

sooner or later, calm and hopeful, which might have been disturbed by doubts."

This, then, is the offense for which I have been arraigned at the bar of the public with so unsparing a condemnation, declared unworthy of my high office, falsely accused of consulting aught else than the law of the land and my own reason in the judgments which I officially pronounce, and have had invoked against me "the fires of Smithfield and the hangings of Salem." From such a condemnation it is that I appeal to the calm, unbiased judgment of my countrymen, with a firm reliance upon its justice.

J. W. EDMONDS.

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DR. DEXTER'S INTRODUCTION.

It is scarcely worth the while, perhaps, that I should make public the causes and influences which have directed my investigation to the subject of "Spiritual Manifestations," or why that investigation has resulted in a sincere belief that spirits who have left the form hold daily and hourly intercourse with man.

But professing as I do to be the medium through which certain spirits have written what may be found in the following pages of this work, there seems to be a propriety in giving to the public, in connection with the spirit-teachings written through my hand, some of the evidences of the truth of spirit-intercourse, which have satisfied my mind, as well as how I am acted upon when under direction of the spirits, and the manner in which they influence me.

And it should be understood that I was not only conservative in regard to this question of spirit-communication when it was first presented to my consideration, but I was positively opposed, and regarded the whole matter as either a foolish delusion or an absolute, outrageous deception, and that this opposition continued long after such proof had been offered, both to my reason and physical consciousness, as would have removed all doubts in reference to the truth of any other subject under heaven.

I also wish to be understood as declining to argue the question, whether it be possible for spirits to leave their own homes and visit this earth. It is sufficient for my belief that I have had such proof, and have so carefully examined the evidence offered to me of the fact that they can do so, that I am without a doubt of its truth; and I present the brief history of my experience, only from

the connection existing between myself as the medium of communication, and the spirits who have written these teachings through my hand.

It is now nearly two years since "spirit-rappings" first attracted my notice, and I have already stated that my unbelief was so great that I was ready to denounce the whole subject as one of the grossest humbugs of the day. But I was actuated by two kinds of feeling when I consented to visit a circle, to which I was invited by a friend: one, a desire to satisfy my curiosity, and the other an impression that the whole phenomena, if not the result of trickery or collusion, could be explained as taking place under the operation of some natural law, and that I perhaps might detect the illusion, or explain the principle by which these effects were produced.

It will not be improper for me to say, that there was no feeling of egotism in this idea that I might discover the causes producing the wonderful developments about which I had heard so much; on the contrary, I imagine that my own ideas were precisely similar to those which are publicly announced by many persons every day, who, desirous to set this perplexing subject at rest, fill the columns of the newspapers with attempted explanations, when in truth they know nothing about the matter, with this difference only, that I was really determined to investigate first, and explain afterward, and they, on the other hand, are so earnest to convince, that the explanation comes first, and the examination whenever they have time or inclination to attend to it.

But be this as it may, my attention being called to this subject, I made arrangements with a friend to invite to my own house a medium of considerable powers, and thus to have an opportunity of careful investigation where I knew there could be no collusion, and the chances for deception would be very few. Previous to this time, about the 10th of September, 1851, I had never witnessed any spiritual manifestation, and neither had any of the members of my family been present at a circle; both they and myself were entirely ignorant of the whole subject. But on this evening the medium referred to and my friend, together with my family and myself, formed a circle at my house, where, for the first time, I heard the peculiar sounds called spirit-raps. I was not satisfied with the results of this sitting, though many mental questions were propounded and answered correctly. The impression on my mind

was unfavorable, and to satisfy myself and others of the medium's powers, as well as to see more of the spirit-capacity to communicate, I invited the medium to remain with me all night, and proposed another sitting the next morning. To this he readily assented, and on the following morning, while seated at the breakfast-table, talking on other subjects than spiritualism, loud raps were heard under the table, on the walls of the room, and in the hall; two or three loud resonant raps were made on the outside door, and were so distinct and natural, that I supposed some one had called in haste for my services. I rose instantly and went to the door, opened it hastily; but there was no one there, neither was there any person in sight. These occurrences stimulated my curiosity to see still more of what the spirits could do; and immediately after breakfast we formed a circle, at which were present myself and all the members of my family, the friend I have before mentioned, and another friend, who could not be present on the evening previous. The two gentlemen friends and myself were positive unbelievers, and the others, Mrs. D. and my two daughters, were in the same catalogue. One of my daughters was about fourteen years of age, and the other was not yet nine years old. It will not, I am sure, appear improper to interrupt my narrative in this connection to say, that my children had been accustomed to attend the Presbyterian Church from their earliest youth, that they had naturally imbibed many of the peculiar views of this sect in regard to the soul and its destiny after death, and that they had no idea of the *modus operandi* of spirit on the medium, either by hearsay or by sight. I make these remarks in reference to their religious education, that I may thus show an educational prejudice against any effect on them as mediums, and I reiterate that they knew nothing about the matter, that what I am about to relate may not be attributed to what is termed the magnetic influence of minds accustomed to sit in circles.

The circle was formed immediately after breakfast, and we were directed to sing, etc., and soon had abundant manifestations.

After we had remained sitting, with the raps heard in every direction, not only on the table, but on the chairs, walls of the room, and once or twice on the stove-funnel, it was written out by the medium, "Let Mr. G. go into the other room." Mr. G. did as he was directed, and went into the next room. Now, my

youngest daughter, during this whole sitting, had not manifested the interest I had expected, and appeared somewhat tired of the affair before this direction was given to the medium; but as soon as he left the room she became visibly agitated all over, her countenance changed, and she was evidently resisting, with considerable effort, what I first supposed was a slight attack of illness from being so long shut up in one room. I asked her if she were sick? She replied, "No, but I can't keep either my body or my hands still, I am trembling all over." As soon as she uttered this, her arms and hands were violently shaken, so much so, that I was afraid she would injure herself by the forcible manner in which they were thrown in every direction. This effect of the magnetic influence was so sudden, so strange, so entirely unexpected by the child, that she became very much alarmed, and running to her mother, who was also deeply moved at this unlooked-for manifestation, she said, while her voice trembled with fear, "Oh, mother! take me away, take me away;" but her arms were forcibly wrested, as it were, from her mother's neck, and thrown violently up and down, and yet while they were so rapidly and forcibly moving in all directions, every fiber of the textures quivered as if trembling with palsy. One can easily conceive of the deep impression this singular exhibition made on us all. And the more so, when, having soothed the frightened child, we induced her to remain in the circle some twenty minutes longer, her hand was made to write legibly and in bold, large letters, not in the least resembling her ordinary handwriting, full answers to all our questions, both mental and oral. And what was yet more remarkable, she wrote rapidly and easily, and the style of the composition and the spelling far excelled what we knew was the character of her original attempts at composition or her spelling, previous to this time. About one o'clock she was ordered to leave the circle by the spirits—as being fatigued—and not immediately complying with the direction, her chair was drawn from under her by some invisible agency, and she fell to the floor. She arose to go into the next room, and as she was passing a sofa she was taken up bodily, by the same unseen force, and deposited upon it, as gently as if laid there by her parents. At this sitting there were many correct answers given to questions, and of such a character as satisfied some individuals that the spirits of their friends were really there. But after the excitement con-

sequent on our daughter's being developed as a medium was over, I could not bring myself to believe that spirits had any thing to do with the matter. I tried to explain it by the action of mind over mind, or the power of magnetic motion, and many other reasons, but I was not satisfied. I was as much in the fog of my own solutions of the phenomena, as I was at the singularity of the disclosures. I did not doubt that every thing I witnessed took place without the intervention of any individual present, and I knew that those present could not have tricked me, and in my own child I had that confidence which a life of truthfulness had inspired. Yet the idea that the spirits of our deceased friends could hold communication with ourselves on earth, could impart their feelings to us, give us a description of the various stages and conditions of their progress in the spheres above us, that they are constantly with those to whom they are attached, except when called away by the duties they are required to perform, that they have the power, through this new discovery, to explain to us every act of their spirit-life, and receive from us the ordinary ideas which characterize our existence and connection here, was so strange, wonderful, and extraordinary, so incompatible with my education, so much opposed to all my preconceived opinions, conflicted so much with my religious belief, and with all that I had been instructed the Bible revealed to us, when compared with all I had seen at this circle, bewildered me. But I could not understand—I did not believe. I do not intend to give in detail all that I have seen and heard during my investigation; it will be sufficient for my purpose to give the leading features of the evidence received, or all that I consider of importance for my present object. Some time in October of the same year I was sitting in a circle at which was present a gentleman who had lost his wife some two years before, and whose spirit indicated her presence and her wish to communicate with him. He had witnessed many revelations of the spirits, and was partially convinced that what he saw was true. In order to test the identity of the spirit, as he was aware no one then sitting with him had been acquainted with his wife when on earth, or knew any thing respecting the subject about which he was to interrogate her, he said, "If this is the spirit of my wife, she can certainly tell me what were the last words I spoke to her when dying, and the reply which she made to me; no one present knows what that was." The medium

was occupied in answering other questions for some little time, and then wrote out the precise words uttered by him on that occasion, and the exact reply which his wife made.

Even this, convincing as it was to all present, did not satisfy me. I attributed it to a sort of psychological effect on the mind of the medium, though she was talking and laughing during the time she was writing this test of the spirit's identity. About this time I was engaged in some business which required my absence for the day from home. The spirit of a beloved friend had intimated to my wife that he would apprise her of the time when I should conclude this affair; and on the day mentioned, just at the hour when I had consummated the matter, he wrote out, through my daughter's hand, "The doctor has settled his business." She asked him how he knew? and he replied, "I have just left him; it was six o'clock when he finished." As soon as I returned home, Mrs. D. immediately accosted me, and said, "So you have arranged your affair." I was surprised, and asked her how she knew? She mentioned her authority, and I then recalled to mind, that just as the final arrangements were made, the clock in the room struck six. The spirit had been with me until that moment, and then left to convey the intelligence to my wife. I did not attempt to explain this circumstance even to myself, but I was yet an unbeliever.

It will not, I am sure, be required of me to say, that when present at promiscuous circles, or those at my own house, I subjected every thing I saw or heard to the most rigid scrutiny. There are many persons whom I was in the daily habit of meeting at circles, who can bear testimony to the manner in which my investigations were conducted. I was sincere in my efforts to get at the truth. I was an unbeliever, and I have often interrupted the circle, and sometimes have completely prevented all manifestation, by my captiousness and quibbling. There was no kind of evidence but what was presented. The secret thoughts of my heart were read as if they had been written on my face. Secrets known only to the dead and myself were revealed to me when there was no one present but the medium and myself, and that medium a stranger to all parties. Events occurring at the distance of thousands of miles were told to me even while they were taking place, and afterward were corroborated to the letter by the individuals who were active agents in the transaction. Facts relating to my own

action were predicted months before they took place, and even now while I am writing, I recall to mind a prediction made by the spirit of a near and dear friend two years ago, "that I should give to the world in a book my confidence, my belief in the truth of spirit-intercourse with man." I have seen the medium represent the walk, the voice, and the peculiarities of a deceased person of whom she never heard, even while the spirit of that individual was manifesting his identity by her.

I have witnessed the medium so completely under control of the spirit, that speech, motion, and even thought itself, was at the command of the spirit influencing her. I have listened to the most elevated thoughts couched in language far beyond her comprehension, describing facts in science, and circumstances in the daily life of the spirit after death, which were corroborated fact by fact, idea by idea, by other mediums with whom she was entirely unacquainted, uttered by a little girl scarce nine years old. The same medium I have heard repeat verse after verse, *impromptu*, of poetry, glowing with inspiration and sparkling with profound thought and sentiment, and yet this child never wrote a line of poetry before in her life. I have taken notes of certain circumstances revealed to me through one medium, and then at another circle, and through another medium who knew nothing of my intention, and who was unacquainted with the first medium, have had the same statements made, in every particular corresponding with those I first received.

I have heard an illiterate mechanic repeat Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Chaldaic, and describe the customs and habits of men living on the earth thousands of years ago, which have been found correct by the researches and discoveries given to the world by those who are and have been engaged in the exploration of ancient nations, either by their architectural remains or through their hieroglyphics.

I have been present when a medium answered many questions in the Italian language, of which she was ignorant, and also uttered several sentences in the same language, and then gave the name of an Italian gentleman of whom she had never heard, but who was when living the friend of one of the party at the circle.

It would be impossible for me, in the limits of this paper, to give the whole nature of the evidence vouchsafed to me; it has been offered in all situations and at all times; it has appealed to my affections, in the manifestation of that same love which guard-

ed my life from early youth to manhood, and it has presented to my memory facts long since buried with the past, as vividly as if they had taken place yesterday.

Neither was the evidence general, but in all those minute peculiarities of individual characteristics, of time, place, and circumstance it was as identical as if I were again in positive association with those long since dead, and again participating in those transactions which marked their connection with me while on earth. Frequently when I have asked for evidence of identity from a spirit professing to be a near relative, the medium has repeated the same phrases and expressions, and has uttered the same words of endearment and affection that the relative was in the habit of using in his intercourse with me on earth, when by no possibility could this medium have known that I ever had such relation, or that he ever lived in this world.

But it is unnecessary to offer any more examples of this kind of evidence.

After my curiosity had been satisfied by the daily manifestations I witnessed, and after I was convinced that there was no trickery or collusion in the totality of the phenomena, both mental and physical, and when it was evident that I was unable to explain, either by the effect of natural or moral laws, how these things were done, it will scarcely be credited that with the abundant, overwhelming evidence I had received, I was still an unbeliever. But so it was; and although I could not solve this wonderful problem after months of careful examination, and although I was at times ready to say, "I am almost persuaded to be a Spiritualist," I still did not believe. For I would not admit that it was possible for spirit, intangible, unsubstantial, and ethereal, as I had always understood it to be, could be permitted to commune with man; and especially did I disbelieve that a spirit, which was a sort of sublimated nothing, and had really no tangible identity, as I had been taught, was able to move tables, rap on walls, lift heavy men, and manifest itself through matter to this world which it had left forever. No. When I candidly compared fact with fact, evidence with evidence, my mind acknowledged that if a moiety of the proof had been offered me on any other controverted question, I must have believed. I *knew* it could not be, and therefore I did not believe.

It was not until after I had become fully developed as a writing

medium, against my will and determined efforts to the contrary, that I yielded an implicit faith in the truth of spirit-intercourse with man. Those of my readers who follow me through this part of my experience, will be satisfied that if I was justified in rejecting such testimony as I have already described, I were more than man to refuse still to believe, when I was a living, acting evidence that through me, and against my will, spirits possessed the power and ability to write their thoughts and express sentiments and ideas as much opposed to the ordinary action of my mind as if I were another person. And when it is understood that I am entirely ignorant of what I write until it is read to me, and that the handwriting differs from my usual style, and that I frequently can not read what has been written, it will not appear so remarkable, that in connection with all the other proof offered me I am now, as I have been for some time, a believer in spirit-rappings, table-movings, and all the phenomena of spirit-communication.

Let it also be understood that the spirit-manifestation by my arm is absolutely involuntary. I have no direction in the act. My muscles are the medium of spirit-communication, not my thought; and neither does my mind recognize the thoughts expressed until after they have been read to me when the communication is concluded.

Neither my will nor my desire had any thing to do with my development, for they were both opposed; and the first time I was conscious that I was impressed with the same influence I had seen manifested through other mediums, I exerted all the power of mind and body I possessed to rid myself of it.

I was sitting alone in my office, late at night, and was leaning back in a rocking-chair, my right hand resting on the arm of the chair. I was not, neither had I been thinking of spiritualism, for my thoughts were occupied in the subject I had been reading upon a few moments before. As my hand lay on the arm of the chair I felt a singular sensation in the whole limb, as if the arm were grasped by two hands at its upper part. I attempted to raise it, but was unable so to do, and as soon as I made the effort to move it, the fingers were bent down tightly on the arm of the chair and grasped it firmly. Immediately the hand began to tremble, and as I watched the movement the whole limb was shaken violently. At this moment I distinctly heard two loud raps on the upper part