LANG ANDREW

COCK LANE AND COMMON-SENSE

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Содержание

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TO JAMES PAYN, Esq

Dear Payn,

Spirits much more rare and valuable than those spoken of in this book are yours. Whatever 'Mediums' may be able to do, you can 'transfer' High Spirits to your readers; one of whom does not hope to convert you, and will be fortunate enough if, by this work, he can occasionally bring a smile to the lips of his favourite novelist.

With more affection and admiration than can be publicly expressed,

Believe me,

Yours ever,

ANDREW LANG.

PREFACE

Since the first publication of *Cock Lane and Common-Sense* in 1894, nothing has occurred to alter greatly the author's opinions. He has tried to make the Folklore Society see that such things as modern reports of wraiths, ghosts, 'fire-walking,' 'corpse-lights,' 'crystal-gazing,' and so on, are within their province, and within the province of anthropology. In this attempt he has not quite succeeded. As he understands the situation, folklorists and anthropologists will hear gladly about wraiths, ghosts, corpse-candles, hauntings, crystal-gazing, and walking unharmed through fire, as long as these things are part of vague rural tradition, or of savage belief. But, as soon as there is first-hand evidence of honourable men and women for the apparent existence of any of the phenomena enumerated, then Folklore officially refuses to have anything to do with the subject. Folklore will register and compare vague savage or popular beliefs; but when educated living persons vouch for phenomena which (if truly stated) account in part for the origin of these popular or savage beliefs, then Folklore turns a deaf ear. The logic of this attitude does not commend itself to the author of *Cock Lane and Common-Sense.*

On the other side, the Society for Psychical Research, while anxiously examining all the modern instances which Folklore rejects, has hitherto neglected, on the whole, that evidence from

history, tradition, savage superstition, saintly legend, and so forth, which Folklore deigns to regard with interest. The neglect is not universal, and the historical aspect of these beliefs has been dealt with by Mr. Gurney (on Witchcraft), by Mr. Myers (on the Classical Oracles), and by Miss X. (on Crystal-Gazing). Still, the savage and traditional evidence is nearly as much eschewed by psychical research, as the living and contemporary evidence is by Folklore. The truth is that anthropology and Folklore have a ready-made theory as to the savage and illusory origin of all belief in the spiritual, from ghosts to God. The reported occurrence, therefore, of phenomena which suggest the possible existence of causes of belief *not* accepted by anthropology, is a distasteful thing, and is avoided. On the other hand, psychical research averts its gaze, as a rule, from tradition, because the testimony of tradition is not 'evidential,' not at first hand.

In *Cock Lane and Common-Sense* an attempt is made to reconcile these rather hostile sisters in science. Anthropology ought to think *humani nihil a se alienum*. Now the abnormal and more or less inexplicable experiences vouched for by countless living persons of honour and sanity, are, at all events, *human*. As they usually coincide in character with the testimony of the lower races all over the world; with historical evidence from the past, and with rural Folklore now and always, it really seems hard to understand how anthropology can turn her back on this large human province. For example, the famous affair of the disturbances at Mr. Samuel Wesley's parsonage at

Epworth, in 1716, is reported on evidence undeniably honest, and absolutely contemporary. Dr. Salmon, the learned and acute Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, has twice tried to explain the phenomena as the results of deliberate imposture by Hetty Wesley, alone, and unaided. [1] The present writer examined Dr. Salmon's arguments (in the *Contemporary Review*, August, 1895), and was able, he thinks, to demonstrate that scarcely one of them was based on an accurate reading of the evidence. The writer later came across the diary of Mr. Proctor of Wellington, near Newcastle (about 1840), and found to his surprise that Mr. Proctor registered on occasion, day by day, for many years, precisely the same phenomena as those which had vexed the Wesleys. [2] Various contradictory and mutually exclusive theories of these affairs have been advanced. Not one hypothesis satisfies the friends of the others: not one bears examination. The present writer has no theory, except the theory that these experiences (or these modern myths, if any one pleases), are part of the province of anthropology and Folklore.

He would add one obvious yet neglected truth. If a 'ghost-story' be found to contain some slight discrepancy between the narratives of two witnesses, it is at once rejected, both by science and common-sense, as obviously and necessarily and essentially false. Yet no story of the most normal incident in daily life,

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[1] *Fortnightly Review*, February 1866, and in a lecture, 1895.

[2] This diary was edited for private circulation, by a son of Mr. Proctor's, who remembers the disturbances.

can well be told without *some* discrepancies in the relations of witnesses. None the less such stories are accepted even by juries and judges. We cannot expect human testimony suddenly to become impeccable and infallible in all details, just because a 'ghost' is concerned. Nor is it logical to demand here a degree of congruity in testimony, which daily experience of human evidence proves to be impossible, even in ordinary matters.

A collection of recent reports of 'fire-walking' by unscorched ministrants, in the South Seas, in Sarawak, in Bulgaria, and among the Klings, appeals to the present writer in a similar way. Anthropology, he thinks, should compare these reports of living witnesses, with the older reports of similar phenomena, in Virgil, in many books of travel, in saintly legends, in trials by ordeal, and in Iamblichus. [3] Anthropology has treasured the accounts of trials by the ordeal of fire, and has not neglected the tales of old travellers, such as Pallas, and Gmelin. Why she should stand aloof from analogous descriptions by Mr. Basil Thomson, and other living witnesses, the present writer is unable to imagine. The better, the more closely contemporary the evidence, the more a witness of the abnormal is ready to submit to cross-examination, the more his testimony is apt to be neglected by Folklorists. Of course, the writer is not maintaining that there is anything 'psychical' in fire-walking, or in fire-handling. Put it down as a trick. Then as a trick it is so old, so world-wide, that we should ascertain the *modus* of it. Mr. Clodd, following Sir B.

[3] See essays here on Classical and Savage Spiritualism.

W. Richardson, suggests the use of diluted sulphuric acid, or of alum. But I am not aware that he has tried the experiment on his own person, nor has he produced an example in which it was successfully tried. Science demands actual experiment.

The very same remarks apply to 'Crystal-Gazing'. Folklore welcomes it in legend or in classical or savage divination. When it is asserted that a percentage of living and educated and honourable people are actually hallucinated by gazing into crystals, the President of the Folklore Society (Mr. Clodd) has attributed the fact to a deranged liver. [4] This is a theory like another, and, like another, can be tested. But, if it holds water, then we have discovered the origin of the world-wide practice of crystal-gazing. It arises from an equally world-wide form of hepatic malady.

In answer to all that has been urged here, anthropologists are wont to ejaculate that blessed word 'Survival'. Our savage, and mediæval, and Puritan ancestors were ignorant and superstitious; and we, or some of us, inherit their beliefs, as we may inherit their complexions. They have bequeathed to us a tendency to see the viewless things, and hear the airy tongues which they saw and heard; and they have left us the legacy of their animistic or spiritualistic explanation of these subjective experiences.

Well, be it so; what does anthropology study with so much zest as survivals? When, then, we find plenty of sane and honest people ready with tales of their own 'abnormal' experiences,

[4] This was merely a cheerful *obiter dictum* by the learned President.

anthropologists ought to feel fortunate. Here, in the persons of witnesses, say, to 'death-bed wraiths,' are 'survivals' of the liveliest and most interesting kind. Here are parsons, solicitors, soldiers, actors, men of letters, peers, honourable women not a few, all (as far as wraiths go), in exactly the mental condition of a Maori. Anthropology then will seek out these witnesses, these contemporary survivals, these examples of the truth of its own hypothesis, and listen to them as lovingly as it listens to a garrulous old village wife, or to an untutored Mincopi.

This is what we expect; but anthropology, never glancing at our 'survivals,' never interrogating them, goes to the Aquarium to study a friendly Zulu. The consistency of this method *laisse a désirer*! One says to anthropologists: 'If all educated men who have had, or believe they have had "psychical experiences" are mere "survivals," why don't you friends of "survivals" examine them and cross examine them? Their psychology ought to be a most interesting proof of the correctness of your theory. But, far from studying the cases of these gentlemen, some of you actually denounce, for doing so, the Society for Psychical Research.'

The real explanation of these singular scientific inconsistencies is probably this. Many men of science have, consciously or unconsciously, adopted the belief that the whole subject of the 'abnormal,' or, let us say, the 'psychical,' is closed. Every phenomenon admits of an already ascertained physical explanation. Therefore, when a man (however apparently free from superstitious prejudice) investigates a reported abnormal

phenomenon, he is instantly accused of *wanting to believe* in a 'supernatural explanation'. Wanting (*ex hypothesi*) to believe, he is unfit to investigate, all his conclusions will be affirmative, and all will be worthless.

This scientific argument is exactly the old argument of the pulpit against the atheist who 'does not believe because he does not want to believe'. The writer is only too well aware that even scientific minds, when bent on these topics, are apt to lose balance and sanity. But this tendency, like any other mental bad habit, is to be overcome, and may be vanquished.

Manifestly it is as fair for a psychical researcher to say to Mr. Clodd, 'You won't examine my haunted house because you are afraid of being obliged to believe in spirits,' as it is fair for Mr. Clodd to say to a psychical researcher, 'You only examine a haunted house because you want to believe in spirits; and, therefore, if you *do* see a spook, it does not count'.

We have recently seen an instructive example. Many continental savants, some of them bred in the straitest sect of materialists, examined, and were puzzled by an Italian female 'medium'. Effects apparently abnormal were attested. In the autumn of 1895 this woman was brought to England by the Society for Psychical Research. They, of course, as they, *ex hypothesi*, 'wish to believe,' should, *ex hypothesi*, have gone on believing. But, in fact, they detected the medium in the act of cheating, and publicly denounced her as an impostor. The argument, therefore, that investigation implies credulity, and that

credulity implies inevitable and final deception, scarcely holds water.

One or two slight corrections may be offered here. The author understands that Mr. Howitt does not regard the Australian conjurers described on p. 41, as being actually *bound* by the bark cords 'wound about their heads, bodies, and limbs'. Of course, Mr. Howitt's is the best evidence possible.

To the cases of savage table-turning (p. 49), add Dr. Codrington's curious examples in *The Melanesians*, p. 223 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1891).

To stories of fire-handling, or of walking-uninjured through fire (p. 49), add examples in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. ii., No. 2, June, 1893, pp. 105-108. See also 'At the Sign of the Ship,' *Longman's Magazine*, August, 1894, and *The Quarterly Review*, August, 1895, article on 'The Evil Eye'.

Mr. J. W. Maskelyne, the eminent expert in conjuring, has remarked to the author that the old historical reports of 'physical phenomena,' such as those which were said to accompany D. D. Home, do not impress him at all. For, as Mr. Maskelyne justly remarks, their antiquity and world-wide diffusion (see essays on 'Comparative Psychical Research,' and on 'Savage and Classical Spiritualism') may be accounted for with ease. Like other myths, equally uniform and widely diffused, they represent the natural play of human fancy. Inanimate objects are stationary, therefore let us say that they move about. Men do not float in the air. Let us say that they do. Then we have the 'physical phenomena' of

spiritualism. This objection had already occurred to, and been stated by, the author. But the difficulty of accounting for the large body of respectable evidence as to the real occurrence of the alleged phenomena remains. Consequently the author has little doubt that there is a genuine substratum of fact, probably fact of conjuring, and of more or less hallucinatory experience. If so, the great antiquity and uniformity of the tricks, make them proper subjects of anthropological inquiry, like other matters of human tradition. Where conditions of darkness and so on are imposed, he does not think that it is worth while to waste time in examination.

Finally, the author has often been asked: 'But what do you believe yourself?'

He believes that all these matters are legitimate subjects of anthropological inquiry.

London, 27*th October*, 1895.

INTRODUCTION

Nature of the subject. Persistent survival of certain Animistic beliefs. Examples of the Lady Onkhari, Lucian, General Campbell. The Anthropological aspect of the study. Difference between this Animistic belief, and other widely diffused ideas and institutions. Scientific admission of certain phenomena, and rejection of others. Connection between the rejected and accepted phenomena. The attitude of Science. Difficulties of investigation illustrated. Dr. Carpenter's Theory of unconscious Cerebration. Illustration of this Theory. The Failure of the Inquiry by the Dialectical Society. Professor Huxley, Mr. G. H. Lewes. Absurdity and charlatanism of 'Spiritualism'. Historical aspect of the subject. Universality of Animistic Beliefs, in every stage of culture. Not peculiar to savagery, ignorance, the Dark Ages, or periods of Religious crisis. Nature of the Evidence.

It is not without hesitation that this book is offered to the reader. Very many people, for very various reasons, would taboo the subjects here discoursed of altogether. These subjects are a certain set of ancient beliefs, for example the belief in clairvoyance, in 'hauntings,' in events transcending ordinary natural laws. The peculiarity of these beliefs is, that they have survived the wreck of faith in such elements of witchcraft as metamorphosis, and power to cause tempest or drought. To study such themes is 'impious,' or 'superstitious,' or 'useless'. Yet to

a pathologist, or anthropologist, the survivals of beliefs must always be curious and attractive illustrations of human nature.

Ages, empires, civilisations pass, and leave some members even of educated mankind still, in certain points, on the level of the savage who propitiates with gifts, or addresses with prayers, the spirits of the dead.

An example of this endurance, this secular survival of belief, may be more instructive and is certainly more entertaining than a world of assertions. In his *Études Égyptiennes* (Tome i. fascic. 2) M. Maspero publishes the text and translation of a papyrus fragment. This papyrus was discovered still attached to a statuette in wood, representing 'the singer of Ammen, Kena,' in ceremonial dress. The document is a letter written by an ancient Egyptian scribe, 'To the Instructed Khou of the Dame Onkhari,' his own dead wife, the *Khou*, or *Khu*, being the spirit of that lady. The scribe has been 'haunted' since her decease, his home has been disturbed, he asks Onkhari what he has done to deserve such treatment: 'What wrong have I been guilty of that I should be in this state of trouble? what have I done that thou should'st help to assail me? no crime has been wrought against thee. From the hour of my marriage till this day, what have I wrought against thee that I need conceal?'

He vows that, when they meet at the tribunal of Osiris, he will have right on his side.

This letter to the dead is deposited in the tomb of the dead, and we may trust that the scribe was no longer annoyed by a

Khou, which being instructed, should have known better. To take another ancient instance, in his *Philopseudes* Lucian introduces a kind of club of superstitious men, telling ghost stories. One of them assures his friend that the spectre of his late wife has visited and vexed him, because he had accidentally neglected to burn one of a pair of gilt shoes, to which she was attached. She indicated the place where the shoe was lying hidden, and she was pacified. Lucian, of course, treats this narrative in a spirit of unfeeling mirth, but, if such tales were not current in his time, there would have been no point in his banter. Thus the belief in the haunting of a husband by the spirit of his wife, the belief which drives a native Australian servant from the station where his *gin* is buried, survived old Egypt, and descended to Greece. We now take a modern instance, closely corresponding to that of the Instructed *Khou* of the Dame Onkhari.

In the *Proceedings of the Psychical Society* (part xiv. p. 477) the late General Campbell sends, from Gwalior House, Southgate, N., April 27, 1884, a tale of personal experiences and actions, which exactly reproduces the story of the Egyptian Scribe. The narrative is long and not interesting, except as an illustration of survival, – in all senses of the word.

General Campbell says that his wife died in July, 1882. He describes himself as of advanced age, and cautious in forming opinions. In 1882 he had never given any consideration to 'the subject of ultra-mundane indications'. Yet he recounts examples of 'about thirty inexplicable sounds, as if inviting my attention

specially, and two apparitions or visions, apparently of a carefully calculated nature, seen by a child visitor, a blood relation of my late wife, whom this child had never seen, nor yet any likeness of her'. The general then describes his house, a new one, and his unsuccessful endeavours to detect the cause of the knocks, raps, crashes, and other disturbances. Unable to discover any ordinary cause, he read some books on 'Spiritualism,' and, finally, addressed a note, as the Egyptian Scribe directed a letter, to the 'agent': [5] *Give three raps if from my deceased wife*!

He was rewarded by three crashing sounds, and by other peculiar phenomena. All these, unlike the scribe, he regarded as sent 'for my particular conviction and comfort'.

These instances prove that, from the Australian blacks in the Bush, who hear raps when the spirits come, to ancient Egypt, and thence to Greece, and last, in our own time, and in a London suburb, similar experiences, real or imaginary, are explained by the same hypothesis. No 'survival' can be more odd and striking, none more illustrative of the permanence, in human nature, of certain elements. To examine these psychological curiosities may, or may not, be 'useful,' but, at lowest, the study may rank as a branch of Mythology, or of Folklore.

It is in the spirit of these sciences, themselves parts of a general historical inquiry into the past and present of our race, that we would glance at the anecdotes, legends, and superstitions which are here collected. The writer has been chiefly interested

[5] Not the house agent.

in the question of the Evidence, its nature and motives, rather than in the question of Fact. It is desirable to know why independent witnesses, practically everywhere and always, tell the same tales. To examine the origin of these tales is not more 'superstitious' than to examine the origin of the religious and heroic mythologies of the world. It is, of course, easy to give both mythology, and 'the science of spectres,' the go by. But antiquaries will be inquiring, and these pursuits are more than mere 'antiquarian old womanries'. We follow the stream of fable, as we track a burn to its head, and it leads us into shy, and strange scenes of human life, haunted by very fearful wild-fowl, and rarely visited save by the credulous. There may be entertainment here, and, to the student of his species, there may be instruction.

On every side we find, as we try to show, in all ages, climates, races, and stages of civilisation, consentient testimony to a set of extraordinary phenomena. Equally diffused we find fraudulent imitations of these occurrences, and, on one side, a credulity which has accepted everything, on the other hand, a scepticism which denies and laughs at all the reports. But it is a question whether human folly would, everywhere and always, suffer from the same delusions, undergo the same hallucinations, and elaborate the same frauds. The problem is one which, in other matter, always haunts the student of man's development: he is accustomed to find similar myths, rites, customs, fairy tales, all over the world; of some he can trace the origin to early human imagination and reason, working on limited knowledge;

about others, he asks whether they have been independently evolved in several places, or whether they have been diffused from a single centre. In the present case, the problem is more complicated. Taboos, totemism, myths explanatory of natural phenomena, customs like what, with Dr. Murray's permission, we call the *Couvade*, are either peculiar to barbarous races, or, among the old civilised races, existed as survivals, protected by conservative Religion. But such things as 'clairvoyance,' 'levitation,' 'veridical apparitions,' 'movements of objects without physical contact,' 'rappings,' 'hauntings,' persist as matters of belief, in full modern civilisation, and are attested by many otherwise sane, credible, and even scientifically trained modern witnesses. In this persistence, and in these testimonies, the alleged abnormal phenomena differ from such matters as nature-myths, customs like Suttee, Taboo, Couvade, and Totemism, the change of men into beasts, the raising of storms by art-magic. These things our civilisation has dropped, the belief in other wild phenomena many persons in our civilisation retain.

The tendency of the anthropologist is to explain this fact by Survival and Revival. Given the savage beliefs in magic, spirit rapping, clairvoyance, and so forth, these, like *Märchen*, or nursery tales, will survive obscurely among peasants and the illiterate generally. In an age of fatigued scepticism and rigid physical science, the imaginative longings of men will fall back on the savage or peasant necromancy, which will be revived perhaps in some obscure American village, and be

run after by the credulous and half-witted. Then the wished-for phenomena will be supplied by the dexterity of charlatans. As it is easy to demonstrate the quackery of paid 'mediums,' as *that*, at all events, is a *vera causa*, the theory of Survival and Revival seems adequate. Yet there are two circumstances which suggest that all is not such plain sailing. The first is the constantly alleged occurrence of 'spontaneous' and sporadic abnormal phenomena, whether clairvoyance in or out of hypnotic trance, of effects on the mind and the senses apparently produced by some action of a distant mind, of hallucinations coincident with remote events, of physical prodigies that contradict the law of gravitation, or of inexplicable sounds, lights, and other occurrences in certain localities. These are just the things which Medicine Men, Mediums and classical Diviners have always pretended to provoke and produce by certain arts or rites. Secondly, whether they do or do not occasionally succeed, apart from fraud, in these performances, the 'spontaneous' phenomena are attested by a mass and quality of evidence, ancient, mediæval and modern, which would compel attention in any other matter. Living, sane, and scientifically trained men now, – not to speak of ingenious, and intelligent, if superstitious observers in the past, – and Catholic gleaners of contemporary evidence for saintly miracle, and witnesses, judges, and juries in trials for witchcraft, are undeniably all 'in the same tale'.

Now we can easily devise an explanation of the stories told by savages, by fanatics, by peasants, by persons under ecclesiastical

influence, by witches, and victims of witches. That is simple, but why are sane, scientific, modern observers, and even disgusted modern sceptics, in a tale, and that just the old savage tale? What makes them repeat the stories they do repeat? We do not so much ask: 'Are these stories true?' as, '*Why are these stories told*?' Professor Ray Lankester puts the question thus, and we are still at a loss for an answer.

Meanwhile modern science has actually accepted as real, some strange psychological phenomena which both science and common-sense rejected, between 1720 and 1840, roughly speaking. The accepted phenomena are always reported, historically, as attendant on the still more strange, and still rejected occurrences. We are thus face to face with a curious question of evidence: To what extent are some educated modern observers under the same illusions as Red Men, Kaffirs, Eskimo, Samoyeds, Australians, and Maoris? To what extent does the coincidence of their testimony with that of races so differently situated and trained, justify curiosity, interest, and perhaps suspense of judgment?

The question of the value of the facts is one to be determined by physiologists, physicians, physicists, and psychologists. It is clear that the alleged phenomena, both those now accepted and those still rejected, attend, or are said to attend, persons of singular physical constitution. It is not for nothing that Iamblichus, describing the constitution of his diviner, or seer, and the phenomena which he displays, should exactly delineate

such a man as St. Joseph of Cupertino, with his miracles as recounted in the *Acta Sanctorum* [6] (1603-1663). Now certain scientific, and (as a layman might suppose), qualified persons, aver that they have seen and even tested, in modern instances, the phenomena insisted on by Iamblichus, by the Bollandists, and by a great company of ordinary witnesses in all climes, ages, and degrees of culture. But these few scientific observers are scouted in this matter, by the vast majority of physicists and psychologists. It is with this majority, if they choose to find time, and can muster inclination for the task of prolonged and patient experiment, that the ultimate decision as to the *portée* and significance of the facts must rest. The problem cannot be solved and settled by amateurs, nor by 'common-sense,' that

> Delivers brawling judgments all day long,
> On all things, unashamed.

Ignorance, however respectable, and however contemptuous, is certainly no infallible oracle on any subject. Meanwhile most representatives of physical science, perhaps all official representatives, hold aloof, – not merely from such performances or pretences as can only be criticised by professional conjurers, – but from the whole mass of reported abnormal events. As the occurrences are admitted, even by believers, to depend on fluctuating and unascertained personal conditions, the reluctance of physicists to examine them is very natural and intelligible.

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[6] Porphyry, *Epistola* xxi. Iamblichus, *De Myst.*, iii. 2.

Whether the determination to taboo research into them, and to denounce their examination as of perilous moral consequence, is scientific, or is obscurantist, every one may decide for himself. The quest for truth is usually supposed to be regardless of consequences, meanwhile, till science utters an opinion, till *Roma locuta est*, and does not, after a scrambling and hasty inquiry, or no inquiry at all, assert a prejudice; mere literary and historical students cannot be expected to pronounce a verdict.

Spiritualists, and even less convinced persons, have frequently denounced official men of science for not making more careful and prolonged investigations in this dusky region. It is not enough, they say, to unmask one imposture, or to sit in the dark four or five times with a 'medium'. This affair demands the close scrutiny of years, and the most patient and persevering experiment.

This sounds very plausible, but the few official men of science, whose names the public has heard, – and it is astonishing how famous among his peers a scientific character may be, while the public has never heard of him – can very easily answer their accusers: 'What,' they may cry, 'are we to investigate? It is absurd to ask us to leave our special studies, and sit for many hours, through many years, probably in the dark, with an epileptic person, and a few hysterical believers. We are not conjurers or judges of conjuring.' Again, is a man like Professor Huxley, or Lord Kelvin, to run about the country, examining every cottage where there are rumours of curious noises, and where stones

and other missiles are thrown about, by undetected hands? That is the business of the police, and if the police are baffled, as in a Cock Lane affair at Port Glasgow, in 1864, and in Paris, in 1846, we cannot expect men of science to act as amateur detectives. [7] Again, it is hardly to be expected that our chosen modern leaders of opinion will give themselves up to cross-examining ladies and gentlemen who tell ghost stories. Barristers and solicitors would be more useful for that purpose. Thus hardly anything is left which physical science can investigate, except the conduct and utterances of the hysterical, the epileptic, the hypnotised and other subjects who are occasionally said to display an abnormal extension of the perceptive faculties, for example, by way of clairvoyance. To the unscientific intelligence it seems conceivable that if Home, for example, could have been kept in some such establishment as the Salpetrière for a year, and could have been scrutinised and made the subject of experiment, like the other hysterical patients, his pretensions might have been decided on once for all. But he merely performed a few *speciosa miracula* under tests established by one or two English men of science, and believers and disbelievers are still left to

[7] The Port Glasgow story is in *Report of the Dialectical Society*, p. 200. The flooring was torn up; walls, ceilings, cellars, were examined by the police, and attempts were made to imitate the noises, without success. In this case, as at Rerrick in the end of the seventeenth century, and elsewhere, 'the appearance of a hand moving up and down' was seen by the family, 'but we could not catch it: it quietly vanished, and we only felt cold air'. The house was occupied by a gardener, Hugh McCardle. Names of witnesses, a sergeant of police, and others, are appended.

wrangle over him: they usually introduce a question of moral character. Now a few men of science in England like Dr. Gregory about 1851, and like Dr. Carpenter, and a larger number on the continent, have examined and are examining these peculiarities. Their reports are often sufficiently astonishing to the lay mind.

No doubt when, if ever, a very large and imposing body of these reports is presented by a cloud of scientific witnesses of esteemed reputation, then official science will give more time and study to the topic than it is at present inclined to bestow. Mr. Wallace has asserted that, 'whenever the scientific men of any age have denied, on *a priori* grounds, the facts of investigation, they have *always been wrong*'. [8] He adds that Galileo, Harvey, Jenner, Franklin, Young, and Arago, when he 'wanted even to discuss the subject of the electric telegraph,' were 'vehemently opposed by their scientific contemporaries,' 'laughed at as dreamers,' 'ridiculed,' and so on, like the early observers of palæolithic axes, and similar prehistoric remains. This is true, of course, but, because some correct ideas were laughed at, it does not follow that whatever is laughed at is correct. The squarers of the circle, the discoverers of perpetual motion, the inquirers into the origin of language, have all been ridiculed, and ruled out of court, the two former classes, at least, justly enough. Now official science apparently regards all the long and universally rumoured abnormal occurrences as in the same category with Keely's Motor, and Perpetual Motion, not as

[8] *Report of Dialectical Society*, p. 86.

in the same category with the undulatory theory of light, or the theory of the circulation of the blood. Clairvoyance, or ghosts, or suspensions of the law of gravitation, are things so widely contradictory of general experience and of ascertained laws, that they are pronounced to be impossible; like perpetual motion they are not admitted to a hearing.

As for the undeniable phenomenon that, in every land, age, and condition of culture, and in every stage of belief or disbelief, some observers have persistently asserted their experience of these occurrences; as for the phenomenon that the testimonies of Australian blacks, of Samoyeds, of Hurons, of Greeks, of European peasants, of the Catholic and the Covenanting clergy, and of some scientifically trained modern physicians and chemists, are all coincident, official physical science leaves these things to anthropology and folklore. Yet the coincidence of such strange testimony is a singular fact in human nature. Even people of open mind can, at present, say no more than that there is a great deal of smoke, a puzzling quantity, if there be no fire, and that either human nature is very easily deluded by simple conjuring tricks, or that, in all stages of culture, minds are subject to identical hallucinations. The whole hocus-pocus of 'spirit-writing' on slates and in pellets of paper, has been satisfactorily exposed and explained, as a rather simple kind of *leger-de-main*. But this was a purely modern sort of trickery; the old universal class of useless miracles, said to occur spontaneously, still presents problems of undeniable psychological interest.

For example, if it be granted, as apparently it was by Dr. Carpenter, that, in certain circumstances, certain persons, wide awake, can perform, in various ways, intelligent actions, and produce intelligent expressions automatically, without being conscious of what they are doing, then that fact is nearly as interesting and useful as the fact that we are descended from protozoa. Thus Dr. Carpenter says that, in 'table-talking,' 'cases have occasionally occurred in the experience of persons above suspicion of intentional deception, in which the answers given by the movements of tables were not only unknown to the questioners, but were even contrary to their belief at the time, and yet afterwards proved to be true. Such cases afford typical examples of the doctrine of unconscious cerebration, for in several of them it was capable of being distinctly shown that the answers, although contrary to the belief of the questioners at the time, were true to facts of which they had been formerly cognisant, but which had vanished from their recollection; the residua of these forgotten impressions giving rise to cerebral changes which prompted the responses without any consciousness on the part of the agents of the latent springs of their actions.' It is, apparently, to be understood that, as the existence of latent unconscious knowledge was traced in 'several' cases, therefore the explanation held good in all cases, even where it could not be established as a fact.

Let us see how this theory works out in practice. Smith, Jones, Brown and Robinson are sitting with their hands on a table. All,

ex hypothesi, are honourable men, 'above suspicion of intentional deception'. They ask the table where Green is. Smith, Jones and Robinson have no idea, Brown firmly believes that Green is in Rome. The table begins to move, kicks and answers, by aid of an alphabet and knocks, that Green is at Machrihanish, where, on investigation, he is proved to be. Later, Brown is able to show (let us hope by documentary evidence), that he *had* heard Green was going to Machrihanish, instead of to Rome as he had intended, but this remarkable change of plans on Green's part had entirely faded from Brown's memory. Now we are to take it, *ex hypothesi*, that Brown is the soul of honour, and, like Mr. Facey Rumford, 'wouldn't tell a lie if it was ever so'. The practical result is that, while Brown's consciousness informs him, trumpet-tongued, that Green is at Rome, 'the residue of a forgotten impression' makes him (without his knowing it) wag the table, which he does not intend to do, and forces him to say through the tilts of the table, that Green is at Machrihanish, while he believes that Green is at Rome.

The table-turners were laughed at, and many, if not all of them, deserved ridicule. But see how even this trivial superstition illuminates our knowledge of the human mind! A mere residuum of a forgotten impression, a lost memory which Brown would have sworn, in a court of justice, had never been in his mind at all, can work his muscles, while he supposes that they are *not* working, can make a table move at which three other honourable men are sitting, and can tell all of them what none

of them knows. Clearly the expedient of table-turning in court might be tried by conscientious witnesses, who have forgotten the circumstances on which they are asked to give evidence. As Dr. Carpenter remarks, quoting Mr. Lecky, 'our doctrine of unconscious cerebration inculcates toleration for differences not merely of belief, but of the moral standard'. And why not toleration for 'immoral' actions? If Brown's residuum of an impression can make Brown's muscles move a table to give responses of which he is ignorant, why should not the residuum of a forgotten impression that it would be a pleasant thing to shoot Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury, make Brown unconsciously commit that solecism? It is a question of degree. At all events, if the unconscious self can do as much as Dr. Carpenter believed, we cannot tell how many other marvels it may perform; we cannot know till we investigate further. If this be so, it is, perhaps, hardly wise or scientific to taboo all investigation. If a mere trivial drawing-room amusement, associated by some with an absurd 'animistic hypothesis,' can, when explained by Dr. Carpenter, throw such unexpectedly blinding light on human nature, who knows how much light may be obtained from a research into more serious and widely diffused superstitious practices? The research is, undeniably, beset with the most thorny of difficulties. Yet whosoever agrees with Dr. Carpenter must admit that, after one discovery so singular as 'unconscious cerebration,' in its effect on tables, some one is bound to go further in the same field, and try for more. We are assuming, for the sake of argument, the

accuracy of Dr. Carpenter's facts. [9]

More than twenty years ago an attempt was made by a body called the 'Dialectical Society,' to investigate the phenomena styled spiritualistic. This well-meant essay had most unsatisfactory results. [10]

First a committee of inquiry was formed, on the motion of Dr. Edmunds. The committee was heterogeneous. Many of the names now suggest little to the reader. Mr. Bradlaugh we remember, but he chiefly attended a committee which sat with D. D. Home, and it is admitted that nothing of interest there occurred. Then we find the Rev. Maurice Davies, who was wont to write books of little distinction on semi-religious topics. Mr. H. G. Atkinson was a person interested in mesmerism. Kisch, Moss, and Quelch, with Dyte and Isaac Meyers, Bergheim and Geary, Hannah, Hillier, Reed (their names go naturally in blank verse), were, doubtless, all most estimable men, but scarcely boast of scientific fame. Serjeant Cox, a believer in the phenomena, if not in their spiritual cause, was of the company, as was Mr. Jencken, who married one of the Miss Foxes, the first authors of modern thaumaturgy. Professor Huxley and Mr. G. H. Lewes were asked to join, but declined to march to Sarras, the spiritual city, with the committee. This was neither surprising nor

[9] For ourselves, we have never seen or heard a table give any responses whatever, any more than we have seen the ghosts, heard the raps, or viewed the flights of men in the air which we chronicle in a later portion of this work.

[10] *Report on Spiritualism*, Longmans, London, 1871.

reprehensible, but Professor Huxley's letter of refusal appears to indicate that matters of interest, and, perhaps, logic, are differently understood by men of science and men of letters. [11] He gave two reasons for refusing, and others may readily be imagined by the sympathetic observer. The first was that he had no time for an inquiry involving much trouble, and (as he justly foresaw) much annoyance. Next, he had no interest in the subject. He had once examined a case of 'spiritualism,' and detected an imposture. 'But, supposing the phenomena to be genuine, they do not interest me. If anybody would endow me with the faculty of listening to the chatter of old women and curates in the nearest cathedral town, I should decline the privilege, having better things to do.' Thus it would not interest Professor Huxley if some new kind of telephone should enable him to hear all the conversation of persons in a town (if a cathedral town) more or less distant. He would not be interested by the 'genuine' fact of this extension of his faculties, because he would not expect to be amused or instructed by the contents of what he heard. Of course he was not invited to listen to a chatter, which, on one hypothesis, was that of the dead, but to help to ascertain whether or not there were any genuine facts of an unusual nature, which some persons explained by the animistic hypothesis. To mere 'bellettristic triflers' the existence of genuine abnormal and unexplained facts seems to have been the object of inquiry, and we must penitently admit that if genuine communications could really be opened

[11] *Report*, p. 229.

with the dead, we would regard the circumstance with some degree of curious zest, even if the dead were on the intellectual level of curates and old women. Besides, all old women are not imbeciles, history records cases of a different kind, and even some curates are as intelligent as the apes, whose anatomy and customs, about that time, much occupied Professor Huxley. In Balaam's conversation with his ass, it was not so much the fact that *mon âne parle bien* which interested the prophet, as the circumstance that *mon âne parle*. Science has obviously soared very high, when she cannot be interested by the fact (if a fact) that the dead are communicating with us, apart from the value of what they choose to say.

However, Professor Huxley lost nothing by not joining the committee of the Dialectical Society. Mr. G. H. Lewes, for his part, hoped that with Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace to aid (for he joined the committee) and with Mr. Crookes (who apparently did not) 'we have a right to expect some definite result'. Any expectation of that kind was doomed to disappointment. In Mr. Lewes's own experience, which was large, 'the means have always been proved to be either deliberate imposture.. or the well-known effects of expectant attention'. That is, when Lord Adare, the Master of Lindsay, and a cloud of other witnesses, thought they saw heavy bodies moving about of their own free will, either somebody cheated, or the spectators beheld what they did behold, because they expected to do so, even when, like M. Alphonse Karr, and Mr. Hamilton Aide, they expected nothing of the

kind. This would be Mr. Lewes's natural explanation of the circumstances, suggested by his own large experience.

The results of the Dialectical Society's inquiry were somewhat comic. The committee reported that marvels were alleged, by the experimental subcommittees, to have occurred. Sub-committee No. 1 averred that 'motion may be produced in solid bodies without material contact, by some hitherto unrecognised force'. Sub-committees 2 and 3 had many communications with mysterious intelligences to vouch for, and much erratic behaviour on the part of tables to record. No. 4 had nothing to report at all, and No. 5 which sat four times with Home had mere trifles of raps. Home was ill, and the *séances* were given up.

So far, many curious phenomena were alleged to have occurred, but now Dr. Edmunds, who started the whole inquiry, sent in a separate report. He complained that convinced spiritualists had 'captured' the editing sub-committee, as people say, and had issued a report practically spiritualistic. He himself had met nothing more remarkable than impudent frauds or total failure. 'Raps, noises, and movements of various kinds,' he had indeed witnessed, and he heard wondrous tales from truthful people, 'but I have never been able to see anything worthy of consideration, as not being accounted for by unconscious action, delusion, or imposture'. Then the editors of the *Report* contradicted Dr. Edmunds on points of fact, and Mr. A. R. Wallace disabled his logic, [12] and Mr. Geary dissented from the

[12] Mr. Wallace may be credited with scoring a point in argument. Dr. Edmunds had

Report, and the editors said that his statements were incorrect, and that he was a rare attendant at *séances*, and Serjeant Cox vouched for more miracles, and a great many statements of the most astounding description were made by Mr. Varley, an electrician, by D. D. Home, by the Master of Lindsay (Lord Crawford) and by other witnesses who had seen Home grow eight inches longer and also shorter than his average height; fly in the air; handle burning coals unharmed, cause fragrance of various sweet scents to fill a room, and, in short, rival St. Joseph of Cupertino in all his most characteristic performances. Unluckily Mr. Home, not being in the vein, did not one of these feats in presence of Mr. Bradlaugh and sub-committee No. 5. These results are clearly not of a convincing and harmonious description, and thus ended the attempt of the Dialectical Society. Nobody can do otherwise than congratulate Professor Huxley and Mr. Lewes, on their discreet reserve. The inquiry of the Dialectical Society was a failure; the members of the committees remained at variance; and it is natural to side with the sceptics rather than with those who believed from the first, or were converted (as many are said to have been) during the

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maintained that no amount of evidence would make him believe in certain obvious absurdities, say the lions in Trafalgar Square drinking out of the fountains. Mr. Wallace replied: 'The asserted fact is either possible or not possible. If possible, such evidence as we have been considering would prove it; if not possible, such evidence could not exist.' No such evidence exists for the lions; for the phenomena of so-called spiritualism, we have consentient testimony in every land, period and stage of culture. That certainly makes a difference, whatever the weight and value of the difference may be.

experiments. Perhaps all such inquiries may end in no more than diversity of opinion. These practical researches ought not to be attempted by the majority of people, if by any. On many nervous systems, the mere sitting idly round a table, and calling the process a *séance*, produces evil effects.

As to the idea of purposely evoking the dead, it is at least as impious, as absurd, as odious to taste and sentiment, as it is insane in the eyes of reason. This protest the writer feels obliged to make, for while he regards the traditional, historical and anthropological curiosities here collected as matters of some interest, in various aspects, he has nothing but abhorrence and contempt for modern efforts to converse with the manes, and for all the profane impostures of 'spiritualism'.

On the question of the real existence of the reported phenomena hereafter chronicled, and on the question of the *portée* of the facts, if genuine, the writer has been unable to reach any conclusion, negative or affirmative. Even the testimony of his senses, if they ever bore witness to any of the *speciosa miracula*, would fail to convince him on the affirmative side. There seems to be no good reason why one observer should set so much store by his own impressions of sense, while he regards those of all other witnesses as fallible. On the other hand, the writer feels unable to set wholly aside the concurrent testimony of the most diverse people, in times, lands and conditions of opinion the most various. The reported phenomena fall into regular groups, like the symptoms of a disease. Is it a disease of observation? If so,

the topic is one of undeniable psychological interest. To urge this truth, to produce such examples as his reading affords, is the purpose of the author.

The topic has an historical aspect. In what sorts of periods, in what conditions of general thought and belief, are the alleged abnormal phenomena most current? Every one will answer: In ages and lands of ignorance and superstitions; or, again: In periods of religious, or, so to say, of irreligious crisis. As Mr. Lecky insists, belief in all such matters, from fairies to the miracles of the Gospel, declines as rationalism or enlightenment advances. Yet it is not as Mr. Lecky says, before reason that they vanish, not before learned argument and examination, but just before a kind of sentiment, or instinct, or feeling, that events contradictory of normal experience seem ridiculous, and incredible.

Now, if we set aside, for the present, ecclesiastical miracles, and judicial witchcraft, and fix our attention on such minor and useless marvels as clairvoyance, 'ghosts,' unexplained noises, unexplained movements of objects, one doubts whether the general opinion as to the ratio of marvels and ignorance is correct. The truth is that we have often very scanty evidence. If we take Athens in her lustre, we are, undeniably, in an age of enlightenment, of the *Aufklärung*. No rationalistic, philosophical, cool-headed contemporary of Middleton, of Hume, of Voltaire, could speak more contemptuously about ghosts, and about the immortality of the soul, than some of

the Athenian gentlemen who converse with Socrates in the Dialogues. Yet we find that Socrates and Plato, men as well educated, as familiar with the refined enlightenment of Athens as the others, take to some extent the side of the old wives with their fables, and believe in earth-bound spirits of the dead. Again, the clear-headed Socrates, one of the pioneers of logic, credits himself with 'premonitions,' apparently with clairvoyance, and assuredly with warnings which, in the then existing state of psychology, he could only regard as 'spiritual'. Hence we must infer that belief, or disbelief, does not depend on education, enlightenment, pure reason, but on personal character and genius. The same proportionate distribution of these is likely to recur in any age.

Once more, Rome in the late Republic, the Rome of Cicero, was 'enlightened,' as was the Greece of Lucian; that is the educated classes were enlightened. Yet Lucretius, writing only for the educated classes, feels obliged to combat the belief in ghosts and the kind of Calvinism which, but for his poem, we should not know to have been widely prevalent. Lucian, too, mocks frequently at educated belief in just such minor and useless miracles as we are considering, but then Lucian lived in an age of cataclysm in religion. Looking back on history we find that most of historical time has either been covered with dark ignorance, among savages, among the populace, or in all classes; or, on the other hand, has been marked by enlightenment, which has produced, or accompanied, religious or irreligious crises.

Now religious and irreligious crises both tend to beget belief in abnormal occurrences. Religion welcomes them as miracles divine or diabolical. Scepticism produces a reaction, and 'where no gods are spectres walk'. Thus men cannot, or, so far, men have not been able to escape from the conditions in which marvels flourish. If we are savages, then *Vuis* and *Brewin* beset the forest paths and knock in the lacustrine dwelling perched like a nest on reeds above the water; tornaks rout in the Eskimo hut, in the open wood, in the *gunyeh*, in the Medicine Lodge. If we are European peasants, we hear the Brownie at work, and see the fairies dance in their grassy ring. If we are devoutly Catholic we behold saints floating in mid-air, or we lay down our maladies and leave our crutches at Lourdes. If we are personally religious, and pass days in prayer, we hear voices like Bunyan; see visions like the brave Colonel Gardiner or like Pascal; walk environed by an atmosphere of light, like the seers in Iamblichus, and like a very savoury Covenanting Christian. We are attended by a virtuous sprite who raps and moves tables as was a pious man mentioned by Bodin and a minister cited by Wodrow. We work miracles and prophesy, like Mr. Blair of St. Andrews (1639-1662); we are clairvoyant, like Mr. Cameron, minister of Lochend, or Loch-Head, in Kintyre (1679). If we are dissolute, and irreligious like Lord Lyttelton, or like Middleton, that enemy of Covenanters, we see ghosts, as they did, and have premonitions. If we live in a time of witty scepticism, we take to the magnetism of Mesmer. If we exist in a period of learned and scientific scepticism, and

are ourselves trained observers, we may still watch the beliefs of Mr. Wallace and the experiments witnessed by Mr. Crookes and Dr. Huggins.

Say we are Protestants, and sceptical, like Reginald Scot (1584), or Whigs, like De Foe, we then exclaim with Scot, in his *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), that minor miracles, moving tables, have gone out with benighted Popery, as De Foe also boasts in his *History of the Devil*. Alas, of the table we must admit *eppur si muove*; it moves, or is believed by foreign *savants* to move, for a peasant medium, Eusapia Paladino. Mr. Lecky declares (1865) that Church miracles have followed Hop o' my Thumb; they are lost, with no track of white pebbles, in the forest of Rationalism. [13] And then Lourdes comes to contradict his expectation, and Church miracles are as common as blackberries. *Enfin*, mankind, in the whole course of its history, has never got quit of experiences which, whatever their cause, drive it back on the belief in the marvellous. [14]

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[13] This illustration is not Mr. Lecky's.

[14] We have here thrown together a crowd of odd experiences. The savages' examples are dealt with in the next essay; the Catholic marvels in the essay on 'Comparative Psychical Research'. For Pascal, consult *L'Amulette de Pascal*, by M. Lélut; for Iamblichus, see essay on 'Ancient Spiritualism'. As to Welsh, the evidence for the light in which he shone is printed in Dr. Hill Burton's *Scot Abroad* (i. 289), from a Wodrow MS. in Glasgow University. Mr. Welsh was minister of Ayr. He was meditating in his garden late at night. One of his friends 'chanced to open a window towards the place where he walked, and saw clearly a strange light surround him, and heard him speak strange words about his spiritual joy'. Hill Burton thinks that this verges on the Popish superstition. The truth is that eminent ministers shared the privileges of Mediums and

It is a noteworthy circumstance that (setting apart Church miracles, and the epidemic of witchcraft which broke out simultaneously with the new learning of the Renaissance, and was fostered by the enlightened Protestantism of the Reformers, the Puritans, and the Covenanters, in England, Scotland and America) the minor miracles, the hauntings and knockings, are not more common in one age than in another. Our evidence, it is true, does not quite permit us to judge of their frequency at certain periods. The reason is obvious. We have no newspapers, no miscellanies of daily life, from Greece, Rome, and the Middle Ages. We have from Greece and Rome but few literary examples of 'Psychical Research,' few collections of books on 'Bogles' as Scott called them. We possess Palæphatus, the life of Apollonius of Tyana, jests in Lucian, argument and exposition from Pliny, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Plutarch, hints from Plato, Plautus, Lucretius, from St. Augustine and other fathers. Suetonius chronicles noises and hauntings after the death of Caligula, but, naturally, the historian does not record similar disturbances in the *pauperum tabernaæ.*

Classical evidence on these matters, as about Greek and

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of some saints. Examples of miraculous cures by ministers, of clairvoyance on their part, of spirit-raps attendant on them, and of prophecy, are current on Presbyterian hagiology. No ministers, to our knowledge, were 'levitated,' but some *nearly* flew out of their pulpits. Patrick Walker, in his *Biographia Presbyteriana*, vol. ii. p. 21, mentions a supernatural light which floated round The Sweet Singers, Meikle John Gibb and his friends, before they burned a bible. Mr. Gibb afterwards excelled as a pow-wow, or Medicine Man, among the Red Indians.

Roman folklore in general, we have to sift painfully from the works of literary authors who were concerned with other topics. Still, in the region of the ghostly, as in folklore at large, we have relics enough to prove that the ancient practices and beliefs were on the ordinary level of today and of all days: and to show that the ordinary numbers of abnormal phenomena were supposed to be present in the ancient civilisations. In the Middle Ages – the 'dark ages' – modern opinion would expect to find an inordinate quantity of ghostly material. But modern opinion would be disappointed. Setting aside saintly miracles, and accusations of witchcraft, the minor phenomena are very sparsely recorded. In the darkest of all 'dark ages,' when, on the current hypothesis, such tales as we examine ought to be most plentiful, even witch-trials are infrequent. Mr. Lecky attributes to these benighted centuries 'extreme superstition, with little terrorism, and, consequently, little sorcery'. The world was capable of believing anything, but it believed in the antidote as well as in the bane, in the efficacy of holy water as much as in the evil eye. When, with the dawn of enlightenment in the twelfth century, superstition became cruel, and burned witch and heretic, the charges against witches do not, as a rule, include the phenomena which we are studying. Witches are accused of raising storms, destroying crops, causing deaths and blighting marriages, by sympathetic magic; of assuming the shapes of beasts, of having intercourse with Satan, of attending the Sabbat. All these fables, except the last, are survivals from savage beliefs,

but none of these occurrences are attested by modern witnesses of all sorts, like the 'knockings,' 'movements,' 'ghosts,' 'wraiths,' 'second sight,' and clairvoyance.

The more part of mediæval witchcraft, therefore, is not *quod semper*, *quod ubique*, *quod ab omnibus*. The facts were facts: people really died or were sterile, flocks suffered, ships were wrecked, fields were ruined; the mistake lay in attributing these things to witchcraft. On the other hand, the facts of rappings, ghosts, clairvoyance, in spite of the universally consentient evidence, are very doubtful facts after all. Their existence has to be established before we look about for their cause. Now, of records about *these* phenomena the Middle Ages produce but a very scanty supply. The miracles which were so common were seldom of this kind; they were imposing visions of devils, or of angels, or of saints; processions of happy or unhappy souls; views of heaven, hell, or purgatory. The reason is not far to seek: ecclesiastical chroniclers, like classical men of letters, recorded events which interested themselves; a wraith, or common ghost ('matter of daily experience,' says Lavaterus, and, later, contradicts himself), or knocking sprite, was beneath their notice. In mediæval sermons we meet a few edifying wraiths and ghosts, returning in obedience to a compact made while in the body. Here and there a chronicle, as of Rudolf of Fulda (858), vouches for communication with a rapping bogle. Grimm has collected several cases under the head of 'House-sprites,'

including this ancient one at Capmunti, near Bingen. [15] Gervase of Tilbury, Marie de France, John Major, Froissart, mention an occasional *follet*, brownie, or knocking sprite. The prayers of the Church contain a petition against the *spiritus percutiens*, or spirit who produces 'percussive noises'. The Norsemen of the Viking age were given to second sight, and Glam 'riding the roofs,' made disturbances worthy of a spectre peculiarly able-bodied. But, not counting the evidence of the Icelandic sagas, mediæval literature, like classical literature, needs to be carefully sifted before it yields a few grains of such facts as sane and educated witnesses even now aver to be matter of their personal experience. No doubt the beliefs were prevalent, the Latin prayer proves that, but examples were seldom recorded.

Thus the dark ages do *not*, as might have been expected, provide us with most of this material. The last forty enlightened years give us more bogles than all the ages between St. Augustine and the Restoration. When the dark ages were over, when learning revived, the learned turned their minds to 'Psychical Research,' and Wier, Bodin, Le Loyer, Georgius Pictorius, Petrus Thyraeus, James VI., collected many instances of the phenomena still said to survive. Then, for want of better materials, the unhappy, tortured witches dragged into their confessions all the folklore which they knew. Second sight, the fairy world, ghosts, 'wraiths,' 'astral bodies' of witches whose bodies of flesh are elsewhere, volatile chairs and tables, all were

[15] *Teutonic Mythology*, English translation, vol. ii. p. 514. He cites Pertz, i. 372.

spoken of by witches under torture, and by sworn witnesses. [16] Resisting the scepticism of the Restoration, Glanvil, More, Boyle, and the rest, fought the Sadducee with the usual ghost stories. Wodrow, later (1701-1731), compiled the marvels of his *Analecta*. In spite of the cold common-sense of the eighteenth century, sporadic outbreaks of rappings and feats of impulsive pots, pans, beds and chairs insisted on making themselves notorious. The Wesley case would never have been celebrated if the sons of Samuel Wesley had not become prominent. John Wesley and the Methodists revelled in such narratives, and so the *catena* of testimonies was lengthened till Mesmer came, and, with Mesmer, the hypothesis of a 'fluidic force' which in various shapes has endured, and is not, even now, wholly extinct. Finally Modern Spiritualism arrived, and was, for the most part, an organised and fraudulent copy of the old popular phenomena, with a few cheap and vulgar variations on the theme.

In the face of these facts, it does not seem easy to aver that one kind of age, one sort of 'culture' is more favourable to the occurrence of, or belief in, these phenomena than another. Accidental circumstances, an increase, or a decrease of knowledge and education, an access of religion, or of irreligion, a fashion in intellectual temperament, may bring these experiences more into notice at one moment than at another, but they

[16] A very early turning table, of 1170, is quoted from Giraldus Cambrensis by Dean Stanley in his *Canterbury Memorials*, p. 103. The table threw off the weapons of Becket's murderers. This was at South Malling. See the original in Wharton's *Anglia Sacra*, ii. 425.

are always said to recur, at uncertain intervals, and are always essentially the same.

To prove this by examples is our present business. In a thoroughly scientific treatise, the foundation of the whole would, of course, be laid in a discussion of psychology, physiology, and the phenomena of hypnotism. But on these matters an amateur opinion is of less than no value. The various schools of psychologists, neurologists, 'alienists,' and employers of hypnotism for curative or experimental purposes, appear to differ very widely among themselves, and the layman may read but he cannot criticise their works. The essays which follow are historical, anthropological, antiquarian.

SAVAGE SPIRITUALISM

'Shadow' or Magic of the Dènè Hareskins: its four categories. These are characteristic of all Savage Spiritualism. The subject somewhat neglected by Anthropologists. Uniformity of phenomena. Mr. Tylor's theory of the origin of 'Animism'. Question whether there are any phenomena not explained by Mr. Tylor's theory. Examples of uniformity. The savage hypnotic trance. Hareskin examples. Cases from British Guiana. Australian rapping spirits. Maori oracles. A Maori 'séance'. The North American Indian Magic Lodge. Modern and old Jesuit descriptions. Movements of the Lodge. Insensibility of Red Indian Medium to fire. Similar case of D. D. Home. Flying table in Thibet. Other instances. Montezuma's 'astral body'. Miracles. Question of Diffusion by borrowing, or of independent evolution.

Philosophers among the Dènè Hareskins in the extreme north of America recognise four classes of 'Shadow' or magic. Their categories apply sufficiently closely to all savage sorcery (excluding sympathetic magic), as far as it has been observed. We have, among the Hareskins: —

1. Beneficent magic, used for the healing of the sick.
2. Malevolent magic: the black art of witchcraft
3. Conjuring, or the working of merely sportive miracles.
4. Magic for ascertaining the truth about the future or the distant present – clairvoyance. This is called 'The Young Man

Bound and Bounding,' from the widely-spread habit of tying-up the limbs of the medium, and from his customary convulsions.

To all of these forms of magic, or spiritualism, the presence and aid of 'spirits' is believed to be necessary, with, perhaps, the exception of the sportive or conjuring class. A spirit helps to cure and helps to kill. The free spirit of the clairvoyant in bondage meets other spirits in its wanderings. Anthropologists, taking it for granted that 'spirits' are a mere 'animistic hypothesis' – their appearances being counterfeited by imposture – have paid little attention to the practical magic of savages, as far as it is not merely sympathetic, and based on the doctrine that 'like cures like'.

Thus Mr. Sproat, in his excellent work, *Scenes and Studies of Savage Life*, frankly admits that in Vancouver Island the trickery and hocus-pocus of Aht sorcery were so repugnant to him that he could not occupy himself with the topic. Some other travellers have been more inquisitive; unlettered sojourners among the wilder peoples have shared their superstitions, and consulted their oracles, while one or two of the old Jesuit missionaries were close and puzzled observers of their 'mediumship'.

Thus enough is known to show that savage spiritualism wonderfully resembles, even in minute details, that of modern mediums and *séances*, while both have the most striking parallels in the old classical thaumaturgy.

This uniformity, to a certain extent, is not surprising, for savage, classical, and modern spiritualism all repose on the

primæval animistic hypothesis as their metaphysical foundation. The origin of this hypothesis – namely, that disembodied intelligences exist and are active – is explained by anthropologists as the result of early reasonings on life, death, sleep, dreams, trances, shadows, the phenomena of epilepsy, and the illusions of starvation. This scientific theory is, in itself, unimpeachable; normal phenomena, psychological and physical, might suggest most of the animistic beliefs. [17]

At the same time 'veridical hallucinations,' if there are any, and clairvoyance, if there is such a thing, would do much to originate and confirm the animistic opinions. Meanwhile, the extraordinary similarity of savage and classical spiritualistic rites, with the corresponding similarity of alleged modern phenomena, raises problems which it is more easy to state than to solve. For example, such occurrences as 'rappings,' as the movement of untouched objects, as the lights of the *séance* room, are all easily feigned. But that ignorant modern knaves should feign precisely the same raps, lights, and movements as the most remote and unsophisticated barbarians, and as the educated Platonists of the fourth century after Christ, and that many of the other phenomena should be identical in each case, is certainly noteworthy. This kind of folklore is the most persistent, the most apt to revive, and the most uniform. We have to decide between the theories of independent invention; of transmission, borrowing, and secular tradition; and of a substratum of actual

[17] See Mr. Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, chap, xi., for the best statement of the theory.

fact.

Thus, either the rite of binding the sorcerer was invented, for no obvious reason, in a given place, and thence reached the Australian blacks, the Eskimo, the Dènè Hareskins, the Davenport Brothers, and the Neoplatonists; or it was independently evolved in each of several remote regions; or it was found to have some actual effect – what we cannot guess – on persons entranced. We are hampered by not knowing, in our comparatively rational state of development, what strange things it is natural for a savage to invent. That spirits should knock and rap seems to us about as improbable an idea as could well occur to the fancy. Were we inventing a form for a spirit's manifestations to take, we never should invent *that*. But what a savage might think an appropriate invention we do not know. Meanwhile we have the mediæval and later tales of rapping, some of which, to be frank, have never been satisfactorily accounted for on any theory. But, on the other hand, each of us might readily invent another common 'manifestation' – the *wind* which is said to accompany the spirit.

The very word *spiritus* suggests air in motion, and the very idea of abnormal power suggests the trembling and shaking of the place wherein it is present. Yet, on the other side, the 'cold non-natural wind' of *séances*, of Swedenborg, and of a hundred stories, old or new, is undeniably felt by some sceptical observers, even on occasions where no professional charlatan is engaged. As to the trembling and shaking of the house or hut, where the spirit

is alleged to be, we shall examine some curious evidence, ancient and modern, savage and civilised. So of the other phenomena. Some seem to be of easy natural invention, others not so; and, in the latter case, independent evolution of an idea not obvious is a difficult hypothesis, while transmission from the Pole to Australia, though conceivable, is apt to give rise to doubt.

Meanwhile, one phenomenon, which is usually said to accompany others much more startling, may now be held to have won acceptance from science. This is what the Dènè Hareskins call *the Sleep of the Shadow*, that is, *the Magical Sleep*, the hypnotic trance. Savages are well acquainted with this abnormal condition, and with means of producing it, and it is at the bottom of all their more mysterious non-sympathetic magic. Before Mesmer, and even till within the last thirty years, this phenomenon, too, would have been scouted; now it is a commonplace of physiology. For such physical symptoms as introverted eyes in seers we need look no further than Martin's account of the second-sighted men, in his book on the Hebrides. The phenomenon of anæsthesia, insensibility to pain, in trance, is not unfamiliar to science, but that red-hot coals should not burn a seer or medium is, perhaps, less easily accepted; while science, naturally, does not recognise the clairvoyance, and still less the 'spiritual' attendants of the seer in the Sleep of the Shadow. Nevertheless, classical, modern, and savage spiritualists are agreed in reporting these last and most startling phenomena of the magic slumber in certain cases.

Beginning with what may be admitted as possible, we find that the Dènè Hareskins practise a form of healing under hypnotic or mesmeric treatment. [18] The physician (who is to be pitied) begins by a three days' fast. Then a 'magic lodge,' afterwards to be described, is built for him in the forest. Here he falls into the Sleep of the Shadow; the patient is then brought before him. In the lodge, the patient confesses his sins to his doctor, and when that ghostly friend has heard all, he sings and plays the tambour, invoking the spirit to descend on the sick man. The singing of barbarous songs was part of classical spiritualism; the Norse witch, in *The Saga of Eric the Red*, insisted on the song of Warlocks being chanted, which secured the attendance of 'many powerful spirits'; and modern spiritualists enliven their dark and dismal programme by songs. Presently the Hareskin physician blows on the patient, and bids the malady quit him. He also makes 'passes' over the invalid till he produces trance; the spirit is supposed to assist. Then the spirit extracts the *sin* which caused the suffering, and the illness is cured, after the patient has been awakened by a loud cry. In all this affair of confession one is inclined to surmise a mixture of Catholic practice, imitated from the missionaries. It is also not, perhaps, impossible that hypnotic treatment may occasionally have been of some real service.

Turning to British Guiana, where, as elsewhere, hysterical and epileptic people make the best mediums, or 'Peay-men,' we are fortunate in finding an educated observer who submitted to be

[18] Petitot, *Traditions Indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest*, p. 434.

peaied. Mr. Im Thurn, in the interests of science, endured a savage form of cure for headache. The remedy was much worse than the disease. In a hammock in the dark, attended by a peay-man armed with several bunches of green boughs, Mr. Im Thurn lay, under a vow not to touch whatever might touch him. The peay-men kept howling questions to the *kenaimas*, or spirits, who answered. 'It was a clever piece of ventriloquism and acting.'

'Every now and then, through the mad din, there was a sound, at first low and indistinct, and then gathering in volume, as if some big, winged thing came from far towards the house, passed through the roof, and then settled heavily on the floor; and again, after an interval, as if the same winged thing rose and passed away as it had come,' while the air was sensibly stirred. A noise of lapping up some tobacco-water set out for the *kenaimas* was also audible. The rustling of wings, and the thud, 'were imitated, as I afterwards found, by skilfully shaking the leafy boughs, and then dashing them suddenly against the ground'. Mr. Im Thurn bit one of the boughs which came close to his face, and caught leaves in his teeth. As a rule he lay in a condition scarcely conscious: 'It seems to me that my spirit was as nearly separated from my body as is possible in any circumstances short of death. Thus it appears that the efforts of the peay-man were directed partly to the separation of his own spirit from his body, and partly to the separation of the spirit from the body of his patient, and that in this way spirit holds communion with spirit.' But Mr. Im Thurn's headache was not alleviated! The whirring noise

occurs in the case of the Cock Lane Ghost (1762), in Iamblichus, in some 'haunted houses,' and is reported by a modern lady spiritualist in a book which provokes sceptical comments. Now, had the peay tradition reached Cock Lane, or was the peay-man counterfeiting, very cleverly, some real phenomenon? [19]

We may next examine cases in which, the savage medium being entranced, spirits come to him and answer questions. Australia is so remote, and it is so unlikely that European or American spiritualists suggested their ideas to the older blacks (for mediumship seems to be nearly extinct since the settling of the country), that any transmission of such notions to the Black Fellows must be very ancient. Our authorities are Mr. Brough Smyth, in *Aborigines of Victoria* (i. 472), and Messrs. Fison and Howitt, in *Kamilaroi and Kurnai*, who tell just the same tale. The spirits in Victoria are called *Mrarts*, and are understood to be the souls of Black Fellows dead and gone, not demons unattached. The mediums, now very scarce, are *Birraarks*. They were consulted as to things present and future. The Birraark leaves the camp, the fire is kept low, and some one 'cooees' at intervals. 'Then a noise is heard. The narrator here struck a book against the table several times to describe it.' This, of course, is 'spirit-rapping'. The knocks have a home among the least cultivated savages, as well as in mediæval and modern Europe.

[19] Very possibly the whirring roar of the *turndun*, or ρομβος, in Greek, Zuñi, Yoruba, Australian, Maori and South African mysteries is connected with this belief in a whirring sound caused by spirits. See *Custom and Myth.*

Then whistles are heard, a phenomenon lavishly illustrated in certain *séances* held at Rio de Janeiro [20] where children were mediums. The spiritual whistle is familiar to Glanvil and to Homer. Mr. Wesley, at Epworth (1716), noted it among all the other phenomena. The Mrarts are next heard 'jumping down,' like the *kenaimas*. Questions are put to them, and they answer. They decline, very naturally, to approach a bright fire. The medium (Birraark) is found entranced, either on the ground where the Mrarts have been talking, or at the top of a tree, very difficult to climb, 'and up which there are no marks of any one having climbed'. The blacks, of course, are peculiarly skilled in detecting such marks. In maleficent magic, as among the Dènè Hareskins, the Australian sorcerer has 'his head, body, and limbs wound round with stringy bark cords'. [21] The enchantment is believed to drag the victim, in a trance, towards the sorcerer. This binding is customary among the Eskimo, and, as Mr. Myers has noted, was used in the rites described by the Oracles in 'trance utterances,' which Porphyry collected in the fourth century. Whether the binding was thought to restrain the convulsions of the mediums, or whether it was, originally, a 'test condition,' to prevent the medium from cheating (as in modern experiments), we cannot discover. It does not appear to be in use among the Maoris, whose speciality is 'trance utterance'.

A very picturesque description of a Maori *séance* is given in

[20] *Proc. S. P. R.*, xix. 180.

[21] Brough Smyth, i. 475.

Old New Zealand. [22] The story loses greatly by being condensed. A popular and accomplished young chief had died in battle, and his friends asked the *Tohunga*, or medium, to call him back. The chief was able to read and write; he had kept a journal of remarkable events, and that journal, though 'unceasingly searched for,' had disappeared. This was exactly a case for a test, and that which was given would have been good enough for spiritualists, though not for more reasonable human beings. In the village hall, in flickering firelight, the friends, with the English observer, the 'Pakeha Maori,' were collected. The medium, by way of a 'cabinet,' selected the darkest corner. The fire burned down to a red glow. Suddenly the spirit spoke, 'Salutation to my tribe,' and the chief's sister, a beautiful girl, rushed, with open arms, into the darkness; she was seized and held by her friends. The gloom, the tears, the sorrow, nearly overcame the incredulity of the Englishman, as the Voice came, 'a strange, melancholy sound, like the sound of a wind blowing into a hollow vessel'. 'It is well with me,' it said; 'my place is a good place.' They asked of their dead friends; the hollow answers replied, and the Englishman 'felt a strange swelling of the chest'. The Voice spoke again: 'Give my large pig to the priest,' and the sceptic was disenchanted. He now thought of the test. '"We cannot find your book," I said; "where have you concealed it?" The answer immediately came: "Between the *Tahuhu* of my house and the thatch, straight over you as you go into the door".' Here the

[22] Auckland, 1863, ch. x.

brother rushed out. 'In five minutes he came back, *with the book in his hand*.' After one or two more remarks the Voice came, '"Farewell!" *from deep beneath the ground*. "Farewell!" again *from high in air*. "Farewell!" once more came moaning through the distant darkness of the night. The deception was perfect. "A ventriloquist," said I, "or – or, *perhaps* the devil."' The *séance* had an ill end: the chief's sister shot herself.

This was decidedly a well-got-up affair for a colonial place. The Maori oracles are precisely like those of Delphi. In one case a chief was absent, was inquired for, and the Voice came, 'He will return, yet not return'. Six months later the chiefs friends went to implore him to come home. They brought him back a corpse; they had found him dying, and carried away the body. In another case, when the Maori oracle was consulted as to the issue of a proposed war, it said: 'A desolate country, a desolate country, a desolate country!' The chiefs, of course, thought the *other* country was meant, but they were deceived, as Crœsus was by Delphi, when he was told that he 'would ruin a great empire'. In yet another case, the Maoris were anxious for the spirits to bring back a European ship, on which a girl had fled with the captain. The Pakeha Maori was present at this *séance*, and heard the 'hollow, mysterious whistling Voice, "The ship's nose I will batter out on the great sea"'. Even the priest was puzzled, this, he said, was clearly a deceitful spirit, or *atua*, like those of which Porphyry complains, like most of them in fact. But, ten days later, the ship came back to port; she had met a gale, and sprung a

leak in the bow, called, in Maori, 'the nose' (*ihu*). It is hardly surprising that some Europeans used to consult the oracle.

Possibly some spiritualists may take comfort in these anecdotes, and allege that the Maori mediums were 'very powerful'. This is said to have been the view taken by some American believers, in a very curious case, reported by Kohl, but the tale, as he tells it, cannot possibly be accurate. However, it illustrates and strangely coincides with some stories related by the Jesuit, Père Lejeune, in the Canadian Mission, about 1637. The instances bear both on clairvoyance and on the force which is said to shake houses as well as to lift tables, in the legends of the modern thaumaturgists. We shall take Kohl's tale before those of the old Jesuit. Kohl first describes the 'Medicine Lodge,' already alluded to in the account of Dènè Hareskin magic.

The 'lodge' answers to what spiritualists call 'the cabinet,' usually a place curtained off in modern practice. Behind this the medium now gets up his 'materialisations,' and other cheap mysteries. The classical performers of the fourth century also knew the advantage of a close place, [23] 'where the power would not be scattered'. This idea is very natural, granting the 'power'. The modern Ojibway 'close place,' or lodge, like those seen by old Jesuit fathers, 'is composed of stout posts, connected with basket-work, and covered with birch bark. It is tall and narrow, and resembles a chimney. It is very firmly built, and two men, even if exerting their utmost strength, would be unable to move,

[23] εν τινι στερεω χωριω, ωστε μη επιπολυ διαχεισθαι. – Iamblichus.

shake, or bend it.' [24] On this topic Kohl received information from a gentleman who 'knew the Indians well, and was even related to them through his wife'. He, and many other white people thirty years before, saw a *Jossakeed*, or medium, crawl into such a lodge as Kohl describes, beating his tambour. 'The entire case began gradually trembling, shaking, and oscillating slowly amidst great noise… It bent back and forwards, up and down, like the mast of a vessel in a storm. I could not understand how those movements could be produced by a man inside, as we could not have caused them from the exterior.' Two voices, 'both entirely different,' were then heard within. 'Some spiritualists' (here is the weakest part of the story) 'who were present explained it through modern spiritualism.' Now this was not before 1859, when Kohl's book appeared in English, and modern spiritualism, as a sect of philosophy, was not born till 1848, so that, thirty years before 1859, in 1829, there were no modern spiritualists. This, then, is absurd. However, the tale goes on, and Kohl's informant says that he knew the *Jossakeed*, or medium, who had become a Christian. On his deathbed the white man asked him how it was done: 'now is the time to confess all truthfully'. The converted one admitted the premisses – he was dying, a Christian man – but, 'Believe me, I did not deceive you at that time. I did not move the lodge. It was shaken by the power of the spirits. I could see a great distance round me, and believed I could recognise the most distant objects.' This 'with

[24] Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami*, p. 278.

an expression of simple truth'. It is interesting, but the interval of thirty years is a naked impossibility. In 1829 there were queer doings in America. Joe Smith's Mormons 'spoke with tongues,' like Irving's congregation at the same time, but there were no modern spiritualists. Kohl's informant should have said 'ten years ago,' if he wanted his anecdote to be credited, and it is curious that Kohl did not notice this circumstance.

We now come to the certainly honest evidence of the Père Lejeune, the Jesuit missionary. In the *Relations de la Nouvelle France* (1634), Lejeune discusses the sorcerers, who, as rival priests, gave him great trouble. He describes the Medicine Lodge just as Kohl does. The fire is put out, of course, the sorcerer enters, the lodge shakes, voices are heard in Montagnais and Algonkin, and the Father thought it all a clumsy imposture. The sorcerer, in a very sportsmanlike way, asked him to go in himself and try what he could make of it. 'You'll find that your body remains below and your soul mounts aloft.' The cautious Father, reflecting that there were no white witnesses, declined to make the experiment. This lodge was larger than those which Kohl saw, and would have held half a dozen men. This was in 1634; by 1637 Père Lejeune began to doubt whether his theory that the lodge was shaken by the juggler would hold water. Two Indians – one of them a sorcerer, Pigarouich, 'me descouvrant avec grande sincerité toutes ses malices' – 'making a clean breast of his tricks' – vowed that they did not shake the lodge – that a great wind entered *fort promptement et rudement*, and they added that the

'tabernacle' (as Lejeune very injudiciously calls the Medicine Lodge), 'is sometimes so strong that a single man can hardly stir it.' The sorcerer was a small weak man. Lejeune himself noted the strength of the structure, and saw it move with a violence which he did not think a man could have communicated to it, especially not for such a length of time. He was assured by many (Indian) witnesses that the tabernacle was sometimes laid level with the ground, and again that the sorcerer's arm and legs might be seen projecting outside, while the lodge staggered about – nay, more, the lodge would rock and sway after the juggler had left it. As usual, there was a savage, Auiskuouaskousit, who had seen a juggler rise in air out of the structure, while others, looking in, saw that he was absent. St. Theresa had done equal marvels, but this does not occur to the good Father.

The savage with the long name was a Christian catechumen, and yet he stood to it that he had seen a sorcerer disappear before his very eyes, like the second-sighted Highlander in Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth* (1691). 'His neibours often perceaved this man to disappear at a certane place, and about one hour after to become visible.' It would be more satisfactory if the Father had seen these things himself, like Mrs. Newton Crosland, who informs the world that, when with Robert Chambers and other persons of sanity, she felt a whole house violently shaken, trembling, and thrilling in the presence of a medium – not a professional, but a young lady amateur. Here, of course, we greatly desire the evidence of Robert Chambers. Spirits came to

Swedenborg with a wind, but it was only strong enough to flutter papers; 'the cause of which,' as he remarks with *naïveté*, 'I do not yet understand'. If Swedenborg had gone into a Medicine Lodge, no doubt, in that 'close place,' the phenomena would have been very much more remarkable. In 1853 Père Arnaud visited the Nasquapees, and describes a *séance*. 'The conjurers shut themselves up in a little lodge, and remain for a few minutes in a pensive attitude, cross-legged. Soon the lodge begins to move like a table turning, and replies by bounds and jumps to the questions which are put to the conjurer.' [25] The experiment might be tried with a modern medium.

Father Lejeune, in 1637, gives a case which reminds us of Home. According to Home, and to Mrs. S. C. Hall, and other witnesses, when 'in power' he could not only handle live coals without being burned, but he actually placed a large glowing coal, about the size of a cricket-ball, on the pate of Mr. S. C. Hall, where it shone redly through Mr. Hall's white locks, but did him no manner of harm. Now Father Pijart was present, *tesmoin oculaire*, when a Huron medicine-man heated a stone red hot, put it in his mouth, and ran round the cabin with it, without receiving any harm. Father Brébeuf, afterwards a most heroic martyr, sent the stone to Father Lejeune; it bore the marks of the medicine-man's teeth, though Father Pijart, examining the man, found that lips and tongue had no trace of burn or blister. He reasonably concluded that these things could not be done '*sans l'opêration*

[25] Hind's *Explorations in Labrador*, ii. 102.

de quelque Démon'. That an excited patient should not feel fire is, perhaps, admissible, but that it should not scorch either Mr. Hall, or Home, or the Huron, is a large demand on our credulity. Still, the evidence in this case (that of Mr. Crookes and Lord Crawford) is much better than usual.

It would be strange if practices analogous to modern 'table-turning' did not exist among savage and barbaric races. Thus Mr. Tylor, in *Primitive Culture* (ii. 156), quotes a Kutuchtu Lama who mounted a bench, and rode it, as it were, to a tent where the stolen goods were concealed. The bench was believed, by the credulous Mongols, to carry the Lama! Among the Manyanja of Africa thefts are detected by young men holding sticks in their hands. After a sufficient amount of incantation, dancing, and convulsions, the sticks became possessed, the men 'can hardly hold them,' and are dragged after them in the required directions. [26] These examples are analogous to the use of the Divining Rod, which is probably moved unconsciously by honest 'dowsers'; 'sometimes they believe that they can hardly hold it'. These are cases of movement of objects in contact with human muscles, and are therefore not at all mysterious in origin. A regular case of movement *without* contact was reported from Thibet, by M. Tschérépanoff, in 1855. The modern epidemic of table-turning had set in, when M. Tschérépanoff wrote thus to the *Abeille Russe*: [27] 'The Lama can find stolen objects by following a table

[26] Rowley, *Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, p. 217: cited by Mr. Tylor.

[27] Quoted in *La Table Parlante*, a French serial, No. I, p. 6.

which flies before him'. But the Lama, after being asked to trace an object, requires an interval of some days, before he sets about finding it. When he is ready he sits on the ground, reading a Thibetan book, in front of a small square table, on which he rests his hands. At the end of half an hour he rises and lifts his hands from the surface of the table: presently the table also rises from the ground, and follows the direction of his hand. The Lama elevates his hand above his head, the table reaches the level of his eyes: the Lama walks, the table rushes before him in the air, so rapidly that he can scarcely keep up with its flight. The table then spins round, and falls on the earth, the direction in which it falls, indicates that in which the stolen object is to be sought. M. Tschérépanoff says that he saw the table fly about forty feet, and fall. The stolen object was not immediately discovered, but a Russian peasant, seeing the line which the table took, committed suicide, and the object was found in his hut. The date was 1831. M. Tschérépanoff could not believe his eyes, and searched in vain for an iron wire, or other mechanism, but could find nothing of the sort. This anecdote, if it does not prove a miracle, illustrates a custom. [28]

As to clairvoyance among savages, the subject is comparatively familiar. Montezuma's priests predicted the arrival of the Spaniards long before the event. On this point, in itself well vouched for, Acosta tells a story which illustrates the

[28] Colonel A. B. Ellis, in his work on the Yorubas (1894), reports singular motions of a large wooden cylinder. It is used in ordeals.

identity of the 'astral body,' or double, with the ordinary body. In the witch stories of Increase Mather and others, where the possessed sees the phantasm of the witch, and strikes it, the actual witch proves to be injured. Story leads to story, and Mr. Thomas Hardy somewhere tells one to this effect. A farmer's wife, a woman of some education, fell asleep in the afternoon, and dreamed that a neighbour of hers, a woman, was sitting on her chest. She caught at the figure's arm in her dream, and woke. Later in the day she met her neighbour, who complained of a pain in the arm, just where the farmer's wife seized it in her dream. The place mortified and the poor lady died. To return to Montezuma. An honest labourer was brought before him, who made this very tough statement. He had been carried by an eagle into a cave, where he saw a man in splendid dress sleeping heavily. Beside him stood a burning stick of incense such as the Aztecs used. A voice announced that this sleeper was Montezuma, prophesied his doom, and bade the labourer burn the slumberer's face with the flaming incense stick. The labourer reluctantly applied the flame to the royal nose, 'but he moved not, nor showed any feeling'. On this anecdote being related to Montezuma, he looked on his own face in a mirror, and 'found that he was burned, the which he had not felt till then'. [29]

On the Coppermine River the medicine-man, according to Hearne, prophesies of travellers, like the Highland second-sighted man, ere they appear. The Finns and Lapps boast of

[29] *The Natural and Morall History of the East and West Indies*, p. 566, London, 1604.

similar powers. Scheffer is copious on the clairvoyant feats of Lapps in trance. The Eskimo Angakut, when bound with their heads between their legs, cause luminous apparitions, just as was done by Mr. Stainton Moses, and by the mediums known to Porphyry and Iamblichus; the Angakut also send their souls on voyages, and behold distant lands. One of the oddest Angekok stories in Rink's *Tales and Traditions of the Eskimo* (p. 324) tells how some children played at magic, making 'a dark cabinet,' by hanging jackets over the door, to exclude the light. 'The slabs of the floor were lifted and rushed after them:' a case of 'movement of objects without physical contact'. This phenomenon in future attended the young medium's possessions, even when he was away from home. This particular kind of manifestation, so very common in trials for witchcraft, and in modern spiritualistic literature, does not appear to prevail much among savages. Persons otherwise credible and sane tell the authorities of the Psychical Society that, with only three amateurs present, things are thrown about, and objects are brought from places many miles distant, and tossed on the table. These are technically termed *apports*. The writer knows a case in which this was attested by a witness of the most unimpeachable character. But savages hardly go so far. Bishop Callaway has an instance in which 'spirits' tossed objects into the midst of a Zulu circle, but such things are not usual. Savages also set out food for the dead, but they scarcely attain to the credulity, or are granted the

experience, of a writer in the *Medium*. [30] This astonishing person knew a familiar spirit. At dinner, one day, an empty chair began to move, 'and in answer to the question whether it would have some dinner, said "Yes"'. It chose *croquets de pomme de terre*, which were placed on the chair in a spoon, lest the spirit, whose manners were rustic, should break a plate. 'In a few seconds I was told that it was eaten, and looking, found the half of it gone, with the marks showing the teeth.' Perhaps few savages would have told such a tale to a journal which ought to have a large circulation – among believers.

The examples of savage spiritualism which have been adduced might probably receive many additions; those are but gleanings from a large field carelessly harvested. The phenomena have been but casually studied; the civilised mind is apt to see, in savage *séances*, nothing but noisy buffoonery. We have shown that there is a more serious belief involved, and we have adduced cases in which white men were not unconscious of the barbarian spell. It also appears that the now recognised phenomena of hypnotism are the basis of the more serious savage magic. The production of hypnotic trances, perhaps of hypnotic hallucinations, is a piece of knowledge which savages possessed (as they were acquainted with quinine), while European physicians and philosophers ignored or laughed at it. Tobacco and quinine were more acceptable gifts from the barbarian. His magic has now and then been examined by

[30] February 9, 1872. Quoted by Mr. Tylor, in *Primitive Culture*, ii. 39, 1873.

a competent anthropologist, like Mr. Im Thurn, and Castren closely observed the proceedings of the bound and bounding Shamans among the Samoyeds. But we need the evidence both of anthropologists and of adepts in conjuring. They might detect some of the tricks, though Mr. Kellar, a professional conjurer and exposer of spiritualistic imposture, has been fairly baffled (he says) by Zulus and Hindus, while educated Americans are puzzled by the Pawnees. Mr. Kellar's plan of displaying a few of his own tricks was excellent: the dusky professionals were stimulated to show theirs, which, as described, were miracles. The Pakeha Maori, already quoted, saw a Maori *Tohunga* perform 'a very good miracle as times go,' but he does not give any particulars. The late Mr. Davey, who started as a Spiritualist catechumen, managed, by conjuring, to produce answers to questions on a locked slate, which is as near a miracle as anything. But Mr. Davey is dead, though we know his secret, while it is improbable that Mr. Maskelyne will enrich his *répertoire* by travelling among Zulus, Hindus, and Pawnees. As savages cease to be savages, our opportunities of learning their mystic lore must decrease.

To one point in this research the notice of students in folklore may be specially directed. In the attempt to account for the diffusion of popular tales, such as *Cinderella*, we are told to observe that the countries most closely adjacent to each other have the most closely similar variants of the story. This is true, as a rule, but it is also true that, while Scandinavian regions

have a form of *Cinderella* with certain peculiarities not shared by Southern Europe, those crop up sporadically, far away, among Kaffirs and the Indian 'aboriginal' tribe of Santhals. The same phenomenon of diffusion occurs when we find savage mediums tied up in their trances, all over the North, among Canadian Hareskins, among Samoyed and Eskimo, while the practice ceases at a given point in Labrador, and gives place to Medicine Lodges. The binding then reappears if not in Australia, certainly in the ancient Greek ceremonial. The writer is not acquainted with 'the bound and bounding young man' in the intervening regions and it would be very interesting to find connecting cases, stepping-stones, as it were, by which the rite passed from the Levant to the frozen North.

ANCIENT SPIRITUALISM

M. Littré on 'demoniac affections,' a subject, in his opinion, worthy of closer study. Outbreak of Modern Spiritualism. Its relations to Greek and Egyptian Spiritualism recognised. Popular and literary sources of Modern Spiritualism. Neoplatonic thaumaturgy not among these. Porphyry and Iamblichus. The discerning of Spirits. The ancient attempts to prove 'spirit identity'. The test of 'spirit lights' in the ancient world. Perplexities of Porphyry. Dreams. The Assynt Murder. Eusebius on Ancient Spiritualism. The evidence of Texts from the Papyri. Evocations. Lights, levitation, airy music, anæsthesia of Mediums, ancient and modern. Alternative hypotheses: conjuring, 'suggestion' and collective hallucination, actual fact. Strange case of the Rev. Stainton Moses. Tabular statement showing historical continuity of alleged phenomena.

In the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, for 1856, tome i., M. Littré published an article on table-turning and 'rapping spirits'. M. Littré was a savant whom nobody accused of superstition, and France possessed no clearer intellect. Yet his attitude towards the popular marvels of the day, an attitude at once singular and natural, shows how easily the greatest minds can pay themselves with words. A curious reader, in that period of excitement about 'spiritualism,' would turn to the *Revue*, attracted by M. Littré's name. He would ask: 'Does M. Littré accept the alleged facts;

if so, how does he explain them?' And he would find that this guide of human thought did not, at least, *reject* the facts; that he did not (as he well might have done) offer imposture as the general explanation; that he regarded the topic as very obscure, and eminently worthy of study, – and that he pooh-poohed the whole affair!

This is not very consistent or helpful counsel. Like the rest of us, who are so far beneath M. Littré in grasp and in weight of authority, he was subject to the *idola fori*, the illusions of the market-place. It would never do for a great scientific sceptic to say, 'Here are strange and important facts of human nature, let us examine them as we do all other natural phenomena,' it would never do for such a man to say that without qualification. So he concluded his essay in the pooh-pooh tone of voice. He first gives a sketch of abnormalities in mortal experience, as in the case of mental epidemics, of witchcraft, of the so-called prophets in the Cevennes, of the Jansenist marvels. He mentions a nunnery where, 'in the sixteenth century,' there occurred, among other phenomena, movements of inanimate objects, pottery specially distinguishing itself, as in the famous 'Stockwell mystery'. Unluckily he supplies no references for these adventures.' [31] The *Revue*, being written for men and women of the world, may discuss such topics, but need not offer exact citations. M. Littré, on the strength of his historical sketch, decides, most correctly, that there is *rien de nouveau*, nothing

[31] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1856, tome i. p. 853.

new, in the spirit-rapping epidemic. 'These maladies never desert our race.' But this fact hardly explains *why* 'vessels were dragged from the hands' of his nuns in the sixteenth century.

In search of a cause, he turns to hallucinations. In certain or uncertain physical conditions, the mind can project and objectify, its own creations. Thus Gleditch saw the dead Maupertuis, with perfect distinctness, in the *salle* of the Academy at Berlin. Had he not known that Maupertuis was dead, he could have sworn to his presence (p. 866). Yes: but how does that explain volatile pots and pans? Well, there are *collective* hallucinations, as when the persecuted in the Cevennes, like the Covenanters, heard non-existent psalmody. And all witches told much the same tale; apparently because they were collectively hallucinated. Then were the spectators of the agile crockery collectively hallucinated? M. Littré does not say so explicitly, though this is a conceivable theory. He alleges after all his scientific statements about sensory troubles, that 'the whole chapter, a chapter most deserving of study, which contains the series of demoniac affections (*affections démoniaques*), has hardly been sketched out'.

Among accounts of 'demoniac affections,' descriptions of objects moved without contact are of frequent occurrence. As M. Littré says, it is always the same old story. But why is it always the same old story? There were two theories before the world in 1856. First there was the 'animistic-hypothesis,' 'spirits' move the objects, spirits raise the medium in the air, spirits are the

performers of the airy music. Then there was the hypothesis of a force or fluid, or faculty, inherent in mankind, and notable in some rare examples of humanity. This force, fluid, agency, or what you will, counteracts the laws of gravitation, and compels tables, or pots, to move untouched.

To the spiritualists M. Littré says, 'Bah!' to the partisans of a force or fluid, he says, 'Pooh!' 'If your spirits are spirits, why do they let the world wag on in its old way, why do they confine themselves to trivial effects?'

The spiritualist would probably answer that he did not understand the nature and limits of spiritual powers.

To the friends of a force or faculty in our nature, M. Littré remarks, in effect, 'Why don't you *use* your force? why don't you supply a new motor for locomotives? *Pooh*!' The answer would be that it was not the volume and market value of the force, but the *existence* of the force, which interested the inquirer. When amber, being rubbed, attracted straws, the force was as much a force, as worthy of scientific study, as when electricity is employed to bring bad news more rapidly from the ends of the earth.

These answers are obvious: M. Littré's satire was not the weapon of science, but the familiar test of the *bourgeois* and the Philistine. Still, he admitted, nay, asserted strongly, that the whole series of 'demoniac affections' was 'most worthy of investigation,' and was 'hardly sketched out'. In a similar manner, Brierre de Boismont, in his work on hallucinations, explains a

number of 'clairvoyant' dreams, by ordinary causes. But, coming to a vision which he knew at first hand, he breaks down: 'We must confess that these explanations do not satisfy us, and that these events seem rather to belong to some of the deepest mysteries of our being'. [32] There is a point at which the explanations of common-sense arouse scepticism.

Much has been done, since 1856, towards producing a finished picture, in place of an *ébauche*. The accepted belief in the phenomena of hypnotism, and of unconscious mental and bodily actions – 'automatisms' – has expelled the old belief in spirits from many a dusty nook. But we still ask: '*Do* objects move untouched? *why* do they move, or if they move not at all (as is most probable) *why* is it always the same story, from the Arctic circle to the tales of witches, and of mediums?'

There is little said about this particular phenomena (though something is said), but there is much about other marvels, equally widely rumoured of, in the brief and dim Greek records of thaumaturgy. To examine these historically is to put a touch or two on the picture of 'demoniac affections,' which M. Littré desired to see executed. The Greek mystics, at least, believed that the airy music, the movements of untouched objects, the triumph over gravitation, and other natural laws, for which they vouch, were caused by 'demons,' were 'demoniac affections'. To compare the statements of Eusebius and Iamblichus with those of modern men of science and other modern witnesses, can,

[32] *Hallucinations*, English translation, p. 182, London, 1859.

therefore, only be called superfluous and superstitious by those who think M. Littré superstitious, and his desired investigation 'superfluous'.

When the epidemic of 'spiritualism' broke out in the United States (1848-1852) students of classical literature perceived that spiritualism was no new thing, but a recrudescence of practices familiar to the ancient world. Even readers who had confined their attention to the central masterpieces of Greek literature recognised some of the revived 'phenomena'. The 'Trance Medium,' the 'Inspirational Speaker' was a reproduction of the maiden with a spirit of divination, of the Delphic Pythia. In the old belief, the god dominated her, and spoke from her lips, just as the 'control,' or directing spirit, dominates the medium. But there were still more striking resemblances between ancient and modern thaumaturgy, which were only to be recognised by readers of the late Neoplatonists, such as Porphyry, and of the Christian Fathers, such as Eusebius, who argued against the apologists of heathenism. The central classical writers, from Homer to Tacitus, are not superstitious; they accept the orthodox state magic of omens, of augurs, of prodigies, of oracles, but anything like private necromancy is alien and distasteful to them. We need not doubt that sorcery and the consultation of the dead were being practised all through the classical period, indeed we know that it was so. Plato legislates against sorcery in a practical manner; whether it does harm or not, men are persuaded that it does harm; it is vain to argue with them, therefore the wizard and

witch are to be punished for their bad intentions. [33]

There were regular, and, so to speak, orthodox oracles of the dead. They might be consulted by such as chose to sleep on tombs, or to visit the cavern of Trophonius, or other chasms which were thought to communicate with the under world. But the idea of bringing a shade, or a hero, a demon, or a god into a private room, as in modern spiritualism, meets us late in such works as the *Letter of Porphyry*, and the *Reply of Iamblichus*, written in the fourth century of our era. If we may judge by the usual fortune of folklore, these private spiritualistic rites, without temple, or state-supported priestly order, were no new things in the early centuries of Christianity, but they had not till then occupied the attention of philosophers and men of letters. The dawn of our faith was the late twilight of the ancient creeds, the classic gods were departing, belief was waning, ghosts were walking, even philosophers were seeking for a sign. The mysteries of the East had invaded Hellas. The Egyptian theory and practice were of special importance. By certain sacramental formulas, often found written on papyrus, the gods could be constrained, and made, like mediæval devils, the slaves of the magician. Examples will occur later. This idea was alien to the Greek mind, at least to the philosophic Greek mind. The Egyptians, like Michael Scott, had books of dread, and an old Egyptian romance turns on the evils which arose, as to William of Deloraine, from the possession of such a

[33] Laws, xi.

volume. [34] Half-understood strings of Hebrew, Syriac, and other 'barbarous' words and incantations occur in Greek spells of the early Christian age. Again, old Hellenic magic rose from the lower strata of folklore into that of speculation. The people, the folk, is the unconscious self, as it were, of the educated and literary classes, who, in a twilight of creeds, are wont to listen to its promptings, and return to the old ancestral superstitions long forgotten.

The epoch of the rise of modern spiritualism was analogous to that when the classical and oriental spiritualism rose into the sphere of the educated consciousness In both periods the marvellous 'phenomena' were practically the same, and so were the perplexities, the doubts, the explanatory hypotheses of philosophical observers. This aspect of the modern spiritualistic epidemic did not escape attention. Dr. Leonard Marsh, of the University of Vermont, published, in 1854, a treatise called *The Apocatastasis, or Progress Backwards*. He proved that the marvels of the Foxes, of Home, and the other mediums, were the old marvels of Neoplatonism. But he draws no conclusion except that spiritualism is retrogressive. His book is wonderfully ill-printed, and, though he had some curious reading, his style was cumbrous, jocular, and verbose. It may, therefore, be worth while, in the light of anthropological research, to show how very closely human nature has repeated its past performances.

The new marvels were certainly not stimulated by literary

[34] *Records of the Past*, iv. 134-136.

knowledge of the ancient thaumaturgy. Modern spiritualism is an effort to organise and 'exploit' the traditional and popular phenomena of rapping spirits, and of ghosts. Belief in these had always lived an underground life in rural legend, quite unharmed by enlightenment and education. So far, it resembled the ordinary creeds of folklore. It is probable that, in addition to oral legend, there was another and more literary source of modern thaumaturgy. Books like Glanvil's, Baxter's, those of the Mathers and of Sinclair, were thumbed by the people after the literary class had forgotten them. Moreover, the Foxes, who started spiritualism, were Methodists, and may well have been familiar with 'old Jeffrey,' who haunted the Wesleys' house, and with some of the stories of apparitions in Wesley's *Arminian Magazine.*

If there were literary as well as legendary sources of nascent spiritualism, the sources were these. Porphyry, Iamblichus, Eusebius, and the life of Apollonius of Tyana, cannot have influenced the illiterate parents of the new thaumaturgy. This fact makes the repetition, in modern spiritualism, of Neoplatonic theories and Neoplatonic marvels all the more interesting and curious.

The shortest cut to knowledge of ancient spiritualism is through the letter of Porphyry to Anebo, and the reply attributed to Iamblichus. Porphyry, the disciple of Plotinus, was a seeker for truth in divine things. Prejudice, literary sentiment, and other considerations, prevented him from acquiescing in the Christian

verity. The ordinary paganism shocked him, both by its obscene and undignified myths, and by many features of its ritual. He devised non-natural interpretations of its sacred legends, he looked for a visible or tangible 'sign,' and he did not shrink from investigating the thaumaturgy of his age. His letter of inquiry is preserved in fragments by Eusebius, and St. Augustine: Gale edited it, and, as he says, offers us an Absyrtus (the brother of Medea, who scattered his mutilated remains) rather than a Porphyry. [35] Not all of Porphyry's questions interest us for our present purpose. He asks, among other things: How can gods, as in the evocations of gods, be made subject to necessity, and *compelled* to manifest themselves? [36]

How do you discriminate between demons, and gods, that are manifest, or not manifest? How does a demon differ from a hero, or from a mere soul of a dead man?

By what sign can we be sure that the manifesting agency present is that of a god, an angel, an archon, or a soul? For to boast, and to display phantasms, is common to all these varieties. [37]

In these perplexities, Porphyry resembles the anxious spiritualistic inquirer. A 'materialised spirit' alleges himself to be Washington, or Franklin, or the lost wife, or friend, or child of him who seeks the mediums. How is the inquirer, how was

[35] The references are to Parthey's edition, Berlin, 1857.

[36] και λεγομεναι αναγκαι θεων, 4, 3.

[37] All are, for Porphyry, 'phantasmogenetic agencies'.

Porphyry to know that the assertion is correct, that it is not the mere 'boasting' of some vulgar spirit? In the same way, when messages are given through a medium's mouth, or by raps, or movements of a table, or a planchette, or by automatic writing, how (even discounting imposture) is the source to be verified? How is the identity of the spirit to be established? This question of discerning spirits, of identifying them, of not taking an angel for a devil, or *vice versa*, was most important in the Middle Ages. On this turned the fate of Joan of Arc: Were her voices and visions of God or of Satan? They came, as in the cases mentioned by Iamblichus, with a light, a hallucination of brilliance. When Jean Bréhal, Grand Inquisitor of France, in 1450-1456, held the process for rehabilitating Joan, condemned as a witch in 1431, he entered learnedly into the tests of 'spirit-identity'. [38] St. Theresa was bidden to try to exorcise her visions, by the sign of the Cross. Saint or sorcerer? it was always a delicate inquiry.

Iamblichus, in his reply to Porphyry's doubts, first enters into theology pretty deeply, but, in book ii. chap. iii. he comes, as it were, to business. The nature of the spiritual agency present on any occasion may be ascertained from his manifestations or epiphanies. All these agencies show *in a light*, we are reminded inevitably of the light which accompanied the visions of Colonel Gardiner and of Pascal. Joan of Arc, too, in reply to her judges, averred that a light (*claritas*) usually accompanied

[38] *Jean Bréhal*, par P.P. Bélon et Balme, Paris, *s. a.*, p. 105.

the voices which came to her. [39] These things, if we call them hallucinations, were, at least, hallucinations of the good and great, and must be regarded not without reverence. But modern spiritualistic and ghostly literature is full of lights which accompany 'manifestations,' or attend the nocturnal invasions of apparitions. Examples are so common that they can readily be found by any one who studies Mrs. Crowe's *Night Side of Nature*, or Home's *Life*, or *Phantasms of the Living*, or the *Proceedings of the Psychical Society*. Meantime Homer, and Theocritus in familiar passages, attest this belief in light attendant on the coming of the divine, while the Norse Sagas, and the well-known tale of Sir Charles Lee's daughter and the ghost of her mother (1662), speak for the same belief in the pre-Christian north, and in the society of the Restoration. [40] A light always comes among the Eskimo, when the tornak, or familiar spirit, visits the Angekok or sorcerer. Here, then, is harmony enough in the psychical beliefs of all time, as when we learn that lights were flashed by the spirits who beset the late Rev. Stainton Moses. [41] Unluckily, while we have this cloud of witnesses to the belief in a spiritual light, we are still uncertain as to whether the seeing of such a light is a physical symptom of hallucination. This is the opinion of M. Lélut, as given in his *Amulette de*

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[39] *Procès de Condemnation*, i. 75.

[40] Appended to Beaumont's work on Spirits, 1705.

[41] See Mr. Lillie's *Modern Mystics*, and, better, Mr. Myers, in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Jan., 1894.

Pascal (p. 301): 'This globe of fire.. is a common constituent of hallucinations of sight, and may be regarded at once as their most elementary form, and their highest degree of intensity'. M. Lélut knew the phenomenon among mystics whom he had observed in his practice as an 'alienist'. He also quotes a story told of himself by Benvenuto Cellini. If we can admit that this hallucination of brilliant light may be produced in the conditions of a *séance*, whether modern, savage, or classical, we obtain a partial solution of the problem presented by the world-wide diffusion of this belief. Of course, once accepted as an element in spiritualism, a little phosphorus supplies the modern medium with a requisite of his trade. [42]

Returning to Iamblichus, he classifies his phantasmogenetic agencies by the *kind* of light they show; greater or less, more or less divided, more or less pure, steady or agitated (ii. 4). The arrival of demons is attended by disturbances. [43] Heroes are usually very noisy in their manifestations: a hero is a polter-geist,

[42] Origen, or whoever wrote the *Philosophoumena*, gives a recipe for producing a luminous figure on a wall. For moving lights, he suggests attaching lighted tow to a bird, and letting it loose. Maury translates the passages in *La Magie*, pp. 58-59. Spiritualists, of course, will allege that the world-wide theory of spectral lights is based on fact, and that the hallucinations are not begotten by subjective conditions, but by a genuine 'phantasmogenetic agency'. Two men of science, Baron Schrenk-Notzing, and Dr. Gibotteau, vouch for illusions of light accompanying attempts by *living* agents to transfer a hallucinatory vision of themselves to persons at a distance (*Journal S. P. R.*, iii. 307; *Proceedings*, viii. 467). It will be asserted by spiritualists that disembodied agencies produce the same effect in a higher degree.

[43] θορυβωδη μεν φερομενα τα ενυλα.

'sounds echo around' (ii. 8). There are also subjective moods diversely generated by diverse apparitions; souls of the dead, for example, prompt to lust (ii. 9). On the whole, a great deal of experience is needed by the thaumaturgist, if he is to distinguish between one kind of manifestation and another. Even Inquisitors have differed in opinion.

Iamblichus next tackles the difficult question of imposition and personation by spirits. Thus a soul, or a spirit, may give itself out for a god, and exhibit the appropriate phantasmagoria: may boast and deceive (ii. 10). This is the result of some error or blunder in the ceremony of evocation. [44] A bad or low spirit may thus enter, disguised as a demon or god, and may utter deceitful words. But all arts, says our guide, are liable to errors, and the 'sacred art' must not be judged by its occasional imperfections. We know the same kind of excuses in modern times.

Porphyry went on to ask questions about divination and clairvoyance. We often ascertain the future, he says, in dreams, when our bodies are lying still and peaceful: when we are in no convulsive ecstasy such as diviners use. Many persons prophesy 'in enthusiastic and divinely seized moments, awake, in a sense, yet not in their habitual state of consciousness'. Music of certain kinds, the water of certain holy wells, the vapours of Branchidæ, produce such ecstatic effects. Some 'take darkness for an ally' (dark *séances*), some see visions in water, others on a wall, others in sun or moon. As an example of ancient visions in

[44] ηνικα αν αμαρτημα τι συμβαινη περι την θεουργικην τεχνην.

water, we may take one from the life of Isidorus, by Damascius. Isidorus, and his biographer, were acquainted with women who beheld in pure water in a glass vessel the phantasms of future events. [45] This form of divination is still practised, though crystal balls are more commonly used than decanters of water. Ancient and modern superstition as in the familiar case of Dr. Dee, attributes the phantasms to spiritual agency

Is a divine being *compelled*, Porphyry asks, to aid in these efforts, or is it only the soul of the seer, as some believe, which hallucinates itself, by the aid of *points de repère*? [46] Or is there a blending of the soul's operations with the divine inspiration? Or are demons in some way evolved out of something abstracted from living bodies? He seems to hint at some such theory of 'exuvious fumes' from the 'circle,' as more recent inquirers have imagined. The young appear to be peculiarly sensitive to vapours, invocations, and other magical methods, which affect the human constitution, and the young are usually engaged as seers. Hence visions are probably subjective. Ecstasy, madness, fasts and vigils seem particularly favourable to divination. Or are there certain mystic correspondences in the nature of things, which may be detected? Thus stones and herbs are used in evocations; 'sacred bonds' are tied (as in the Eskimo hypnotism and in Australia); closed doors are opened, the heavenly bodies are observed. Some suppose that there is a race of false and counterfeiting

[45] Damascius, *ap.* Photium.

[46] παθη εκ μικρων αιθυγματων εγειρομενα.

spirits, which, indeed, Iamblichus admits. These act the parts of gods, demons, and souls of the dead. Again, the conjurer plays on our expectant attention. Omitting some remarks no longer appropriate, Porphyry asks what use there is in chanting barbarous and meaningless words. He is inclined to think that the demon, or guardian spirit of each man is only part of his soul, – in fact his 'subliminal self'. And generally, he suspects that the whole affair is 'a mere imaginative deceit, played off on itself by the soul'.

Replying as to divination, Iamblichus says that the right kind of dreams are between sleeping and waking when we hear a voice giving directions. A modern example occurred in the trial of the Assynt murderer in 1831. One Kenneth Fraser, called 'the dreamer,' said in the trial: 'I was at home when I had the dream. It was said to me in my sleep by a voice like a man's voice, that the pack (of the murdered pedlar) was lying in sight of the place. I got a sight of the place just as if I had been awake. I never saw the place before, but the voice said in Gaelic, "the pack of the merchant is lying in a cairn of stones, in a hollow near to their house". The voice did not name Macleod's house.' The pack was, however, not found there, but in a place hard by, which Kenneth had *not* seen in his dream. Oddly enough, the murderer had originally hidden the pack, or some of its contents, in a cairn of stones, but later removed it. In the 'willing game,' as played by Mr. Stuart Cumberland, the seeker usually goes first to the place where the hider had thought of concealing the object, though

later he changed his mind. Macleod was hanged, he confessed his guilt. [47]

Iamblichus believed in dreams of this kind, and in voices heard by men wide awake, as in the case of Joan of Arc. When an invisible spirit is present, he makes a whirring noise, like the Cock Lane Ghost! [48] Lights also are exhibited; the medium then by some mystic sense knows what the spirit means. The soul has two lives, one animal, one intellectual; in sleep the latter is more free, and more clairvoyant. In trance, or somnambulism, many cannot feel pain even if they are burned, the god within does not let fire harm them (iii. 4). This, of course, suggests Home's experiments in handling live coals, as Mr. Crookes and Lord Crawford describe them. Compare the Berserk 'coal-biters' in the saga of Egil, and the Huron coal-biter in the preceding essay. 'They do not then live an animal life.' Sword points do not hurt them. Their actions are no longer human. 'Inaccessible places are accessible to them, when thus borne by the gods; and they tread on fire unharmed; they walk across rivers… They are not themselves, they live a diviner life, with which they are inspired, and by which they are possessed.' Some are convulsed in one way, some in another, some are still. Harmonies are heard (as in Home's case and that of Mr. Stainton Moses). Their bodies are

[47] *Life of Hugh Macleod* (Noble, Inverness). As an example of the growth of myth, see the version of these facts in *Fraser's Magazine* for 1856. Even in a sermon preached immediately after the event, it was said that the dreamer *found* the pack by revelation of his dream!

[48] iii. 2. δοιζομενου εν τω εισιεναι.

elongated (like Home's), or broadened, or float in mid-air, as in a hundred tales of mediums and saints. Sometimes the medium sees a light when the spirit takes possession of him, sometimes all present see it (iii. 6). Thus Wodrow says (as we have already shown), that Mrs. Carlyle's ancestor, Mr. Welsh, shone in a light as he meditated; and Patrick Walker tells the same tale about two of the fanatics called 'Sweet Singers'.

From all this it follows, Iamblichus holds, that spiritual possession is a genuine objective fact and that the mediums act under real spiritual control. Omitting local oracles, and practices apparently analogous to the use of planchette, Iamblichus regards the heavenly *light* as the great source of and evidence for the *external* and spiritual character and cause of divination (iii. 14). Iamblichus entirely rejects all Porphyry's psychological theories of hallucinations, of the demon or 'genius' as 'subliminal self,' and asserts the actual, objective, sensible action of spirits, divine or daemonic. What effect Iamblichus produced on the inquiring Porphyry is uncertain. In his *De Abstinentia* (ii. 39) he gives in to the notion of deceitful spirits.

In addition to the evidence of Porphyry, Iamblichus, Eusebius and other authors of the fourth century, some recently published papyri of the same period throw a little light on the late Greek thaumaturgy. [49] Thus Papyrus cxxv. *verso* (about the fifth century) 'contains elaborate instructions for a magical process,

[49] Greek Papyri in the British Museum; edited by F. G. Kenyon, M.A., London, 1893.

the effect of which is to evoke a goddess, to transform her into the appearance of an old woman, and to bind to her the service of the person using the spell..'

Obviously we would much prefer a spell for turning an old woman into a goddess. The document is headed, γραυς Απολλου Τυανεως υπηρετις, 'the old serving woman of Apollonius of Tyana,' and it ends, η πραξις δεδοκιμασται, 'it is proved by practice'.

You take the head of an ibis, and write certain characters on it in the blood of a black ram, and go to a cross-road, or the sea-shore, or a river-bank at midnight: there you recite gibberish and then see a pretty lady riding a donkey, and she will put off her beauty like a mask and assume the appearance of old age, and will promise to obey you: and so forth.

Here is a 'constraint put on a god' as Porphyry complains. Reginald Scot, in his *Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), has a very similar spell for alluring an airy sylph, and making her serve and be the mistress of the wizard! There is another papyrus (xlvi.), of the fourth century, with directions for divination by aid of a boy looking into a bowl, says the editor (p. 64). There is a long invocation full of 'barbarous words,' like the mediæval nonsense rhymes used in magic. There is a dubious reading, Βαθρου or Βοθρου; it is suggested that the boy is put into a pit, as it seems was occasionally done. [50] It is clear that a spirit is supposed to show the boy his visions. A spell follows for

[50] See notice in *Classical Review*, February, 1894.

summoning a visible deity. Then we have a recipe for making a ring which will enable the owner to know the thoughts of men. The god is threatened if he does not serve the magicians. All manner of fumigations, plants, and stones are used in these idiotic ceremonies, and to these Porphyry refers. The papyri do not illustrate the phenomena described by Iamblichus, such as the 'light,' levitation, music of unknown origin, the resistance of the medium to fire and sword points, and all the rest of his list of prodigies. Iamblichus probably looked down on the believers in these spells written on papyri with extreme disdain. They are only interesting as folklore, like the rhymes of incantation preserved in Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft.*

There were other analogies between modern, ancient, and savage spiritualism. The medium was swathed, or tied up, like the Davenport Brothers, like Eskimo and Australian conjurers, like the Highland seer in the bull's hide. [51] The medium was understood to be a mere instrument like a flute, through which the 'control,' the god or spirit, spoke. [52] This is still the spiritualistic explanation of automatic speech. Eusebius goes so

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[51] See oracles in Eusebius, *Praep. Evang*., v. 9. The medium was tied up in some way, he had to be unloosed and raised from the ground. The inspiring agency, in a hurry to be gone, gave directions for the unbinding. παυεο δη προφρων οαρων, αναπαυε δε φωτα ραμνων εκλυων πολιον τυπον, ηδ απο γυιων Νειλωην οθονην χερσιν στιβαραις απαειρας. The binding of the Highland seer in a bull's hide is described by Scott in the *Lady of the Lake*. A modern Highland seer has ensconced himself in a boiler! The purpose is to concentrate the 'force'.

[52] *Praep. Evang*., v. 8.

far as to believe that 'earthbound spirits' do speak through the medium, but a much simpler theory is obvious. [53] Indeed where automatic performances of any sort – by writing, by the kind of 'Ouija' or table pointing to letters, as described by Ammianus Marcellinus (xxix. 29) – or by speaking, are concerned, we have the aid of psychology, and the theory of 'unconscious cerebration' to help us. But when we are told the old tales of whirring noises, of 'bilocation,' of 'levitation,' of a mystic light, we are in contact with more difficult questions.

In brief, the problem of spiritualism in general presents itself to us thus: in ancient, modern, and savage thaumaturgy there are certain automatic phenomena. The conjurer, priest, or medium acts, or pretends to act, in various ways beyond his normal consciousness. Savages, ancient mystics, and spiritualists ascribe his automatic behaviour to the control of spirits, gods or demons. No such hypothesis is needed.

On the other side, however, are phenomena not automatic, 'spiritual' lights, and sounds; interferences with natural laws, as when bodies are lifted in the air, or are elongated, when fire does not fasten on them, and so on. These phenomena, in ancient times, followed on the performance of certain mystic rites. They are now said to occur without the aid of any such rites. Gods and spirits are said to cause them, but they are only attained in the presence of certain exceptional persons, mediums, saints, priests, conjurers. Clearly then, not the rites, but the

[53] *Ibid*., v. 15, 3.

peculiar constitution of these individuals is the cause (setting imposture aside) of the phenomena, of the hallucinations, of the impressions, or whatever they are to be styled. That is to say, witnesses, in other matters credible, aver that they receive these peculiar impressions in the society of certain persons and not in that of people in general. Now these impressions are, everywhere, in every age and stage of civilisation, essentially identical. Is it stretching probability almost beyond what it will bear, to allege that all the phenomena, in the Arctic circle as in Australia, in ancient Alexandria as in modern London, are, always, the result of an imposture modelled on savage ideas of the supernatural?

If so we are reduced to the choice between actual objective facts of unknown origin (frequently counterfeited of course), and the theory, – which really comes to much the same thing, – of identical and collective hallucinations in given conditions. On either hypothesis the topic is certainly not without interest for the student of human nature. Even if we could, at most, establish the fact that people like Iamblichus, Mr. Crookes, Lord Crawford, Jesuits in Canada, professional conjurers in Zululand, Spaniards in early Peru, Australian blacks, Maoris, Eskimo, cardinals, ambassadors, are similarly hallucinated, as they declare, in the presence of priests, diviners, Home, Zulu magicians, Biraarks, Jossakeeds, *angakut*, *tohungas*, and saints, and Mr. Stainton Moses, still the identity of the false impressions is a topic for psychological study. Or, if we disbelieve this cloud of witnesses,

if they voluntarily fabled, we ask, why do they all fable in exactly the same fashion? Even setting aside the animistic hypothesis, the subject is full of curious neglected problems.

Once more, if we admit the theory of intentional imposture by saints, *angakut*, Zulu medicine-men, mediums, and the rest, we must grant that a trick which takes in a professional conjurer, like Mr. Kellar, is a trick well worthy of examination. How did his Zulu learn the method of Home, of the Egyptian diviners, of St. Joseph of Cupertino? [54] Each solution has its difficulties, while practical investigation is rarely possible. We have no Home with us, at present, and the opportunity of studying his effects carefully was neglected. It was equally desirable to study them whether he caused collective hallucinations, or whether his effects were merely those of ordinary, though skilful, conjuring. For Home, whatever his moral character may have been, was a remarkable survival of a class of men familiar to the mystic Iamblichus, to the savage races of the past and present, and (as far as his marvels went) to the biographers of the saints. 'I am one of those,' says the Zulu medicine-man, in Mr. Rider Haggard's *Allan's Wife*, 'who can make men see what they do not see.' The class of persons who are said to have possessed this power appear, now and then, in all human history, and have at least bequeathed to us a puzzle in anthropology. This problem has

[54] Dr. Hodgson, in *Proceedings S. P. R.*, Jan., 1894, makes Mr. Kellar's evidence as to Indian 'levitation' seem far from convincing! As a professional conjurer, and exposer of spiritualistic imposture, Mr. Kellar has made statements about his own experiences which are not easily to be harmonised.

recently been presented, in what may be called an acute form, by the publication of the 'Experiences of Mr. Stainton Moses'. [55] Mr. Moses was a clergyman and schoolmaster; in both capacities he appears to have been industrious, conscientious, and honourable. He was not devoid of literature, and had contributed, it is said, to periodicals as remote from mysticism as *Punch*, and the *Saturday Review*. He was a sportsman, at least he was a disciple of our father, Izaak Walton. 'Most anglers are quiet men, and followers of peace, so simply wise as not to sell their consciences to buy riches, and with them vexation, and a fear to die,' says Izaak.

In early middle age, about 1874, Mr. Moses began to read such books as Dale Owen's, and to sit 'attentive of his trembling' table, by way of experiment. He soon found that tables bounded in his presence, untouched. Then he developed into a regular 'medium'. Inanimate objects came to him through stone walls. Scent of all sorts, and, as in the case of St. Joseph of Cupertino, of an unknown sort, was scattered on people in his company. He floated in the air. He wrote 'automatically'. Knocks resounded in his neighbourhood, in the open air. 'Lights' of all varieties hovered in his vicinity. He spoke 'automatically,' being the mouth-piece of a 'spirit,' and very dull were the spirit's sermons. After a struggle he believed in 'spirits,' who twanged musical notes out in his presence. He became editor of a journal named *Light*; he joined the Psychical Society, but left it when the society pushed materialism so far as to demonstrate that certain

[55] *Proceedings S. P. R.* Jan., 1894.

professional mediums were convicted swindlers.

The evidence for his marvels is the testimony of a family, perfectly respectable, named Speer, and of a few other witnesses whom nobody can suspect of conscious inaccuracy. There remain, as documents, his books, his MS. notes, and other corroborative notes kept by his friend Dr. Speer, a sceptic, and other observers.

It is admitted that Mr. Moses was not a cautious logician, his inferences are problematic, his generalisations hasty. As to the facts, it is equally difficult to believe in them, and to believe that Mr. Moses was a conscious impostor, and his friends easy dupes. He cannot have been an impostor *unconsciously* in a hypnotic state, in a 'trance,' because his effects could not have been improvised. If they were done by jugglery, they required elaborate preparations of all sorts, which must have been made in full ordinary consciousness. If we fall back on collective hallucination, then that hallucination is something of world-wide diffusion, ancient and continuous, for the effects are those attributed by Iamblichus to his mystics, by the Church to her saints, by witnesses to the 'possessed,' by savages to medicine-men, and by Mr. Crookes and Lord Crawford to D. D. Home. Of course we may be told that all lookers-on, from Eskimo to Neoplatonists and men of science, know what to expect, and are hallucinated by their own expectant attention. But, when they expect nothing, and are disappointed by having to witness prodigies, the same old prodigies, what is the explanation?

The following tabular statement, altered from that given by Mr. Myers in his publication of Mr. Moses and Dr. Speer's MS. notes, will show the historical identity of the phenomena. Mr. Moses was the agent in all; those exhibited by other ancient and modern agents are marked with a cross.

	Rev. Stainton Moses	D. D. Home	Iamblichus	St. Joseph of Cupertino	Eskimo	Australian	'Spontaneous (Glanvil, Bovet, Telfair, Kirk)
1.	X	X				?	X
2.	X	X	X		X		X
3.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4.	X						X
5.	X						
6.	X	X					
7.	X	X					
8.	X	X	X				X
9.	X	X		X			
10.	X	X	X		X		X
11.	X	X					
12.	X	X					X

1. 'Intelligent Raps.'
2. 'Movement of objects untouched.'
3. 'Levitation' (floating in air of seer).
4. Disappearance and Reappearance of objects. The 'object' being the medium in some cases.
5. Passage of Matter through Matter.
6. Direct writing. That is, not by any detected human agency.
7. Sounds made on instruments supernormally.
8. Direct sounds. That is, by no detected human agency.
9. Scents.
10. Lights.

11. Objects 'materialised.'

12. Hands materialised, touched or seen.

There are here twelve miracles! Home and Iamblichus add to Mr. Moses's *répertoire* the alteration of the medium's height or bulk. This feat still leaves Mr. Moses 'one up,' as regards Home, in whose presence objects did not disappear, nor did they pass through stone walls. The questions are, to account for the continuity of collective hallucinations, if we accept that hypothesis, and to explain the procedure of Mr. Moses, if he were an impostor. He did not exhibit before more than seven or eight private friends, and he gained neither money nor dazzling social success by his performances.

This page in the chapter of 'demoniac affections' is thus still in the state of *ébauche*. Mr. Moses believed his experiences to be 'demoniac affections,' in the Neoplatonic sense. Could his phenomena have been investigated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Parker, Messrs. Maskelyne and Cook, and Professor Huxley, the public mind might have arrived at some conclusion on the subject. But Mr. Moses's chief spirit, known in society as 'Imperator,' declined to let strangers look on. He testified his indignation in a manner so *bruyant*, he so banged on tables, that Mr. Moses and his friends thought it wiser to avoid an altercation.

This exclusiveness of 'Imperator' certainly *donne furieusement à penser*. If spirits are spirits they may just as well take it for understood that performances 'done in a corner' are

of no scientific value. But we are still at a loss for a 'round' and satisfactory hypothesis which will colligate all the alleged facts, and explain their historical continuity. We merely state that continuity as a historical fact. Marvels of savages, Neoplatonists, saints of Church or Covenant, 'spontaneous' phenomena, Mediumistic phenomena, all hang together in some ways. Of this the Church has her own explanation.

COMPARATIVE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

A Party at Ragley Castle. The Miraculous Conformist. The Restoration and Scepticism. Experimental Proof of Spiritual Existence. Glanvill. Boyle. More. The Gentleman's Butler. 'Levitation.' Witchcraft. Movements of Objects. The Drummer of Tedworth. Haunted Houses. Rerrick. Glenluce. Ghosts. 'Spectral Evidence.' Continuity and Uniformity of Stories. St. Joseph of Cupertino, his Flights. Modern Instances. Theory of Induced Hallucination. Ibn Batuta. Animated Furniture. From China to Peru. Rapping Spirit at Lyons. The Imposture at Orleans. The Stockwell Mystery. The Demon of Spraiton. Modern Instances. The Wesleys. Theory of Imposture. Conclusion.

In the month of February, 1665, there was assembled at Ragley Castle as curious a party as ever met in an English country-house. The hostess was the Lady Conway, a woman of remarkable talent and character, but wholly devoted to mystical speculations. In the end, unrestrained by the arguments of her clerical allies, she joined the Society of Friends, by the world called Quakers. Lady Conway at the time when her guests gathered at Ragley, as through all her later life, was suffering from violent chronic headache. The party at Ragley was invited to meet her latest medical attendant, an unlicensed practitioner,

Mr. Valentine Greatrakes, or Greatorex; his name is spelled in a variety of ways. Mr. Greatrakes was called 'The Irish Stroker' and 'The Miraculous Conformist' by his admirers, for, while it was admitted that Dissenters might frequently possess, or might claim, powers of miracle, the gift, or the pretension, was rare among members of the Established Church. The person of Mr. Greatrakes, if we may believe Dr. Henry Stubbe, physician at Stratford-on-Avon, diffused a pleasing fragrance as of violets. Lord Herbert of Cherbury, it will be remembered, tells the same story about himself in his memoirs. Mr. Greatrakes 'is a man of graceful personage and presence, and if my phantasy betrayed not my judgement,' says Dr. Stubbe, 'I observed in his eyes and meene a vivacitie and spritelinesse that is nothing common'.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.