

Appendix—D.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH J. F. LANING.

PHILADELPHIA, July 24th, 1853.

HON. J. W. EDMONDS :

Dear Sir—Because we are interested in the investigation of one of the most sublime subjects that ever engaged the human mind, I feel a more fraternal freedom than I otherwise would in addressing you, an entire stranger to me. I have read with delighted interest your wonderful experience, as published, in *Spiritualism*. I am glad to see you acknowledge the great divine truth, that we are all allied to one Eternal Father, and that we should recognize the universal brotherhood of man. This is another reason why I make free to address you. My own experience has been remarkable, and is still full of interest to me, as scarcely a week passes without some new phenomenon being added to it. In Mr. Davis' last book, "The Present Age and Inner Life," you will find, commencing on page 162, a letter written by me, detailing in general terms what has, in part only, happened to me. Some portions of it remind me of your own case. I presume, however, you have been more fortunate than myself in satisfying your mind as to the usefulness of it. Here is my greatest trouble. I can not place implicit confidence in all I have experienced, and I sometimes fear I may be in some way hallucinated. I have been promised, or, at least, I think so, that I shall be able to do some good in this way to my fellow-man; but as yet I have done nothing. It is now almost two years since I was first sensibly influenced, and by this time I think I should be able to do something, if I am not indeed under a delusion. What I wish to ask of you is, your opinion of my case. If you will read my published letter, you will get a general idea of the peculiar manner in which I have been influenced. I had hoped Mr. Davis would be able to throw some light upon it; but after all his remarks concerning it, my mind is still in the uncertain

mood. Have you ever had things promised by the spirits which were not realized?

In my seekings I have always insisted on this one point, that the spirits should desist from influencing me, unless they were certain of accomplishing some good for others, by me; but I can not prevail upon them to do so. If I had kept a regular diary of the facts which have transpired with me, I think it would show there were at times either deceiving spirits attending me, or that my own mind is most singularly hallucinated. If I could be persuaded that good will eventually come out of it, I am patient enough, I think, to pursue my investigations further; but at times I am disheartened and am almost ready to abandon all idea of ever accomplishing any useful purpose in this way. Will it be asking too much of you to read my letter, if you please, in Mr. Davis' book, and give me your opinion respecting it?

I do not know of any one whose spiritual experience tallies with my own in all particulars; but the nearest I have read of is yours, which, in the pictorial part, seems to correspond in a degree. Yours is more reliable, and so far very useful, it seems to me.

All I desire to know is, that I can be made useful in this way, and if so, I think my mind is patient enough to pursue the subject to an available issue.

Will it be asking too much of you to write me at your convenience, and give me your opinion respecting my case?

Very respectfully, yours, etc.,

J. F. LANING.

NEW YORK, July 29th, 1853.

Dear Sir—I have yours of the 24th, and, so far as I can, I will answer it.

Your difficulties seem to be twofold: one is, that you do not or can not do as much good as you expect or wish, and the other, that the communications are not always reliable.

As to the first, I beg to ask you how do you know that you are not doing good? How do you know that your letter to Mr. Davis, or that to me, have not already done good? How do you know that your experience, in your immediate vicinity, and among your

acquaintance, is not doing good? You can not know any more than I can, when I deliver a lecture or publish something. Perhaps I may hear of some one benefited by my action, and perhaps not. What then? Shall I, because I do not see the good I do, therefore rashly conclude that I do none? Paul may plant and Apollos water, but it is God that gives the increase, and it is often that it is God alone that sees the increase. Now it seems to me (and with this I content myself) that it is enough for me to do all I can—the rest is in the hands of God, and we have hardly a right to demand that it shall be disclosed to us. And if it was, would it not be apt to engender in our minds a feeling of vain-glory, rather than a disinterested desire for the good of our fellow-men? But again; are you yet prepared to go forth on your mission? Have you been to school long enough, and learned enough, to be sure you are right, and that it would be wise for you to go ahead?

Here again I hesitate, for as I progress I find how much there is to learn, and how little I know, and I approach the task of teaching (or doing good) with fear and trembling, lest I may err and teach error instead of truth—may mislead rather than wisely guide. Against this there is but one remedy, and that is patient and persevering industry in my studies, and not venture to teach any thing until after long and carefully weighing it I am satisfied I am right. I can not get all knowledge at once. I must get a little at a time; and it is only as I get one point here and another there, firmly established as true, that I venture to attempt to do any good with it. Any other course renders me liable to the danger of uttering some crudity or some inconsistency that, by-and-by, I may regret; and our New Philosophy has suffered enough from that cause already.

Now the substance of all this is, be patient; the time will come when your mission will be unfolded to you. I waited longer than you have to learn mine, and I passed through such a "slough of despond" as lies in your way; but now I can see right well how all that was preparing me for my task; I think you will find it so with you, for you may rely upon it that no person is gifted as you are in vain. Be patient, then, and abide your time. It will come surely and speedily, unless delayed by unnecessary doubts and dependency. And when it does come, oh! how richly will it repay you!

Your other difficulty, the unreliability of the communications,

involves more considerations than I can find room for in a letter like this. I must content myself with a few general ones.

In the first place, do you not expect too much from the spirits? You seem to expect them to be perfect and unvaryingly accurate in what they say. Can that be expected of any thing but the Almighty? Spirits in that respect are like mortals, they can tell us only what they know and as they know it. They, like us, frequently think they know when they do not, and while they mean to speak truly, from ignorance they err. Is not this natural? nay, is it not inevitable, unless you clothe the spirit with the omniscience which belongs alone to God?

Then as to the future, how do they know any thing about it more than we do? Simply, as I understand it, because they are better able to see the surrounding circumstances than we are, and can therefore form a better judgment as to results. Yet their judgment may err sometimes as well as ours; and here again, unless we clothe them with an attribute of the Deity, we have no right to expect entire accuracy.

But there is another kind of foretelling still, that, namely, which involves their own action. For instance, they say on such a day a thing will happen. By this they mean that on that day they will do that thing. Now, with them as with us, a thousand things may happen to prevent their accomplishing their purpose; they may change their minds about it; circumstances may occur to render it inexpedient or unnecessary, etc. Shall we, therefore, withhold all credit from them?

I tell you that on Monday next A. B. will go to London, and I say so because certain circumstances cause me to believe he will. He has told me so, perhaps, or the like. But he does not go. Am I therefore unworthy of all belief? Again, I tell you that on Monday I will go to London, but I alter my mind and do not go, will you condemn me as a falsifier of the truth before you learn the reasons of my change of purpose? The difficulty in all this matter lies in our expecting too much perfection in the spirits, in looking upon them as knowing more than they do, and as being able to do more than they can; in other words, in an erroneous conception of the true nature and character of the spirit-world.

This regards the communications which are intended to be true. There is, however, another class which are intended as deceiving

and to mislead. I have good reason to believe that there is in the spirit-world much opposition to their intercourse with us, and that a combination has been formed to intercept and, if possible, to overthrow it, and one mode of this operation is by visiting circles and individuals, exciting their suspicion of spirits, and bad thoughts as to their good faith and purity of purpose. To one acquainted with the true nature of spirit-life, and not misled by erroneous conceptions of unattainable perfection, this will not appear improbable, for it is precisely what men do in this stage of existence, and what they would be likely to do in that, if influenced by the same feelings. So that between the hasty, uninformed spirits, and those having positive mischievous objects, we are liable constantly to erroneous communications. It is just so in this life. Go out into the streets and ask of the passers-by an account of an affray, and see how many different accounts of it you get. No two will agree. Now, what will you do in such a case? Will you reject them all as being untrue? Will you refuse even to hear another word from those who thus clash in their stories? Or will you set down, like a man of sense, and by the exercise of your reason endeavor to gather the truth from this mass of incongruous matter? Or, in other words, would it have been wise for Franklin because he was knocked over by one of his batteries to have abandoned his researches in electricity?

There are still other considerations not to be overlooked. Our communications are apt to be affected by our own minds, for two reasons—one, because every state of mind has its kindred spirit, and the other, because they can not take complete possession of our mind to the entire exclusion of our own reason and imagination, and the communications, therefore, often come strangely mixed and made up of our thoughts and theirs. Now all these are difficulties and dangers of spiritual intercourse, and what is the remedy? I say, patient perseverance, which day by day will perfect us in the intercourse, make it more distinct and reliable, and more under the control of our reason.

One other topic and I have done. You complain that you do not distinctly remember all that is said and done to you. Mr. Davis explains *how* this is done, and I suppose that *why* it is done is this, in order that they may get an habitual control of your mind, so as to prevent you from mingling your thoughts with theirs, and to

teach you to keep them distinct. I have seen such cases, and have found that self-discipline and aiding the spirits at this self-control soon removed the difficulty.

And now I must close my letter. I have been necessarily very brief on a topic where a great deal may be said—indeed must be, if one is to understand it; but I could not do otherwise, and I only hope that I have aided you. At all times I shall be glad to hear from you.

Truly, yours,

J. W. EDMONDS.

Mr. J. F. LANING.

P. S.—I have just re-read your letter to me, and notice one remark: "I have always insisted on this point, that the spirits should desist from influencing me, unless they were certain of accomplishing some good." Let us illustrate this. You meet a man in the street who says to you, "Mr. L., I will not use that medicine you gave me, unless you are certain that it will do good." Your answer is that of an honest, intelligent man, "I can't be certain, I can only judge it will do good." "Very well," is his reply, "I won't use it," and he leaves you. In a short time he meets a quack, or mere pretender, and asks him for a remedy that he is certain will do good. Either fraudulently, or misled by ignorance or zeal, his new friend says he is certain.

Now see the condition of that man. His state of mind has found a kindred spirit, not in your integrity and intelligence, but in the quack, or pretender. He has left you and gone to an inferior mind, though he is unconscious of the inferiority. Will he by-and-by have a right to complain that he has been deceived by the association he has thus chosen?

In the mean time, you who wanted to aid him and was able to act with wisdom, what has become of you in reference to him? You saw there was no use of your continuing with him, and you went elsewhere in search of those who would appreciate you and not repel you by their unreasonableness. And this would have been prevented by his acting rationally, by reasoning with you on the subject, by earnestly desiring of you knowledge of what your remedy was, and how you expected it would do the good anticipated. In that case you would have kept up the connection with him, and with pleasure have taught him all you knew, until he should have become as wise as yourself, and been prepared to seek

and receive knowledge from those whose knowledge was superior to yours.

Now is not this a fair illustration of your whole case? You can tell better than I can. But as I have gone through this same "slough," it seems to me that I can not do better than give you the clue which led me out of my difficulties.

PHILADELPHIA, August 3, 1853.

MY FRIEND:

Not to weary you do I again take my pen, but to thank you with a heart full of gratitude, which words can not express, for your kind regards to me in your very timely and highly instructive letter, which I have read many times, and I think with lasting instruction to my spirit. You certainly have given me the key to many riddles, which have perplexed my mind so much in my seeking the goal I ever had in view. You have answered all I desired to have answered, except one point, and I will not now ask you to write again, as I see by the length of your letter, how great a tax I was to you. The doubt which comes over my mind is suggested by a remark you make in these words: "I have good reason to believe that there is in the spirit-world much opposition to this intercourse with us, and that a combination has been formed to interrupt and, if possible, to overthrow it, and one mode is, by visiting circles and individuals, exciting their suspicions of spirits, and bad thoughts as to their good faith and purity of purpose." The only indication I have had of such being the case with me, is in the incorrectness of what they have said to me, in answering questions falsely, by whispering in my ears, and presenting to my inward vision symbols which contradicted the facts as they afterward came to my knowledge. Now I do not so much fear that I shall do a serious evil, at the instigation of any spirit, so long as I am governed by principle; but may not such spirits hold out false notions to my mind, in spite of all my entreaties to the contrary? Is there a possibility, with my motives pure, of an evil spirit always keeping so closely *en rapport* with me, as to prevent those whose motives are good from communicating with me and aiding me?

I do not ask the questions to trouble you for a reply now, but should you at any time be at leisure, and feel disposed to answer

me on this point, I think I can then go on my way rejoicing, humbly waiting God's time to come for me to labor.

I have not attended circles as a general thing, and never have I been influenced, except once, in any circle. I spend full six hours nightly and *alone* in my room, and have always conclusive evidence of the presence of spirits. How they are to accomplish any good by me I know not, as by education I am quite ordinary, my time having been mostly employed in an exciting business, in which there is little call for book-learning. I thank you for the encouraging words in your saying, "You may rely upon it that no person is gifted as you are in vain." This idea has always sustained me amid all my doubts, because I believed that such a gift properly cultivated could be brought into requisition, and herein has been my earnest labor to become properly developed for usefulness. And now, my good friend, do not let me trespass on your time for any further reply to me, but just as you feel inclined, thus do. You have already laid me under a debt of gratitude I know not how to repay.

Truly, yours fraternally,

J. F. LANING.

Hon. J. W. EDMONDS.

NEW YORK, August 5, 1853.

My dear Sir—Yours of the 3d has just reached me, and I avail myself of a few moments' pause in my business to answer you, simply because it affords me pleasure thus to occupy my leisure, and I might otherwise find it difficult to do my duty as it ought to be done.

Before, however, referring to your question, I want to suggest to you whether your desire to do good may not be in some measure gratified by allowing our correspondence to be published? There are many others in the same situation with yourself, to whom my advice to you may be also valuable, and I should like to bring it to their attention. It can be published without our names if you wish, but it would be better with them, as thus it would have more effect, and besides would encourage others by our example to speak boldly before God and man, the shrinking from which being one of the greatest evils we have to contend with and encounter.

And now as to your queries. "May not evil-disposed spirits

hold out false notions to your mind in spite of all your entreaties to the contrary?" Certainly they may. May not some loafer from your sinks of iniquity approach you and tell you all sorts of lies? May not some abandoned profligate fellow, whose delight is in tormenting others, thrust himself upon your attention and amuse himself by relating to you a farrago of nonsense or blasphemy? Certainly, and what is your remedy? It is twofold—first, to take the measures which the circumstances of the case demand to get rid of him, and second, to weigh what he may say in your judgment, and determine by your reason how far you may rely on or accredit his statements.

It is just so with spiritual intercourse; for, ever bear in mind that many in the spirit-world are even below our level, both intellectually and morally, and they can commune with us just as well as those who are higher.

Then again you ask, "Is there a possibility, with motives pure, of an evil spirit *always* keeping so closely *en rapport* as to prevent those whose motives are good from communicating with and deceiving you?" When you say "*always*," I answer No; but if you should say "*occasionally*," I would answer Yes. And for this reason, would the loafer of whom I have already spoken always seek your society? By no means; he would be uncomfortable in the society of one purer and better than himself, and would soon leave it, and only "*occasionally*" come to answer a special purpose. It would be only as long as he found himself welcome, or until he had fairly tried the experiment whether he might not be welcome, that he would come. There is probably no worse punishment to the evil-disposed than constant association with the pure; and except for some special purpose, we need not fear their society.

But there is another consideration growing out of my experience, and that is, that lower spirits are often allowed to come to us, in order to contribute to their elevation. It is not a week since I had such a case. It was one * * * who hated me, and came to annoy me, and who did so for several days. By dealing with him with good sense and kind feelings, and uninfluenced by any foolish fears that he could injure me, I not only rid myself of the annoyance, but I helped him so, that though he came with all the vindictive feelings which were uppermost in his mind at the moment of his death, he left me, begging me to "remember him only as the humble, peni-

tent, grateful spirit who had by my means been lifted out of the darkness of despair and death." It is only three or four times in all my experience I have been thus visited; and once, at a circle to which I belonged, it was asked, Why inferior spirits did not more frequently come to us as they did to others? and it was answered, "Why does not the loafer from the Five Points seek the society of the judge or the minister?" One thing, however, I have observed in all my intercourse with that class—that I can make them obedient to my will, and compel them to speak the truth to me whenever I command them in the name of God. And still another thing—that I can know them to be inferior, when I find they can not read my mind or answer a mental question.

These are very general propositions in answer to your questions. I can illustrate and enforce them by many other remarks and instances, which the limits of a letter will not allow; but you will find, by reflecting on what I have said, and applying it to your own experience, that I am right, and that these considerations will materially aid you in dealing properly with this new, most interesting, and extraordinary phenomenon.

In the mean time, allow me to make a further suggestion to you, and that is, carefully and laboriously to preserve accurate records of every thing communicated to you. I have done this from the beginning, and I regard my records as invaluable of themselves, while I find that this course has been productive of another good, and that is, that spirits who are aiming at man's advancement, finding that their instructions are not thrown away or confined only to myself, but are preserved so as to do good to others, are more anxious to commune with me, bring others also, and go higher and higher in the character of their teachings; and thus I am able to do good, by giving to the world, at proper times, their beautiful and elevated teachings.

Pray have no hesitation in writing to me at all times. Do you not think that the consciousness derived from your last letter, that I have done you good, amply repays all my labor?

Truly, yours, J. W. EDMONDS.

MR. J. F. LANING.

PHILADELPHIA, August 9, 1853.

MY FRIEND:

Your most welcome and unexpected letter of the 5th inst. is at hand.

There is certainly a luxury in doing good, and he who tries it most will partake most largely of its blessings. When I first became satisfied of the reality of spiritual intercourse, my mind was called to this point, which I see impressed you also so strongly, "Of what good can all this be?" I was informed that by yielding myself calmly to its influence I might be enabled to do something for the benefit of my fellow-man. I then made a pledge that upon such conditions only would I humbly seek to render myself useful in this way. I feel how inadequate I am to such a task; and were it not for a letter I received from a most gifted lady stranger to whom I had written some three or four times, explaining, as best I could, the results of my experience and trials, I should not know that my advice and guidance had assisted any one. In the closing remarks of her last to me, received but a few days ago, are these most cheering words: "This correspondence was necessary to me—I should have died spiritually without it. You have done me immeasurable good, because I stood in a most perilous position, and you helped me in the right direction." Not to appear egotistic do I quote from this lady, but to satisfy you of my motives in allowing my letters to be published over my name, in so distinguished a connection. Therefore, I say, publish just what you please of mine, as in your wisdom you may see best, and if I can in this way awaken one thought of usefulness which shall tell for humanity, I shall be more than paid for the sacrifice of feeling it costs me to have my name appear in print.

I know but in part what spiritualism has done for you, my friend, but for me it has done a blessed work. For twenty long years was the subject of religion a most inexplicable mystery to me—my mind never could be fully persuaded, and often did I wish I had never been born. It will not do for others to say of me, I was not honest while thus seeking. My attention to the religious services of the Church, to the study of the Bible, only tell *me* how anxious my heart was, as it longed for the blessings I supposed were to be found in them. I have now no more misgivings on this point. I am free, and oh! what a freedom it is! Shall I then hesitate to lend

my humble efforts to so ennobling a cause? True, they may not influence the learned, yet the unlearned perhaps may read the little I have said to you, and who can tell but your replies may in such connection be better understood and more wisely appreciated by the honest seekers of the light, the truth, and the way?

Yours, truly,

J. F. LANING.

Hon. J. W. EDMONDS, NEW YORK.

Appendix—C.

HISTORY OF AN UNDEVELOPED SPIRIT.

ONE HUNDRETH INTERVIEW.

NEW YORK, July 12th, 1852.

Last evening (having the day before returned from Albany) I attended the circle at Mr. A.'s house, where Mrs. S. was the medium.

I began by reading the by-laws and the prayer. As we had no minutes of the last meeting, I proposed to read some of my papers that I had taken with me. I began to do so, when I was interrupted by some vehement manifestations on the part of Mrs. S. She was violently and roughly affected, and we knew not what to make of it.

Mr. S. explained by saying, that the evening before his brother, who is a disbeliever in this intercourse, and doubted the existence of a God, was at his house on a visit, and Mr. S., anxious to do him good, had solicited him to sit down and have a communication through Mrs. S. He said he was sorry he had done so, and was afraid he had done wrong, for she was taken possession of by a spirit who had been very violent in his manner, who had been rude and boisterous in his deportment, and had manifested a fiend-like spirit of defiance. Being requested in the name of God to leave the medium, he had done so, but with a wail of agony and disappointment; and she had been ever since in an unhappy state of mind, and had come to the circle in the hope of being relieved from the depressing influence.