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How I became a Spiritualist.

A PAPER

*Read by MR. JAMES SMITH at the Monthly Conversazione
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HOW I BECAME A SPIRITUALIST.

It is just thirty years since I first began investigating the phenomena which are commonly called Spiritualistic. I had heard of them in England, and had even witnessed those of table rapping and table turning ; but I viewed the whole subject with ridicule ; and when I subsequently approached it, I did so in a thoroughly sceptical spirit. This was partly the result of an orthodox education, on the one hand ; and partly of the materialistic atmosphere which we almost all of us breathe, in an epoch like the present, when the physical sciences are cultivated so exclusively, that we are apt to lose sight altogether of the fact that man is something more than a compound of blood, bone, muscle, nerves and adipose tissue ; that every atom of his frame possesses its individual life and animating principle ; that his brain is merely an organ or instrument played upon by his invisible mind ; and that while the material constituents of his body are being taken to pieces and reconstructed with each breath he draws, and at every pulsation of his heart, that body is inhabited by a permanent tenant, whose continuity is proved by the possession and exercise of that remarkable faculty which is known to us as the memory. We are equally liable to overlook another very impressive fact, and that is that, while this perpetual flux is going on without intermission from our cradle to our grave so that we are clothed upon with a new body, from head to foot, in the course of a few months, at the very outside, the mysterious Ego, who constitutes our veritable self, remains comparatively unchanged, and seems to exercise a kind of directive and co-ordinating power and authority over this wonderful succession of bodies ; moulding and modelling each according to a constant and unvarying type, so that the cast of our features, the colour of our hair, the shape of our face, the expression of our countenance, the tones of our voice, our gestures, and our very walk, retain their special characteristics in the midst of all this disintegration and reintegration of our corporeal substance.

In my ignorance, and probably, also, in my conceit, I never reflected on these things, nor followed up the train of thought to which they might and would have conducted me ; and if I happened to stumble upon the declaration of Paul, that " things which are seen are not made of things which do appear," I dismissed it as a metaphysical speculation, or as a theorem quite incapable

of proof. In after years, I came to recognise in it the simple statement of a profound truth.

Towards the close of the year 1870, curiosity led me to visit an elderly woman, living in a three-roomed cottage in Carlton; who enjoyed the reputation of being a gifted medium. I was prepared to find her a fraud, but the second time I called upon her, I was brought face to face with certain phenomena which were both novel and surprising. She was a German by birth, and the wife of a journeyman tailor. She was uneducated, in the true sense of the word, and was certainly illiterate. Her conversation was as uninteresting as her face was unprepossessing. Suddenly, she fell into a deep trance; a convulsive shudder passed over her frame; and in a few moments I was addressed through her lips by an intelligence which could not possibly be confounded with her own. The German accent was gone from her voice, her manner was grave and dignified, her language elegant and scholarly, and I found myself listening to a fascinating description of the Cosmos by a person who appeared to have been living on the earth before the dawn of history. Every question I asked was promptly answered; but sometimes the controlling intelligence would say:—"I am unable to reply to you upon this point; but I will ask someone who can." Then another shudder would pass over the frame of the medium, and the first speaker would be replaced by a second, who at once gave me the information I asked for. On other days, others spoke; and I soon formed the habit of passing one afternoon in every week with the medium, who, on coming out of a condition of trance, retained no recollection whatever of anything that had been conveyed to me through her lips; and, when I mentioned to her some of the things which had been said, was obviously incapable of comprehending them. On one occasion a very ancient spirit described to me, with a charm of manner, a vividness of language and a copiousness of detail which were perfectly delightful, the public and private life of the Egyptians, their religion, their form of government, their occupations and enjoyments at the culminating period of their civilization, which he stated to have been reached many centuries before the time of Moses. Let me add that this same spirit has within the last three years, instructed me to incorporate my own record of what fell from him nearly thirty years ago, in a book which my present medium and myself have written jointly under his direction.

One of the most remarkable physical manifestations I have ever witnessed, occurred in connection with my earlier and elderly medium. She was seated in the full

light of day, facing a window on the north side of her small sitting room ; when as many as twenty-four spirits took possession of her in rapid succession ; and the face of each seemed to be thrown, like a mask, upon her own ; each of them opening her eyes for two or three seconds and then closing them again. Sometimes her countenance was that of an aged man ; sometimes that of a young girl ; sometimes it was beautiful and sometimes plain ; and the form and colour of her eyes varied with the varying faces ; and each was distinctly discriminated from all the rest.

I shall be told, perhaps, that all this was pure hallucination ; but by whom was it produced ? By this woman who was in a deep unconscious trance ? or by myself, with all my faculties alert and vigilant, and my mind as tranquil as ever it was in my life ?

But hallucination is an inadmissible theory, when the following phenomenon has to be accounted for. One of the controls proved himself to be deeply engaged in ethnological studies ; and after describing what he represented to be the twelve primitive types of mankind, he went on to say, "If you will bring M. Vievers, who is a pretty good draughtsman, with you, the next time you come, we will project upon the face of this woman, each of those twelve types." This was done. He drew her face as actually transformed and often rendered frightfully repulsive, in its twelve mutations ; and I made tracings of them, which I still retain in my possession. They are as follows :—The Carib, the Northern Asiatic, the Chinese, the Central European, the Northern European, the Southern European, the Arab, the Central Asiatic, the African, the Southern Asiatic, the Malayan, and the Peruvian. Some of these faces were so hideous, that at first M. Vievers was terror stricken and could with difficulty be restrained from throwing down his pencil and quitting the house.

Each type formed the theme of an interesting disquisition by the controlling spirit ; as an example of which I will transcribe from my own notes what was said of the Carib :—

"His skull is carefully labelled in your museums at the present day, after lying for many ages in the drift or caverns of the earth ; and teaches an eloquent lesson to modern man. Look at his feebly developed cranium, —that flat unseemly skull, so well fitted to serve for the satisfaction of his extremely limited daily wants. Pause and inquire if you have not here an important link in the great chain of human development. Do you imagine that this is the skull of a being worthy to have walked and talked with angels ? No ! his companions

were the wild and terrible denizens of the forests, and the creatures who made their lairs in the gloomy caverns of the earth. His sling was composed of thongs cut from the skin of a wild animal ; his bow was of bone and his arrow heads of flint. These were the adjuncts of his savage life. Nor is his descent shrouded in mystery ; for tens of thousands of years before the lowest type of humanity appeared upon your planet, the hungry prowling wolf roamed abroad in search of prey. Bloodthirsty and cunning, his crouching gait, his stealthy step, his bright bloodshot eyes revealed his cruel nature. Nay : start not ; for this is no overdrawn picture of the Carib's ancestry. Ah ! proud European, thy genealogy perhaps is not more illustrious than that of thy poor brother, the Carib, who looks down upon thee, now ; for his development, in another and a better world, now outstrips thine own, in this. His hunting days are long since past. His progressive career is now bright and radiant ; and perchance when thou shalt enter into the realm of spirits, thou shalt not refuse to accept the guidance of the poor Carib, and the first lesson thou learnest, thou mayest receive from the lips of the wolf's child."

I could fill many pages with the interesting communications I received through the medium above referred to ; and I must not omit to observe that a vein of exalted piety—in the truest sense of the word—ran through the whole of them ; and that nothing could be loftier than their ethical tone. The great fundamental principles they invariably inculcated, were the Fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man ; the education, elevation, and purification of the human race by means of a plurality of existences ; and the responsibility of every one of us for his own thoughts, words and actions ; coupled with a personal expiation of all the wrongs we think and the evil we speak or perpetrate.

A few years later I joined a small circle of earnest investigators, who used to meet on two evenings in the week, in the surgery of Dr. Motherwell, one of the leading practitioners in Melbourne. His two principal mediums were what is known as test-mediums ; through whom I received many convincing proofs of the actual presence of departed friends and relatives. One of these I will now relate. On a certain evening, the medium, while in trance, said to me :—"There is a young man standing near you, who is very like you in the face ; and he looks as if he had just come up out of the water. He says he is your brother." The new comer then took possession of the medium ; and described his death by drowning ; and how, at that supreme moment, not only

did the whole of his past life flash before him in an instant of time, but the whole of his future life, as it would have been, had he lived, came before him as in a panorama. The moment his spirit quitted his body, he hastened to me, and his great grief was, he said, to witness my anguish of mind and to feel that he could not make his presence known to me. He then went on to speak of the conversations we had had, and the hopes and plans we had formed together, when we were boys; recalling many incidents which had entirely faded from my memory; and the interview was one of the happiest quarters of an hour I ever spent in my life. Now, not a person in the room, besides myself, knew of my having lost a brother in England; still less that he was drowned. It occurred when he was seventeen and I was five and twenty. We were brothers indeed, and my attachment to him was so great, that the shock nearly killed me. He said, in addition, that during all the intervening years, he had been continually by my side, influencing me for good, and endeavouring to restrain me from evil. As a matter of course, he spoke to me repeatedly afterwards.

On another occasion the medium said:—"Some one calling himself your grandfather is present." "Will he give you his name?" I asked. "He says he will do so by a symbol. And now he holds up a piece of wood." The name of my mother's father was Wood; and he made a great pet of me when I was a child. "Can he tell you where he was born?" I enquired. "He holds up such a beautiful bunch of flowers and leaves. O, I see: they are hops." The house in which he was born and died was surrounded by hop gardens. Again I asked, "Can he tell you the county he was born in?" She said: "He holds up a map of England, and points to one corner of it, upon which I read the word 'Kent.'" This was also quite true: and no one present was acquainted with these facts but myself.

It will be asked, "How are these material objects produced?" just as I have heard people inquire, with a profound air of wisdom, "As ghosts always appear clothed, do you mean to say that there are spectral garments; and that the buttons of a man's coat are as immortal as his soul?" No; nothing of the sort; but in the other world, which is the world of causes as ours is the world of effects, thoughts are things; and the abstract immediately becomes the concrete. It takes a material form and becomes objective on the instant. But it is a kind of matter, of which, owing to the limitations of our minds in their present state of infancy, we can form no conception. We must all recognise,

however, that everything fashioned by human hands, preexisted in the mind of the originator, as an idea, before it took visible shape and tangible substance; just as everything we behold in Nature preexisted as a thought in the mind of God, its Creator; and therefore it ought not to be so very difficult for us to conceive of a higher state of being, in which our mental powers are so enlarged and expanded that, whatsoever we think creatively, forthwith exists as a solid reality: necessitating none of the laborious processes which a block of marble, for example, undergoes before it embodies the original idea of the sculptor.

And in connection with this subject let me remind you of a very striking passage in the second chapter of Genesis, where we are told that the Lord God made "every plant of the field *before it was in the earth*, and every herb of the field *before it grew*." Here we have the same truth enunciated as that to which I incidentally referred just now, when I spoke of everything in Nature as having preexisted, as a thought, in the mind of God.

In fact that old Book when read discerningly, instead of being worshipped as an infallible record, will be found to anticipate many modern discoveries in science. For instance, the whole doctrine of evolution is concisely set forth in the 139th Psalm, where these words occur:—"My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in Thy book all my members were written, which *in continuance were fashioned*, when, as yet, there was none of them."

And this leads me to speak of the origin of ideas, as explained by a number of my teachers in the spirit-world; all of whom—it is important to remark—are in accord upon the subject.

Plato, as you may remember, spoke of ideas as a possession acquired in previous existences, and brought over by us into the present one. Aristotle regarded them as the exemplary causes of that which is constant and permanent in Nature. Descartes divided them into three categories; innate, adventitious and factitious ideas. Locke made them the offspring of experience. Leibnitz, on the other hand, believed them to be exclusively innate. Kant contended—so far as I am capable of understanding his meaning—that all our ideas are factitious; while Rosmini, an Italian thinker of our own times, ridiculed as absurd the assumption that the idea is created by the human mind, inasmuch as, he argues, it exists eternally in the thought of God.

Now what is the language held upon this much

debated question by our instructors in the Unseen? It is that man can no more create an idea than he can create an atom of oxygen or hydrogen; or than he could induce these or any other gases to combine, except in obedience to the law of definite proportions. We cannot originate, we can only receive the thoughts impressed upon our brains by invisible intelligences. What we call genius, is simply the faculty of receptiveness,—a sensitive susceptibility to inspiration; demanding a highly organised brain and nervous system. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, the architect, the musical composer, the man of science, the geographical explorer, the philosopher, the orator, the great writer, and the mechanical inventor, resemble so many musical instruments played upon by spiritual intelligences. These receive *their* inspiration from teachers higher than themselves; these again are being taught by more august instructors; and so up and up, through a magnificent hierarchy of celestial beings, until we reach the Supreme Source and Fountain-head of all pure and beautiful ideas.

Our amenability to impression or inspiration is promoted or retarded by a variety of circumstances. The man whose mind is crammed with a mass of undigested erudition; the man who is conceited of his own intellectual powers; the man who is immersed in material pursuits, places himself in a mental attitude hostile to those who are always waiting and willing to help us by the gift of such ideas as may be helpful to us in discharging the paramount object and duty of our daily lives; that is to say, to promote the welfare and elevation of our fellow creatures. On the other hand, to one who is gifted with a simple child-like mind, and is animated by a feeling of deep and genuine humility the sages and scientists in the other world will reveal some of the deepest secrets of Nature.

There is, I believe, nothing in the great scheme of things devised by Infinite Wisdom which excites greater curiosity in the human mind, than the origin of ideas. And the explanation of that origin, which we receive from spiritual sources, appears to me to be strictly logical and reasonable. If we look at the physical world, we shall perceive that the power of man over matter is limited to certain functions. He can decompose, recompose, and transpose its constituent atoms or molecules: but he can create nothing. This is altogether outside of his capacity. Creation is an attribute of the Creator, in which He has no participant. This should admonish us that, in the domain of mind also, we are hedged in by corresponding limitations and

restrictions. Through its sensorial avenues it receives a multitude of impressions consequent upon its perceptions. For example, the perception by the eye of certain colours in combination, or of certain sounds in combination, by the ear, lead to the impression of harmony, and this impression being digested and assimilated, as it were, becomes an idea ; which, when verified by experience, constitutes a permanent standard of judgment ; and, as often as a similar combination reoccurs, the mind immediately recognises its harmonic character, and, by opposition, discerns discord of sound and colour. But the mind did not create the idea of either ; any more than the stomach creates the substance of the bones, the blood, the muscular, nervous and adipose tissues. These are merely the result of certain processes of mastication, deglutition, digestion and assimilation, to which various nutritious articles of food have been subjected in that marvellous laboratory which each of us carries about with him. And at the first appearance of the race upon the globe the poor savage, with his dim intelligence, must have had some authoritative guidance in the selection of his food. Certain berries, roots, and leaves, contain a deadly poison. Others are pleasant to the palate, and capable of sustaining life. Who taught him to discriminate between the two,—to choose the wholesome, and to reject the pernicious ? And when, in the slow process of mental development, his necessities called for the use of fire, who instructed him how to produce it by friction ? If we look at the beginnings of things:—if we reflect upon the condition of the earliest of our race, scarcely distinguishable in form, feature, or intellect from their alleged animal ancestry, we shall be unable, I think, to escape the conclusion that they must have derived the knowledge they possessed,—knowledge, which, however small, was adequate to their wants and capacities, from a higher source. We call it instinct, as often as we speak of the ways and habits of the quadruped, the bird, the reptile, the fish, the insect and the plant. But what is instinct ? Is it not the action of an external power upon the mind of the animal or the vegetable ? For we cannot deny to the latter some kind of mental gift, some form, however rudimentary, of consciousness ; such as influences the sensitive plant to close up its petals at the slightest approach of danger ; and the sun-dew to shut down upon the flies it has entrapped and intends to feed upon ; and many flowers to fold themselves to sleep on the approach of night. And what instinct is to the lower forms of life—it cannot be too often or too emphatically declared—that is impression or inspiration

to the higher. If the mind receives, through the physical senses, perceptions and impressions of the objective world,—of the visible forms of things; shall we refuse to believe that it is also receptive of impressions from the spiritual world! Has the materialism of an age which seems to have surrendered itself to merely material gratifications and pursuits, and which, in the pride of its ignorance, has endeavoured to banish the Creator from His own universe, so blinded us to the possibilities of the immaterial and the unseen world, as to incapacitate us for recognising anything outside of us, higher, or greater, or better than ourselves? Surely this—if it be so—is a deplorable state of things, and an evidence of retrogression, rather than of advancement. It degrades us to a lower level than that occupied by the animals. If we could investigate the mind of the horse or the dog, we should probably discover that it regards man somewhat in the light of a god,—capricious and occasionally cruel, it may be, but relatively wise and powerful. But the man who cannot or will not see in Creation, a Creator, all-good, all-wise, and all-mighty, from whom proceeds everything that is, whether physical or material, has already fallen beneath the quadruped that almost worships himself. Not only so, but such a man voluntarily cuts himself off from the Fountain-head of ideas. For he puts away from him the source of all good. He virtually proclaims his independence of Him. (Alas, the bitter irony of such a proclamation!) He interposes a barrier between himself and God. For as He coerces nothing He has made, and does not offer His bountiful ideas to those who insolently reject them, by denying His existence, it follows that the atheist and the materialist are shut out, by their own voluntary act, from receiving those impressions and inspirations, those counsels and warnings which a loving Father is always ready to bestow upon His children. And hence the comparative rarity of what is called genius in an epoch of materialism. It is true that Infinite Wisdom is never without its witnesses; and that even in the most corrupt ages and the most depraved societies, there are always a few pure and child-like minds that are receptive of Divine ideas; just as in the worst periods of Italian history there were a few artists whose canvases reflected the guilelessness of their natures. But, as a general rule, the literature and arts of such an epoch are as debased as its morals, as degraded as are its occupations and enjoyments.

Then again, Spiritualism supplies us with an answer to the question “What is Imagination?” That it is the highest faculty of the human mind, and that it is

largely concerned in the production of the greatest works of genius, is pretty generally acknowledged; but this does not help us in any way to a definition of the thing itself. Such a definition, however, was furnished to me by the spirit of the German philosopher, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, while exalting Idealism as the only true philosophy, in a conversation on the 20th August, 1897:—"Imagination is the capacity to receive an idea projected upon it by spirit power. If you have not the appropriate organisation, you will either not receive that image at all, or only imperfectly. The human brain resembles a sensitized plate, upon which the ideas of the spirit controls are photographed and thence communicated to others, through the various channels of art, literature, music or song. Therefore imagination is spiritual inspiration or impression." Akenside, who wrote a poem on "The Pleasures of Imagination," confirmed Fichte's statement, on the 11th June, 1898, adding this:—"The man who possesses a vivid imagination does so in virtue of the fact that he is a medium: and therefore he attracts a number of spirits who give him thoughts pure or impure, according as he himself is one or the other. Imagination, then, is a phase of mediumship; and is, in fact, another name for inspiration. No man ever achieved fame or eminence in human history without it." And the spirit of George du Maurier, speaking to me of his own stories, a month later, said:—"Imagination is a reality, and the characters in every work of fiction have an actual existence. We, who tell you this, can see the magnetic currents, as they are being transmitted along innumerable lines, forming a most complicated network between ourselves and yourselves. You are ignorant of these things and hence the confusion which prevails in your own minds concerning the relations of your world to our own."

Byron, as you may remember, caught a glimpse of what Du Maurier asserts to be a fact: namely that the creations of the intellect become living entities, when he wrote in *Childe Harold*—

The beings of the mind are not of clay;
Essentially immortal, they create
 And multiply in us a brighter ray
 And more beloved existence. That which fate
 Prohibits to dull life, in this our state
 Of mortal bondage, *by these spirits supplied*,
 First exiles, then replaces what we hate;
 Watering the heart whose early flowers have died,
 And with a fresher growth replenishing the void.

More explicit was the testimony I received from the spirit of Charles Dickens, on the 5th of September,

1897, who said :—" Uriah Heep was a real character in the spirit-world. That was not his actual name, but he was and is a veritable personage. When I sat down to write a story, spiritual beings came about me, described their experiences, and revealed their characteristics. Every one of those who figure in my books did so. If novelists only understood this, they would be under no necessity to cudgel their brains for characters and incidents. They have only to wait patiently and passively for us, and we will come : whereas, instead of doing so, they set up such a turmoil and disturbance in their own minds as prevents us from influencing them. They will tell you that they are relying upon their own imaginations. But what is imagination ? It is the control, making images in the brain of the medium. But the faculty for the reception of such images must be there. And if the instrument be a good one, and well tuned, we can play upon it, to some effect. But if it be an indifferent one, we can only produce poor stuff. . . . The characters in fiction are all of them realities ; and they either control a writer directly, or intermediately through the instrumentality of special and secondary controls. I was accustomed to write under very powerful influences ; so much so that, after a prolonged sitting at my desk, during which, I was unconscious of the flight of time, I was often accustomed to rise from my work quite exhausted. I actually beheld the faces come in front of me. I have seen those of Micawber and Uriah Heep, as plainly as possible. And they were so vivid, that I 'sensed' their characters, as it were. Many and many a face have I seen peering at me, laughing, and making wry mouths at me. Others were grave, serious, and even solemn. When I walked the streets and saw a man whose countenance struck me, I 'sensed' his character and seemed to know all about him ; and his spirit would come to me afterwards, and complete the details of it . . . Each of the characters in Scott's, Thackeray's, and Bulwer Lytton's novels is an actual, sentient, living being. You, happily for yourselves, know all this, while you are still in the flesh. We had to wait until we came into this world before learning it. You have begun, in the earth-life, where we left off ; and great are the advantages which you enjoy, as compared with ourselves when we were in your world. How fortunate you are and what a difference it ought to make in your daily lives ! . . . I can now see how I was helped, and buoyed up, and sustained by my friends in what was then to me the Unseen. At the same time, I always tried to help myself, being naturally self-reliant

and energetic; and by the exercise of my own will power, as I now perceive, I increased their power of assisting me. For you, yourselves, must be the prime movers in the matter. It is you who must take the initiative; and your own efforts have the effect of setting in motion the forces which act upon you from our world. Every human being is the master of his own destiny, within certain limitations; the leading lines of it being laid down in advance before he takes on his mortal body. His destiny is marked out by his own choice, and he cannot afterwards evade it. You are free agents, nevertheless, because you determined your own destinies, before entering upon your present lives. All this, however, you have heard before, from others; for we cannot always be original, you know: but truth will never suffer by frequent repetitions In speaking to you, I am sometimes in a serious, and sometimes in a facetious mood; but, at bottom, I was a serious man; for I had some solemn lessons to deliver and enforce. Therefore I used my pen in furtherance of a good cause, and I was a teacher of mankind, through one of the most popular channels of modern literature. Fame and fortune came to me unsought; for my motive in writing was to do good to my brothers and sisters upon earth: and it is a satisfaction to me to reflect that I was instrumental in the reformation of many abuses. The name I made in your world is nothing to me now, but the good I did is a permanent possession, and will live for all time. Nothing can ever rob me of the happiness which arises from the recollection of it."

Now this communication, which is only one of many hundreds, received during the last thirty years, from upwards of a thousand distinct personalities, will serve to shew the continued interest manifested by those who seem to have departed from us, in the affairs of the world they have apparently quitted, and in their brothers and sisters who are still imprisoned in the bonds of mortality. And what more natural and rational? What more unnatural and irrational than the supposition that, at the change called death, we are suddenly metamorphosed into angels or devils, and transported either to a limbo, in which our souls sleep for ages, until awakened by the trumpet of a general Resurrection; or to some undefined region in space, where we spend an entire eternity either in singing psalms and waving palm-branches—O, the horrible monotony of the occupation!—or in undergoing inconceivable torments inflicted upon us by a just and righteous Creator, whose name is Love!

But what is the after-life, according to the concurrent testimony of hundreds of thousands of those who have entered upon it?

Let us, first of all, master these two fundamental truths:—

“First. The intelligence—the thinking principle, the immaterial Ego—persists after the body is dead. Thought is not a product of the brain only. Man still remains man, even when his body has crumbled into dust. The immortality of the human spirit is capable of being demonstrated with the utmost certainty by well-established facts; for, what we already know, may reasonably suffice to affirm the indestructibility of the human spirit.

“Secondly. That spirit, after its separation from the body, loses nothing whatever of its individuality. In a word, the real man survives. He remains himself in his new position. He has the faculty of continuing his relations with his friends, and it is an occasion of happiness to him to do so. He continues, as I have said, to interest himself in the affairs of our life; only he does so under different conditions.”

Then arises the question, What are those conditions? They are rigorously determined by the nature of our earthly lives; of which the immediately succeeding existence, is the continuation, the logical sequel, the legitimate consequence. If we have done well, it will be well with us; if evil, we shall experience great remorse and shall have to efface it by years of well doing.

Are there such places as Heaven, Hell and Purgatory? No! Are there mental states, corresponding with the ideas conveyed by those words? Yes: for each is within us here, as well as there.

In the other world, the spirit who enjoys that eternal peace, and that feeling of harmony with God that constitutes the true at-one-ment, finds a perpetual happiness in doing good: either by helping the myriads of darkened spirits who people the lower spheres, nearest to the earth, to emerge from their condition of mental suffering, and to aspire towards purer thoughts and a nobler life: or he moves about the earth on a mission of beneficence, impressing men's minds with generous and loving ideas, inciting them to benevolent actions, and restraining them whenever practicable, from evil of thought, or word, or deed.

Those who are in hell, or who, more accurately speaking, carry about a hell within them, are drawn to the earth by the force of their earthly feelings, appetites, and propensities. The man who has lived to accumulate wealth, moves unseen among his old associates on the

Stock Exchange, or in the marts of commerce; the drunkard infests public house bars; and the criminal repairs to his old associates; instigating them to deeds of violence and murder. And the punishment of these unhappy spirits is to be still under the dominion of their old inclinations and desires, and to feel that they have no longer the physical means and opportunities of gratifying them. But, sooner or later, there comes a time when they grow weary of indulging in unsatisfied and unappeasable lusts and longings; when a sentiment of remorse and a yearning for better things, awaken in their minds; and, on the instant, a good spirit hastens to the side of such an one, whispers in his ear words of hope and comfort, and points out to him how he can extricate himself from his condition of mental misery. Then begins what, for want of a better word, may be called the purgatorial state of spiritual existence; and the work of expiation commences. That supreme and immutable Justice which governs all the Universes, exacts from each human being reparation for every sinful thought, evil word, and wrongful deed. No such thing as punishment exists on the part of God, our Creator. He has instituted certain laws for the happiness and the advancement of the beings He has called into existence. Those laws are written in the moral consciousness of each one of us. If we transgress them, we punish ourselves; just as when a man, disregarding the law of gravitation, jumps off a precipice, he punishes himself by suffering from a fractured limb or from several fractures.

The reparation, or expiation I have just spoken of, consists in doing good, and for this, innumerable opportunities exist, both in the spiritual and in the material world. Thus, a discarnate spirit "working out his own salvation in fear and trembling," may do much for the reclamation of others, by "preaching to the souls in prison,"—a figurative description of those unhappy spirits who are still in bondage to the vices which kept them bound, hand and foot, during their earth lives; just as we speak of a man being a slave to his passions. Or they may influence those who are still in the flesh.

Let me mention a case in point. One evening, in a circle at Dr. Motherwell's, the medium who was in trance said:—"Mr. Smith, there is a poor spirit named——. He says you knew him well. He committed suicide and is very wretched. He asks you to help him?" I immediately recognised him as having been a cashier in a certain office, who shot himself under the pressure of family troubles. I could only advise him to pray, and

assured him that I would pray for him. But the medium was immediately controlled by a powerful intelligence, who said to me :—"That is not enough. Your friend should seek and find some one who is still in the flesh, and is afflicted with similar tendencies and temptations to those which impelled him to take his own life, and should exert his utmost influence upon that man's mind to restrain him from the commission of the crime he is meditating, and then the work of expiation will have commenced."

Three or four weeks later, the poor suicide returned, and told us that he felt much brighter and more cheerful, as he had followed and benefited by the advice he had received, and had been thus led to perceive how he could undo the past, and find happiness in the future.

I have thus only related to you a ten thousandth part of my own experiences ; and while I can vouch most solemnly for their truth, I do not ask you to accept them, until they have been abundantly confirmed by the results of your own investigations. For Spiritualism is not merely the synthesis of all that is purest and most divine in all religions ; and the essence of what is true and therefore eternal, in all philosophies ; but it is one of the positive sciences—and the greatest of them ; resting upon a broad and solid foundation of carefully observed phenomena, and a vast mass of strictly accordant facts, closely scrutinized and accurately recorded in every modern language, by some millions of investigators in all parts of the civilized world.

And, if I earnestly recommend its study, it is because it has opened up to me new avenues of knowledge, which appear to be illimitable ; and has brought me into contact with some hundreds of departed philosophers, statesmen, poets, painters, sculptors, architects, musicians and men of letters, whose condescension is as great as is my own relative ignorance of that which they can and do teach me.



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