When men of scientific eminence quit, even for a time, the special field of action on which their spurs were won, and venture the perilous attempt to pass the mystic portals of the "spirit world," a feeling akin to regret steals over us lest their own science might lose by their absence, and one, also, of fear lest the treasures expected to be brought to light might ill
reward the time and attention expended in the search. *Est natura hominis novitati visiva*, and philosophers are but men, and many among them have a "heel of Achilles." We do not doubt that the authors of the works before us are most thoroughly sincere in their profession of faith. Indeed, it demands a good deal of soberness—possessing some general veneration, and the wish not only to learn, but also to be able to do scientific opinion; and immense faith in a mission, when, as a duty, we undertake at all risks—even loss of golden opinion—to promulgate and to defend it. History furnishes multiplied instances of such militants being not only as enthusiastic, but as numerous as the varied forms of faith engendered by the progress of the ages.

From near the time of the "Poughkeepsie see and clairvoyant," the floating traditions and current tales of witchcraft, apparitions, dreams, second-sight, strange and inexplicable noises, luminous appearances, bell-ringing, etc., were by degrees collected, cross-compared, and systematised, and then connected with the accredited phenomena of "Od"—force, bio-memorisation, and clairvoyance. These phenomena, with the recent immense additions and daring inferences, form a tolerably comprehensive body of doctrine. It is the object of the authors of the works at the head of our page to obtain for this doctrine an impartial hearing, additionally strengthened as it is supposed to be by the results of their own proper experience.

The little work of Mr. Crookes, mostly controversial, is confessedly a reprint, and therefore need not specially occupy it. And as all the theory is based thereon, they form the most fitting subject for investigation.

The work of Mr. Wallace is larger, more ambitious, embodying a much fuller amount of general spiritualistic material. A considerable portion is devoted to the subject of miracles. He states, however, that spiritualism "abolishes the terms 'supernatural' and 'miracle' by an extension of the sphere of activity of this force which we might term 'miracle.'" He then goes on to contrast the force of Hume's argument. So far as this ability permits us to discern, Hume's "wonders are unwrong." When Mr. Wallace, in all seriousness, narrates "that Lord O'Reilly and Mr. Valentine Greattrak both informed Dr. Henry More and Mr. Glanvil that at Lord Conway's house, at Ragley, in Ireland, the gentleman's butler, in their presence, seating in broad daylight, rose into the air and floated about the room above their heads," we would ask our readers which they consider the more probable, the truth of the miracle, or the falsity of the testimony? When we remember, moreover, that Mr. Valentine Greattrak was a reputed miracle-worker, we might, perhaps, appositely quote Hume's own remarks, "The many instances of these miracles are not all found in the same place, or at the same time; and, indeed, they are distributed in the world so as to correspond with the places and times at which the unbiassed judgment of mankind is least likely to be formed." The testimony, we observe, are either inconsistent with, or not even computed by the testimony of, the testimony of Mr. O'Reilly ("levitation"), and the testimony of Mr. Glanvil ("materialization of hands, visible and palpable, bearing Flora's gifts, so often more among the "assistants at the sciences"); or when, according to Mr. Crookes, the lovely form and indescribable charm of manner of "Katie King" grace the scene? To the question, moreover, we say that although we are not acclimated to the production of such sweet visitants, of supernatural mould, will be so exclusive, and not visit outside the charmed circle. What losses do we not sustain from feasible faith?

But, au sérieux, let us again undertake critically to seize the thread of this strange narrative of phenomena, at least, as far as the problem of the most fitting subject for investigation, and mental questionings are correctly answered by a real though invisible agent; that we can hold direct communion with the spirits of departed friends; that spirit-forms appear in photographs, and phantom forms without such need; that "Katie King" is an incorporeal reality; that not inanimate bodies alone, but human bodies, may float in space unsuspended, or even transported to far distant localities,—in short, that the laws of nature (as we are accustomed to conceive them) may be not only modified, but even completely violated, almost at our bidding, by invisible intelligent power, "disembodied spirit," and all this not on the actual testimony of one, but on that of numerous witnesses, both in this country and abroad—may we not mentally exclaim, "Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer's heat, Without our special wonder!"

May we not inquire in what category such assertions are to be included—in that of sober fact, or in that of illusion? If so, we would, perhaps, much to our own, and unreservedly to confess that there are more things on earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. And it may be so. We are willing to admit the reality of some of the phenomena included under the head of "Spiritualism"; willing even to admit that they may be produced by some "odylic" or "psychic" force; but we are disposed to reserve to a circle of persons under some peculiar psychical condition. It is mainly with the conclusion drawn, with the ab extra hypothesis, that we join issue.

If in the category of illusion, Time but repeats its old errors. As, in barbarous ages, every unusual phenomenon was attributed to the direct agency of some deity, and almost every inanimate object taking the form of a human being or part of a human being was reservedly to confess that there are more things on earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy. And it may be so. We are willing to admit the reality of some of the phenomena included under the head of "Spiritualism"; willing even to admit that they may be produced by some "odylic" or "psychic" force; but we are disposed to reserve to a circle of persons under some peculiar psychical condition. It is mainly with the conclusion drawn, with the ab extra hypothesis, that we join issue.
even at this moment that we write, if they have one tittle of positive evidence to offer in support of the existence of conscious mind or spirit apart from a material substrate? If not altogether silent, the probable confession would be that the answer to such a question came not within the pale of their teaching. And—apart from our Faith—within the pale of what teaching is the reassuring answer to be found? Some—many—unsatisfied by orthodox doctrine, have found this answer so needed for their unrest in the teaching of Spiritualism. For the theory of “disembodied spirit” is its theory par excellence. Confident in its power at such a juncture, it offers a remedy for at least our scientific impotence. Hear Mr. Wallace (“Theory of Spiritualism,” p. 102)—“Under certain conditions disembodied spirit is able to form for itself a visible body out of the emanation of living bodies in a proper magnetic relation to itself; and under certain still more favourable conditions the body can be made tangible. Thus all the phenomena of ‘mediumship’ take place. Gravity is overcome by a form of life-magnetism, induced between the spirit and the medium; visible hands or visible bodies are produced, which sometimes write, or draw, or even speak.” In such manner (“Historical Teachings”) he would explain the nature of the intelligent spiritual being (daemon) which Socrates believed attended him through life. Without raising the question anew as to whether such belief were of a truly sane character or partook of that of hallucination, we may hazard the remark en passant that the cursory allusion made hardly aids the cause of “Spiritualism.” It is not even clear that the “daemon” might not have been the “inner voice” intensified. On the other hand, our author leaves entirely unnoticed what history further records as to the real religious attitude of the son of Sophronicus and Phoenarete.

But let Mr. Wallace proceed (“Moral Teachings,” etc., p. 213):—“1. Man is a duality, consisting of an organised spiritual form evolved coincidently with and permeating the physical body, and having corresponding organs and development. 2. Death is the separation of this duality, and effects no change in the spirit morally or intellectually. 3. Spirits can communicate through properly endowed mediums.”

Should these views be accepted, of course the entire ground as to the agency of the phenomena is covered. We demand, and with instance, that crucial test which shall lay the ghost of our distrust, and compel even an unwilling allegiance to a creed now professed by many millions, and believed as destined more or less rapidly to supplant our old one. But let us not forget that this latter, too, teaches us to believe in an unseen universe, where, also, spirits dwell; to believe, also, in an immortal destiny, not by means of waltzing tables, or of rapping mediums, but by the solemnity of its appeal to our reason and our conscience. Which shall we choose? Whatever our choice, whatever our convictions, one thing is certain—they confer no possible right to quarrel with the conscientious belief of other people; enough that we maintain our own inviolate. But we are quite entitled to inquire as to how far the ground for any new form of belief is valid. While claiming this right we may once again state (and it is just to do so) that we are persuaded the authors hold a perfectly honest belief as to the preternatural character of the phenomena they have witnessed, and that neither self-deception nor complicity had any share in their production. Messrs. Crookes and Wallace have done quite enough of good and original work in their own particular departments to entitle them to our respect, however widely we may dissent from their latest views on the subject of Spiritualism.

They imagine that, by cumulative proof, they have brought their argument to its logical culmination, and that the fact of a constant preternatural communication with this nether world is the legitimate outcome. But we may hint that that awkward material fallacy of the non-causa pro causâ still looms in its background; and until the subject-matter the premises on which the argument affirm is placed upon a much less doubtful and assailable basis, we opine that the conclusion attempted to be drawn will not be accepted by those accustomed to sift and to weigh the evidence which is to enforce conviction in such grave matters as those submitted for our consideration.