

It is for this reason that the method of healing during sleep is better for all concerned than any other system of mental healing yet discovered. It follows the lines of nature, in that it employs the subjective powers at a time when they are normally active; and it employs them in such a way that the ordinary peripheral impressions, which often disturb the sleeper and produce unpleasant dreams, are overcome by a more potent suggestion. Any other method of mental healing, where the subjective powers of the healer are called into action, entails a certain loss of vital power on his part, for the simple reason that subjective activity during waking moments is abnormal. It is true that when the work is not carried to excess the physical exhaustion may not be perceptible; but any Christian scientist will testify that any great amount of effort in the line of his work produces great physical exhaustion. And it is noticeable that this exhaustion ensues in exact proportion to the success of his treatment. This success being in proportion to the subjective power exerted, it is reasonable to infer that subjective activity during waking hours and physical exhaustion bear to each other the relation of cause and effect.



CHAPTER XV.

THE PHENOMENA OF SPIRITISM.

If a Man die, shall he live again?—The Problem not solved by Spiritistic Phenomena.—The Phenomena admitted.—Their Supernatural Origin denied.—Explained by the Hypothesis.—Subsidiary Hypothesis.—An Intelligent Dynamic Force.—Its Characteristics.—Limited by Medium's Intelligence.—It is controlled by Suggestion.—Phenomena fail in Presence of Scepticism.—Reasons.—Mediumistic Frauds.—The Primary Lesson in Spiritistic Investigation.—Mediums not necessarily dishonest.—Their Honest Belief in the Phenomena.—Suggestion explains all.—Illustrations from Hypnotism.—Convincing Character of Alleged Communications.—Telepathic Explanations.—General Conclusions.

THE next subject which claims our attention in connection with the hypothesis under consideration is that of modern spiritism. It is approached with much diffidence and some misgivings, not because of any doubt as to the applicability of the hypothesis to the vast range of so-called spiritual phenomena, but because of the transcendent interest and importance of the subject to all mankind. It cannot be forgotten that millions of human beings base their hopes of a life beyond the grave upon their belief that in the phenomena of spiritism they have tangible evidence of the immortality of the soul, and that by means of such phenomena they can be put into communication with the spirits of the loved ones who have gone before. The fact cannot be ignored that there are millions of stricken hearts whose wounds have been healed by the consolation afforded by that conviction. The great question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" has been by these phenomena satisfactorily answered for many whom revealed religion failed

to satisfy, for many whose reasoning powers have failed to grasp the logic of the theologian. It were an unwelcome task to throw a shade of doubt upon the validity of evidence which to many seems to be "confirmation strong as proofs of Holy Writ;" and if in the perusal of the following pages such doubt arises, the reader is begged to discriminate between the question of the validity of evidence and the question of fact. For, be it remembered, I shall not undertake to prove that the souls of men do not live after the death of the body. That question stands just where it has always stood. It is a problem which, outside of revelation, is no nearer a solution than it was when Job propounded the momentous question. Neither will I undertake to say that the spirits of the dead do not and cannot communicate with the living. I do not know. But I do undertake to say, and will attempt to prove, that the phenomena of spiritism, so-called, do not constitute valid evidence of the ability of spirits of the dead to hold intercourse with the living. In doing so, no attempt will be made to deny the phenomena of spiritism. On the contrary, I shall not only admit the possibility of every phenomenon alleged by any respectable number of reputable witnesses to have occurred, but I shall also assume the substantial accuracy of the general statements made by spiritists regarding the leading phenomena of spiritism. But I shall attempt to explain their origin on other grounds than the supposition that they are caused by the spirits of the dead. In other words, I admit the alleged phenomena, but deny the alleged cause.

I will not waste time, however, by attempting to prove by experiments of my own, or of others, that such phenomena do occur. It is too late for that. The facts are too well known to the civilized world to require proofs at this time. The man who denies the phenomena of spiritism to-day is not entitled to be called a sceptic, he is simply ignorant; and it would be a hopeless task to attempt to enlighten him. I shall indulge in the hope, however, that by explaining the origin of the phenomena on rational

principles, and thus removing them from the realm of the supernatural, those who now assume to be sceptical may be induced to investigate for themselves. It is easy to deny the existence of that for which we cannot account by reference to known laws, and it is easy to believe in that which can be thus explained. This is especially true in regard to phenomena which are popularly attributed to a supernatural origin. Modern scientists have an easy way of treating such phenomena, which consists in denying their existence and refusing to investigate. Such men would plug their own ears and deny the phenomenon of thunder if they could not account for it by reference to laws with which they are familiar. And such a proceeding would be no more senseless than, at this day, to deny the phenomena of spiritism.

In justice, however, to those scientists who have sought to investigate the subject, and have failed to witness the phenomena promised, it must be said that in many instances their failure is attributable, not to any fault of their own, or lack of earnest purpose on their part, but to a want of knowledge of the fundamental laws which pertain to the production of such phenomena. The reasons for the frequent failure to produce psychic phenomena in presence of avowed sceptics has been fully discussed in a previous chapter of this book, to which the reader is referred. But at the risk of repetition they will be restated in their proper place in this chapter, as they pertain to the subject of so-called spirit phenomena.

The laws which govern the production of the phenomena under consideration are precisely the same as those which pertain to all the other phenomena which have been discussed; and the fundamental propositions of our hypothesis apply with equal force to them all. Again, the reader is asked to recall those propositions, in order that their force and logical sequence may remain clear to his mind in this connection. They are:—

1. The mind of man is dual in its nature,—objective and subjective.

2. The subjective mind is constantly controlled by suggestion.

These two propositions would seem to have been so well established as to need no further elucidation at this time. The subsidiary proposition, which applies to the phenomena under consideration, is that, —

3. The subjective mind, or entity, possesses physical power; that is, the power to make itself heard and felt, and to move ponderable objects.

This may seem at first glance to be begging the question; but its truth must be assumed provisionally, for the sake of the argument which follows. It will readily be seen that if those three propositions can be established, all the physical phenomena of spiritism can be accounted for on the ground that living man possesses inherently the power to produce them. And this is the position which we must assume, for it appears to be the truth.

It must be acknowledged by all who have witnessed, under test conditions, any of the physical phenomena, that there is a dynamic force residing somewhere that is capable of moving ponderable objects without physical contact, and that this force, whatever it is, or from whatever source it emanates, possesses intelligence, oftentimes to a remarkable degree. Now, this intelligent force either emanates from the spirits of the dead, or it does not. If it does not, it necessarily follows that it emanates from the living. That this last supposition is the true one is evidenced by many of the characteristics of the intelligence which it manifests, among which the following are prominent: —

It is essentially a human intelligence, and neither rises above nor sinks below the ordinary intelligence of humanity.

The intelligence is always on a level with that of the medium through whom it manifests itself. That is, it never rises so far above that of the medium as to preclude the possibility of its having its origin in the medium's subjective mind. That it often rises above the medium's known objective intelligence, is well known and admitted. But we have already seen what remarkable powers the subjective mind

possesses in certain lines of intellectual activity, and with what limitations it is hedged about; and we find that the intellectual feats of mediums possess all the characteristics belonging to subjective intelligence, — the same wonderful powers, and the same limitations. That so-called spirit communications always correspond to the nature of the medium's mind and character, and are limited by his capacity, is admitted by all the ablest writers on spiritism; and their greatest ingenuity is taxed to account for the fact. Alleged communications from the greatest philosophers who have gone before, amount to the merest twaddle when filtered through an ignorant medium.

Again, we find that the intelligence is controllable by the power of suggestion. This is shown in the readiness with which "spirits" can be made to respond to calls made upon them, whether they have any real existence or not. It is well known that any one can as readily obtain a communication from an imaginary person as from a real one, from a living person as from the dead, providing the medium does not happen to know the facts. The writer has had frequent and very affectionate communications from an imaginary dead sister, and has occasionally had a very touching communication from himself, the medium believing the name to represent a dead brother. The fact that he never had either brother or sister made the communication all the more convincing.

This perfect amenability to control by suggestion is evinced in another most remarkable way. It is well known to every person who has been in the habit of attending spiritual séances how necessary it is that "harmonious conditions" should prevail. The very presence of an avowed sceptic will often prevent any manifestations. It frequently happens that some one present remarks, in a despairing tone, that he does not expect any manifestations, "because it always happens that when I am present no communications can be had." When such a remark is made, the chances are ten to one that the "spirits" will refuse to respond. Why this happens, spiritists have laboriously attempted to explain,

but never satisfactorily, except to themselves. The fact that a spirit, possessing sufficient power to move a table, raise a piano to the ceiling, or levitate the medium, should be paralyzed in presence of one who does not believe in spirits, is simply inexplicable, except upon the one hypothesis, namely, that the power evoked is that of the subjective mind of the medium, which is amenable to control by the mysterious power of suggestion. It is inconceivable that the spirit of Napoleon Bonaparte, who, when living, swayed the destinies of nations, used kings and popes as his puppets, and led his hosts to successful battle against the combined armies of Europe, should, when dead, shrink, abashed and powerless, in presence of some one man who happens not to believe in spiritism. But it can be readily understood how a séance should prove a failure when we assume that the power that moves the table or writes the communications is exercised by the subjective intelligence of the medium, and that the presence of an avowed sceptic operates as an ever-present and all-potent suggestion that the promised manifestations are impossible in his presence. It is in strict accordance with the universal law of suggestion that such should be the result. It is this constant amenability to control by suggestion which always hampers mediums when they are giving test séances in the presence of sceptical investigators; and I undertake to say that no medium ever was, or ever can be, powerful enough to produce his phenomena under test conditions in presence of a hostile and aggressively sceptical investigating committee. It is no fault of the medium that this is the case, and it is no test whatever of the genuineness of his phenomena. But it is presumptive, if not conclusive, evidence that the source of his phenomena resides within himself, and hence is amenable to the universal law which governs the action of all subjective intelligence and power. Neither is it any reflection upon the sincerity of the investigator that he fails to witness the phenomena that have been promised. His ignorance of the law which governs the subject-matter, together with his desire to be frank and honest enough with

the medium to put him in possession of a knowledge of his sentiments and prejudices, leads him unwittingly to place an insuperable barrier in the way of success. It unfortunately happens that many professional mediums, despairing of success in producing the genuine phenomena, and more than ordinarily anxious to earn the reward of success, will, under such circumstances, resort to fraud and legerdemain. The temptation to do so is great when he reflects upon how much is at stake, the immediate monetary reward promised being the least consideration. His professional pride, his love of approbation, his hope of future fame and emolument in case he succeeds in convincing a sceptical scientific investigator, — all operate to constitute a temptation too great to be always successfully withstood. Besides, he knows that, under favorable conditions, he can produce the genuine phenomena, that he has produced them again and again, and he quiets his conscience by reflecting that it can do no harm to resort to legerdemain to simulate that which he knows to have a genuine existence.

In this connection it may be well to state what must already be obvious to the intelligent reader; namely, that the only way to secure the production of genuine phenomena is, first, to secure the confidence of the medium by assuming to be in hearty sympathy with him, and by giving him to understand that you thoroughly believe in his honesty and his power to produce genuine phenomena. Give him all the time he wants, and assure him that you are in no hurry; remembering always that quiet passivity and undisturbed serenity of mind on the part of a medium is an indispensable prerequisite to success, not only in producing the phenomena, but in entering the subjective condition. It is precisely the same in this respect as it is in hypnotism. The condition of the medium, when in a trance or partial trance, is precisely the condition of a hypnotized person, and he is subject to the same laws, and the same conditions are necessary and indispensable to his success. Every hypnotist knows that it would be madness to antagonize a hypnotic subject by suggesting to him in advance that he is

an impostor, or that hypnotic phenomena are mere humbug, and then expect to hypnotize him and produce the phenomena. When investigators realize this one fact they will have taken the primary lesson in spiritistic investigation. Every one who understands the first principles of hypnotism knows what folly it would be to subject the science to the test of allowing a sceptical investigator to take a subject in hand and begin the operation of trying to hypnotize him by assuring him that hypnotism is imposture, and all subjects are mere pretenders. And yet one who investigates hypnotism in that way does, in effect, precisely what the sceptical investigator of spiritistic phenomena does when he avows his scepticism to the medium in advance. If investigators would observe the rule here suggested, and always endeavor to put the medium at his ease and accede to all the conditions prescribed by him, instead of insisting upon test conditions of their own devising, they would soon find that they would witness all the phenomena desired, and under conditions that preclude the possibility of fraud or legerdemain. Any other course almost of necessity defeats the object sought.

It will be seen, therefore, that a failure to produce phenomena at a given time does not necessarily indicate fraud on the part of the medium; and in strict justice to professional mediums, who as a class have been brought into disrepute by the fraudulent practices of some of their number, it must be said that the detection of a medium in fraudulent practices does not *per se* prove that he was consciously guilty; for it is an undoubted fact that when a medium is unconscious, and his subjective mind is in control, it often acts capriciously, and presumably fraudulent practices might be indulged in without the objective knowledge or consent of the medium. Therefore, until the laws governing the subject-matter are better understood, we should extend the broadest charity over the professional medium, except in cases where it is discovered that the paraphernalia necessary for the perpetration of fraud have been prepared by the medium in advance.

At this point the question will naturally be asked, "How can a medium, professional or otherwise, be entitled to credit for honesty, who represents himself as being able to hold communion with the spirits of the dead, or to be an instrument through which communications from spirits of the dead can be obtained, if, in point of fact, such communications have their origin wholly within his own personality?"

This is perhaps the most pertinent and the most far-reaching question that could be formulated in regard to the hypothesis under consideration. If it could not be fairly answered from a purely scientific standpoint, our hypothesis would not be worthy of further discussion; for it is simply impossible to presuppose that all the immense number of mediums, professional and private, who may be found in all ranks of society throughout the civilized world, are deliberately and consciously perpetrating a fraud upon mankind. On the contrary, I here take occasion to say that there is no system of religious belief which is so thoroughly fortified by facts as that of spiritism, when its phenomena are viewed from the standpoint of the investigator who is unacquainted with the latest scientific discoveries in the domain of experimental psychology. But with that knowledge in possession, the evidential value of the phenomena of spiritism is vastly depreciated, and the high character of the medium for truth and sincerity loses all its weight as a factor in the case.

The intelligent reader has already anticipated the answer to the foregoing question. It is simply this: that the subjective mind of the medium, being controlled by suggestion, believes itself to be the spirit of any deceased person whose name is suggested. It has been educated to that belief through the objective education and environment of the individual. It is, by the laws of its being, absolutely controlled by the objective belief of the medium, and the suggestions embraced in that belief. It is true that it often acts capriciously and independently, but it is always in pursuance of the auto-suggestion or belief of the medium

that it is an extraneous and, therefore, an independent power.

No one who has witnessed even the stage exhibitions of the phenomena of hypnotism will doubt the substantial truth of this proposition. An intelligent subject can be made to assume any number of characters, diverse as the antipodes, and in each one he will imitate the original in thought, word, and action with perfect fidelity, so far as he knows the character, habits, and idiosyncrasies of the individual personated, firmly believing himself to be the individual he represents. He may, with the same facility, be transformed into an angel or a devil or an animal; and he will never doubt the truth of the suggestion, or fail to act the character suggested, so far as it is physically possible. These facts are well known to all hypnotists, as well as to all who witness the common stage exhibitions of the phenomena. Some stage hypnotists have much difficulty in preventing their subjects from exhibiting spiritistic phenomena on the platform. This was a common experience of Professor Cadwell, an American performer, who was himself a spiritist. When it became known to his audiences and subjects that the latter were liable to be "controlled by spirits," the trouble became very marked, and the professor was greatly annoyed by the frequency with which his subjects were seized upon by "passing spirits," and made to receive communications and perform other antics in the name of the spirits of their dead acquaintances. The phenomena exhibited through these subjects were identical with those shown through ordinary mediums, and indeed some of his best subjects afterwards became successful professional mediums. That the liability of the professor's subjects to lapse into mediumship was the result of suggestion is shown by the fact that Professor Carpenter, who was Cadwell's pupil, and operated by his methods, and was in every sense his peer as an operator, never had any trouble with mediumistic phenomena, for the simple reason that he was careful to avoid suggesting the idea to his subjects that such a thing was possible. In point of fact it is well known to many hypnotists that all the phe-

nomena of spiritism can be reproduced through their subjects by simply suggesting to them that they are under the control of spirits. Of course it may be said that the spirits do actually take possession of a hypnotic subject when permitted to do so, and that it is the genuine control of spirits after all. The answer to this is that it is also just as easy to obtain communications from a living person through a hypnotic subject as from a dead one, and from an imaginary person as from a real one, by merely making the proper suggestion. The same is true of any medium, for that matter, as will presently be shown.

It is obvious, therefore, that the universal law of suggestion operates upon the subjective mind of a medium with the same force and certainty as upon all others. He is in the subjective, or hypnotic, condition. The suggestion that he is about to be controlled by the spirits of the dead is ever present to his mind, and is all potent. It is a part of his education. It is his religious belief. No other explanation of the mysterious phenomena is known to him. He knows only that he is moved by a power, an intelligence, over which he exerts no conscious control. It gives utterance to thoughts beyond his comprehension, and possesses knowledge of matters of which he consciously knows nothing. His conclusion is, first that the intelligence is something extraneous to his personality, and secondly that it must be that of an inhabitant of another world. From his standpoint it is the only rational conclusion. His hereditary belief in the immortality of the soul confirms it. His reading of the Bible sanctions the belief in the power of spirits to hold communion with the living. His hope of a life beyond the grave, and his longing to hold communion with the loved and lost, combine to give his conclusions a welcome reception in the chambers of his mind.

A more potent suggestion was never forced upon the subjective mind of man than this; and in obedience to the universal law, it must be believed by the medium's subjective mind, and acted upon accordingly. And the subjective mind *does* believe the suggestion most implicitly. If it did

not, the law of suggestion would have no place in experimental psychology, and all the conclusions deducible therefrom would have to be revised. So believing, it follows that, when questioned, it will unhesitatingly affirm that it is the spirit of whatever person is suggested; and so far as the medium knows the character or antecedents of the spirit invoked, that spirit will be personated with all the preternatural acumen characteristic of subjective mental activity.

If the chain of reasoning by which the medium and his friends have arrived at the conclusion that the phenomena must proceed from disembodied spirits seems to them to be perfect, their conviction rises to the dignity of a certainty, in their estimation, when the supposed spirit begins to forward alleged communications from the hypothetical borderland of another world. They find that his alleged "control" is able to tell them secrets which they supposed to be safe in their own custody, or perhaps only known to themselves and the deceased whose spirit has been invoked. He will describe the character and personal appearance of deceased persons whom it was impossible that he should have known in life, sometimes even giving their names and ages; he will tell of incidents in their career known only to the person for whose benefit the communication is given.

If the sitter is sceptical, and has learned something of telepathy, his ready objection is that all this is "mind-reading." But presently the medium will describe some one of whom the sitter has not thought for years, who was utterly unknown to the medium, and of whom he never heard. It is then that the sitter is confounded. His telepathic explanation is exploded, for he "was not thinking of the deceased at all; it could not, therefore, be mind-reading," he declares, with all the enthusiasm of a new convert whose last objection has been answered.

There is no more common or popular explanation of certain phases of spiritistic phenomena than attributing them to mind-reading. When a medium relates to you incidents of your life of which you know he has no previous knowl-

edge, the most obvious explanation is that he reads your mind, — that is, if you do not believe that he is controlled by spirits; and you are undoubtedly right. But when he tells you of things that you had forgotten, and describes persons of whom you are not thinking, you jump to the conclusion that thought-reading does not explain that particular phenomenon. And it is just here that you make a mistake, for the reason that you do not understand the first principles of mind-reading. But when it is once understood that mind-reading is the communion of two subjective minds, and that the objective or conscious thoughts of the sitter have no necessary effect upon the character of the communications, it will be seen that the fact that the sitter was not consciously thinking of the person described, or had forgotten the incident recalled, has no evidential value whatever. The sitter may or may not be thinking consciously of the subject of the communication; he may even be endeavoring to cause the medium to speak of some particular one with whom he earnestly desires to communicate. It makes no difference whatever, for it is the uppermost thought of the subjective mind that is read, and of that the sitter has neither knowledge nor conscious control. That the medium relates incidents of the sitter's life which he had forgotten until reminded of them, is not at all strange or unaccountable, when we remember that the memory of the subjective mind is perfect. Neither is there any evidential value in the fact that the sitter cannot remember an incident related by the medium; for he must remember that objective memory retains little, comparatively, of the incidents of life, while the subjective mind retains all.

It will thus be seen that in order to explain the phenomena of spiritism on the hypothesis that it has its origin wholly within the sub-conscious mind of the medium, it is not necessary to presuppose that he is dishonest or insincere when he attributes it to disembodied spirits. In the absence of knowledge on his part of the recent discoveries in psychological science, he has the best of reasons for so believing, for up to the present time no other hypothesis has

been advanced which will account for all the phenomena on any other rational supposition. But the two great laws — duality of mind and suggestion — clear away the greatest stumbling-block in the way of scientific investigation of this, the greatest problem of the ages. It is now no longer necessary to deny the phenomena, since they can all be accounted for on scientific principles, outside the domain of the supernatural. It is no longer necessary to consider the spiritual medium either a fool or an impostor, since the phenomena are genuine, and their explanation on scientific principles is impossible, except in the light of very recent discoveries in psychic science.

Having set forth the fundamental principles underlying the production of so-called spirit phenomena, we will now proceed briefly to examine their various phases and leading characteristics, and to show how the hypothesis under consideration applies to each of them with the same force and pertinency as in the case of the other psychic phenomena which have been considered.



CHAPTER XVI.

THE PHENOMENA OF SPIRITISM (*continued*).

Various Classes of Phenomena. — Clairvoyance. — Its Field not yet clearly defined. — Telepathy invades its Ancient Domain. — Simple Experiments in Telepathy. — Their Significance. — Telepathic Power in Mediums. — Telepathic Visions. — A Typical Séance. — Wonderful Exhibition of Telepathic Power. — An Affecting Interview of the Sitter with Himself. — Deductions. — Visions of Inanimate Things as well as of Deceased Persons. — Spirit of the Jack of Clubs. — Subjective Memory. — Spirit Identity. — Allan Kardec's Observations. — His Illogical Conclusions. — His Supreme Test. — Telepathic Explanation. — Four Ways of explaining his Test Case.

THERE are several ways by which the operations of the subjective mind can be brought above the threshold of consciousness. When this is done by any one of the various methods, a phenomenon is produced. Each of these phenomena has been, at some time in the history of mankind, attributed to the agency of disembodied spirits.

The leading phenomena above alluded to are clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy, mesmerism, or hypnotism, automatic writing, percussive sounds (spirit-rapping), movement of ponderable bodies (table-tipping), and phantasmic appearances.

Of these, clairvoyance, telepathy, and hypnotism have generally ceased to be regarded as proceeding from supernatural agencies. They are now recognized as powers inherent in mankind, and, as will be seen, are largely employed to explain other phenomena.