

Science and the "Spirits".

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upon the table and several pairs of legs under it; but how was I, without offense, to express the conviction which I really entertained? To ward off the difficulty, I again turned a wine glass upside down and rested my ear upon it. The rim of the glass was not level, and my hair upon touching it, caused it to vibrate and produce a peculiar buzzing sound. A perfectly candid and warm hearted old gentleman at the opposite side of the table, whom I may call A., drew attention to the sound and expressed his entire belief that it was spiritual. I, however, informed him that it was the moving hair acting on the glass. The explanation was not well received; and X., in a tone of severe pleasantry, demanded whether it was the hair that moved the table. The promptness of my negative probably satisfied him that my notion was a very different one.

The superhuman power of the spirits was next dwelt upon. The strength of man, it was stated, was unavailing in opposition to theirs. No human power could prevent the table from moving when they pulled it. During the evening this pulling of the table occurred, or rather was attempted, three times. Twice the table moved when my attention was withdrawn from it; on a third occasion, I tried whether the act could be provoked by an assumed air of inattention. Grasping the table firmly between my knees, I threw myself back in the chair and waited, with my eyes fixed on vacancy, for the pull. It came. For some seconds it was pull spirits, hold muscle; the muscle, however, prevailed, and the table remained at rest. Up to the present moment this interesting fact is only known to the particular spirit in question and myself.

A species of mental scene painting, with which my own pursuits had long rendered me familiar, was employed to figure the changes and distribution of spiritual power. The spirits, it was alleged, were provided with atmospheres, which combined with and interpenetrated each other, and considerable ingenuity was shown in demonstrating the necessity of time in effecting the adjustment of the atmospheres. A rearrangement of our positions was proposed and carried out; and soon afterward my attention was drawn to a scarcely sensible vibration on the part of the table. Several persons were leaning on the table at the time, and I asked permission to touch the medium's hand. "Oh! I know I tremble," was her reply. Throwing one leg across the other, I accidentally nipped a muscle, and produced thereby an involuntary vibration of the free leg. This vibration, I knew, must be communicated to the floor, and thence to the chairs

of all present. I therefore intentionally promoted it. My attention was promptly drawn to the motion; and a gentleman beside me, whose value as a witness I was particularly desirous to test, expressed his belief that it was out of the compass of human power to produce so strange a tremor. "I believe," he added earnestly, "that it is entirely the spirits' work." "So do I," added the candid and warm hearted old gentleman A. "Why, sir," he continued, "I feel them at this moment shaking my chair." I stopped the motion. "Now, sir," A. exclaimed, "they are gone." I began again, and A. once more affirmed their presence. I could, however, notice there were doubters present, who did not quite know what to think of the manifestations. I saw their perplexity; and, as there was sufficient reason to believe that the disclosure of the secret would simply provoke anger, I kept it to myself.

Again a period of conversation ensued, during which the spirits became animated. The evening was confessedly a dull one, but matters appeared to brighten toward its close. The spirits were requested to spell the name by which I was known to the heavenly world. Our host commenced repeating the alphabet, and when he reached the letter "P" a knock was heard. He began again, and the spirits knocked at the letter "O." I was puzzled, but waited for the end. The next letter knocked down was "E." I laughed, and remarked that the spirits were going to make a poet of me. Admonished for my levity, I was informed that the frame of mind proper for the occasion ought to have been superinduced by a perusal of the Bible immediately before the seance. The spelling, however, went on, and sure enough I came out a poet. But matters did not end here. Our host continued his repetition of the alphabet, and the next letter of the name proved to be "O." Here was manifestly an unfinished word, and the spirits were manifestly in their most communicative mood. The knocks came from under the table, but no person present evinced the slightest desire to look under it. I asked whether I might go underneath; the permission was granted; so I crept under the table. Some tittered; but the candid old A. exclaimed: "He has a right to look into the very dregs of it to convince himself." Having pretty well assured myself that no sound could be produced under the table without its origin being revealed, I requested our host to continue his questions. He did so, but in vain. He adopted a tone of tender entreaty, but the "dear spirits" had become dumb dogs and refused to be entreated. I continued under that table for at least a quarter of an hour, after which, with a feel-

ing of despair as regards the prospects of humanity never before experienced, I regained my chair. Once there the spirits regained their loquacity and dubbed me "Poet of Science."

This, then, is the result of an attempt made by a scientific man to look into these spiritual phenomena. It is not encouraging, and for this reason: The present promoters of spiritual phenomena divide themselves into two classes, one of which needs no demonstration, while the other is beyond the reach of proof. The victims like to believe, and they do not like to be undeceived. Science is perfectly powerless in the presence of this frame of mind. It is, moreover, a state perfectly compatible with extreme intellectual subtlety and a capacity for devising hypotheses which only require the hardihood engendered by strong conviction, or callous mendacity, to render them impregnable. The logical feebleness of science is not sufficiently borne in mind. It keeps down the weed of superstition, not by logic but by slowly rendering the mental soil unfit for its cultivation. When science appeals to uniform experience, the spiritualist will retort: "How do you know that a uniform experience will continue uniform? You tell me that the sun has risen for six thousand years; that is no proof that it will rise tomorrow; within the next twelve hours it may be puffed out by the Almighty." Taking this ground, a man may maintain the story of "Jack and the Beanstalk" in the face of all the science in the world. You urge in vain that science has given us all the knowledge of the

universe which we now possess, while spiritualism has added nothing to that knowledge. The drugged soul is beyond the reach of reason. It is in vain that impostors are exposed and the special demon cast out. He has but to slightly change his shape, return to his house and find it "empty, wept and garnished."—[Fragments of Science.]

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