MR. ALFRED WALLACE, the distinguished naturalist, who divides in some sense with Mr. Darwin the honour of establishing the principle of 'natural selection' as a real and most powerful cause of the variation of species, has written two remarkable papers for the powerful cause of the variation of species, has written two remarkable papers for the

lous, few reasonable men would think of doubting; nor that its

We are not about to dispute the assertion that a great deal of that evidence is of a kind which, in relation to facts less marvellous, few reasonable men would think of doubting; nor that its

Mr. Wallace's remarkable assertion that the chemists

writer has attended some twenty sittings in his time, many of them with persons like Mr. Home, Mr. Foster, and others, of great reputed power in that capacity whither the spiritualists call, evidently more from pure ignorance than from even rational consider-

ture as to what it means, "mediumship," without, however, seeing, hearing, or after any fashion whatever perceiving a single phenomenon which was unaccountable on the most ordinary and humdrum view of life. But he, nevertheless, quite willing to admit that the facts of which he has been assured, by men of whose acuteness, calmness, and honour he has had every reason to form a very high estimate, are quite remarkable enough to make it, in every sense, a reasonable thing to inquire into, and more carefully into the character and meaning of a class of phenomena which seem to be rather multiplying, and boasting a higher calibre than formerly in the character of the converts, as well as a rapidly increasing number of them, than dying out. And we have no wish, therefore, to meet Mr. Wallace's challenge by a mere exclamation of "Incredible nonsense!" If the belief of Spiritualists be, as, of course, it seems at first, to most people who have had only the ordinary experience of mortals, incredible and nonsensical, investigators will be able to show, on careful cross-examination of some of the leading instances, how the delusion arises; and that result alone would be quite worth a great deal of painstaking investigation. And if not, why, it seems to us as absurd as it seems to Mr. Wallace to say, with Professor Huxley, that the alleged facts are not important only because they are wrapped up in a jargon of at once trivial and pretentious nonsense. But at true, whatever they mean, —whether they mean only a new physical force, or a new field of volition, or a new evidence of immortality, —they must be of the greatest importance; no wise man will say that because silly persons, embodi-

sided or otherwise, rap out very foolish truisms or falsisms by means hitherto unknown to science, the understanding of those means is without importance. As well might you say that because sometimes unmeaning, and often silly, and occasionally wicked messages are sent by the electric telegraph, the understanding of the electric agency itself is without importance to us. Still Mr. Wallace is very unreasonable, when he tells us that the reality of his alleged facts is so indisputably proved, that they do not want "confirmation"; and, moreover, he is not consistent with himself, because he ends his paper by saying that "spiritualism makes no claim to be received on hearsay evidence," —and if not, then clearly, for all who have no better evidence than hearsay however good, it does clearly want confirmation. For our own parts, we have seen quite enough of the credulity of intel-

lectual men, in cases where it was clear there was credulity, and not merely willingness to be convinced on sufficient evidence, to refuse to accept even the best hearsay evidence without the very im-

portant "confirmation" of observing for ourselves that the enthu-

siastic shudder of belief has not cast its spell over the minds of

Our informants. We know that there is such a thing as incredulity which gives way not step by step, as it is conquered by evidence, but with a sudden revulsion of feeling passing at once into the opposite extreme of conviction. None of these facts of Mr. Wallace's are in any degree conclusive, without that keen sifti

Mr. Wallace’s paper to know simply on his assertion, that the chemists whom be there names as having verified this wonderful statement are adequate chemists, who have taken all the proper precautions to avoid either error or fraud? An excellent photographer, who has carefully examined the facts, and found fraud at work again and again, assures us that Mr. Wallace's instances, as far as they depend on mere scientific guarantees, are absolutely worthless for the purpose for which they are quoted. Of course, if Mr. Wallace can rely absolutely both on the science and on the good faith of his photographic investigators, that is another matter. But we cannot be expected to take on trust Mr. Wallace's reasons for moral confidence.

However, all this is by the way. What we want to say some-

thing of is Mr. Wallace's remarkable assertion that if Spiritualis
be true, it constitutes "a great moral agency, which may yet regenerate the world;" that it is "the only sure foundation for a true philosophy and a pure religion." This is an assertion which, we must say, simply amazes us. That "Spiritualism," if true, and if true in Mr. Wallace's, and not simply in Mr. Serjeant Cox's sense,—would furnish a powerful additional evidence of continued life;—would show that at least that is its final word, as far as we have read, and we have read a good deal of this dreary literature,—for most dreary it is, however we may judge the question of true or false as to the main facts alleged. We should say that, assuming for a moment the theory of the Spiritualists to be true, as well as their facts,—assuming that these phenomena occur, and that they are due to the agency of spirits which once lived upon this earth, is enough to make every one, as each new account comes to us, that ninety-nine hundredths of the communications made to us come from the moral rubbish of the unseen world. And so far, at least, we should not be prepared to feel any surprise, considering that, as Mr. Wallace very justly insists, so many human beings do leave this life in an intellectual and moral condition in which "rubbishy" seems the word that most exactly expresses them.

If not, then we must find in the common state of their physical condition, in the grossness of their every way instead of developing the capacities of the spirits departed, and this would be much more alarming. Of all the bad and dreary moralities, the jejune religious exhortations, the sickly symbolisms, the incoherent parables, and the conceited rhapsodies and dreary moralities, the jejune religious exhortations, the sickly symbolisms, the incoherent parables, and the conceited rhapsodies which most exactly expresses them."

"Is Spiritualism a religion? says one. "It is not a theology. If religion has to do with the human soul; it is not a theology. If religion has to do with the human soul; it is not a religion by that? Mr. Wallace thinks it is a wonderful thing to desire actions make it. That is a good thing to know; unquestionably. We have no spirit tells you that he is with Christ or God. So much the sadder, inadmissible style with which we compare Mrs. Tappan's windy and ambitious "trance-mediums," not heard their living words from that source which came up to the level of the simplest of the Old Testament narratives, of the least striking of the meditations of Marcus Aurelius, of the least sagacious of the religious lessons of Socrates, or the homoelet of the pieties of Luther. If we compare Mrs. Tappan's windy and ambitious "trance-speakers," such as Mrs. Harding's, Mrs. Tappan, and Mr. Peebles, I have heard discourses such as for high and proud, and to put it very mildly. When it is said that spiritualism has no priests, "save the priest of birth, are equal and common. Death is common to king and subject. And the laws of the universe are common." None of them, however, are so "common" as trash and bad grammar. Why "equality and good will to man" should be mountain-tops, and the common in another, if both the pauper and the prince are supposed to be the same, and the sense of birth, are equal? Are all mountain-tops benevolent? But apart from silly rhetoric, does a baby resemble sunbeams in being common to all? Mothers do not ordinarily think so. The pauper child may be thought common in one sense, and both pauper and prince are common in another, if both the pauper and the prince are supported out of the common fund of taxation; but neither of them have access to us all, as air and light are common; and to look that, either in the spiritual state or in the earthly state is sheer idocy.

But, says Mr. Wallace, Spiritualism is without a theology. "No spirit tells you that he is with Christ or God. So much the worse for the spirits. However, a good many of them do say a great deal about God, and very little to the purpose. Mrs. Cora L. V. Tappan delivered on the religious of birth, are equal and common. Death is common to king and subject. And the laws of the universe are common." None of them, however, are so "common" as trash and bad grammar. Why "equality and good will to man" should be mountain-tops, and the common in another, if both the pauper and the prince are supposed to be the same, and the sense of birth, are equal? Are all mountain-tops benevolent? But apart from silly rhetoric, does a baby resemble sunbeams in being common to all? Mothers do not ordinarily think so. The pauper child may be thought common in one sense, and both pauper and prince are common in another, if both the pauper and the prince are supported out of the common fund of taxation; but neither of them have access to us all, as air and light are common; and to look that, either in the spiritual state or in the earthly state is sheer idocy.

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which communicate through mediums are possibly not human at all, but may come from some other race of beings.—Ariels and Calibans, presumably, we should say, below our level, not above it. And, indeed, one of the curiosities of the spiritualistic faith is that no one has ever proposed a mode of either identifying these unembodied agencies with the persons for whom they give themselves out, or proving the impersonation to be a fraud. But be they what they will, this seems to us certain, that the “religion of spiritualism” is nothing in the world but a faith in immortality, plus the excitement of receiving a lot of communications from the other side of the grave, most of which give us a deplorable impression of the intellectual and moral calibre of the creatures which communicate with us. Of any new and regenerating affection in Spiritualism there is not a trace. If it be a great spiritual gain to believe that after death you will be able to knock about your friends’ tables, to drown them with flowers, to give them a lock of spiritual hair, to appear in a misty cylinder with your head just dimly discernible at one end, to play an harmonium, to ring bells, and to untie knots, then Spiritualism may be a great gospel for the million. But as we do not feel any great desire for these exalted functions in our immortal state, we must say that to us the interest of the investigation of Spiritualism is not spiritual, but mainly physical. Immortality we hold, on higher evidence than that of Mrs. Cora L. V. Tappan or Mr. Peebles. Still no doubt, if all these things could be established, the multitude would have a new and physically-grounded belief in it. But whether it would do them more harm or good would depend on what the average character of future “spiritual” communications should be. For our parts, we do not desire to be put into constant communication with a world so noisy, purposeless, and fraudulent as the world of communicating spirits at present appears to be. Mr. Wallace’s facts should be inquired into, for scientific and other reasons. But even if substantiated, they would imply not a new religion, but in the main a new manifestation of what St. John meant by the world, the flesh, and perhaps even the devil.