

## AN EVENING WITH THE SPIRITUALISTS.

BY LT.-COL. W. H. GARDNER.

I WAS sitting one Sunday evening in the 'smoking-room of the Parker House, in Boston, with my friend Judge G——. Having nothing better to do, we concluded to attend one of the Spiritual Circles which we knew met on this evening in that city.

We sent out and procured *The Banner of Light*—a paper entirely devoted to Spiritualism and kindred subjects—and from among its many *peculiar* advertisements selected at random a meeting which we thought might serve at least to pass away an hour or two agreeably.

A few minutes' walk brought us to the house where the meeting was to take place, and after ringing the door-bell we were admitted into a small, plainly furnished drawing-room connected with another room of the same size by large folding-doors. There were several persons seated about the two rooms when we went in, but the one who most attracted our attention was the "Medium."

This important personage in the proceedings was a delicately formed woman apparently about twenty-five years of age; she had light brown hair, very light blue eyes, and her skin was so waxy and anæmic that she looked almost like a corpse. Her features were classical in their regularity, but her emaciation and care-worn expression plainly showed that she had long been an invalid; her dress was of light blue silk that hung in wrinkles and folds about her wasted form and increased, if possible, the death-like pallor of her face. She was sitting in a large arm-chair near the folding-doors and had at her side a small table on which were placed a couple of bouquets and a glass of water. The Judge and I seated ourselves as near her as was convenient and awaited in silent expectation the commencement of the ceremonies.

People came dropping in by twos and threes, some giving each other tokens of recognition; others, like ourselves, evidently stran-

gers to all present. After the rooms were filled and a small admission fee had been collected from each person, the bright glaring gas was toned down to "a dim religious light," and a lady seated at a parlor organ in the back room commenced playing very softly some plaintive hymn in a minor key; gradually the trembling tones hushed to a murmur so faint that the listening ear could scarcely detect the slightest sound, when the "musical silence" was broken by a deep sighing inspiration from the "Medium," which was repeated at intervals of a few seconds, until she sank back in her chair with her arms outspread, in an apparently cataleptic condition; her extended arms gradually fell, until they rested motionless upon the arms of the chair, and her vacant staring eyes were covered by the lids for a short time as in sleep; when suddenly she started from her reclining attitude and sat upright, her face assumed an animated expression, she looked around the room with her eyes full of intelligence, and with a voice apparently belonging to a child ten or twelve years of age she said:

"How do you do everybody? Willie is glad to see you all here to-night, and so are those who are with him; they say it pleases them to know that even amid the cares of earth their relatives and friends think of the Spirit land and the dear ones who have gone there before them.

"One comes with Willie to-night who says he came to see *that* lady"—pointing to a young woman dressed in deep mourning who sat near. "He says that he has often come here to tell her that she must stop grieving because he went to the Spirit land and left her alone; he says he is very happy and she must try and be happy too, and very soon they will meet again when there will be no more parting, no more sickness, and no more sorrow; he says that in life he was her husband."

From remarks made by persons near this lady we learned that her husband had recently died, that he was a Spiritualist and had formerly attended this circle, but that his widow could never be persuaded to attend their meetings until to-night. The poor creature appeared crushed to earth, her swollen eyes seemed—

"To weep a loss forever new,"

and her agonised face and heaving bosom told truer than words could tell the story of her bitter sorrow.

The "Medium"—Willie, as she called herself—then turned toward an old man who stood near the door and said: "There is a little tiny boy here only so high"—indicating his supposed height

from the floor with her hand—"he says he came to see Grandpa and tell him to be a good boy," to which the old man replied, while tears filled his eyes: "Yes, I knew his spirit was here, for I have felt his little hands drumming on my shirt front as he used to do in life every time I took him in my arms."

The "Medium" then spoke to other persons in the two rooms delivering so-called messages from friends in the Spirit world, the most of them of the same general character as those already detailed; some of them however appeared to be of a more personal or specific nature, for in two or three instances she called the person to her and gave the communication in a low whisper: one of those whispered messages was given to a gentleman who sat next to the Judge. The "Medium" said: "There is a spirit here who wishes to speak to *that* man"—indicating the person addressed with her finger.—"He says that you have the care of a stoopy old man with white hair who was his father; he says the old man will soon come to the Spirit land, and he says he has something more to tell you that he wishes no one else to hear;" to which the gentleman quickly replied: "Tell it aloud, I have nothing to keep secret."

The "Medium" then said: "He says it is about the burning of Mr. Coffin's store," whereupon the gentlemen cried out, "Hold on!" and quickly made his way to the medium who gave him the remainder of the message in a low whisper. When he returned to his seat, he turned to my friend and said: "I am almost an entire stranger in this city, and in this house I do not see one person whom I know, or who I believe knows me; to-night is the first time I ever visited this Spiritual circle, or any other meeting of Spiritualists; and yet this woman has not only told me truly of the dead and buried past, but I think she has accurately predicted the future, for"—he continued—"I have been appointed guardian to my wife's father, on account of his great age and infirmities, and he now lies at my house so ill that he cannot possibly recover."

The "Medium" then turned toward us and said: "There is a spirit here to speak to that man,"—pointing toward the Judge. "He is a tall man with blue eyes, light hair, and long reddish beard. He says his name is L—," slowly spelling out the name letter by letter. "He says he is glad to see that you have been led to seek for the light; don't be weary in the search, and soon your doubts will vanish, and the truth will be manifested to you; he says you are now threatened by a great calamity, but do not fear, as it will eventually turn out to your advantage."

The "Medium" then delivered an address or sermon to an elderly lady in the room, purporting to come from a daughter in the Spirit land, which seemed to be a conspectus of the creed of the Spiritualists of the present day, after which she dropped into a deep sleep—apparently of exhaustion—and the meeting broke up.

As we were walking homeward, the Judge said that L——, who was supposed to have dictated the communication to him tonight, and himself had been intimate friends from their boyhood up to the time of L's. death, a few weeks ago. L. was a man of extensive reading and of considerable scientific attainments, and he had been thinking of him nearly all the evening, for they had often conversed upon Spiritualism, though L—— was more inclined to believe in Materialism than in the doctrine of the Spiritualists. "Though"—he continued—"this evening's experience is so extraordinary as almost to seem miraculous, yet there are two or three circumstances in my life that I regard as more wonderful still; and I will relate them to you with the hope that you may be able to explain them without calling in any other *Deus ex machina* than the well-known mental powers.

"After I left College"—continued the Judge—"I was book-keeper in my father's store in the town of Lynn, and though we had a large fire-proof safe in the office yet it was one of the old-fashioned kind, without the combination lock, and so I used to take out the money and valuable papers and deposit them in the bank every evening before it closed.

"One Saturday night I found I could not balance my books by just ten dollars, and though I spent the whole of the next day—Sunday—going carefully over all the transactions of the week, it was all in vain; what had become of the ten dollars was a riddle that I was not Oedipus enough to read; at length tired out and disgusted with the matter, I went home late at night and went to bed, but I had scarcely lain down when my actual surroundings disappeared and I plainly saw *myself* standing at the bank counter giving into the teller's hands my moneys, notes, and bank book; the amounts of deposit were written upon a little abstract, showing first the amount of specie deposited, then the amount in bank notes, and lastly the amount in private notes, and there on that abstract given in by my actual self the Thursday before, I plainly saw the total amount of "paper" carried out *ten dollars less* than the sum of the notes actually footed up. My dream, or whatever you may please to call it, made such an impression upon my mind that on Monday morning as soon as the bank was opened, I went to the

teller and told him where the mistake was, and upon an examination of the notes deposited, it was found that my dream was correct: the teller had counted the specie and bank notes but had not taken the trouble to verify my statement of the total amount of private "paper" deposited.

"The next occurrence is more singular still. I had always carried one key of the safe, the other being deposited in the bank for security: One afternoon before the money had been taken to the bank my father came in and got the safe key from me and took out the books to examine them, and whilst he was looking over them I went out of the store; when I returned, a half an hour or so afterward, father was gone; the books were on the desk, but the safe door was locked and the key was not in it. I speedily hunted him up and asked him for the key, but he neither had it nor could he give me any account of it; this was very vexatious as it involved the necessity of carrying all the books and valuables to the bank each night, for there was no knowing into whose hands the missing key had fallen. The affair was at once placed in the hands of a skilful detective but each time he met me it was with the same blank report, that not the slightest clue had been obtained as to who had the missing key.

"Nearly two weeks had passed since the key was lost, when one night I went to bed more than usually worried about the matter, for it had now become necessary either to get a new safe or have the lock so altered that the old key would not fit it. I am conscious of lying awake a few minutes puzzling my brains over the mysterious disappearance of the key and then, as in the former instance, my surroundings vanished and *I distinctly saw myself* standing at the desk in the counting-room and my father come in and ask me for the safe key, as he did on the day it was lost; I saw him unlock the safe, take out the books and examine them, and while he was doing this I saw myself go through the store and start down street; then I saw my father shut and lock the safe door and with the key in his hand go down into the basement and examine some goods which were piled up on shelves on either side of the gas-jets. The basement was not lathed and plastered, and across from one flooring joist to another some boards had been nailed at intervals, forming shelves. After father had examined the goods, I plainly saw him stand abstractedly a few moments gazing upwards and then suddenly reach up and place the safe key upon one of those dusty unused shelves, and immediately afterwards come up from the basement and pass through the store into the street. This

vision could have occupied but a very few minutes, as the town clock was striking the hour of eleven when my consciousness returned, which was less than ten minutes from the time I had gone to bed.

“The next morning I was nearly wild with impatience to see if my vision had told me correctly, and as soon as father came into the store I said to him, ‘I think I know what you did with the lost safe-key’; and without further words I asked him to come with me down into the basement and said: ‘After you had looked over the books and left them on the desk you locked the safe-door and took the key in your hand and came down to examine the goods on those shelves, standing here;’ ‘You are right,’ said he; ‘And now,’ said I, ‘can you recall where you placed the key?’ After reflecting a moment, ‘Yes!’ he said, *and reaching up he took the key from the very spot where I had seen him place it in my vision.*

“Both of the circumstances I have just related occurred years ago, when I was a much younger man, and I thought that my hard experience during the civil war and since, had broken up the habit of ‘seeing visions and dreaming dreams,’ when on the first of September, 1871, I had revealed to me in a dream or vision all the horrors of the great fire in Chicago, and that, too, more than a month before it occurred. The date is accurately fixed in my mind by a letter from my brother, which was written in Chicago and dated August 29th, and was received by me on the morning of the first of September. The letter contained a draft and a request for me to renew the fire insurance policy on his property in Chicago. Pressure of other business caused me to neglect his request during the day, and I went to bed with the neglected duty on my mind. I had rooms then in Mt. Vernon street back of the State House; it was a still, sultry night, and I tossed around a long time before getting to sleep; after I did, I seemed to be awakened at once by an alarm of fire. Dressing hurriedly, I went from the house into the street, where for a time I was bewildered by the strangeness of my surroundings; by and by I recognised that I was in *Chicago* standing in front of my brother’s store on N. Clark, between Indiana and Illinois streets. Looking southward the whole city in that direction seemed to be burning; tongues of flame leaped over the tops of the highest buildings and were absorbed in the inky clouds of smoke rolling above. A motley throng of people filled the streets, a few in carriages, but the most on foot; many of them were only partially clothed and some were barefooted and in their night-dresses, all having in their arms or hands some little me-

mento, or article of value, hastily snatched from the destroying element; the lurid light of the burning city lit up the terror-stricken faces of the multitude, and above all the noise and confusion I could plainly hear the roaring and crackling of the flames as they were swiftly borne along by the fierce wind. After a short time my brother came up N. Clark street, his hands and face soiled with smoke and soot, and looking at the poor wretches who had lost their all I distinctly heard him say: 'My God this is terrible!' He unlocked the store and went inside, but shortly came out again and hurried down the street; some time elapsed and the roaring grew nearer and louder, and ever and anon I could hear the crash of a falling wall; the light grew brighter and brighter and I could plainly see showers of sparks and burning fragments borne aloft by the gale to add to the destruction. The crowd of people still increased and the panic seemed to grow greater every moment; when along towards morning, as it appeared to me, my brother again entered the store and said excitedly to the clerks and porters—who had come in while he was gone—'Save what you can men, the fire has crossed the river and Chicago has gone up.' At this time my distress and anxiety were so great that I awoke, but the horrible realness of the vision made such an impression upon me that I at once wrote to my brother about it and of course got laughed at for my trouble, though I assure you I lost no time in having his fire insurance policy renewed.

"Now before you attempt to explain any one of these cases, I wish to assure you, that just as I have related them they are *literally* and *circumstantially true in every respect*: and moreover I will inform you that at the times of their occurrence, I was in sound and vigorous health; I have never suffered from dyspepsia and am not as far as I know a somnambulist or given to fancies or hallucinations."

"Well Judge," I said, "the cases which you have related as having occurred in your previous experience are certainly more remarkable than anything we have seen or heard to-night; they are cases which the Spiritualists would magnify, mystify, and render inexplicable under the wonderful term "Clairvoyance," but if you will bear with me while I try to explain to you a little of the physiology of the brain and nervous system I think you will readily see that all of these cases are explicable by well-known laws of cerebral action.

"The nervous system is a highly complex machine consisting chiefly of cells, tubules and blood-vessels joined in groups or gan-

glia by connective tissue: Some of these groups of cells, ganglia, or nerve centres *originate*, or at least *preside* over muscular contractility, some over tactile sensation, and some are highly differentiated into complex apparatuses which take cognizance of special excitants such as light, sound, odors, and taste; the nerve-centres are all connected to each other and to every part of the body by the nerve-tubules which correlate and combine the various portions of the nervous system into one composite organ. At no one time is the *whole* nervous system, or the *whole* brain, in a condition of general activity; but periods of rest and activity alternate, the duration of activity and of rest varying with the peculiar structure of each particular ganglion and the special *habit* in each individual case: the term *habit* here being limited to mean, the preferable exhibition of vital activity through one particular channel or set of organs *from frequent repetition*. The state of activity or rest of any particular nerve-centre, ganglion, or cell, depends very greatly on the quantity and quality of the blood furnished; the blood supply being to a large extent governed by the force and frequency of the heart's contractions, and the calibre and patency of the vessels carrying the blood to and from the part; both of these factors being largely under the control of the sympathetic system of nerves, and varying not only with the conditions of the organs themselves, but also from stimuli or irritants reflected to them from contiguous or even remote organs.

“The brain, as well as every other part of the nervous system and indeed every organ and tissue of the whole body, requires for the proper performance of its functions, a plentiful supply of oxygenated blood. In sleep there is a diminished blood supply to the brain, and the functions of its various parts are more or less in abeyance, but while most of the brain may be locked in sound sleep, from receiving a *diminished* supply of blood, one or other ganglion may receive its *regular* supply or a *larger* supply, and be as active and vigorous or even *more* active than if the whole organism were fully awake; if therefore the sensorium and the nerve-centres that preside over muscular motion receive a *diminished* blood supply, while the comparing and ideational centres receive a larger supply, the function of reasoning might be properly carried on, though the individual would be totally unconscious of it. This is not an unusual mental condition and many remarkable cases of it are on record: I recall one very similar to the first ‘dream’ you have related, which is cited in Dr. Abercrombie’s work on the *Intellectual Powers*, and is quoted from there in ‘De Boisement’s



*Rational History of Hallucinations*; as near as I can recollect it now, it is as follows :

“The cashier of one of the banks in Glasgow was at his desk one busy day, when a man came in and presented a bill for six pounds, upon which he demanded immediate payment: he made so much noise and *stuttered* so horribly that the cashier at once paid him, to get rid of him, but being hurried did not note the transaction on the day-book; at the close of the year, some months afterwards, the books would not balance by exactly that amount. The cashier spent several days trying to find the missing six pounds, but without success. At length one night he went home and went to bed and then dreamed that he was at his desk, that the *stuttering* man came in and demanded payment of six pounds and that he quickly paid him *and did not enter the transaction on the day-book*; the next morning it was discovered that the transaction had not been entered on the day-book, though the circumstance was recollected by all, when associated with the *stutterer*.

“This is an instance almost identical with your first ‘dream’ and the explanation is the same in both cases. The attention had been painfully concentrated on one subject for so long a time that even in partial sleep the active ideational centres still dwelt upon it, and at length when the sensorium was benumbed and did not present external impressions to divert the thoughts, some associated idea arose, which recalled the whole transaction.

“The explanation of your second ‘dream’ is not materially different, and though it seems very mysterious as you have related it, there are undoubtedly circumstances which would throw light upon it, if you could remember them in detail; for instance: On the day the safe key was lost, and you had searched in all the places it was most likely to be found without discovering it, you had probably requested your father to recount minutely where he went, and what he did, from the time he left the counting-room until you met him again; he or some of the employees of the establishment would recollect that he went down into the basement; his or your knowledge that goods kept on certain shelves in the basement were getting low or needing inspection at the time would lead you to think that your father went down into the basement to attend to this business; and from where he stood it is probable that the shelves nailed to the flooring joists came into plain view. In your fruitless searches after the missing key, you had no doubt gone down into the basement with your father more than once, had stood where he stood and looked over the stock, had

seen the shelves overhead, and indeed acted over all the circumstances except placing the key on the shelf.

“In the mental condition which we have spoken of, if the mind is under the influence of a *dominant idea* it is often more vigorous when the body is inactive than at other times—the famous musical composition called ‘The Devil’s Sonata’ was composed by Tartini when asleep, after trying for hours when awake to write a composition for the evening’s performance; and Coleridge’s ‘Kublai Khan’ he said, was the recollected fragment of a long poem which he composed in his sleep after he had been reading Marco Polo’s account of this *crème* of Tartars: Your mind, when you went to sleep, was in a very similar condition to theirs, and it is probable you would have dreamed something about the key; sleep only supplied the missing link in your chain of reasoning, which would in all probability have been united the next day when awake.

“Your dream about the fire in Chicago is what our Spiritual circle to-night would call a wonderful case of *prevision* or *prophesy*; yet I do not think there is anything wonderful or supernatural about it. When you went to bed the night after receiving your brother’s letter your mind was occupied with this neglected business, which concerned insurance against fire for him in Chicago; and nothing is more natural, under the circumstances, than that you should dream of fire; the items of your brother’s letter, together with your personal acquaintance with the topography of the city of Chicago and a vivid imagination, undoubtedly supplied the details of the dream, for having been for some years a resident in Chicago you knew that a great fire had been predicted by many people in that city, who had long looked upon the shanties around De Coven and Jefferson streets and the rookeries known as ‘Conley’s patch’ as tinder boxes which were some day to set the city on fire; moreover it is more than probable that with your recollection of the ‘dream’ you have *assimilated* some of the details which were so graphically described in the newspaper accounts of the fire, for it is a law of mental action that similar events or impressions registered in the memory, especially if contiguous in time or locality, are so constantly associated that they frequently become identified.

“The so-called ‘Communications from the Spirit Land’ given by this ‘Medium’ to-night we do not know enough about to judge accurately how largely they are due to intentional deception, and how largely to that species of cerebral activity called ‘mind reading,’ or more scientifically ‘thought transference’; for if we rid our minds of all ideas of sentiment, and eliminate from the ques-

tion the adjuncts of the darkened room, the low plaintive music, and the seeming (or actual) trance as having no necessary connexion with the matter, it will then seem only natural that a person living in the same community should be cognisant of the death of a man so well known as Mr. L——, and it is highly probable that as you and Mr. L—— were intimate friends, she had seen you and L—— together more than once, and recognising your face, L—— was at once recalled to her mind; or possibly the conception of the personality of Mr. L—— having been formed in *your* mind, might have been transferred to the mind of the medium, on the principle of “thought-transference” before mentioned. Of the other messages, or the *whispered* message concerning the fire in Mr. Coffin’s store, we have no means of determining whether there was any secret to be told, whether those people were *confederates* of the medium, or whether, as I have before said, her mind was in sympathy (*en rapport*) with theirs, and she was thus enabled to tell the thoughts in their minds on the principle of ‘thought transference’; but surely either supposition is more consonant with experience and reason, than calling in the aid of departed spirits, which gives as a so-called explanation only an improbable and extravagant supposition, and a supposition that does not explain anything, but only makes the occurrence more of a mystery.

“One great fault with even scientific men is the habit they have inherited from their ancestors, of looking at all phenomena they cannot readily explain as *mysterious* or *supernatural*. And this fault is especially prominent in regard to those intricate chemico-vital phenomena in animal bodies about which philosophers from Thales down to Herbert Spencer have puzzled their brains for explanations and built up systems only to be demolished by the more extended observations and larger generalisations of later generations.

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“If we go to either the most bigoted theologian, or the most advanced materialist, and ask them the question, ‘What do you mean by “Spirit” or a “Spiritual Body”?’ if they attempt to answer the question at all, they must both say that *spirit* is either an attenuated form of *matter* or some peculiar manifestation of *force*. It must of necessity be either one or the other. The whole universe as far as we now know of it concerns only *matter* and *force* in some of their varied forms or relations, every phenomenon of which is governed by natural laws, and when we speak of *natural laws* we limit the term to mean only that sequence of events that human

experience has shown to be universal and unvarying. We yet know but little more of the true essence of *matter* than we do of the actual nature of *spirit*: if we try to explain the intrinsic nature of either, we find ourselves involved in a hopeless tissue of contradictions. Still we know something of the laws that govern *matter* and *force*: we know that some form of *force* inheres in every atom of *matter*, that *matter* does not exist without exhibiting some of these inhering *forces*, and that *force* does not exist, *as far as we know, without matter in some of its varied forms*. Of *spirit* all we can say is that it is either a form of *matter* or *force*, or else a cant term to hide ignorance. If any scientific person knows anything about it, or knows how to find anything about it, let him tell the world how to find out.

“In the earlier ages of the world all of the varied functions of the human body, such as alimentation, digestion, secretion, assimilation, thought and volition seemed so mysterious that it was considered necessary to introduce an *ἄρχων*, *dæmon* or *spirit*, to preside over every separate one of these processes; as time passed on and the human race grew in knowledge, the rationale of most of these processes became better understood, and the *dæmons* or *spirits* that have been dislodged from one viscus of the body after another now have their residence only in the *brain*. But the march of intellect still goes on; the calm, cold, clear-eyed Goddess of Wisdom knows no reverence and no fear, and she will as ruthlessly exorcise the *dæmons* or *spirits* that yet haunt the brain as she has already chased them away from the other viscera of the human body.”

“Let us therefore set aside the hypothesis of *Spirits*, *Dæmons*, and *Ghosts* of which we know nothing, and see if we cannot explain these so-called spiritual phenomena by less ambiguous means. And for this purpose we will divide all of these so-called mysterious occurrences into two general classes:

“The *First*,—comprising all of those cases in which a purposed deception, trick, or cheat is practised.

“The *Second*,—comprising all of those unusual processes of the brain and nervous system, such as *Somnambulism*, *Hypnotism*, *Catalepsy*, *Trance*, *Ecstasy*, etc.

“The *first* class comprises by far the largest portion of all these phenomena that are presented for our study. The origin of these practices is lost in the remotest antiquity; but in the fragments of the earliest nations ‘that have survived the wreck of time’ and come down to our day, we read of *Chaldæans* and *Soothsayers*,

Priests and Magi working wonders and performing miracles, to impose upon the ignorant and credulous masses and thus gain power and ascendancy over them; and that they had attained no mean skill even in remote ages we can readily see from the descriptions given in the Sacred Chronicle of the contest between Moses and the Egyptian Priests; and the Witch of Endor who it is stated raised the spirit of Samuel at the request of Saul. In the Middle Ages well authenticated records tell us that the power of these adepts was almost omnipotent. Langlet du Fresnoy in his *History of the Hermetic Philosophy* and Mackay in his *Memoirs of Extraordinary Popular Delusions* give detailed accounts of the miraculous powers of Gebir, Albertus Magnus, Raymond Lully, Roger Bacon, the Maréchal de Rays, Cornelius-Agrippa, Paracelsus, Cagliostro, and a host of others, who were believed by their contemporaries to possess the power of transmuting the baser metals into gold, making the spirits of the dead to appear, reanimating dead bodies, and all such *tricks* as their congeners—the Spiritual Mediums of the present day—entertain and mystify their believers with. Albertus Magnus was said to have made a brazen statue which under a favorable aspect of the planets he endowed with life and speech, and made it perform the duties of a household servant. Paracelsus boasted that he had discovered the *elixir vitæ*, and was not only able to prolong life for hundreds of years, but actually had power to reanimate the dead. Pirnetti was said to be able to render himself invisible, change his shape at will and multiply himself indefinitely; it is even related on credible authority that he was seen by the assembled inhabitants of St. Petersburg to pass out of every one of the fifteen gates of the city at the same instant of time.

“At the present day every improvement in the arts, and every discovery in science, has been appropriated by the charlatans and made subservient to their purposes, and now there is scarcely a trick or deception of the senses the mind can conceive of, that they have not available means of performing, and that too with but slight risk of detection.

“The cases comprised in our *second* class cannot be disposed of so summarily: first, from the fact, that for ages past they were looked upon as something akin to ‘Demonic Possession’ and only to be legitimately treated by priest with ‘bell, book, and candle’; and therefore it is only within the latter half of the present century that they have been considered a subject of scientific investigation. Second, their causation, depending as it does upon imperfectly known chemico-vital processes, makes the study not

only intricate and perplexing, but often inexact, since the *personal equation* is never a *constant*, but varies in every case. Besides which, intricate and involved as these questions are *per se*, they are made much more obscure and inexact for the reason, that along with the abnormal condition of mental action which we wish to study there is always so great a tendency to *self-deception* and to deceive others, that it actually amounts to a ruling principle.

“But excluding all egoistic, personal, or subjective testimony, and as far as we can, every possibility of deception, there is still enough known about these cases to make the subject one of great interest to every one.

“Let us commence with SOMNAMBULISM. The name is derived from one single phenomenon occasionally presented in this condition, sleep-walking, though this is by no means an essential, nor is it one of the most commonly observed, phenomena of this state the condition of the body in somnambulism is similar to what it is in dreaming, except that the somnambulist acts out the ideas presented by his dream; those ganglia of the brain originating the ideas and impulses only, being active, whilst other portions are at rest. As in all other variations from the norm or standard of health in animal bodies, this abnormal nervous action is of varying grades of intensity in various subjects. The sucking action of the lips and cheeks frequently observed in the sleep of nursing infants is as truly somnambulistic as the more complicated psychical and physical actions of those less numerous cases, who climb dizzy heights, perform long journeys, compose music, or write logical treatises in a state of profound slumber.

“Not widely different from somnambulism and depending upon somewhat similar causes is that condition called HYPNOTISM, either automatic, or induced by the will of another, which has caused so much wonder under the mystifying titles of *Animal Magnetism*, *Mesmerism*, and *Clairvoyance*. This state may be produced in various ways, the most common plan being to fix the attention of the subject upon some small, bright object held near the eyes until tiring takes place and sleep occurs. The period required to produce this effect depends greatly upon the susceptibility of the individual: in children, and nervous hysterical women, and in men whose nervous conditions resemble theirs either from weakness, mental over-work, or original conformation of the nervous system, a few minutes may suffice; in those whose nervous organisation is fixed on a more stable equipoise, a longer period is required; and in some rare cases, whose vigorous wills never lose their controlling pow-

ers, hypnotism is impossible. In every case however induced, the only one essential cause required to bring on this condition is to produce temporary exhaustion of the sensori-volitional nerve-centres, and render them dormant. When this occurs, we have an animal automaton, which may be made to perform all the varied and complex acts that it has acquired from its peculiar organisation, environment, and education, but only by means of external suggestions. A woman in this state, if seated at the piano, would play and sing as well as she could in her normal state of consciousness, or if an infant were placed in her arms, would care for it as tenderly as if every maternal instinct were awake and active; a man, if placed in proper attitudes and started with leading suggestions, would make a speech, fight a duel, or run a foot-race; or, if paper and tobacco were placed in his hands, he would make a cigarette, light and smoke it; but, the sensorium being dormant, the woman would play a dummy piano with as much *empressement* as if it were a perfect instrument, and would nurse a doll or a pillow placed in her arms, as carefully as if it were a real child; and similarly the man would fight an imaginary foe as vigorously as if it were a real enemy; or make a cigarette of saw-dust as carefully and smoke it as readily as if it were made of real tobacco.

“Cases of Catalepsy, Trance, and Ecstasy are exceedingly rare. They are all of a somewhat similar nature, and are all caused by allowing the attention to dwell for a long time upon one idea, or set of ideas, to the exclusion of all else; until the one idea dominates and controls the whole organism. Almost invariably the ideas are of a religious nature; and the visions seen are of heaven, hell, and purgatory, the thoughts taking the particular cast of the previous reading or teaching upon these subjects. In these conditions the patient usually lies or sits perfectly still and composed, with the eyes open and staring, the facial muscles relaxed and calm, and the skin smooth and shiny, giving the condition known to physiologists as transfiguration. The breathing is scarcely perceptible, and the heart-beat often cannot be distinguished, even by the most careful auscultation; this condition is very similar to hibernation in animals, and is so liable to be mistaken for death that cases are on record of persons being buried alive while in this state. Consciousness—while in this condition—is usually in abeyance, or, if present at all, takes cognisance only of those impressions that relate to or are *en rapport* with the dominant idea. In impressible subjects the body is wholly in sympathy and dominated by the ruling idea. In the wonderful case of Marie de Moerl,

'The scarred maiden of Tyrol,' if we can believe the report of Doctor Goerres, there appeared in a short time bleeding ulcers around her brow, on her hands and feet, and over her heart, as the result of directing her attention so often to the localities of the wounds upon the body of Christ.

"These cases are all closely related to that protean disease called Hysteria, and like that disease are all marked by a more or less complete loss or suspension of volition or directive will-power: and by *will-power* I wish to be understood to mean the ability of determining a preponderating activity to one or more ganglia or group of nerve-cells, and so causing nervous force to be directed or expended through *one* channel, or to *one* organ, rather than to another. This lack of will-power not only leaves these cases little or no control over their own thoughts or actions, but also allows their thoughts and actions to be easily determined and controlled by persons of stronger wills. It is of course this class of people that are always selected as *Impressibles* or *Mediums*.

"The average adult human brain weighs about fifty ounces in the male and a few ounces less in the female: and as I have before said is a highly complex organ consisting chiefly of gray cells aggregated into masses called ganglia, white tubules or nerves, and blood-vessels: the whole apparatus combined and held together by a frame-work of connective tissue. The grey cells originate nerve-force, while the nerves transmit it to and from the various organs of the body. What is the intrinsic nature of this subtle force generated in the nerve-cells that, emitted through one channel, gives us the sensation of touch; through another, sound; through another, light, etc., *we do not know*; any more than we know the intrinsic nature of electricity, galvanism, or the chemical force. But there are many facts which lead us to believe that it is analogous to or not materially different from those forces last named, and like those forces is generated by the attraction and repulsion of atoms of matter having opposite polarities. Nor need we look upon this theory as one too meagre or too materialistic to explain all the recondite processes of cerebral action, including even thought; for when we recall the wonderful force evolved by the simple attraction of atoms of zinc for atoms of oxygen in the galvanic battery and the complicated uses it has subserved in the arts—in one place to drive an engine, in another to carry our messages through thousands of leagues of ocean, in another form to give heat, and in yet another light; we can readily discern how a varied and complicated extension of the same or a similar force acting



between the atoms of that most complex fluid, the blood, and the organic molecules of the animal body, can only be limited in its manifestations by the special mechanisms through which it must act."

"My dear Colonel," said the Judge, "it would not be very hard for me to accept your conclusion if I could accept your premises, which I can not, since they assume that dead brute matter is capable of self-consciousness, thought, volition and memory. You give me atoms of oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, carbon, phosphorus, and other elementary forms of matter, acted upon by the blind force of chemical affinity; and expect me to construct out of these meagre details all the varied and complicated forms of life from its lowest manifestations up to man, with all the wonderful potentialities of the human brain. Can an atom of phosphorus think, has an atom of nitrogen volition, is there any consciousness in carbon, or memory in hydrogen? It is almost preposterous even to ask such questions."

"Not quite so preposterous as it seems, my dear Judge, though I acknowledge that it requires a careful study of the lower forms of life and a vivid, but still scientific, imagination to arrive at such a conclusion. If we go back link by link in the chain of life from the highest type of the *Homo Sapiens* down to the lowest microscopic speck of 'protoplasm' in which can be recognised the principle of vitality, we cannot fail to see that every higher type has been evolved from some lower type by some favorable variation or by a more favorable 'environment.' Every link in the chain is connected and shows that the highest powers of the human brain are potential in the amœba. And if we critically examine the manifestations of life displayed by these lowest forms of vitality we will find that if their manifestations differ at all from chemical affinity, it is not in kind but only in degree. These vital molecules—somehow—recognise in their environment what kinds of matter are necessary to their being, they appropriate it, assimilate it, and when their affinities are satisfied the residue is eliminated as excreta.

"Now let us turn to inorganic chemistry. An atom of oxygen if brought into contact with different atoms of matter will select one kind and refuse all the others; or if in combination with one kind of matter will leave that one, and unite with another if it has a stronger affinity for it. Every single atom of what you call 'dead brute matter' evinces this selective power.

"When atoms unite to form molecules their affinities are more

complicated: the more simple the molecule, the more limited is its range of affinities; while in those more complex molecules that form the basis of animal life, the more highly differentiated are their affinities, and the more wide their range of attraction; since every atom composing the molecule has not only its atomic (personal) affinities to be satisfied but its molecular (family) affinities to be satisfied also.

“The whole science of chemistry is but little more than a ‘table of affinities,’ and the great fundamental law that underlies the science is the fact that all kinds of matter have the power to select what combinations they shall enter into. If we bring together baryta and nitric acid, the acid and baryta unite and form barium nitrate; now if we add to the mixture a little sulphuric acid, the barium leaves the nitric acid and combines with the sulphuric, forming barium sulphate; if now we vary the experiment and to the solution of barium nitrate add the sulphuric acid in combination with a salt of potassium, a new element is introduced with its individual affinities, and a mutual divorce takes place: the sulphuric acid leaves the potassium and unites with the barium, and the nitric acid leaving the barium combines with the potassium. Now, I do not attempt to explain *why* atoms of matter behave in this manner; we must, for the present at least, be satisfied to know that this is ‘an ultimate scientific fact’; but I *do* say that in this discriminatory electing power possessed by all atoms of matter may be found the rudimentary germ which in the more highly differentiated and complex atoms that form the nervous system of animals, evolves those wonderful forces which we designate as consciousness, thought, and volition.

“Nearly six centuries before the birth of Christ, the Greek philosopher Thales of Miletus enunciated the rudiments of such a doctrine, and with all due deference to the philosophers and sages who have lived since his time I do not think they have improved much upon his fundamental ideas.

“All of the varied manifestations of life are now being carefully studied by cool clear-headed scientific men, who bring to their work minds purged from dogmas and preconceived systems, and trained to careful observation of facts and to logical deductions from them. They have already determined the chemical elements that compose the brain and nervous system, and in great part their molecular arrangement and peculiar construction. They have carefully mapped out the topographical anatomy of the brain and shown what special ganglia preside over the different parts of the

organism, and I am confident that in a short time it will be as possible to make accurate diagnoses of those deviations from normal cerebral action as it is now to detect any deviation from health in most of the other organs of the body."

After the Judge and I arrived at the Hotel, we had a little further discussion upon Spiritualism and analogous topics suggested by the evening's experience; and before parting each gave the other his sacred pledge:

That, if there is a *future* state of existence, with consciousness of personal identity, the first one of us who entered into that state would appear to the survivor and give him some unmistakable token of his continued existence, if such evidence was consonant with the laws that govern that state.

We then bade each other good-bye and parted. A few months after this meeting my dear old friend "went over to the great silent majority," and often since, when I have stood by his tomb, or visited the home his presence had made so dear, I have remembered the pledge we gave each other on that summer Sunday evening years ago and have watched and waited and *hoped* for the promised token—

"But alas Death's adamantine portal  
 Holds fast its secrets evermore;  
 And when we pass through that dread door,  
 It shuts the light from every mortal.  
 And though with aching brain we learn  
 The mystic lore of every age,  
 And knowledge taught by seer and sage,  
 The secret ne'er can we discern."