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Higher Aspects
of Spiritualism.
by M. A. Coxon.

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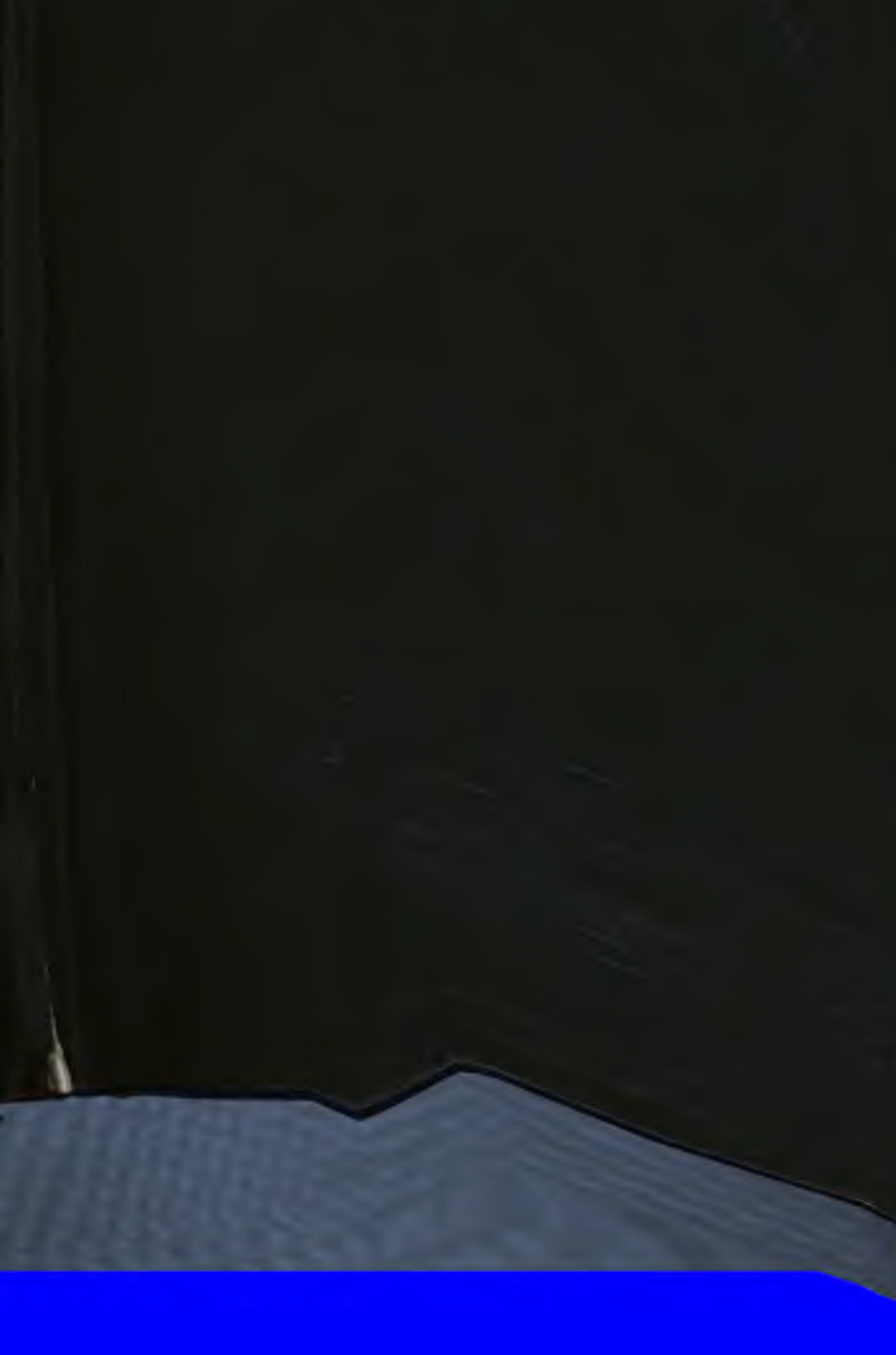


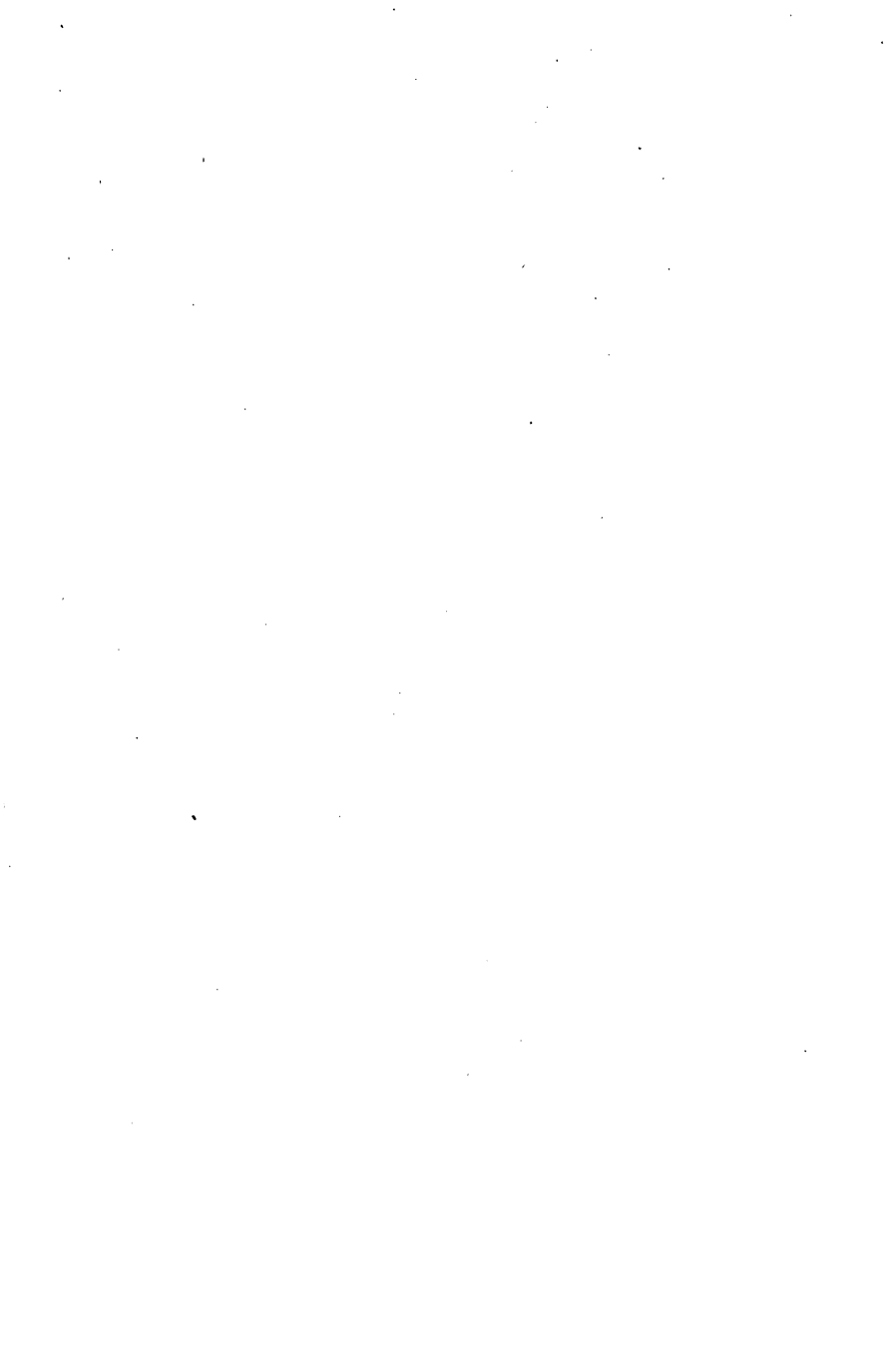
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HIGHER ASPECTS
OF
SPIRITUALISM.

BY

M. A. (OXON),

AUTHOR OF "PSYCHOGRAPHY" AND "SPIRIT IDENTITY."

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“The Old Spiritualism, born of Myth and fed upon Tradition, is dying, surely dying. A new and living Spiritualism is as surely taking its place. The Old Spiritualism was based on Belief: the new is founded on the facts of a common experience.”

—GERALD MASSEY.

“Stains will mar the noblest revolutions, but must not blind us to the fact that a spiritual revolution follows only on a spiritual need.”

“The end of the Oracles was determined not from without, but from within. They had passed through all their stages. Fetishism, Shahmanism, Nature worship, Polytheism, even Monotheism and Mysticism had found in turn a home in their immemorial shrines. Their utterances had reflected every method in which man had sought communion with the unseen from systematic experiment to intuitive ecstasy. They had completed the cycle of their scripture from its Theogony to its Apocalypse: *it was time that a stronger wave of Revelation should roll over the world, and that what was best and truest in the old religion should be absorbed into and identified with the new.*”

—F. W. H. MYERS on GREEK ORACLES.

“The world has cycles in its course, when all,
That once has been, is acted o'er again:
Not by some fated law, which need appal
Our faith, or binds our deeds as with a chain
But by men's separate sins, which blended still
The same bad round fulfil.

“Then fear ye not, tho' Gallic's scorn ye see,
And soft-clad nobles count you mad, true hearts!
These are the fig-tree's signs: rough deeds must be,
Trials and crimes: so learn ye well your parts.
*Once more to plough the earth it is decreed
And scatter wide the seed.*”

—JOHN HENRY NEWMAN.

P R E F A C E.

SPIRITUALISM is a subject much maligned and misunderstood: discredited by friends and misrepresented by enemies.

The newspaper-reading public gains its notions from such stray paragraphs as creep into print when some fresh exposure of fraud gives room for a sneer to writers who are neither generally nor specially informed on the subject, so as to handle it with reasonable fairness.

A highly-coloured narrative, a few old sneers, some cheap moral indignation, a stock jest or two, thread-bare long since with age,—this is their receipt. The order has gone forth to write the subject down, and they obey. They can do little else, even if they would. For it must be said, to the eternal disgrace of what boasts to be a free press, that we have no journal that will, or perhaps that dare, give a perfectly fair and full hearing to writers who can defend Spiritualism from personal knowledge. The subject is tabooed as being likely to imperil circulation and impair influence.

The result is, that only one side—that calculated to discredit the subject—is presented to the public.

Nor is this all. Neither our great London Circulating Library, nor the great firm that supplies the travelling public with literature at the Railway

Stations throughout the kingdom will give any publicity to works on Spiritualism, save in so far as one or two books (such as Mr. Home's diatribe) have found their way into Mudie's Library. Messrs. Smith will not allow a paper connected with Spiritualism to lie on any of their stalls. Mudie and Smith, the two great centres for the dissemination of English works, do their best to stifle Spiritualism.

It is well, I think, that this unique fact should be placed on record.

What wonder then that the general public that hears of Spiritualism only through its daily paper, entertains an utterly false notion with regard to it, viewing it only as a melancholy picture of chicanery and credulity, and a grotesque jumble of blasphemy, buffoonery, and fraud.

And even if a mind be found that is willing to look below the surface, the feeling of distaste is too often intensified by the pretensions recklessly put forward by the enthusiastic devotees of Spiritualism. Such a mind knows nothing of the inner and higher aspects of the subject; and the claim that the banjo-playing and furniture-shuffling, the antics and ineptitudes of the ordinary dark circle are the work of our departed friends who take this remarkable method of proving to us their continued life and happiness, is so monstrous that a well-balanced mind recoils in disgust as from a profanation and a blasphemy.

Both by what is said and by what is *not* said, by what is done and by what is left undone, Spiritualism is degraded and made mean in the eyes of the public.

I protest against this view as dishonouring, one-sided and unjust, as calculated to mislead an honest man who seeks for truth; and, above all, as calculated to foster and perpetuate that worst of all falsehoods, a half-truth.

I protest that Spiritualism is not the unclean thing that it suits its enemies to make it out.

I protest that it is not the silly thing that its friends (alas!) too often depict it.

It has a noble side of which the world hears little, and which it heeds less. When a Crookes tells the scientific world that he is about to investigate the subject, he is hailed as "a Daniel come to judgment; yea, a Daniel." But when he reports that *the facts are true*, the scientific world will have none of them, and Daniel would lose his reputation as a man of science, did he not redeem it by some more material, and therefore more popular investigations.

When a Newton relieves suffering humanity by his power of healing, the world laughs at human credulity, but makes no account of the fact that the load of human misery is thereby lightened.

When Spiritualism releases an enslaved mind from the terrorism of a degrading creed, and lifts it into an atmosphere of light and love from one of ignorance and slavish fear, by showing the realities of the world to come, the world sneers loftily about enthusiasm and fanaticism, as it would sneer again at a Christ were he among men.

The world knows nothing of the consolations of the family circle: nothing of the light that has beamed there on many a mind that had come to despair of a

future existence, and was driven well-nigh to distraction by the problems of the present. It knows little of Spiritualism as a Religion, nor of the extent to which its teachings are permeating modern thought, leavening the churches, and giving a truer and nobler faith to many a soul that sorely needed it.

In short, the world either ignores or is ignorant of what seems to me to be the great claim of Spiritualism on the attention of men of thought in an age which is marked by a startling development of scientific Materialism, with its dreary shadow Atheism, and by an equally ominous decadence of true spiritual life.

It is with a view of presenting some of the HIGHER ASPECTS OF SPIRITUALISM that I have put together these Essays; the former dealing with the general condition of the public movement, and with some requirements for its proper guidance and conduct: the latter sketching the parallel between the age of Christ and this age of ours, and shadowing forth the contrasts between Christianity and Christian Spiritualism—the Old Faith and the New.

M. A. (OXON.)

LONDON, Easter, 1880.

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THE
PRESENT POSITION AND FUTURE NEEDS
OF
SPIRITUALISM IN ENGLAND.

*Being an Address delivered before the British National
Association of Spiritualists, on January 26, 1880.*

My subject is so wide that it may seem a hopeless task to master it within any reasonable limits. So no doubt it would be, if I aimed at any exhaustive treatment. But I do not. I am not going to be mystical or metaphysical: I am not going to offend any prejudices by attempting to set up any particular standard of belief, or to decry any that commends itself to any of my brethren of that very large, and not always, externally at least, very happy family which is called by the name of Spiritualist.

WHAT IS A SPIRITUALIST?

It is a little difficult to find out sometimes who and what a Spiritualist is. Lord Rayleigh, I read in a public journal, is "an ardent Spiritualist," but nevertheless, the writer is kind enough to say he will make a good successor to Professor Clerk Maxwell. My late lamented friend, Serjeant Cox, is being claimed by

Spiritualists of undoubted orthodoxy as one in belief with themselves, while the outside world regarded him always as an enthusiast on the subject, as indeed he was in some sort. He was what I may call a Psychist; and I suppose I may call Lord Rayleigh and men of his type who attest the phenomena without advancing any theory to account for them, Phenomenalists. They would themselves disdain the name of Spiritualists, and regard it as a nick-name affixed by ignorance or spite. These are dwellers on the threshold (not, however, of the type described in *Zanoni*), and hardly come within the sphere of our contemplation now, except in the way of passing acknowledgment of the excellent work they perform in introducing the outer fringe of the subject acceptably to a class of mind that otherwise would not be brought into contact with it at all.

Within the undoubted domain of Spiritualism we have numerous shades of opinion. The Phenomenalist obtains here as well as outside; for a most assured belief in the operation of spirits as the efficient cause is quite compatible with an almost exclusive interest in the phenomena themselves.

Others are devoted to the purely sentimental or emotional side of spirit-communion. To them the circle is the family altar, round which the ties dissolved by death are temporarily re-united, and they live again in holiest communion with their dead. Nothing to them is of any pressing import except this sacred fellowship. They care little whether others accredit their belief, or whether any phenomena come

home to the world at large, or to scientific experts. They would desire in the abstract that all should be partakers of the privileges they themselves enjoy: but practically their experience is too sacred to them to be rudely handled by the outer world, which would probe, and pry, and ask cold questions, and so they shrink into seclusion, and seek only to be left alone. How many of such there are whom the world never hears of, Spiritualists *par excellence* as regards their faith, none but such as are behind the scenes can even roughly guess. With exceptional means in some ways of knowing, I am more and more astonished year by year at the extent to which this most private and personal form of Spiritualism—the very core and kernel of the movement—obtains amongst us, and especially in country districts. The simple folk who swell the numbers of those of whom I now speak are not perplexed by any doubts: the intellectual questionings that beset more subtle minds pass over their heads with a harmless whirring which only causes them to look up in surprise: they have something like—the best modern imitation I know of—that overmastering Faith, on which the paralysis of Doubt has never fallen, which Eastern hyperbole declared capable of moving mountains. So long as these do not fail from amongst us—and they increase and will increase, I have no fear—we shall never lack Spiritualists.

PHILOSOPHICAL SPIRITUALISM.

Of late another class of Spiritualists, the Philosophical Spiritualist, has come into some prominence.

He seeks to penetrate below the surface, and to apply to the subject of Modern Spiritualism the dark hints and cunning speculations of the Ancients and Mediævalists. If his mind be metaphysical he will concern himself with speculations as to the nature of Matter, Time, Space, and the various ideas which men have framed, and which have gradually assumed a position of reality in our arguments to which they are not entitled. If he be a Platonist, he will be attracted by the modern school of whom Henry More and Thomas Taylor are perhaps the best examples. Theosophical leanings will correlate him intellectually with the abstruse system of Jacob Behmen, and land him in a state of mind when the exoteric phenomena of Spiritualism will no longer interest but rather will disgust, and when, in point of fact, he will cease to be a Spiritualist, in any fair and usual sense of the word altogether.

A middle course has given rise to another school of Modern Theosophists, recruited principally from the ranks of philosophical Spiritualists, and devoted both to the observation (though in a minor degree) of the phenomena called Spiritual, to speculation as to their cause, and especially to the study of the innate powers of the human spirit. They usually deny or make light of what to the Spiritualist is his central article of faith—the return of the departed: but they do a very necessary work in calling attention to what Spiritualists too often ignore, the potency of the human spirit; and they set us also an example that many may well follow, of intelligent reasoning and investigation

respecting phenomena the mere surface explanation of which we are too often ready to accept without enquiry until we find that "things are not always what they seem." There should be no antagonism at all between the Spiritualist pure and simple, who lives in the practice of communion with his departed, and the Theosophist who brings a speculative philosophy to bear on the facts presented by the Spiritualist: indeed the union of the two minds would seem to be the desideratum. But as a matter of fact the Theosophist is a little inclined to question and perhaps to ridicule Spiritualism—he has not far to go in order to find material for his scoffs;—and the Spiritualist is a little inclined to resent this by bringing him down from the airy region of unproven speculations to the domain of fact. This, however, is mere surface friction, and nothing but good can result from the intercourse of men of all shades of opinion who will bring honest, fearless, and impartial thought to bear on the great "problems of life and mind" which concern us all.

RELIGIOUS SPIRITUALISM.

This class embraces also some representatives of a school of thought which is spreading very widely in the ranks of Spiritualists both in this country and in America—I mean Religious Spiritualism. I do not use a narrower term because Spiritualists, who see in the midst of the apparent chaos that surrounds them the dawns of law and order as the Spirit of God broods over its waste, do not always take the same view of the Supreme. The Spiritualist, who regards

the abnormal conditions produced by the action of Spirit in this world as merely the phenomenal manifestation attendant on the close of one dispensation, era, or epoch, and the ushering in of a new regime, with wider spiritual knowledge, and clearer insight into Truth,—he is by no means at one on all religious topics with his equally earnest brother. Theological training, or the absence of it, will tell; and one mind rebounds from a narrow cramping Christianity mis-called orthodoxy, to a broad and rather shadowy Theism, or to a still more shadowy Pantheism; while another rests in the familiar by-paths of the creed of its childhood, and sees no reason to love any the less dearly the lessons of faith learnt from a mother's lips, or to discard the old well-worn prayers to which the association of scenes past for ever lend such a mellowing influence.

These minds are infinitely varying in their conceptions of God, of His dealings with man, and of man's necessary relations to Him. As time rolls by these views will harmonise, and out of their fusion will come what I think I can dimly discern in bold outline, looming through the mists that hang around me—the Religion of the Future. Be this as it may, the great cause for congratulation that strikes me in the outlook that I am attempting to take, is this undoubted inclination on the part of thoughtful Spiritualists to look beyond the surface phenomena, even beyond what I may call, without offence, the emotional aspect of the subject, and to dwell increasingly on its religious side, and to regard the vast

movement as essentially a spiritual effort analogous to many that have preceded it, which has a beneficent aim for humanity. I look with confidence to the increased prevalence of this feeling and tone to rescue the movement from much that was in danger of defiling it in the eyes of those who viewed it from without, and who saw its superficial blots without knowing the beauties and blessings that are below.

SPIRITUALISM IS A REVOLUTION.

For it is vain to expect that a movement so wide as Spiritualism, one animated by such divergent influences, one that appeals to so many types of mind, one that naturally draws into relation with it all the restless, speculative, curious, and often unevenly balanced minds that mankind is always plentifully furnishing; one too that seethes and bubbles in the midst of an age of excitement and excess, physical and intellectual too:—it is idle to expect that such a movement will not present to the hostile critic aspects of disorder, and even of license, which will furnish him with ample opportunity for assault.

“Spiritualism,” as Mr. F. F. Cook points out in a very able paper* read before the Chicago Philosophical Society, “is Revolution, not simply Reform.” This is exactly the view that I have long had impressed upon me. There is very little conservative about it; little that is orderly, any more than there was in the great

* *The Rationale of Spiritualism.* By Fred. F. Cook. London: E. W. Allen, 11 Ave Maria Lane.

Revolution that left us Christianity. It is an upheaval, and is attended with all the apparent disorder and chaotic confusion of an earthquake. It is not in a transition epoch, nor amid the very birth-throes of a new dispensation, that we are to expect a Reform of the drawing-room order, nicely cut and dried in the study of its originator, patronised by the Nobility, Clergy, and Gentry, and accomplished by the decorous moving and seconding of some nicely-worded resolutions. It is no time for polite patching-up: we are in the very dust and din of spiritual strife, in the thick of a great spiritual conflict, the effects of which we shall try in vain to escape; and it is no time now to go about deprecating noise, and timidly sprinkling rose-water to quench the powder-fumes of battle. The battle is upon us, and it is waste time to grumble at its smoke and din.

In order rightly to estimate the progress of the movement, it is necessary to view it from within, and from the standpoint of the Spiritualist. In no other way can any clue be got to what seem its manifold absurdities, contradictions, and vulgarities, to say nothing of other more serious blemishes. In the pamphlet already referred to Mr. Cook points out with much shrewdness and force, that the movement which we call Spiritualism is controlled and governed by spiritual methods from a spiritual plane, and that what we see around us here are the results of causes over which we have comparatively little command. Its originators deal with the class of mind that is not concerned with logical definitions and exact modes of

thought, the class out of which come ardent enthusiasm, vigorous action untrammelled by any modifying views, and the revolutionary force that has always been liberated when the world is temporarily turned up side down. The educated and cultured mind sees too many sides of a question to be the suitable agent for commencing such a revolution as Christianity was, and as this is. It was the fishermen of Galilee who were the co-workers with Jesus; it was the common people who heard him gladly. And now, it is not from among the Pharisees and rulers of modern society, so much as from the ranks of the simpler and plainer folk; not in the laboratory of the scientist, or amid the experiments of learned and scientific bodies, so much as in the family circle, in the homes of those who have no other claim to a public acceptance of their record than that they have ears to hear and eyes to see with, and a desire to record with truth what they see and hear; it is to these, and not to the wise and cultured and highly placed that the weight of evidence first came with such startling force.*

* It is well to note this. For the world hears much of the efforts of certain minds to correlate themselves by personal experience with such of the phenomena of Spiritualism as may be expected to lend themselves to scientific demonstration. And every now and then the failure of some such effort is trumpeted abroad; and, now and again, too, the exposure of a fraud, consequent on such attempts, makes Spiritualism nauseous in the eyes of those who know it under no other guise, and presents a very unlovely aspect of it to those who do know what is beneath. But the world hears and knows little or nothing of the Spiritualism of private life.

THE DIRECTING AGENCY.

There is indication now, however, that the place of the cultured and trained mind in the development of the movement is being shown. If it be enthusiasm and zeal, which does not stop to reason, that sets such movements as Christianity and Modern Spiritualism in action, it is discriminating and calm judgment that shapes their ends and directs the force that enthusiasm has liberated. It is in this precise state that one of the most real dangers to such a movement is felt. If it become a fashionable toy, its end is not far to seek; but, if it refuse the aid of power, wealth, and position, it fails to utilise one of the very greatest factors in success, and stands self-confessed as unable to reach the most cultured classes of the community. Between these two poles the choice lies, and one of the greatest difficulties in the way of the governors of this movement is to use as not abusing, neither to scorn nor to cringe; and, if I may adapt an expression that seems singularly appropriate, "to be *in* the world but not *of* the world," not removed from the world, but kept from the evil that is in it.

It is a source of consolation to reflect that the leaders of this movement are wiser than we, and that they occupy a plane of development, and a vantage ground of observation from which they can see through the dust of strife, and mark the progress that the future brings. But we have to do our part in subordination, and it is in this co-operation that we find ourselves confronted with a difficulty, and that we

are forced to present to a superficial observer a picture of disunion when we are really striving for peace. Except on the veriest external plane, anything like real association in spiritual matters is very difficult of attainment. And this for obvious reasons. We are all of us on different planes of progression—spirits gaining our experience in the great school of incarnate life, and each learning our lessons with different measure of success; possibly, too, starting in the school with different degrees of antecedent experience. At any rate, in spiritual progress you will not find two persons occupying planes exactly alike. So long as merely external matters are being organised or discussed, no inner spring is touched, and superficial agreement is possible. But it is different when we come to deal with the inner verities of spirit; then the innermost springs are touched, and entire coincidence of opinion is not to be had from those who view vital questions from different standpoints. Entire agreement is so far from being desirable, that it is easy to see that its existence, if it were possible, would betoken an absence of that healthy friction which is inseparable even from reform, and much more from such revolution as I have estimated Spiritualism to be.

Divergence then there must be, and from time to time this made manifest, and circumstances arise to emphasise the fact that all cannot see eye to eye when the deep things of spirit are concerned. But the points of agreement may equally be insisted on, and I am animated by the hope that the future may draw out these points of contact, may give us oppor-

tunities of cultivating that spiritual grace of *charity*, or *active love*, which is scared away by the din of our unwelcome strife, but without which, now as in the days when the words were first used, we are but "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

INDIVIDUAL NOTIONS TO BE SUBORDINATED.

Peace and progress are, probably, incompatible here, except in the silent growth of the individual spirit by contemplation, meditation, and prayer. Progress in a public movement means friction. Abuses cannot be reformed without raising dust; and there are some who delight in wielding the iconoclastic hammer of demolition, just as there are others who love peace, and are, practically, unable to distinguish it from sleep. Anything for a quiet life, even paralysis and death. These were not born to take an active part in revolutionary work. From those who are forced into activity the movement has one boon to ask, by which, if granted and perpetually borne in mind, its future progress will be largely helped.

It is that minor points of difference be consciously kept out of view while we stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of the truth we hold in common. The time will never come when we shall all agree on everything. I hope that that pale drab uniformity, that dead level of commonplace, on which anything like vigorous life would perish of inanition, will never come. At any rate, I don't expect, any more than I want to live to see it. But I do hope to see more of what I may call mental perspective among Spiritualists. Many of us

seem to have our minds filled with the contemplation of some extremely small matter, which we have gazed at till its proportions are magnified out of all truth, and we forget in contending for it how valuable effort is being wasted, and withdrawn from the central point where it is really needed. If, as I entirely believe, all truth is evolved by conflict with error, and if these spiritual truths, of which we are now the recipients, are born in our world by conflict with the foes of progress, how important that we should direct our weapons against them instead of wasting force in fruitless contention about trifles amongst ourselves. I do not want uniformity; but I want unity in multi-formity. I want a little self-sacrifice of pet notions, even though they be ever so dear to our minds, as the children of our mature intellectual life. I want a resolute eye fixed on central truth, contending for it, and not to be diverted from it by any tricks of any foe. If there be spiritual adversaries who would stop the spread of a truth that they hate, surely one of their most successful devices must be to set every one of us fighting for his own hand.

And the inevitable result of this magnifying of private whims to the exclusion of deep self-sacrificing devotion to the great truths which we hold in common, is seen in a tendency to pettiness and smallness of aim, which does especially impress those who regard us from an external and generally unsympathetic point of view. Crotchety, full of cranks and notions, viewy, one-ideaed, unpractical, unfit for active useful work in the world; these are some of the charges that

I hear brought against us. *They are not true*; there will rise to the minds of all who hear me, names of men eminent in the walks of daily life, not only as men of science, art, and letters, but as practical men of business, dealing with the world on its most unsentimental side, and dealing with it in that way which is the world's great measure of success—the acquisition of wealth—who are sufficient to refute any such wholesale calumny. *They are not true*: but there is enough foundation, through our own fault, to give just that superficial verisimilitude that makes a half-truth the most dangerous of falsehoods.

SPIRITUALISM DEALS WITH THE MOOT QUESTIONS OF THE AGE.

I can see, I think, how necessary it is that this great spiritual solvent should be brought to bear on all subjects that affect at all intimately the social well-being of man. Spiritualism comes, as I have tried to show, as a revolutionary element to an age that is ripe for it, and like that great movement of which it is the nineteenth-century analogue, it deals with all the relations and inter-relations of man with man, and man with God. See how it touches the position of women, just as the teaching of the Christ did, though in another way. See how it lays its hand on the broadest questions of civil and religious liberty, proclaiming the liberty wherewith the truth makes men free, so that they are free indeed. There is not a problem that the world is face to face with

in these days of vexed questions and conflicting interests, on which Spiritualism has not or will not have its say.

And so it is to be expected that those on whose minds strong views have been borne in as to any of the moot questions of the hour, should turn with expectation, or should instinctively find their way, to the ranks of Spiritualism. They dimly see that there they will find, among minds gathered by a process of spiritual selection, minds to whom the notion of progress and reform is one familiar as a household word, that sympathy and attention which they do not expect, or are very foolish if they do, in the fellowship of those who find in the wisdom of their forefathers a subject of never-failing admiration, and in their enactments the embodiment of a sagacity that it would be sacrilege to interfere with. They are welcome to our sympathy, and we recognise their claims on us, being what we are. Children of the new dispensation—the spiritual epoch—we welcome them as brethren whose faces, like our own, are turned to watch for the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, the dawning of the coming day. But we desire to impress upon these strenuous souls that reforms are best inaugurated by a judicious choice of opportunity, and that to press unwelcome change on unwilling minds is one ready method of making it impossible. And we would urge that zeal be tempered with discretion.

We have quite enough to do to look after the points on which we are agreed without emphasising those on which we claim liberty of opinion. And we may,

But those } surely, unite on the central facts, and devote our
 who see } chiefest energy to their elucidation.

But those } I have said that I regard that providential system
 who see } to which the incongruous name of Spiritualism has
 further need } been given, as concerned with all the great problems
 not forward } that arise in this age. Divinely ordered and spiritually
 step them. } guided, it is nothing short of an effort to wipe out
 some results of human ignorance and folly, and to
 replace them with advanced knowledge so applied as to
 ameliorate the condition of man in all the various
 relations of his earthly life. It is therefore impossible
 for me, holding this belief, to impose any barriers on
 the action of this great movement. It deals with all
 that influences humanity, and I cannot measure the
 action of Spiritualism in any of the great efforts that
 I see around me for the benefit of mankind. The
 world of cause is hidden from my gaze, and here I
 see only the effects.

But I entertain no doubt that from that world
 emanate the motive springs of much that I see in
 operation around me, and I have no doubt too that
 disorderly human effort combines frequently with
 antagonistic spiritual assault to thwart the beneficent
 work of progress. It is extremely desirable that, as
 co-workers with these ministering spirits, we should
 labour with discretion as well as with zeal. It is even
 to be desired that we should supply a knowledge of
 our human life, its possibilities, capacities, and condi-
 tions, which spirits far removed from the earth plane
 do not possess. And to this end it is surely most
 undesirable that the movement should present to the

observer a picture of undisciplined and incoherent struggle: one enthusiast contending with another for some point, which may, or may not, be true in fact, but which, at any rate, obscures the broad principle on which we ought to unite. Let us look to our foundations, and let us leave accidents alone while we look clearly after essentials.

I protest, for instance, against being called upon, as a Spiritualist, to identify myself with all the numerous fancies that my fellow-thinkers on that subject are fond of mixing up with it. I will entertain on its merits the notion of any reform; if I were not so inclined, I should probably not have taken any active part in Spiritualism; but Woman's Rights, the Reform of the Lunacy Laws, to say nothing of other questions that have at various times been imported into Spiritualism, I should like to consider as independent questions. To force them on one *quod* Spiritualist seems to me a grotesque absurdity. I am quite as desirous that every woman should have her rights, whatever they may be, as I am determined to secure my own; and I am quite sure she can be trusted to get them. As to the Reform of Lunacy Laws, that is trenching on delicate ground here, and in connection with Spiritualism. I should like to see Spiritualism vindicated on its own merits.

UNITY IN MULTIFORMITY.

No estimate of the position and outlook of Spiritualism would be in any way complete without some attempt to offer an opinion on the methods by which

we may best advance the cause that we have at heart.

In some sense the simplest and plainest answer is:—By leaving it in wiser hands than our own. Half the troubles and worries that beset the cause of Spiritualism come from our own folly; and a considerable proportion of the remainder from misdirected zeal. And this is seen most conspicuously in public effort, for the very plain reason that private efforts are less known and less important.

This is one of the standing reasons given by some Spiritualists, whose faith is quite as clear and whose works are quite as zealously carried out as our own, for the policy of abstention with regard to organisation. Is this system, then, which we have put in practice here a mistake? Do I recommend a policy of isolation? The previous part of my paper, in which I appeal as strongly as I can to all Spiritualists, as such, to sink their differences and to stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of their common faith, will sufficiently indicate the answer I should give to those questions. I entirely believe that organisation, on the simple lines I have mentioned, would be an un-mixed blessing; and I should expect from it great and beneficent results. It could never, I think, give to the chance inquirer the conviction to be got only from private investigation. It could never supply the place of the family circle—never even presume to interfere with that stronghold of our faith. But as a *defensive* organisation, capable of becoming *offensive* too under unrighteous attack, it seems to me to be

almost a necessity. It is one of the glories of the British National Association of Spiritualists which will never fade, that it saved Slade when other means would have been almost hopeless.

It is needless to say that the isolation of working members from any organisation is a cause of weakness, or that the multiplication of centres of organisation leads to a frittering away of power. The principle of organised effort is as sound, in my opinion, now as it has always been, in spite of certain shocks that have made it wise to revise that opinion; but the application of the principle is, as I have pointed out, a matter of grave difficulty. To be really effective, a national organisation should be all-embracing—should draw sympathy and support from all phases of opinion—should represent them all, and should, on any emergency, while giving fullest liberty of thought, be able to calculate on united action. I need not say that English Spiritualists are very far from the realisation of *that* ideal.

LESSONS OF THE PAST.

It is impossible to speak of organised public Spiritualism at this juncture and in this place without reference to that melancholy event which has brought so much discredit on the cause. I allude to the discovery, at one of the Enquirers' Séances held on the premises of the Association, that the medium was personating a spirit-form. Having been placed in a chair behind curtains, and tied to that chair, she was discovered in a state of partial undress, personating

a form which was presented as independent of her body, while her discarded garments were found on the chair to which she had been secured. These salient facts are undisputed, though they involve many considerations which admit of argument. Into these I do not enter.*

But we are foolish indeed if we do not attempt to learn from experience. Let us dispassionately look at what we have done, and see how far we have done wrong. It is easy to be wise after the event, and there are always plenty of good-natured friends to come forward with their "I told you so;" but that should not prevent us from seeing ourselves as others see us, if only we can attain that position, one more calculated to develop wise and wholesome views than any other we can occupy.

And this we ought to do without any over-sensitiveness as to facing the results of our methods. We in this Association have exercised at least as much care as others have taken in conducting séances. In anything that I may say I entirely disclaim any idea of blaming any one. I deal only with facts that are admitted. I carefully abstain from entering into the field of speculation; and I desire only to gather up the lessons that plain and reasonable investigators of a very dark and difficult subject ought to gather from experience. I believe the whole method of conducting materialisation séances to be erroneous, calculated to

* For a full and very clear account of the whole circumstances, see *Spiritual Notes*, No. 20, Feb. 1880.

introduce elements of uncertainty, and to produce the results which we are compelled again and again to deplore. In the interests of all concerned these methods should, in my opinion, be abandoned. We should have more respect for our mediums, with their sensitive temperament, and liability to obsession by any undeveloped spiritual agency that may seize upon them, than to place them deliberately under the very condition where such power may have fullest opportunity of possessing them. Under none but the happiest and most perfect conditions should they be exposed to such a risk. We should have more thought for the fair fame of the movement, and for the credit of all concerned in it, than to expose it to the danger of such association with what the world will surely brand as fraud. And we should hesitate long before we permit any, who have not familiarised themselves with the simpler objective phenomena of Spiritualism, to be introduced to the observation of a fact, which, seen under the best possible conditions, is astounding and almost staggering to the reason, but which, presented as it only too frequently is, amid conditions of darkness and secrecy that seem devised for the very purpose of mystification, can convince no one who is worth convincing, or who is not already satisfied by other means.

Now, on broad principles of criticism, let us see what has been the method almost universally observed in investigating these questions.

(1) We have attempted to show to a circle, composed largely of enquirers, gathered together on no other

principle than that of a common curiosity—if I may exclude that of a desire to explode what, on *a priori* principles, many consider an impossible and ridiculous hypothesis—and selected on no principle of fitness, a phenomenon the most rare, the most difficult of satisfactory demonstration, even under the best possible conditions. We have assumed that this rare phenomenon was procurable at stated times, and we have allowed those who have no antecedent knowledge of the subject to come together for the purpose of witnessing it.

Was this wise? In my opinion it assuredly was not. If such phenomena are procurable at all in a mixed circle, it must be under very rare conditions, and the attempt to elicit them must frequently end in failure.

(2) But it does not always end in failure. It sometimes demonstrably ends in the substitution of another phenomenon altogether. The beings, whoever they may be, who produce these manifestations, are able to laugh at our bonds, and to release a medium from the most complicated ligatures. They do also, as has been repeatedly demonstrated, dress up the unconscious medium, and present her transformed and sometimes transfigured body as a "Spirit-form." Of the moral aspects of such a procedure I will say nothing. It is a fact well known to experienced Spiritualists that the Spirits who are able to deal with gross matter so as to produce these physical manifestations are beings who are not possessed of high moral consciousness. Whether they are instruments in the

hands of more progressed intelligences or not, the fact remains that they can give no trustworthy information, that they are not to be relied on in many cases if judged by the laws of human integrity and truth, and that they do demonstrably, in some cases, enact what must be described as a fraud, of which the entranced medium is or may be unconscious. Now, since experienced Spiritualists know that such power resides in the beings with whom they have to do, is it not a duty to explain to those who know nothing of the subject, that they have such power, that they use it as they think fit, and that in any given case, unless absolute proof to the contrary is forthcoming, the form produced is most probably the transformed medium? In the vast majority of instances that have come under my observation, I believe this has been the case. And I think very decidedly that the fact should be plainly stated.

(3) But this is not all. It has been usual to seclude a medium from view by means of curtains or a cabinet. It is an old story now that I detest this method, and protest against the bewildering perplexities that it introduces into the investigation. I hope this exposure will at least abolish in public circles that mystifying device. It has, however, been customary to use it. Now, when a medium is secluded from view, it is very difficult indeed to say with any certainty what takes place. She is bound to her chair, and if a form appears, and if, further, the medium and the form be seen at the same time, or if the medium be proved to be in her chair at the time that the

observers see the form, there is good evidence for one special class of manifestation called **Materialisation** or **Form-Manifestation**. There is a compact and perfectly unimpeached body of evidence for the reality of this astounding phenomenon: and these exposures do not touch it.

V If, again, the tying be secure, and a form be presented without any proof that the medium is in the chair, and if, further, she be found in her place with tying unmolested, after the séance is over, there is evidence of an interference with ordinary natural law by occult power, but no cogent evidence of materialisation. It is this phenomenon that I believe to be of the most frequent occurrence in cabinet séances. And, being as it is of a totally different order to that which enquirers come to see, when they find from observation that such is the case, they not unnaturally consider themselves duped.

Would not a plain statement of facts go far to prevent that idea? and should not such a statement precede every séance held in public for form-manifestation? I strongly think it should.

I would hope, however, that for the future we shall be content with eliciting such phenomena as can be had without secluding the medium, and with light sufficient for observation. I am so convinced that no method of public investigation that uses cabinets and dark séances can be satisfactory to any mind worth attracting to the movement, that I should prefer to see no séances at all on these premises than such as I have described.

At anyrate, whether my own opinion commends itself to you or not, we shall be agreed that it is our duty to present to enquirers, so long as we allow them to resort to us for information, nothing that can savour in the faintest degree to the most suspicious mind of fraud, whether the imposture be earthly or spiritual. Better that all sèances should be stopped at once, than that another cause of distress, such as we have brought on ourselves, should occur. And better, too, that we should curtail the power of these irresponsible spirits to work mischief, and enact fraud, by placing the medium in a position where no such deception is possible. Dark circles should be relegated to private meetings when no tests are wanted, and where such sèances have their place and their use.

EXPOSURES DO NOT AFFECT THE FOUNDATION OF OUR
FAITH.

There is a sort of feeling current amongst those who know nothing of Spiritualism beyond what they glean from the newspapers when some fresh exposure leads them to print a few contemptuous paragraphs, that the phenomena of Spiritualism are discredited *en masse*, and that the records of them are stories of imposture or delusion throughout. It is hardly necessary to say here that that is itself a curious delusion born of the wish that such might be found to be the case. The phenomena of Spiritualism are irrefragably established on too wide a basis of demonstration to be shaken: and, deplorable as these repeated shocks to weak faith undoubtedly are, the mediumship which is

incriminated by them is a proven and assured fact. When we are more careful in our methods of eliciting these phenomena, we shall find that it is our own ignorance and folly that are, in very many cases, responsible for the results that we deplore.

On repeated occasions, as competent witnesses testify, when the medium has not been separated from the circle, figures fully formed, apparently as solid and real to the touch as our own bodies are, have been presented under conditions which absolutely preclude deception or delusion. Mr. Barkas, of Newcastle, has repeatedly testified to this fact, and his precautions against deception leave nothing to be desired. Mr. Epes Sargent, of Boston, U.S.A., a man than whom none is more competent, from high character, long experience, and intellectual ability, to give evidence on this question, is unflinching in his testimony to what he has himself observed in the materialisation of figures or forms under irreproachable conditions of test. The literature of Spiritualism is full of such evidence, and though some of it be laxly stated, much of it can be got rid of only by supposing that the writers are consciously stating what is not true. The facts are substantially proven, whatever the explanation of them may be.

It has frequently occurred to me to wonder whether these phenomena are transitory, the signs of a transition epoch, to pass when it is over. And I find Mr. Cook, in the pamphlet to which I have already more than once referred,* giving utterance to the same

* *The Rationale of Spiritualism.*

feeling. "I am not of those who believe that the manifestations of spiritual power, now so general, will always abide with the race. They occur only in transition periods. . . . Hence I regard this as essentially a history-making epoch." It has been so before, as we know, and it may be so now. But if the phenomena do remain, and if we persist in dealing with them as we have been doing, it requires no prophet to foretell a constant crop of these exposures. The observant critic who turns his eye from this country to America will find the same condition of things. There, as here, popular Spiritualism presents features for which its adherents have good cause to blush. And so it will be to the end of this chapter of human folly; till we have learned our lesson in the only school that turns out instructed scholars—the school of hard and dearly-bought experience.

LESSONS OF THE FUTURE.

It is just three years—January, 1877—since, in writing on the Slade case,* I took occasion to say, at some length, what seemed to me to be the broad aspects of Spiritualism, the mistakes of Spiritualism, and the necessities of the immediate future. Among them I instanced the study of mediumship, and of the conditions under which its phenomena may successfully be evoked, the proper methods of holding public circles, and the need for care in eliciting spiritual phenomena. I have nothing to withdraw of what I

* *The Slade Case*. By M. A. (Oxon). London: J. Burns, 15 Southampton Row, W.C.

then said. I have little to add, though three years additional experience has deepened at once my conviction of the truth of what I then wrote, and my despair of seeing what I desire accomplished.*

It may be that we have been moving too fast, and that this great revolution requires a check that we may pause, and breathe, and learn a little wisdom. I think I can see that after every crisis in its history, when scorn is poured on its truth, and daylight is let in on its errors, it roots itself more firmly, spreads itself more widely, and is more a source of attraction than before. This may be the beneficent purpose of what seems so hard a trial. Be this as it may, it behoves us to try at least to see what we are lacking in, and what we should avoid, as well as what we ought to do; and, in recapitulating what I have said, I will endeavour to focus attention on these points. You will then see what is the outlook of the future as gleaned from the teaching of the past.

DESIDERANDA.

What do I desiderate?

1. With respect to the phenomena of Spiritualism, I earnestly desire that in all circles to which enquirers are admitted, the most careful means be adopted to present facts to them under conditions that avoid the very appearance of deception, that preclude the possibility of the pranks of a tricky spirit, and that admit of such observation as may satisfy a reasonable man. This involves, in my opinion, the abolition of all means

* For the substance of the remarks alluded to see Appendix.

of secluding the medium, and—though I do not lay so much stress on this—of dark circles also. Such phenomena only should be sought as can be had under these conditions.

2. To the end that our circles may be more reasonably conducted, I desire a careful study of mediumship, and of its phases, and of the circumstances under which its phenomena may safely be evoked. I am sure that the conditions under which ordinary public circles are usually held are fatal to the medium, and land the sitters in bewilderment, even when they do not induce spirit-imposture. We have no right to treat our mediums so. I, for one, am ashamed of the way in which their delicate powers are abused, and have a deep sympathy with them in all honest work they do.

3. With respect to the general aspects of Spiritualism, let us remember that when that ill-omened word is mentioned, there rises before the public mind a picture of the grotesque convulsions of furniture, emotional descriptions of equally grotesque sèances, exposures of imposture, advocacy of crotchets, and general absurdity, as public opinion judges. Let us see to it that we present to the world some at least of the higher aspects of the much-maligned subject. It is not all the silly thing men think it. Let us rise to the plane of spirit, and teach men what we find there.

4. And for ourselves, esoterically, let us learn wisdom. We are a company whose faith is varied, whose private opinions are divergent. Let us have so much self-sacrifice as to keep our private fancies in

the background, while we unite in defence of the common faith that is ours. Ephraim is perpetually vexing Judah, and Judah is not slow to retaliate. Would that in the hallowing atmosphere when we unite in communion with those who have risen above the strifes of the lower world, we might learn to live in peace and unity with our brethren who are still by our side; so far, at least, as love of truth, and zeal for its cause permit. The pitiful waste of force that each year shows, is one of the most melancholy aspects of the question.

5. And this, I believe, will never be remedied until we learn that Spiritualism without spirituality is a body without a soul—so little desirable that it is sure to lead its votaries to some form of physical, intellectual, or moral degradation; so entirely to be deprecated as that, even now, the whole movement suffers from its cultivation. When we learn to cherish Harmony and to love Peace, to aspire to a life of true spiritual vigour and health, to regard the phenomenal evidences of spirit action only as the signs and wonders that testify to the inner working of the inspiring and informing spirit that broods over the waste waters of our earthly life, to avoid the depths where linger the mist and fog of earth, and to rise to the heights where we may breathe the pure and invigorating air that braces the spirit within us, when, in brief, we lift our souls to the noblest ideal that they can grasp, we shall leave behind us these bad dreams, and realise, as we cannot now, the SPIRIT AND THE TRUTH OF SPIRITUALISM.

SPIRITUALISM

IN SOME OF

ITS RELIGIOUS ASPECTS.

“The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil.”—St. John vii. 20.

“Have any of the Pharisees or the Rulers believed on him?”—St. John vii. 48.

“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”—St. John i. 46.

“We have all heard the witty saying that scientific truths have three stages to pass through. First, the truth is denied; next, they are declared to be contrary to religion; and lastly, it is said that no one ever denied them.”—*Times' Leader*, September 23, 1874.

“No talents and acquirements can serve in this crisis without an absolute renunciation of claptrap. Those who cannot obtain to this have no part in the future which is before us; real insight and real progress are impossible for them. Jesus would have said of them—*They cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*”—MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Contemporary Review*, October, 1874.

“They do us an ill turn, and we owe them no thanks for it, who compel us to keep going back to examine the old grounds, and declaring their want of solidity. What we need is to have done with all this negative, unfruitful business, and to get to religion again—to the use of the Bible upon new grounds which shall be secure. The old grounds *cannot* be used safely any more, and if one opens one's eyes one must see it. Those who inveigh against us could see it, if they chose, as plainly as we do; and they ought to open their eyes and see it, but they will not. And they want us to go on trusting foolishly to the old grounds as they do, until all tumbles in and there is a great ruin and confusion.”—MATTHEW ARNOLD, *Contemporary Review*, October, 1874.

I.

OLD JUDAISM AND THE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST.

SPIRITUALISM has had many opponents. Science has looked down on it with a cold sneer; Philosophy has tabooed it; Fashion has given it the cold shoulder: though now, with proverbial fickleness, she is coquetting with the subject that she once looked askance at; and Theology has roundly asserted that it is the work of the great Father of Lies, diabolic in its origin and devilish in its outcome. Perhaps this last objection is the most dangerous of all. Superstition dies hard, more especially when the "craft is in danger." From time immemorial the devil has been the convenient scape-goat on which every inconvenient truth may be fastened. It was so in the last great epoch, as in every one that preceded it. In all ages when God has been revealing to man higher views of Himself, man has shrunk back, and, unable to discern them, has affirmed them to be of the devil. When Jesus Christ was engaged with His mission on earth, the Jews said of Him—"He hath a devil, and is mad;" or, if that precise mode of objection failed, they recurred at once to another—"Have any of the Pharisees or Rulers believed on him?" Just as now-a-days men say of

the new truth—It is of the devil; or, failing that, they cry with the writer in the first number of the *New Quarterly*—“Let a few of the great names in science be ranged on the side of Spiritualism: let some of our men of science who are philosophers as well as savants say they believe in it, and it will be time for reasoning men to bestir themselves.” Pharisees and Rulers again, only in another guise.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.

At the time when Jesus Christ was born into this world there was much in the state of society, especially of the religious world, which bears a very close resemblance to the days in which we live. Man had outgrown the old faith. A large portion of the thinking world had lapsed into infidelity. The Sadducees believed in nothing, neither angel nor spirit, nor even in a future state. Others had lapsed into mere formalism—they were the Ritualists of the period—neglecting “the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth,” they would recognise nothing outside of the strict limits of the Church—*i.e.*, of their own opinions. They deemed that they possessed the key of knowledge, and they persecuted any one who refused to enter by their door, doubtless quite as honestly as devout men were burned and martyred in the bloody reign of Mary, or as the Pharisees of the *Record* and the *Rock* would now persecute, if they could, all who venture to disagree with them.

The Word of God had become of none effect through the overlaying of man's tradition. Mighty pains the

Scribes took to elaborate mere textual criticism. Laborious effort elaborated gloss after gloss, until the simplicity of the Divine message was obscured by the fogs of human ignorance, even as now the simplicity of the Gospel of Christ is lost in the mists of modern Christianity. If any one would see how far human ignorance can disguise Divine truth, let him select some single point of Christ's teaching, and read the commentaries upon it by divines of various Churches. The Fathers of the Early Church, the Medioeval Roman writers, the commentators of the Eastern Church, the Anglican, German, and modern orthodox theologians, to say nothing of writers external to the Catholic Church—all these and ten thousand others have piled up their own little mound of criticism, until the bewildered reader feels that the germ of truth has long since been lost, buried deep beneath the divergent opinions with which it has been overlaid. And still the dreary work goes on. Volume after volume issues from the press, each rendering confusion worse confounded. Revision committees laboriously plod over mere textual criticism, spending years of valuable time in preparing emendations which will add one more shock to unreasoning faith, and fabricating one more bolt to be launched by the hand of orthodoxy against its own stronghold. The parallel is complete.

We shall see it if we recur to the days of Christ. How did God deal with the state of the world which we have described as a condition of dissatisfaction with the past, and of expectation in the future?

The means taken to enlighten the dense ignorance and prejudice of the Jewish Church was perhaps the most unlikely that could have been devised for the purpose. If we look at the state of the Jewish world at the time of the coming of John Baptist, remembering to view it from an orthodox Jewish standpoint, we shall see points of similarity to what is now occurring in our own midst, which are well worthy of serious attention. The contrast between the Jewish world as it would appear to an orthodox Pharisee, and the Christian world as it now seems to an orthodox Churchman, would be such as this.

As the Jew looked round upon the state of his religious world in the days immediately preceding the birth of Christ, his reflections would carry him back over the religious history of his people.

Four thousand years of this world's history had rolled away since, in the far-distant past, the promise had first been given of some one who should regenerate humanity. Nations had arisen and sunk again into obscurity, and still it was unaccomplished—"A light shining in a dark place." Two thousand years had passed over the chosen Israel since the day when God had first said of their Father Abraham—"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed;" and still the Day Star to which that promise pointed had not arisen upon the favoured nation. And now, after centuries of intercourse with the elect Church and people, by angelic visitants, by miracles of mercy and judgment, by a continuous stream of prophetic promise and vision, God had at length, as it seemed,

sealed up the fount of prophetic light by that prediction which closes the canon of the Old Testament, that Elijah the prophet should re-appear before the advent of the Redeemer. Still for five hundred years or nearly, after that closing prophecy, no voice but the voice of uninspired man was heard throughout the once divinely instructed Judah. It was a season of peculiar spiritual desolation. God seemed to have withdrawn Himself from His Church—"Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Few eyes among them were lifted up to watch for the twilight dawn of day. Few were looking for the consolation of Israel, or if they did, it was not for a heavenly and spiritual, but for a carnal and earthly Saviour, for the Monarch who should come in all the pomp and pageantry of earthly sovereignty to reward his true followers with the coveted treasures of earth.

It was indeed a season of especial darkness. The glimmerings of day, however, were at hand, and the first Divine utterance that broke the prophetic stillness so long undisturbed was the voice of the Angel of the Lord sent to a priest in the Jewish Temple to forewarn him of the birth of the Forerunner of Messiah. It is curious, moreover, to observe that the thread of prophecy which Malachi had relinquished was taken up unbroken. The first prophetic utterance of the New Testament is a continuation of the last prediction of the Old. The continuity is unbroken. John Baptist, first Prophet of the Gospel, is a living fulfilment of the final prediction of Malachi, last Prophet of the Jewish law.

JOHN BAPTIST AND HIS MESSAGE.

It was in answer to this prediction that suddenly there appeared in the wilderness of Judea a strange man of unusual aspect and bearing; a solitary man, one severed from the common tastes of his species; a melancholy man, who loved the desolate places and the waste; whose clothing was but a tattered skin of some solitary wild beast of the wilderness; whose food was but the locusts and honey which the solitude supplied; whose resting-place was the bare rock, and the desert his home. This was John Baptist, the Forerunner. He stood there in savage isolation, apart from the world to which he came to testify; but he had a "Voice" which soon surrounded him, even in the waste wilderness, with listeners. He had the voice of truth, of terror, of warning, which testified of forgotten promises, of faded hopes, of a degenerate Church and a ruined world, of wondrous things in the past, of glorious things in the future, of the fan which was to winnow the world, of the fire which was to purify the Church, of the near at hand kingdom. It was a Voice that reached the cities of the land, and soon peopled that solitary plain with their multitudinous inhabitants. "There went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the regions round about Jordan." The learned Scribe, the proud Priest, the ministering Levite, the Roman soldier, the despised Publican, and the self-complacent Pharisee—all came flocking to hear the fervent eloquence of the desert preacher, and to cry—"Who art thou? and What must we do?"

What was his voice to them? Was it some courtly strain of flattery that poured the gentle unction of peace into their souls; or a strain of misty æstheticism that dealt with the feelings rather than with the life; or the enunciation of oft-told platitudes which might tickle their ears; or a rigid ceremonialism which rested on the dogma, "Do this and live, do it not and die;" or a stern insisting upon the intellectual acceptance of a prescribed creed, "Purchase salvation by belief and live, or, believe not, and have eternal death"—was this the message of the first Forerunner? Assuredly not: it was none of these. It was the most awful, the most uncompromising, the most stern and almost savage denunciation of class sins. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," rung in the ears of the self-righteous Pharisee fresh from his ritual observance and his neglect of judgment, mercy, and truth. "O generation of vipers, bring forth fruits meet for repentance." "God will of these stones raise up children to Abraham before you." "There stands one among you whom ye know not." His day is near, His kingdom is at hand. It will be a day of purging, of threshing, of winnowing, and sifting—a day which you must face.

We may almost seem to see that strange and solitary man, as he stood upon the brow of some precipitous rock in the wilderness of Judea, with the fords of Jordan at his feet, testifying to the gracious dealings of Jehovah with His people, when He divided the waters that the ransomed might pass over; with the dark expanse of that sea of death in

his gaze which covers the cities of destruction—Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim. We may picture him as he stands there, stern, dark, severe, wild in outward mien, his unpolled hair streaming over his massive shoulders, his strong gaunt limbs almost unclad, a hairy man girt with a leathern girdle about his loins, hardened by long lonely fastings, a terrible summoner to repentance, terrible even to the faithful, and with barely a word of absolution for the sinner. We may almost catch the deep and solemn tones of those deeply solemn words—"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight." And as we gaze we recognise in this Forerunner, the man who was to come in the spirit and power of Elias, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." What manner of messenger was this to the Pharisees and Sadducees of Israel? Surely a most unlikely one: one as little likely to command acceptance as any we can fancy; and yet how like to that other messenger whom God had previously sent to convince His people of their sins. Elijah seems indeed to have reappeared according to the word of Malachi. Our minds go back to the days of Ahab and Jezebel, and the points of similarity come strikingly before us. Like the Baptist, Elijah came as a witness against his nation's sins. Like him, he was a Reformer—a testifier that God was giving His people a new revelation of Himself. As an epoch closed upon the chosen race, the constant cry of both

was—"Repent, and change your deeds." "If the Lord be God, then follow Him; if Baal, then follow Him." Like John, Elijah too was a melancholy man, ever mourning over his people's sins, wild in his garb, solitary in his habits, dwelling in caves of the rock, his home among the wild beasts and the ravens by the side of the brook Cherith. In his end alone he differed from the Forerunner. Miraculously translated, as the Jew believed, it was fancied that he should return in glory to inaugurate Messiah's reign. The blue heavens, it was thought, would be cloven, the mighty voice of the rushing whirlwind would again be heard, and the chariot and horses of fire would descend, bearing the prophet from heaven to the city of the Great King. The blazing chariot would go up to the Holy Mount with a mighty noise and the sound of the trump, while kneeling thousands would cry as of old—"My Father, my Father! The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" And then, they fancied, Messiah would come in all the visible splendour of regal state, King not only of the heavenly Jerusalem, but, what they valued very much more, King of the earthly Jerusalem too. Their troubles would be at an end, the Roman oppression would cease, and the favoured people would once more be the chosen of God, chiefest of the chief ones of the earth. Such was the dream. The fulfilment was the cry of this solitary man in the wilderness, the most unlikely of all Messengers of the new Revelation.

THE BIRTH AND MISSION OF THE CHRIST.

And when the Messiah was born, the same unlikely condition was perpetuated. Let us turn and view the birth of Christ from the orthodox Christian standpoint. Let us dwell a moment on that astounding mystery, the cardinal dogma of orthodox Churches, the union of God with man in the person of Jesus Christ. Majesty and meanness seem everywhere combined in the history of the Son of God. In the eternal counsels of the All-wise it is decreed—so we are taught—that the Son of God should be born into this world to save it from the doom of sin. The King of heaven is to descend to earth and to become a Son of Man. Who then shall be his mother? On whom among the great ones of the earth shall this chiefest honour be conferred? On none: but upon a lowly virgin espoused to a carpenter unknown and unhonoured among the world's nobility. In what city and in which of the royal palaces shall His infant form be cradled? In none: but in the corner of an empty manger of a wayside inn the Lord of Life was born. The angel hosts of heaven receive the Divine commands to herald this mighty miracle—God manifest in the flesh. To whom, then, among the kings of the earth are they commissioned to bear their message? To none: but to simple shepherds as they watch their flocks beneath the midnight sky, following their simple avocations. Kings of the East and wise men, led by the Star of Bethlehem, came to worship and offer costly oblations to the new born King, but they made their

offering in a stable. So it was throughout all His life: majesty and meanness are throughout combined. As for instance when His word of power spoke peace to the diseased soul and devils trembled at His voice; as when a word from Him healed the sick, and disease fled vanquished from His presence; or, still more marvellously, when His utterance of miraculous power unbound the spell of death, and recalled the mouldering body from the grasp of dissolution; or as, when on the mount of transfiguration, He stood before His three disciples in the unveiled glory of one who communed with those who had long since left the sphere of earth, and a Voice from the open heaven bore witness to the well-loved Son; or as, when insulted, mocked, reviled, and crucified, He wrung from the Centurion the confession—"Verily, this was the Son of God." It was true of Him as it had been true of all who bore God's message to the world—He was a most unlikely messenger, and sprung from a most unlikely source. The people said of Him—"He hath a devil, and is mad," and the Pharisees sneered at Him as a Pretender, the Sadducees would have none of Him, but "*THE common people HEARD HIM GLADLY.*" The parallel is sufficiently plain; and they who regard what we have written as a fair expression of what they hold to be truth, are not those who can fairly dismiss the messengers of the New Faith with the sneer that their story is absurd, and themselves unlikely messengers.

II.

MODERN CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

THE Church and the world in the present day is but little different from the Church and the world in the days of Christ. The Church which arrogates to itself the title of Catholic has been occupied of late with attaching to a fallible man one of the inalienable prerogatives of Almighty God. In the Church of England, among the different sections into which it has been severed, the High Church—the Pharisees of the period—are occupied with the minutiae of ritual, well-nigh to the exclusion of real vital religion. The Low Church are occupied in teaching terrible dogmas, which found no place in Christ's gospel, and in consigning to irremediable hell all who refuse or are unable to accept them. The most active religious life is found outside of the National Church, and in quarters most widely removed from acceptance of its tenets. And even amongst these, what a divergence must be sadly noted from the "simplicity that is in Christ." The Christ-idea, the spiritual truth that He proclaimed, is dragging out a lingering life, choked by the weeds of sacerdotalism and human theology.

Were it possible for a man who was unacquainted with the popular religion of the period to enter some of the Churches which best represent any popular phase of opinion, he would be most struck with the absence of the Christ-like spirit, and with the prevalence of those precise characteristics which distinguished the Pharisees and Rulers of the days of Christ. We refrain from criticising the popular beliefs. The task would be endless and profitless. Nor is it necessary. They are mutually destructive, and the numberless incoherent fragments into which Christian Churches are split, have little in common but the name of Him whose teaching and practice they so little represent. Dogmatic theology has no charms for us. We deal rather with facts than with theories. And the special fact that concerns us now is, that as was the teaching of John Baptist to the orthodox Jew, so is the teaching of Spiritualism to the orthodox Christian.

It is not strange that, in the face of this divergence, religion has lost its hold upon the masses. A careful study of the signs of the times, as far as they affect the thinking portion of the community, will show the infinitesimal degree to which—in any orthodox Christian sense—religion leavens representative thought. Such works as "Ecce Homo," "Literature and Dogma," "Supernatural Religion," and "The Creed of Christendom," must arrest the attention of any one who studies this side of the question. "Popular Christianity," says Mr. Matthew Arnold, "at present is so wide of the truth, is such a disfigurement of the

truth, that it fairly deserves, if it presumes to charge others with Atheism, to have that charge retorted upon itself. And future religions will perhaps not scruple to condemn it almost as mercilessly as Polycarp condemned the religion of heathen antiquity. For us, the God of popular religion is a legend, a fairy tale; learned theology has simply taken this fairy tale and dressed it metaphysically." And again, "Some, we know, have made their God in the image of the inferior animals. We have had the god Apis, and the god Anubis; but these are extravagances. In general, as God is said to have made man in His own image, the image of God, man has returned the compliment, and outwardly or inwardly has made God in the image of man." Turning from this view to that which is best exemplified by the "very learned and exact book which has lately appeared, having for its title, *Supernatural Religion*," the case is not improved. The writer, with vast store of erudition and merciless use of logic, demolishes the popular view of the Bible. He "leaves the reader when he closes the book with the feeling that the Bible stands before him like a fair tree all stripped, torn, and defaced, not at all like a tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." The popular conceptions of miracles, and the sacred record with regard to them, is simply shattered. A careful and exact estimate of the work in question appears in the *Fortnightly Review* of October, 1874, from the pen of the editor; and to his remarks, all worthy of careful note, but too long for quotation, the reader is referred.

OBJECTIONS THEN AND NOW.

If we have made clear the points which we have wished to present, it will be seen that the very objections which the Scribes and Pharisees of the nineteenth century bring against the present enlargement of our views of Revelation, are precisely those which their Jewish prototypes brought against that Revelation of Christ which our accusers have agreed to accept as final. For them God has closed the Book of Revelation, and has ceased to speak. So thought the Jew when the echoes of Malachi's prophetic voice had died away. Yet John Baptist heralded the Christ, even as now messengers are heralding the dawn of a richer and truer Faith. The Jew sneered at the source of the new teaching—"Can any good come out of Nazareth!"—the modern orthodox Christian does the same. The old Jew, even when partly Christianised, could not shake off his worldly notions of respectability and ambition. The modern Christian views with horror anything that comes from without the Church, and vainly looks for some unknown time when his Risen Redeemer shall return, and the millennial reign shall begin, and he shall have his share of glory.

And if his positions are impugned, he is ready with the parrot cry that greeted Christ—"This blasphemer says." Or if he be pushed still further, he will put argument aside, and answer all objections by a text—a text wrested from its context—a text from some work written in ages past for other men in other states of being—a text from a book the original of which he

probably cannot even read, and of the authenticity and application of which he has not the faintest notion. Surely, if there be a Deceiver of man, he could not have devised a more complete plan for paralysing the intellect and deluding the soul, than this fallacy which is so rife amongst us!

It is impossible, indeed, to deal with objections so long as they take the shadowy form of isolated quotations from the Bible. To deal with the matter on its merits, it would be necessary to investigate the questions of inspiration, revelation, miracles, the authenticity of the passages quoted, and the correctness of their translation. What is meant by Inspiration? Is it verbal or not? Is all the Bible inspired, and the English translation too? (for that alone is known to ninety-nine out of every hundred who attack us.) If that be pretended, we have no more to say to persons so foolish. If not, we are prepared to define the limits of Inspiration, and the value to be attached to particular passages as of binding force on us.

Is it pretended that Revelation ceased with the Book of the Apocalypse? or that within the covers of our Bible we have the only and the complete revealing of God? or that such Revelation is one for all time and for all mankind? or that in all its several parts it is of binding force on us and on all men? If this be pretended, we have no more to say to persons of such heroic faith. If not, we are prepared to estimate the value of the old revelations in their succession, and to collate and compare the views of the Supreme there enunciated with others which have

been revealed in other ages and to other peoples, as well as with those which are being now revealed amongst ourselves.

Is it pretended that the Age of Miracles is past? that it ceased with the Apostles of Christ? that the miracles of the Bible are literally true, and all others false? If that be pretended, we are prepared to retire from the field of controversy in dismay. We do not fight with ignorant fanaticism. If not, we would point out that Jesus Christ especially promised an increased power to His followers; and that, therefore, miracles (so called) may be expected to continue instead of ceasing. And this expectation we would show to have been abundantly realised amongst His true followers, in all ages subsequent to His, even to the present moment.

Is it pretended that we, living in the nineteenth century, are bound by the enactments of the Levitical Law as regards dealing with Spirits? If so, we are prepared to enforce on our accusers the whole of its provisions. We decline to allow them to pick out what suits their purpose, and to reject the rest. The whole or none, if our opponents please; and by the time they have accepted and obeyed the whole law, they will not be in a position to find much more fault with us.

It would manifestly require a volume to treat even superficially of all these points. They are not within the scope of the present essay. We can but say—and we shall be careful to say nothing which is not capable of direct proof—that we do *not* believe that God once

spoke and has for ever since been dumb. We do *not* believe that He inspired the Jewish and Christian Bibles both in the original and the translations, and that we have there an infallible record of the Divine Word. We do *not* believe that any text can settle any moot point. We do *not* believe in the authenticity and applicability of much that passes for inspired truth. But we *do* believe that in the Bible we possess a strange and tangled, but most deeply valuable record of the dealings of God with divers men in divers ages. We read and learn of Him with pleasure and profit, but we do not take the sanitary legislation of Moses as our one guide and law. We *do* believe in a present God operating in our midst now as of old: the same God, using similar means for a similar end. We *do* believe emphatically in the teaching of Jesus Christ, and we reverence Him and His work in a far higher and more rational way than do those who attribute to Him words and claims which were never His, and who distort and twist His teaching into something which He never meant.



III.

SOME FREQUENTLY RECURRING OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

I. THE BIBLE MIRACLES AND THE PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALISM.

THE age of miracles is said to be past: and although certain phenomena described as miracles are recorded in the Bible, they are alleged to be utterly *unlike both in kind and degree to anything that has occurred since*. Is it so? In the 16th chapter of Genesis it is stated that an angel appeared to Hagar, Sarah's maid, in the wilderness, and comforted her.

In the 18th chapter it is stated that three angels in the forms of men appeared to Abraham upon the plains of Mamre, that Abraham entertained them with material food, and conversed with them at the door of his tent for some considerable time.

In the 19th chapter of Genesis it is stated that two angels in the forms of men appeared to Lot at the gate of Sodom, and rescued him and his family from impending danger.

In the 21st chapter it is said that an angel appeared again to Hagar, and comforted her about her boy Ishmael.

In the 22nd chapter it is said that an angel intervened to save the life of Isaac, who was about to be sacrificed by his father.

In the 28th chapter it is said that Jacob had a dream, that in the course of that dream he saw a ladder extending from earth to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon it.

Thus, within twelve chapters we have records of phenomena which prove, if they are accepted as real, the intercourse of spirits, frequently in a material form, with earth. The age of miracles has ceased! We recommend anyone who is inclined to affirm that, to read the records of spiritual phenomena during the past year. He will there find that the intervention of spirits with earth—ay, in a material form—so far from having ceased, is more pronounced than ever. And if he will give himself the trouble to place side by side the evidence for their appearance now, and their appearance then, he may decide for himself which body of evidence he would best like to place before a jury. For the former we have the sworn testimony of hundreds of credible persons now living amongst us—men whose words are unimpeachable—whose evidence would be sufficient to hang a man, and who have submitted the phenomena to rigid scientific investigation, the accuracy of which leaves nothing to be desired. For the former we have—our orthodox friends may say what; but assuredly something which is not the result of scientific investigation.

Again, in the 6th chapter of Judges, we have the case of Gideon, who, when summoned to his mission to relieve Israel from the oppression of Midian, requested a sign to confirm his doubting mind. There is a fanaticism of incredulity as well as of credulity,

and Gideon appears to belong to those who were in the condition of fanatical incredulity. Accordingly, he requested a sign, and it was given. A fleece of wool placed upon the ground was drenched with dew to such an extent that a bowl was filled from the wringing of the fleece while the ground around was dry. Still Gideon was not satisfied, and he requested that the process might be reversed. "Will my Lord allow me to place the fleece again, and let the wool remain dry, and the ground become wet?" It was done; and time after time have we seen manifestations in no degree dissimilar given for the confirming of weak faith, and reversed or altered, according to dictation, to satisfy the weak brother. Gideon was not the only man who has wanted a test of his own devising.

Not to multiply instances, the book of Ezekiel, in its first three chapters, records the various manifestations that occurred to the prophet—his dreams and visions and spiritual intercourse. Often in the course of the record Ezekiel says a spirit entered into him and enabled him to hear a voice from the sky telling him what he was to speak. It is only those who are acquainted with the phenomena of trance-speaking who can enter into the exact parallel between the experiences of Ezekiel and those which are current amongst ourselves. The New Testament is full of similar occurrences. It is one vast record from Matthew to Revelations of manifestations similar in kind to those so familiar to Spiritualists, and scarce one of them but can be paralleled in thousands of cases

which occur at the present day. It would be tedious to produce evidence on such a plain matter of fact. Those who doubt it may be recommended to investigate for themselves.

II. SPIRITUALISM IS NECROMANCY, AND THEREFORE FORBIDDEN.

Shifting the ground from that of the final cessation of divine agency among men, our opponents have another objection at hand—"It is wrong for us to deal with spirits. No doubt spirits did appear as is alleged of old, but at any rate it cannot be denied that God forbade the Jews from dealing with them, and even prohibited them from going near any dealers with familiar spirits." In fact, Spiritualism, they say, is necromancy, and necromancy is forbidden in the Bible. "In the latter days"—that is, *now*, according to the assumption of these interpreters—false Christs, false prophets, signs, wonders, doctrines of devils, and all the rest of it is prophesied, "in so much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." From all this they argue that the condemned necromancy is come under the auspices of the devil to usher in the advent of Christ (strange conjunction!), and that this is one of the signs of the times.

This jumble contains fallacy upon fallacy. It is not worth while to go into the question at length, simply because those who seriously advance the argument are fanatics, whom no reasoning would reach. It is, however, so frequently put forward by pious and well-meaning persons, that it may be worth while to

say that Spiritualism is not necromancy, but that it is, in its complete sense, the intervention of the spiritual with the material world, of which intervention the Bible is one long record. To call it by a nick-name which is only applicable—if at all—to a small portion of its sphere of action, is disingenuous. It is no new thing, and was known as well to the prophets and seers of Israel as to us. It has been and is a recognised instrument of divine intervention with mundane affairs. Necromancy was forbidden to the Jews, simply as a vast number of other things were forbidden to them. And why? The reason is stated over and over again. They were to be a peculiar people, separate and distinct from all the nations round them. Everything that these nations did, the Jews were not to do—and all these people were acquainted with and practised communion with spirits. So, lest the Jews should frequent the heathen mysteries and heed the heathen messages, they were cut off from the opportunity once and for all. The command was to them and not to us, and folks have as much right to ask us not to eat pork, to keep the Jewish Sabbath, or to fall upon the first Japanese we see in the street and slay him with the edge of the sword, as they have to quote Mosaic laws about necromancy and apply them to us as our rule of life and conduct. Some people seem to think that everything is settled by a text. It is no use to argue with such. They may be left to their texts, and then they will pick out only those that suit them. Injunctions about “trying the spirits,” “seeking earnestly spiritual

gifts," and the texts which describe angelic and spiritual visitants are all ignored or explained away with a lack of sense and reason which would be pitiful were it not mischievous. The latter days alluded to were the days of the destruction of Jerusalem, and there can be no doubt that the disciples imagined the end of the world was to be then: Christ was to come when the Roman foe was crushed, and the Millennium was to begin. There is no shred of reason for transferring the predictions about that epoch to this. The disciples were plainly mistaken in their ideas.

Spiritualism gives a new colour to religion, and the modern dealing with the spirits throws the best light upon their intercourse with men in ages past. If persons will be content to take a rational view of inspiration, and of the records of that marvellous story which is so new and yet so old—the Bible—they will see that spirits, in some form or other, have been the vehicles of God's communications to man since time first began. And they may gather from that the hope that they will continue to be so till time shall be no more.

III. SPIRITS ARE TRICKSY OR EVIL.

Again, it is alleged that the spirits who communicate are demons—at best, personating spirits, or Pucks.

This objection is one that has its rise in the difficulty which most people find in fitting in the new knowledge of the future state with the old idea

of it, which has been erroneously evolved from a too literal acceptance of the oriental imagery of Scripture. Most of us have our theories of the future drawn from orthodox sources, and they very much colour our expectations. We cannot imagine our friends returning for the purpose of giving a mere passing greeting, and then leaving us unsolaced. The instincts of humanity are against the notion. "I am sure," says the sorrowing widow, whose agonised mind is not in the best frame for accurate judgment, and who just now thinks that Spiritualism means the return of the departed, especially of *her* departed, "I am sure, if my dear husband were permitted to return to me, he would never leave me with the shred of a sentence such as this. He would have said so and so, and so and so. . . ." This is pure human instinct, exaggerated and intensified by sorrow. For instance, did any wife, bred up in the strictest sect of our religion, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, a Puritan of the Puritans, ever seriously picture—let us be pardoned for putting the question plainly—*ever seriously picture her husband in the material hell of fire and brimstone in which she professes to believe?* Did the most red-hot Calvinist ever really picture his son there? Assuredly not. He will narrow down the elect to a handful out of the myriad myriads of humanity; but he will take care to put himself and his friends among the chosen few. If driven into a corner, he will take refuge in platitudes about the mercy of God, though he is careful enough in shutting the rest of the world out from a share in it. This, I

say, is pure human nature—selfish at root—and shifty from being driven to unworthy straits by unworthy conceptions of God.

Personating spirits must be either—1st, Those who, as a hoax, or from malicious motives, or from a love of posturing under great names, “fool us to the top of our bent.”

No doubt there are such spirits, and the curious investigator who seeks to pry into all mystery, and asks the profoundest questions of any chance spirit that he comes across, will not be long in making their acquaintance. Some of them would seem to be on a lower plane than our own; others are apparently destitute of moral consciousness, and play tricks that soon tell their own tale—the tricks of a Puck, rather than the delusive attempts to deceive and ensnare, which are suggestive of an evil origin; others, again, are vain creatures, strutting in borrowed plumes—Shakespeares who cannot spell, Bacons who cannot convey consecutive ideas; others are really actors of excellence, who play their part for a time with skill. But all, of whatever degree, soon show their real character to a patient and reasonable man, who is not in himself the reflex of the spirits he has attracted to him. All of us are liable to the temporary vexation of having to deal with such spirits; but it is our own fault, or that of our guardians, if we do not dismiss them, the better for a brief intercourse, and turn to something more worth attention. It is the folly on this side that generates, or at least attracts and encourages, a deal of the folly on the other.

If not such as these, then—2nd, Personating spirits are demons: devils, in short, emissaries of Satan.

Here we come again across the result of orthodox theological training. Theology framed for itself long ago a devil which has been a convenient lay figure ever since. I do not see why such a devil as Calvinists, Puritans, and the narrow school of Evangelicals believe in, should not account, on the most comprehensive principles, for the whole mystery of evil. He is practically an Omnipotent God of Evil, powerful for evil as the Supreme for good, restrained by no laws, trammelled by no compunctions from within—a merciless, sleepless, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God of Evil. No power can exclude him from man's most secret life, for he is Lord of all man's passions. No power can fetter him until a mysterious far-off-day, when he is at last to be disposed of for ever. What wonder that that day seems shadowy, the while the devil is at large on the earth! Prayer, indeed, may drive him off for a while, but only for a while, and even prayer must seem a broken reed to lean on in the face of such a foe. While he is rampant, even heaven itself can know no security.

THE ORTHODOX DEVIL.

Is this so? Whence came the idea? We have spent some laborious hours in collating from the different books of the Bible the various senses in which the word is used, and in tracing the growth of this Omnipotent Fiend of Orthodox Theology. The results, not a little curious, are too long to find a place

here; but it is not too much to say that the term is applied generically to everything which the writer wishes to brand with his disapproval. And as regards the actual Personal Devil, the epithets applied to him, and the work which he apparently performs, are most remarkable. He is the Accuser of his brethren (Rev. xii. 10), the Angel of the Bottomless Pit (Rev. ix. 11), The Adversary (1 Peter v. 8), The Dragon (John xxvii. 1; Rev. xx. 2), The Enemy (Matt. xiii. 39), The Evil Spirit (1 Sam. xvi. 14), The Lying Spirit (1 Kings xxii. 22), The Old Serpent (Rev. xii. 9), The Father of Lies (John viii. 44), The Crooked Serpent (Isa. xxvii. 1), The Unclean Spirit (Matt. xii. 43), The Great Red Dragon (Rev. xii. 3), The Power of Darkness (Col. i. 13), The Prince of the World (John xiv. 30), The Prince of Devils (Matt. xii. 24), Prince of the Power of the Air (Ephes. ii. 2), Ruler of the Darkness of this World (Ephes. vi. 12). This is a fair list of *aliases*, and it is by no means complete. He is also Apollyon (Rev. ix. 11), Beelzebub (Matt. xii. 24), Belial (2 Cor. vi. 15), Leviathan (Isa. xxvii. 1), Murderer (John viii. 44), Tempter (Matt. iv. 3), Liar (John viii. 44), and Satan (Job. i. 6).

And yet the ghastly catalogue is not half written. The term *Devil* in Scripture is so variously applied, indeed, that one finds it hard to know what is really meant. For instance, a comparison of 2 Sam. xxiv. 1 with 1 Chronicles xxi. 1 shows that the same act is attributed to God and to Satan. How is this? In Luke xiii. 16 the term *Devil* is applied to a disease; in John vi. 70, to a traitor; in Zech. iii. 1, to an adver-

sary ; and in Mark viii. 33, to a worldly man. Are all these devils, or the work of the devil, or what are we to understand ?

THE GROWTH OF THE IDEA.

The growth and development of the idea is of this sort. Satan does not appear in the Old Testament, except in the later books—Job, Zechariah, and 1st Chronicles. His functions originally appertained to Jehovah, the Jewish God. He it was who hardened, provoked, destroyed. And it was only when the spiritual sensitiveness of the Jews rejected this idea as applicable to their God that the functions of Accuser, Adversary, Satan, were handed over to “a Son of God,” a chief prosecutor, as in Job i. 6. Bit by bit the functions of this Adversary develop. His familiarity with evil apparently makes him suspicious, and he becomes not only an Accuser, but a Slanderer, and as such is rebuked when offering (Zech. iii. 2) to become a slanderer of Joshua, the high priest. He next becomes a *diabolus*, an aider and abettor of crime, and he tempts to its commission for the pleasure of seeing the criminals punished.

This was the state of Jewish belief about 588 B.C., when they became closely associated with Persia, and borrowed the Ahriman, or Evil Spirit, and erected him into a sort of Infernal God.

In the New Testament the development increases ; and our translators have materially aided it by the laxity with which they have rendered the words, Satan, Diabolus, Adversary, Slanderer, &c.—e.g. St. Paul (1 Tim. iii. 11) warns the wives of the deacons

not to be "devils;" wishing to be polite, the translators rendered the word "slanderers." Again (Titus ii. 3), St. Paul warns the old women not to be devils, but the word is rendered "accusers." So that our difficulties are increased by this lax use of terms.

It is correct to say that the term "devil" is one of very wide application, and of easily discerned development. We have seen some of the persons and things to which the term is applied. Our heart sickens at the notion that this personage, with all his Protean aliases, is loose in the world, malignantly trying to delude confiding folks. If this be so, then we are indeed accursed. But we take heart of grace, and boldly strip the mask from this gruesome Fiend. He has been, as we have pointed out, a steady growth. Oriental love of imagery and personification crystalised him first into shape. He was furbished up, dressed, and rendered hideous by the morbid fancies of mediæval monks, whose minds, from a long unnatural course of fasting and maceration and loneliness, had become warped, distorted, and diseased. The creation was then taken in hand by such poets as Dante and Milton, further embellished and adorned by poetic fancy, until he has come forth the convenient fetish of popular theology, such as we hear of now in the full-flavoured fire-and-brimstone theology of the Calvinist, or see him in the hideously grotesque delineation of Dorè.

e/ When the theory is taken in pieces and examined, it simply evaporates, and the Devil merges into one of the undeveloped spirits who abound both in and out of the flesh. And this is probably the truth. In

the world to come as in this, the evil and good are mingled; and change of condition works no magic change of nature. "He that is holy is holy still; and he that is filthy is filthy still." Evil men become in their time evil spirits, and act accordingly. One of the most vicious consequences of the popular theory of the effects of a death-bed repentance is, to lead to the half-belief that everybody goes into the next world more or less saintly, whatever his life may have been. The idea is monstrous, dishonouring to God, and demoralising to man. The evil man does not change his evil nature by dying; the result of his evil deeds clings to him, and he cannot, as it were, transmit them to a hell where the Devil may have them as a deposit for his use in laying pitfalls for the human race.

Far be it from us to deny that undeveloped spirits may and do cause vast mischief both in the flesh and out of it. We would rather insist on the fearful harm that may be done by them, the lusts they may foster, the crimes they may incite, the angry passions they may stir. If the information we have received on the subject be at all true, this is a subject of most vital import, and the actions of the Adversaries is most real and deadly. But we are now fighting against the notion of an Arch Fiend of Evil, such as Medicevalism has pictured, and Modern Christianity has adopted. It may roundly be asserted of him, that while there are devils many in the sense of undeveloped spirits in the body and out of it, there is no such Arch Devil as theology has evolved for itself.

IV.

ON SPIRIT COMMUNION.

AGAIN we say that evil is not extinguished by bodily death. And we would solemnly warn all who deal with this matter that they beware of the means they use, and of the temper in which they approach it. Indubitably it is dangerous to a certain extent, and to certain natures. Dangerous to the evil, who will attract evil by the law of affinity, to the foolish gaper who will get pretty much what he is fit for; but not dangerous to the sincere and pure, who pry not from idle curiosity, nor force themselves unbidden into communion, who are free from the curses that bring malign influences round men—Vanity, Pride, Selfishness, and the like. Not dangerous to these, round whom the guardians watch, and fence them from attack. But the Vain Coxcomb, the Selfish Egotist, the Wise in his own Conceit, has so little to gain from the spirits who will throng around him, that, in words of solemn and sacred import, “it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea,” than that he should meddle in the matter at all.

It would be no deplorable result, if men should get a more fixed idea of the harm that *may* be done

by indiscriminate, foolish, ill-regulated attempts to gratify vain curiosity or selfish feelings by communion with the spirit-world. We, at any rate, heartily wish such a notion God-speed. For we are assured that not even the orthodox Devil is such a foe to us as many men carry within their own breasts.

ON THE BIBLICAL WARRANT FOR SPIRIT COMMUNION.

But while this is an undoubtedly necessary warning, it is a monstrous thing that students of the Bible should deem it wrong to "try the spirits" whom God permits, or, if they please, who come without permission, to commune with men. The mere list of those who are recorded to have seen and conversed with spirits would be a long one; and though we have no hope that preconceived opinion will be shaken by any facts, or that texts which we may quote will affect our opponents more than their texts affect us, we will even put down a list of *some* of the persons who so dealt with spirits. It contains some names that all will reverence:—

Adam.....	(Gen. iii. 9.)	The Jews... ..	(Judges ii. 4.)
Eve	(Gen. iii. 13.)	Manoah	{ (Judges xiii. 11,
Cain.....	(Gen. iv. 9.)		18.)
Noah	(Gen. vi. 13.)	Manoah's wife	(Judg. xiii. 3, 9.)
Abraham	(Gen. xvii. 1.)	Samuel.....	(Sam. iii. 11.)
Lot.....	(Gen. xix. 1.)	Saul	(Sam. xxviii.)
Isaac.....	(Gen. xxvi. 24.)	David.....	(2 Sam. v. 19.)
Laban	(Gen. xxxi. 24.)	Solomon	(1 Kings iii. 5.)
Jacob.....	(Gen. xxxii. 30.)	Elijah	{ (1 Kings xviii. 1.)
Moses.....	(Ex. xxxiii. 11.)		1.)
Balaam	(Num. xxii. 31.)	Elisha	(2 Kings ii. 12.)
Joshua	(Josh. i. 1.)	His Servants ...	(2 Kings vi. 17.)

Daniel	(Daniel x. 5.)	Jesus	(Mark ix. 4.)
Eliphaz	(Job iv. 15.)	Peter	{ (Matt. xvii. 13; Acts x. 13.)
Ezekiel.....	(Ezek. iii. 2.)	James	
Nebuchadnezzar	(Daniel iii. 25.)	John.....	{ (Rev. xix. 10; xxii. 9.)
Belshazzar.....	(Daniel v. 5.)	Saul	
Amos	(Amos ix. 1.)		
Zechariah.....	(Zech. iii. 1.)		

Now, an apology is due for referring to such a mass of texts, which, probably, none of our readers will take the trouble to verify. But, while admitting the tediousness, we must maintain the necessity. Were all these deluded of the Devil? It will be maintained by none. Were they, then, sinning in so dealing with spirits? Our opponents cannot allege that, seeing that the most patent case of communing with the dead occurs in the case of no less a personage than Jesus Christ himself. Was the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration real or not? If real, then we have the highest and holiest sanction for communing with the dead. If not, then what is real?—what of the record are we to believe? Our opponents, if they commit themselves to that theory, have inserted a wedge which will cleave asunder the whole volume of Inspiration, and leave it a shattered, worthless mass of fragments. If they wish to demolish the Bible, they are taking the readiest means to that end. And if such things did actually occur—nay, have occurred habitually, why not now as then? The habit of quoting texts is contagious, and it occurs to us that the wise man said: “I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever, . . . that which hath been is now, and that which is to be hath already

been;" and "the thing that hath been is the thing that shall be." We can find throughout the Bible no indication of the close of this avowed communion. Jesus practised it, and his apostles too; and the Apocalypse, which closes the canon of the New Testament, is one prolonged record of communion with disembodied spirits, and of clairvoyant vision of things which were to come.

The argument is as strong as can be conceived, and it lies with overwhelming force on those who accept a few words of the Bible as conclusive settlement of a difficulty, even more than on those who are accustomed to use their own reason in everything, and who decline to meet on that common platform where Papist and Puritan alike stand, the surrender of judgment either to an Infallible Bible, or to an Infallible Pope. For ourselves, we do not require to have it proven to us that "all things are lawful," even though "all things be not expedient." Of the expediency we will judge for ourselves. Our opponents, having appealed to the Bible, may be left to draw what comfort they can from its decision.

"They refuse"—[we quote the eloquent words of Mr. S. C. Hall, F.S.A., in a pamphlet too little known, on "The Use of Spiritualism"]—"They refuse to believe that Mr. Home and others have been raised, without hands or any visible power, and floated about a room; but they say they believe that Philip was 'taken up,' and conveyed from Gaza to Azotus; and that they credit ^{Ezekiel} Daniel when he says, 'He put forth the form of a hand, and took me by ^{the} ~~the~~ back of my head, and the Spirit lifted me up between the heaven

*Ezekiel
a look*

see Ezekiel, viii 3

and the earth.' They will not believe that a simple, uneducated peasant girl has written Greek sentences, and a man from the plough delivered a Latin oration; but they say they believe that, on the day of Pentecost, apostles and disciples 'spoke with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.' They will not credit the healing powers of the Zouave Jacob, Dr. Newton, and others; but they say they believe that at the gate of the Temple called Beautiful, a man was made to walk who was impotent from his mother's womb. They will not believe that a heavy table has been raised from floor to ceiling without touch of human hand; but they say they believe that the stone was rolled back from the door of the sepulchre. They will not believe that voice-music has been heard continuously when no 'living lips' were moved; but they say they believe that shepherds heard voices praising God in the highest. They will not believe in modern trance-mediumship; but they say they believe Ezekiel when he wrote, 'And the Spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me on my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me.' They will not believe in the cold breeze, and violent shakings of rooms that usually precede communications when Spiritualists are 'with one accord in one place;' but they say they believe in 'the rushing mighty wind' that shook the house in which the apostles were assembled. They will not believe in the voices heard by Spiritualists; though they say they believe in the voice heard by Paul on the way to Damascus, which some of the attendants 'heard not,' and in the voice that hailed our Lord, heard by some, though others 'said it thundered.' They will not believe in 'direct spirit writing;' although they say they believe that Jehoram received a written communication from Elijah four years after he had been taken from earth. They will not believe that writings

and drawings are now produced without draught, design, or will; but they say they believe that David thus received instructions how to build the Temple. They will not believe that in one day seen or unseen hands have been known to write what was afterwards read; but they say they believe in the handwriting on the wall at the feast of King Belshazzar. They will not believe that a coal of fire has been placed on the head of a white-haired man without singeing a hair; but they say they believe that three men were thrown into a fiery furnace from which they issued unscathed. In short, that angels and spirits do now communicate with men and women, earth-living, they will not believe; although they say they believe that angels announced to the shepherds good tidings of great joy—that a multitude of the heavenly host heralded them to the manger at Bethlehem—that Moses and Elias talked with our Lord on the Mount—that it was an angel who reproved John when seeking to worship him, ‘See that thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets.’”

APPEAL TO INTELLIGENT STUDENTS OF THE BIBLE.

It would be an endless and fruitless task to attempt to bring home to many minds the arguments which they are not fitted to entertain. To many the Bible contains the ultimate revelation of their God. They are not even able to understand its progressive development. A text from Genesis, from Isaiah, or from St. Paul, is to them equally conclusive. They are not even able to say of the utterances which they so glibly quote whether they are authentic, whether they are properly translated, whether the circumstances under which they were uttered are applicable

in any degree to our own state and time—whether, in short, what they produce as a clenching argument is of any force whatever. They suffer from Bibliomania in an aggravated form, and can only be treated as other monomaniacs. A somewhat extended experience of such persons has convinced us that it is impossible to deal with them until their mania shall have been successfully treated. We presume, from past experience, that there are fanatics who will continue to believe that the Pope is the root of all evil, and that one of his most successful machinations is the temporary quashing of Sir Roger Tichborne; and, in similar fashion, many able and pious fanatics will consider to the end of the chapter, that they have settled everything by the quotation of some curious text. Such are beyond the reach of argument, and may well be left alone. They have neither the knowledge, nor the experience, nor the mental capacity which qualify them to form a judgment.

But, putting these persons aside, we venture to appeal to the sane and thinking portion of mankind, to throw aside all pre-conceived notions, and allow their minds to dwell candidly on the parallel between the age of Jesus Christ and that in which we live. If we have delineated that parallel at all successfully, it must surely strike an unprejudiced mind that the source from which the Revelation of Jesus Christ came was as unlikely to an orthodox Jew as is the source from which the modern Revelation springs to the orthodox Christian. The very same arguments which assail the spiritual development of to-day might

have come—*mutatis mutandis*—from the mouth of Caiaphas in reference to Jesus Christ.

Moreover, the stock argument against all that is new, that it is devilish in its origin and outcome, is nothing fresh. An orthodox Pharisee and a scoffing Sadducee might have used it just as consistently as they who attributed Galileo's telescope and its revelations to the Devil, or as they who now dispose of what they do not like by the same cheap expedient. Human nature must change very considerably before that easy means of shunting disagreeable truths is abandoned.

But outside of these persons who are so unable to see and discern the signs of the times, for whom the Volume of Inspiration is closed, and in whose opinion God has abdicated his functions as Ruler of the Universe, there are vast numbers with whom it is far more important to deal. They have thought for themselves. Reason has not been paralysed by Faith; and they have dared to believe that God has given them an intellect for some nobler purpose than that they should crush it out in obedience to some priestly dogmas which will not stand the test of Reason. They decline to believe that the God of the Past has vanished from the world, and that the old order has given place to the dreary *régime* which these apostles of the past rejoice in. To them it seems far otherwise. The Book to which their orthodox opponents refer them is so far from being a dead letter, recording only shadowy visions of the past, that it is a living record of progressive development, the counterpart of

which they see actually being evolved in their very midst. They smile at the idea of a frequently badly-translated text being applied as an argument; but they are ready to point out, in a way to which their opponents can make no pretensions, the gradual evolution of the idea of God, and the progressive revelation of the duty and destiny of man. They have studied—some of them at least—the sacred records of other lands, and can point out how Indian Vedas and Persian Zendavesta throw light on early Bible story. They can show how the experiences of Confucius and the Buddha, the early Egyptian and later Mahommedan seers and prophets, confirm and elucidate much that is obscure in our own records. And they can point out how not a few of the earlier myths of Jewish story find their source and spring in Indian sacred lore many ages previous to their appearance in the form in which we know them. They put aside the theory of Verbal Inspiration as a clumsy and stupid blunder, and can point out how God reveals Himself even now as He revealed Himself to holy men in all ages of the world's history. They are not scrupulously careful to split hairs over mere textual criticism, though they regard each page of the sacred record with feelings of rational and intelligent affection, to which those who never really understand it can make no claim.

It is to such as these that we speak. Many, we know, will view with mistrust and suspicion any attempt to bring home to thinking minds a new view of God and the hereafter. Across the stagnant

pond of their intelligence, no ripple of doubt has ever passed. No bracing breeze has ever stirred its changeless surface. No angel has ever descended to trouble those waters over which hangs the impenetrable mist of Ignorance. They are content to believe what they dare not or cannot think out for themselves. For them life is so far from being real and earnest—an intelligent factor in their future state—that they can dismiss it with an easy conscience, if only they can persuade themselves that its long tale of sin has been settled for them by the Atonement of the Son of God. They will die with hope, for in a moment they will be with their Maker, joining their (must we not say discordant?) notes to the anthem of the angels. Such are beyond reach; and it is hard to say so without a feeling of overpowering regret at man's perversity. Let them rest, since they will. They do but sleep that sleep of death of which mountain travellers tell; when the unfortunate sinks into a dreamy repose, from which he will not wake on this side of the great change. They are practically dead to the voice of reason. We could not reach them even if we would; and we turn to those whose eyes are fixed on the dawning of the day, who would know how the ever-present God is acting now, and of what sort is that Revelation which He is giving.



V.

SPIRIT-TEACHING.

THIS then, as we have learned it, is Spirit-teaching, imperfectly sketched, but in the main trustworthily.

THE GOD-IDEA.

God is spoken of as the Supreme, All-wise Ruler of the Universe, the Object of the ceaseless adoration of all created sentient beings. No spirit who communicates with earth, however long his spirit-life may have been, pretends to have seen Him, or to have penetrated to His presence. They know more of the operations of His laws: they are more deeply penetrated with a sense of His perfection, His wisdom, and His love: they have cast aside much of the anthropomorphism which clings round our ideas of Him: they are content to adore His perfection, and to speculate little about His nature. They insist invariably on worship of the Supreme, adoration, praise, meditation, and prayer. They tell of constant adoration and praise on their part. They inculcate on us the same, and are specially strong in insisting on the blessing of meditation and the privilege of prayer. They view the latter not as the sort of charm that it is to many men, but rather as the link that joins man to the ministering angels, who are the intermediary agencies between him and his God.

Man, they say, is surrounded by "ministering spirits," of whose services he may avail himself if he will, or whom he may drive from him by neglect of prayer, by engrossing care for the bodily and the earthly, by ignoring the higher spiritual part of his nature. Constant progressive cultivation of higher sentiments in work for God, for his fellow, and for himself: a living of the Christ-like life of adoration and prayer, and self-denying work, together with that spiritual rest which springs from meditation and conscious aspiration to a high and elevated standard: this is their ideal.

MAN—HIS DUTIES TO HIMSELF, TO HIS RACE, AND TO
HIS GOD.

Of man they speak as a being, a spirit, temporarily enshrined in a body of flesh. The spirit-body, the real man, is perpetuated beyond the grave when the shifting atoms with which it has been clothed are dead and done with. They reject as a baseless figment the story of a fall from a state of primeval innocence and perfection to a state of degradation in the persons of Adam and Eve. They treat man as a being evolved from a lower state of existence and destined for a life which is eternal, so far as all experience and analogy point: as placed on earth for the purpose of gaining experience in a training school. His spirit-body, on the death of the natural body—a death permanent and complete—passes, so they say, into the state for which it has fitted itself by its life on earth. Its business here has been to assimilate its

experiences of earth, to prepare itself, by the development of its powers and the zealous discharge of its duty, for future progress. The duty which is incumbent upon it here is to develop its higher, and to repress its less noble faculties, and to discharge all its righteous obligations (in obedience to conscience, the inward monitor) to God, to its fellow-man, and to itself. We are told that the Moral Code, which has been given from time to time in generations past, and which the quickened moral sense in mankind sanctions, defines, and amplifies, roughly suffices, though some of its details may require restating and altering so as to apply to the new requirements of a changeful age. Its underlying principles are true for all time. There are, however, points of development which man's quickened sense of higher verities qualifies him to note. The hard and fast rules of obligation couched in the emphatic language of command—"Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not"—need to be spiritualised and widened in conformity with the dictates of a quickened spiritual sense, and in accord with the attempt that the children of the New Dispensation of Spirit are making to lead a higher spiritual life. As the coming of the Christ shed truer spiritual light on the dead ritual of the Jewish Church, so it is said that a popularised and deformed Christianity needs the baptism of the Spirit, that its dry bones may be quickened, and it may become once again instinct with Life.

Viewing man in his Personal state as a tripartite being composed of a spiritual, an intellectual, and a

bodily nature, they say that, as respects the former side of his nature—the SPIRITUAL—his duty may be summed up as GROWTH in knowledge of Self, of his duty to Self and the great Brotherhood of which he is a unit, and of his own future destiny as an accountable being.

As respects his INTELLECTUAL nature, his duty may be roughly summed up in the one word CULTURE.

As regards his BODILY nature, PURITY in thought and act, Temperance, Health-seeking in its fullest and noblest sense, specifies his duty to his physical body, on the condition of which his spiritual state so largely depends.

Having respect to man as a Citizen, owing a duty to the community of which he is a member, they sum up his complex duties in the words CHARITY, PROGRESS, ORDER, TRUTH.

Here it is that the fruits of man's own inner development make themselves manifest. As an Individual, he will reap in the life hereafter the fruits of his spiritual culture here. But as a Citizen, those fruits are to be shown in a love of PROGRESS in all lawful ways; in a ceaseless attempt to bring home to the community the beauties of true and orderly growth in virtue, peace, and knowledge. He is to labour to make other men partakers of his own knowledge. He is to be animated by a love of LAWFUL ORDER, by a strict obedience to constituted authority in due subordination to the sanctions of the highest Judge, and by a zeal for the defence of those ordinances and enactments which have been formed by

sages in times past, and which are, till amended by a richer and riper experience, the expression to him of the collective wisdom of his fellows.

In all his dealings he is to be animated by a pure love of TRUTH—the highest ideal that his spiritual development can grasp. He is to order himself in his dealings with mankind in conformity with those enduring and eternal principles of rectitude which are summed up in that word, and the application of which, to the several cases which must arise at every turn in life, is to be governed by CHARITY, or Active Love. Truth reigning supreme, its action is to be tempered by Charity, as human Justice is by Equity.

Fallible in himself, he is to be tolerant of divergent opinion, charitable in construction of doubtful acts, while stern in denunciation of hypocrisy, deceit, and fraud. He is to be courteous in intercourse, ready to bear his share of the common burden, and to assist any who need his help; zealous in good deeds, and ready to impart to all who seek, a share of the knowledge that he has gained.

PROGRESS, TRUTH, CHARITY are the great watch-words of the life of the Spiritual Man in his relation with his fellows.

Viewing man as a creature with duties to his Creator, the attitude prescribed is one of REVERENCE and ADORATION, as of a being in one of the lowest stages of creation who approaches the Supreme. Reverence, not slavish fear—the feeling of the son, rather than of the slave. The ministering angels and spirits are regarded as the means of approach

between man and God, the links in the chain that binds earth to heaven. The future will develop knowledge, and throw light on much that now is dark. Meantime so much light is given as to illumine the page of Bible story with a much-needed light.

It is further pointed out that, in discharging his duty to himself and to the race, man is doing a most important part of his duty to God. Self-culture, Progress in Wisdom and Truth, and the loving dissemination of knowledge by which mankind is raised in the scale of culture, this is the active side of the Godlike life, of which the passive side is Adoration, Praise, and Prayer. .

MAN'S FUTURE DESTINY.

Such, in broad outline, minor points and some more interior considerations being designedly omitted, is man's duty to God, to his fellow, and to his own self. In proportion as he discharges it, he rises in the scale: he "works out his own salvation," and is blessed. In proportion as he neglects it, he becomes degraded, in obedience to irreversible laws. Influences of good are repelled: evil gathers round him, and he becomes worse and worse. For, it is insisted on over and over again, man is the arbiter of his own destinies. It rests with him whether, in the honest and conscientious discharge of the duties and obligations laid upon him, he will fit himself for future progress, or whether he will neglect his spiritual development and live a corporeal existence, which shall starve his higher nature and chain his spirit down by centring his

affections exclusively on earth and earthly things. Helps man has if he will avail himself of them ; but not a store of merit laid up for him on which he may draw at will, and by virtue of which he may reverse on his death-bed a character which has been the imperceptible growth of a life-time, the laborious aggregation of myriads of daily acts. For these acts man's absolute accountability is emphatically maintained. The future life, differing from the present one only in degree, and, in the states immediately succeeding this, only in a very slight degree, is a life of continued progress, in which the sin-stained spirit will be compelled to remedy in sorrow and shame the acts of conscious transgression done in the body.

PUNISHMENT.

Punishment is not the vindictive act of an angry God, but the inevitable consequence of the conscious transgression of known laws. Sin must be *conscious* transgression, or it is not *sin* at all, but *error*. Error involves loss, but not punishment. The retribution laid upon the transgressor consists in his being made to see the result of his sins, and to remedy it in all its infinitely-ramifying consequences, so far as that is possible. The Spirit—the same individual consciousness as was the man on earth—may find progress in a state other than this : or may return to the scene of his former life, gather up the broken and tangled threads of his old sins, and so work out his own salvation. For instance, if he has neglected one side of his spiritual nature—the affectional, the moral,

or the religious—his business is to remedy that defect, to cultivate the neglected talent, and so to seek for progress. Perhaps he has been earthy, base, sensual in the body, and in giving unbridled rein to passion has wrought misery and wrong to himself and to his fellows. His own misery he must bear till it is alleviated in remedying the effects of the misery of which he has been the author. This is punishment, the inevitable fruit of conscious sin. The penalty must be paid somewhere and sometime, and by personal effort, either such as indicated in the hypothetical case quoted above—though not by Re-incarnation as popularly understood—or by some more purely spiritual method of illumination and instruction.

REWARD.

Similarly, reward does not consist in instant admission to a heaven where life is one long vista of dreamy inactivity. The heaven of the spirit is a heaven of ceaseless progress through the ages, higher and yet higher, reaching onward and upward to perfection. "Nearer, my God, to thee" is the motto which is inscribed upon it. Just as the evil deeds done in the body have their issue in the life disembodied, so with deeds of good. "Their works do follow them," or rather they have preceded the new birth of the spirit, and have prepared for it a home and a congenial society. The consciousness of duty done, of progress made, and of capacity for progress developed, of spiritual graces nurtured, of truer insight gained, and wider fields of knowledge opened out—this is the

spirit's reward in the past, its earnest of further progress in the future. It must be gained before it can be enjoyed. It comes as the rest that succeeds toil, which only the toil-worn can enjoy.

The Religion taught by the spirits is emphatically one of common life—of the body as well as of the soul—and in this it bears a marked resemblance to that of the Master—Christ. They take little count of the theological differences which so perplex us. Man's views of God, they say, are all more or less erroneous, and the theology for which man has striven to his last breath with acrimonious zeal is surrendered without a struggle when the spirit has soared above the earth, and looks down with purged eye on the points it once thought so all-important. > They care far more for what a man has *done* than for what he has *believed*, inasmuch as habits, tempers, characters are so formed, and the immediate condition of the spirit is settled. The Religion taught by the spirits is, we make bold to say, one which is eminently calculated to make a man a better citizen and a better man, in all his domestic, social, and civil relations, and to fit him, indefinitely more than any with which we are acquainted, for future progress and happiness.



VI.

THE OLD CREED AND THE NEW.

It will be seen from this short and imperfect sketch that spirit-teachings contravene much that Christians have agreed to hold *de fide*. Whether they are so divergent from the teachings of Jesus Christ is not so certain. For Him and for His work they profess the highest reverence. They declare their mission to be but the complement of His; and where they seem to contravene or to traverse some part of Christian faith, they say that it is man's addition, and not God's revelation, or the real teaching of the Christ, that they contradict.

They claim for themselves nothing short of a Divine mission. The signs and wonders of which men make so much they regard as only the necessary witnesses of the inner underlying truth which they proclaim. God, they say, has always so revealed Himself. The agencies at work in previous revelations, of which there have been many, are identical, they say, with those now being used to spread a higher and truer knowledge of God among men. Inspiration they declare to be the same in all ages. God, by His ministering spirits, spoke to man in old time as He speaks now. The human instrument has always been more or less fallible, and revelation has been adapted to the special needs of those to whom it was given.

The agencies at work were identical, whether the medium of revelation was Moses or Ezekiel, Isaiah or Paul, and the message given through their instrumentality was one adapted to the wants of those to whom they ministered. Consequently no texts taken from a book intended for the Jews a thousand years ago can be held to be a binding argument on those who are situated in other conditions. No text of whatever nature wrested from its context can be adduced as an argument; no utterance in times past is to be assumed to be literally correct, or legally binding for all time. The knowledge of God has been progressive, and we now know better than (say) Job did about God, His nature, attributes, and works. Men would not assert such a miracle as the stopping of the sun and moon to be literally true; nay, they have even outgrown the conception of God which permeates the Athanasian creed. They are getting to have a higher ideal of God, and so the time has come when truer and nobler notions of God can be revealed. Man has become dissatisfied with the old conceptions; in fact he has outgrown them. He looks around him for something better, and in answer to his cry comes the voice of God, who has waited to reveal further ideas of Himself. It was so, we have seen, in the days which preceded the coming of the Christ. When John Baptist uplifted his voice in the wilderness of Judea—not, let it be reiterated, a very likely place in which to proclaim a new Gospel—it was after long ages of darkness and desolation. The old faith had waned, the whole world was looking out for some-

thing—it knew not what—just as men are now wondering whether there is anything left in which they can believe, and are sighing out helplessly, “If God does not speak, then indeed religion will be dead.” When Jesus Christ at length came forth from His seclusion and spoke to men, it was but for three short years, and all He had to say was the veriest heresy to the orthodox Scribe and Pharisee. He gathered His associates from the rank of life in which He Himself had been nurtured. He was far more a Social Reformer, as men would then view Him, than anything else. He denounced bitterly what we should call the educated upper classes, not because of their position and education, but because, in spite of them, they were so heartless and so little useful in their day and generation. He dealt emphatically with daily life; and the Gospel which He preached must have seemed to an educated Pharisee as strange as the Gospel we have now sketched would seem to an orthodox churchman of the present day. “Have any of the Pharisees and Rulers believed on Him?” Yet He did not desire to destroy the old religion—the law and the prophets—but only to lead man on to higher and purer truths. Much rubbish that man had gathered over God’s truth must be swept away—the petty ritual observances must go, and the shadow be replaced by the substance. The time had come for the revelation of new truth, and though man should crucify its Prophet, future generations would recognise the truth and beauty of His teaching.

The parallel, on the hypothesis of the spirits, is complete. Now, as then, man is looking for more light, and is receiving it. Round the light is mist and fog. It will disperse, and man in coming days will recognise the source from which the light shines. It has always been so. Generations must pass while the light is making its way. Much that man has chosen to place upon God's truth must be removed, but in the end, to a materialistic age which cries for proof of future life, that proof will be given in the only possible way which can satisfy and convince—namely, by positive scientific demonstration. And so, in strict accordance with all this, much is made of Reason and less of Faith. This is the age of Reason; the sublimer age of Faith has not fully come. Man is told to weigh all by the divinely-implanted test, and to stand or fall by his acceptance or rejection. Reason is the ultimate court of appeal. Trust only supervenes on rational conviction.

But all this is monstrous heresy. Well, of course, it is permissible to call it heresy, but surely it is not monstrous. Is it a bit more monstrous than Christ's teaching must have seemed to (say) Caiaphas? Is it monstrous in its essence, in its conception, in its logical outcome? We think not. The new must always be strange. This is scarcely more strange than Christianity in the days of its Founder must have seemed by the side of orthodox Judaism.

But it is so improbable, so unlikely. Doubtless the assertions made remain to be established by proof, and in that they differ not one whit from many other

assertions which the religious world has for long agreed to stand by. We do not see the improbability. We see in the claims made the unity and continuity of God's dealings—the same God, working as of old, only we know Him better; our conception of Him is less human, more Divine. The grand question, to be solved only by patient waiting and laborious care, is not, Is it likely? but only, Is it true? The time will come when a more elaborate answer than we are now able to give will be possible. But at any rate the world sadly needs something such as that which we have sketched to answer its growing materialism. If such a religion does not satisfy it, then we have faith that we shall get a better; and it may well be that the dim outline, which alone we can see now, is blurred and faint compared with the perfect conception which hereafter shall be revealed. For ourselves, we presume to no knowledge; we do but record that which has been given to us from time to time by a faithful and elevated Intelligence, and which we have only too sadly failed in imparting in anything like the beauty and vivid force of its first unfolding. We venture upon no dogmatic opinion: but the issues at stake are so tremendous that we are impelled to register as clearly as we can the points of difference and divergence between the New Faith and the Old.

VII.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE.

It is impossible to deny that a creed which shall commend itself to the thinking men of the age, which shall satisfy their cravings, shall be compatible with their reason, and logically coherent and demonstrable, is very likely to obtain a hold on an age wherein a vague sense of disbelief and chafing at the bondage of Creeds and Formularies, and an impatience of the demands of Orthodoxy, are plainly visible. Moreover, if this faith, which commends itself as reasonable, is supported by evidence which science can investigate, prove, test, and authenticate, then precisely that union between Science and Religion is established, which is the great desideratum of the present day. On this point we have no hesitation in affirming distinctly our conviction that patience and perseverance in the path of investigation will lay before the scientific world proof of independent existence outside of a physical body, and strong presumptive evidence of continuous human life in a disembodied state, which will be so complete as to place the question of the indestructibility of existence among the category of scientifically established facts. And if this be as we believe, then the evidence of this New Faith will at

once rest upon a scientific basis of assured truth on which no other Faith has yet been grounded.

This is of vast moment as a consideration. The miracles (so-called) that attest the truth of Bible story both in the Old and New Testaments are well nigh worthless to science. It cannot test, examine, or weigh them. It has no means of examining the eye witnesses, nor can it trace the origin of the records from which they were described. When patient investigation has been spent on the records themselves, it is unfortunately true that results the most detrimental to orthodox belief have been obtained. In short, whether on the ground of actual lack of evidence, or on the ground of want of reliability in the record, scientific men would unanimously refuse to admit evidence so little trustworthy. (This, be it understood, is spoken *ab extra*, from an external point of view. We have now nothing to do with those who accept the whole theory of verbal inspiration.) But upon what a different ground would rest evidence which scientific men could weigh, could test, could have before them time after time, until they could deal with it as Professor Ferrier has dealt with the workings of the brain, or Mr. Crookes with the mystery of light. The difference would be absolutely incalculable, and the dream of a union between Science and Religion would be well nigh realised.

A PRACTICAL RELIGION.

Nor is this all. The argument may be carried a step further. One of the most cogent criticisms of

religious teaching in the present day deals with its unpractical character. This crops out in all sorts of ways, and specially in impatience of anything that transcends reason:—Witness the endless discussion about prayer. Instances will occur at once when men of the world—we use the term widely, to signify the intellects that do practically rule in the present world—put aside popular religion somewhat impatiently as good enough for their wives and children, but not practical enough for themselves. “Give us something that will stand hard daily wear and tear—not that superfine transcendentalism. It is not a working day religion, if it were even possible to assent to its truth”—and so the two sides of criticism work together, and well nigh demolish orthodoxy. Science says—It is not true. Practical utility says—It will not work.

Now, we believe that to be an exaggerated statement, but it does contain within itself an element of truth. It is true in the main as regards modern utility, but quite untrue as regards the teachings of Jesus Christ. He was, before all, a practical teacher, and in so far as his teachings can be sifted out, every one of them forms a cardinal point in the teaching of the new faith. Purity in thought, word, and deed, as man’s chiefest duty to himself; universal philanthropy and lovingkindness; self-sacrifice and self-denial; humility; sincerity; forgiveness of injuries; the worthlessness of mere external ceremony; the Fatherhood of God; and the universal brotherhood of humanity:—these were the principal points

in Christ's teaching, and they have lost nothing of their lustre now, simply because they are divine verities, eternally and irreversibly true. But those doctrines which short-sighted men have piled upon their Master's teaching, doctrines contained, for the most part, precisely in those passages of the Bible which modern criticism has most successfully attacked, as, for instance, the Fourth Gospel, the latter part of the Gospel of St. Mark, and the earlier portions of St. Matthew and St. Luke;—these are conspicuous by their absence. The view of God propounded in the new faith is emphatically that of Christ, not that of his Apostles. Their ideas of the future are such as the noble and simple imagery of Jesus would suggest; their re-iterated advice to man to deal with himself here as a being embodied, to recognise the fact that the body is the avenue to the spirit, that which is in rudest contact with the world, and so to tend and cultivate its perfect health, to secure the *mens sana* through the *corpus sanum*:— all this is in eminent concord with the teaching of Him who was, above all, a Social Reformer, a Pure Philanthropist, and a Practical Dweller amongst men.

The faith of which we speak is one which does, at anyrate, appeal clearly to man's reason. It is logical, coherent from its first principles down to its ultimate conclusions. Once these principles are assured, as we believe they will be on a scientific basis, and a rational religion is before man.

But the old will all be swept away. We do not think so. Those who have gone deeply into the

question of inspiration, who have tried to tabulate for themselves the relation between modern Christianity and Christ, will not be prepared to say that there is such a wide gulf between Christ's teachings and those which we have indicated.



VIII.

LOSS AND GAIN.

WHAT have we lost and what have we gained? We have lost, first of all, belief in the inspiration of the Bible as understood by the school of verbal inspirationists. We have gained a reasonable, intelligent insight into a series of records which describe the progressive revelations of God to man in different ages among different peoples. We have learned to use reason on what must always be the most vitally interesting and important book in the world to us. We have gained power to sift the true from the false, and have lost childlike confidence in what we discover by intelligent criticism to be of doubtful authenticity, or of undoubted falsity. We have still the grain, only more carefully winnowed.

We have lost that cardinal doctrine that belief is the one thing essential to salvation—a doctrine grounded upon texts found only in the most dubious parts of the Gospels; a doctrine unpractical, irrational, and, as we believe, untrue. Belief is simply the effect of a cause. It is not an act, but a condition of mind induced by evidence presented. In competent minds belief will follow as a necessary consequence upon presentation of sufficient evidence. No two minds will believe on the same grounds, and therefore the

same law will not apply to all. Each must find its due ground of acceptance. This found, belief may be suppressed, but cannot in the *mind*, which God judges, be refused, though outward assent be withholden. To pretend belief is dishonest; to disbelieve in spite of adequate proof is impossible. It seems, then, that on the principle of "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed," the blessing is pronounced upon a state which is either weak or dishonest.

That vacillating condition of mind called Scepticism, is a transition state, and, if it becomes permanent, is a mental disease. In a vigorous and healthy mind, when the processes of thought are complete, the conclusion is arrived at, *pro* or *con*, according to the weight of evidence. In some rare cases, evidence is so balanced that the mind cannot incline to the one side or the other. Authority, age, probability, then have their place, and the sane mind acts on the principle *quieta non movere*. This is not Scepticism, but an exercise of the purest judgment. Scepticism, not an act but a state, a permanent condition of mind, grows by what it feeds on, enervates and depraves the power of judgment, until the victim of the disease becomes a mere puny halter between two opinions, unable to decide on any direct course of action. The result is spiritual paralysis, and grave risk of intellectual and moral depravation.

In condemnation of this vice of the age, as the spirits from their standpoint call this Scepticism, they are very strong. The parent of the Pseudo-atheism,

the Nihilism, that is such a note of our generation, closely akin to Materialism, of which it is a consequence, they fight against its sway with the more sternness on account of its prevalence, and of the hold it has got on the thought of the present day. They would equally, as I understand their teaching, protest against the enslaving of the intellect, the prostitution of the judgment, which would be involved in a blind credulity, an unreasoning acquiescence in dogmas which the mind took no pains to grasp in essence or in application. These are the two poles of excess and defect. In the system I am attempting to expound Faith finds its legitimate place, and my instructors are fond of insisting on the unknown potencies that are included within a fervent, active Faith. But they insist chiefly on the use of right Reason, on the sacred duty laid on each of us to keep his light burning clear, and to preserve the power of applying to all cases that present themselves, the discriminative faculty entrusted to us, and which we cannot see aright unless the habit of using it is constant.

But it is when we come to deal with the central figure in the Gospel story that the divergence becomes most marked. The mysteriously incarnated God shades away into the divinest type of human nature. The being like nothing man can reach—so infinitely high and lifted up above weak human nature—gives place to the VERY MAN, the highest realization of man's possible; the actual living model which man may place before him for daily imitation. The God who lived amongst men gives place to the man who

lived nearest God. We have lost a God-made man, but we have gained a model man, all but divine. The loss is in the humanised God; the gain is in the God-like man. We will say no word of the Divinity of the Christ. The vast subject can find no place here. We confine ourselves to results, and have nothing to do with the sentimental side of the question. If it be true, it will stand; if it be false, let it perish. Few will be content to look at the question on its merits. When they can bring themselves to do so, they will find that a venerable belief may rest upon a very shadowy basis.

The idea of a good God sacrificing his sinless son as a propitiation for man is repudiated as monstrous. Equally strong is the rejection of the notion of a store of merit laid up by the death of this incarnate God on which the vilest reprobate may draw at his death, and gain access to the society of God and the perfected. In place of this it is said that man can have no saviour outside of himself; that no second person can relieve him from the consequences of the conscious transgression of known laws; that no transference of merit can wipe out in a moment a state which is the result of a lifetime's work, nor counter-balance that which is indelible, save by slow process of obliteration, even as it was built up; that man stands alone in his responsibility for his deeds, and must work out his own salvation and atone for his own sin. At the same time, much is made of helps and aids to man's efforts in the power of prayer, in the work of ministering spirits; and sins of various

kinds, which are the result of bodily organisation or of unavoidable surroundings, are leniently dealt with.

The material resurrection and the material heaven and hell go too. The resurrection of the body, long since given up by scientific men, is superseded by the resurrection of the spirit body, the real individual, from the dead matter with which it has been temporarily clothed, not in a far off future, but at the moment of dissolution. This body goes to the place for which it has fitted itself. It does not remain dormant, save in exceptional cases of premature withdrawal from earth, but has absolute continuity of existence in a state very like the earth it has just quitted. Its heaven is a state of development, and consciousness of duty done, knowledge gained, and progress made. Its hell is the remorse of cleared perceptions, of knowledge of opportunities wasted and graces lost, the awful, terrible state wherein the spirit is led to see itself, its foul sins, its sensual lusts and disfigurements, as the Pure and Holy see them; the lonely sense of wasted life; the sight of loved ones soaring away and leaving it alone with the depraved; the feeling that the great work has yet to be done; the burning flame which shall eat out the past, and leave a future of renewed helpful effort to be begun anew. Material fire and brimstone are gone, but does no hell remain? The harps and the thrones and the hymns are gone, but is there no heaven in the consciousness of progress, knowledge, love, in the society of those who have gemmed with their deeds the history of earth; in the sense of

gradual but real perfecting which the blessed spirits feel?

THE GAIN GREAT—THE LOSS UNIMPORTANT.

It seems rather that what man could never really believe, if he ever thought about it, has yielded to that which is most in accord with his best thoughts of God and the hereafter. He needs no longer perplex himself with curious questionings as to the compatibility of divine justice with eternal burnings, nor explain away man's crude notions of heaven and hell so as to make them square with his higher knowledge and truer ideal.

If he has lost throughout the Definite, it is only when the Definite blasphemously defines the Infinite. If he has lost minute material description, he has gained nobler ideals, more realisable, more true. The loss is great in some things—in that passive sense of security so dear to those who are too lazy or too fearful to think—in the simple childish notion that a feeble cry of frightened human weakness can reverse irreversible laws, and change a nature by a prayer. But the sooner such fallacies vanish, like morning mists before the sun, the better for the cause of progress and truth. The sooner men learn to think for themselves, even though their thoughts lead them to probe mysteries which orthodox creeds have dogmatically defined, the better, we say, for the cause of truth and enlightenment.

Doubtless the time has not yet come when it is proper to pronounce any dogmatic opinions. The work

of destruction must necessarily precede the work of construction, and if the destructive process be long and arduous, the excuse must be found in the fact that man has disguised God's truth so deeply, and is so wedded to his inventions, that it is not easy to disabuse him. We have no taste for the discussion of points that are beset by the fiercest theological controversy. Such controversial discussions must find their place at another time than this. If we do not enter upon them now it is not for the reason that they have not occupied our earnest attention. We have studied the arguments of all Western phases of religious thought too often not to know how much is to be said *pro* and *con* on all points. We know, too, enough of the mental attitude of scientific and thinking men to welcome any union between Science and Religion—between a rational theology and a materialistic age. As to the doubt, we do but recognise its existence. We do not create or even increase it. It is there already. And as to faith, let the honest reader contrast our faulty outline of the New faith with that which he still holds of the Old, and say candidly, Is the Old better? If he thinks so, in God's Name, let him cleave to it. If he find in the New that which comes home to the inner wants of his nature, let him sift it and try it. Let him thank God and be of good courage, for assuredly no higher yearning after God ever remained unsatisfied by Him from whom it came; and no fabled Devil ever led man on to higher truth. He has no need to hamper himself with considerations such as these, or to

be perplexed at heart because all cannot see alike. Many there must be—good souls who know no better—who will hug the faith of their childhood, and find it sufficient for their wants. Why should they be vexed? In the ears of others will be ringing the cry as of old—“Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.” Why should they be held back? And if there be, as there always have been, halters between two opinions—timid souls who dare not, though they fain would go on; casuists who are hampered with difficulties in reasoning; cautious souls who will make sure before they leap; why should they be hurried?

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”



A P P E N D I X .

WRITING (January, 1877) on the alleged exposure of trickery on the part of Henry Slade, I made some remarks which it is convenient to repeat as a pendent to the preceding paper. After going through the evidence, I proceeded thus :—

I have given a historical summary of the Slade case, and have said something of the tone and temper of the prosecution in the present instance. But it is to little purpose that Spiritualists view their present experience if they do not gather up the lessons that it teaches. The processes of education are very much the same, whether in the individual or the community. Man learns most from sad experience: the more sad the lesson, the more surely it is learned, and the more deeply imprinted. If the "burnt child does not dread the fire," then that child's future is easy to predict. It will turn out a foolish ne'er-do-well, always in scrapes, and unfit to shift for itself. Precisely the same rule applies to communities, and especially to such a body as this of ours. We are emphatically in need of discipline and education. We have hardly yet settled down after our rapid growth. The child born just thirty years ago, has increased in stature (if not in wisdom) at a very rapid rate. It has grown so fast that its education has been a little neglected. In the expressive phraseology of its native country, it has been "dragged up" rather promiscuously: and its phenomenal growth has absorbed all other considerations. The time has now come when those who have regarded it as an

ugly monster which was born by one of nature's freaks only to die an early death, begin to recognise their mistake. The ugly brat means to live: and beneath its ugliness the least sympathetic gaze detects a coherent purpose in its existence. It is the presentation of a principle inherent in man's nature, a principle which his wisdom has improved away until it is well nigh eliminated altogether, but which crops out again and again in spite of him—the principle of Spirit as opposed to Matter, of Soul acting and existing independently of the body which enshrines it. Long years of denial of aught but the properties of matter have landed the chief lights of modern science in pure Materialism. To them, therefore, this Spiritualism is a portent and a problem. It is a return to superstition: a survival of savagery: a blot on nineteenth-century intelligence. Laughed at, it laughs back: scorned, it gives back scorn for scorn. What is to be done with it?

The present prosecution supplies the answer of the materialist. Every engine that can be used will be brought to bear to crush: every blot and flaw will be picked out: every slip we make will be pounced upon: every scandalous story of imposture made the most of. We must be prepared to set our own house in order, if we would not have it very rudely done for us. That seems to be sure. We must be prepared to go in for a thorough cleaning. And, truth to tell, we want it. Though the hand that is prepared to scrub is not governed by maternal tenderness, the child is sadly in need of the discipline of soap and water. And to refuse to recognise that plain fact would augur very badly for the educational development of which I have been speaking.

Without going at length just now into the whole question at issue, it may be broadly said, without much fear of contradiction, that an observer who looks at the broad aspect of Spiritualism without any intimate knowledge of the subject, would see in it much to astonish, much to startle, much even to fill him with a certain vague alarm. To such an ignorant on-looker—and be it remembered that the outside public is and must be ignorant of the inner principles, the esoteric rationale of spiritual philosophy—the subject would present a curious picture. Let us assume that

an intelligent student of man and manners in the present day desired to make himself acquainted with the working of the various factors that go to make the opinion of the age. He would have no difficulty in seeing that it is no common age, this in which we live. A diligent student of history, he would at once correlate the present epoch with those which have preceded some great revolution in the history of a people:—the same restless spirit of inquiry: the same cautious and repeated trying of old institutions and habits which are brought in their old age to show cause for their very existence: the same spirit of rampant speculation: the same eager expectation of a something “which is to come.” Everywhere and all around him he sees a process of disintegration, a destructive force that for the time obscures and paralyses constructive energy; or which, at any rate, is more conspicuous in its action and more visible in its effects. In politics the air is heavy with impending struggle: the destroying angel of war is abroad, and over us we may almost hear the rustle of his wings. In the narrower fields of religion and science the same forces are at work. The world has outgrown the religion that sufficed its fathers. The story that they accepted with unquestioning faith is now called upon to stand the ruder test of reason, and the spiritual food that fed them is found unsatisfying for the more vigorous digestion of modern criticism. Bit by bit the old power has been slipping away from churches and creeds. By slow degrees man has emancipated himself from priestly control, and he now stands and looks fearlessly into the face of that which has long been used to frighten him, and the bogie is found to have lost its power. Religion to him means something more than anything that any system however venerable, any church however infallible, any creed by whatever penalties it is sought to be enforced, can furnish him with. It means a theosophy which does not run counter to the lines of human science; which tells him of his nature and destiny, of the place whence he came, and the life to which he goes; which puts before him a God that he can worship, an ideal to which the loftiest aspirations may reach up. He seeks no anthropomorphic conception; he demands precision only in the foundation whereon his faith may rest;

4 | content, if he can see but the tendency of life, to allow the tendencies to unfold themselves in progressive cycles of existence. First and foremost he needs to be satisfied of his spiritual existence after bodily death.

Our observer turns from this, the highest religious yearning, to the domain of science. What is the answer that comes from the realm of exact knowledge? Science knows nothing of Soul. Its scalpel cannot find it; its researches, in whatever way conducted, fail to discover it. Matter, and nothing but the properties of matter, is the result of its processes of investigation. Spirit, it says, is an invention of ignorance. Man, in his savage state of rude development, has always had a certain number of vague superstitions. One of them is that he has a soul, which will live after death. The wish is father to the thought. He would like to live, and so has framed the theory of disembodied existence; just as certain mediæval charlatans who feared death, fabricated the notion of an Elixir of Life which was to enable them to defy the last great enemy. Man has no Soul; there is no Spirit: there is no God: nothing but the reign of Inflexible Law. Man pleases himself in his infancy with these notions, and thinks to propitiate the ideal he has erected by ceremonies which he calls Religion. All in vain; the rain falls on the evil and on the good: the most abandoned reprobate, equally with the greatest saint, is crushed if he fall from a precipice, or slain by the attack of pestilence. There is one law for all; and if virtue is the best policy, it is because it is most in harmony with the laws of man's being which his own investigations have discovered, and which it required no Divine Being to reveal.

This then, omitting all that does not show the progressive tendency of modern thought, all that survives yet among the unthinking and the easy-going, who will not be disturbed till their neighbour's house is on fire and they are half choked by the smoke,—this is the outlook that meets our observer. Old Theology losing its power: modern Nihilism at variance with it and with all forms of religious thought. And yet in the midst of it all, the best, the truest, the noblest minds yearning for some proof of the instinct which is not all dead, that they have in them the

germs of a future life that death will not be able to destroy. Have then the ancients been all wrong? Have the noblest of mankind lived for a fallacy, and died for an idea? What more melancholy, dreary thought! Is the hope of endless progress a chimera? Is modern science surely right, and must the quality of infallibility be transferred from the Vatican to Burlington House?

In the midst of this train of thought our observer turns his attention to another phase of belief. Within the pale of orthodox theology, and even within the precincts of the Royal Society, he observes certain persons who do not entirely agree with either view yet presented to him. Some scientists not only tell him that man has a soul, but also that they have obtained scientific evidence of the fact. Some estimable and religious people assert that the friends whom death has riven from them, not only live in all the plenitude of sentient existence, but that they themselves have held communion with them; and that not once but often; not "perhaps," but "verily and in sober truth;" not seeing them "as in a glass, darkly," but openly and "face to face." Here then is the key to the mystery. If one, a hundred, a thousand of the race live again, then the law must probably be the same for all. Spirit is proven, and immortal life is something more than a speculation. No more tremendous proposition was ever put forward, and our observer will look into the evidence with attention. He finds that the believers in this creed are called Spiritualists, and in their numbers and character, in the startling strangeness of their beliefs, and in the scorn with which those tenets are received by modern Pharisee and Scribe, he recognises a resemblance to another "sect which was everywhere spoken against," now nearly 2000 years ago, and which has survived to dominate the then fashionable belief. This does not surprise him. He is prepared to find new truth unfashionable. What does surprise him, as he becomes acquainted, in such manner as he best can, with the broad aspects of the subject, is the strange contradictions, the grotesque absurdities (as they seem to him), the trifling puerilities, the mixture of the holiest truths with the plainest fraud, that he fancies he detects all around

him. Having obtained access to the only means of investigation open to him, he is at a loss to recognise in what he sees there any realisation of what he had hoped for. If he is fortunate, he will find ready evidence of the operation of a force unknown to him before, and of an intelligence very different from any that he has previously been acquainted with: but he will have some difficulty in correlating that intelligence with that of a departed human being, unless he is more than ordinarily fortunate.

Puzzled and bewildered, if not discouraged, he turns to the records printed from time to time, to the historical evidence and—unless he has the esoteric knowledge which, by the hypothesis, he cannot yet possess—he is more perplexed still. On the surface lie the most patent contradictions, what to him, in the light of his ideal, seem the most puerile follies. Shakespere returns to demonstrate his own imbecility: Bacon, to talk bad English, and worse philosophy. Leaders of public thought in ages long past, saints and sages whose lofty philosophy and noble religious ideas are still a power among us, return to sanction the crudest speculations, or to give utterance to the most dangerous doctrines which have only to be believed and acted upon in order to revolutionise society, and turn the wheel of progress backwards. Side by side with this he finds perpetual records of alleged imposture, all too specious to his eye. The very persons with whom he comes in contact in his investigations are divergent in their opinions, and animated by motives as various. Some are merely curious, some strangely credulous, some jest, some scoff, some look for scientific proof of a pet theory, some seek to explode what seems to them an error or a fraud; few, very few, are the earnest seekers after truth, who strive with reverence and patient care to fathom the mystery that surrounds them.

All this perplexes him. Again I reiterate that he sees only what lies on the surface, he has not the 'inner knowledge which will enable him to brush away these perplexities, and harmonise these seeming contradictions. He is looking at the matter from without. And I, for one, do not wonder that such an observer, with the best intentions

and the most impartial mind, is bewildered and dismayed. If he has patience to pursue the investigation, he will work through all this scum and find his reward in time: but to most men this is impossible; from all it is asking too much, all the more that these surface difficulties, these absurdities and chicaneries, are no part of the subject, and should be resolutely purged away. Instead of presenting Spiritual Science in the most repulsive garb, it should be our aim to make it lovely and of good report. Instead of trivialities and absurdities, we should strive to set forth the grand truths it teaches in their most attractive aspect. Instead of permitting or tolerating what may wear even the appearance of fraud, whether the authors of that fraud be men or controlling spirits, we should set ourselves scrupulously to eliminate it by making the conditions of investigation such as to preclude its possibility. Instead of dragging spirit down to matter, we should try to raise ourselves to the plane of spirit, and to enter into relations with intelligences of moral consciousness and integrity who will teach us what we want to know. In short we must study the science of spirit, the laws of mediumship, the principles that govern intercourse between the world of spirit and the world of matter, the means by which we may avoid what we all agree, I hope, in deploring.

These are the lessons which lie on the surface, and which the present crisis should bring home to us. We are not beyond learning them if only they are pointed out; and it is only by patient investigation and discussion that we can attain to knowledge of them. I am far from thinking that I can do much to put before my readers anything that can be new. I can at best but suggest what must have occurred to many minds before; perhaps, however, it may be serviceable to state it now, and it may, at least, lead to further suggestions from others. In this spirit, with a hearty desire to avoid dogmatism, and with a single wish for truth, I venture to throw out the following suggestions:—

In estimating the bearings of the subject we must have regard to our own world, to that with which we come into communion, and to the link that unites us to it. We must think, not only of ourselves as Spiritualists, but also of the

outside world whom we often seek to influence, and who will meddle with us, whether we like it or not; and chiefly, we must try and understand the nature of mediumship and the conditions under which it is best exercised.

On these, the exoteric and esoteric views of Spiritualism, I propose, to offer some plain reflections, tentative and imperfect, but, I hope, suggestive too. As to the necessity for facing all difficulties, there can be no doubt in any sane mind; if we do not, we shall surely suffer for it. It has been said that a divine work cannot be brought to nought by man. It may be so. I do not know; but this I do know: that man, by his folly and wickedness, may materially injure its progress, may bring it into transient contempt, and may impede when he might foster and impel its progress. God works by instruments, and though it is said again that He sometimes chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, I have yet to learn that folly is a good preparation for any form of work. I prefer to think, as most people who are not fanatics will, that we shall be better advised in preparing ourselves by the severest exercise of our highest powers to become "fellow-workers" with the messengers of the Supreme, who are to us the ministers of His will. In this spirit let us "set our house in order," and see how we stand.

Now the questions involved range themselves naturally into those which affect Spiritualists as such, and this is the esoteric view: those which concern us in our relation to the outside world, the exoteric view: and especially those which concern the medium, the link between the two worlds. I will sketch rapidly certain considerations which occur under these several heads.

I. *Esoteric questions affecting Spiritualists only.*

2. There are Spiritualists and Spiritualists. We are a great body and the body has many members, which fulfil widely divergent duties, and which are related to each other only so far as they are members of the same body. There is the largest freedom of thought among us in matters non-essential. No conclave has presumed to lay down for the acceptance of the faithful a creed to be subscribed to under penalties

affixed. There is, indeed, a simple yet very sublime creed which those who have come into communion with the higher spirits have received; but none has sought to force on any of his brethren any dogmatic definition of faith. On the common platform of a belief in existence perpetuated after bodily death, and of the interference of the world of spirit with the world of matter under certain conditions, those who call themselves Spiritualists are content to meet. Their private fancies are (or ought to be) thrown aside, and they are banded together in defence of spiritual existence and spiritual communion. None has any right to graft his own ideas on those stocks, or to hold as of binding force the *dicta* of spirits which, to his own mind, are commended as reasonable or fair-seeming. The platform is broad and comprehensive.

Again, none prescribes to the individual Spiritualist what part of the wide field of investigation he should devote himself to explore. To one may be commended the religious aspect of the question: to another its scientific demonstration. One may long and seek for communion with his own departed friends; another may try to search out the mysteries that beset the whole question of communion with the unseen world. One may experiment with a view to fathoming the powers of his own spirit; another to see if perchance all unembodied intelligence be indeed that of deceased humanity. There is room for all: and though he who covers the whole ground necessarily obtains a wider view than the minute investigator of a single point, still there is ample room for choice. In a science so new and yet so old, of such infinite ramifications, and of such far-reaching issues, none need fail to suit his individual fancies. The field is open to all.

Wide, then, as the field is, the comprehensive character of those who are generically called Spiritualists is not less wide. Men of every divergent cast of mind find themselves side by side: the one bond between them being a desire for truth, and a certain ability, which does not always belong to those who have not given their minds full play, to look it straight in the face and follow it when they have found it. Most of them have not found satisfaction in older forms of

faith, and have come, in the course of their search after truth, to find rest within the pale of Spiritualism. Some have found in its evidences a confirmation of their belief in the "old, old story." Some see a possible union between Religion and Science. Some are simple souls who have come there to meet their friends whom they once thought dead. Some are in hot pursuit of a crotchet—unconscious cerebration, or what not. *Quot homines, tot sententiæ.* It is not necessary that they should subscribe to any declaration, or be bound by any fetters. Most of them, indeed, have emancipated themselves from rusty fetters of old and cramping creeds. The iron had eaten into their soul: and in their new-found liberty, they are little desirous to fetter themselves with fresh obligations.

Hence the organisation of Spiritualists is as elastic as may be, and in it the one desirable thing is unity of purpose with liberty of individual effort.

(1.) This, then, is one point I want to press home on Spiritualists—*Unity of action, so far as that is possible and attainable.*

Furthermore it is a common cause of complaint among us that the communications received, so far as they are known to the outside world, are of an unsatisfactory nature. It is said that they are frequently trivial, contradictory, foolish (if not worse), and not such as to command respect from those who are little inclined to give it. I am anxious not to overstate the argument, and I must be understood as putting the allegation of an opponent. Is it so? I am disposed to think it is. In very many cases it undoubtedly is the fact that the communications made in circles where a mixed company is gathered are not of a high or consistent character. Why is this? Because, as I understand the philosophy of spirit-intercourse, we do not provide the conditions under which satisfactory communion can take place. Our public circles are frequented by people led there by the most various motives. Curiosity, a desire to expose preconceived fallacy or fraud, the wish to wile away an idle hour,—such motives predominate. And this is so almost by the very nature of the case. Spiritualism attracts a good deal

of public notice. Those who hear of it ask at once, "Where can I see anything of this for myself?" Entirely ignorant of the delicate conditions which beset the investigation, they are sent to the nearest public circle. The result is that any possibility of the evolution of phenomena or of the communication of information on satisfactory principles is entirely stopped. It would be impossible for me here to lay down any laws which should be observed in seeking communications from the world of spirit. I am not venturing to do more than throw out hints. But anyone who has intelligently investigated this subject will realise the difficulty which I now point out. I shall have more to say on the question when I come to deal with the nature of mediumship: but meantime it may be said that before communion with the world of spirit can be had on satisfactory bases, *it is necessary to revise the conditions on which it is usually sought to be obtained.* The melancholy stories of imposture, too often charged on the medium when he is the unconscious instrument of spirits whom the circle have attracted, make this plain enough. It is high time that this should be seen to: and that we should learn that we have it in our power to raise ourselves, in this respect, to far higher results than any yet obtained. When we have purified our circles, when we have made it impossible for those who now gain access without question—the curious, the vicious, the scoffing, the uninformed—to get in without preparation, we shall have removed one great stumbling-block. We must diffuse knowledge of conditions, prevent the ingress of the enemy on our own side, and then we shall be in a position to commune with higher intelligences, and to preclude imposture and trick. Surely this is not impracticable. Surely it is most desirable.

(2.) This is my second point—*The purification of public circles.*

Other points suggest themselves, but I must deal only with the most salient, and that only by way of suggestion. Others may take up points which I have missed, or which do not come within my scope. I pass to the link that unites us to the world of spirit.

II. *The Medium, and the Nature of Mediumship.*

The medium is a mesmeric sensitive, and as such is amenable to every dominant influence brought to bear on him. He is the receptacle of the several positive influences of the circle. If there be present a positive mind filled with doubt, it reacts on the medium. If there be a scoffing, jeering spirit amongst those present, it cuts into him like a knife. If an over-clever person thinks he has detected, or suspected fraud, that suspicion bites into the medium and "the iron enters into his soul"—precious *rusty* iron it is too! If vice be present, it reacts on him. If fraud suggests itself, he feels it. He is the "wash-pot" into which the collective feelings and sentiments of the circle are collected. And more than this. He is the link between them and the spirits that their mental states attract. The communications are pretty sure to be the re-presentations of the mental state of the sitters: unless indeed a powerful controlling spirit is charged to protect and neutralise adverse influence. On the medium first of all devolves the effect of the conditions under which the sitting is held. If the minds be harmonious and the intentions pure, he is calm and passive and a fit vehicle for corresponding influences. If suspicion and evil tempers are predominant, he is influenced in corresponding ways. A mesmeric sensitive, he comes under the dominant influence, and too often re-presents the wishes and thoughts of those who surround him: or rather, becomes the unconscious vehicle for spirits who so act.

When will investigators learn this simple truth? A medium is a mesmeric sensitive controlled by spirits unembodied. These spirits are, in the vast majority of cases, attracted by the circle; and in order to elevate and purify our communications we must exercise supervision over those whom we admit to our circle. A medium should be dealt with in the same way as an astronomer would deal with one of his most delicate instruments. He should be isolated from the rude contact of others, seeing that he absorbs their influence, and becomes charged with their active thoughts. He should be protected from anything that can upset the delicate equilibrium which can alone make him a service-

able vehicle for communications. He should even be guarded from mixing with other people, seeing that each human being is surrounded with his own atmosphere, and that the medium, by virtue of his sensitiveness, readily enters into the sphere of those with whom he comes in contact. He should be isolated; kept from the possibility of being dominated by any earthly influence; trained in habits of temperance, sobriety, and chastity; placed outside of the range of vulgar temptation, and kept "unspotted from the world."

I think I hear the laugh that greets this statement. A medium is a charlatan, an impostor, who produces one's grandmother for five shillings, a noxious and "elusive wild beast," to be crushed and trampled out! Yes. I am aware of it. *Hinc illæ lacrymæ.* It is for this reason that our circles are crowded with phenomena at best equivocal, too often apparently or really fraudulent. It is for this reason that we have such cause to blush for the puerilities and imbecilities, the frauds and tricks that are perpetually being brought to light. The most delicate of all conditions, the most obscure of all subjects, the most fugitive of all phenomena are dealt with on principles that may do for blasting rock or clearing virgin forests, but which defeat their object when applied to cases where precise knowledge and delicate care are the first requisites. The best results will always be obtained in harmonious family circles, where jealousy, mistrust, and the grosser passions find no place. It would seem as if these spiritual plagues take form and shape in some open circles: as if the mental obliquity of some of the sitters caused equivocal phenomena. This is a wide question. Before we can hope to obtain results at all commensurate with what is possible, we must learn somewhat of the nature of mediumship and of the conditions under which it may be profitably exercised.

(3.) This, then, is my third point. *Let us study the conditions under which the best results may be obtained from mediums.*

III. It remains to consider our attitude to the outside world—the *exoteric aspect.*

Here I will be brief. I should like to have as little to do with the outsiders as possible. I believe the energies of Spiritualists may be more profitably devoted to esoteric development than to touting for scientific recognition, or even to proselytising in any form. I do not believe that we have any legitimate *locus standi* for scientific proselytising at present. When we can get our phenomena produced under conditions which we have tabulated and laid down according to rule: when we can get them *at will*, we shall be in a very different case. Our best energies should be spent to achieve this. But seeing that outsiders *will* meddle with *us*, we must consider how we ought to deal with *them*.

As to the question of public circles, I have already indicated the line on which, as it seems to me, they ought to be conducted. It should be impossible for ignorant people to gain access to them and make a fiasco through their ignorance. The Lankesters should be kept out; they should be made to serve an apprenticeship before they can obtain admission.

And, in this aspect of the matter, it is well to note again what I have before said, that by no means sufficient care is given to perfecting a few experiments which can be produced at any time and place for the investigation of those who "want to see something." It can be done, and with comparative ease; and nothing would do more to place our phenomena on a scientific basis than the pains-taking attempt to perfect a few which can be produced under conditions which do not admit of doubt. I know that I shall be met with the rejoinder that Slade did that and (by the Nemesis of fate) stands now as the conspicuous example of exposure. I know, and most unjustly it is so. When knowledge has progressed even in a slight degree, the ignorance of a Lankester will be impossible. He will be educated out of himself. Only let the phenomena be produced in sufficient quantity, and under proper conditions for observation, and that cause of complaint will die of inanition. If public mediums, instead of producing a number of astounding phenomena in the dark, would devote their powers to evolving a very few simple experiments in the light, the whole aspect of the matter would be changed. I

have said enough of this before. It is sufficient to add now that evidence of (1) a force not yet recognised by science, and (2) controlled by an intelligence outside of man is what we should aim at. For the rest let science come to us. We have no need to run helter-skelter to Burlington House, in order to enlighten those who do not wish to be enlightened, and who only misrepresent our endeavours. As Lord Melbourne was fond of saying, "Why can't you leave it alone?" We have enough to do without adding to our perplexities by trying to convince those who have not yet reached the plane of knowledge on which alone conviction is possible. The same energy and pains judiciously applied would enable us to command what we now ask as a favour. Let us perfect our science, and we may go down to the Royal Institution and compel attention—if that is desirable. . . .

I have said more than enough to indicate a few of the lessons that seem to me to press on Spiritualists now. I have perhaps said too much, and what I have said may be misconstrued. I hope not. At any rate I have said openly what is in my mind, and what I earnestly believe is of importance at the present crisis. In anything that I have said I desire to speak on my own responsibility and for myself alone. I may be mistaken in my views: but at any rate they are honestly put forward and with the sincerest motives. The questions on which I have touched are only tentatively handled. It would require a volume to deal with them as they deserve. But surely they are important: and however wrongly I may have treated them, however imperfectly I may have suggested them, they press for solution. If we do not solve them, *they will be rudely solved for us.* Nothing but good can come from our dealing with them: nothing but mischief can come from our shelving them. I hope that nothing in the mode of their presentation will prevent Spiritualists from giving them their most careful consideration.)

I commenced this article by saying that we had arrived at a crisis in the history of Spiritualism. I wish to strike the same note in concluding. I emphatically believe that we have reached a crisis when we shall be compelled to set

our house in order and to face much hostile criticism and even persecution. If only the crisis produces its fair result, I at any rate shall hail it with a welcome. Times of persecution cannot be pleasant times: but they should be times of profit. They should be times when lessons are gathered up, and the lines of future progress are mapped out. With the experience of past ages to guide us, it is a day too late to hope that any form of truth worth having will make its way except through persecution and trial. If it were possible for any advanced form of truth to gain acceptance quietly, I should say at once that it was not the highest form of truth which the age was able to receive. Truth is always persecuted. There are always a number of persons who have a vested interest in the old, merely because it suits them; a number who do not want to take the trouble of facing new difficulties; many who turn uneasily in their bed, and ask for a little more slumber before they get up; many whose instincts are engaged on the side of the old and the established. Every new truth has had to win its way, by most righteous discipline, through persecution and obloquy to final acceptance and belief. This grand truth of spirit communion is no exception. How should it be? Is it not the noblest, mightiest fact that man can know? And being so, is it not to be expected that a materialistic age should receive it with contempt and scorn? Let it be so. Only be it ours to see that the scorn is not deserved, that we purify ourselves as those who herald a great truth should, and that we "give no occasion to the enemy of the Lord to blaspheme." If I have said anything here that can help to encourage men to hand on the torch of progressive truth, and to keep its flame pure, I shall not have spoken in vain.

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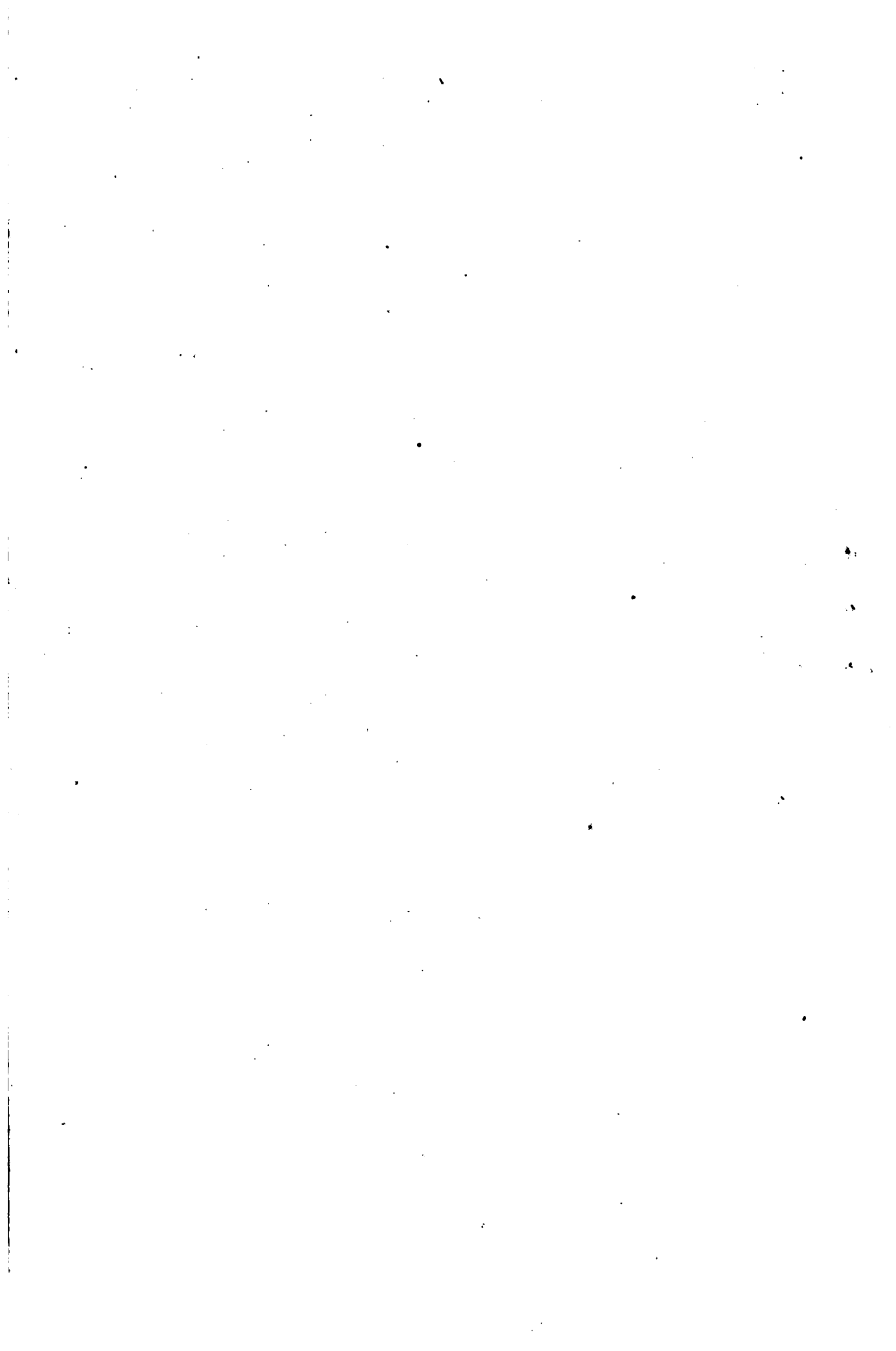
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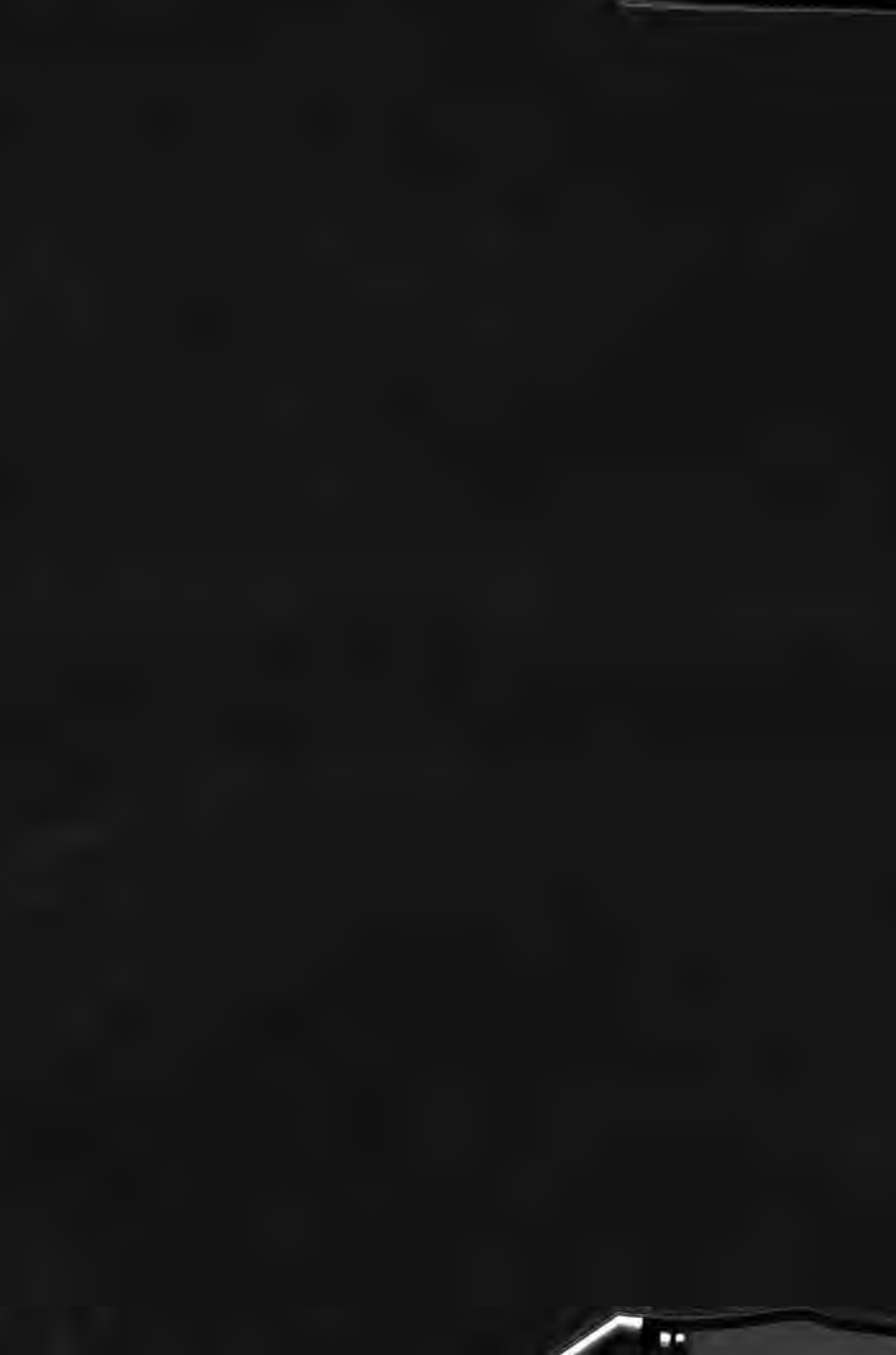
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