

THE
PROBABLE EFFECT
OF
SPIRITUALISM
UPON THE
SOCIAL, MORAL, AND RELIGIOUS CONDITION
OF SOCIETY.

PRIZE ESSAYS.

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PREFACE.

The publication, in their present form, of the two Essays contained in this volume is due to the following circumstances.

In the year 1875, through the liberality of two Members of its body, the Council of the British National Association of Spiritualists was enabled to offer two prizes, the first consisting of a Gold Medal, or £20; the second of £10; for the best and second best Essays on a selected subject, which was—

“THE PROBABLE EFFECT OF SPIRITUALISM UPON
THE SOCIAL, MORAL AND RELIGIOUS
CONDITION OF SOCIETY.”

The conditions were that the competition should be open to all British born, or naturalised British subjects, and further to all Foreign Members of the British National Association of Spiritualists, provided the Essays were written in English.

The following gentlemen were kind enough to consent to adjudicate upon the merits of the competing Essays:—MR. ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE, the well-known naturalist and F.R.G.S.; a gentleman known to a large circle under the *nom de plume* of “M.A., OXON”; MR. J. M. GULLY, M.D.; and MR. MARTIN R. SMITH.

the Essays sent in, the two which are here printed were selected by the Judges as worthy of the first and second prizes respectively, by reason of their logical and literary merits; and, in accordance with the conditions of candidature, the copyright of the Essays vests in the Association for the term of five years from the date of adjudication.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

In the case of the present Essays, the duty of selection rested entirely with the Adjudicators ; and the Council of the Association, though it has undertaken the publication, holds itself free from all responsibility for the views of the writers.

Mr & Mrs L. Stanton.
with the Author's kind regards.
April 20. '88.

FIRST PRIZE ESSAY.

BY

ANNA BLACKWELL.

THAT our "Social Institutions" are the outcome of our "Beliefs" is a proposition so evidently true that we may probably be allowed to assume its acceptance as such by our readers and to proceed, without further preamble, to examine the consequences resulting from the admission of the fact of correlation between *Philosophic Convictions* and *Social Forms*.

If we admit that our Beliefs are the source of our Institutions, we must also admit that the latter will necessarily change with every change in the former; and, as what we have been accus-

tomed to regard as "the established order of society" is founded on religious, philosophic, and scientific "creeds" that are crumbling away on every side, we must admit, still further, that this "order" will necessarily share the fate of the theoretic conceptions on which it has been reared, and that the present epoch is, therefore, emphatically *an epoch of transition*. And as the very fact of transition implies both the abandonment of our actual stand-point and the existence of some new stand-point to which this transition is leading us, we cannot escape the conclusion that the general throwing of "Beliefs" into the crucible of analytic examination—which is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the present day—must be regarded, not merely as being destined to effect a *decomposition* of the elements of society as it has hitherto existed, but also as

a preparation for an approaching *re-combination* of those elements, on the basis of some new form of mental conviction that will constitute the "Belief," and thereby determine the social developments, of the Future.

A transformation of such vast importance, and implying possibilities of change so far transcending the reach of human foresight, may well induce an earnest consideration of such indications, in regard to the general direction in which we are tending, as may be deducible from an examination of what is taking place in the world around us.

The most superficial glance at the present state of opinion suffices to show us that the immediate effect of the decomposing process, to which all the old formulæ of human thought are now being subjected, is to be found in the rapid spread of theoretic Materialism,

which denies the existence of the Spiritual element of the universe as the corollary of its denial of the existence of an Intelligent CREATOR, and in the substitution of selfish appetites and interests, in place of the nobler psychic motives of action, which is the practical consequence of that theoretic denial. And as the practical carrying-out of a theory so simply dissolvent as that of Materialism would necessarily result in the destruction, not only of what we call "society," but of the human race itself, it is natural that the prospect of deterioration and ruin thus presented should fill with dismay the minds of those who have not yet learned to regard *all* states as essentially transitory, and to see, in *all* modes of dissolution, only a destruction of perishable forms that have been temporarily assumed by imperishable elements—only a setting-free

of those elements, as the indispensable preliminary to their re-combination in some new modes of temporary union.

But the "dissolution" of old ideas, of which the present prevalence of Materialism is the earliest result, is seen, on a closer examination of the subject, to be no exception to the consoling law of Providential ordering which makes what we call "death" the forerunner and harbinger of what we call "life." For the Materialistic denial of the ideas of a Creative and Overruling Power distinct from the Creation, of the Soul, and of human duty, responsibility, and destiny, is less a denial of those fundamental intuitions of the human mind than a rejection of the unsound and arbitrary theoretic assumptions on which they have hitherto been rested; and the Materialistic hypothesis should, therefore, be regarded as only a passing

phase of the reaction of modern science against assumptions which must necessarily be cleared away before those fundamental elements of human belief can be securely established on the solid ground of scientific and rational conviction. *For those assumptions—recognizing no community of origin or of destiny among the various orders of beings, and, consequently, no identity of Purpose in the evolutions of existence, but, on the contrary, breaking up those beings into unconnected categories and substituting permanent antagonisms in place of pre-ordained co-operation—prevent the ascertainment of the only sound basis of belief in the CREATOR and in Immortality.* The Materialistic protest against those assumptions is therefore rendering an immense service to the ideas which it aims at destroying; for it is unwittingly preparing the way

for the establishment of a Unitary Theory—the need of which is beginning to be generally though vaguely felt—that shall combine all the facts of existence in one grand, all-embracing synthesis, and thus furnish the key to the problems of Origins and Ends that have hitherto baffled the keenest enquiry. And as it is only through the solution of those problems that we can arrive at a rational belief in the existence of a Beneficent Creator and Overruler of the universe and a rational acceptance of the all-important moral consequences inseparable from that belief, it is evident that whatever tends to undermine those arbitrary and erroneous assumptions is clearing the ground for the establishment of the Scientific Theism which—as the only certain guarantee of the eternal persistence of the Spiritual principle, the only sound

foundation of Physical Science, and the only safe guide, to the elucidation of social questions—is the most urgent need of the present day.

The real tendency of modern Materialism is to the establishment of this unitary synthesis. Compelled, by the identity of their chemical constituents and vital phenomena, to attribute a common origin and destiny to the various orders of beings that people our globe, and being unable to unite them on any common ground of *spirituality*, the Materialist essays to unite them on a common ground of *materiality*. The stand-point of the visible world being too narrow to allow of the construction, thereupon, of a theory that can reconcile the facts of life and the fact of death with the belief in a Beneficent Creator and Overruler of the universe (from which belief the admission of a Spiritual ele-

ment distinct from Matter is inseparable), the Materialist endeavours—by eliminating that belief and consequently denying the existence of a Spiritual element—to bring those various orders of beings and of facts within the scope of a common formula. Seeing only Matter, he takes it as his basis of speculation. By attributing to Matter the “property” of Force, he makes it the cause of Movement; and, by attributing to it the properties of Soul, he makes it the source of immaterial phenomena. Unable to imagine a beginning of the material universe, he credits Matter with the capacity of orderly evolution which is the result and evidence of the Divine Overruling, and thus endows it with the SELF-EXISTENCE which is the distinguishing characteristic of the CREATOR. Denying—or attributing to assumed “properties of Matter”—all the facts indicative of

the concurrence of *Soul*, *Force*, and *Matter* in the phenomena of existence, and of the action of SELF-EXISTENT INTELLIGENCE in the co-ordination of those three constituent elements of the universe, the Materialist arrives at a basis of reasoning that appears to be unitary, but that is unitary only in appearance; and he builds, upon that incomplete and delusive basis, a Theory of Existence, which—as an attempt to arrive at the formation of the unitary synthesis that will be the beacon of the Future—constitutes an advance upon the theoretic antagonisms of the Past, but which is, in reality, as partial and unsound as the various unfounded assumptions it dissipates.

But as the Sun, notwithstanding the terrestrial vapours that veil its splendour, continues to discharge its beneficent functions as the Ruler of the system of depen-

dent worlds that revolve around it, so the Divine Overruling—untrammelled by human denial—provides the appropriate remedy for Materialistic aberration, by enabling the spirits of the so-called “dead” to give us incontrovertible evidence of their continued existence beyond the grave, and thus furnishes to the world—just when the dazzle of physical discovery is blinding it to the existence of the Spiritual principle—the visible and tangible proofs of the reality and immortality of that principle which will eventually place our convictions, in regard to the Spiritual element of our compound nature, on the same basis of Positive Science which underlies our convictions in regard to the facts of our physical existence.

It is evidently impossible to overrate the influence which the establishment of intelligent communication between the surface and the spirit-sphere of our planet

must necessarily exercise in shaping the new phase of conviction and of action towards which we are tending, notwithstanding the drawbacks which may seem, at first sight, to diminish the value of the results to be hoped for from that communication.

The two realms of existence furnished by the surface and the spirit-sphere of our planet being "part and parcel" of each other and subjected to the same law of slow and gradual progress, we must expect to find—as is, indeed, already abundantly evident—that ignorance of general principles, retentions of prejudice and error, and contradictory statements based on individual impressions, suppositions, and speculations, are as rife on the other side of the grave as on this side of it. Like attracting like, it is evident that each medium will usually attract only spirits of the same average advancement

as his own, and that the difficulties inherent in the art of spirit-manifestation must necessarily impede—for the present, and perhaps for a long time to come—the free and correct transmission of thought from the higher regions of the spirit-world. But it is equally evident that, notwithstanding these drawbacks—which are due to the general backwardness of our planet, and can only be got rid of through the gradual progress of both classes of its population—the communication now being established, at every point of its surface, between our globe and the spirit-world, must nevertheless exert a determining influence upon its future development.

In the first place, this communication will generalize the certainty of the survival of the soul, with its activities and affections, after the death of the body; a survival in regard to which the vast majority of man-

kind have, as yet, no clear and enlightened belief, and which has, consequently, no practical influence on their action. And although this survival does not suffice to prove the indestructibility of the soul—for the prolongation of its existence through a few hundreds, thousands, or even millions of years, is by no means a certain proof that it will be *prolonged throughout eternity*, which, as previously pointed out, can only be proved with absolute certainty as a deduction from a Unitary Theory of Existence—yet, if spirit-communication were to have no other result than that of showing that the soul does not die with the body, and that there is, consequently, no inherent impossibility in the idea of its being destined to an eternal duration, the fact of that communication would still be incomparably more interesting in itself, and more important in its bearing on the future con-

victions and action of mankind, than all the purely physical discoveries which are the glory of the Positive Science of our day.

But the communication in question is evidently destined to bring about a result far more important than the mere establishment of the presumption, in favour of our eternal existence, which is deducible from the survival of the soul, for a longer or shorter period, after the death of the body. For, while it is evident that the great mass of medianimic communications can only be a reflex of the present ideas of the spirits who are nearest to the earth and of the mediums to whom they are sympathetically attracted, it is equally evident that the generalization of medianimity will enable the more advanced intelligences, who are directing the transformation of ideas now being effected in our world, to select

the mediums best fitted to serve as the channel of the suggestive hints they may have to give us, and thus to assist us in working out the general explanation of the Creative Plan, which—as it must necessarily involve the relations of the present to the past and the future, and those of our earth and its races with the other realms and beings of Infinity—can never be elaborated through any unassisted efforts of observation and induction on our part, but can only be arrived at by us with the aid of those whose superior advancement enables them to take a wider view of Providential arrangements than is obtainable from the lower stand-point of human observation; an explanation which the progressive discoveries of Science will elucidate and confirm, and which, by enlightening us in regard to *the nature and conditions of the soul's*

existence, will give us at once the *rationale* and the *certainty* of the eternal duration of each individualised soul, as the aim and result of those arrangements.

The supposition of such a transmission of teaching from a higher point of view than that of our present life—as a consequence to be naturally anticipated from the communication now being established between spirits and men—necessarily pre-supposes our inability to foresee, in their entirety, the ideas that will be gradually conveyed by that teaching. But it is evident that, in order to set us on the track of the theoretic unity now being sought for, more or less consciously, by the most advanced thinkers of the day, this higher teaching must do three things:—

1. It must prove the common origin, law of development, and destiny, of ALL

the Creatures of the universe, from the lowest to the highest, by showing that all forms of suffering and of effort, of life and of death, result from their community of origin and of destiny, and occur in virtue of a Unitary Plan and Purpose that link together, in one endless chain of progress, all the reigns, modes, and realms of Creation :—

2. It must vindicate the Wisdom, Justice, and Beneficence of the Divine Government, by showing us (i.) That the various orders of beings constitute the successive links of that chain ; (ii.) That their corporeal differences and mental inequalities mark successive degrees of the same general scale of evolution, successive steps of the common road to the common goal ; and, (iii.) That they only appear to us to be heterogeneous and unconnected, because we see them all at the same time and out of the natural sequence

of their production, and are therefore unable to perceive the orderly filiation according to which—could our glance take in the origin, career, and end of our planet, and the relations of its races with the other worlds and beings of the universe—we should see that they have been produced. For a Unitary Theory of Existence must necessarily show us that the Universe is a *unit*;—that “Creation” is not *local* but *general*, not *an act* but a *process*, whose sole aim is the development and education of Soul through the action it is made to exert upon the elements of Matter, in accordance with the Creative Plan;—that Soul is the formative principle of all the temporary agglomerations of those elements which we call “bodies,” and that all natural “bodies,” from the simplest to the most complex, from the lowest to the highest, are mere temporary

results of the past or present action of Soul, upon the material element, at the various stages of its education;—that there is, consequently, no fixed and abiding “Universe,” but only a succession of temporary phenomena, constituted, for the time being, by the action of Soul, and that the duration of a nebula, with its countless myriads of suns and of planets, is as changeful and ephemeral, considered in its relation to Eternity, as that of the May-fly which lives and dies in a single day;—and that all our Positive Sciences—Chemistry, Geology, Astronomy, Electricity, Mineralogy, Botany, Physiology, Natural History, &c.—are mere summings-up of the modes of soul-action in the special directions with which they severally deal:—

3. It must explain the mingling of truth and falsehood in the various “Beliefs” of the Past, as having resulted

from the imperfections of the phases of human development in which they took their rise; and it must take the place of those "Beliefs," not by *destroying*, but by *fulfilling*, their aspirational out-reachings, as the workings of root, stem, and flower are *fulfilled* in the fruit.

Let us now briefly examine the consequences deducible from the idea of the Unitary Synthesis towards which we have seen that the mental movement of the day is tending, as regards, first, the *belief*, and next, the *social forms*, of the Future.

1. The idea of a Unitary Theory of Existence necessarily pre-supposes the fact of a Unitary Plan in the production and maintenance of the universe, and thus implies the eternal continuity of the Creative Action by which we and all the other orders of Creatures have been called into being, and the eternal

continuity of the same law of development to which we and they are now subjected :—

2. The continuity of the Creative Action implies that there never was a period, in the eternity of the Past, in which the Creatures of an earlier Creation had not already attained to the relative “perfection” of knowledge, love, and power which is the aim of Creation and the source of the happiness of all Creatures :—

3. The attainment of that relative “perfection” by the spirits of earlier Creations implies the employment of those relatively “perfected” spirits in fields of cosmic activity proportioned, in grandeur and importance, to the degree of their scientific and moral advancement :—

4. The arrival of the Creatures of earlier Creations at those higher fields of activity (the “Thrones, Principalities,

Powers” of the vicegerents to whom the practical administration of the universe is entrusted by the CREATOR) implies that we, and all the other Creatures of the later Creation to which our earth and its population belong—and those of all the innumerable future Creations that will succeed each other throughout ETERNITY—shall eventually arrive at the same elevation :—

5. The attainment of the same elevation by all the Creatures of the universe implies the upward passage of all those Creatures through the same successive degrees of development, and thus confirms the earliest religious insight of our globe, as recorded in the earliest of its “Sacred Writings,” which expressly declare that “*Kinsmen, beasts, stones, vegetables, are all one; what they are, a man has been.*” * a declaration tantamount

* *Vide* the Druidic Triads, Bhagavat-Ghita, &c.

to asserting that *what a man is, they will be*:—

6. And this unity of origin, training, and destiny implies, in its turn, the two great related doctrines expressed, with more or less clearness, in all the “Bibles” of the world and in the writings of its greatest thinkers, from the earliest times to the present day, viz., (i.) The pre-existence of the soul to the body it animates, and, (ii.) The gradual progression of the soul in knowledge, virtue, power, and happiness, through successive embodiments in the same planet, or in planets of higher and higher degree, until it reaches the grade of mental, moral, and corporeal development which lifts it above the need of any further connexion with planetary matter, and introduces it to the nobler modes of being that are dimly foreshadowed, in all those “Bibles,” as the “glorified” existence to which we are

eventually to attain, but of the nature of which we are unable, at our present low level of attainment, to form the remotest conception.

No theory that does not fulfil the conditions here laid down can satisfy the mental need of our day, for no other could claim to be *unitary*; because no other could explain the affinities and constructivity of the Mineral Reign; the vitality, digestion, circulation, sleeping and waking, activities, preferences, efforts, diseases, and death of the Vegetable Reign; the intelligence, passions, and sufferings of the Animal Reign; the unequal conditions, the sorrows, aspirations, and progressiveness of the Human Race; and the persistence, in each ascending reign, of the special characteristics of the reigns below it: and because, without this coherent and all-embracing explanation, it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of a Beneficent

and Omnipotent Author, Sustainer, and Ruler of the Universe,—to prove the existence of any unity, either of nature or of destiny, between the beings of the various reigns of our planet, or between these and the other beings of the universe,—to justify the conception of the Brotherhood of the Human Race,—or to perceive the *rationale* of Christ's sublime summing-up of the totality of aspiration and of constructive achievement in his prophetic prayer that the "Will" of the CREATOR may "be done *on earth*, even as it is done in" the more advanced realms of being, whose inhabitants have learned to practise the lesson of *conformity with the laws imposed by the Creative Ordaining* which we are now being made to learn through the discipline of the earthly life; all of which conceptions, without the solid substratum that can only be furnished to them by a Unitary Theory of Existence, must be

regarded as mere baseless figments of the imagination.

It is evidently as impossible to forecast the details of the Social Institutions that will take their rise in the phase of unitary "Belief" to which we are tending, as to foresee all the ideas that will be comprised in that "Belief." But it may be safely assumed, on the one hand, that those institutions will grow out of, and crown, the experiences and aspirations of our Past, and, on the other hand, that they will, nevertheless, differ from those of the Past as widely as the convictions of the Future will differ from our earlier "creeds." For the institutions of the Past—growing out of a perception of diversities and antagonisms that were supposed to be inherent in the nature of things, and attributing a false and exaggerated importance to the

present conditions of an earthly life that was supposed to be our only one—necessarily embodied the individual and social selfishness implied in those suppositions. But the institutions of the Future—growing out of a view of existence in which all the Creatures of the universe are seen to be travelling onwards, from the same starting-point, by the same road, to the attainment of the same destiny, and in which the interests of *each* are perceived to be inseparable from those of *all*—will necessarily embody the conviction that, not only is “Love,” in literal truth, the sole “fulfilling of the law” of Creation, but that *we can only secure our own individual interests and happiness by substituting, for the divergent and antagonistic arrangements which make ALL the rivals and enemies of EACH, the convergent and co-operative arrangements*

which will secure to EACH the aid and support of ALL.

It may therefore be safely assumed that the *individualism* and *antagonism*, which have characterized the social arrangements of the Past, will be succeeded by *the application of the principle of co-operation*, as the characteristic of the social arrangements of the Future. No one, at this day, would contest the vastness of the power obtainable from the union of wills and efforts in the accomplishment of any given aim; but comparatively few are yet aware how enormous are the economic results that would be obtained—as regards both the *production* and the *employment* of all the elements of human well-being—from the application of the principle of co-operation, of mutual helpfulness, to the various interests and occupations of life. Did

space permit, it would be easy to show that, just as all moral evils result from the substitution of self-love for the sentiment of justice and of charity, so all the evils of our social state result from the substitution of individualism and antagonism in place of co-operation and mutual helpfulness, and can only be successfully dealt with by substituting *co-operation* for *individualism*.

Ignorance, poverty, brutality, pauperism, prostitution, servitude, war, vice, disease, injustice, can never be prevented from producing their natural effects; and all our various philanthropic efforts to *ameliorate* what is *radically bad* are mainly to be rejoiced in because they will necessarily lead, in time, to a recognition of the impossibility of diminishing the evils of our social state otherwise than by ridding ourselves of the causes to which those evils are

due: a result which, as will be apparent to all who reflect dispassionately on the nature of those evils and the conditions required for clearing them away, can only be accomplished by the adoption of modes of living that shall ensure, to every member of the human family, the full and healthy development of his physical, mental, artistic, and moral nature, and a sphere of congenial activity in which he will both contribute to the general weal and benefit by all that has been achieved by the industry, skill, science, and genius of all its other members.

“*Practise* my simple doctrine of fraternity and charity,” said the Great Teacher, eighteen hundred years ago, “*and all other things shall be added unto you;*” in other words—*while the exclusive seeking of his own interests by each individual necessarily defeats itself*—the practical application of the principles of brotherhood

and of mutual helpfulness which, in this nineteenth century, is briefly expressed by the term *co-operation*, will give comfort, health, knowledge, elegance, security, to all.

The application to social life of principles which are universally accepted in theory, but universally rejected in practice, can only be effected gradually, through repeated experiments, and with the aid of experience gathered from partial and temporary failures. But, though such a transformation of society must necessarily be laborious and slow, no one who believes in the supremacy of good over evil, no one who perceives the signs of dawn amidst the darkness of the present, can doubt that it will be eventually achieved, and in the way implied in the words of Christ, viz., by *the application of the principle of co-operative helpfulness to every department of human life* ;

a practical carrying-out of the law of brotherhood and charity that will become possible in proportion, *and only in proportion*, as the fact of intelligent communication, between souls in flesh and souls in the spirit-world, shall bear its natural fruit in the enlarging of the mental horizon of mankind, and the defining of the true nature and aim of terrestrial existence. For, the evils of our social state being due, as we have seen, to the narrow views of human life and destiny hitherto prevalent in the world, the persistence of those views would necessarily perpetuate the defective social conditions in which those views are embodied; and it may therefore be broadly asserted that such a transformation of social conditions can only be accomplished through the modification of human ideas, motives, and aims, that will necessarily be effected, sooner or later, as the result of that communication.

The possibility of such a substitution of co-operation for antagonism being once admitted, who would venture to assign a limit to the amelioration of human existence that must result from so radical a transformation of its social conditions? The present social conditions of our earth, being evil, attract to it souls of very slight advancement, whose baseness corresponds to, and is perpetuated by, the evil surroundings into which they are born, and which they, in their turn, help to perpetuate. The establishment of better social conditions, on the contrary, will attract to the earth souls of greater advancement, already fitted to profit by those improved conditions, and by whom those conditions will be still further improved; until—through the gradual amelioration thus achieved by the efforts of successive generations—our earth shall have become the abode of righteousness, fraternity, and

peace, prefigured in the brief, but pregnant, words of Christ.

What imagination, of painter or of poet, could forecast the glory, the beauty, the happiness, of the earthly life under such conditions, chastened and ennobled as it would be by the knowledge—due to our communication with spirits of greater advancement—that terrestrial life, even under such improved conditions, can only be the stepping-stone, the portal, to higher states of being, and that its most exquisite refinements are only valuable as educating us up to modes of etherealized existence beyond the region of planetary worlds? For, as we have already seen, such a transformation of the social conditions of our earth can only be accomplished through a transformation of our scientific, philosophic, and religious “Beliefs” which will cause us to take a new view of

human life;—a view that will, on the one hand, reduce our estimate of the *intrinsic importance* of an earthly lifetime, by showing us that it is but *one step* of the endless career we have before us, while, on the other hand, it will enhance, immeasurably, our estimate of its *relative importance*, by showing us that *the use we make of each phase of our existence decides the character of the next phase of our career.*



SECOND PRIZE ESSAY.

BY

G. F. GREEN.

IF the influence of an idea upon Humanity were always commensurate with its intrinsic importance and scope—in other words, if the Harvest were always proportioned to the quality of the Seed sown—our task in tracing the probable effect of Spiritualism in the world would be an easier one. But, as, in the material world, the goodness of the soil, and favorable conditions of heat, light, and moisture, are as essential as good Seed ; so, in the moral world, the preparation of men's minds, and favoring outward influences, are as essential as the intrinsic goodness of the Idea.

The idea of a Future Life has been in the world for centuries, but the seed has fallen for the most part upon "stony ground." Where it has taken root it has undoubtedly brought forth some fruit; but the extent of the harvest cannot be ascertained for the tares which are not withered. As a practical question, therefore, our subject demands, firstly, a careful consideration of the present condition of Society, and its state of preparation to receive the truths revealed by Spiritualism; and, secondly, the proper Influence of the truths themselves under favorable conditions. It may here be premised that we shall not seek to forecast the effects of Spiritualism beyond the proximate future. This is the only problem a solution of which can be either possible or profitable to finite beings. If we took the ground that Truth is mighty and must prevail, it would only be

necessary to prove Spiritualism to be true, and imagine an Utopia in which it should flourish, and our task would then be completed. But the conditions being all imaginary, such an attempt should rather be embodied in the form of poetry than prose. The end of the prose essayist is better attained if he be content to narrow his field of vision, for the sake of better definition of the object to be viewed. In the present instance we have a given state of Society and a given Motive, and we shall attempt to trace the probable effect of that motive only so far into the future as ordinary human faculties may penetrate.

Although then the form of the problem before us does not involve only, or even mainly, the question of the truth of Spiritualism, the solution of that problem is necessary as a preliminary to the consideration of its influence. We

shall therefore deal with this question first—Is Spiritualism true?

Is Spiritualism true? The question naturally suggests another—What is Spiritualism? Many different answers might be given, but we shall claim here this one as the proper definition—Spiritualism is the Science of a Future Life. In the modern sense of the term, as contradistinguished from ancient forms of supernaturalism, Spiritualism is strictly a Science. All its fixed conclusions are to be maintained by inductive reasoning. The orthodoxy of its facts is to rest alone upon the constancy of their verification and verifiability.

Amongst the existing forms of religion which point to similar conclusions this characteristic is entirely lacking. The Protestant Church, for example, builds its belief upon a Revelation which is closed, *i.e.*, upon facts which cannot

recur. The Catholic Church, although not denying the occasional recurrence of miracles, yet bases its belief also entirely upon the past. Hence, apart from the internal or inspired knowledge of spiritual existences (which many deny), these Churches have no more evidence of the actuality of the Spirit-world to offer to the sceptic than is offered for the actuality of many ancient myths, viz: historical testimony. All merely traditional beliefs, whether true or false, have a tendency to become weakened by time; and unless supported by fresh testimony their ultimate extinction is a certainty of nature. And Christianity, so far as any real belief in its supernatural evidences is concerned, is rapidly sharing this fate. The facts upon which it is built have come to present to us so strange and unnatural an appearance, have become invested with such a legendary and ideal

character as to lose their very quality of facts. They are regarded as something quite distinct from ordinary facts; so that more weight is attached to contemporaneous theories than to the very facts which gave rise to them. As a matter of historical accuracy, facts are more likely to be correctly transmitted than words — the substance than the form. But many lovers of the Bible will have it that the words have an inspired accuracy, which is by no means confirmed by an unequivocal meaning. The pertinacity with which the *letter* of the Bible is clung to proves the absence of any living faith in the Supernatural. It is necessary to bolster up our belief in facts so strange by the belief in something yet stranger, viz: Verbal inspiration.

Anomalous as must appear such a state of mind as we have described, it is

impossible otherwise to explain the utter incredulity and sheer inability to believe the facts of Spiritualism which we meet with in most Christian circles. The power of believing in a miracle seems so dead, that we must conclude the continuance of the Christian religion in the present day is due to the acknowledged perfection of its ethical teachings alone. It is not an uncommon trait of the human mind to hold on to the form of a faith after "the brains are out,"

"The times have been

That when the brains were out the (creed) would die,
And there an end."

But it is not so now. The "brains" of Christianity were the supernatural facts of Christ's life; his resurrection and appearance to the disciples; and the spiritual gifts which were subsequently bestowed upon them; not so much the morality or theology which he

sought to inculcate; and still less the subsequent teachings of the Apostles. As Spiritualists it is not necessary to hold the infallibility or the fallibility of those teachings, but Spiritualism offers such strong confirmation of the facts upon which only a reasonable belief can be based, that Christians should be the first to welcome it. Unfortunately, dogma is rather held to confirm the facts than as needing confirmation by them, and any additional probability given to the facts of the Bible is thought to be unnecessary, and the offer of it is only contumaciously rejected.

While such is the attitude of the religious world towards Spiritualism, we need not be surprised that the sceptical, and more thinking portion of the community, has not been able to attain any wide-spread belief in it, but, repudiating

alike the records in which it sees professing Christians have no solid belief, and the rumours of so-called modern superstition, denies the existence of Soul altogether. The only proof possible of such an occurrence as an apparition (we are told) is in the consciousness of the Seer. To all the world beside it is but hearsay, and should be discredited on the mere ground of its improbability—on the same grounds as we discredit the existence of the Sea-serpent. Such an argument as this is wholly unassailable by any weapons of orthodox Christianity. The Christians and Materialists are at the two poles of belief, and both lack the middle part of it which Spiritualism can supply. For these it has its verifiable facts; for those its all-embracing philosophy. With the Materialist it is necessary to begin by proving that Intelligence and Volition are to be found separate

from the brain and human organism. With the Religionist it is necessary to point out the true *raison d'être* of his belief.

That Spiritualism is true may be demonstrated in two ways—inductively, from the facts of spirit-communion occurring daily in our midst; deductively, from the universality of the belief in it, which has prevailed in some form or other in all civilized nations. It is difficult, nay impossible, to suppose that any widespread belief is an entirely baseless one. Moreover, this belief that when every sensible proof of life is extinct a something yet lives, is not one for which we can readily assign a cause if it be false. The belief in a God may have arisen from the contemplation of Nature. The thunder, the earthquake, or the regular course of the seasons may alone have suggested the idea of a Governing Power.

But we see no *suggestion of Life where Death is*. Whence then has arisen the belief in a future life if not from sensible communion of some kind with the unseen world? But if the *onus probandi* is still with us, we affirm that a Future life may be proved to-day inductively from facts. No amount of *argument* will suffice to prove a fact. Testimony which will convince one will not convince all. We can only therefore point out what are the facts which we claim as premisses, and ask our opponents to test them in their own manner. They are these: That under certain conditions Spirits can be seen, felt, and heard, thus establishing their existence through the same three senses which take cognizance of the existence of our fellow-men. That they prove their identity as human beings, and their relationship (in many cases) in exactly the same way as those

whom we do not scruple in our daily life to regard as bodily realities. That we have, therefore, no more reasonable certainty of each other's existence than of the existence of these apparitions. There is no change of consciousness, as after sleep, to induce us to liken them to the creations of dream-land. These are no madmen's fantasies: but if they be not real facts, there can no longer be any certainty in the world: all phenomena must be regarded as phantasmagorical and illusory alike. The Future and the Past can have no real existence. The Present must be regarded as the only reality, and even that a subjective one, with no other substratum than the individual consciousness.

Happily, however, such ultra-scepticism as this does not seriously threaten to overwhelm humanity. It is only with regard to the experience of others that

we are ever able to feel any high degree of doubt. Our own senses in the end are always trusted, Reason, it is true, should lead us to conclude that the confidence in the actuality of the things we perceive, is ill-founded if we do not accord a like confidence to the perceptions of others. But, practically, this confidence is impeded by imperfect sympathy. Without sympathy it is impossible to reveal our perceptions to others so that they cannot be doubted. The proof, therefore, of the facts of Spiritualism must doubtless rest on personal experience—and this may be obtained by any who seek it earnestly.

We come now to the question—What will be the effect of Spiritualism upon Society, viewed merely in its social aspect? It cannot be doubted that the very existence of Society depends upon

the susceptibility of its members to ideal impressions. While men are governed chiefly by simple primary impulses, and those more complex motives which spring from ideal impressions of the Past and Future are in abeyance, none but temporary associations are possible. The permanence of Society depends upon the permanent predominance in a majority of its members of the ideal over the real, as a motive-power: or all motives which regard a future, in preference to a present good, are in their nature ideal. But although Society cannot exist without an ideal basis, that ideal may be, and frequently is, a narrow one. The need of association for mutual protection against a common enemy, or for purposes of industry, or commerce, are motives which regard only a proximate future; and of themselves are not calculated to produce a highly civilized

society. The strength of a given community is in proportion to the unanimity, or equality of culture, of its working majority; but its durability and harmony will depend on the scope and truthfulness of its ideal. It may well be affirmed, therefore, that an ideal which is limited to the consideration of our interests in this life, or at furthest does not look beyond those of our immediate descendants or their successors, cannot be a sufficiently wide one, if the doctrine of a future life for us and them can be verified.

Undoubtedly the lower ideal of how to make the best of this life is as yet very imperfect, and has not been long enough in the world to effect one tithe of the good to be expected from it. This may be urged (and is urged by the Secularists) as an argument for ignoring the consideration of a Hereafter. But

it has no weight against Spiritualism as a Science, however it may tell against speculative theology. The larger ideal does not destroy, but includes, the lesser. The perception of a future good does not *per se* prejudice the enjoyment of the present, but enhances it. Hence we conclude that the belief in Spiritualism is calculated to benefit Society as such, by adding another and higher motive for association. At present its influence is weak; but, maybe, in the course of time, the lower motives which depend on our physical wants, will cease with those wants to be the predominant ones; and we must then look to something higher to supersede them and form the necessary cement of Society. Judging from analogy, the power which regards the world

“With other, larger eyes than ours”

has not ordained that the knowledge of

a longer lease of existence should act as a disintegrant of Society; or cause us to neglect the present for the future altogether.

The effect of Spiritualism upon Morality and Religion must depend on the condition in which it finds them. If Utility be accepted as the basis of morals, it is obvious that Spiritualism opens up a wider view of it than that taken by the disciples of the Benthamite school. If, on the other hand, a correct code of morals can only be arrived at by a special revelation, Spiritualism is the science which recognizes, expounds, and harmonises all Revelations. In either case it is of paramount importance in its relation to Morals and Religion. Our creed includes a belief in both methods of arriving at knowledge,—Revelation and Science. A truth is often *apprehended* before it is *comprehended*. It

is felt by a species of intuition, before it is explained and proved by Science. We do not wish to exalt Intuition at the expense of Science. The one is our beacon light, the other our compass and guide through the darkness.

As an illustration of our meaning, we may point to the fact, that the truth of the universal brotherhood of mankind was revealed to the world through Christ, but neither his disciples nor their descendants really grasped the idea. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." It is reserved for Science and experience to expound and prove the actuality of this grand truth, by inductive processes, before it can be assimilated into the fabric of the human mind. The way in which it will achieve this object is, by discovering the nature of the links which connect each member of the human family

with all its members. As we advance in knowledge the actual community of interests of all mankind must become more and more apparent: until, if we had thoroughly mastered the laws which govern Society, we should doubtless perceive that no one member of the human family can suffer without a corresponding harm to the whole of his kindred.

We have said that Spiritualism recognizes Revelation: but it does not recognize an infallible Revelation: for two reasons—the necessary fallibility of the human medium, and the possible fallibility of the Revelator. There are Christian Spiritualists, it is true, who believe in the Divine character of the Scripture revelation, as coming from an infallible source through infallibly-inspired channels, but such belief is a part of their Christianity, and not of their Spiritualism. The science of Spiritualism by itself (and

this cannot be too well remembered) proves nothing but the sole doctrine of a Future Life. Upon all other subjects the teachings of the Spirits are various and often conflicting. We are left to sift the truth from the error in all cases. It needs but little reflection, we think, to show us that a complete Revelation of God's will to man is an impossibility: for it would presuppose the capacity in man to comprehend it. And so also the revelation of any higher truths than those we are accustomed to, must be a gradual one; and it is a natural supposition in conformity with all experience of Law, that to be intelligible to us they should come through the medium of minds only a little in advance of our own.

From the foregoing it will be gathered that we do not look to Spiritualism for any influence upon Morality or Religion

from the revelation of any altogether new and startling truths. We look rather to the gradual growth, and increased vitality, of the belief in a future life—to the consequent widening and enlarging of our ideal of happiness, which is undoubtedly the actual basis of all morality. In the present stage of man's development, there are comparatively few who are duly influenced by the thought of a temporal and proximate future, sufficiently to induce them (for instance) to make provision for old age or possible calamity. With such, the idea of a remoter future can have but little effect. But that which influences the higher, gradually filters downwards in the scale of intelligence, and we have to consider, besides, many causes now existing which tend to make the process an accelerating rate—the increased density of the population of the globe, the

greater facility of acquiring, recording, and imparting new ideas which is due to the discoveries of the steam engine, printing, and the electric telegraph.

All these things are so many concurrent influences which must be taken into account. To sum up—the good effect of Spiritualism upon Morality is all comprised in the additional incentive it offers us to seek out for ourselves the true path. At first, no doubt, many will be led away by the notion that advanced Spirits can supply us with a new and infallible code, but bearing in mind the ascertained law of spirit-communion that “like seeks like,” that only those Spirits in sympathy with us can hold direct intercourse, we cannot reasonably encourage such a hope. The standard of morality can only advance with our knowledge of God’s laws. The idea of an infallible code of morals is rather

calculated to hinder than promote true progress in those who believe it.—for it precludes the exercise of charity. Our perception of the best manner of living is, and ever will be, far beyond our practice—but our perception can never attain to the Absolute. Science, not dogma, is the great promoter of morality if rightly understood, for it discovers and expounds God's laws, and morality is the art of conforming our lives to them.

Lastly—What will be the influence of Spiritualism upon Religion? Religion is too apt to be regarded as the intellectual belief of certain dogmas about God's nature and attributes; or the knowledge of his designs and intentions towards his creatures. A *true* belief is held to be the only pass-word to salvation; or works founded upon a *true* belief. But what if man, an erring and finite creature, is unable to see God's message in humanly

transmitted dogmas? What if the report of his intentions seems but a system of human theories, and partial truths? Is all religion therefore impossible to him? We answer—No! True religion demands none of these things. It demands of every man that he should worship only his highest ideal—that he should seek after Truth and practise Charity. The conditions of salvation are nowhere distinctly laid down, for they are imperfectly known even in the Spirit-world. Like Christ's gospel, then, Spiritualism is good tidings. The tidings are good whether they be accepted or rejected; but we rejoice in the belief that the time will never come when it will exert any but an *indirect* influence upon Religious creeds—or supplant conscience—the true basis of Religion—by authority, though that authority were supported by a host of Angels.