

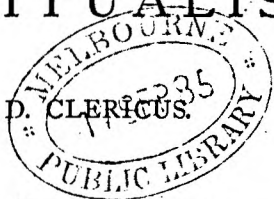
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A CLERGYMAN

ON

SPIRITUALISM.



With a Dedication to

THE REV. SIR WILLIAM DUNBAR, BART.

*And some Thoughts for the Consideration
of the Clergy.*

BY

LISETTE MAKDOUGALL GREGORY.

LONDON: W. H. HARRISON,
38 GREAT RUSSELL STREET.

1879.

Dedication

—o—
TO THE REVEREND

SIR WILLIAM DUNBAR, BART.

—o—
"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser."

THIS pamphlet was given to me by an old friend, a clergyman of the Church of England, with permission to dedicate it to whom I pleased, and as I wish to place it under the most favourable conditions for circulating among the public, I take the liberty of dedicating it to you, Sir William, as a pupil of mine in Spiritualism, and as a friend of more than thirty years' standing.

In inscribing this little work to you, I would like at the same time to say a few words of exhortation to your brethren, the clergy.

Perhaps I am wrong, but I think it your duty to look into a subject which, to say the least, seems to present, in these days, for the severest criticism, the same facts as those upon which the Bible and your teachings are founded. If the facts and phenomena of Spiritualism fall, your most conscientious teachings and authority fall too, although few of you seem aware of this. You forget that although God was ready to reveal Himself to His creatures in former days, it may be equally His intention to do so now, and His revealing Himself in this materialistic age by signs, by wonders, by

prophecies, and by inspiration, but sets the seal of authenticity upon the truths of the past which you acknowledge and publicly preach.

Not to waste time, let us come at once to the doctrine of the Atonement, which I have, in the course of long experience in studying the minds of others, discovered to be the greatest stumbling-block to disbelievers, preventing their inquiring into Spiritualism. They forget that when God ordered the lamb to be slain, that it was, as I think, meant to be an emblematic worship; that as men offered up the pure lamb as the emblem of innocence and true affections given up to God, in like manner the worshipper offers up all he holds dear, not excepting life itself, to God. But as the world

advanced, and as men became more materialistic, the spiritual meaning was lost; the multitude, however, adhered to the letter, as some of the less religious of the clergy do now. You may ask what I mean by offering up the affections to God. I mean acting up to our highest conceptions of that which is right, and good, and true, but not falling at the feet of a tyrant devised in the mind of another, and not making attempts to propitiate something created by our brother. The only way we can please God is by acting up to our highest intuitions.

The temporal power of the Pope is now in rapid course of destruction; the most conservative of us in England admit that the separation of Church and State is but a question of time; materialistic philo-

sophy is exercising a destructive influence on modern religious thought; consequently it is high time that irruptions from the world of spirits should open the eyes of men to the slough in which they are sinking — sinking imperceptibly almost to themselves. If Spiritualism does not act as a sledge-hammer to break up this condition of relapse from religion and high ideality, nothing else will.

In conclusion, let me quote a few words about the clergy which I published in a work containing much about the religious aspects of Spiritualism, namely, "Rifts in the Veil : " *—

"The clergy not unfrequently presuppose that the proofs of Divine Revelation terminated at a definite period, and have

* W. H. Harrison : 1878.

been fully embodied for all time in the Sacred Canon, whereas most Spiritualists believe that God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, being as willing and able to communicate with His beloved children by the mouths of His prophets now as in the most favoured ages of antiquity. There is, therefore, to my mind, no *à priori* impossibility in Spiritualism, and all we have to inquire is, whether of a verity these things be so. I, in common with most of those who have really investigated the subject, think Spiritualism a very important and sublime fact in human experience—one that we cannot consent to ignore or despise at the bidding of those who, while accepting the spiritualistic phenomena of the past, most inconsistently deny those of the present.

“The clergy cannot fully understand or appreciate Spiritualism by merely reading about it. They must witness its facts, and become thoroughly familiar with its manifold forms, ere they can judge, by personal experience, of its resistless effect in producing conviction in the mind of an honest and earnest inquirer.

“The Spiritualist does not give up the teachings of the past; on the contrary, he feels that they are confirmed to him. He simply emerges from slavery to the letter, into the true gospel liberty of the spirit, in the attempt to interpret those teachings.

“I cannot accept the conclusion that we should refuse to think for ourselves on matters of religion, whether in doctrine or practice, because such thinking may

prove dangerous. Such a principle, if carried fully out, would be utterly subversive of the Reformation; it would end by reinstating the Romish clergy in their spiritual despotism, and relegating the laity to their mediæval condition of spiritual serfdom to a tyrannically predominant hierarchy. In conclusion, let me advise the clergy to cease theorising about Spiritualism, and commence with the practical investigation of its truth or fallacy, leaving the worth of its communications for after consideration."

LISETTE MAKDOUGALL GREGORY.

21 GREEN ST., GROSVENOR SQ.,
LONDON, *March* 1879.



PREFACE.



THE following pages were not written with a view to induce any persons to become Spiritualists ; nor to represent Spiritualism as a new revelation ; nor to balance the good and the evil which have been reported and written about, as resulting from *Séances* and Mediumship. They were written principally with the design of answering the inquiry, "How can you, with the religious opinions you

hold, take up with such nonsense?—besides, it is downright sinful!”

I have answered that question.

I can almost hear the exclamation of some one who may read my manuscript—
“After all, you have thrown no new light on the subject!”

To this I reply that I did not undertake to impart new light.

“But you have not pointed out what is objectionable?”

I reply: Such a course was not required in furnishing an answer to the question put to me. All I have to say on that point is this:—Whatever is found to be objectionable in Spiritualism, let it be rejected by all means; and whatever good

is found, let it be held fast ; it may prove as the light of the rising sun, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

D. CLERICUS.

A CLERGYMAN ON SPIRITUALISM.



THE imputation of imposture, the assertion of trickery, and the lamentation for aberration of mind, which are often applied to those who profess to believe in the genuineness of what is designated "Spiritualism," unite in urging me to commit to writing a few particulars of events I have witnessed, observations I have made, and sensations I have experienced in connection with it.

To the above my remarks will be almost wholly confined, leaving the science and philosophy of the subject untouched.

Treatises have been written on these points which claim the candid, serious, and critical attention of all who are disposed to collect and weigh the importance of whatever is considered to bear upon man's moral improvement, and the progress and elevation of the human mind.

But to proceed with my intention as above denoted. My brief record will most probably be, on the part of some, treated with the like incredulity as the communications of others who have, with equal truthfulness, greater minuteness, and more extended experience, stated their convictions; and I may by some be deemed a fit subject for pity, and be spoken of as an imbecile who ought to be taken care of by his near kindred.

Be it so ; my mind and feelings will not thereby be much disturbed. I am now upwards of threescore years of age, and will endeavour so far to defend myself against the supposition of being thoughtlessly swept along by the stream which is flowing rapidly, and with increasing strength, as to state that for twenty years I have been a close and inquiring observer of this subject of Spiritualism.

I have one more remark to make about myself, and that is with reference to my social status. For more than forty years I have been, without intermission, actively employed in the Christian ministry.

Several years ago an esteemed friend was reported to me as having become "insane, positively mad, on the subject of Spiritualism." Need I say that this was

calculated to grieve me much? As I had never witnessed any act, or heard any expression, which might have led me to suspect the least tendency to the malady my friend was spoken of as labouring under, I deemed it my duty to inquire into the accuracy of the statement. Had I obtained proof of its being correct, my sympathy in sorrow with the relatives would have been due, whereas, in the absence of such proof, my duty was to correct the impression in the mind of my informant, which duty I endeavoured soon after to carry out.

I called upon my friend, and was rejoiced in being welcomed as usual, and in conversing as we were wont. The only remark about Spiritualism was to the effect that those who acknowledged

it were supposed to have lost their senses. There was no effort on my friend's part to enlist or proselytise me.

About this time there appeared in the periodicals various articles about Spiritualism. Some were written with temperance and judgment, setting forth that what was transpiring demanded consideration; and some of the articles which appeared, were evidently intended to heap unmeasured ridicule on the subject; while others were couched in terms denoting that it was an infidel movement against Christianity.

I ruminated anxiously on what became much spoken of and written about, and considered it a duty in my office as a Christian minister to make myself acquainted, if possible, as to what this Spirit-

tualism really was, and to what it seemed likely to lead. If I had come to the conclusion that it was calculated to unsettle the minds of any of my congregation, or of my personal friends, my course would have been to warn them against it ; if, on the other hand, there were to be somewhat which appeared to have any resemblance, however faint, to the outpouring of the Spirit as in the primitive days of Christianity, it would, I thought, behove me to regard the matter with intense seriousness, and to make it the subject of prayer for enlightenment.

I knew, on divine authority, that formerly there was, among other gifts imparted to the Church, the discerning of spirits ; and I had not then, nor have I now, evidence that the gifts imparted were

withdrawn. They were bestowed, as the Apostle states, to effect certain specified results, which are as yet but partially accomplished; and I submit that the members of the Body of Christ—"the blessed company of all faithful people"—now on earth (the Church in continuance) are not excluded from the benefits of these gifts.

In this state of mind I weighed attentively all I heard and read about it. Much was incredible in the absence of evidence, and all was to me inexplicable. My friend already referred to, whom I was, and am still, in the habit of meeting—(our friendship has subsisted for more than thirty years, and to that friend I am principally indebted for the commencement of my acquaintance with Spiritual-

ism)—my friend seemed fully to realise its truth; and I am sure is not mad, as had been reported to me.

I resolved to adopt means for informing myself more minutely, especially as bearing upon my ministry. I conversed with one, and another, and another, but arrived at no conclusion by merely conversing about it. It was necessary that I should have evidence of, or experience in, the matter—a matter not to be trifled with. I called upon one whom I knew to be familiar with the subject, who spoke seriously, and said the investigation ought to be conducted and closely associated with prayer. My friend—not a clergyman—offered an extempore prayer, to which I most sincerely responded Amen!

This interview led me to inquire about

“Mediums:” who were they? of what social status? Did they possess some considerable measure of intelligence? Were they religious characters? Having obtained the name and address of an acknowledged medium, I went to the house; not a member of my family, nor any individual, being aware of my intended visit.

When in the presence of the medium, I stated my wish to obtain information about Spiritualism, and asked if I might make a few inquiries respecting it, having heard somewhat which I did not comprehend. The medium expressed a readiness to give me information as far as possible. I then inquired if a fee or payment was to be charged. There was not. The medium requested to know my name.

To this I replied, "You must excuse me; we are entire strangers to each other, and if my asking questions will be objectionable to you I will retire, but I decline stating who I am. Of this I assure you, I am not come to ridicule what I may hear, nor have I pre-determination to believe all you may say, nor am I come with the intention of arguing or disputing; my sole object is to satisfy myself on certain points."

I may state that I never before that day had seen the medium, nor do I think the medium had ever before seen or heard of me.

During the interview, which lasted about an hour, sundry raps, which I was told were regarded as affirmative or as negative, were distinctly heard, in answer to

questions suggested by me, but put into form of words by the medium. It is unnecessary that a lengthy description should be given of all that occurred ; let it suffice to say, that several unusual particulars in connection with my professional engagements were given, and given correctly. These particulars could not possibly have been known to the medium ; also events relating to members of my family then living, and the departure from earth life of some of my near relatives, were also distinctly stated.

I had occasion to allude to the death of one which took place several years before ; upon this the medium said—" No ! not death ; Spiritualists speak of *departure* ; your —— is not dead."

The medium about this time inquired

of me if the answers to the questions which I had suggested were correct, to which I again replied, "You really must excuse my not admitting as correct, or contradicting, what I have heard; I have come to investigate as far as I can, and shall afterwards draw my own conclusions."

On leaving the house, and during the entire remainder of the day (my interview was about three o'clock), I thought of nothing else. Of this I was assured, that my actions and words were described by one or more having intelligence, who had not with mortal eyes or ears seen or heard them; and further, that a knowledge of events connected with members of my family was entertained by some unseen agents acquainted with mortal affairs;

and to which events I had not given the least clue.

It was an overpowering thought ; I asked myself, Was the agency from above or from below ? I had witnessed nothing bad, but still I had not been accustomed to such communications, coming apparently from inhabitants of the spirit-world. It forced me to my knees, it induced me to pray for divine teaching and for preservation from error, and from the influence of all evil, especially of all evil spirits.

Such was the commencement of my experience in what is now spoken of as "Spiritualism" or "Modern Spiritualism."

With the conviction thus wrought, I felt bound to go farther into the matter ; and as far as possible turn it to good account. My great anxiety was to know how it

should be dealt with so as to make my public and private ministrations more effectual. To allude to it in the pulpit I considered would be unwise ; I was not prepared to advocate, or even to defend by argument, what was in many places occurring under the name of "Manifestations," or when spoken of in ridicule as "Spirit-rappings." I became from this time conscious that my preparation for the pulpit was increasingly associated with prayer for the promised aid of the Spirit from on high ; and in my pastoral visits and conversations with the sick I realised and was deeply thankful for the result in many cases made known to me.

This led me to attend future meetings or séances, and I was perpetually on the *qui vive* to detect, if possible, any decep-

tion; for I candidly acknowledge I was not wholly free from the thought that there might be a measure of trickery on the part of some, who were spoken of as favouring Spiritualism, but who were not, in universal estimation, the most upright characters, and who did not speak of it as, in my opinion, the subject demanded.

It must be carefully borne in mind, that I do not undertake to commend all that took place at these and other séances—far from it. The above remark will apply with the strongest possible force to accounts which have been published of different séances held in this and other countries.

It is for the conscientious and right-minded to favour what is good, and discourage the opposite. I do not hesitate

to say that at a séance I have witnessed what appeared to be most objectionable, as calculated to produce very unfavourable impressions, and bordering upon somewhat near akin to profanity, and such as to greatly shock the religious feelings. On the other hand, I have at séances sat beside, and held verbal intercourse and Christian communion with, brethren in the ministry, whom I would gladly see in my pulpit teaching my people. I refrain, however, from comment, and shall give an account of two of the early séances I attended.

1 One was held on a Sunday evening. To this I went with rather a doubtful mind as to whether it was right in a Christian man, especially a Christian minister, thus to appropriate Sabbath hours.

But as my motive in going was neither to gratify curiosity, nor to procure amusement, but with a desire to learn what might be useful, I proceeded, not, however, without some little hesitation.

The party assembled, eight or ten in number, had been seated around a table for a few minutes in perfect silence, when one expressed a doubt as to whether there would be any manifestations.

Another of the company then inquired: "Are we all seated aright?" This was responded to by raps, heard by all, and recognised as affirmative or "Yes!" When a negative answer was intended, raps recognised as such were given.

Another inquired, "Shall we have a dark séance?"

"No!" (signified by raps.)

"Shall we pray?"

"Yes!"

"Is each person to pray in silence?"

"No!"

"Is the person in whose house we are now met to pray?"

"No!"

"Or ——?"

"No!"

"Or ——?"

"No!"

"Or ——?"

"Yes!"

I was the person to pray; and it was indicated accordingly (by raps). We all knelt; I prayed. After this a passage of Scripture was denoted to be read by me.

While reading, to my utter astonishment, when I came to a verse upon which,

if I had been conducting family worship at home, I should have been inclined to make an observation, raps were distinctly heard by all present. I paused for a little, then proceeded; again, on coming to another verse on which I should have commented had I been elsewhere, raps were a second time heard; upon which I paused as before. Rapping once more occurred, when I had finished reading the passage indicated.

There was not one present who had ever heard me read the passage before; only two of the party assembled knew that I was a "Reverend."

Much that I do not describe took place afterwards. I need not record the reflections which engaged me on going home.

The next séance to be referred to was

held on a week-day. On this occasion, one who is a medium—not a *professional* medium—had the hands bound with tape, the ends of which were waxed, and stamped with my seal, to the floor or wall, I do not remember which. The medium was reclining on a couch. We sang a hymn. Soon afterwards, from a small square aperture in the cabinet where the medium alone was (which aperture the medium if standing could not have reached), from this aperture a hand was projected, then the arm bare, and subsequently a countenance, the medium all the while reclining, and in a deep trance.

Before long, raps loud and louder, and louder still, were heard. Some present became alarmed, and at last the knockings resembled the striking of the door

panel with a brick in the hand of a powerful man. One of the party exclaimed, "That is the work of a bad spirit." Without giving the different remarks of those who were present, it may be stated that one of the company said, "Only prayer can overcome him," and — was asked to pray; this was done in the form of short ejaculations. The noise gradually abated; prayer was continued by another, and eventually all was silent; and there in the cabinet lay the medium, reclining as when left, with the tape as described, and the wax unbroken. I state facts, and refrain from comments.

Since that séance, I have frequently attended others, when there was witnessed a diversity of manifestations; and have progressed in the way hundreds more have

done, who have without prejudice investigated. Were the facts I have witnessed to be all narrated, they would fill a large volume; I mention but a few incidents. On one occasion, when more than two hundred miles from home, and no member of my family with me, I met a medium, a foreigner. This medium described a circumstance which had taken place in my household during my absence. I said, "There you are mistaken." To this the medium replied, "I am right; it is as I state."

Returning home a week or ten days afterwards, I found that what the medium had stated was correct. The change had taken place, although I had not been informed of it by any member of my family.

I have heard both men and women

speaking in trance continuously from fifteen to thirty minutes, who, when the trance was over, did not know what they had said.

Again, there is now in my possession a photograph, taken in my presence, and which, when afterwards examined, was found to reveal to the view an apparent spirit-form, having a long white lace veil, whereas no such person had been seen in the room. Two mediums—one of whom is British born, the other is an American—said the figure was one of my relatives, who had left earth life years before, and even specified the relative tie. These mediums were unknown to each other, and they signified their respective opinions at an interval of weeks.

I have also copies of what has been

written by non-professional mediums, members of families of high station, on different subjects: among these, most wholesome and even hallowed advice as to conduct, and cautions as to the danger of trifling with messages purporting to be from the departed, who are permitted to communicate with those on earth; also warnings to the wicked and ill-disposed, who are liable to be deceived and led astray by evil influences from the spirit-world.

I have heard, and read as given through mediumship, and by persons in trance, that modern Spiritualism is by divine ordering intended to open the eyes of many to see the wide-spread infidelity of the age, to make men feel the certainty of a future state, and to expose the worth-

lessness of a mere nominal profession of religious belief. But further particulars are not needed.

After having witnessed what I have faithfully described, if the whole world were to pronounce it imposture, trickery, hallucination of my mind, I could not swerve nor be shaken in my convictions. I may even add, that if some were to be—I do not say accused of lust—detected in deceiving and playing tricks, while these would merit the utmost condemnation, still that circumstance would not, could not, shake my conviction that there is a powerful agency at work. I should regard detected tricks in the light of counterfeit coins, the existence of which proves that there are genuine standard coins.

Nor is my experience exceptional; but were I to narrate any portion of that of others, it would be diverging from my original design.

A word about physical manifestations. What of "table turning," "chairs moving about the room," "musical instruments playing of themselves," "spirit drawings," "messages and answers by the planchette"? These I have of course witnessed, to say nothing of additional phenomena, and what has resulted? Let others speak for themselves if they think fit, or let them silently meditate.

The result to me is a deeply-seated, unalterable conviction, that a power beyond human strength, an intelligence beyond human ken, and an influence beyond human control, are in operation, and

that many marvels are being evidenced through what is in the present age designated "Spiritualism."

That power, intelligence, and influence, exercised by invisible agency, alike for good and evil, have in past ages been apparent, is amply certified and illustrated by history, both sacred and profane (secular). Inspiration, divination, demonism, witchcraft, may be pointed to.

I do not hesitate to assert that it is to me an occasion of great thankfulness that circumstances led me to think seriously of these things, instead of joining in the cry, "Trickery! imposture! infidelity!" and other harsh epithets, which are employed by too many.

Confining my observations, as I have

purposely done all along, to the religious aspect of the subject, I would in conclusion ask, Does Spiritualism rightly used, or as used by right-minded and serious persons, aid in leading us to cherish communion with the Holiest? Does it enable us to realise a "cloud of witnesses" as being in a measure cognisant of our doings while we are yet in the body? Does it assist in enforcing the observance of Christian precepts? Does it promote the cultivation of Faith, Hope, and Charity? My opinion, conviction, and experience reply, It does.

I do not assert it produces these results in all. A draught that may be beneficial to one patient may be injurious to another. This depends upon the condi-

tion of health in each of the patients. So it is with the mind and soul as regards intellectual and spiritual operations.

True it is, and forcibly has it been brought before my mind on the perusal of letters from dear and much-valued friends, that some seem not only to depreciate, but even to repudiate it; and to the extent of their, in my estimation, misapplied powers, trample it under their feet.

I regret this on their account, and with the kindest intention would remind them that a present despising of blessings, of whatever kind, may entail future and very sore regret.

It seems to me that those who, after a candid and patient investigation of Spiritualism in its different phases, arrive at

the conclusion that it tends to quicken intelligence, and induce aspiration heavenwards, ought not to object avowing this; whereas, such as do not realise these effects, ought habitually to exhibit a commendable, if not superior, state of heart and mind, by abstaining from the utterance of expressions conveying a condemnation of those who conscientiously differ from them.

But on the importance, the marvellous features, and beneficial use of Spiritualism rightly applied, much has been said and written by others better qualified. I shall only add that my endeavour has been, and is, to act upon the injunction of one who thus spoke under inspiration assuredly from heaven, "*Let every man be FULLY PERSUADED IN HIS OWN MIND.*"

P.S. — The foregoing has been in manuscript for some time. I have intentionally refrained from making it public, watching at the same time the current of events. I am more and more convinced that Spiritualism, although by some ridiculed, by others denounced as demoniac, is silently and effectually working a widespread revolution for good in the thoughts of many, and consequently can with equanimity, and without a vindictive feeling, submit to the scornful words of such as seem to repudiate the idea of spiritual communications being made to men yet in the body.