

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.

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### Appendix—C.

#### HISTORY OF AN UNDEVELOPED SPIRIT.

##### ONE HUNDREDTH 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.



Instead, however, of being relieved, she was taken possession of by him as violently as ever, and it was melancholy to see how she was exercised by him.

The first words she spoke under his influence were, "You must all pray for me."

We knew not who he was, nor what his condition and his wants, and we were therefore silent.

In a little while he said, in a stern and boisterous manner, "Won't you pray for me?"

Again we continued silent, for we were surprised, and knew not what to do.

In a short time we engaged somewhat in conversation with him; but as I did not record the conversation—being too much occupied with the novelty of the phenomenon to do so—I can only give a general idea of its purport.

He manifested a very unhappy frame of mind, sometimes setting us at defiance, and at others acting as if he hated us.

At one time he said, "Well, I don't care for your prayers; I don't want them."

I remonstrated with him on his rudeness, and his reply intimated that he would not alter it.

I told him that we had a will, too, as well as him, and if he put us to exercising it, it perhaps might interfere with him some.

He looked at me with an air of defiance, as if he wanted to strike me, but seeing that I was very cool, and rather compassionate than otherwise, the expression of his countenance changed to a look of inquiry, as if he was looking to see whether I was speaking in any temper. He was apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, for he said:

"I don't want to hurt your woman—I only want to frighten her; and I should like to frighten you, too, if I could."

"Well," said I, "suppose you try it on me, and see how you come out."

I then said, "If you will be gentle and quiet, we will pray for you." He became so, and I then gave utterance to this prayer:

"Almighty and most merciful Father, who has created us in thy wisdom and sustained us by thy love, look down with compassion on this, thy unhappy child now present, and assist him, we beseech thee, in his search after thy truth. Roll from his mind the clouds

of error, ignorance, and superstition, that the light of thy wisdom may shine upon him, cheering his heart, enlightening his understanding, and rendering bright his pathway to thy holy mansions eternal in the heavens. Suffer thy holy spirits to minister unto him as his guardians and guides, to lead him from darkness to light, and place him on the plane of everlasting progression."

[Here he threw himself on his knees in the center of our circle, and lifted his hands in the attitude of prayer. I continued:]

"Drive far from him the darkness of his own errors, and the mischiefs of his evil imaginings, and endue him with wisdom to receive and know thy truth. Teach him to seek knowledge with a single eye to his advancement and thy glory, and defend him from all false doctrine. Enable him to know and to feel thy love, and that through thy ministering spirits it is shielding him by day, and watching over him by night."

When the prayer was completed he arose from his knees, and on resuming his seat, in a tone indicating a feeling of uneasiness and desperation, he made some remark about his unhappiness. I did not record the precise words, but I remember the purport was, that he saw no prospect of a termination to his unhappy condition, nor how to remedy it.

I suggested to him that if I should read to him some of my papers it might aid him. He said, "I'd rather you'd talk to me."

I answered, "Well, I will, in the language I have here written down."

He intimated his willingness to listen, and I read my papers containing the allegories of the transit from physical to mental light, and from mental to spiritual light, and that on the nature of the laws, human, divine, and semi-divine.

He listened with a good deal of patience. The papers had an evident effect to calm him. Occasionally, however, he interrupted me, sometimes by getting up and giving me a look of defiance, sometimes a look of searching inquiry, and sometimes by asking me, "Is that true, now?" That question was asked several times, and only when I was reading something about the ultimate redemption of the soul, through the love and mercy of God.

Mrs. S. said afterward that he frequently spoke, as it were, to him-



self: "What does this mean?"—"That's a lie!"—"By thunder!" etc. And while reading of the happiness of the brighter spheres, he exclaimed, "And, oh! can I ever get there?"

After I had got through reading, and he had become evidently much calmed, I said to him: "Now, my friend, we have given you most of our evening; will you not leave us, that we may converse with the friends we came here to meet? We will willingly converse with you at another time, after you have thought upon what we have said to you to-night."

He looked searchingly into my face, as if to see whether I was earnest. I said, "I intend to act in good faith with you. I will converse with you at any time, if I can only do you any good." He said, "Will you talk to me in your own house?"

I answered, "Yes, or here at our next meeting, or at Mrs. Fish's, through the rappings."

He said, "But I don't know how to rap."

I replied, "You will easily learn, and you will find plenty to teach you; so I will meet you there some day this week."

He said, "Will you ask for me?"

I answered, "Yes."

He said, "Agreed."

"But," said I, "who shall I inquire for—what's your name?"

He looked very suspiciously at me, as if his doubts of me were all awakened again, and so I said, "Never mind, I suppose I shall find you by asking for the one who was here to-night."

He then said, "Ask for the man who was drowned in the canal three weeks ago."

I said, "Very well, I will not forget; and now pray leave us, for you see how much distress you have caused to the medium."

He then turned to Mr. S. and said, "I don't want to tear your woman to pieces—I don't want to hurt her. I lied to you last night."

Mr. S. said, "Well, never mind, that need not trouble you, for I forgive you for that."

"Will you?" exclaimed he; "well, you are a good fellow, you are, and (at the same time shaking Mr. S. heartily by the hand) I will leave."

He then left her, but not until he had thrown her upon the floor in great distress. From that, however, she was soon relieved, and resumed her seat. I asked if he had left. The answer through

Mrs. W. was, "He still lingers here." And I said, "He need not fear; I will keep my word with him, and have an interview during the week." And he then left.

I have spoken of the spirit thus far as if he was a man personally present and visible to us.

Of course it will be understood that I mean to speak of him only as he manifested himself through the medium. He seemed to have obtained entire possession of her, compelling her to do and to say things which she would gladly have avoided. She was very much distressed by the whole thing, frequently wept bitterly, and resisted as far as she was able.

After that spirit had left, Mrs. S. became more calm, and was impressed we should sing,

"Before Jehovah's awful throne,"

which we did. We asked the good spirits who usually attend our circle to commune with us, and not let us feel that we were abandoned to such unhappy influences.

They soon manifested themselves, and with a calmness and gentleness strikingly in contrast with the violence before exhibited.

The first words she now said were:

"Wisdom ruleth all things."

And then she repeated the following lines, given to her on a former occasion:

"His power how great, his love how vast,  
His wisdom how intense!  
He holds the nations in his hand,  
And watches o'er the vast expanse."

We inquired who was speaking to us, and we learned that Washington and Franklin were present, and that it was William Penn who spoke, and the manner and language were most gentle and grateful to us.

I remarked that I supposed the visitation of that unhappy spirit had been permitted for some good end?

The answer was, "Yes; and love and kindness will accomplish much, where uncharitable minds and feelings will only create more discord than harmony.

"Ye have all perceived this evening, and the medium has most severely felt, the discord and unhappy influence which a poor, unpro-



gressed, and unloved spirit has brought into thy circle—unloved, because of an unlovely sphere surrounding him, which repelled those who wished to approach near and take him by the hand, and lead him where his troubled soul and wandering spirit would find rest; and let it teach you all a lesson of humility, love, and forbearance.

“When the wisdom of God permits a poor spirit to enter thy circle for the purpose of information, of obtaining light, do not stand aloof, feeling holier, more favored, more exalted than him; but thank thy God, in thy inmost heart, that thou hast been favored to partake of his dearest love, to know his truth, and to feel how vast, how high, how much and thankfully to be prized are the privileges which you enjoy, who yet inhabit this covering of flesh!

“Mysterious are the ways of Providence in his workings on the minds of men. Beautiful is his wisdom in the unfolding of his will, in the power of his might, in the strength of his love, in his long-suffering, his mercy, and forbearance, even to those who turn their backs and shut their eyes to the light which comes in heavenly streams, always felt and tasted by mortals, who live by his command, who exist by his power, and yet who are blind to that holy power which overshadows us with the brightness of his glory.”

I inquired if it was in their power to have prevented the visitation we had had?

It was answered: “It was beyond our power to prevent it. Beyond any power but the Power of powers. It was permitted in order to teach you a lesson and to aid him.

“That poor spirit lately left the body, and was wandering around in darkness and chaos. He was drawn toward a certain spot by a certain unbelieving man—a man who needs to be convinced there is a God—a man whose mind, when rightly led, will be capable of leading many others to seek the light of truth. He was followed by this spirit, and with him approached this medium. He was anxious to converse, no matter how or by what means his object might be gained. The other spirits who wished to commune obeyed the will of God, and stepped aside.

“That spirit overshadowed the weaker one, but not to harm her. Oh, no; God will not permit harm to befall the instruments he has chosen to do his work! And for that poor spirit have charity, sweet charity.

“He came, and even told a falsehood, so great was his desire to

talk, and he startled the persons present by the violence of his actions and the rudeness of his language. But one good object was gained, though then unseen. Curiosity was aroused, and an intense desire to know more, which will lead yet to flowers, and bring forth fruit to gladden thy brotherly heart.”

I inquired if we had dealt rightly with him?

“Yes, as far as you know, in your sincere desire to do right, but you could not see the effect. God in his wisdom could, but you can not behold the mysterious workings of his superintending and almighty ruling power. That poor spirit left its poor body after causing much agony of mind and body to others, and hovered around the earth he had left, till through the kindness of God he was permitted to approach thy circle. Then why not through your kindness permit him to enter the path of knowledge which he yet must tread, but which, without aid, long time must elapse before he can tread?

“He was permitted to come for instruction from mortals, who could instruct him in a manner more acceptable unto him than could spirits who could not approach him near enough to do so. Will you not, then, bear with him? He is just as heaven-born as you are; his destiny is just as high and holy; and without aid, he must go down and labor hard, and climb long before he can reach the plane of progression on which ye stand, highly-favored friends. Not that thou art more worthy, but thy lot has been cast in a sphere whose close surroundings have enveloped thy footsteps, have led thee on to see this high and holy light, which is coming surely on, brightly, magnificently to the hearts of men, and to those first who are willing to receive it.

• “Do thy duty, then, to God. And this is thy duty: to help a spirit, whether in or out of the flesh, and spread the influence of the light on all around.

“And, oh, that poor spirit has left thee humbled—yes, humbled. Charity and forbearance, my friend, have done it. God gave thee such gifts from heaven. Hide them not. Let them shine, and thou shalt be made happier and stronger as thou shalt cultivate those lovely gifts of Heaven. You saw what an effect the word forgiveness had on that poor spirit. Never shrink from duty, no matter how unpleasant; for far more bright becomes the way where willing hearts begin the work, and far more bright becomes the ray of light, and love, and truth, and hope.



"When that poor spirit comes again, make thy words simple to him, as if talking to a child. Kindly use him. Oh! tell him of a Father's love, and of bright spirits who have left the earth and dwell in glory now, and who though happy, would love to come and teach him. They will gladly take him by the hand, and lead him to green pastures, where peace and love will gently lead him on to where his poor spirit may find rest. He has as yet only caught a faint glimpse, only heard a faint echo, and only here now, my friend, conceived, or thought he conceived, of a happier life to be obtained from learning the first rudiments of the school which he is now but beginning to enter.

"Happy, happy, happy privilege that you enjoy of communing with spirits, and leading them, as ye have yourselves been led, to a knowledge of the love and mercy of God!"

It will be remembered that Mr. S. had said in the beginning of the evening that he was afraid he had done wrong, and was sorry he had been instrumental in introducing that spirit, and thus causing his wife so much distress and unhappiness. Now, before the interview ended, the spirits turned toward him and said, "No, Gilbert, you did right; you acted from pure motives to do good to your brother, and good will come out of it, both to him and to that unhappy spirit."

#### ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTH INTERVIEW.

*August 9, 1852.*—The circle met last evening under its new organization, as the "Circle of Hope."

After some preliminary matters, we with one accord asked for the spirit who said that he was the one who had been drowned in the canal, and, after a little while, but with much less violence, he came.

He assumed a rough, devil-may-care sort of manner, and said, in a coarse tone, "You think you are too good to speak to me."

We replied to him, "No; we wanted to speak to him, if we could do him any good, and for that purpose we had inquired for him and kept our promise."

"Yes, we had, and he would'nt lie to us any more, but they lied so to him all round where he was."

I then remarked to Mrs. S. (the medium), that I hoped she would give utterance to every word he desired to say.

"Why, you would'nt like to hear all I would say, would you?"

"Certainly I would, if we are to administer to your disease."

"I have no disease, my fine old gentleman, neither of mind or body."

Mrs. W. remarked something about his not having a body now.

"Hav'nt I?" was the answer. "Well, anyhow, I think I have."

Mrs. W. then asked him if he had a mother, and whether she was living or dead? and for some time she kept his attention on his mother.

He answered, at first roughly, "Yes he had one, but she was dead." Then he seemed overcome with emotion at thinking of her; said she was his best friend. Then, as if ashamed of his feelings (for he had shed tears), he suddenly threw aside the signs of emotion, and in a rough tone said he was a man, not a baby.

Mrs. W. inquired of him about his father.

"Damned old fool," was the reply. "He is the cause of my being here."

I then asked him if he had seen his mother in the spirit-world?

"What! down there in that dark and dismal place? No, she was a good woman wherever she is—in heaven or hell. But she is not in hell; I know she ain't. Don't talk about her; don't speak of her to me."

"Why not, if she was your best friend? She has still as much love for you as ever."

He again was shaken with emotion, and cried, "Oh, my mother! my dear mother! She did love her villain son, and I was very—very wicked."

I asked him if he did not wish to join his mother wherever she was?

He answered, "Do you think I am a fool?"

I replied, "I don't know how that is, I am not yet well enough acquainted with you to tell."

"Well, I am not satisfied by a great deal where I am now."

And then, after a pause, he exclaimed, "Oh! where shall I go? What shall I do? Oh! save me! save me!"

I answered, that if he would allow me I would read him a little story that might enlighten him some.

"What does that mean? Don't use big words to me. If you want me to understand you, talk plain, so that I can understand."

"Well, excuse me, I will try to do so. You recollect the stories I read to you when you came before?"