B. did not know the age.—It struck one, and a gentle lift. [He entered his second year on the 19th of July, 1853.]

22. Give the age of Mr. D.'s second boy.—It struck three, and a smaller lift. [He was four in October, 1853.]

23. Gave correctly the age of Mr. D.'s eldest boy.

24. State the number of men employed in the office below. [I knew nothing of the number.]—It struck three, and two gentle rises. Mr. B. said, "There are four men and two boys; and so there is a mistake." But he afterwards remembered, that *one* of the young men was out of town.

25. If you move by electricity, strike, &c.—It did so.

26. If you move by any evil influence, strike, &c.—No reply.

27. Whilst it was moving, by order, towards the window, Mrs. D. (*unknown to Mr. B. and myself*) laid a Bible on the table, and it stopped. This was done several times; and another book produced no effect at all.

In moving, the carpet, in one direction, checked the freedom of the table's motion. One leg of the three would scarcely move at all. It went quicker or slower, according to order.

Some questions were much more readily answered than others; especially ages and dates; in some of which it really gave us information which we did not possess till the answer was given.

When told to move "towards the window," it remained motionless. I observed, "there are two windows." One of them was named, and then it moved toward that one.

Here, on the paper, are the five names, signed by the persons who were present. I wrote out these questions and answers, and I said, "Are you willing to stand by them? If so, will you sign them?" They did.

I may say that nearly all the parties I spoke of in the last paper, and also the greater part of those I am going to speak of now, are in this room.

On Friday, Aug. 12, at my house, 62, Torrington Square, the Rev. Mr. ———, his wife, my wife and another being present, the conversation turned on Table-moving. He expressed his disbelief of there being anything supernatural in it; and said he thought Professor

Faraday's letter gave a good account of the matter. I said I thought not; and proposed to try whether he himself could move a table with me. He at first declined; but after, he laid his hands, with mine, on a small table standing on three legs. It soon began to move as we wished. We then asked questions. Strike the age of Mr. G——'s eldest daughter. It struck sixteen (right). I did not know it.

He told me he had eight or nine children; whether they were boys or girls I did not know.

We then said, "Strike the age of Sir —— ——. But as the numbers will be tedious, strike one for ten, till you come to the odd units." It struck one. We said, "That is ten." Then it struck another. We said, "That is twenty." And so on, till it reached five, when we said, "fifty." It then gave one gentle heave. As we did not know the age, we made inquiry, and found he was fifty-one!!! Many more questions were asked, and correctly answered.

Is there a God?—Yes.

A devil?—Yes.

Is it right to pray to the Virgin Mary?—Yes? (Very quickly.)

Was Mr. Simeon a good man?—No reply.

Was Luther a good man?—No.

I must say a few words before I come to the next paper. I went to a certain place, known to some who are present. I did not go about Table-Turning, but on a matter of business. Somebody there said to me, "Here's a man who can tell you all about Table-Turning. You are going to lecture upon it, are you not?" "Yes," I said, "I am going to lecture upon it." "Oh! you must see him." So we were put into a room together. The gentleman told me I could make what use I pleased of his communica-

tions; he is in the room now, I believe. He said, when he went into the room, "I have heard strange things about this Table-Turning; but I have raised a good spirit; all the others have been evil ones." "Oh, indeed," I said, "Who is that?" "Edward Young, the poet—the author of *Night Thoughts*." And he gave me his experience. He said he was going to write a book, conjointly with a friend; and, if I mistake not, he told me it was to be under the direction of Edward Young. When the spirit came, he asked him what was his name. "Edward Young," was the reply. "Are you the poet?" "Yes." "If you are, repeat a line of your Poems." He repeated "Man was not made to question, but adore." "Is that in your *Night Thoughts*?" "No." "Where is it, then?" The reply was, "Job." That they could make nothing of. They did not know what he meant by Job, not being very familiar with his Poems. They let it pass. Many other things occurred which I must pass over. The next day this gentleman bought a copy of Young's Poems, and at the end of *Night Thoughts* he found a Paraphrase of Job, as it is here; and the last line of that Paraphrase is, "Man was not made to question, but adore." He was naturally very much astonished at such a thing as that. He then entered into some very curious and interesting inquiries. He had a sister-in-law—

an intelligent girl, about two-and-twenty. He said that Edward Young had given him a title for the book he was going to write. The title was, "WARNINGS FROM THE WORLD OF SHADES." I said, "It is a long story, and I am rather pressed for time; I am just going to my chapel; perhaps you will do me the favour to call upon me." He consented, and we fixed Thursday, the 20th of October, at five o'clock. He came, and brought his sister-in-law with him. He said, "I have brought my sister with me, because she has more influence over the table than I have, and particularly over Dr. Young; she can bring him whenever she likes, and make him reveal anything. But I must tell you fairly," he said, "before I go any further, that I have found it all out—it is all a delusion." "Oh, indeed! what do you say it is, then?" "Oh!" he said, "I think it's a sort of animal magnetism—a sort of electricity." In fact, he did not seem to be very clear what it was; but at any rate, it was not Dr. Young, nor anything supernatural, and it could be easily explained. "Well," I said, "I should be glad to hear any explanation of it." "First of all," he said, "I will read you my experience;" and he read five or six sheets of as extraordinary things as I am telling you. I was amazed. I said, "Do you think all that is electricity?" "I do." "Well, what is your reason for thinking so?" "Why," he said, "I'll

tell you how it happened. The very day I saw you, and agreed to give you my experience, I went, in the evening, to a friend's, and he told me that he had had Dr. Young there, answering questions. I was very much surprised. I tried the table, and asked the spirit whether he was Dr. Young. He said, 'Yes.' I found that he could not even *spell*. My sister-in-law arrived shortly afterwards, and the real Dr. Young came; and he said the other was an impostor. I found out then that it was all a delusion." Let me say, that my wife was present, as well as this gentleman's sister-in-law; and I am sure he would say, that I do not, in the slightest degree, misrepresent what he said. I asked him what had brought him to believe that it was all a delusion. "Why, in the first place," he said, "I think you do it yourself, unconsciously—that there is a sort of unconscious influence exerted on the table." "I will tell you how it was," he said, "that we found it out. We asked most ridiculous questions—things quite absurd and laughable." "Well, what were they?" "I will tell you first," he said, "the experiment by which I found it all out." "I should like to hear it." "I got," I think he said, "*four* envelopes, and wrote inside a certain word. I laid them upon the table, and said, 'Say what is inside;' and the table spelt wrong." I should tell you, in regard to spelling, that the

table answers very quickly by letters. If you want anything told you, you must go through the alphabet. Supposing you ask, "Is murder bad or good?" you begin, *A, B*. The table strikes at *B*. Then you begin again, *A*. The table strikes. You begin again, *A, B, C, D*. Then another strike at *D*, and you get the answer *B A D*. It is rather tedious going through the alphabet so often; so this gentleman hit upon a new plan. He got a child's alphabet, took his pencil, and ran it along the lines, and as it came to each required letter it was to stamp. It did so; and in that way he got his answers very quickly. Well, when he laid these envelopes on the table, with the words written in them, the table answered wrong. I think it spelt "nothing;" at any rate, it was not what was in the envelope; and this failure opened his eyes. "Well," I said, "that is very strange; what do you think of Young, and of his bringing out that line, 'Man was not made to question, but adore?'" "Well," he said, "the fact is, I must tell you, that I had it in my house all the time, although I bought another copy, and I found that I had read it before." "Ah! very likely; had you read it recently?" He did not know; the book had made a great impression upon him when he read it. "But did that line make more impression than any other?" He could not say. "How, then, do you account

for the table striking that line?" "My opinion is, that it was a LATENT IDEA, and the table brought it out." "Very amazing, certainly; are you quite satisfied?" "Yes, I am quite satisfied." "Well, I can't say that it satisfies me." He said, "I will tell you the most ridiculous things. When we tried the table afterwards we had the most funny answers. We said, 'What sort of eyes has so-and-so?' The reply was, 'Roguish eyes.' 'What sort of eyes has so-and-so?' 'Laughing eyes.' 'What sort of eyes has so-and-so?' 'Yankee eyes.' And then my sister said to the table, 'Do you love me?' The reply was, 'I adore you.' And one in the room said, 'If you do, kiss her;' and the table rose up to her lips!" "And you say that is all electricity?" "Yes; the fact is this." And he went over the former ground again. I said, "It does not satisfy me; I think your own experience is against you. How do you account for the table telling you things that you did not know before?" "Oh! it did not." "Well," I said, "I have had answers from that table you see there, on subjects with which I was not acquainted before." "He took hold of the table, and said, 'I should like to try.' I said, 'I advise you not; I believe it is Satanic, and I don't want to have anything more to do with it.'" I had heard of instances of persons being paralysed, and even struck

dead, so that I did not wish any one to try it again. "Oh!" he said, "I am not afraid." The sister was rather frightened, and said she would rather not. "You had better," he said; "you have been doing it all the evening before you came here." At last she consented. They took the table and it moved immediately. "Now, perhaps, you will allow me," I said "to ask you a few questions, to satisfy you that the table will answer things which you know nothing about." "Will you?" "Yes," I replied. So I said to the girl who sat next to me, "Do you know how old the Princess Royal is?" She said, "Fifteen, or sixteen." She did not know which. I said, "Strike with the leg next the window" (for the table will strike with which leg you please) "the age of the Princess Royal." It struck thirteen, and stopped. "Well," I said, "that is neither fifteen or sixteen; Is it right? Nobody knew. My wife left the room, and fetched an almanack, and we found it right. "Now," I said, "that told you what you did not know before." "Yes," he said, "it is very astonishing indeed." I then asked if any body in the room knew what o'clock it was. They said, "No." I said, "Don't look at the clock." The clock was behind, on the mantelpiece. We had been talking nearly two hours, and to save my life I could not have told the hour. "Now," I said, "strike the hour which this clock on the

mantlepiece struck last." It struck six. The fact was, it wanted a few minutes to seven. One or two ages were asked, and some mistakes were made. That is often the case. Whilst the table answers many things correctly, it will often make mistakes. I say this once for all, though it was hardly so much the case on the first night of my experiments. I then put a certain set of questions, which I always put for particular reasons:—

Are we justified by works?—Yes.

By faith alone?—No.

Is the whole Bible true?—No.

Were the miracles of the New Testament wrought by supernatural power?—No.

By some hidden law of nature?—Yes.

By the same power that moves you?—Yes.

Was it Edward Young who answered by the table to Mr. —?—Yes.

Was Oliver Cromwell good?—No.

Was Charles I. a good man?—Yes.

Is it right to pray to the Virgin?—Yes.

Is Christ God?—No.

Is he a man?—No.

Is he something between God and man, a sort of angel?—Yes.

Is he in heaven?—No.

Where is he?—It spelt slowly, H-E-L-L.

As the last letter was indicated, the girl drew her hands quickly off the table, much as a person would do who was drawing them off a hot iron. Her brother-in-law turned very pale, and took his hands off the table also.

"Now," I said, "I hope you are satisfied." "Yes," he said, "I am." I said, "You must notice this: the table has told you things you did not know before, and in connexion with them, tells

you that Christ is not God, and at last tells you that he is in hell. Now, I entreat you to have nothing more to do with Table-Moving. You see you have been dealing with it all along in a light manner; do not have any more to do with it." The sister-in-law declared that she never would. I have since seen this gentleman, and it is most extraordinary that upon reflection, he *thinks it is electricity after all!!!* But I certainly do not agree with him. Nor shall I record the solemn words that passed between us, except so far as to say, that I told him my fears lest he had been so "giving place to the devil," that he seemed to have fallen under the blinding influence of the "god of this world" in this matter.

*Here, then, are the facts upon which I rest my argument—that it is of supernatural agency. If any one doubts my veracity, or questions the possibility of my senses being correct witnesses—in such a case, I have nothing to reply to that person. Such an one puts himself out of the reach of all argument; and by such incredulity makes it impossible to prove anything to him.*

Candour, however, demands that some attention be paid to those who *admit* the facts, and try to *account* for them in some *other* way than by *supernatural agency*. I have read much on that side of the question. In fact, I generally make it a practice to read both sides. Here is

a "NEW ISSUE" of a treatise on Table-Moving the seventeenth thousand. The writer (anonymous) says, "It is a newly developed force, and certainly some strong magnetic power, but most assuredly *not evil spirits.*" Next is a treatise of a respectable length, by a "Physician," also anonymous. He affirms, that it is a new fluid, which operates on bodies in some unintelligible manner, but says *it is not evil spirits.* Then we have the testimony of *Punch* and *Diogenes*—writers, perhaps, that we should not pick out as guides on a religious or spiritual matter. They have thought it right to take up their pen (as they do on all subjects), and express their opinion, and we may take it for what it is worth. I only name them as proofs of the diligence of my search on this subject.

Then there is the *Church and State Gazette* also on that side of the question. It speaks on this wise:—

"Professor Faraday has settled the question of Table-Moving. He has invented a card board 'Indicator,' which is placed on the table. At this instrument the operators are required to look, and the result is, that, having something to do, the involuntary muscular motion which moved the table is no longer in force. The Professor intimates that the table-moving question has revealed a gullible condition of the human mind, which he could hardly have credited."

I read his letter, (as I dare say you did), and observed the way in which he speaks of

religious people and others—as a parcel of gulls who will believe anything.

He thinks that a table of seventy or one hundred pounds weight may be moved by unconscious *muscular action*. He does not say whether the *same power* will answer questions. No doubt Professor Faraday understands his own department of science. What personal knowledge he has of the working of spirits, good or evil, it is not for me to say. But, in general, it seems necessary that men should be taught of the Holy Spirit, before they are competent to give any trustworthy opinion on the doings of Satan, or of evil spirits generally. Whether that ingenious Professor's spiritual attainments are such as to enable him to pass judgment with such contempt upon the belief of pious and wise men, I am unable to decide.

The *Naval and Military Gazette* is also decidedly of opinion, that it is *not of spiritual agency*. Then here is a book called "*Common Sense*," written, I must say, in a very good spirit, by some anonymous writer at Bath, where Mr. Gillson lives, who published those interesting remarks which are before the world. This writer says, the whole thing may be settled by an appeal to COMMON SENSE and REASON. He says it is done by electricity :

"It does not seem to us at all contrary to the dictates of common sense, to suppose that it is this—mysterious and

wonderful, I allow, yet certainly not Satanic — agent which may produce those surprising effects which so many of us have witnessed ; and it is surely more consonant to have recourse to such a theory as this, than to set down immediately to the working of evil spirits that which seems to be incomprehensible.”

And then this gentleman goes on to say :—

“ What is it which causes a person to understand immediately the wish, the thought, or the impulse of another ? What is it in that glance which makes another quail before it ? Mark it more particularly—it is simply a glance of the eye—a look ; and yet that look exerts an exceedingly great influence on the person to whom it is addressed ; provided—and this is very important—provided the person who directs the glance has, from whatever cause it may be, sufficient power to exercise an influence over the person to whom the glance is directed. But it is not the eye which exerts the influence ; that is merely the instrument through which it is communicated. The influence itself is caused by mind acting upon mind ; and hence mesmerism, which we think, without a doubt, is closely linked with the table-turning. In common language, we speak of electrifying any one ; and, I must own, I see nothing at what common sense has to cavil in the idea of a fluid being as easily communicated by a glance as by the touch.”

That is *common sense*, he says. He supposes that the well-known effect of a very piercing eye in making persons sometimes start, is produced by electricity. He further says—

“ We would ask the supporters of the Satanic theory, *why the spirits should prefer causing the table to lift up its leg and rap, to the far simpler and easier way of speaking.* We imagine the objection would be, that the spirits are not corporeal, and therefore have not the organs necessary for articulation. But then, surely the lifting up of the leg of a table, and causing it to rap, must be an action purely physical. Perhaps some of the invokers would kindly inquire of the spirits, why they prefer this laborious, and

somewhat difficult manner of procedure, to the simpler one of speaking an intelligible language. We must own that we think that the spirits are in one or two points not quite as rational as they might be, and that the rappings, altogether, are very far removed from any approach to common sense."

The RAPPINGS, I must explain, are these. I have had no experience of the rapping or knocking of the table, except on one occasion, which I will not allude to. Some persons get answers in this way. There is more than one person present who has done so. One of them is a pious minister of the gospel. I will not mention his name. He asked me not to mention it. Example:—They say, "If Victoria is Queen of England, strike two; and there are two raps." Or they begin by saying, "Let us carry on a conversation in this way: if you wish to say 'Yes,' strike loudly; if 'No,' strike softly." That is what is meant by the rappings.

But the most remarkable opponent of the Satanic solution, is a writer in the *Quarterly Review*, which no doubt many of my hearers have seen. It is impossible to *quote* from it—it must be *read*. I have given it a very careful perusal, and I venture, in all humility, to submit the following observations in reply; and in these observations will be involved the pith of the article.

It has been said, by a deceased divine, more

celebrated for his puns than for his sermons, that Tractarianism consists of two parts—1. *Position*, and 2. *Imposition*. If *all* his theology had been as correct as that, I believe he would have been ranked among our most scriptural authorities. In a like way, it may be said of the sort of argument adopted by such writers as this in the *Quarterly Review*. Their arguments consist of—1. *Assertion*, and 2. *Denial*.

1. ASSERTION. As that the whole facts of Table-Turning may be easily accounted for upon certain well known and established laws—Psychological, Physiological, and other laws. Whatever appearances may *seem* to say to the senses of the Table-Turner, every thing can be resolved in the simplest manner.

It might be convenient to know *who* established these "*well known laws*," and *where* they are to be found.

In my younger days, we looked for the laws of grammar in Lindley Murray, and for the laws of motion in Sir Isaac Newton's works; and, generally, when laws are laid down, the authority for them is *known* and *named*. Certainly, it may be said, that *some* laws of ordinary operation are so familiar to any observing man that there needs only to refer every one to his own observation. But, granting that there *are* such laws, we still object that the

psychological, &c., laws in question will not account for the *facts* of Table-Turning.

*Unconscious muscular action* may account for our moving a small table and thinking that it moves without our using any force upon it. But unconscious muscular action will not account for our moving a table which we could not move (in the manner attempted) even though we knowingly used all our strength for the purpose. The theory of assertion comes in conveniently and says, "Oh, yes, you *could*—you *think* you could not—but you could." But, if it be objected that trial has been made to move, by voluntary effort, the same heavy table which easily moved with the unconscious muscular action, and it has *failed—the table would not move*. Assertion replies, "Oh! very easily explained;—there is a certain well known law in psychology by which, when all a person's energy is concentrated on a given object, he can perform feats, which, at other times, he could not. The truth is, very *great exertion indeed*, is often used when there *seems* to be little, or even none." Unquestionably the poor Table-Turner is silenced now, for he is not simply told *not to believe his own senses, but the dictum* of these wise and learned persons, who know all these wonderful laws, and, of course, know much better than he himself what it is that he has done.

But there are certain difficulties which these well-known laws will not overcome. The Table-Turner, being reduced to a somewhat humble position, as regards the dependence to be placed on his ordinary faculties, by the great doctrine of *assertion*; now ventures to suggest that there are some FACTS which the will, unconsciously guiding the muscles, can not account for. For example:—*The table will actually tell him things truly which he himself did not know before asking the table.* This somewhat startling declaration is met by the second doctrine of *denial*—“The table does *not* tell you what you were ignorant of before. You may *think* it does. But you were *unconsciously aware* of the thing you asked.” Example:—“You say that you ask the table to strike the hour, and that you did not know the hour when you asked; and that the table strikes the *right* hour. But WE should account for this, by the supposition, that some one of the party either *knew* or *guessed* the hour.”—(p. 552.) The Table-Turner is thus effectually vanquished. He says, “I got information I had not before.” The dictator replies, “*You did not.*” He explains: “I asked the age of a person unknown to me, and whose age might have been (for aught I knew), five or fifteen, and the leg beat five, which I found, by after inspection, to be correct.”

*Dictator.*—“No such thing. Either the table

did *not* give the right age, or, if it did, you knew it before.”

*Table-Turner.*—“The age was correctly given, and I did *not* know it before I asked the table.”

*Dictator.*—“I *deny* that. You *did* know it. It might be unconsciously latent in your mind. But, however it is explained, there is no supernatural agency—*certainly not Satanic*. There was nothing but what I have fully and satisfactorily explained, according to well-known and established physical laws.”

This summary method of getting over a difficulty—viz., by denying that it exists at all—is not original. We find it as far back as the days of a certain blind man, whose eyes (he affirmed), had been miraculously opened, though he had been born blind. He affirmed, that Jesus of Nazareth opened his eyes. But the great, wise and learned men assured him that it was not so. Having first raised a doubt as to the fact of his having been born blind and then by miracle enabled to see, and finding that there was no getting over that fact, they set themselves to show that, at any rate, *Jesus did not open his eyes*. The man says he did. They, armed with certain laws of prejudice and malice, exhort him to tell the truth, and say how his eyes were really opened. He, poor man, has but one tale to tell. It was Jesus of Nazareth. “No such thing. He did not. He

is a sinner." "Well," says the man, "as to his being a sinner, I know *not*; but I *do* know that he opened my eyes. God would not have heard him were he a sinner." They reply "Dost thou teach us? Don't you see that we know all about it? We were not there, indeed; and you may think and say what you please—but he did *not* open your eyes; for *we* say so, and 'we are the people, and wisdom will die with us.'"

It is thought judicious to silence the unlearned just as the inconvenient questions of inquisitive children, upon certain physical, pecuniary and other matters are silenced, with explanations which the parent or preceptor knows to be false, but which he thinks better to give than the true. I have sometimes thought, that our profound rebukers have acted in this way, and have not always themselves believed the satisfactory (?) explanations they have given. But this method of dealing with a difficult subject has this inconvenience, that clever children are sometimes able to see through the flimsy veil which is cast over the truth and suspect either the truthfulness or the intelligence of those who profess to teach them by such absurdities. Hence confidence in authority is shaken and the child becomes, driven by consciousness of ability, to think for himself.

Thus it is in matters like Table-Turning and in the case of teachers like the *Quarterly Review*. Many, no doubt (like simple children), just submit at once to what is so oracularly pronounced. They understand nothing of the explanations, though they are told that the matter has been made quite clear to them; and they pass on to other things. But there is a somewhat thinking minority, who, having given their best attention to the "explanation," feel, somehow, a sort of sensation, as if dust had been thrown in their eyes. They see no clearer for the explanation. They are told, indeed, "To those who already possessed the *clue* to the mystery of electro-biology, odylic force, the magnetometer, *et hoc genus omne*, nothing could be simpler than the explanation of Table-Turning."—(p. 567). Without disputing the imposing effect of such an array of hard words, as soon as they have recovered from this display of profound magniloquence, they cannot help recurring to the fact, that this "clue," which has been so elaborately set forth in above forty pages, does not, after all, seem to afford any explanation. And then arises an unpleasant feeling in the mind, that the pompous supercilious instructor is, after all, either unable or unwilling to instruct them, and that the time has been literally thrown away in endeavouring to get to the bottom of a muddy mass of

twaddle which proves, not the point in question, but either the ignorance or the dishonesty of the writer—ignorance or dishonesty which he has endeavoured to conceal under an inflated and dictatorial style of dogmatism.

Those who have not read the article and wish to have a simple illustration of the needless parade of learning, in defending points which no one attacks, and supporting the point defended by *non sequitur* arguments, will be pleased to take the following as an humble imitation of that peculiar style of writing:—  
“A child may think the moon is made of green cheese; but Newton has long since demonstrated that, being a luminous body, kept in its orbit by centripetal and centrifugal forces combined, and revolving round the earth and the sun at the same time, it is clearly proved to be anything but cheese; to say nothing of the fact that the greater part of known cheese is made in Cheshire, and not in the plane of the orbits of the heavenly bodies—at least, we *know* of nothing of the sort—and we can, as scientific, not to say reasonable men, only form our conclusions on ascertained *data*. We appeal simply to the reason and candour of all—we will not say learned—but moderately instructed readers, whether, dynamical laws being taken into consideration, we have not proved the error of the child. But this assertion has been so often re-

futed that it seems astonishing that any child can now be found to hold the contrary opinion."

Probably, if most or all of the above-quoted writers had been asked to decide upon some mathematical or other question—on a subject about which they had "never learned"—they would have said at once, that they could "give no opinion;" but men act in religious and spiritual questions as they do in none other; they take it for granted that they always know all about such matters and pronounce judgment upon those who have some right to speak on such things with perfect confidence. So it is here. What reason have newspaper writers and magazine writers (often young men not having even received a college education) to conclude that **THEY** are able to contradict and overbear men who are not inferior to themselves either in learning or ability, and who have the great advantage of having deeply studied the subjects they write upon?

Where, indeed, ministers of religion think right to speak on such subjects, the case is different. They have a perfect right to speak and ought to be able to speak correctly when they do. But here, alas! a common error is to be noted. Most ministers like to be thought **JUDICIOUS**; they are afraid of anything which may be considered new or extravagant. Hence, if any of their brethren venture to proclaim

some unusual sentiment, they are the first to join a scoffing world in their jeers and ridicule. They are so anxious to justify THEMSELVES to the ungodly, as not sympathising with the novelty, and not in *their* persons committing the cause of Evangelical Religion to the supposed absurdities of their erratic brother, that they seem to forget he is a brother; and attack him and his character, and endanger his usefulness with as little scruple as though he were altogether as bad as a Socinian. No doubt such judicious attacks on a differing brother have some leaven of self-conceit and "popishness" (as Leighton says) in them. But still there need be no question that such assailants imagine they are only contending for the truth. It is only thus that we can account for the way in which the late Edward Bickersteth—of blessed memory—was spoken of by many good men, vastly his inferiors in sense, piety and diligence, when he openly avowed (like an honest and wise man as he was) his belief in the "Premillennial Advent and Personal Reign of Christ." Good, well-meaning persons, both in print and in private talk, would speak of "poor Bickersteth," "Bickersteth's fall," and even speak of him as the "*late* Edward Bickersteth." Happily, his loving spirit could easily bear such unchristian taunts and his deep sound sense enable him to estimate correctly the

value of the judgment of such patronising  
PITIERS.

Several clergy have published on the subject. First, the Reverend Mr. Magee, of Bath. I cannot better convey my own opinion of this work than by quoting a letter from a minister, whose learning, talent and piety will entitle him to speak. I only regret that in this, as in some other instances, I have not permission to use the name of the writer. Indeed, I may say, that I know several (not to say many) who agree with my view of the subject, but think it wise to forbear giving testimony to their convictions. I the more honour the courage and faithfulness of such men as Godfrey, Gillson, Vincent and others, who have not been afraid to speak out what they think they ought to declare.

“I have had a sermon, by Mr. Magee, of Bath, sent me, ‘Talking to Tables a Great Folly or a Great Sin.’ He opposes the Satanic explanation, but gives no reason, The pith of the argument is, the Bible is all-sufficient, and we want no further revelation from the spiritual world—a truism he need not have laboured to prove. His object, he says, is to allay the extraordinary excitement on the subject in Bath. The sermon is not worth sending to you. The mode of dealing with the subject is entirely beside the question at issue.”

What says Milner in his “History of the Church?” In the third century, he says—and there are many other passages of the same sort—

“Though the miraculous dispensations attendant on Christianity form no part of the plan of this history, I cannot but observe, on this occasion, how strongly their continuance in the third century is here attested. Pionius affirms that devils were ejected by Christians in the name of Christ; and he does this in the face of enemies, who would have been glad of the shadow of an argument to justify their bitterness resentment and perfidy.”

Instead of its having ceased in the first century, many are disposed to believe—and I am inclined to think too,—that it extended to the middle of the third century, and even further. It is a somewhat singular confirmation of our view on the subject, that Tertullian, a writer of the third century, says, in his “Apology for Primitive Christians,” a book well known to my reverend brethren on the platform, and especially to my learned brother, Mr. Thelwall—

“But consider with yourselves. Do not your magicians perform very amazing feats?—call ghosts and departed souls from the shades below; and, by their infernal charms, represent an infinite number of delusions? And how do they perform all this, but by the assistance of evil angels and demons, by which they are able to MAKE STOOLS AND TABLES PROPHECY?”

Extraordinary! What can be the meaning of that? I suppose that this Table-Turning is no new thing after all.

But I must hasten to a conclusion, for I have only five minutes left. Certain objections are made. Some persons make *à priori* objections. They have nothing to say to the facts, but they have certain previous objections to get over.

“Satan is too wise,” they say. “What a foolish thing it is, moving a table!” The reply is, it may not be Satan himself. Is it clear that he has his rebel forces under such perfect discipline as to be able always to restrain their malignant and mischievous doings? It is not so revealed. This is “answering a fool according to his folly.” But a man brings me an objection; and I certainly have a right to ask him in reply, How do you know Satan does it at all? How do you know but that some of those inferior fallen spirits are not in a state of rebellion against him? But it is more than possible that Satan may have deeper designs than some men can fathom, and he may be wise in doing it after all. And, in confirmation of this, I introduce here part of a long and deeply-interesting letter from an experienced and venerable clergyman, well known to every one on this platform, and whom, I suppose, almost every one here would acknowledge as his superior:—

“It was a good thought to try the moving power by questions. Senseless matter has in itself neither life nor motion! Electricity cannot utter speech, or give signs in answer to questions! No muscular power can impart animating or rational faculties to the irrational and inanimate.

“Neither does God ever endow man with superhuman power, but for some extraordinary purpose, beyond the reach of man’s ability, and that for some beneficial end—either the happiness of man, or the glory of God, or for both. Nothing of this kind is elicited by Table-Turning—wonders are wrought evidently, and from the drift of

them, as evidently 'lying wonders.' The power in force is supernatural—it is not of man, therefore! it is put forth to answer no wise or good purpose; it is not of God therefore! the inference is clear and conclusive—it is therefore of the devil and Satan, who is, by his subtle devices, preparing the way for the coming of 'the man of sin,'—'whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders.'

"To what extent the devil and Satan, by the turning of the tables, will proceed, does not yet appear; this will be gradually developed; but the end of the device must be evident to all but those who will not see, or who know not the Scriptures.

"The turning of a table may appear to some a very innocent amusement—but for what do they turn it? For what—but to see a miracle? To call forth the intervention of a power that belongeth not to man, and which cometh not from God, for God is not in all this amusing operation. What is this but to hold converse and ask counsel of the devil? Satanic subtlety is inscribed on the brow of this fearful device! and though the cloven foot may not yet appear, yet, from the drift of the answers given by the *leg of a table*, the course it is taking, and the end to be accomplished, may, by implication, be fairly gathered. Luther was a bad man—Newman a good man! the Pope is the head of the Church! *et similia!* What does all this mean? And besides this, births, dates, are given—things secret, and things future are revealed!

"What is the natural tendency of all this, but to lead people to turn away from the word of God, and on all special and anxious occasions to consult this oracle—just as Saul, in his extremity, had recourse to the witch of Endôr. Hence, as this scheme of the devil progresses, and gains credence among men, 'in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not,' greater wonders shall bewilder, and greater delusions mislead."

There is another objection that some people make. They say, "I have tried it, and found that I did not succeed." That may be; it is quite compatible with my theory. We do not say the devil is omnipotent or omnipresent. It

is quite credible, also, that there may be devils at hand to do it, and they may not choose to exercise their power on some occasions. But this I say, that if it is electricity, or any law of nature, it ought *always* to succeed; as experiments illustrating Gravity, the Hydrostatic Paradox, &c., always do. In my opinion, this argument destroys itself, and is rather in favour of the Satanic theory.

I cannot draw to a close without quoting a few words from the Rev. Mr. Vincent, of Islington, whom, like the rest, I have not the pleasure of knowing; but who, judging from this sermon, must be very well worth hearing. It is a sort of improvement of the matter, which is, after all, the most important use of it:—

“The people of the world, who in their heart believe neither in the true God nor in the devil, are of course unwilling to admit Satanic agency in the Table-Rappings; but in cases where this has been denied by serious persons, it will be found almost uniformly, that they have neither studied the statements of others, nor made any personal experiments themselves. My own mind, after much thought and study of the subject, is at present persuaded of its being the work of Satan and his evil spirits. And, as one appointed here ‘to watch for your souls,’ I feel constrained, in faithfulness and love, to warn you all, my dear people, in the strongest manner, against making an amusement of Table-Turning and Table-Talking, as I have heard, to my great sorrow, of so many among you having done. As a watchman in Zion, I would sound an alarm in the ears of my own congregation. I could tell you of awful consequences from playing with this subject; in one case, insanity; and in two others, thoroughly investigated by a clergyman in Yorkshire, the parties were

disturbed at night by knockings, rustlings, and other noises, while an appearance was in one case distinctly witnessed by two persons. I would especially warn all impenitent and unpardoned sinners against having anything to do with Table-Turning. They have no God to protect them against the consequences. If they treat it as child's play, they may find it fool's play. It may fare worse with them than with the seven sons of Sceva, the Jew at Ephesus (Acts xix). The wickedness of these spirits is their most evident and dreadful feature."

He says again—

"His probable object, I think, is to accustom men's minds to preternatural powers; to make miracles so familiar to them, that they may be prepared to undervalue the one grand Divine Fountain of revealed truth; and so to believe anything without the Bible, or to disbelieve anything in the Bible; that thus they may be led either to Popery on the one hand, or to Infidelity on the other. Our grand adversary seems to me to be introducing the thin end of the wedge for some dark and dreadful object, which will develop itself in due season."

I say Amen to every word of this; and that is the reason why I am reading it, as there are many of my congregation here:—

"If any Christians, after the warnings which I have given, are still resolved to try the reality, *for the conviction of their own minds, and with the purpose of warning others respecting it*, let them do it with much prayer to God, and earnestly looking to him to preserve them from all evil consequences. The result will, I think, confirm them in the reality of the matter."

Now, I do not agree with that. I cannot conceive why they should do it at all. Will they not take our word? Surely we are not all liars: surely we are not all fools. They cannot

do more than has been done already. It can be nothing more than the gratifying of a morbid curiosity, and no practical good can come from it. Is a man better or wiser for having made a table move, and say all manner of things? He may be *this*; he may be a great deal more under the power of the evil one than before. I want to know what possible right a man can have for consulting the Devil—incantation, I may call it—for no assignable purpose?

There are those present who could testify that I have not only told what I have seen and they too, but also that I have forbore to state what would be immeasurably more fearful and startling. My object has been, not to gratify a morbid taste for the marvellous, but, firstly, to prove that Table-Turning is DIABOLIC, and secondly, to beseech you to have NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.



