

in that, as it has been in this, to give the teachings as precisely and faithfully as they are received as is possible. And as they have no selfish purposes to advance, no pre-conceived notions to defend or sustain, they believe they are, and will be, able to give them as free from mortal taint as is in nature practicable.

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## Introduction

BY JUDGE EDMONDS.

I HAVE recently had occasion to make to the public a statement of my views on the subject involved in the following papers. Forced into that publication by the injustice which had been done to my researches, and the result of them, I was compelled, from the nature of the channel through which I reached the public, to be brief and general. I annex that paper to this, and while I reiterate all I there said, I avail myself of this occasion to be more specific and particular, both as to the nature of my inquiries and the conclusions which flow from them.

I was early aware that the world at large looked upon the subject as exceedingly trivial and inconsiderable. I was not surprised at this, because I saw that what reached the general ear through the common newspapers of the day, was almost always unimportant, and frequently absurd and ridiculous. There were good reasons for this. The conductors of those journals desired to insert only what would amuse their readers, and were unwilling, and often refused, to open their columns to the graver and more important matters that flowed from the same source. And then they who received those more serious communications did not often feel themselves called upon to court the scoffs and sneers and persecution of the world, merely for the purpose of giving to that world that which aimed only at the general good.

I, however, early thought that I saw something in this mat-

ter more worthy the attention of mankind. If it was what it purported to be, and what so many thousands were daily believing it to be, an intercourse between man and an unseen and invisible power, governed by "some intelligent agent with a will of its own, independent of all persons present," it was indeed a new era in his history, fraught with most important consequences to him, and not unworthy a most careful examination.

Furthermore, if it had, as it seemed to have, a most intimate connection with our religious faith, it was worth while to inquire what effect it was to have in that respect, and whether it was addressed most to those who already professed some religious faith, and were attached to some religious sect, or to that still greater number who made no such profession and had no such connection. My intercourse with the world had taught me that most of the educated and intelligent among the people belonged to the latter class, and I found that many, very many secretly felt as I did. They had heard and read so many contradictory statements, that they hardly knew what to believe on that most momentous of all subjects, the life after death. I had the curiosity to examine the relative strength of these two classes, and was astonished at the result.

I confined my examination to my own country, and inquired how these two classes stood among our population, which the census of 1850 proclaimed to be 23,191,918. I could not at first get access to the census returns on that subject, and I referred to the "American Almanac," a work that I had for many years been in the habit of relying upon for the accuracy of its information, and there found that the professed Christians of our country amounted to only 4,731,639, leaving in the other class 18,460,279! Since then I have obtained access partially to the census returns, and find that this statement is a close approximation to the truth.

By these returns I find there were in the United States 36,011 churches, capable of containing each, on an average,

only 384 persons, and thus accommodating at their utmost capacity only 13,828,224. In other words, that to every 646 of our population, there was a church capable of containing only 384 persons, so that 9,363,694 of our people could not go to church if they would.\* When to this I added the consideration known to every one to be true, that it was very rare indeed that any of our churches were filled to their utmost capacity, and the equally well-known fact that many who do frequent them are not professed religionists at all—some of them indeed decided unbelievers—I could not resist the conclusion, that a vast majority of the population of our country, professing as it did to be a Christian nation, were not, to say the least, professed believers in the religion of the day, and perhaps not of any religion, and the question pressed itself upon my mind, May there not be in this new phenomenon something calculated to supply this great want?

There was yet another consideration. The world of professing Christians was divided into numerous sects, and most of the sects were again divided into factions among themselves—thus causing discord among those to whom it was a primary lesson, "Love one another"—and I thought whether there might not be found in this new revelation some common platform on which all might congregate and unite in one common adoration of the God of all.

And yet another. It did not seem to me to be "Christian philosophy that would have men shrink from the investigation of Nature, from fear of finding a contradiction between the works and the word of God. When rightly un-

\* Since the foregoing was written, I have come across this statement:

"In New York city there are 277 religious societies, as follows: Romish churches, 35; Presbyterian, 49; Episcopal, 49; Methodist, 36; Baptist, 35; Dutch Reformed 19; Congregational, 7; Lutheran, 6; Universalists, 5; Quakers, 4; Unitarians, 2; Jewish Synagogues, 3; all others, 27."

Now, allowing that each one of these churches will contain a thousand people, and that each is full every Sunday—and every one will admit that in both respects this is a liberal allowance—there must be near 250,000 of our city population who never go to church, and who could not go if they would!

derstood, they must harmonize. Nor can we assume that human knowledge has as yet arrived at its maximum in the comprehension of the word any more than it has of the works of God."

With such feelings it was that I entered upon and continued my investigations. I aimed at three things: first, to ascertain beyond all doubt, whether that which was before me was a reality, and not a delusion or an imposture; next, whence came the intelligence and will that were directing it; and finally, to what end it tended?

I might, indeed, have been content merely to satisfy my own mind on the subject. And here let me pause a moment, while, *par parenthesis*, I express my regret at being compelled thus freely to speak of myself. I feel how ungraceful it is, and gladly would I avoid it. But what can I do? To borrow an illustration from my calling, when I thus appear upon the witnesses stand to testify of the things that I do know, I am bound in candor to disclose all those matters in reference to myself which, in every intelligent mind, will enter into the question how far I may be entitled to credit. And as I mean now to have no reservation, but to state as well those matters which I alone have witnessed, and which must depend solely on my veracity, as those which have been witnessed and can be sustained by others, so it seems to me that I ought, even at the hazard of being charged with egotism, to speak of all those things which may affect my credit one way or the other. Therefore it is that I speak of the reasons why I did not, as I might have done, confine the knowledge which I obtained within my own bosom. I knew full well what I should draw down upon myself by speaking out. I could not mistake all I saw around me: one universal shout of ridicule and condemnation of all who professed to believe, nay! even of those who went into the investigation at all, unless they came out of it fiery red in their denunciation of it as an "atrocious imposture." I knew full well that truth was ever born with many a bitter pang, and most to

him who gave it birth. And I had no right to expect, nor did I expect, to escape this common and apparently inevitable fate. But I confess that at first I shrank at the prospect before me.

It is now about two years since I was urged, most affectionately, yet most earnestly, for the sake of my fellow-men, to speak out fearlessly what I had discovered. I have now lying by me a long article which I then prepared on the subject, but which I then shrunk from publishing. It was no easy task for me to peril, at one fell swoop, all that during a life, extending to half a century, I had been struggling to attain, namely, the good opinion of my fellow-men. I had not aimed at wealth, but my reputation was, as it were, the very breath of my nostrils, and I could not but pause ere I jeopardized it. After a year's hesitancy, however, I at length spoke out, for the sake of others, not for my own, and I at least have not forgotten "the hue and cry" that was raised at my presumption. But I was buoyed up and sustained, and, indeed, impelled by the conviction—whether well founded or not, let others judge—that by my self-sacrifice I might do good to my fellow-man, and assist him to advance in goodness and knowledge, both in this world and in the world to come.

Having said thus much, that all may judge for themselves how far I was governed by a spirit of fanaticism which ought to detract from the weight of my testimony, I happily dismiss, for good and all, every personal consideration, and proceed with my narrative.

For the first four or five months of my investigations my chief inquiry was, Is this a reality, or an imposture or delusion? And here I pause to remark on one feature of the evidence which ought not to be overlooked, and that is, that much of it is so purely personal in its character, that it is nearly, if not quite impossible to convey an adequate idea of its force to others. For instance: if my person is touched inaudibly by an unseen power, no mortal being but myself can, in the very nature of things, have

any evidence but my say so. And though it may be to me most satisfactory, so that I can say beyond all peradventure "I know," yet it is impracticable for me to convey to any other one the same strength of evidence that is accorded to me. So it must be, when my most secret thoughts are read. It is impossible that the evidence can be presented to any other one with the same overwhelming force that it is to me, for the simple reason, that no one but myself can know positively what my thought was.

So, too, much of the evidence is appreciatory, and not tangible. What I mean by this is, that it is evidence addressed to the mind only, and not to the senses. For instance, when the spirits detail to us their daily life in the spheres, or proclaim to us the doctrine of PROGRESSION, we can not have the same evidence of those matters that we can of a house or a tree, which we can see and touch, and thus, by the aid of our senses, ascertain the reality. We can only reason upon it; we can only test it by all the laws of nature and all her manifestations around us, and then determine for ourselves what judgment to form, whether we will be governed by the conclusions of our judgment, or by a blind faith (as unlike true belief founded on our reason, as the stupor induced by laudanum is unlike a natural slumber).

Hence it is that it is so important that each one should investigate for himself, and not depend upon what others tell him. Pinning their faith upon the sleeve of others has for ages been the curse of mankind.

These considerations I was aware of during my investigations, and they caused me to receive with great caution the relations I obtained from others, and so they ought to admonish others to receive my statements with equal caution. For I beg it to be borne in mind, that I am not so much seeking to convince others, as I am aiming to induce them also to investigate for themselves as I have. But,

One cause of folly, one especial cause  
Is this. Few know what wisdom is, though well

Defined in God's own words, and printed large  
On heaven and earth in characters of light,  
And sounded in the ear by every wind.

My first interview was with the rappings, and three things struck me as remarkable. One was, that under the circumstances it was beyond all cavil that the sounds were not produced by the instrumentality of any person present. Another was, that my mental questions were answered, when I knew that no person present could know what they were, or even that I was asking any; and a third was, that I was directed to correct a mistake I had made in my written memorandum of what was occurring, when I knew that no one present was aware that I had made a mistake, or what it was.

It can not be necessary that I pause here or elsewhere to detail the circumstances which cause me to say one thing was established "beyond cavil," and as to other things that "I know." I was at the time a disbeliever; I had all my wits about me, and was on the sharp look out for deception. And all who will thoroughly investigate this matter will over and over again be placed in the situation I was, where they will be compelled to say "I know," in defiance of all preconceived opinions, and of all the arguments in the world from those who do not and can not know. It is useless for a man to argue to me that the sun does not shine, when I know it does. There are thousands who have gone into this matter—and of clear and intelligent minds too—who have realized as I have, the truth of this proposition in regard to various phases of the phenomenon. It was but a few days ago that a vigorous mind wrote to me, "It will not do for the world to tell me that I am deceived, when from the oft-repeated evidence of my senses, and the deductions of my reason I know I know."<sup>\*</sup>

\* I can not persuade myself to resist the temptation of inserting here, for the benefit of those who insist upon it that we ought not to believe the evidence of our own senses, a few extracts from a writer who was considered

At my next interview, several things occurred to attract my attention. None of my questions were asked orally, some were written, and some merely framed in my mind,

“as standing at the head of those metaphysical philosophers who adorned the last century.”

“By the laws of all nations, in the most solemn judicial trials wherein men's fortunes and lives are at stake, the sentence passes according to the testimony of eye or ear-witnesses of good credit. An upright judge will give a fair hearing to every objection that can be made to the integrity of a witness, and allow it to be possible that it can be corrupted; but no judge will ever suppose that witnesses may be imposed upon by trusting to their eyes and ears; and if skeptical counsel should plead against the testimony of witnesses, that they had no other evidence for what they declared but the testimony of their eyes and ears, and that we ought not to put so much faith in our senses as to deprive men of life or fortune upon their testimony, surely no upright judge would admit a plea of this kind. I believe no counsel, however skeptical, ever dared to offer such an argument; and if it was offered, it would be rejected with disdain.

“Can any stronger proof be given that it is the universal judgment of mankind that the evidence of sense is a kind of evidence which we may securely rest upon in the most momentous concerns of mankind; that it is a kind of evidence against which we ought not to admit any reasoning; and therefore, that to reason either for or against is an insult to common sense?”

“The whole conduct of mankind in the daily occurrences of life, as well as the solemn procedure of judicatories in the trial of causes, civil and criminal, demonstrates this. I know only of two exceptions that may be offered against this being the universal belief of mankind.

“The first exception is that of some lunatics who have been persuaded of things that seem to *contradict* the clear testimony of their senses. \* \* \*

“The other exception that may be made to the principle we have laid down is that of some philosophers who have maintained that the testimony of sense is fallacious, and therefore ought never to be trusted. Perhaps it might be a sufficient answer to this to say, that there is nothing so absurd which some philosophers have not maintained. It is one thing to profess a doctrine of this kind, another seriously to believe it, and to be governed by it in the conduct of life. It is evident that a man who did not believe his senses could not keep out of harm's way an hour of his life; yet in all the history of philosophy we never read of any skeptic that ever stepped into fire or water because he did not believe his senses, or that showed, in the conduct of life, less trust in his senses than other men have. This gives us just ground to apprehend that philosophy was never able to conquer that natural belief which men have in their senses; and that all their subtle reasonings against this belief were never able to persuade themselves. It appears, therefore, that the clear and distinct testimony of our senses carries

yet all were answered correctly. Once I began writing a question which I had thought, and it was answered when I had written only two words of it. Again was I told to correct a mistake in my minutes—for I was a novice, and did not do the business as well as I might—and we were told of what was occurring in the adjoining parlor with a person who had entered the room since we had left it, and which, on throwing open the folding doors, we found to be correct.

My next interview was where a party of eight or ten

irresistible conviction along with it to every man in his right judgment.”—*Reid on the Mind*, vol. i., Essay II.—Perception.

Such are the opinions of a learned philosopher, who has long been regarded as standard authority, and who has, in this instance at least, good, old-fashioned common-sense to support him. He is rather too material and Aristotelian for my notions in some respects, but he will be none the less acceptable for that to those who yield to authority the credit they deny to their own senses, and who, in their blind adherence to preconceived opinions, reject that which every sane mind admits.

I know nothing more or less important to set off against it, than the recent act of a learned Theban at the “Blarney Rock of New England,” who denounced at least half a million of his fellow-citizens for being rash enough to believe the evidence of their senses; and this amid “applause,” as he was careful to have it reported, as if this was the first time that the groundlings were made to laugh while the judicious grieved.

Professing to be a gentleman, he implies against those whose purposes are, to say the least, as upright as his own, an intention to deceive. Claiming, as his flatterers do for him, a high order of intellect, he charges against great numbers that they have not intelligence enough to know when they see and hear, and the willing vassalage of a delusion of which a child would be ashamed. The ignorance of the subject which prompted the wholesale denunciation, is the legitimate offspring of the wisdom which would have us deny the evidence of our own senses, and the argument used is kindred to that of the boor, who, in the vehemence of his denial that the earth rolled around, exclaimed, “Why, we should all fall off!”

It is melancholy to see intellect that might be made to conduce to the advancement of the race, thus pandering to the prejudices of the populace, and equally so to mark the contrast with the use of intellect in Galileo, in discovering at the hazard of his life the true laws of the universe, and thus opening to the human mind juster conceptions of the Creator, and the display of wisdom in Franklin, in disarming, in defiance of the clamor of the ignorant, the lightning of its power.

were assembled, and where I knew only one of them. The first thing that struck me was, that no communication could for more than half an hour be obtained, though all were anxious for it, and particularly the medium, who was reproached with being the cause of the interruption. At length, however, the rappings were heard, and the first thing was to direct a lady who was there merely as a spectator, who had never witnessed any thing of the kind, and who sat by herself in a corner of the room, to come to the table around which the party were sitting. She was reluctant to do so, yet finally consented, and received what purported to be a communication from a child she had lost, and which she said was in all respects accurate, even as to the cause of death, which was an unusual one, namely, swallowing a peach pit. One gentleman asked mental questions, to which he received answers which he said were correct; one asked aloud several personal questions on matters known only to himself, and received, what he said, were correct answers; and I asked mental questions and obtained answers, the truth of which I could not then tell, though afterward I ascertained. Then came the first physical manifestations I ever was present at, and they came in the shape of heavy poundings, as with a fist on the panel of a door, at some distance from the medium, and where she could not reach. We were sitting in the basement, and the poundings were answered from the cellar underneath, and from the second or third story overhead. Of course I could not tell who made them, nor could I inquire very closely without being in danger of giving offense, but I confess I suspected an imposition, and I was provoked at it. That is, I thought it done, not by the medium, who was a young, innocent girl of some fifteen, but by some one to deceive us. My journal of that day's proceedings looks as if my suspicions were known, for it contains this entry:

"I returned home and went to bed about twelve. About two or three o'clock, as I should judge, I was awakened and heard knockings faintly but hurriedly on the floor in one corner of my room. I listened, and

fairly persuaded myself it was mice. The moment I had come to this conclusion the rappings ceased in that corner, and were heard in an opposite corner, near the head of my bed. This time they were slow and distinct. I again persuaded myself it was the mice, and again the rappings changed to another part of the floor, and so on in different parts of the room, until I fell asleep."

My next interview presented to me a new feature. A gentleman and his wife were present, and he incidentally mentioned a faculty which she possessed of telling the character and mood of mind of a person upon whom she might fix her attention, though not knowing who the person was, and she did so by holding in her hand or binding on her forehead some writing in which that person's thoughts were expressed. I uttered a wish to witness that, and was gratified. I took out of my pocket and handed to her so that she did not see the writing, a memorandum of my own, in which I had recorded the thoughts of another person. I supposed it would be my own character that would be given, but instead of that, she gave me a very graphic and perfect delineation of the character and mood of mind of the person whose thoughts I had thus committed to paper, and that, when it was most manifest she could not have known what was on the paper.

I remark, in this connection, that this lady is one of the persons mentioned in my address to the public, and I have frequently since that time witnessed the same thing. I have among my records the delineations of the character of some of our eminent men, which would perhaps startle even them. I was once desirous of inviting a relative to live with me, but I knew nothing of that person's character, having seen the person only once, and that at the early age of nine years. A residence with me of over two years has only demonstrated to me how perfect was the delineation, even to the most delicate touches of character and feeling.

My next interview was marked by these features: I had received an anonymous letter—no unusual thing, by the