

MODERN SPIRITUALISM.*

MODERN Spiritualism, began in March, 1848, with the advent of two young girls of Hydesville, near Rochester, New York—Catharine Fox and her sister Margaret. It now lays claim to the title of "The New Philosophy," and professes to include within its field of experiment and exposition that part of the universe and its phenomena which secular science has overlooked or avoided. As the foundation of its title to acceptance, it asserts that the spiritual and the material being merely different sides of the same nature, spiritualism and materialism are no more than different provinces of the same scientific domain—the one appointed to complement and illustrate the other; so that, in process of time, a body of philosophy complete in all its parts and including all that is the subject of knowledge shall be the result.

Secular science begins with the examination and analysis of those subjects of knowledge which fall within the recognized province of nature and are equally accessible to all, and reaches its conclusions by appropriate deductions and generalizations. Spiritual science, on the contrary, begins with that which bears the appearance of the supernatural and ends with belief in what it holds to be revelation. The subjects of its knowledge are, in general, invisible and intangible; or, if they ever become visible and tangible, it is under special conditions; and its phenomena are variable, in accordance with differences in the physical or moral constitutions of the media through whose agency they appear. The unlikeness, therefore, between the two sciences, as well in respect to their fields of operation and processes as in respect to their conclusions, is wide and strongly marked; and how they can be so co-ordinated as to form a consistent and harmonious body of knowledge is a thing difficult to conceive.

Heretofore, the relations between the votaries of secular and of spiritual science have not been in harmony. The temporally minded

* "A Defense of Modern Spiritualism." By Alfred R. Wallace, F. R. S. London: Fortnightly Review; Boston: Colby & Rich.

and the spiritually minded have regarded each other with about the same feelings of distrust and suspicion in the field of philosophy as parties similarly named have done in that of theology. The former have looked upon the manifestations relied upon by the latter to sustain their theory as tricks of jugglery or vagaries of self-deception; while the latter have considered the studies and discoveries of the former as calculated rather to belittle than to enlarge the understanding. Of late, however, several gentlemen having claims to reputation in the walks of physical science have given their adhesion to the spiritualistic faith; and among these the one best known to the world is Alfred R. Wallace.

A "Defense of Modern Spiritualism" by a gentleman so renowned in the province of physical research as Alfred R. Wallace, can not be regarded otherwise than as a marked event in the history of science, material as well as transcendental. Mr. Wallace is known to the world as well through his own volumes on natural history and paleontology as through those of his great co-laborer in the same field, Darwin—in which they are often cited—by whom he is evidently held in high esteem for his accuracy as an observer of nature and his fidelity as a recorder. Mr. Wallace is said to have arrived simultaneously with Darwin at similar conclusions in respect to the origin of species, differing, however, from that philosopher in this respect, that while the latter, true to the theory which is common to both, regards the unlikenesses between the higher and the lower orders of animate creatures as differences only of degree, the former, departing in a single instance from the theory, believes that "a special intelligence is necessary to account for man."

As, in the world of palpable objects and constant phenomena, it would be inconvenient for Mr. Wallace to find facts whereby to demonstrate the soundness of his hypothesis, it is not unnatural that he should turn to the only other conceivable source for information: the world, to wit, of impalpable objects and inconstant phenomena. A favorite theory is not a thing to be lightly laid down because there happens to be a scarcity of such evidences as is calculated to make it acceptable only to such as are specially prepared for its reception. No love is more indulgent than that which men feel for their intellectual progeny. It is a mistake to suppose that even philosophers always arrive at their conclusions through the comparatively slow processes of observation and deduction; and he is an exceptional thinker who, in no case, finesses with his facts in order to give an appearance of soundness to his speculations.

Mr. Wallace is, without doubt, a faithful believer in his theory of special intelligence; also a believer in the facts of spiritualism, and in—whatever they may be—its “truths.” He is convinced that the phenomena and manifestations are genuine phenomena and manifestations, and that they are the productions of the spirits of human beings who were once alive in the physical body, but who, from causes beyond their control, having parted with that incumbrance, are now enjoying an inheritance in that which is, in spiritualistic phraseology, known as the “Spirit World”; from whence, either spontaneously or in compliance with invitations, they effect descents upon the world of matter, performing a variety of services, imparting a variety of information, submitting to a variety of tests invented to enable them to demonstrate their ghostly genuineness, and enacting a variety of feats to confirm the faith of the docile, shut the mouths of scoffers, overcome the scruples of the sceptical, and astonish and amuse such as, in a teachable disposition, attend their entertainments.

It would naturally be expected that a work in defense of modern spiritualism, the production of a mind accustomed to the examination and valuation of facts and phenomena, and of a hand skilled in description, written, moreover, as the author relates, “under an imperative sense of duty,” would contain something in the way of specification and argument more exact and logical than could be found in the works of differently constituted reporters of spiritualistic miracles and deliverances. They, however, who look for this in the essay of Mr. Wallace, are doomed to disappointment. In nearly the same degree as in the cases of Hon. John W. Edmonds and Robert Dale Owen, the emanations from the subject seem to have prescribed the intellectual operations of the philosopher; and modern spiritualism, which has gained so much of authority as a profession of faith in its claims by a man of high position in the ranks of physical science can confer, has gained little or nothing in the means to satisfy the judgment, or convince the understanding.

Mr. Wallace, upon the authority of those amiable but not particularly accurate historiographers, Judge Edmonds and Mr. Owen, fixes the number of spiritualists in the United States—the country where the spiritualistic faith has realized the greatest progress—at “from eight to eleven millions.” By “spiritualists,” Mr. Wallace must mean—if he mean any thing—persons who are rationally convinced of the ghostly character of the spiritualistic phenomena. Now, if he had brought to the examination of the subject, that scientific caution which he is so accustomed to employ in other fields of inquiry, he

could not but have perceived that, in a population of forty millions, it would be absurd to look for eight, much less eleven millions of persons of sufficient maturity and intelligence to be capable of a rational conviction upon any subject outside the range of their own immediate sensations. The United States is not yet that Utopia, foreseen by philosophers of the progressive order, where all minds are cut to the same pattern, educated to the same degree, and inspired with a love of inquiry to the same extent. In every community of human beings, here or elsewhere, the number of thinkers—of persons whose beliefs are worthy to be taken as rules of judgment by any others, upon any subject—bears but a small proportion to the number of non-thinkers. The attitude of a majority of the people of the United States toward spiritualism is that of indifference; the absence of curiosity in respect to its phenomena, the absence of opinion in respect to its evidences, and the absence of either hope or fear in respect to the future which it professes to reveal. Of the remainder, many—including the most of those who profess Christianity—are unbelievers and opposers; a few believe in the sense intended by Mr. Wallace and his authorities; while the rest either doubt the genuineness of the manifestations, or question the title to a ghostly character of the source from which they are derived.

The truth is, that spiritualism fails to retain those who have given it their adhesion. The enthusiast of one year is the indifferentist or the doubter of the next. While, therefore, it is gaining upon one margin, it is continually losing upon the other. The reason for this is two-fold: satiety with its prodigies, and the absence of attractiveness in the future which it discloses. Although spiritualism demands acceptance as a science, professes to be the foundation of a system of philosophy, affects to bring all things, material and immaterial, within the category of nature, and offers physical phenomena as witnesses to prove the soundness of its pretensions; nevertheless, in respect to its main purpose—to unveil to humanity another world, and a *post mortem* state of existence—and in respect to its evidences—miracles and revelations—it has no right to object to being classed among the religions. But, whatever may be said of spiritualism as a science, or as the basis of a philosophy, it can hardly be denied that, as a religion, it fails in several important points to come up to the standard of rational requirement. The future state—considered as an individual condition—which it discloses, is not such as would be calculated to inspire any well-situated resident of the solid earth with impatience to realize the change it necessitates; neither is there

any thing in the world it reveals to make it look desirable as a place of permanent residence for any properly constructed human being ; nor in its inhabitants, as, in various ways, they manifest themselves, to render it by any means certain that they would prove interesting as instructors, valuable as friends, or agreeable as associates.

Religious mythology has always, in order to its casual acceptance, required a pretty extensive stock of faith in the neophyte ; and, in this respect, none have been more exacting in their demands than the investigators of modern spiritualism. This, not because the former has not been voluminous enough, and the latter sufficiently numerous, but because of the incongruities of the one and the puerilities of the other. The air of antiquity with which the elder religions are surrounded has done much to hide, and even to hallow, those defects which appear so plainly in the younger ; and the feats which credulity is required to perform in respect to the former, are equaled and exceeded by those which it is required to perform in respect to the latter. Now, faith in regard to matters which are assumed to be within the province accessible to positive knowledge is simple ; a demand that men shall lay aside their reason, sequester the knowledge they may have acquired through experience, and adopt a posture of docility which is only excusable when in the presence of the divinely supernatural.

An agency which tenders itself as an explanation of the unknown, should not itself be inexplicable. If the causes of the so-called spiritual phenomena are, in any sense, subjects of distinct knowledge, they must be capable of definition by something beside themselves. If there is a potential co-ordination between spiritual and secular science, there must be a point where the elements of the one are cognizable under the predicates of the other. To say that a spirit is a spirit is not, in rational contemplation, altogether satisfactory. When informed that such and such phenomena owe their origin to spirits, the question, What is a spirit ? precedes the question whether or not, to spirits, such things are possible. When furniture becomes mysteriously locomotive, bells, horns and musical instruments break loose after their respective kinds, without visible human intervention, pencils become impregnated with enigmatical spontaneity, and deliver an eruption of proverbs and messages, and apparitions rise and submit to the processes of photography, and these marvels are attributed to spirits, the sister science—if there is the relation of sisterhood between the spiritual and the secular—has a right to be informed of the nature of a spirit, in order to be convinced whether or not it is

possible that spirits are endowed with a capacity for such performances. What reason—it may, not impertinently, inquire—is there for supposing that the spirit of a dead man can do more—in the way of the exertion of physical force, for example—than the spirit of a living man?

Under the head of "Moral Teachings of Spiritualism," Mr. Wallace gives four articles to explain the "Theory of Human Nature," which is "the outcome of the phenomena taken in their entirety, and more or less explicitly taught by the communications which purport to come from spirits." Two of these, which relate to the nature of man and the transformation which, at death, he undergoes, are as follows:

"1. Man is a duality consisting of an organized spiritual form, evolved coincidentally with and permeating the physical body, and having corresponding organs and developments.

"2. Death is the separation of this duality, and effects no change in the spirit, morally or intellectually."

Contrasted with the "physical body" in the foregoing, is the "spiritual form:" the opposition implying that, in spiritualistic contemplation, while the one is material, the other is immaterial. A spirit, therefore, is an abstract vitality, a figure without substance, a fraction of nothing organized and developed.

Spiritual science, which, as Mr. Wallace alleges, abolishes the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, by bringing all things and phenomena within the domain of nature, seems also to demand an obliteration of the difference between the material and the immaterial. It is rather curious in this connection, and adds not a little to the difficulties in the way of comprehending and accepting the spiritual theory, that, while "the separation of the duality effects no change in the spirit morally or intellectually," it should prove the initiatory step to such surprising changes in its physical powers and proclivities. To the mind unenlightened by the philosophy of spiritualism, it would seem strange that development should be retarded where, naturally, it would be most, and accelerated where naturally it would be least, expected. A spirit having form and organs is a thing pretty difficult to conceive. It could hardly be cognizable in any science but that which was constructed expressly for its entertainment. But when this emanation from material humanity performs feats of strength and dexterity of which the duality, before the separation was incapable, the question where wonders are to cease, and the demand for faith be suspended, becomes interesting.

A system of positive knowledge should not only be able to meet all the tests which sceptics may propose, logical as well as experimental, but should invite their multiplication. This spiritualism declines to do. When asked for explanations, it responds with physical miracles and dogmatic revelations. With suspicious sameness and melancholy monotony, the continued relish of which by spiritualists can only be accounted for upon the hypothesis of infatuation, it delivers its equivocal messages, works its useless wonders, raises its suspicious apparitions, and chants the litany of a circular jargon which it offers as a philosophy, and which holds out continually promises of further instruction that are never realized.

A true philosophy appeals inevitably to the higher faculties of the intellect; a false, to the lower. The one seeks to establish itself upon conviction, the other upon mystification; the former makes free, the latter takes captive the understanding. Mr. Wallace, a man conversant with the logic and dialectics of science, accepts it as a fact to be believed on the relation of spirits, that, like the material body, the spiritual form is organized and developed. Now, aside from the unthinkability of such a thing as an organic and functional nonentity—as the organs developed in physical humanity belong to it, either primarily or secondarily, for the purpose of individual preservation or collective perpetuation, why it is required to transport them to another world where, so far as appears, there is neither production nor reproduction, needs to be explained. Physical nature eliminates those of its parts which, in the process of evolution, become useless; how is it that in non-physical nature, redundancies, abortive developments, organs without functions to correspond, are continued?

The first revelation of modern spiritualism, as Mr. Wallace relates, was a message rapped out in March 1848, to Miss Kate Fox, then a young woman of the age of nine years, giving to her, and through her to the world, the not particularly important piece of information that the remains of a man who had been murdered five years previously, had been buried in the cellar of the house in which, with her parents, she resided. The first revelation of the spiritual dispensation immediately preceding the present, was spoken out to Swedenborg by a spirit who appeared to him in person, as he raised his eyes from the dinner table at which he was placed, advising him not to eat to excess. These two initiatory revelations—the one of one spiritualistic period, and the other of another—are of about the average importance of spiritual messages; and the facts present the strange and not a little perplexing dilemma: Are these things impostures or

delusions ; the work of the hands of charlatans or of the brains of visionaries ; or are the spirits of the dead, in another world, reduced to such a level of mental poverty and moral imbecility, as that, having opened communication with the living, they have nothing better to communicate ?

In fact, nothing can be more spiritless than the revelations which purport to come from spirits. Information of any value in respect to matters of fact, advice of any importance in respect to the regulation of the conduct, intelligence of any interest in respect to things physical or metaphysical, have, none of them, been received. By the admissions of those who write in defense of spiritualism, Mr. Wallace included, it appears that many—some say a large majority—of the communications touching the condition of spirits in the spirit world, are falsehoods ; and this humiliating confession is extorted from the advocates of the spiritualistic theory, by the palpable contradictions of the spiritual disclosures. Nor are the falsifications confined to matters within any one field of inquiry, but extend to all with nearly equal impartiality. In short, the distinguishing characteristic of disembodied spirits appears to be that they are liars. In this world men seldom utter untruths, except under the influence of some special motive, usually of interest ; in the other, by all accounts, a different code of ethics prevails ; and a habit which, in the one, would expose an individual to suspicion and avoidance, would, in the other, be regarded as, if not a laudable, an excusable exercise of the faculty of invention. This would seem to dispose of the notion that the spiritualistic next world is a place appointed for the realization of a higher development : at least it would negative the presumption that any development, in the right direction, had been realized. All the inducements to falsehood here, have their source and exciting cause in that congeries of solids and fluids which, together, constitute visible humanity, and which are laid aside at the moment of transition from one state of being to another ; and rather than believe that the souls of men become, through the process of disembodiment, so deteriorated as to enjoy a habit of purposeless falsification, it would be preferable to accept the doctrine of the Catholic priesthood, that the authors of the phenomena are devils who have been turned loose upon the upper world, by divine permission, to counteract that disbelief in the supernatural which modern science has initiated.

In all that relates to human interests and affairs, the question *cui bono* is always in order. It can not be conceded that spiritualism is

of any value to mankind, until it is made to appear that something of importance has been realized through its agency. The world is too busy and too much in earnest to allow itself to be long occupied, however mysterious may be their origin, with mere barren phenomena. It can not be admitted, because it has never been shown—because the apologists for spiritualism have endeavored to show it, and have not succeeded—that spiritualism has ever imparted a single new rule of conduct to mankind, placed in a better light any previously accepted maxim, or in any respect added to the store of sayings worthy of preservation. The best of its deliverances are as inane as the worst of those of poor Tupper; and there is more of the essence of wisdom in a single page of obsolete Colton, than can be found in the entire body of spiritualistic disclosures from the day when, twenty-six years ago, the unquiet ghost of a peripatetic vender of tinware first began to vex the reluctant movables of the Fox household at Hydesville, New York, to the present "*anno domini*."

But if modern spiritualism is deficient in dignity in respect to its revelations, it is even more so in respect to its physical manifestations—its miracles. Here is wonder-working for no apparent purpose, except to excite or to gratify an idle curiosity. In deep darkness or in dim twilight, at the invocation of the adept, the spirits abandon the spheres appropriated to their residence, and make known their presence by the signals appointed for the purpose. Then the paraphernalia of the household where the faithful are assembled, becomes endowed with a mysterious vitality. Bureaus and pianos steal from their standing-places against the walls, and glide noiselessly to the center of the apartment; chairs and tables rock and vibrate as if in a state of disreputable inebriety, or perform strange quadrupedal polkas and minuets; musical instruments waltz around the room, near the ceiling, or turn vocal of their own accord with strains of fantastic melody; horns bray out of themselves, as if blown by an invisible Eolus; bells become incontinent, toss themselves in frantic somersaults and emit peal after peal of discordant clamor. Under spiritual auspices, fire refuses to burn, chains to confine, and blows to injure; bifurcated garments are marvelously withdrawn from persons whose limbs are restrained by fetters and handcuffs, and as marvelously replaced; in short, all the various wonders, tricks, and antics ascribed of old to fairies, ghosts, and witches, reappear in the spiritualistic repertory, even to that of evading the force of terrestrial gravitation and riding, either with or without the traditional broomstick, upon the invisible wings of the atmosphere.

But this is not all that modern spiritualism does to undignify itself and cancel the claims of its theory of a future state to the acceptance of mankind. The spirit-rapt worker of miracles, places himself upon the same level with the professors of mechanical necromancy; the spirits in the one case corresponding to the confederates in the other. Both alike exhibit their marvels to miscellaneous audiences for money; and in many instances their performances are so similar, that which is juggle and which miracle is a point difficult to decide. Indeed they may be said to interchange avocations, so that, at different times, the same individual is thaumaturgist and conjurer. Between the Davenport brothers—whom Mr. Wallace indorses as genuine media—and Signor Blitz or Monsieur Alexander, the unlikeness, either in the style or in the morale of their respective exhibitions is not very considerable; and so far as can be perceived, the world is under obligations quite as heavy to the prestidigitators as to the apocalypstists.

In curious contrast with the exactitude which the science of material things observes in respect to its evidences is the liberality practiced in favor of the science of immaterial things. Strangely enough for a natural philosopher, Mr. Wallace finds, both in the agreements and in the disagreements of spiritual testimony, proof of the correctness of the spiritualistic theory. He says:

“The fact that the communications do not agree as to the condition, occupations, pleasures, and capacities of individual spirits, so far from being a difficulty, as has been absurdly supposed, is what ought to have been expected; while the agreement on the essential features of what we have stated to be the spiritual theory of a future state of existence is all the more striking, and tends to establish that theory as fundamental truth.”

Now the fact that the testimony which the spirits bear concerning themselves and each other, and concerning their condition and occupations is false and conflicting, is something of a difficulty, especially when taken in connection with the doctrine that the spirit world is a place to which men are translated for the purpose of improvement; and, if it does not suggest misgivings in regard to the existence of the world itself, might, not unnaturally, present the inquiry, whether, all things considered, it can be a very agreeable place of residence. But while spirit intelligence is confessedly unreliable in matters of detail, there has not been that agreement on the essential features of the spiritual theory of a future state which is calculated to afford it a very firm establishment. Says Mr. Wallace:

"In the scores of volumes and pamphlets of spiritual literature I have read, I have found no statement of a spirit describing 'winged angels,' or 'golden harps,' or the 'throne of God,' to which the humblest orthodox Christian thinks he will be introduced if he goes to heaven at all."

The difficulty with Mr. Wallace is, that having come rather late into spiritualism, he did not go back far enough in his investigations. Swedenborg—whom modern spiritualists affect to repudiate, as the modern Swedenborgians affect to repudiate spiritualism, but who was, nevertheless, a prophet of the penultimate spiritual dispensation—while he largely modified the orthodox heaven and hell, did not aspire to the place of a revolutionist. He saw both angels and devils, while he foreshadowed the dogma of progressive evolution, and of spheres provided as the residences of spirits in different stages of development. Corresponding with the two aspects of Swedenborgianism, the early spiritualists of the present dispensation experienced a division into two sects: one of which adopted and extended the scheme of evolution to the exclusion of the orthodox belief, while the other took the opposite direction, went back to the apocalypse, and outdid the exile of Patmos in glowing descriptions of the New Jerusalem. The latter, however, has disappeared, its particles either going back to the church or forward to the new theory; but the fact that it once existed is a negative to any claim to acceptance made by modern spiritualism on the ground of the uniformity of its evidences.

Still, it will hardly do to deny that there is a phenomenal basis for the spiritualistic idea. There are—at least there are pretty strong reasons to believe there are—more things in heaven and earth than are included within the boundaries of that which is called "secular science." That which is called spiritualism is not a thing of modern origin: it is as old as humanity. Traces of its existence are to be found in the histories of all nations: of its influence in every body of philosophy, poetry, and literature; in the religious superstitions, traditions, legends, and folk-lore of all mankind. There has been no long period of time within which it has not appeared; and while, from causes similar to those which are now operative, it has failed to acquire or to preserve an institutional establishment, it has, to a greater or less extent, pervaded every field of thought, and left its traces on every province of speculation. That belief, firmly entertained by many, and utterly rejected by but few, in the actuality of phenomena that occur independently of any known natural agency, which has descended through the ages, stamped its impressions, in

some form, upon the mental constitution of every human being, and maintains its hold in spite of the precepts of science and the protests of the intellect, is no mere creation of the fancy; or else we are compelled to contemplate the fancy as endowed with powers that are not conceded to it by modern metaphysicians. Modern science holds us to the maxim that there are no creations out of nothing; and that, no more in the transcendental than in the palpable universe, can there be a genesis without material. There must—such is the law of its predicates—have been an objective basis even to a hallucination; from which it follows that that faculty which, in ancient times, gave to every grove and fountain its attendant nymphs and naiads, and to every household its tutelary Lares and Penates, and which, among the Germanic tribes, peoples the caves and mines with gnomes and the woods and fields with fairies, did not work upon a mere vacuity.

Physical science has its catalogue of elements and its catalogue of forces. It believes that it has included within its boundaries the sum total of nature's continent: that there is nothing which does not fall within one or the other of its categories. It has classified and arranged; constructed a system in which its confidence is implicit, and devised and laid down predicates to which it attaches the validity of immutable law. Its elements are subject to analysis according to given formulas; its forces correlate, and it has mapped out the path in which its future labors are to be prosecuted. It believes—and there is no disputing its correctness in this respect—that there can be no effect without a cause adequate to its production; it believes, furthermore, that there can be no phenomena within the region it occupies, the cause of which is not in some one of the forces it has enumerated. But even physical science, liberal as it professes to be, and liberalizing as are supposed to be its influences, is not without its congestions; and there are others besides M. Comte, who have had visions of a time when, having satisfied itself of its own completeness, science shall sit down upon its throne, and order the doors to be shut in the faces of those importunate persons who might come with requests that it should accept additions to its empire, or revise any one of its ordinances.

It is not science itself—which is forever young—that aspires to set metes and bounds to its dominion. It is the man of science who grows old, whose intellectual joints become stiffened and whose intellectual muscles attenuated; who, satisfied of the encyclopedic extent of his own knowledge, does not want his complacency disturbed by the intrusion of facts which refuse to be amenable to

formulas which he has convinced himself are infallible. There are *crustacea* in the schools as well as in the sea, with this difference in favor of the latter, that there is an annual moulting to allow for an annual growth; as well in secular science as in transcendental; and the professor of physics may as effectually secrete around himself a shell through which knowledge can not penetrate, as a professor of metaphysics.

It is a consciousness on the part of thousands who do not believe in spiritualism that there is something besides mere charlatany in the manifestation, which has prevented the *exposés* of several gentlemen of scientific eminence from producing upon the public mind the effects which their authors probably anticipated. Multitudes who care nothing for the spiritualistic theory are unable to lay down their belief that there is more in the phenomena than Messrs. Tyndall, Huxley, and Faraday were inclined to discover. Admit—and this is, perhaps, the sentiment of the largest number—admit that there has been much of chicanery and delusion; admit that the Holmeses are impostors, Mr. Owen a dupe, and Katy King not a materialized spirit, but an illiterate trickster, whose jewelled presents went to pawn-brokers instead of sparkling among the immortals; admit that the phenomena are inconstant, and that dishonest arts have been many times employed to supply their places when they failed to appear; admit that spiritualism, taken as a whole, is paltry—its philosophy a jargon, its works trivial, its science a pretense, its promises unreliable, and the future which it reveals unacceptable, and still there is a problem in which its phenomena are contained, as old as humanity, and now as ever awaiting solution.

It is not a little adverse to the interests of knowledge, that while a portion of the scientific men of the age have gone into an investigation of the phenomena with an apparent determination to find in them nothing but jugglery and deception, another portion, including the author of the "Defense," have no sooner become convinced of their reality than they have subscribed to the notion of their ghostly origin. To the docility of faith upon one side, stands opposed the obstinacy of predetermined unbelief on the other. There has been no suspension of judgment upon either part; and the contributions to the cause of truth made by the scientists are of as little value as those made by the spiritualists. It is almost incredible, that men who have passed their lives in the observation of phenomena, subjective as well as objective, as they are believed to have done, have not, in the course of their experience, seen or felt something which

is incompatible with the belief that there is nothing in the matter but trickery and deception; and there is, to say the least, room for the presumption that there has been a blindness not attributable, strictly, to natural causes, with which they have been afflicted.

It may not be the most important, but it is certainly the most curious problem now before man for his solution. From whence came these phenomena, the like of which have, for thousands of years, been a terror and an enigma to humanity? The answer of the spiritualist is not satisfactory; that of the materialist has not been accepted. There are too many thousands of sane and honest people who have not only witnessed the manifestations, but have produced them, who can not entertain the latter. There is a general consciousness that there is something somewhere—either in humanity or its environment—which the current philosophy has not included; and that, either in respect to the one or to the other, science needs a revision.

There is enough that is common to all the legends, stories, and reports in which disembodied spirits, ghosts, phantoms, fairies, spectres, gnomes, and demons are included—to the unexplained and seemingly unnatural influences which some individuals exert over others, both in contact and at a distance—to those stray transmissions of intelligence on matters of fact, those mysterious premonitions of which nearly every one has had more or less experience, and those startling displays of dynamic force, in the production of which material things seem inspired with supernatural spontaneity, to indicate a persistent cause and a common origin. Among those who admit the reality of the phenomena, there is a consciousness so general, that it may not unfairly be called universal, that, diverse as they are in appearance and in their seeming proximate causes, there is, if it could be formulated, a definition in which all of them may be included. The grim shades and fearful noises which constituted the raw material of those goblin tales that, before the era of newspaper and Sunday-school library romanticism, made up a body of oral literature which was transmitted from generation to generation, and, even yet, maintains its place at the kitchen fireside; the marvels of mesmerism; those unaccountable perceptions of the presence or the approach of individuals who are themselves invisible; the apparitions described by Catherine Crowe in her "Night Side of Nature," the physical marvels recorded by Richenbach—all these are without doubt comprehensible within a single term, and owe their occurrence to the same mysterious agency.

The order of phenomena in which the spiritualistic are included is divisible into three classes: 1. Those in the production of which there is no declared or discovered cause, intelligent or non-intelligent—as when, of their own accord, bells ring, stones throw themselves, furniture topples or tumbles, and dishes commit *felo-de-se* by leaping distractedly from the shelves upon which they had been deposited; 2. Those in respect to which there is no pretense of spiritual intervention—as the feats of mesmerism and those physical and mental movements and influences popularly termed psychological; 3. Those which are assumed to be the work of spirits, and—if there be such and they are to be believed—in whole or in part, of the spirits of persons deceased—as messages, oral, written, or rapped, and apparitions. Now, according to the maxims of science, it is not allowable, in the consideration of any order of phenomena, to assume more than one cause where one is sufficient to account for any portion of the same; and, as it is admitted by spiritualistic writers that some of the phenomena called spiritual are the work of the spirits of the living; and as it can not be shown—outside of that which purports to be spiritual revelation—that the rest are the work of the spirits of the dead, it appears illogical to attribute any of them to the latter. This, especially, as spiritualists themselves allow that there are cases in which it is indeterminable whether a given act is the performance of *ante-mortem* or *post-mortem* existences.

This community of origin—leaving out the ecclesiastical dogma of direct diabolic intervention—would seem to afford, as the source of the phenomena, a choice between three agencies, to each of which, by different writers, they have been attributed: the spirits, to wit, of deceased persons; the organized totalities of living individuals; and blind forces of nature, in some inconceivable way, self-stimulated to activity. The fact of community of origin is admitted by writers of the spiritualistic order; but, of these, all alike decline to recognize a distinction between the spirits of the living and those of the dead, including both indiscriminately under the equivocal phrase, “intelligent cause of the phenomena.” Thus Mr. Wallace, in a note, invites his readers not to regard the word spirit—“which is often considered so objectionable by scientific men”—as “implying spirits of the dead, unless expressly so stated;” while, in the body of the essay, he does not seem to have found it convenient to state expressly to which class of spirits the wonders he records are to be attributed. In fact, there is an apparent unwillingness pervading the minds of the more recent and prudent defenders of the spiritualism, as shown

in their writings, to commit themselves so far as to credit all the phenomena or even the entirety of any single manifestation to the spirits of the deceased, or to supply a test by which it may be ascertained where the agency of one order of spirits ends and that of the other begins.

There is place for a distinction which Mr. Wallace, it will be seen, takes pains to overlook, between phenomena the product of an agency which is incidentally intelligent, and phenomena the product of an intelligent agent acting consciously in their production. There is a manifest begging of the question in the predicate that the cause of the phenomena called spiritual, is a force acting under the direction of a conscious intelligence. It is impossible to conceive that congeries of materials and forces which together constitute inorganic nature, or that it is capable spontaneously to beget the phenomena of the class first enumerated, and there is no evidence yet discovered that they are the work of a will intelligent in their production. In the phenomena of the second and third classes, there is a point where the consciousness of a living human factor comes into relations with the agency by which they are produced, and in some sort prescribes their character and occurrence. That this agency or energy is a natural force, no more self-conscious, nor spontaneously active than any of the other forces which nature has ordained and science catalogued; that it is subject to the equivalents of the laws which they obey, and becomes efficient under the equivalents of the same conditions that are essential to their efficiency, are things which they who would preserve their faith in the stability of nature are compelled to accept, and the admission of which is implied even in the literature of spiritualism itself. What name should be given to this energy—galvanism, magnetism, electricity, "od"—is of little importance, so long as the conditions of its activity remain to be discovered; for it is unwise to contend over a term which, when adopted, includes a controversy in respect to its definition.

Admitting the possibility that the manifestations called spiritual are the work of disembodied spirits, admitting the possibility that they are feats of mechanical necromancy, there still remains the possibility that the force to which they owe their origin is one of the energies of nature, the efficient cause of whose activities resides in living organisms: operating sometimes under the direction, and sometimes independently of a conscious will, and now and then, but not always, evincing the movements of a low order of intelligence. If there is such an element in nature, it can not be annihilated by the

refusal of scientific men to include it within the field of their explorations; and any attempt, on their part, to ignore it out of existence can only react upon themselves in the form of loss of reputation and influence. The rightful domain of science includes all that is cognizable as matter, or as phenomena, and it is not for the professor to prescribe limits to it under the direction of either his inertia or his ignorance. It is to the professed interpreters of nature that mankind are entitled to look for information in all that can be known of these phenomena. Several of them have admitted this, by examinations, hasty in themselves, and, in respect to the conclusions to which they led, unacceptable; and from such men, for their own sake, the world is entitled to hear farther.

Phenomena cease to be objects of superstitious reverence when their causes are comprehended; they also cease to be such objects when, through familiarity, their occurrence passes unnoticed. Humanity really knows nothing of the genesis or the nature of that force which we call gravitation, under the influence of which, every atom of the material universe is allied to every other, and made capable of assisting in the production of a common result; and yet having learned from experience that its action, under like conditions is invariable, it posits it in the order of nature, where it is an object only of scientific curiosity. If there were an invisible and impalpable medium, including every human being, or every sensuous existence, rendering them capable of collective manifestations of force or intelligence, the fact would be no more wonderful—it would be far less so—than the fact that there is a relation between the static and dynamic conditions of every particle of matter in the sun and the static and dynamic conditions of every particle of matter in the planet Jupiter. Astronomy is compelled to postulate an ether pervading alike cosmical bodies and intercosmical spaces—an entity which no astronomer has ever seen, felt, weighed, or measured—simply because it is indispensable to a rational explanation of astronomical phenomena. Within a certain limit, the existence of such a medium is directly demonstrable from phenomena whose actuality is too thoroughly proved to admit of dispute; and there are facts as well as analogies to sustain the theory that it not only comprehends all humanity, but every thing having an organized form and a conscious existence.

We employ the word "battery" to designate a congeries of mechanical appliances and chemical agents used in the generation of a force of a special character, which is called magnetism or electricity; and, by metonymy, use the same term to characterize certain living tissues,

whose phenomena, in some respects, resemble those produced by the mechanico-chemical arrangement. Thus the human brain and nervous system are often alluded to as batteries; nor is this improper, except when carried to the extreme of inferring from resemblance in the mode of activity, identity in the product. It is no more incredible than many things which humanity has been compelled to accept as true, and is far better proved than some, that the combined brain and nervous system of animate nature constitute, so to speak, a battery, of which each several brain and nervous system is a section; producing its phenomena without personal consciousness in its collective or combined, and sometimes with, and sometimes without, in its individual manifestations.

There is no denying the difficulty of the subject; and he would need to be very much or very little learned, to start a theory in which he could place unwavering confidence. The hypothesis of a common force, like gravitation, or a common medium like the ether, or an universal influence like magnetism or electricity, would seem to account for a larger number of the phenomena than any other; but whether it comes up to the scientific requirement of accounting for all, it would be imprudent to affirm. As there can be no generation of force without a corresponding expenditure of material, and as the spiritual manifestations, as they are called, are often exhibitions of force without any apparent expenditure, the supposition of a vast generative apparatus that can be drawn upon without consciousness on the part of those who contribute to its maintenance, acquires plausibility. If this all-pervading potentiality, whatever it may be called, is a bond of alliance between all orders of animate nature, the fact may explain the origin of these exhibitions of force, such as only a low grade of intelligence would initiate, and whose purpose is only to frighten and injure. Finally, as the mental phenomena from such source must represent its average mind, it would account for the poverty, in an intellectual point of view, of the spiritualistic deliverances