

SPIRITUAL TRACTS, No. 7.

INTERCOURSE

WITH

SPIRITS OF THE LIVING.

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NEW YORK, *October 24, 1857.*

DR. C. ROBBINS, CHARLESTOWN, MASS. :

Dear Sir—If, from my investigations into the subject of Spirit intercourse, it shall be in my power to answer any of your inquiries, it will afford me pleasure to do so. But there is a difficulty about it which neither you nor I can obviate; and it is this, that we are as yet but in the infancy of the matter, but on the threshold of a knowledge of its phenomena, and I can not therefore yet hope to arrive in all instances at certain and satisfactory conclusions. Think how long it was after man had learned that water would boil, before he learned the power of steam! How long after the affinity of iron for electricity was known, before the telegraph was discovered! So it is with Spiritualism; time and very many more manifestations, and much more rational investigation, must yet be had, before we can say that we understand the subject. In the mean time it is very well, as tending to elucidate the truth, that we discuss the nature of what we have received. But I find it necessary to be careful to be not too hasty in arriving at my conclusion—not to be too ready to build up theories, lest I may rather mislead by the ingenuity and confidence of my own ignorance than enlighten by the calmness and modesty of wisdom.

In the early stages of my investigations, I found myself measuring the phenomena before me by the standard of my pre-conceived opinions, and it took me some time to find out that

that was, at least as respects this subject, the standard of ignorance, and not of knowledge, and that the first thing I had to learn was how ignorant I was of the whole matter—of its laws as well as of the manifestations of them. This taught me to move more cautiously, and not attempt a sum in the Rule of Three, until I had learned my Multiplication Table.

Hence I must entreat you to receive my expositions with great care, and rather as an index to your own thoughts than as certain and reliable solutions of your difficulties.

Your first inquiry, as I understand it, relates to the communion with the Spirits of the living as well as of the dead, and you ask, Is it a delusion?

I was a good deal disturbed when this feature first came to my knowledge. I had had related to me several instances where it afterward turned out the party was yet living. I did not understand it at all, unless it was a false personation by a Spirit, or a delusion on the part of the medium or inquirer.

One day while I was at West Roxbury, there came to me, through Laura as the medium, the Spirit of one with whom I had once been well acquainted, but from whom I had been separated some fifteen years. His was a very peculiar character—one unlike that of any other man whom I ever knew, and so strongly marked that it was not easy to mistake his identity.

I had not seen him in several years; he was not at all in my mind at the time, and he was unknown to the medium. Yet he identified himself unmistakably, not only by his peculiar characteristics, but by referring to matters known only to him and me.

I took it for granted he was dead, and was surprised afterward to learn that he was not. He is yet living.

I can not, on this occasion, go into all the particulars of an interview which lasted more than an hour. I was certain there was no delusion about it, and as certain that it was just as much a Spirit-manifestation as any I ever witnessed or heard of. Yet how could it be? was the question that was long agitating my mind. I have known since then many similar manifestations, so that I can no longer doubt the fact, that at times our communications are from the Spirits of the living as well as the dead.

About two years ago I had quite a marked exemplification of this. A circle was formed at Boston and another here, and they met at the same moment of time in the two cities, and through their respective mediums conversed with each other. The Boston circle would, through their medium, get a communication from the Spirit of the New York medium, and the New York circle would receive one through their medium from the Spirit of the Boston medium.

This continued for several months, and records of the circles were carefully kept. One of these days, I intend to give to the world a full account of the affair, for it was interesting as an attempt to get up a sort of telegraph, whose possibility was thus and there demonstrated. To me the matter was also particularly interesting in another aspect. For out of its incidents and teachings there came to me much that was calculated to explain to me the *rationale* of it.

That *rationale* embraces much thought and investigation, more than I have yet been able to give to it. I have as yet only the faint outline, but I hope in time to be able to go farther than that. At all events, I give it to you now as I have received it, that you and others may direct your researches to it, and like the recent discoveries of new planets in our solar system, out of many intelligent and well-directed observations, be able to work out new truths in the moral firmament.

Have we ever yet been taught how it is that the soul—by soul I mean the immortal part of man—is connected with the material form?

There is something in man beyond what is possessed by any other animal. This is not merely the power of reasoning, for man and animals alike possess and exert that faculty. Place a man and a horse in the middle of a field, and both will reason in the same way about going to a neighboring brook to quench their thirst. A child and a kitten will reason precisely alike in respect to the danger of touching fire. But there is something in the man and child that the horse and the kitten have not got, and can not get. I may, with much propriety, call this "*Devotion*," for it is the power of comprehending the existence of a

Great First Cause, and our connection with it, and embraces something more than the power of reasoning, and the mere capacity of the intellect to form a conclusion from that reasoning.

This "Devotion" belongs to the soul, and not to the body, and can be displayed only by that living being which has the attribute of immortality.

Now how is the soul which possesses this attribute connected with the body?

Some have said that it was seated in the brain, because it had the power of reasoning and judging as to immortality. But here comes the difficulty of distinguishing between the mind, possessed alike by man and horse, and the soul which belongs to man alone. And here comes too the great argument of the infidel, that if such is the soul, man can not be immortal any more than the horse.

Some have said it was seated in the heart, because there can be no "Devotion" without emotion. But here is again the same difficulty—animals have emotions in common with man.

And it is manifest that this immortal part of man is connected with both his intellectual and emotional attributes.

Indeed, without dwelling too much on details, it will be enough to say that how the soul is connected with the body has been hitherto a great mystery—inexplicable upon any hypothesis ever yet suggested to man. For every such hypothesis has encountered somewhere some one insuperable difficulty; and that one alone can be acceptable which has the capacity of surmounting them all, and which can be consistent with every known fact.

The chemist, in searching for arsenic, finds other substances which will produce the same effects with the different tests, but he arrives at a certain conclusion, because there is no other single substance which will produce the same results with *all* the tests.

Now with all this long preface—long, though stating many things too briefly—let me come to my propositions:

1. The soul is an independent entity or existence of itself—

possessing its own individuality and identity independent of all other existence, whether connected or disconnected with it.

2. It has its own peculiar attributes of thought and feeling, which it can exercise independently of, as well as in connection with, the body.

3. Science has long spoken of the duality of man, conveying the idea of two separate and distinct entities belonging to him ; but how thus connected, is involved in profound mystery.

Strange as this idea has seemed, it has been accepted by many, because it was only thus that many things, indisputably established as facts, could be explained, and because without it the reasoning mind had no refuge, but in denying the reality of that whose existence could not be questioned.

4. This quality consists of two existences, (beings or entities) each possessed of its mind and heart—or in other words—(for it is difficult out of old words to convey new ideas for which they have not been fitted) each having its own power of reasoning and feeling ; which, in the earth-life, most commonly act in unison, but possessing the ability to act independently of each other, and at death one of them ceasing to exist, and the other acting on forever.

5. These two parts of the entire man are connected together by a third being or entity, which has no separate attribute of thought or feeling, but whose office it is to connect the other two parts together in the earth-life, and to give form and shape to the man in the Spirit-life.

Thus there is in man the emanation from God in the soul—the animal nature in the body, and the connection of the two in what I will designate as the electrical body. Hence man is a trinity.

6. This electrical body has, among others, two attributes applicable to the matter in hand. *First*, in death it leaves the body, and passes with the soul into the Spirit-life, and lives with it there. In the earth-life its presence is manifested by that odic light of which Reichenbach speaks, and in the Spirit-world it causes, or rather is, that pale and shadowy form which the seer beholds when he sees Spirits. *Second*, It has a power of elasti-

city, which enables the soul to pass to a distance from the body, and yet retain its connection with it. When that connection ceases, death ensues, but while it exists, life continues.

Hence it is, that in dreams and in clairvoyance, we behold actual realities, existing and occurring at the moment far distant from us. This is not a mere picture, like a painting presented to the mind, but is the passing, changing reality, for we behold the various and incessant changes of the scene, and we hear the conversation accompanying it.

7. The soul and the electrical body are never separated, but the animal body may be separated from one or both. In death the animal body is separated from both. In life it may be separated from the soul for a while.

These are not all the propositions connected with the union of the soul and the body, which have been revealed to us, but they are all which bear upon the immediate topic which we have in hand.

And in regard to them I ask you and all thinking minds these two questions :

First, Are they not consistent with all the phenomena of soul and body which have ever come to our knowledge? *Second*, Do they not explain many things connected with our earth-life, which have hitherto been profound mysteries to us, and especially, do they not answer your question?

There is but one mode in which these questions can be wisely answered, and that is, each must search, and see for himself. It will not do to receive the idea as a truth upon the *ipse dixit* of any one, for no man has yet advanced far enough in this new matter to be warranted in saying, "I know." Nor will it do simply to deny its truth, for it is not impossible, and a denial will necessarily involve the negation of many things which are as firmly established as fact, as anything that man is capable of receiving as such.

Your next inquiry relates to what may be called mental manifestations (as distinguished from physical) without the mediums being entranced.

If my previous positions are true, we may well ask why should

not the soul be able to think through the animal mind without suspending the consciousness, as in the trance-state? Sure enough, why not? Simply because, as I understand it, our education, physical condition and surroundings have given our material nature the preponderating power in us, and our Spirit-nature can not make itself felt until the accustomed domination of the senses shall be suspended, and the supremacy which we have accorded to the animal mind, be made to give way.

Hence, with some of our mediums, the Spirits have to resort to deep trance, to avoid the interference of the animal part with the Spirit-power.

There are some who are so organized that this is never necessary, and others who can attain that condition by proper training, and hence with them the manifestations are when they are in their normal condition.

This is the condition of the just supremacy of our spiritual over our material nature—a condition for all mankind, which Christianity aimed at, and Spiritualism is destined to achieve.

It involves a great advance in our nature, yet one that we are capable of, and which each may attain by proper self-discipline.

I repeat, this is the great end and aim of Spiritualism, and it will be arrived at when man shall make all of his material nature subordinate to his spiritual, and shall cause all his earthly surroundings to assume their proper position of being, as but a means, and not an end.

Then the soul will be able always to speak to the animal mind, and make its presence ever manifest to the consciousness of the man.

Meanwhile, they who, either from self-discipline or physical conformation, have already attained that condition, have a fearful responsibility cast upon them—no less than that of showing before God and man what we may be, when the mortal shall thus, even in this life, have put on immortality.

Your next inquiry is, whether a pure thought can be conveyed to us through an impure medium, or an enlarged thought through a contracted mind?

How simple is the answer ! The same law which governs our earth-life governs us in the Spirit-world.

You wish here to send me a message by your servant. By making him learn by rote the precise words in which you clothe your idea, you can convey it to me as accurately as you could yourself convey it personally. But if you content yourself with simply giving him the idea he is to convey to me, as is most commonly the case, you necessarily incur the hazard of his not having comprehended it, and therefore of his not getting it right. So if you give him for transmission an idea too elevated or too pure for his comprehension, it is almost certain there will be some error committed.

Thus, by your Irish servant—who has hardly learned that twice two are four—attempt to send me a demonstration in algebra, what sort of a message shall I get from you, be he ever so honest? Send me the same thing by an accomplished mathematician, and lo ! how accurately I get the communication.

The purity of the communication is affected, however, by other considerations, but natural and simple still. How hard it is in life for purity to approach and get near the impure ! Try

Go yourself into the sinks of vice in your great cities, and see how difficult it will be to get near their inmates, how long it will be before you can get a hearing, and how forcibly they repel you.

Let them, however, but once entertain an aspiration for something pure and good, and lo ! how easy of access they are to you.

And this is true, whether spoken of your messenger, or of him to whom your message is sent.

And now, having answered your inquiries, but so generally as to merely suggest and not elaborate ideas, I subscribe myself,

Truly yours,

J W. EDMONDS