

the precept to love God and his fellow. It comes not with the fagot and the sword, but with healing on its wings, at once the Redeemer and the Comfortor; not in a distant and subjugated province, but amid a mighty people, who are free to receive and embrace it; not to a few obscure men in lonely places, but everywhere broadcast throughout the whole civilized world, and among all classes; not to be taught covertly amid the caverns of the hills or the dens and vaults of imperial Rome, but openly in the face of God and man, challenging investigation; not asking a blind faith or dependence upon authority, but the exercise of man's most Godlike quality, his reason; not appealing to the base passion of fear, but to the ennobling sentiment of love; not to destroy, but to save; not to punish, but to redeem; not to sow discord and build up sects, but to heal the divisions among the followers of the lowly Jesus, and afford a common platform on which all may assemble.

Thus it comes, with its Nicodemuses privately and in the night time, asking how these things can be; perhaps, too, with its Peters to deny, and its Judases to betray it, but amid all, giving a peace which the world can not take away.

J. W. EDMONDS.

NEW YORK, September 1, 1853.

Appeal.

TO THE PUBLIC:

On my recent return from an excursion into the country, I found that during my absence a decision lately pronounced by me had been seized upon as an occasion for an attack, in several quarters, on my religious belief. I was fully aware that that judgment, running counter as it would to popular sentiment, would subject my action to severe criticism, but I confess I did not anticipate that thence would flow an assault on my religious opinions. Were I a private citizen I should content myself with merely claiming the right which belongs to every one in this country, of entertaining such faith on this—the most important of all topics—as my conscience might dictate. And as it is, I might perhaps rest satisfied with challenging those who assail me to point out a single article in my creed that aims at aught else than exalted private worth and public virtue. But as the position which I occupy renders the soundness as well as the integrity of my judgment a matter of public interest, I am bound to acknowledge the right of others to question my faith, and my own obligation to defend it.

I acknowledge a still further obligation. And inasmuch as I accepted my present position under the implied understanding at least, that I believed in the Christian religion, and would administer our civil law according to the principles of the Divine law as it had been revealed to us, on which all our institutions were based, so I am bound to certify to those who have intrusted me with the Divine attribute of administering justice among men, that my reverence for that revelation has not been shaken, nor my obedience to that moral law impaired.

I have not, however, waited for these assaults, to be impressed with these obligations, but have already so far felt them, that I have prepared to publish a volume on the subject, which, but for my other avocations, would ere this have been in the printer's hands. To

that I must refer for much in elucidation and proof of my belief, which the limits of this communication will not now allow me to dwell upon, and content myself on this occasion with such general statements as may tend to give a correct idea of what it is that I believe or have done. Even this would not have been necessary, if those who assail me had but done me the justice themselves to have published any thing I have said or written on the subject. But hitherto I have been able to reach the public only through publications of very limited circulation; and the wildest and most erroneous notions have therefore been imbibed as to my belief, and the mischief has been increased by the recklessness with which erroneous statements have been fabricated by those who could not know them to be true, but who could easily have ascertained them to be false.

Thus one writer, with a want of feeling not perhaps surprising, speaks of my consulting my dead wife in making up my decisions. Another says, that it is "rumored" that I have consulted spirit manifestations in regard to my decisions. Another, that my belief is "at irreconcilable variance with all divine revelation, and is fit for no other system than devil-worship;" and still another, that "it constitutes an abandonment of all self-control, and a surrender of the supremacy of reason, as informed and enlightened by the senses, to the most nonsensical jugglery."

All these statements are as wide as they can be of truth, and I might with some justice complain at being subjected to such grievous imputations, merely because I had made a decision which was unacceptable to a portion of the community. But it is not for the purpose of complaining that I sit down to write. I am aware that it is not so much me, as it is the faith which I profess, which is the object of attack. It is "the mighty theme, and not the inconsiderable advocate," which offends. I am also aware why it is that so much error exists in the public mind on that subject, and my whole purpose is, so far as I am concerned, to correct that error; to state truly, as far as I can in this connection, what it is that I do believe, and generally the grounds on which my belief is founded, that all who take interest enough in the matter to read what I may say, may have the means of judging for themselves as to what I really do believe, rather than what others erroneously impute to me as a belief.

I am sincerely grateful to my assailants for not imputing to me any unworthy or selfish motives, for conceding that as a private

citizen I "stand exempt from public criticism," and that I am "not a fool," and for confining themselves to the mere imputation that I am laboring under a delusion. It is, therefore, to that point I shall confine myself in what I have now to say.

It was in January, 1851, that my attention was first called to the subject of "spiritual intercourse." I was at the time withdrawn from general society; I was laboring under great depression of spirits. I was occupying all my leisure in reading on the subject of death, and man's existence afterward. I had in the course of my life read and heard from the pulpit so many contradictory and conflicting doctrines on the subject, that I hardly knew what to believe. I could not, if I would, believe what I did not understand, and was anxiously seeking to know if, after death, we should again meet with those whom we had loved here, and under what circumstances. I was invited by a friend to witness the "Rochester Knockings." I complied, more to oblige her and to while away a tedious hour. I thought a good deal on what I witnessed, and determined to investigate the matter and find out what it was. If it was a deception or a delusion, I thought that I could detect it. For about four months I devoted at least two evenings in a week, and sometimes more, to witnessing the phenomenon in all its phases. I kept careful records of all I witnessed, and from time to time compared them with each other, to detect inconsistencies and contradictions. I read all I could lay my hands on, on the subject, and especially all the professed "exposures of the humbug." I went from place to place, seeing different mediums, meeting with different parties of persons, often with persons whom I had never seen before, and sometimes where I was myself entirely unknown—sometimes in the dark and sometimes in the light—often with inveterate unbelievers, and more frequently with zealous believers. In fine, I availed myself of every opportunity that was afforded, thoroughly to sift the matter to the bottom. I was all this time an unbeliever, and tried the patience of believers sorely by my skepticism, my captiousness, and my obdurate refusal to yield my belief. I saw around me some who yielded a ready faith on one or two sittings only; others again, under the same circumstances, avowing a determined unbelief; and some who refused to witness it at all, and yet were confirmed unbelievers. I could not imitate either of these parties, and refused to yield unless upon most irrefragable testi-



mony. At length the evidence came, and in such force that no sane man could withhold his faith.

Thus far the question I was investigating was, whether what I saw was produced by mere mortal means, or by some invisible, unknown agency; in other words, whether it was a deception, an imposition, or what it professed to be, the product of some unknown, unseen cause. To detail what I witnessed would far exceed the limits of this communication, for my records of it for those four months alone fill at least one hundred and thirty closely-written pages. I will, however, mention a few things, which will give a general idea of that which characterized interviews, now numbering several hundred. Most of them have occurred in the presence of others besides myself. I have preserved their names in my records, but do not give them to the world, because I do not desire to subject them to the obloquy which seems, most strangely, to be visited upon all who look into the matter with any other feeling than a resolute and obstinate incredulity, whatever the evidence. But these considerations grow out of this fact: 1st, that I have thus very many witnesses, whom I can invoke to establish the truth of my statements; and, 2d, that if I have been deluded, and have not seen and heard what I think I have, my delusion has been shared by many as shrewd, as intelligent, as honest, and as enlightened people as are to be found anywhere among us.

My attention was first drawn to the intercourse by the rappings, then the most common, but now the most inconsiderable, mode of communing. Of course I was on the look out for deception, and at first relied upon my senses and the conclusions which my reason might draw from their evidence. But I was at a loss to tell how the mediums could cause what I witnessed under these circumstances: the mediums walking the length of a suite of parlors, forty or fifty feet, and the rappings being distinctly heard five or six feet behind them, the whole distance, backward and forward several times; being heard near the top of a mahogany door, above where the medium could reach, and as if struck hard with a fist; being heard on the bottom of a car when traveling, on a railroad, and on the floor and the table, when seated at lunch, at an eating house by the side of the road; being heard at different parts of the room, sometimes several feet distance from the medium, and where she could not reach—sometimes on the table and immediately after on

the floor, and then at different parts of the table, in rapid succession, enabling us to feel the vibration as well as hear the sounds; sometimes when the hands and feet of the medium were both firmly and carefully held by some one of the party, and sometimes on a table when no one touched it.

After depending upon my senses, as to these various phases of the phenomenon, I invoked the aid of science, and with the assistance of an accomplished electrician and his machinery, and of eight or ten intelligent, educated, shrewd persons, examined the matter. We pursued our inquiries many days, and established to our satisfaction two things: first, that the sounds were not produced by the agency of any person present or near us; and, second, that they were not forthcoming at our will and pleasure.

In the mean time another feature attracted my attention, and that was "physical manifestations," as they are termed. Thus, I have known a pine table with four legs lifted bodily up from the floor, in the center of a circle of six or eight persons, turned upside down and laid upon its top at our feet, then lifted up over our heads, and put leaning against the back of the sofa on which we sat. I have known that same table to be tilted up on two legs, its top at an angle with the floor of forty-five degrees, when it neither fell over of itself, nor could any person present put it back on its four legs. I have seen a mahogany table, having only a center leg, and with a lamp burning upon it, lifted from the floor at least a foot, in spite of the efforts of those present, and shaken backward and forward as one would shake a goblet in his hand, and the lamp retain its place, though its glass pendants rang again. I have seen the same table tipped up with the lamp upon it, so far that the lamp must have fallen off unless retained there by something else than its own gravity, yet it fell not, moved not. I have known a dinner-bell taken from a high shelf in a closet, rung over the heads of four or five persons in that closet, then rung around the room over the heads of twelve or fifteen persons in the back parlor, and then borne through the folding doors to the farther end of the front parlor, and there dropped on the floor. I have frequently known persons pulled about with a force which it was impossible for them to resist, and once, when all my strength was added in vain to that of the one thus affected. I have known a mahogany chair thrown on its side and moved swiftly back and forth on the floor, no one touching it,

through a room where there were at least a dozen people sitting, yet no one was touched, and it was repeatedly stopped within a few inches of me, when it was coming with a violence which, if not arrested, must have broken my legs.

This is not a tithe—nay! not a hundredth part of what I have witnessed of the same character, but it is enough to show the general nature of what was before me.

At the same time I have heard from others, whose testimony would be credited in any human transaction, and which I could not permit myself to disregard, accounts of still more extraordinary transactions, for I have been by no means as much favored in this respect as some.

While these things were going on, there appeared in the newspapers various explanations and “exposures of the humbug,” as they were termed. I read them with care, in the expectation of being assisted in my researches, and I could not but smile at once at the rashness and the futility of the explanations. For instance, while certain learned professors in Buffalo were congratulating themselves on having detected it in the toe and knee joints, the manifestations in this city changed to ringing a bell placed under the table. They were like the solution lately given by a learned professor in England, who attributes the tipping of tables to a force in the hands which are laid upon it, overlooking the material fact that tables quite frequently move when there is no hand upon them.

What I have thus mentioned has happened in the presence of others as well as myself. I have not alluded to any of the things which have occurred to me when I have been alone, for as that would depend upon my testimony only, I have preferred not to subject my veracity to the rash and reckless contradictions of those who venture to denounce as an “atrocious imposture” that of which they are profoundly ignorant, and which has been examined and is believed in by thousands and tens of thousands of their fellow-citizens, who are, to say the least, every whit as honest and as intelligent as they are. Nor am I very anxious to submit my faith to the judgment of those who would have persecuted Galileo nigh unto death for discovering our planetary system, and have united in the cry of “folly” at Fulton’s steamboat, “humbug” at Morse’s telegraph, and “insanity” at Gray’s iron road.

Having thus, by a long series of patient inquiries, satisfied my-

self on this point, my next inquiry was, Whence comes the intelligence there is behind it all? For that intelligence was a remarkable feature of the phenomenon.

Thus I have frequently known mental questions answered, that is, questions merely framed in the mind of the interrogator, and not revealed by him or known to others. Preparatory to meeting a circle, I have sat down alone in my room and carefully prepared a series of questions to be propounded, and I have been surprised to find my questions answered, and in the precise order in which I wrote them, without my even taking my memorandum out of my pocket, and when I knew that not a person present even knew that I had prepared questions, much less what they were. My most secret thoughts, those which I have never uttered to mortal man or woman, have been freely spoken to as if I had uttered them. Purposes which I have privily entertained have been publicly revealed; and I have once and again been admonished that my every thought was known to, and could be disclosed by, the intelligence which was thus manifesting itself.

I have heard the mediums use Greek, Latin, Spanish, and French words, when I knew they had no knowledge of any language but their own; and it is a fact that can be attested by many, that often there has been speaking and writing in foreign languages and unknown tongues by those who were unacquainted with either.

Still the question occurred, May not all this have been, by some mysterious operation, the mere reflex of the mind of some one present? The answer was, that facts were communicated which were unknown then, but afterward found to be true; like this, for instance: when I was absent last winter in Central America, my friends in town heard of my whereabouts and of the state of my health seven times, and on my return, by comparing their information with the entries in my journal, it was found to be invariably correct. So in my recent visit to the West, my whereabouts and my condition were told to a medium in this city while I was traveling on the railroad between Cleveland and Toledo. So thoughts have been uttered on subjects not then in my mind, and utterly at variance with my own notions. This has often happened to me and to others, so as fully to establish the fact that it was not our minds that gave birth to or affected the communication.

Kindred to this are two well-authenticated cases of persons who