THE EVIDENCES OF SPIRITUALISM.

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE MASONIC HALL, MELBOURNE, SUNDAY, 25th SEPTEMBER, 1874, BY W. H. TAYLOR.

The idea of Spirit intercourse is a strictly rational one to all those who believe in the immortality of the soul; it is supported by the Scriptures of all nations, is the history of childhood, and it is an anomaly which at first sight appears incomprehensible that Christians who found their belief on the record of the most careful and summative occurrences of the Old and New Testaments should deny the possibility of the occurrence of similar manifestations at the present day. Ideas were lessened for such evidences? Are the meagre records of God's intercourse with an eastern nation thousands of years ago adequate to the requirements of humanity in its present stage of progress and development? Have mankind at so firm a faith in revealed religion that no further light is required, or to demonstrate the immortality of the soul, or give a knowledge of the nature of the life beyond? Look round and judge for yourselves, question your church-going neighbour on the tenets of his faith, and how unessential is the foundation on which he stands, and how conscious he is of it. Talk to your materialistic frieze and whilst denying the adequacy of the orthodox system to prove man's immortality, and adapting himself to the alternative, he still hopes and waits, often with intense expectation, on some positive, rational evidence, of such a condition. And in a rationalistic reasoning age, like this, such evidence is needed to bring final conviction Raising was unreasoning faith held away; and now the time has come for it to be swept away, and its place filled by faith founded upon knowledge, and supported by reason, the requisites for which are to be found in modern Spiritualism.

Amongst the early investigators of Spiritualism in America was the Reverend S. B. Brittan, and Dr. Hallock, of New York. They carefully investigated the phenomena of Spiritualism, from writing to writing, and becoming convinced of its genuineness, wrote and spoke in their defence. Being men of acknowledged ability and success, their example stimulated inquiry and drew the attention of many thinking people to the subject, among whom was Horace Greeley, the then Editor of the "Tribune." He personally tested the mediums, and in that paper expressed his unqualified satisfaction that the raps which occurred in their presence were not caused by them.

About this time (1851) the Hon. John Worth Edmonds, of New York, became a member of a circle in that City, where through the mediumship of Dr. Dexter a series of highly interesting and phenomena took place for a year, and were received and subsequently published; they had a large circulation and ran through several editions. Many clairvoyant phenomena were exhibited, and wonderful manifestations of power and intelligence were exhibited. In the presence of a number of well-known men and intelligent witnesses one Edwd. Fowler received a written communication, signed by upwards of fifty spirits of men well known in history, every signature of which was found to be a facsimile of their earthly autographs. The Hon. J. P. Talmadge, Governor of Wisconsin and a prominent senator (a man of powerful mind), was induced by his friend Judge Edmonds to investigate, and obtained such evidence in a comparatively short time as compelled him to give his unqualified support. The excitement in reference to the subject increased. The clergy became seriously alarmed, and with a view of upseting the phenomenal facts, an eminent professor of chemistry, Robert Hare (the Faraday of America), was appealed to. He did not immediately respond, but a few days later wrote as follows: "I am called upon as an act of duty to my fellow creatures to bring whatever influence I possess to the attempt to stem the tide of "phantom mediums," in defiance to reason and science is fast setting in in favor of the "gross delusion" called Spiritualism."

The best and most solid ideas of the immediate work and constructed three ingenious instruments for the detection of the imposture, but the engineer was "hoist with his own petard," and the instrument having been tried by the means by which he was convinced beyond all doubt that those whom he had murdered as dead still lived, and exercised a living after-life, his illustrations and communications spelt out through the test. An indicator was a Latin quotation his father (who had been "dead" many years) was in the habit of using. Professor Hare had more courage than many of his class, and publicly avowed his conviction, giving the grounds for it. He stated to an audience of 3000 persons, who assembled to hear his vindication, that he was fully aware of the effect it would have upon his scientific reputation, but that Truth was dearer to him than worldly honor, and as he predicted it was; the so-called scientific world turned their backs upon him, and came to a comfortable conclusion that his once great mind was failing.

In 1859 a committee of thirty-six persons was appointed by the Dialectical Society of London to investigate the Spiritual phenomena. The report published in 1873 affirms that 100 supernatural phenomena and tabloids and other objects occurred, and intelligence was displayed by some force apart from the in individuals comprising the circle. Some order, which the different intelligences communicating (purporting to be spirits) displayed several ways; to persons and individuals, they also demonstrated beyond doubt the objective nature of the phenomena. The Committee examined witnesses on the subject, with the following result:

1. Thirteen witnesses state that they have seen heavy bodies in some instances men—rise slowly in the air and remain there for some time without visible or tangible support.

2. Fourteen witnesses testified to having seen hands and figures, not appertaining to any human being, but life-like in appearance and mobility, which they have sometimes touched or even grasped, and which they are therefore convinced were not the result of imposture or illusion.

3. Five witnesses state that they have been touched, by some invisible power, on various parts of the body, and often where requested, when the hands of all present were visible.

4. Thirteen witnesses declare that they have heard musical pieces well played upon instruments not manipulated by any ascertainable agency.

5. Five witnesses state that they have seen images, called the "test indicator," which were red-hot coal applied to the hands or heads of several persons without producing pain or searching; and three witnesses state that they have had the same experiment made upon themselves with the like immunity.

6. Eight witnesses state that they have received precise information through mediums, writing down, in other ways, the accuracy of which was unknown at the time to themselves or to any persons present, and which, on subsequent examination, have been found correct.

7. One witness declares that he has received a precise and detailed statement which, nevertheless, proved to be entirely erroneous.

8. Three witnesses state that they have been present when drawings, both in pencil and colors, were produced in so short a time, and under such conditions as to render human agency impossible.

9. Six witnesses declare that they have received information of future events, and in some cases the hour and minute of their occurrence have been accurately foretold, and even future events.

In addition to the above, evidence has been given of trance-speaking, of hailing, of automatic writing, of the introduction of flowers into closed rooms, of voices in the air, of visions in crystals and glasses, and of the elongation of the human body.

In presenting their report, the Committee, taking into consideration the high character and great intelligence of many of the witnesses to the more extraordinary facts, the extent to which their testimony is supported by the reports of the sub-committees, and the absence of any proof of imposture or delusion, regards a large portion of the phenomena; and further, having regard to the exceptional character of the phenomena, the large proprietors in the development of the phenomena to the public and to the responsible explanation of such phenomena as has yet been arrived at, deem it incumbent upon them to state their conviction that the subject demands serious attention and careful investigation than it has hitherto received.

During the year 1870, Mr. W. Crookes, F.R.S., Editor of the British Journal of Science, who had formed one of this Committee, commenced a series of investigations with Mr. D. H. Holme, and obtained some very startling results. An accordian was played in a cage, without visible hands. A board attached to a spring balance was made to move, and set itself at will; and out any possible contact with Mr. Holme's hands, and many other manifestations of an intelligent power outside the medium were obtained. The phenomena were followed by a series through Miss Florence Cook. Up to this point Mr. Crookes had kept his belief as to the cause of the phenomena in abeyance.
but the evidences of their spiritual origin received through this source were too much for him, and he openly joined the Spiritualist ranks. And so it is with every truly scientific man who has correctly investigated the medium in the same conclusion. Sir Wiliam Thomson, in his opening address before the British Association (1871) says: "Science is bound to face fearlessly every problem which can fairly be presented to it." Spiritualism. a pre-judice which demands and courts investigation, but unfortunately the majority of so-called scientific men do not recognise the law referred to.

The following is a list of the phenomena scientifically demonstrated in his own house by Mr. Crockett:

1. The bringing of solid bodies, with contact but without mechanical exertion.

2. The phenomena of percussive and other allied sounds.

3. The alteration of weights of bodies.

4. Movement of heavy bodies when at a distance from the medium.

5. The rising of tables and chairs off the ground without contact with any person.

6. The levitation of heavy objects.

7. Luminous appearances.

8. The appearance of Hands, either self-luminous or visible by the aid of a luminous or electric light.

9. The bringing of solid objects to life by the aid of a medium.

10. The production of an extraneous intelligence and miscellaneous occurrences of a complex character.

This, remember, is the result of a careful scientific investigation and entered into without preconception to the cause, the Spiritualist demonstrating being the outcome.

A book recently published by Mrs. Catherine Berry, a medium whom he had investigated, contains a mass of evidence of startling phenomena, physical and mental. There is no theory but the spiritual might possibly account for.

At one scene, eleven persons being present, the manifestations were very powerful, there was no levitation being the result, and many other wonderful phenomena well attested.

I may here remark that the phenomena of levitation is one of the unanswerable cases published in the Harbinger for September, 1873, and another in the same paper of June, 1876. With the bringing of solid substances into a closed room is a very common occurrence in the presence of a lady resident at Castlemaine, who since months since submitted to the most crucial tests to my device, and demonstrated the fact both at Melbourne and Sandhurst.

Some years since the attention of the New York press was attracted by accounts of marvellous materialising phenomena occurring at a country residence in this city. The town that published the "Sun" and the "Graphic," Colonel Ottoc, a gentleman of approved acumen and literary ability, was despatched to the scene and the investigation proceeded. He spent upwards of two months in the investigation, assisted by about nine mediums, whom he submitted to every test that could be applied to spiritualists in general as well as to his own. There were no cases of levitation, but a manifest proof was given of the presence of a medium, and in a number of cases the spirit manifested itself by its own volition, which is far more powerful evidence of its reality than any other thing that might be supposed. The evidence is strong enough to prove the fact, and is not such as would be expected in a mediums' case.

The evidences I have brought forward so far would be considered amply to ensure the general acceptance of any ordinary scientific discovery, yet they are not a title of what can be presented in support of the important fact of spirit intercourse with mortals, a fact upon which hinges the demonstration of the immortality of the soul. Yet I do not ask or expect belief on this or any other oral or written evidence, but I do say that no unbiased person can candidly review the evidences presented in this paper, and conscientiously assert that there is not sufficient to justify a theoretical investigation of the subject. In the first place, it is no unanswerable theory, but a question of demon-trah fact, and is par excellence the most important question relating to the soul, and which, by being considered calmly and dispassionately weighed, sifted, and analyse the evidence, reject all that you find faulty and defective, but admit that which your reason demonstrates must be substantial and good.

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